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# CARMELIGHT






# UNCANNY EXPLORATIONS

## AN INTERNATIONAL, MULTI-DISCIPLINARY CONFERENCE ON DELINEATING THE BORDERS OF THE UNCANNY



*Organized by*

Department of English

*Sponsored by*

Indian Council of Social Science Research (ICSSR)

Mount Carmel College Autonomous

# 58, Palace Road, Bengaluru - 560052

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# EDITORIAL MESSAGE

“Where the mind is without fear,
where the head is held high,
where knowledge is free”

"Uncanny Explorations: An International, multi-disciplinary conference delineating the borders of the Uncanny” organized by the Department of English, aimed to create a space that encapsulates the ideals reflected in these lines by Rabindranath Tagore.

A free exchange of thoughts between multiple disciplines with the common goal of academic excellence and social progress was central idea of this conference. In a world that is becoming increasingly strange, and every normal is new, it has become imperative for us to re-evaluate our vision and find new and better ways of looking at the world. The support of the Indian Council for Social Science Research (ICSSR) has been invaluable in powering this academic endeavor and underscoring the need for intellectual collaboration and exchange.

This special edition of the Carmelight Journal captures the essence of the intellectual common ground created by the confluence of multiple academic conversations that have to come together regardless of fields or disciplines. It mirrors the inclusive and open-minded ethos of the department of English and the academic rigor of Mount Carmel College, Autonomous. We extend our heartfelt gratitude to all the authors who have contributed to this intellectual collaboration that has enhanced the scope and impact of this ICSSR sponsored International conference. We also thank the editorial team and the Research Cell for their efforts in compiling this journal and contributing to the cause of responsible, inclusive education.

**Dr Sr Sajitha S**
Convener
Head of the Department, English

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# Unravelling the Uncanny in Jordan Peele's Movies: *Get out, Us, Nope*

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## ABSTRACT

The concept of 'uncanny' derives from the German word 'unheimliche', meaning unhomely, and was explored by psycho-analysts like Freud, Lacan and others to understand the source of anxiety. The 'uncanny' is experienced when the familiar becomes unfamiliar during various and unpredictable circumstances. In the present day, uncanny is a common trope used in the horror genre. American director and actor, Jordan Peele utilizes 'uncanny' to bring in the element of horror and weaves it along with social commentary on race, 'spectacle', and the inequality between haves and have-nots. The 'uncanny' of the 'double' is used to highlight the gap between the privileged and underprivileged in Us. In Get Out, he employs uncanny 'gaze' to explore insatiable lack, and therefore desire, among the privileged class and race. The society's flagrant obsession with 'spectacle' unravels in Nope. Jordan Peele situates his social commentary at the locus where the familiar becomes strangely unfamiliar to examine the issue under a different light. His characters breathe life into an uncanny mise-en-scène by their expression and body language which is quite distinctive from a normal person. The music and use of visceral instruments in the background play a vital role in conveying the mood throughout the film texts. Even the props andthe set design provide significant visual cues. This paper explores Jordan Peele's depiction of uncanny through various film techniques. It also examines the use of uncanny to delve into social issues through a different lens. It reviews Jordan Peele's directorial works through Sigmund Freud and Jacques Lacan's concepts of anxiety and uncanny in their works of psychoanalysis.

**Keywords:** Uncanny in film, Jordan Peele, Double, Spectacle, Gaze, doppelganger

## INTRODUCTION

Sigmund Freud in his essay 'The Uncanny' (1919), recognizes that the subject of uncanny "has been neglected in standard works" of psychoanalysis. Freud further acknowledges Ernst Jentsch's contribution and credits him for using the term uncanny for the first time in medico- psychological literature and also showing us the obstacle in studying the very concept, as the sensitivity of people vary greatly to the quality of perceiving the uncanny. For Freud, uncanny is "that class of the terrifying which leads back to something long known to us, once very familiar" is rendered unfamiliar when it appears in a situation or context where we do not expect it to be. (Freud, 1919). This understanding of the uncanny is a slight deviation from Jentsch, as he believed that intellectual uncertainty is the primary cause of the uncanniness experience.

The case study of Sergei Konstantinovitch Pankejeff, also known as "the Wolf Man," is included in Freud's 1918 book From the *History of an Infantile Neurosis*. It describes an extensive examination from the initial

diagnosis to the cure and was written with the intention of proving the viability of psychoanalytic theory and its methodology. In 1910, The Wolf Man, a wealthy Russian aristocrat, came to Freud's consulting room at the age of twenty-three. He tells Freud about his upbringing, filled with phobic emotions and nightmares where the main image is that of wolves. (Goodwin, 2023)

The story of the Wolf Man begins, "suddenly the window opened of its own accord…" in his dream, the wolf-man dreams of wolves sitting on the big walnut tree appearing through the window. Dreading that he would be devoured by the wolf, he wakes up from the dream screaming, yet he couldn't shake off the scene of wolves appearing through the window from his mind. (Goodwin, 2023)

While analyzing the wolf man's story, Jacques Lacan focuses on just one element in the story. The element that fascinated him was not the Wolves but the window: '…suddenly the window opened of its own Accord…' Why does the dream start with the opening of a window? Why doesn't the wolf man just see the image of the wolves in a tree? Lacan opines that it is not what is 'homely' can be rendered 'unhomely', 'uncanny', 'unfamiliar', it's what is behind this uncanny, frightening image: something that hides, more dangerous, more threatening but unrepresentable. it's as if the image forms a barrier, a kind of a frontier point or threshold that shouldn't be traversed. This frontier point or threshold, in other words can be identified as a frame of the window.

According to Jacques Lacan, "Unheimliche, presents itself through little windows" (Miller, 2014). The framing makes what was already there appear much closer. He said that when something homely suddenly appears in the frame. As a result, the homely is viewed at closer quarters which makes it uncanny.

In literature, the uncanny was prominently used in Dark Romanticism, often reflecting irrationality, demonical, twisted and distorted visions, found reflection across various mediums and forms of expression. Henry Fuseli's 1781 painting by the name "The Nightmare", is one example. Lida Bach finds that the enigmatic and frequently sexually charged visuals, elevated landscapes, and metaphysical themes of Dark Romanticism served as a direct source of inspiration for pioneering filmmakers in early Europe. In Germany, the genesis of uncanny cinema mirrored the escalating unpredictability of daily life. The money earned with effort just the day before held no value today, fellow humans were viewed as carriers of contagious death, a recently formed republic was swiftly crumbling, and the atrocities from the battlefields of the first industrialized war returned home through minds scarred by trauma and bodies gruesomely disfigured. What was once secure, cherished, and familiar abruptly became unstable, disconcerting, and questionable. The very nature of reality became uncanny, prompting uncanny fiction to offer a framework for identification in this unsettling context. *The Student of Prague* (1913), *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* (1920), *Nosferatu* (1922), *Mad Love* (1935) are few silent German films using tropes of Dark Romanticism having uncanny as its primary motif in it. (Bach, 2021)

The cinema as a medium itself presents as uncanny as Priya Jaikumar notes, "...the ability of film and media to record and replay events and temporally liberate them from human fatality grants media uncanny powers of repetition, if not always those of remembrance." The uncanny

in media has the "ability to unseat the presumptions of authority and power" adopted by societies, schools of thought and states. (JAIKUMAR, 2022)

Theorists have conceived movies to generally have therapeutic value. However, it is a considerably less hospitable space for Blacks - "one of negative reflection and segregation". (SCOTT, 2022). Considering the uncanny's ability to dismantle perceptions and "unseat" assumed power and authority, it is a suitable tool to bring forth Black representation in cinema. Invariably, Jordan Peele has utilized uncanny to showcase Black perspective and experience.

Additionally, he has also used it to highlight issues that are prevalent today in unique perspectives.

### *Get Out*

Jordan Peele's Oscar-winning film, *Get Out* (Best Screenplay, 2018), explores the psychological terrors of a society based on slavery. In this fascinating tale, Chris Washington, a young black man, finds himself in danger when he goes to the estate of his white girlfriend's parents and notices their strange, intrusive behavior. After seeing multiple pictures of her with black men, he becomes aware of the family's racist scheme to have him undergo surgery that would bind his body to white society while imprisoning his mind. He immediately comes up with a plan to escape. The film utilizes various film techniques to bring out some of the major themes in the uncanny area of psychoanalysis. An attempt is made to discuss a few below:

#### Gaze

Since the arrival of Chris at the estate of his white girlfriend's parents, he becomes aware of people having strange gaze towards him, which is quite unsettling for both the character and the viewers, inciting a sense of uncanny feeling in them. This gaze

from the people who visit the estate also have clear hints of envy towards Chris' body (well-built and athletic). The white people's greed to acquire Chris' body for themselves showcases the colonial hangover of occupying/colonizing the lands of other people. Apart from this, the gaze when seen from a close up shot becomes eerie and uncanny. Peele uses the concept of framing to dial up the sense of uncanny as in a scene where the black maid (whose body is occupied by a white person) at the house just stands at the other side of the door from the dining room. Even though the frame lasts for only a few seconds, the scene nevertheless arouses the feeling of uncanniness.

**Music**

In recent times, films from the horror genre heavily rely on the background music to invoke the fear in the viewers. Peele is no exception here as he uses the background music to bring in the uncanny effect. In one of the scenes, we see the character named Jeremy Armitage stand outside the house playing random tunes on his guitar while he waits for Chris and his sister to return home. The eerie tunes foretell Chris' imminent danger at that place. In another scene where Chris is tied-up and made to look at the video clip of the Armitage family, the distortion in the background music due to the old VCD recording, incites a feeling of uncanniness in the viewers.

**The Sunken Place**

The Matriarch (girlfriend's mother) hypnotizes her captives to induce a psychotic state.

She relentlessly questions Chris about the evening of his mother's passing, repeatedly milling her mug with a teaspoon until he impulsively accepts blame for her demise. He is directed to "sink to the floor" since he is now psychosomatically immobile. Here are a few scenes that illustrate Chris' extremely traumatized and troubled state. As he thrashes through space, sinking into darkness, Missy seems increasingly elusive like a window. We then see dread on his face in real time as he is told that he has fallen into 'the sunken place'. 'The sunken place' represents the voiceless state of African Americans in a society dominated by the whites.

**Manifestation of Freudian and Lacanian Uncanny in *Us***

Jordan Peele's second directorial movie, *Us*, is steeped in the uncanny; materializing many of Freud and Lacan's uncanny elements. It takes on the 'home invasion' and 'evil doppelganger' trope and embeds it with an examination of the societal structure of privileged and underprivileged and examines the relationship between those who have and those who don't. In the film, we see Adelaide, the protagonist, as a child enters a house of mirrors exhibit without her father's supervision. She encounters her doppelganger, or 'tethered' as they are called in the film. When she is found by her parents, she is unable to talk and is withdrawn. The psychologist they consult labels it as PTSD, which the parents are unable to accept. However, the twist at the end of the film reveals that Adelaide's 'tethered' self had forcefully exchanged places with her. The real Adelaide is forced to live underground and becomes Red. The 'tethered' Adelaide continues to live in her place and grows up to have a family of her own. Adelaide reluctantly goes on a vacation with her husband, Gabe Wilson, and children Zora and Jason to their family home near Santa Cruz beach where she had gotten lost as a child. On the way, she encounters several coincidences which gives her a premonition of Red's arrival.Jordan Peele utilizes several elements that bring about this huge uncanny effect in the film. The primary uncanny element is that of the double used in several ways in the film. The first element of double is the 'tethered' double that rise aboveground to usurp the normal lives of their counterparts. The 'tethered' are doppelgangers of American citizens living in an underground system of tunnels. They are genetic clones created by the higher authorities in the U.S.A. to control the masses. Since they couldn't replicate the soul, the experiment was considered a failure and the 'tethered' were abandoned in the underground tunnel system spread throughout the country. Since they were designed as a way to control those above ground, the tethered had to live mindlessly mimicking their counterparts. They mimicked eating, partners, giving birth to children and so on, with no control over their actions. This continued for several generations. Since the 'tethered' had no access to language and society, they remained in Lacan's Real order with no access to symbolic or imaginary order It's the reason the 'tethered' Adelaide couldn't speak when she usurped her counterpart as a child. Whereas, Adelaide who is stuck underground has to mindlessly mimic the one who took her place. Her larynx is destroyed during the switch, and can only speak in broken words. However, when the 'tethered' Adelaide learns dancing to learn to speak again, it gives real Adelaide, now going by Red, a chance to express herself and thereby giving her and those around her their own will (Friedlander, 2023). Hence, they plan to usurp their counterparts, and have access to the same things and they call this event as 'untethering'. For those above ground, the untethering is not just a confrontation with their doubles, but also a manifestation of the Real Order.

There is a change in subjectivity when the 'tethered' make themselves known to their counterparts which arouses uncanny horror among those above ground when facing their double, which soon escalates when they realize the tethered are there to kill them and take their place.

**Framing**

Peele also makes use of mirrors and frames to bring out the uncanny horror in the film. He frequently uses mirrors and windows to frame the characters. At the beginning of the film, Peele frames each member of the Wilson family through mirrors. We are presented moments of their experiences solely through mirrors. This foreshadows the arrival of the 'tethered'. Peele

also makes use of Lacanian concept of gaze when the mirror in the dance room reminds Adelaide of the dance classes she took as a child and the child Adelaide in her vision gazes back at her.

This builds on the premonition she has of Red's arrival.

Peele also uses windows to frame characters in their moments of confusion and fear. He also provides characters' perspective through windows creating a distance or limitation to what is known. He creates an uncanny effect by the sudden emergence of the 'tethered' in the framed space.

**Exploring Societal Structure at Minus phi ('-φ')**

According to Lacan, the uncanny occurs when the 'lack' lacks, or when something appears at the locus of the lack. In Us, when the 'tethered' arrive above ground, they occupy '- φ', the locus at which the lack exists, therefore, causing a huge uncanny effect (Miller, 2014). It is at this locus that Peele explores the relationship and dichotomy between those who are privileged and those who are destitute and the consumerism culture.

The 'tethered' and their counterparts serve as the representation of each other's' lack. The 'tethered' who have remained in the Real Order, according to Lacan have a completeness on their own. In some respects, the 'tethered' represent what the above ground people 'lack'.

Whereas, the above ground counterparts have access to Symbolic Order, materialism, privileges that the 'tethered' lack. Therefore, they occupy each other's '-φ' causing an uncanny effect. The people above ground and the 'tethered' counterparts represent the same people or made of the same genetic makeup, however, brought up in different environments. This highlights the difference in treatment, access to resources and influence, and representation present between the privileged and the destitute in our society. A chance birth in either of the classes is responsible for either depriving or affording a person of resources, influence and representation. By pitting the 'tethered' and above ground people against each other, Peele also highlights the effects of consumerism. Those who are destitute show superior prowess in terms of survival and determination. The film "accords" an advantage to lack, whereas those who are privileged are brought down by complacency. The 'tethered', who are extremely destitute, mostly emerge victorious in the confrontation whereas those above ground who had lived most their lives without lacking much died quickly. This difference can also be observed between the Wilsons and Josh's family. Gabe Wilson and Josh Tyler are in the same profession; however, Josh is more socio-economically successful. Josh and his family quickly die at the hands of their 'tethered'.

However, Wilson and his family emerge victorious in the confrontation not just with their tethered but Josh and his family's 'tethered' as well (Friedlander, 2023). According to Harry Olafson, despite racial inequality not being an overt theme, Peele criticizes racial inequality by juxtaposing the Wilsons and the Tylers. (Olafsen, 2020)

Peele highlights the "superficial solidarity" of the Hands Across America event in 1986 through repetition. The event was a fundraiser held to raise awareness on homelessness and hunger. The film highlights that the system and structure of society is responsible for these issues and charity cannot resolve it (Friedlander, 2023). It shows the repetitive nature of suffering, ultimately leading to destruction with the 'tethered's' uprising. This also represents the Freudian concept of 'death drive', a drive towards aggression expressed through repetition, aggression, compulsion and self-destructiveness (Freud, 1920). Zizek further expands on the concept by indicating that 'death drive' aims not at the destruction of the "organism", but the destruction of the 'Symbolic Order' (Zizek, 2004). In the film, the untethering causes an explosion of the 'Real Order' in the unsuspecting and complacent 'Symbolic Order', thereby destroying the social system.

**The Uncanniness of Spectacle in *Nope***

Jordan Peele's third directorial work, *Nope*, was released in 2022. The film examines society's obsession with spectacle and the desperate means taken to partake it. The film centers on siblings Otis Haywood Jr and Emerald Haywood hailing from the family of equestrians who train horses for film productions. The two fall into desperate times after

their father is killed by a coin assumed to have fallen from an airplane. They are forced to sell the horses to Ricky 'Jupe' Park. As they try to make ends meet, they experience unusual phenomena, similar to the moment their father died, of power outage and failure of electronic gadgets. They soon suspect the presence of a UFO. However, they discover that it is a large territorial flying creature feeding on the life on the ground. They are initially horrified by the discovery, but soon realize they can capitalize on it. They intend to capture it on film and sell it as evidence. Their attempts lead them to Jupe's Park, where it all began. Through subtle uncanny elements, Peele reveals the ever-present obsession with spectacle. Society has always been obsessed with spectacles. The Romans had the Colosseum built to host numerous larger-scale battles as well as thousands of gladiator bouts and man-versus-animal matches for entertaining themselves. Between the 14th and 18th centuries, there were witch hunts throughout Europe and the European colonies in the Americas. The Roman Catholic inquisition, use of guillotine during the French Revolution, to mention a few, had attracted curiosity of the public, resulting in the obsession towards the spectacle. In technologically progressive society, spectacle is easily accessible. Nope examines the tragedy of being the object of a spectacle and self-serving spectators of such tragedies. The film also examines the profitable nature of capturing spectacle on film, especially 'Oprah Shot'. For OJ Haywood and Emerald Haywood, capturing the creature on camera meant making it to the top (in terms of richness and fame), which they call it as the money shot or 'Oprah Shot'.

*Nope* opens with an uncanny scene of a bloodied shoe standing upright beyond a pair of legs and is framed by bloodied sofas. The arrival of a chimpanzee in a yellow sweater, with a birthday cap and covered in blood within the frame intensifies the uncanniness of the scene. The empty audience seats with "APPLAUSE" flashing in the background brings an eerie realization of the setting, the object of spectacle. Sitcoms are familiar, which is made unfamiliar from the perspective of the object. The elements of violence further distances the viewer from the known. The uncanniness of the upright shoe, which symbolizes "bad miracle" (Zinski, 2023), arrests Jupe's attention leading him to dissociate during the violent incident. This helps him escape Gordy's (rogue chimpanzee) attention who had already mauled two of his colleagues. The tragic opening scene is a metaphor highlighting the exploitation behind the need to capture spectacle. The light diffuser cone tossed around by Gordy, the chimpanzee, foreshadows the foreign creature that Haywoods later encounter.

The Haywoods experience inexplicable moments of power shortage, unsettled horses and a mysterious object in the sky which they assume to be a UFO. Society's obsession with UFO sightings, which is familiar, is supplanted and it is revealed to be an organism instead, something unfamiliar, leading to an uncanny revelation for the Haywoods. They are now dealing with an instinctual and territorial species that hides in clouds, wants to eat them and is not an intelligent species. OJ suggests they name the creature after the horse that was denied to Em (Emerald) on her 9th birthday, Jean Jacket. This would give Em a second chance in obtaining what she couldn't have before. The unfamiliar Jean Jacket is familiarized through the naming. According to Lacan, this also evokes the uncanny because what is unfamiliar enters the familiar space.

We see a manifestation of the Freudian concept of repetition and death drive in Ricky "Jupe" Park. He recreates the traumatic moment he experienced on the set of Gordy's Home by setting up Jupiter's Claim, a Western theme park near the Haywood's ranch. He offers a sighting of the organism, Jean Jacket, as the main attraction. Despite the tragic end he faced the first time, he makes a repetitive attempt to tame a wild animal and present it as a spectacle. This shows Jupe's drive towards destruction rendered through repetition (Freud, 1920).

After the initial sequence of Gordy's incident, we are shown the insides of a cuboid metallic sheet, which acts like a frame, beyond which lies the unknown from which haunting sounds of screams seems to come out, which is later revealed to be the insides of Jean Jacket and the screams are from the people (spectators themselves becoming a part of the spectacle) being fed on.

After Jean Jacket feeds on the people at Jupiter's Claim, it excretes indigestible things onto the Haywoods' house. The display horse which it had sucked in earlier has wounded it, as a result it is unable to digest the humans entirely. So when it excretes onto their house, it excretes the display horse and blood of the humans causing a blood rain which douses the entire house in blood.

Jean Jacket, when partly revealed, resembles the human eye and a closer look shows a resemblance to a camera's light diffuser cone. In his seminars, Lacan examined that the closer one gets to what is familiar and other elements are taken away, the remainder elicits uncanny feelings. The creature's resemblance to the human eye elicits anxiety and its partial resemblance to the light diffuser makes it uncanny. This also reverses the positions of those who are subject and object of spectacle. The humans that are usually spectators find themselves being observed and watched by the creature. The reversal of these

roles arouses a feeling of dread and unsettling ideas in the characters and the viewers.

The film also utilizes the element of 'double' through Gordy and Jean Jacket. Gordy's incident is explored on a larger scale through Jean Jacket. Both are provoked to take a defensive stance when they are made objects of spectacle. There is an indirect reference to another double by Jupe, who talks about the SNL sketch of the Gordy's incident. Jupe relies on the sketch to narrate the incident since he is too traumatized to talk about the incident itself.

They convince a famed cinematographer to help out as the creature is both elusive and damages gadgets running on electricity. Their attempt to capture the creature enrages it and it unfurls to its full size. They risk their lives to capture the 'Oprah Shot' and kill it. As the film ends, we see spectators and paparazzi gathering around them. In their attempt to capture a spectacle, they become a spectacle themselves.

Peele subtly uses Freudian uncanny elements to explore the relevance of spectacle in society and its ambivalence in regards to the morality of it. Peele presents spectacle as a "bad miracle", as something that has profitable or welcome consequences, which is also harmful or dangerous generally. The bloodied shoe at the beginning of the film came at the cost of grievous harm to others, but the same shoe distracted Jupe enough to escape Gordy's attention. The organism, Jean Jacket, is responsible for the death of Haywood siblings' father, horses and others, however, an 'Oprah Shot' of the animal will make them rich and escape their financial trouble. Spectacle too, comes at a cost, but has its own advantages in society.**Conclusion**

The themes explored by Jordan Peele seem common, like racism, the obsession and dangers of spectacle, an examination of the societal system of privileged and underprivileged. However, he embeds these themes in horror, especially that of uncanny horror. The amalgamation of uncanny elements and the themes presents a unique lens through which these age-old societal issues can be viewed. Issues of marginalization like voiceless are visualized through the sunken place in *Get Out* and the effects of it are observed in *Us*. *Nope* explores humans' morally ambiguous obsession with spectacle and uncannily provides the perspective of those being spectated upon rather than the spectators.

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# Analyzing 'the Uncanny' in Bani Basu's novel *Moom* through the motif of Milk

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## ABSTRACT

This research paper explores the concept of the uncanny in literature as postulated by Sigmund Freud in his infamous essay "The Uncanny" (1919), focusing specifically on Bani Basu's novel, Moom. The paper attempts to closely study the use of milk as an uncanny element within the narrative. It tries drawing connections between milk motifs and the - exhibition of irrational familial dynamics, the faulty practice of dowry and subjugation of women within the four walls of their house. The paper tries to identify how the milk motifs foreshadows the chilling climax of the story, revealing a heinous secret about a past incident.
Within the framework of Indian culture and household settings, milk is predominantly associated with a source of nourishment, care and protection. However, through instances in the novel, this paper illustrates how this otherwise familiar and culturally significant substance takes on an eerie and unsettling quality, embodying the uncanny.
Through a close analysis of the text, the paper posits how the portrayal of milk in Moom obscures the lines between the familiar and the unsettling, invoking the uncanny. By drawing on the cultural significance of milk, this paper traces the journey and its transformation into an uncanny force, shedding light on the broader themes of the novel, highlighting social evils like-dowry, women as agents of patriarchy, and infanticide.

**Keywords:** Dowry, Familial Dynamics, Infanticide, Milk, Uncanny

## INTRODUCTION

Sigmund Freud's "The Uncanny"(1919) is the landmark text that establishes and clarifies the theoretical framework of uncanny. It explores the unsettling and eerie aspects of human experiences, particularly when the familiar becomes strange. (Freud, 1919)

Bani Basu's novel Moom embodies all the elements of the Freudian concept of the Uncanny at its best. This work, initially published in 1998 in Bengali, was translated into English by Arunava Sinha in 2020. The two driving characters Savitri and Moom become lenses through whom readers explore the uncanny dimensions of the Agarwal residence and their familial ties. Basu's skilful use of Milk as both a life-giving and a havoc-wrecking source in the story's narrative invokes the uncanny into the world, where the familiar transforms into the sinister.

Basu's use of milk motif and food imagery also highlights-the portrayal of characters and their equation with each other, the ingrained malpractices and a state of helplessness in the story to change faulty situations or practices, discriminations against women. This paper attempts to extol Basu's exploration of the uncanny within the familial context, and has drawn comparisons to Freud's theoretical work.

Moom tells the story of the Agarwal family in Kolkata, cursed with the birth of female infants over generations. Hridaynarayan, the patriarch, has an indifferent son, Jagdish, and four daughters-Layli, Guddi, Ladli, Pinki. Layli and Guddi die due to porolonged torture of dowry harassment. Parvati, Hridaynarayan's wife, constantly belittles her daughter-in-law, Savitri in the matters related to the very dowry that took the lives of her two daughters. Savitri and Jagdish's marriage lacks emotional intimacy due to the loss of their first and only child.

Savitri's sudden death ceases her physical existence, but her voice remains behind, transcending the boundaries of life and death to order around and help in daily chores. It later keeps haunting and coaxing the inmates of the house to help her overcome her emotional pains still lingering after her death. Hridaynarayan very soon starts hearing the dead voices of his two daughters, pestering him to rescue them from the perils of their torture. A mysterious girl named "Moom" arrives in the Agarwal household with no whereabouts, gradually earning a place in the house and Hridaynarayan's heart like a grandchild; silencing Savitri's voice. Moom's authority over the house grows as Hridaynarayan's health declines. Moom's transformation leads to a disturbing climax, where she reveals that she was the child (Savitri and Jagdish's) killed by drowning her face in milk.

This spin-chilling revelation draws at home the mysteries of the story, explaining Savitri's aversion towards having any children later, Moom's fear of milk, and the recurring motif of milk as both of nourishment and a means of ending lives. (Basu, 2020)

The following Literature Review dives into the general discourse of "The Uncanny" by Freud along with some journal articles and academic sources discussing the discourse on milk and its symbolic representation in Indian cultural context, it also touches up the relationship between food and women within the familial discourse.

Sigmund Freud, the father of psychology, posits that the concept of the uncanny emerges when something which is familiar, homely, comfortable or common undergoes a process of defamiliarization, resulting in a state of being made unfamiliar, unhomely, uncomfortable and uncommon. The author suggests that it may also arise as a result of suppressed desires, thoughts, and memories residing within the unconscious psyche of an individual. The author is of the opinion that literary works frequently employ motifs of duality (doubles), the transformation of known elements into something ominous, and the collision of opposing forces in order to generate feelings of the strange and uncanny. (Freud, 1919)

Moom is the primary text of enquiry in this research paper. Moom revolves around the women in Agarwal household. It explores many ideas like- Dowry, subjugation of women by other women along with touching upon the instance of infanticide and the subaltern position of women in their household.(Basu, 2020)

Meenakshi Mukherjee in her essay she pointed out the very idea of the motif of milk being used deliberately as, "The novel uses the trope of milk in insidious ways, generally as a source of life - warm and soothing - till on the last page it turns into the fluid of death when the stunned reader realizes that twelve years ago a new-born girl-child was killed in this house by pushing her face into a bowl of milk. ( Muse India - Past Issue - Meenakshi Mukherjee: Bani Basu's Novels, n.d.)This idea of the repetitive occurrence of milk, becomes the main driving focus of this research paper.

One can find the reference of milk being the primary source of food or nourishment for mammals ever since their postnatal stage. Milk is revered as a celestial food associated with goodness, purity and gods themselves in cultures across the globe. Milk is the epitome of care, nourishment, abundance, protection and undivided maternal care. The maternal correlation of milk draws from the medieval art of the Virgin Mary, holding up an infant Jesus. The article explains an example of an instance of milk symbolism in literature through the infamous Act 1,Scene 5 in Macbeth where Lady Macbeth ruminates over the soft nature of Macbeth and says, "What thou art promised: yet do I fear thy nature; It is too full o' the milk of human kindness" This example very well tells how milk is associated generally with kindness, generosity, benevolence and tenderness.("The Curious Symbolism of Milk in Literature and Myth")

Another article extols the idea of milk being the gift from gods- elaborating on the instance from Hindu mythology, the Samudra Manthan, the churning of ocean milk that gave rise to the drink of immortality, Amrit. Milk has religious significance in Hindu culture-idols are bathed in milk, milk and milk made sweets are offered to gods, and milk also holds the prime position in all the rituals after birth as much as it holds the same significance in the last rites. All in all, for every small and big event, the presence and use of milk as an essence of purity and untaintedness is evident in Hindu culture. (Post) This is very critical for our understanding as to how the stand of milk shifts in the narrative.

Milk has also been used in Hindu mythology as a weapon of murder. This finds an expression in the story, famously known in Indian context as "Putana Vadh." (Putana's Killing) Ironically, to the name of

this mythological story, it was Putana, who attempted to murder infant Lord Krishna through breastfeeding poisonous milk under the orders of Krishna's Maternal Uncle Kansa. Kansa feared the prophecy that stated his death in the hands of his sister's eighth child. (Digital)

"Feeding the Family: The Social Organization of Caring Work," offers a sociological perspective on how food practices and its preparation contribute to the construction of gender roles and family dynamics. It exhibits how traditional gender roles are often reinforced through food preparation. Historically, women have been primarily responsible for cooking and meal planning, which can perpetuate traditional gender norms and an expectation within the family. The book also explores how power dynamics within families can be found evident in food practices. (DeVault)

Deborah Lupton, a cultural studies' scholar, emphasizes that food discourse not only reflects power dynamics but also actively contributes to the construction of our identity: suggesting that our relationship with food is not a matter of physical sustenance but involves complex emotional experiences. According to her, food and eating are fundamental to our individual subjectivity, forming a core part of how we perceive ourselves and how we distinguish ourselves from others. (Lupton)

**Some research methodology used in this research paper is:**

Textual analysis: Close textual reading and digging out all the instances of the milk motif and its use in different circumstances, highlighting the context in which the milk resembles uncanny due to what it is explicitly representing in the text at that instance.

Discourse Analysis: The language used within the text especially to describe the women and milk show subtle instances of creating meaning, social and cultural realities related to the uncanny. The Discourse of Food and Gender is the focus point of this study. For instance, the language used to describe milk and its unprecedented importance in the life of Hridaynarayan, the act of denying Savitri to have good food and the language used to describe Moom and her eccentricities invokes unease.

Formalist criticism: Close examination of the structure of the story's progress and the gradual transformation of milk as strange. A nuanced observation of how the form of the storytelling introduces the characters, how does the main conflict arise in the story, how the narrative style used in the story gives it the air of mystery and unease, how the climax is brought forth through the motif, etc.

Feminist Criticism: Use of feminist criticism to explore how females and their individual and collective experiences become uncanny in the story, how females get marginalized and cornered with the discourse of household, explore how the uncanny represent women as a source of fear and danger through milk imagery. For instance-The dead voices of Savitri and the two daughters of Hridaynarayan invokes unsettling feelings.

**The following instances and nuances describes in detail the uncanny in the story:**

Milk as part and parcel of life: In the very first chapter, the author establishes milk as a life giving and nourishing attribute within the Agarwal household. On Hridaynarayan's eightieth birthday, when his daughter Pinki comes to give him a glass of milk at night as part of the ritualistic tradition in Indian Households to have a glass of milk before sleep; the author elaborates how milk is a part and parcel of life.

Milk was life for these people. So many feasts, such elaborate meals, but he didn't touch any of it. He hadn't tonight either. Fixed mealtimes, fixed bedtime, a glass of milk before bed. A glass of life. Lalla lalla lori Doodh ki katori… Lalla lalla lori Doodh ki katori… Holding his bowl of milk, Hridaynarayan floated away into a milk-white reverie. Let the daughters and the grandchildren chat. Let Bahu take care of them.Eighty years of habit were holding a warm bowl of milk to his lips. It made him sleep so soundly. Warm sleep. Bubbles of milk rose everywhere. Evanescent, they drifted away in the air. In his sleep, he poured the foamy milk endlessly from one glass into another, more foam, more foam, a glass of foam atop a glass of milk. Life and the celebration of life. (Basu 17-18)

Hridaynarayan's experience with the milk takes on an uncanny dimension as he enters a "milk-white reverie." The warmth of the milk and its comforting qualities are juxtaposed with the surreal imagery of bubbles of milk rising and drifting away. The presence of milk in his daily life is evident of how milk is used in every small and big event from birth to death in Hindu culture. (Post)

The relationship between milk and motherhood: The author's use of language associated with milk to show the existing family dynamics is evident when she writes about how Jagdish, Hridaynarayan's only son is a reclusive, indifferent being right from childhood. In the statement "but sons became adults as soon as they gave up breast-milk," (Basu 22) there is a significant shift from childhood to adulthood associated with the act of ceasing to drink breast milk. This shift is not merely biological but also

symbolic. Breastfeeding is traditionally linked to infancy and childhood, and its cessation signifies a transition to a more independent and grown-up stage of life. Milk is associated with motherly love.(The Curious Symbolism of Milk in Literature and Myth)

So, refusal of breastmilk can be shown as disassociation for maternal nourishment, this impression runs deep within the story of Savitri. It highlights the entrenched gender disparities that continue to exist in many cultures. It stresses the strange interplay between biological and social components of human development, where gender determines one's agency and position in ways that are both familiar and unaccustomed.

The use of milk to control and oppress: In the novel, we see how Savitri was marginalized in the area of food consumption. "Her sasu was long gone, there was no one to order her around, no one to say, 'The milk is not for you, the cream is for the others, all these sweets and fried food are not meant for you.'(Basu , 2020, p.43)

Women are generally the ones in charge of meals and preparing food. Power relations within families are likely to be reflected in eating practices. (DeVault, 1991)

Savitri's autonomy after meal preparation is reduced when she is denied the pleasure of eating simple foods such as milk, cream, or fried food. This demonstrates that she could only use her willpower in the vicinity of food preparation, and could not reserve food for herself at her leisure or liking. Milk is perceived as an oppressive tool through denial of its consumption. This milk connection is disturbing and subjugating.

Food not just dictates power dynamics but is also associated with identity formation.(Lupton, 1996) This idea creates no identity for Savitri within the family as she is marginalized in the act of food consumption.

Milk and the Dead in the House: After Savitri passed away, Hridaynarayan seemed to have forgotten about her absence and as a matter of habit he enquires about his breakfast casually. Savitri's voice (from the dead) responds and tell him to fetch 'cold milk' and laddos from the fridge.

'Bahu, Bahubeti, nashta laao, it's quite late already . . .' Bahu responded, 'It's all in the fridge, Bapuji, the milk is cold but doesn't matter, drink it anyway. There are laddus too. I can't warm your milk or make halwa anymore. I'm still struggling underwater, you see.' (Basu,2020, p.65-66)

The chilled nature of the milk hints at the coldness of the house in the absence of Savitri. Milk is also considered auspicious, and the bride of the house is also referred to as Ghar ki Lakshmi. But, with Savitri's departure, all that was auspicious and promising vanished. The unsettling feature here is Savitri's persistent presence, as if her voice and energy still haunt the house. This presence, which cannot be separated from the house or its responsibilities, provides an ominous and disturbing tone to the story.

In another instance, Hridaynaryan starts hearing the voices of his two dead daughters too. Once one of his daughters complained about how she is served burnt rotis and leftover curd only to postulate her sufferings after marriage. 'Bapuji they give me burnt rotis with leftover curd, I never get fresh curd.'(Basu, 2020. p 131)

Curd is sour, and leftover curd can be seen as a symbol of neglect and indication of how something has been set aside and forgotten. This torture of Hridaynarayan's daughter is quite similar to how Savitri suffered. Both Savitri and Hridaynarayan's two daughters were subjected to the rude practices related to dowry harassment. In both the cases they were denied a good part of food, and all three of them had to tolerate prolonged insults and taunts related to their dowry. The association of curd with gruesome experiences of dowry harassment is unnerving. This alludes to the idea of 'doubles' as being a hallmark of uncanny as postulated by Freud.

Jagdish was disinterested and fed up with Savitri's voice tormenting the households with frequent cries, complains and lament about her enduring pain she is not able to let go even after being dead. His use of her proverb, 'crying over spilt milk' to describe Savitri's unnecessary attachment with the earthly world after her demise equates all of Savitri's suffering as milk wasted, much like life wasted. 'Look Savitri, my troubles are no less than yours, be quiet, be quiet now. You're dead, but you refuse to forget your sorrows from when you were alive.' (Basu 129)

'So you were happy as long as I was managing your household, now you don't like it because I'm talking of my pain.' 'It's not about whether I like it or not. It's no use crying over spilt milk, is it?' (Basu, 2020. p-129)

This reference reduces the reverence for Milk in the family and their emotional attachment. It exhibits the idea that Savitri's distress is nothing worth taking active actions about. This is a collision of opposite ideas-for Hridaynarayan milk is a source of life and important, but her Savitri's sufferings are like useless nature of spilt milk. This juxtaposition of opposite nature and its coexistence is evident as one of the trait of "The Uncanny" as given by Freud.

Milk and Moom's arrival in Agarwal household: Moom's scene of entry into the Agarwal Household sets the dread and discomfort of the unknown.(Freud, 1919) The waxing moon is

described as flooding the earth, which Hridaynarayan captures with his cataract-ridden eyes. The analogy of moonlight to "thick, creamy buffalo milk" contributes to the scene's creepy and enigmatic character. It alludes to the natural world being transformed into something supernatural and unpleasant.

On a dry April evening, Hridaynarayan was lying on a rope cot on the roof. The waxing moon had flooded the earth with its beams, concentrated, observed.Hridaynarayan with his cataract-ridden eyes, like a stream of thick, creamy buffalo milk. The moonlight kept gathering, gradually acquiring a distinct shape, a blend of light and shade. He was startled by a clinking sound. 'Who's there?' 'It's me,' came a small voice. The green skirt appeared black in the moonlight, the red blouse too, the yellow urni was transparent like clear water. 'Who are you?' 'I'm Moom.' Hridaynarayan sat up in his cot. 'Who Moom? What Moom? Where did you come from? (Basu , 2020, p.144)

Moom's attire and the description of how she looked under the moonlight can be seen as her green skirt being black, her red top and yellow urni being transparent like clear water, creates an ethereal and ghostly sight. The deliberate use of these visuals adds to the unsettling atmosphere of the scene.

Moom and her aversion for Milk: Moom would eat any and everything, but couldn't stand the sight of milk or comprehend its consumption. She describes milk as "dangerous' without further elaboration creates an unsettling feeling and suspense. It suggests that there might be more to milk than meets the eye within the context of the story.

'Moom ate everything she was given. Rotis bought in the market, dahi, south Indian food—uttapam, upma, kanji vada, tea, coffee—sugar-rich sweets, everything, but she wouldn't touch milk.' (Basu , 2020, p.162)

'But why? Does milk have a foul smell? Does it upset your stomach? What is it?' 'Nothing like that. I feel choked, milk is dangerous.' (Basu, 2020, p.162)

The mention of feeling choked when consuming milk adds a physical dimension to her aversion. This physical discomfort, along with the emotional response, creates a complex and enigmatic portrayal of her relationship with milk. The fact that neither she nor Hridaynarayan can put a concrete reason for this aversion makes this dynamic between Moom and Milk really alarming and jarring.

Milk as the Lethal Killer: In the novel's final episode, Moom had an insatiable craving for milk following a brief sensuous segment in which she exposed her blossoming maturity and gushing sensuous freshness to Hridaynarayan. She requests a baby cradle cloth to wrap her body as nothing from Savitri's closet seems to be able to fit her any more.

'Hridaynarayan found an old, unstarched dhoti of Jagdish's, and took out a pink towel. Moom wrapped them both around herself, like a newborn child. Then she smiled innocently like one and said, 'Now give me milk, Dadaji.' Milk? Moom wanted to drink milk? After all this time she would drink milk?' (Basu, 2020, p.210)

'Drink it up, Munni,' he said, 'drink it up.' As though his salvation lay in making this Moom-Munni drink milk from the bowl he was holding. With a smile Moom said, 'I don't even know how to drink milk, Dadaji, can you show me?' (Basu, 2020, p.211)

Moom's incapability of drinking milk all by herself even after being a grown up seems off-putting. Her lack of knowledge does not seem to justify her age, and this alarms the forthcoming unnerving revelation in the story

"A tiny girl and a bowl of milk. My dadima brought the bowl to this room herself on your orders, and my mother, a foolish young girl of just seventeen, trembling with disgrace at having given birth to a daughter, killed me, her first child, by drowning me in the milk. This is the simple method used in your family to get rid of unwanted girls." (Basu, 2020, p. 211)

Moom's description of herself as a "tiny girl" and her mother as a "foolish young girl" highlights two startling ideas-the untimely death of, Moom while also highlighting the tragedy of her mother being forced to kill her newborn. The dichotomy between infantile innocence and the horrific act of infanticide points out the postulation of two opposites colliding to create unease (Freud,1919), which is a hallmark of the uncanny.

The reported discovery that Moom's mother (Savitri) drowned her in milk is a surprising departure from expectations. This is like the same instance where Lord Krishna was tried to be murdered by a mythical demoness, Putana through her breast milk. Putana was to breastfeed Lord Krishna and her breast milk was poisonous.(Digital,2020)In this environment, milk, which is normally connected with feeding and life, becomes a metaphor of death and violence. This twist on the familiar and comforting picture of milk generates an unsettling sensation.

The revelation about the family's practice of infanticide using milk as a technique illustrates the family's awful secret that has been deliberately concealed for generations. This ambiguity is perplexing because it contradicts the usual conventions of familial love and care.

The bowl of milk, which was a metaphor for both life

and death throughout the entire story, is now associated with Hridaynarayan's succumbing. His death while burying his face in milk symbolizes the weight of the family's long kept dark secret and the weight of the past grabbing him, paving the way to his own tragic end.

"He, his khandaan, all of them, were finally dead," (Basu,2020, p. 214) the concluding line rings with finality and doom. The disclosure of the family's terrible secret indicates the end of an era, and the term "dead" reaffirms the narrative's overarching theme of death.

Moom is like an apparition or a phantom, this what is revealed in the end; her act of seeking revenging on the wrongdoer and killing him the same way she was killed can be seen as an expression of repressed emotions and feelings. Revelation of repressed feelings can be slightly out of sorts and eerie and uncanny. Also, the death of Hridaynarayan completes the story bringing it full circle- Moom was killed by drowning her face in a bowl of milk and so was Hridaynarayan who had ordered Moom's murder action. This alludes to the idea of 'doubles' by Freud as being uncanny. (Freud, 1919)

All the aforementioned instances of the novel highlights the uncanny nature of the story. The detailed analysis came deduced to the following findings:

Milk as an Uncanny Motif: The aforementioned instances discussed how milk is used as an uncanny motif in Bani Basu's novel Moom applying the Freudian concept of "The Uncanny" (1919) that the uncanny happens when something known or normal is made strange (Milk is in turn strange, unsettling and eerie). He says that strange experiences could also come from thoughts, feelings, and memories that are pushed down in the unconscious mind (Moom's attempt to murder Hridaynarayan can be a manifestation of repressed feelings even though she is a phantom figure in the story). Freud also says that themes of doubles, can embody the uncanny (The voices of the dead in the novel, it is just not Savitri but also the voices of the two daughters along with the two deaths-one, Moom's murder by Savitri and the other Hridaynarayan's murder by Moom). Beyond the metamorphosis of milk into an unsettling element, it highlights the novel's continuous ambiguity.

**Family Dynamics:** The present study uncovers the manner in which the use of milk symbolism serves to reflect and perpetuate irrational familial dynamics inside the Agarwal household. Milk as a mechanism for exerting control, perpetuating oppression, and fostering discrimination against women is what gets explained throughout the paper. In doing so, it brings attention to wider societal concerns like dowry practices and patriarchal structures.

**Language used:** The present study also investigates the recurring usage of milk as a metaphor, as well as milk-related terms or concepts, in describing an individual's behaviour, character, biases, predispositions, and hidden dark secrets

**Discussion and scope:**

Narrative Shift: Future research may delve into how the shift of narrative impacts the impression of the eerie nature of milk or Moom. An examination of first-person and third-person tales within comparable situations has the potential to provide thought-provoking observations.

**Comparison of the Uncanny elements in other works of the author:** This analysis can aim to compare the uncanny features present in other literary works authored by Bani Basu. Through scavenging her other works, one can correlate the similar thematic concerns and motifs.

**Explore Moom's Position:** Moom has a very eccentric way of being and putting herself forward. She is a rebel, she is the embodiment of naivety and surprising wisdom, she is illogical as much as her reasoning being head strong in many instances. Her description of herself, her name and its correlative relationship with milk and its properties are certain areas where the research can be carried forward.

**This research paper also has it's limitations as the following:**

**Cultural Differences :** The interpretation presented in this paper is heavily located in the cultural framework of Indian literature and society. Readers from different cultures may find it difficult to join dots and references provided to explain the context. This is a limitation, and it might be jarring to the perception and understanding from consumers of different cultures.

**Authorial intent:** The absence of direct access to the intentions of an author is a potential drawback. While the analysis is heavily drawn from the text itself. However, the non-accessible arena of how the author might have wanted to present it can be a limiting factor.

**Interdisciplinary Research:** The research revolves around the discourses in psychology, gender and food along with The Uncanny. However, the future research can bring trends from Marxist, Colonial, Post Colonial, Political, Anthropological, etc arenas to excavate potential interpretations and theory untapped into.

In conclusion, the research presented provides a comprehensive and thorough examination of the portrayal of milk as a symbol with unsettling significance in Bani Basu's novel "Moom." Through an exploration of ambiguity, semantic components, and emotional ties, the research illuminates the detailed and diverse characteristics of the uncanny phenomenon within the literary work. Potential avenues for further research encompass the investigation of narrative perspective, the exploration of same thematic instances in other works of the author, and the comparative analysis of Moom's character with milk and its symbolism. The research conducted has made a substantial contribution to the comprehension of this motif. However, it is crucial to recognize the inherent subjectivity, cultural limitation and the probable divergences in the intentions of the authors. The implementation of an interdisciplinary method has the potential to enhance the examination of milk's intriguing significance within the realm of literature.

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# Revisioning the Itihasa-Purana Tradition: Unravelling Mythical Narratives

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## ABSTRACT

This research paper aims at revisioning the mythical narratives through Itihasa-Purana tradition and explore the interplay between history, mythology, and cultural narratives in ancient India. While history relies on concrete evidence and chronology, mythology comprises interconnected stories that offer insights into a culture's understanding of the world. Often considered as literary works lacking empirical proof, the Ramayana and the Mahabharata hold significant cultural and historical value in Indian society. By delving into the Itihasa-Purana tradition, this study seeks to unravel the complex relationship between these mythical narratives and the documentation of history in ancient India. Through a critical analysis of the sources and methods employed, this research sheds light on how this tradition served as a unique way of understanding and recording the past, contributing to the cultural fabric of Indian society. In addition, this article examines how the Itihasa-Puranic tradition developed over time and shaped the understanding and documentation of history in ancient India by examining the role of the Ramayana and the Mahabharata in the Itihasa-Puranic tradition as historical events and cultural building blocks.

**Keywords:** History, mythology, Itihasa-Purana tradition, historical knowledge-formation, cultural narratives.

## INTRODUCTION

Famous historian, R.G. Collingwood in his work *Idea of History*, theorizes his conception of history as 're-enactment'. This contains three stages: the examination of documentary evidence, the use of the historical imagination to interpret the data and then imaginatively re-enacting of the past. Therefore, history can be defined as a continuous, systematic narrative of past events as relating to a particular people, country, period, person, etc., written in a chronological order. Likewise, the Ramayana and the Mahabharata have been considered as historical events of India and the building blocks of culture of Indian society. The characters in the works are even now believed to be existed. But, according to history, it demands evidence for the past. Evidences like documents or archaeological remains to establish the fact.

In contrary, mythology can be defined as a body of interconnected myths, or stories, told by a specific cultural group to explain the world consistent with a people's experience of the world in which they live. A mythology or belief system often concerns supernatural beings/powers of a culture, provides a rationale for a culture's religion and practices, and reflects how people relate to each other in everyday life. Such sacred stories, or narratives, concern where a people and the things of their world come from, why they are here, where they are going.

According to F. Nietzsche, "Every culture loses its healthy creative nature without myth, only myth makes culture complete" (Nietzsche, 20). Myths are a part of every culturein the world and are used to explain natural phenomena, where a people came from and how their civilization developed, and why things happen as they do. At their most basic level, myths comfort by giving a sense of order and meaning to what can sometimes seem a chaotic world. Mythology has played an integral part in every civilization throughout the world. Pre-historic cave paintings, etchings in stone, tombs, and monuments all suggest that, long before human beings set down their myths in words, they had already developed a belief structure corresponding to the definition of `myth'.

All cultures create and tell stories, and myth-making is an important human creative activity. Myths, stories, legends, folklore, tall tales give valuable insights into how people perceive and think about their world. As stated in *The Bedford Glossary of Critical and Literary Terms,* "Even when a culture no longer believes that its myths are true explanations, however, these stories often survive as receptacles of important cultural values" (Murfin, 284).

Language, arts, oral and literary traditions express how people order their experience and the universe, set standards of behavior, shape and reflect cultural values. These arts and traditions are important means to preserve and transmit a culture's customs and values, to contribute to the cohesiveness and solidarity of society as well as to critique the status quo and stimulate change. Poets, storytellers, writers, as well as other artists and performers, make and use symbols to shape and interpret experience, create works of beauty and significance whether religious or secular and exercise the human imagination in a rich diversity of ways the world over.

The problem is: where does mythology end and where does history start? In the case,

entirely new to us, "Of a history without archives, there being of course no written documents, there is only a verbal tradition, which is claimed to be history at the same time" (Myth and Meaning, 16). As Roland Barthes defines Myth in his work *Mythologies,* "Myth is a historical reality, defined, even if this goes back quite a while, by the way in which men have produced or used it; and what myth gives in return is a natural image of this reality (142)."

The ancient Indians, though not to the extent of their contemporaries in historiography like Greeks, Romans and Chinese. They envinced interest in their ancestors and past. But for several centuries interest in the past was severely circumscribed by a mythic view of life and the cosmos and was totally bereft of the rational inquiry (Ganguly, 4). The unfathomable and incomprehensible universe mirrors itself probably in poets and philosophers of history. And these stand under the influence of time and space. Every period and every geographical unit has its own method of approach and every world-view is controlled historically. G. N. Chakarvarty states in his essay *Philosophy of History in Ancient India* – "problems of philosophy are perennially present; they need to be re-thought by each age in the light of its broader scientific knowledge and deepened ethical and religious experiences" (Chakravarty, 11).

The fact that ancient India could produce no legitimate historians has misled western critics into thinking that the ancient Hindus were lacking in historical sense and perspective. The literary records of the people are continuous and produced in successive periods, and reflect, generally, the mind of the period rather than the records of kings and generals. "The philosophical and literary works in India through the millenniums prove that India did develop a philosophy of history which is as distinctive as it is unfamiliar to the western mind" (Chakravarty, 18), opines while tracing the history of historiography in ancient India. In support of this statement, Sigfried Gidieon, in his work *Space, Time and Architecture,* states - "History in ancient India was not the study of mere fact as such, but was the symbolization of the idea behind the fact" (Gidieon, 81).

Romila Thapar thinks that historical consciousness does not need to conform to any particular model. It begins with a society showing consciousness of both past and future and starting to record the past. She rightly says:

> "To argue over whether a particular society had a sense of history or not on the basis of our recognition of the presence or absence of a particular kind of historical tradition – one which has been predetermined as being properly historical in perpetuity – seems somewhat beside the point. It is more purposeful to try and ascertain what each culture regards as its historical tradition and why it does so; and to analyse its constituents and functions as well as assess how it contends with competing or parallel traditions (4)."

The etymological derivation of itihasa includes, within its connotation, anything that was is in existence in the past. This term which is now synonymized with history connotes all the facts of the past. "History in ancient India was not an independent and self-determining genre of thought as it has been in the West. It was part and parcel of

philosophical thinking, a means of moral edification it was given a very high rank in the domain of knowledge" (Chakravarty, 19) Thus, itihasa was also given a sacrosanct character and called it to be fifth Veda and place it higher than any branch any other branch of literature that developed after the Veda.

**Development of Itihasa-Purana Tradition:**

Itihasa originated and grew in the context of ancient Indian civilization which was very much different from the European. The modern concept of history, imported to India from the West, has no alignment with itihasa. The modern historian of ancient India unceremoniously discards the Indian concept of itihasa. Itihasa had a broad and comprehensive meaning. It was not merely events but much more – a history of ideas and cultures. It comprised ancient events arranged in the form of myths to illustrate the truths of empirical and spiritual spheres. History acts, according to the concept, simultaneously on two planes, the temporal and the transcendental, and the two are interconnected.

Romila Thapar in her work *History of Early India from the Origins to AD 300,* traces ancient tradition of writing history as –

> "Ascertaining the audience and the intention has been useful in attempts to locate texts that incorporate historical perceptions of the past, in what is now sometimes called the itihasa-purana tradition. Itihasa literally means 'thus it was' and purana refers to that which belongs to the past. This takes a variety of forms (Thapar, 34)."

She further explains the method as "*itihasa-purana* tradition presents a narrative of events, their explanation and an attempt at summation. These are not acceptable to modern notions of analyses and arriving at historical generalizations, but they provide insights into how the past was viewed at various points of time many centuries ago (Thapar, 34)."

Myths, poetically and pregnantly, embody the traditions, values and aspirations of a people. It is this myth-making function of history that underlies its dynamic force of moulding the social life, morality and culture of a nation. Itihasa-purana tradition illustrates that the present is knit with the past and the past lives on eternally through the present.

The Ramayana and the Mahabharata though lacked historical consciousness or orientation, they are favoured as source materials by several scholars because of their better preserved state, and relative freedom from 'textual corruption.' However, a parallel tradition, called itihasa-purana, consciously recording traditional history existed. This tradition was oral in nature, primarily based on the compositions of bards like the sutas. The great epics, the Ramayana and the Mahabharata, closely correspond to this type of itihasa. As JinaSena points out in his discourse, *Adipurana,* "The Mahabharata is also called Arsa, for it was composed by the rishis; sukta, for it instructs through good and pleasant discourses. Itihasa means past events arranged in the form of stories and instructions in the four ultimate ends (Dharma, Artha, Kama and Moksha) of a human being. However, Janamejaya, in the Mahabharata states "People are hungry to hear more and more about the great achievements of their ancestors." A history of great souls, an interpretation of their lives and of their thoughts would also form an essential contribution to Indian history.

Itihasa originated and grew in the context of ancient Indian civilization which was very much different from the European. The modern concept of history, imported to India from the West, has no alignment with itihasa. The modern historian of ancient India unceremoniously discards the Indian concept of itihasa. Itihasa had a broad and comprehensive meaning. It was not merely events but much more - a history of ideas and cultures. It comprised ancient events arranged in the form of myths to illustrate the truths of empirical and spiritual spheres.

Invaluable assets of India's past history and it behooves the historian of ancient India to study these great minds and present a true picture of the blazing fire of their spirit. The existence of bards saved the ancient traditions from dying out and made it possible for the priest and the lute players, in the ashvamedha sacrifice and other occasions, to play their respective parts successfully. During the ashvamedha these ancient traditions were brought together, systematized and developed. It is in these respects this great sacrifice can be said to be the source of the origin of itihasa. History to the vedic bards, in its proper sense, was by no means restricted to their past. It was no mere complex of settled events, nor a museum of dead events. History was a living thing; it was with them in every moment of their lives.

The symbolical myths, recited during the festivals were by no means fictitious. They embody, poetic and conceive the philosophical traditions and values. The Vedic Bards, who recited these narratives, was held high regards, not as a mere entertainer like the travelling minstrel, but as a sage who had profound knowledge of the philosophical traditions and who gave an ethical direction to the people to follow in the footsteps of their ancestors. According to the vedic rishis, spiritual progress and material prosperity are not contradictory, they are organic to each other. The soundness of spiritual life is not complete until it has

shaped properly the material existence of man. The latter requires a sound political, economic and social life; a power and an efficiency which will make people not only survive, but also grow towards a collective perfection. History, therefore, is neither wholly material nor completely spiritual, but rather a two-dimensional unfolding of the interaction between the physical and spiritual aspects of man.

The periodic classification of history has its moral import and ethical significance. According to it, the duration of the ages is not chronologically immutable, but rather depends upon the actions of the human being. As a philosophical concept, the process of history characterized by the rhythmic succession of periods is the counterpart of the daily life of men marked by the recurring phenomena of sleep, awakening, and activity. The puranas, thus, stress the moral aspect of the historical periods besides this chronological conception. They give a moral footing to a natural process. Therefore, Vyasa's Mahabharata deals with world-wide issues of human conduct, the motive and impulses that movement public action, no less than the rise and fall of states and the clash of mighty personalities and great powers.

**Conclusion**

'The four characteristics of history', writes R. G. Collingwood, - 1. That it is scientific, or begins by asking questions, whereas the writer of legends begins by knowing something and tells what he knows; 2. That it is humanistic, or asks questions about things done by men at determinate times in the past; 3. That it is rational, or bases the answers it gives in appeal to evidence; 4. That it is self-revelatory, or exists in order to tell man what man is by telling him what man has done.'(Collingwood, 18).

Thus, it may be argued that while myths and history are often considered distinct genres, there are instances where myths can share some similarities with historical narratives. Collingwood suggests that history begins with questioning and seeks to uncover knowledge through investigation. On the other hand, myths often begin with pre-existing beliefs or cultural narratives, they can still involve an element of inquiry. It should be remembered that myths often explain natural phenomena, human behavior, and the origins of societies, reflecting the curiosity and attempts at understanding that are akin to scientific inquiry.

History, according to Collingwood, focuses on human actions and events in specific times. Myths also revolve around human experiences, cultural values, and societal dynamics. In addition, Collingwood emphasizes the importance of evidence in constructing historical narratives. While myths may incorporate elements of the supernatural or fantastical, they often emerge from collective experiences and observations of natural phenomena. Collingwood asserts that history serves to reveal insights about human nature by examining past actions. Similarly, myths often convey cultural values, beliefs, and the complexities of human behavior. In light of these points, it's possible to argue that myths can exhibit characteristics akin to those of history. However, it's also important to acknowledge the distinctions between the two genres.

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# Within: Exploring Gender and Sexuality in *Demian* by Hermann Hesse

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## ABSTRACT

In this paper, we explore the characters of Emil Sinclair and Demian from Hermann Hesse's bildungsroman, Demian, in relation to the Jungian archetypes of anima and animus. The characters' physical characteristics, growth and relationships with each other will be looked upon closely as we try to unveil their sexualities and weave a link between the same and their spiritual journey. Other prevalent Jungian archetypes and philosophies, along with references from Hesse's other works, will be used to help understand the story as clearly as possible.

**Keywords:** Demian, Herman Hesse, Gender and Sexuality, Spirituality, Jungian Archetypes

## INTRODUCTION

*"When we touch the place in our lives where sexuality and spirituality come together, we touch our wholeness and the fullness of our power, and at the same time our connection with a power larger than ourselves." – Judith Plaskow*

Hermann Hesse was a German novelist known for his works- Siddhartha, Gertrud, and Narcissus and Goldmund amongst many others. His works usually revolve around the themes of self-discovery, identity and spirituality. Hesse won the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1946.

Born on 2nd July 1887, in Germany, he published his first book, an anthology of his poetry in 1899. His first novel, Peter Camenzind, was a success that laid the foundation for his successful career as a novelist. His anti-war sentiments during the First World War had him branded a traitor. His mental state worsened due to a personal crisis, which led him to meet the psychoanalyst J.B. Lang, a disciple of Carl Jung. His sessions with Lang exposed him to the tenets of Jungian psychology. His interest in the same is evident as his later works had the semblances of the analysis and concepts. (The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2023)

### Demian: The story of a boyhood

Demian by Hermann Hesse, is a bildungsroman revolving around Emil Sinclair's life. His story is riddled with philosophical questions whose answers are brought to light through intimate emotional bonds, furthering his spiritual journey. Hesse establishes the divinity of every individual in the introduction of the story, states that "there is no reality except the one contained within us," and questions the nature of morality through Nietzschean ideals and the concept of Abraxas as the story progresses.

*"Each person is not only himself, he is also the unique, very special point, important and noteworthy in every instance, where the phenomena of the world meet, once only and never again in the same way. And so every person's story is important, eternal, divine; and so every person, to the extent that he lives and fulfills nature's will, is wondrous and deserving of full attention. In each of us spirit has become form, in each of us the created being suffers, in each of us a redeemer is crucified." (Hesse, 2018)*

In this paper, we will reconstruct the relationship between the two main characters- Demian and Sinclair, while exploring the role of their gender and sexuality in the discovery of their spiritual self.

Hermann Hesse's Demian begins when Sinclair is ten years old. At a young age, the protagonist and narrator- Emil Sinclair, not only understands the presence of two worlds– the holy, chaste world of godliness and love and the world of temptation and sin– but also how they border each other. Sinclair was an ideal son until he met Franz Kromer and gave in to his vices. Kromer represents Sinclair's shadow, or the parts of him that are societally unacceptable. René Breugelmans says that Hesse uses Jungian philosophies, and Kromer is one of the first examples of the same (Breugelmans, 1981). Max Demian frees him from his shadow and teaches him to accept it as part of himself, becoming his first mentor (Hesse, 2018).

The title takes its name after Demian, portraying his significance in Sinclair's life. Demian comes from the Greek word "daimon," meaning guardian. He stays true to his name. He was several years older than Sinclair and immediately caught his attention due to his mature confidence and timelessness. Sinclair's initial descriptions of Demian resemble feelings of infatuation. Even as their relationship grows, deepens, and rifts apart, Demian is always the one he thinks of when faced with an obstacle. From freeing him from Kromer to teaching him to question his beliefs and introducing him to Abraxas, God who is both good and evil, Demian is the catalyst of change (Hesse, 2018).

Years later, after moving to a boarding school, Sinclair had gone entirely wayward. He had become a regular tavern goer who bragged about his knowledge to everyone, but within, he was lonely and depressed. On the verge of expulsion, he met a girl.

"*She was probably scarcely older than I was, but much more mature, elegant and with clear contours, already almost a total lady, but with a hint of boyishness in her face that I especially liked.*" *(Hesse, 2018)*

He never spoke to her but named her Beatrice after the painting- Beata Beatrix, and built a shrine for her in his mind, worshipping her ardently. His pure, unconditional love for her reformed his ways. Sinclair's biggest obstacle before meeting her was his sexuality. Through her, he learns to accept these desires and realises their holy nature. She represents the return or acceptance of his anima– the innate femininity in him.

The painting he made of her looked more like Demian. It also looked like Sinclair himself, like his "daemon." As his longing for his friend grew, the painting began looking more like him. He then painted the bird in the coat of arms. It looked like a sparrowhawk making its way out of an egg. Following his urges, he sent it to Demian. His reply brought Sinclair closer to understanding himself through the God named Abraxas. Pistorius, a musician, becomes his new mentor and enlightens him on the background and history of Abraxas.

Thoughts and ideas about Abraxas gave rise to new feelings and dreams, invoking God. His dream was his destiny. A destiny that strongly resembled Demian and looked both angelic and devilish, masculine and feminine. The clearer the image of his dream became, the stronger the attraction he felt. He called her murderess, whore, beloved and mother. Only later did he realise that his destiny was alive and breathing in the form of Lady Eve or Frau Eva, Demian's mother. When he finally met her, she immediately recognised him. He became a part of their inner circle. She asked him to earn her if he really loved her. Before he could fulfil his desires, their premonition of catastrophe in the form of the World War came. The story ends with Demian informing an injured Sinclair of his departure. He kisses him on the lips on behalf of Lady Eve. Sinclair falls asleep after their conversation and wakes up to find that he has now completely united with Demian.

"*But whenever I find the key at times, and descend all the way into himself, where the images of destiny slumber in the dark mirror, I need only lean over the black mirror to see my own image, which now looks exactly like him, him, my friend and guide.*" *(Hesse, 2018)*

**Review of Literature**

Rodchyn and Blahun (2022) looked at the masculinity and femininity of the characters in Narcissus and Goldmund and Demian in relation to the Jungian concept of anima and animus while also clarifying the role of the androgynous personality.

On the other hand, "Gender and Modernity in the Work of Hesse and Kazantzakis," (Petropoulou,

2000) has chosen select texts from the authors mentioned that revolve around the topics of self, identity and gender. She also looks at the male domination of these texts in light of the Nietzschean and Hegelian thoughts.

Outsiders and Others (Von Seth, 2022) deals with select Hesse texts with queer undertones and possible homoeroticism. It focuses on the showcase of the characters' queerness through nonconformity and has proven to be essential in discovering their true identity.

Talat (2020) looks at Hesse's Demian and Narcissus and Goldmund as bildungsroman with the influence of Freud and Jung's psychoanalytical approaches. She deconstructs the relationship between spiritual maturity and modernisation from the viewpoint that an individual's experience is a microcosm of the world.

A thematic analysis of Hesse's Narcissus and Goldmund and how the characters are two sides of the same coin is done by Jan et al. (2022). The emphasis is on the Jungian archetype of The Self and how it is viewed in different cultural settings.

**Methodology**

As part of writing the research paper, a meticulous study of multiple journal articles, books and research papers on the chosen text and topic was done. Our primary data sources were Hermann Hesse's Demian and The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious. These texts were selected due to their significance in understanding different gender archetypes and sexuality. The texts were read, interpreted and analysed carefully, along with secondary material.

**Findings and Research**

**Sinclair and Demian**

Many have studied and analysed the relationship between the two. One group deems it purely a bond of brotherhood and spiritual connection, whereas another group speaks of possible homoeroticism between the two.

Many readers have found queer undertones in Demian. One reader described their relationship as "falling in love of sorts"(*Question to the People Who Read This, Like. . . – Demian. Die. . . Q&A*, n.d.). We would like to further this thought by providing some details from the text. When Sinclair first saw Demian, he says, "his face had a strange fascination for me" and he could never stop glancing at him, even though he disliked doing so. Later in the story, Lady Eve reveals Demian's excitement about meeting Sinclair. At first glance, he knew he wanted to be his friend. Demian was the only one who could burn down Sinclair's walls of pretence. Sinclair's dreams in which Kromer tortured him, were slowly replaced by Demian.

*"All that Kromer had made me suffer in the way of torture and struggling against it, I accepted from Demian gladly with an emotion made up just as much of pleasure as of fear." (Hesse, 2018)*

These lines hint at a brewing sexual desire for Demian. The focus on the dynamic nature of morality, emphasising the acceptance of taboo topics like sex and sexuality in other cultures, all point towards homosexual subtexts in the text being forced to repression due to the criminalisation of the same in then Germany.

Demian's affinity for Sinclair is seen through his constant use of concentration and willpower to reach him, and his reciprocation of the same when in the boarding school proves the mutuality of their feelings. The tension in each of their encounters due to the blending of the binaries is another point to be noted when considering their relationship. Their relationship in a way looks at a queer subversion of the Jungian archetypes. The growing number of petitions to study the queer aspects of the concept can be seen as support for this argument.

Sinclair's acceptance of his sexual desires towards Lady Eve without hesitation despite the stark resemblance she bears with Demian, alludes to his homosexual desires for him. Lady Eve represents the archetype of the mother. She is supposed to be merely a mentor and guide. Furthermore, Demian represents the daemon within Sinclair, so the attraction between them would be natural as the soul seeks to attain completion by embracing all parts of itself. Demian thus bridges different parts of Sinclair's soul from his shadow to the mother and caregiver. He binds Sinclair's life together. His kiss helps Sinclair finally accept and become his true self. According to Newton, "Demian is marked as a symbol of destiny. (Sinclair's destiny is said to be his Daemon [Damon= Daimon =Demian])" (Newton, 1985).

**Hesse's Personal Life**

While looking at the nature of the relationship between Demian and Sinclair, we should pay attention to the situations in Hesse's life. Hesse wrote Demian during a trying period in his life– his father's demise, his wife, Maria's mental breakdown and their impending separation. Hesse's weak or unsuccessful relationship with women as compared

to his close bonds with his male friends is well-known. When Maria was hospitalised in 1905, and they had to relocate, Finckh, Hesse's close friend joined them at his request (Palmer, 1997). According to Joseph Mileck, their relationship was rather queer. "As if to underscore how this homosocial relationship competed with heterosexual relationships, Hesse's friendship to Finckh began to deteriorate as soon as Finckh himself married and had children" (Stanley & Mileck, 1982). Though this is no reason to suspect Hesse of being homosexual, it is plausible that he tried to reflect such a closeness between his male characters. Demian's character is believed to have been modelled after Gustav Zeller, an old friend of Hesse.

**The Jungian Archetypes**

Jungian archetypes is a psychological concept that represents a universal, inherited mental image present in the collective unconscious of humans. The four main archetypes are Persona, Shadow, The Self and the Anima/ Animus. The Persona is the image we show of ourselves to society. It is how we want others to see us. The Anima is the femininity in a male, and the Animus is the masculinity in a female (Jung, 1969). Our Shadow represents the parts of us we try to hide. Most of it is repressed and unconscious. The Self represents our true nature and potential (Chute, 2023).

Demian is in touch with his anima and animus, giving him an almost androgynous personality. He is caring and guiding like a woman, yet protective and rigid like a man.

*"I saw Demian's face, and I saw not merely that he didn't have a boy's face but a man's; more than that, I saw, or I thought I saw or sensed, that it wasn't a man's face either, but something different still. There seemed to be something of a woman's face in it as well; in short, for a moment that face struck me not as masculine or childlike, not old or young, but somehow millennial, somehow outside of time, bearing the mark of different eons from those we live in." (Hesse, 2018)*

One can argue that Sinclair is heterosexual due to his deep attraction towards Beatrice and Lady Eve, both of whom bring in him drastic growth, but what we lose sense of is the fact that these women eventually brought him closer to Demian and that sexuality is a spectrum. His painting of Beatrice looks like Demian, and after he recognised this, Demian clouded his thoughts.

*"It had begun with Beatrice, but for some time I had been living with my paintings and thoughts of Demian in such a totally unreal world that even she vanished completely from my sight and thoughts." (Hesse, 2018)*

Lady Eve is said to be the feminine form of Demian due to their similarities. Many believe that Sinclair's love for Lady Eve was a plot device used to distract the readers or veil the possibility of a homosexual relationship between Demian and Sinclair. The well-known Argentinian author Julio Cortazar had accused Hesse of being afraid to take Demian and Sinclair's relationship towards a homosexual direction, as in the 1900s, homophobia was much more rampant than now. Apart from this allegation, Sinclair's preference for androgynous individuals is a hint of his queerness.

**A Comparative Study with Hesse's Other Works**

Hesse's well-known homosexual friend, Thomas Mann is said to have responded enthusiastically to the "homoerotic metaphysics" in Demian and felt that the story had struck a chord in him (Heilbut, 1996). His works after Demian, especially Steppenwolf and Narcissus and Goldmund have been a little more openly homosexual.

Steppenwolf revolves around Harry, a man who has two natures- human and wolf. The relationship between Harry, Pablo and Hermine is complicated and confusing, to say the least. Both Pablo and Hermine are attracted to Harry in ways and degrees unconventional to their gender identities. Harry falls in love with Hermine when she is dressed as a man, resembling his childhood friend, but she is the embodiment of his ideal partner as a woman. The amalgamation of the homosexual and the heterosexual in their relationship is puzzling. When Harry tries to befriend Pablo, his courting is taken sexually by Pablo, who then invites him to a threesome with Maria. Harry initially rejects the request due to the guilt and shame of being associated with a direct homosexual activity. He later understands that Pablo, Maria and Hermine are all in sexual relationships with each other. Once he comes to terms with himself and his desires, he revisits Pablo's request and accepts it (Palmer, 1997).

Hermine's androgyny in Steppenwolf draws a parallel to that of Lady Eve's in Demian. Through their heterosexual relationship with the protagonists, these women act as vessels in bringing them closer to their homosexual relationship with their friend. They aid Harry and Demian in realising the unified desire regardless of gender binaries.

Craig Bernard Palmer says that "Steppenwolf, in fact, radicalises the convergence of homosocial and heterosexual relationships that the author had previously portrayed in Demian" (Palmer, 1997). Like Harry, Pablo and Hermine, Sinclair, Demian, and Lady Eve represent an intricately entwined triangle of homosocial and heterosexual desires: "The

troubled male protagonist meets his ideal, wiser self in another man, and is brought closer to him through a female who shares many traits with the ideal man." Sinclair's heterosexual desire for Lady Eve, who is the female form of Demain and a very masculine figure, guides his relationship with Demian, leading their friendship to eventual homosexuality through the kiss. Before exiting from the narrative, Lady Eve sends across to Sinclair a kiss through Demian, which steers the collapse of Sinclair and Demian's characters and their homosexual and heterosexual desires into one- the final union. "While the kiss is symbolically heterosexual, it is homosexual in terms of the gendered bodies performing it" (Palmer, 1997).

Hesse's Narcissus and Goldmund is a story articulating the Jungian idea of individuation and The Self. Narcissus and Goldmund are two polarities. Narcissus is a priest at a monastery and follows a life of celibacy and intellectualism, while Goldmund seeks his meaning through sensuality and artistry. Goldmund is enamoured by Narcissus as soon as he meets him, similar to Sinclair. Both of them follow different paths in life. Goldmund is content with his life. Narcissus is not. Yet neither of them realise their true self, for individuation only takes you so far, in terms of spirituality. They represent two sides of a coin, an existence that does not reach completion without the other (Jan et al., 2022). In contrast to them, Sinclair and Demian accept each other and identify with their true self. This difference between the texts can only make us assume that, in a way, it is probably homosexuality that is one's route to enlightenment.

**Conclusion:**

In their study, Zoriana Rodchyn and Nataliia Blahun say, "It must be emphasised that in the texts by Hesse, the natural reality of gender characteristics is very strongly questioned, a step that was only later recognised and established by gender studies research. Some researchers even point to the androgyny of both the Hessian figures – women and men – and to the androgyny of being in general. The gender identity is not innate for him because he constantly relativises the worldview and the innate physical traits of his characters, of both, man or woman" (Rodchyn & Blahun, 2022). Hermann Hesse uses the binaries to create tension in his texts, which keeps the readers hooked (Von Seth, 2022).

The binaries of masculinity and femininity, good and evil, in Hesse's works, along with his description of the same co-existing and being part of one another, hints at the transgression of the said binaries, implying the fluidity of gender, which in turn implies the fluidity of sexuality. However, Demian does highlight the presence of everything within us. All the answers we seek will be found within, once we embrace every aspect of our soul. With this in mind, categorising the characters based on their gender and sexuality is futile. Hesse never gives clear-cut answers about anything as can be seen (Von Seth, 2022). Nevertheless, it is the performative homosexual kiss between Demian and Sinclair that leads to their ultimate union and enlightenment. It is when Demian and Sinclair accept each other as part of themselves and Harry accepts his desires towards Pablo and Hermine that their spiritual journey progresses. The power of sexuality in defining who we are as human beings has been accepted by many, including Havelock Ellis and Alfred Kinsey, so we can conclude that it is the veiled homosexual relationship between the two main characters that played the most significant role in their spiritual journey.

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# The Echoes of the Uncanny in Bram Stoker's *Dracula*

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## ABSTRACT

For centuries vampires have been a point of attraction since the era of oral literature. The concept of the undead, hunting for blood, haunting innocent and sucking blood has been a centre of attraction and intrigue for a long time. These mysterious monsters have an undeniable aura which made the authors to incorporate them into gothic fiction. Later, Vampire fiction arose as a genre of itself. Bram Stoker's Dracula gave a new insight into the gothic novel where there is a tug of war between the known and unknown. The narrative is set in a manner to instil the fear of uncanny which foreshadows the repressed and suppressed thoughts in oneself. Dracula is something familiar as they are recurrent characters from the ballads but the idea of familiarity is concealed and presented in a new manner which is an image of concealed trauma, pain, agony and sexual desires. These elements come into light after giving a deep sense of eerie which is highlighted in the paper. Therefore, the paper successfully highlights the concept of the uncanny in popular fiction and presents a healthy platform to discuss the issues of morality, self-identity and self-control which play a major role in order to remain harmony with nature.

**Keywords:** covert, overt, vampires, and uncanny.

## INTRODUCTION

The term uncanny is derived from a German word that denotes a fear in human beings due to the feeling of disorientation or sense of familiarity which causes discomfort. This concept was later used in English and the term uncanny meant a sense of confusion and estrangement. Tizianna Lentini (2021) mentions the history of the uncanny:

> *Das Unheimliche* is a German substantivized adjective used by Freud as conceptual term for explaining that particular attitude of the fear in establishing, inside the human being, a feeling of disorientation due to an impression or a situation which appears familiar but extraneous at the same time. This kind of feeling brings the subject to experiment a sense of anguish, confusion and estrangement. (p. 47)

There is a German word "hmlich" which means home. This word denotes something that is quiet and comfortable. Whereas, the word "un-heimlich" is contrary to the above said word and it denotes something unusual or unfamiliar. These unusual or unfamiliar things create a sense of terror and fright thereby causing disturbance to the natural order. Eventually, the word was translated into English as "uncanny" and it held a deep meaning as it was connected to the literary world. Lentini (2021) reciprocates the idea of Freud who clearly stated that, "the Uncanny is the frightening that goes back to what has already known to us, to what is considered familiar" (p. 48).

Schelling in his *Philosophy of Mythology* (1856) throws light upon the uncanny that whatever was kept hidden or mysterious comes to light at one point. The submerged or the hidden in some way or the

other returns to the light with the help of disturbance caused by uncanny situations or elements. Schelling (2007) sums up, "So the uncanny arises when what was kept hidden is shown, when what was repressed returns to awake childhood trauma which were initially silent" (n.p).

After Freud's intervention, the uncanny was categorized as an aesthetic element in the late 19th century. Freud's (2003) contribution to the uncanny plays a pivotal role as he spoke about "the double, repetitive acts, superstitions and self-propelled mechanisms; the maternal womb, the animation of the inanimate, the return of the dead, alive burial and emasculation" (p.143). As stated by Freud, uncanny literature often involves familiar settings or characters which transform into unfamiliar in a frightening sense. Hence, the uncanny plays a pivotal role in creating a world filled with horror and suspense. The fear it induces is not heartbreaking but it is subtly that it slowly consumes the readers.

The writers usually induce these uncanny elements in literature in order to blur the fine line between familiar and unfamiliar scenarios. This uncanny is used as a thread woven between narratives thereby creating thrill and intrigue. The uncanny in Gothic literature mirrors the fears and anxieties of society as a whole. They highlight the uncertainties of time and life since science and technology were developing drastically at the time when the novel was written. Additionally, the tale of Dracula delves into the darker areas of the human psyche. The theme of fear of the unknown in the novel creates an element of suspense and thrill. The darker or hidden aspects in the work of Bram Stoker resonate in the modern century as well.

Bram Stoker's *Dracula* was published in 1897. The novel is written in epistolary form where the narration unfolds in the form of journal entries, letters and newspapers. The novel is sprinkled with jump-scares, horror and disgust. The narration is done in a lurid tone that gives a sense of eerie. Though the gothic novel of Bram Stoker got its influence from the vampire legends and oral storytelling of the past, Bram gave a different outlook to the story as he presented a primitive notion of Dracula who tried to adapt himself to the changing and challenging modernized condition at that time. After this, which there were many works based on vampirism that began to appear as popular fiction - *The Twilight Series*, *Salem's Lot*, *Sesame Street* and so on.

As stated earlier, the uncanny deals with the unseen or concealed elements in the plot. It refers to something that was concealed for a while but then revealed later upon. The uncanny in *Dracula* is where the execution of the idea of vampires itself. In the old legends and tales, vampires were presented to be simply bloodsucking monsters who were present in forests or woods. They would feed upon the passengers or travelers and they lived a life of horror wherever they were found. But in Bram Stoker's novel, Dracula appears to be that of a human. He lives, dresses, walks and talks like a civil man. In fact, he carries out the routines of a human and so no one suspects. But later, it is evident that he does not consume human food or water but solely relies on blood.

There is a scene where the female vampires are found eating children and it symbolizes the disregard of motherly instinct in those female vampires. The situation is depicted in an unfeminine manner where there is consumption of human blood and flesh. The horror intensifies when the corpses are presented in front of the lead characters. These corpses and the uncanniness are shown as a real threat. While going through the description, the horror strikes and engulfs. When these corpses are displayed, it allows people to confront their mortality. It speaks about the inevitability of death and how our bodies will not last longer like the ones in the Vampire legend.

The mirror scene in *Dracula* holds significant importance where Dracula's image is not visible in it. It is well-known that the mirror image of vampires and ghosts does not exist. Whereas, here the scene throws light upon self and presence of soul in humans. Moreover, Dracula appears in the human form and can act like a human even though he is not one. Instead, he is a monster who preys on the blood of others. This is why Dracula is not seen in the mirror. Dracula mirrors the crooked ways of humans by breeding the evils – lust, power, greed, dominance and so on. It is because of the violent and destructive nature of Dracula, makes the common men are afraid that Dracula itself is a mirror of the evil way of mankind in the Victorian period.

Even the transformation of Lucy from a familiar friendly face to a frightening undead also resonates the Freud's idea of the uncanny. As stated by Freud, Lucy who is portrayed as a charming and beautiful young lady slowly decays into an undead persona. This is frightening and it evokes so many thoughts and emotions. The mysterious events occur in the castle of Dracula. The novel begins in his castle and then the story progresses to the city of London. Then in the final scene or the final pursuit of the Count Dracula, the setting moves back to the castle of Dracula itself.

The recurring pattern in the night time like Dracula visiting Mina and Lucy in the form of bats, wolves, rats, mist and nightmares itself shows the return of Dracula. Nobody recognizes his secret visits to these wonderful ladies as he escapes taking different forms. Dr. Seward expresses in disbelief,

"Lucy was bitten by such a bat; and that such a thing is here in London in the nineteenth century?" (Stoker 204). Only before Lucy's death scene, where Van Helsing was in her room for a blood transfusion. That's when the team meet their enemy for the first time. Dracula meets Mina in the form of recurring nightmares. He visits her night after night to make her fall in love and he instills the thoughts of lust in her. This recurrent visit of Dracula forms the duplication which is one of the ingredients in the uncanny representation in literature.

The state of confusion is one of the relevant ideas in the uncanny representation. In the text, there are numerous articles, journal entries and letters about the emergence of Dracula in England. The narrating documents are written or recorded by different characters and this creates a sense of disbelief as people find it difficult to trust the presence of a mysterious monster in England. Each source of information narrates the presence and witness of Dracula and this creates a delay in the thread of continuous narration. Since the major characters do not come in contact with Dracula due to his concealed identity, they remain in a state of confusion. Holmwood, Dr. John Seward and Quincey wait for an adequate explanation to connect the dots. It was Van Helsing who believed that Dracula was present and he was seducing and picking victims already. Van Helsing explains in the book "It is the fault of our science that it wants to explain all; and if it explains not, then it says there is nothing to explain" (Stoker 203).

Multi-perspectivity is another technique used in novels where the focal character does not have access to information to what readers know or sometimes they know only a bit of information. Bram Stoker used this technique to Lucy and Mina where the focal characters are unaware of the things happening to them. This creates uncanniness as there will be none to offer any solution to the problems or tensions created in the novel. Lucy is unaware of what is happening to her and soon she loses her sleep. Sleep is an important routine in human life and Lucy loses it due to sleepwalking. Mina followed Lucy and found her having illicit moments in the garden with Dracula who was in the form of a wolf. The feeling of uncanny begins when Lucy starts sleepwalking or when Dracula calls her in the night through nightmares and so on. Mina finds it to be strange watching her sleepwalking and seducing a wolf but then she is unable to provide any solution. The uncanniness intensifies till the death of Lucy.

The duplication of Lucy takes place once she is dead and buried in a coffin. The uncanniness intensifies when the undead Lucy turns up from her coffin. Luckily, Van Helsing and his team were there to put her down forever. The undead Lucy dressed like a bride looked exactly like her. The only difference was her eyes which Stoker records, "Lucy's eyes in form and colour; but Lucy's eyes unclean and full of hell-fire, instead of the pure, gentle orbs we knew" (Stoker 221). When the men saw Lucy, they were terrified to see her lifeless but filled with bloodthirst. The violent reaction of Lucy made them aware that Lucy's soul was gone and it was the monster who was ready to find a few more victims. Mercilessly, Van Helsing killed her and placed a few cloves of garlics as a safety measure. The duplication of Lucy was clear when she entered the tomb clutching a child depicting that her motherly instincts died as she was one among the vampires.

Even writing is used as one of the tools in the novel where the team of Van Helsing discover the uncanny confusion that prevailed in England. Stoker states in the novel, "How these papers have been placed in sequence will be made manifest in the reading of them" (Stoker 28). In the opening pages it is revealed from the narration that the narration style will move back and forth. It was Bernstein (2007) who mentioned, "the uncanny cripples speech as the narrative staggers and stumbles, trips over itself…breaks up language, leaving material remnants, in the presence of the strange" (206). This shows that the entries made in the diary and letter by the major characters like Jonathan Harker and Mina prove to be useful as they throw light and clear the air of confusion. The submerged information which creates fear and agony gets cleared as they read the writings and inscriptions of prominent characters.

Apart from clearing the doubts, writing was initially used as a refuge for the character who suffered due to the uncanny. It was Jonathan Harker who entered the castle of Count Dracula all alone without any prior information or warning from the organization he worked for. Jonathan Harker before entering Transylvania tried to research a bit about the place as he wanted to become familiar with it. Even the British Museum withholds limited information and conceals which instils a sense of fear in the protagonist. He was aware of the geographical and anthropological history but not the horrors in the castle. The hell broke loose when he entered the estate of Dracula. There was deficiency of information and with that, he entered an arena which was unknown even to the locals in the town.

The readers immediately realize the dangers lurking in the surroundings of the castle. Right from the appearance of the host to the howling of a wolf, the hooting of owls and mysterious sounds were faithfully recorded in his journal. The inscriptions clearly reflect the bestial features and this was later read by the crew who confirmed that it was a vampire. Harker did not expose his fear outwardly

instead recorded the sharp teeth, protruding fingers, nails, a nauseating smell and so on. Dr. Seward found that the writings were once mentioned by Van Helsing who, "told me of a diary kept by Jonathan Harker when abroad, and gave me a typewritten copy of it, as also of Mrs. Harker's diary at Whitby. 'take these,' he said, 'and study them well. When I have returned you will be master of all the facts, and we can better enter into our inquisition" (Stoker 228).

Even the writings of Mina prove to be useful she used to read the news printed in two prominent newspapers at that time and she wrote about it in the letters to Jonathan. She understood that things began to turn bad when Count Dracula entered Whitby. Mina soon finds the connections but unfortunately falls prey to Dracula. Mina was clear that a mysterious monster was ruining the lives of innocent women and children in England. Only after Lucy's death, does she find the truth but was unable to resist the temptation of Dracula. Mina who was chaste and loyal was tempted by Dracula which shows the evil powers of the vampire who has renounced God. The typewriter of Mina has communicated more than enough to fill the gaps while there was an argument arising about the true identity of Count Dracula. Only with the help of these writings, the characters combat the uncanny and prepare themselves for the final battle against evil.

On deeper analysis, it is evident that it was Lucy's sexuality and interest in sex which made her weak. This made her an easy prey for Dracula thereby becoming the first victim in London. If she was strong in faith and renounced her unchaste ways after her betrothal to a respected gentleman she would have been saved. Even Harper found it difficult to resist the temptation when he was tempted by the brides of Count Dracula. It depicts the darkness that existed in his mind which made him forget Mina for a split second and yield to temptation. Mina was unable to resist Count Dracula and she began to turn against her own teammates. In the end, when she was chastised with the help of the cross and holy signs she turned towards God and finally helped to put an end to the life of Count Dracula. These are some of the uncanny present in everyone that scares or creates confusion among the civilized as well.

Therefore, the uncanny in popular Gothic literature presents a story that has shaped the understanding of the fear of unknown or unfamiliar things. This Gothic literature provides a platform to explore societal fears, the human psyche, the dark side of mankind and so on. Gothic literature utilizes these elements for aesthetic content and at the same time intends to drive home a lesson. Likewise, the work of Bram Stoker chosen for study still possesses a solid impact on the popular culture of the vampire genre. There are many Tv and series adaptations based on this fictitious narrative. *Dracula* is often considered a masterpiece of Gothic literature thereby becoming a touchstone for the horror genre overall.

Thus, the idea of occurrence of the uncanny in Bram Stoker's *Dracula* is where the covert becomes overt through which the darker side of human civilization is addressed. The title of the novel is based on the uncanny itself which provides a space for examination in order to recognize or uncover something that has been known for a long time. The paper successfully highlights the uncanny explorations in the novel chosen for study and proves the different way the writer challenges the concept of perception, identity, morality and existence.

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# Modern Food practices: A wolf in sheep skin – The uncanny valley of food with instances from fiction

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## ABSTRACT

"So long as you have food in your mouth you have solved all questions for the time being."

This famous quotation by the Bohemian novelist and short-story writer, Franz Kafka points to how a so-called mundane element of food plays an important role in a person's everyday life. Food was one of the major factors which caused the human civilization to flourish at a tremendous pace and has always been a connecting agent between humans and nature. The earth gave us what we needed and for long, there has been a harmony between the human world and nature. However, with over-the-top advancements in technologies, food has been slowly dragged away from nature and this is where we can apply the concept of uncanny valley. The concept of the uncanny valley with humanoid robots or androids and the audio-visual stimulations closely resembling humans, but not quite convincingly realistic evokes a kind of unsettling feeling in us and can be applied to study the rise of artificial and synthetic food. The rise of synthetic food has taken mankind away from the natural or real food and has cut off our connection with nature. We are approaching a time when most of our food no longer comes from farms,dairy barns etc; instead, they come from the sterilized labs of biotech companies. We are eating food-like substances that are almost, but not quite, real food. In the same way that robotics and AI scientists are attempting to mimic real humans with human like robots, many food biotech companies are attempting to mimic real food with food like substances. Before the 20th century, almost all food we ate were natural and minimally produced. Apart from the stored grains and a few preserved food products, the plants and meat we consumed were more or less recently alive and from natural environment. As we reached the early 20th century, humans started including synthetic vitamins and minerals in the natural food to bridge the nutrient deficiency gaps. However, this tinkering got a little too far and by the mid-20th century, the revolution of processed food began and this marks our entry in the uncanny valley of food. More and more of what we began to eat came from bags, boxes etc and not from farms and pastures. Things like margarine instead of butter, plant-based meat instead of actual meat etc have taken over the natural food. Now, synthetic ingredients that were not a part of the human diet are made to fold and shape into things that resemble the traditional food. In short, these synthetic foods have become the silent conquerors of naturally grown items and have thus dragged mankind into the uncanny valley.
**Keywords :** Artificial food, Uncanny Valley, Food culture, Science Fiction, Artificial Intelligence.

## INTRODUCTION

"So long as you have food in your mouth you have solved all questions for the time being."

This famous quotation by the Bohemian novelist and short-story writer, Franz Kafka points to how a so-called mundane element of food plays an important role in a person's everyday life. Food has been a part of life since the beginning of time, the only change being the advancements in the techniques of food making, recipes, availability of raw materials etc.

Food was one of the major factors which caused the human civilization to flourish at a tremendous pace. Food has always been a connecting agent between humans and nature and it symbolized the hard work and efforts humans out in growing and preparing food. The earth gave us what we needed and for long, there has been a harmony between the human world and nature. Animals, humans, and nature have always lived in interconnected, symbiotic relationships which in turn regenerate all systems that support life. This synergy is vital to the renewal of soil fertility, the creation of habitat for biodiversity, and the rejuvenation of Earth's water, carbon, and nutrient cycles.

The story of human evolution itself is largely a story of adjustments brought about by using different modes of food processing. Bipedalism, the fact that hominids walk on two feet, is thought to be the result of the need to move faster and see farther when hominids began to move onto the plains and catch larger animals or escape from predators. We see that the initial cultural adjustments associated with food seemed approximately 2.5 to at least 1.5million years in the past with the start of the era of Homo habilis. They are thought to have made a transition from a diet comprised primarily of unprocessed plant food to a greater amount of meat in the Pleistocene era, about 1.5 million years ago.

From the beginning and up to the Neolithic Period, approximately 10,000 years ago, man was a nomad who lived by hunting and picking wild fruits and vegetables. Cooking can be traced back as the first major food revolution and it has proved itself to being very essential in our becoming human. The advent of cooking with fire brought about major changes in the food habits of people and this led to many food items such as meat, starches, and wild grasses more digestible. During the Neolithic Age, man's eating habit changed. Animal breeding allowed man to continue to have meat to eat, while the development of agriculture let him plant his own food and produce cereals, vegetables and fruit. Progressing to the Middle Ages, we observe that cereals continued to remain the most important staple. During the 17th century, meals included pork, beef, lamb, fish, shellfish, chicken, corn, beans and vegetables, fruits, and numerous baked goods. Moving on to the 18th Century, we see that innovative farmers experimented with new techniques to increase yield and looked into new products such as hops, oilseed rape, artificial grasses, vegetables, fruit, dairy foods, commercial poultry, rabbits, and freshwater fish. Entering the 19th Century, Food culture underwent fundamental changes, thanks to a second industrial revolution and a second wave of imperialism. The arrival of electricity made it possible for people to preserve food in fridges. Thus, freezing food became a landmark of the 1880s. Later developments paved way for canning and pasteurization. Food Imperialism came to the World as a boon. Manufacturers of food in the industrialized nations now wanted two things: new markets to sell their mass-produced goods like processed food items and raw materials. In this process of mass production, they destroyed traditional foodways.

As we trace this evolution of foodways and the food culture, we can see how the growing developments in technology and science took their toll on the traditional food. Passing time saw over-the-top advancements in technology and industrialization, resulting in food being slowly dragged away from nature. This is where we can apply the concept of uncanny valley.

The concept of the uncanny valley describes the relationship between the human life appearance of a robotic object and the emotional response that it evokes in humans. The humanoid robots or androids and the audio-visual stimulations closely resembling humans, but not quite convincingly realistic evokes a kind of revulsion and unsettling feeling in us. But with the passing time and technological advancements, humans themselves pave way for the development of such unnatural and artificial intelligence that may pose harm to our kind in future.

Applying the concept of the uncanny valley to food is a creative and metaphorical extension. In the context of food, we use the term to describe dishes or food products that mimic the appearance of familiar, traditional foods but fall short in terms of taste, texture, or overall experience. The rise of artificial and synthetic food becomes the biggest example of this uncanny valley of food in todays' world. The rise of such synthetic food has taken mankind away from the natural or the real food and has thus cut off our connection with nature. We are approaching a time when most of our food no longer comes from farms, coops, dairy barns etc; instead, they come from the sterilized labs of biotech companies. Thus, we have reached a point in life where our food has got in the uncanny valley. We are eating food like substances that are almost, but not quite, real food. In the same way that robotics and AI scientists are attempting to mimic real humans with human like robots, many food biotech companies are attempting to mimic real food with food like substances which could be considered akin to synthetic food. This could lead to a sense of unease or disappointment because the food doesn't live up to the expectations set by its visual resemblance to a more authentic counterpart. The visual similarity can create a discomfort just like the uncanny valley effect in robotics and animation.

Even after these discomforting experience

from synthetic or artificial food, the need for such food and the reason for growing popularity rises from the concern of limited food supply that is being exacerbated by problems such as climate crisis, environmental imbalance, limited space availability etc. Although the wave of synthetic food started as a form of sustainable alternative to naturally grown food, this has started to raise questions on the ethical impact these have on the environment and human health. Synthetic food items are those created artificially in controlled laboratory conditions, rather than through the traditional natural means and these are produced in such a way as to imitate the characteristics of natural food including the appearance, taste, smell, texture etc. The main concern owes to the use of heavy metals, artificial preservatives, food colouring etc which could be very harmful to human health in the long run.

Before the 20th century, almost all food we ate were natural and minimally produced. Apart from the stored grains and a few preserved food products, the plants and meat we consumed were more or less recently alive and from natural environment. A large chunk of the population lived in farms and obesity was unpopular. As we reached the early 20th century, synthetic vitamins and minerals were discovered and humans started including those in the natural food to bridge the nutrient deficiency gaps like iodine in salt, Vitamin D in milk etc. However, this tinkering got a little too far and by the mid-20th century, the revolution of processed food began. More and more of what we began to eat came from bags, bottles, boxes etc and not from farms and pastures. Things like margarines instead of butter, plant-based meat instead of actual meat, milk powder instead of milk etc have taken over the natural food.

The accelerated demand for packaged food has paved way for further experimenting in the biotechnology sector and has given rise to advanced food production technologies that mint out large quantities of artificial food. While these foods owing to their high shelf life offer more convenience, they are less nutritive due to the high levels of sodium, fats, and other unhealthy ingredients. They lack the essential nutrients that could be otherwise gained in a naturally produced food, and therefore, these synthetic alternatives should further be infused with artificial nutrient supplements which further causes more harm.

Companies like Impossible, Beyond Meat, Mosa Meat, Upside Foods etc. have come up with products like Shrimp made of algae, Impossible veggie meat burger, Vegan cheese, Plant-based meat alternatives, Lab-grown meat, Dairy and Cheese alternatives etc. which are far cry from natural food. Impossible Foods even went on to become the first company to produce plant-based burger that bleeds in an attempt to create an illusion of actual meat. This is the example to which technology has taken over the natural aspect of food and how it exercises the uncanny valley. The extremity of this starts to create an eerie feeling within us about how these synthetically produced foods can appear so real when in fact, they are artificial.

Instances of such synthetic food has appeared in many works of literature, mostly science fiction and it makes us think about what the condition of human health and environment would be in the years to come. Here, I would like to bring in a reference to appearance of such synthetic food in Margaret Atwood's novel *Oryx and Crake*, Roald Dahl's novel *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* and Harry Harrison's novel *Make Room! Make Room!*.

Starting with the first text for study, Oryx and Crake is a dystopian novel penned by the Canadian author Margaret Atwood in the year 2003. This is the first book in her trilogy named *MaddAddam.* The novel gives a compelling vision of the future and takes us through a journey from the lush wilderness to a phase where powerful corporations have taken over mankind using uncontrollable genetic engineering. This cannot be called a science fiction because Margaret Atwood does not present anything new that we have not seen, rather she projects a near future that seems too familiar yet beyond our imagination. We could say that Atwood, through this novel was prophesying that humans would one day make synthetic meat in laboratories and science experiments.

> "This is the latest," said Crake. What they were looking at was a large bulblike object that seemed to be covered with stippled whitish-yellow skin. Out of it came twenty thick fleshy tubes, and at the end of each tube another bulb was growing.
> "What the hell is it?" said Jimmy.
> "Those are chickens," said Crake. "Chicken parts. Just the breasts, on this one. They've got ones that specialize in drumsticks too, twelve to a growth unit."
> "But there aren't any heads," said Jimmy. He grasped the concept– but this thing was going too far . . .
> "That's the head in the middle," said the woman. "There's a mouth opening at the top, they dump nutrients in there. No eyes or beak or anything, they don't need those."
> "This is horrible," said Jimmy. The thing was a nightmare. It was like an animal-protein tuber. (202)

This excerpt from the novel gives the perfect picture of what too much technological advancements in the field of food production could

look like in the near future. Here, we see the characters being terrified of the "latest" invention called the ChickieNobs' Buckets O' Nubbins, which are headless chickens genetically engineering to give only chicken drumsticks and breasts.

> "No need for added growth hormones," said the woman, "the high growth rate's built in. You get chicken breasts in two weeks-- that's a three-week improvement on the most efficient low-light, high-density chicken farming operation so far devised. And the animal-welfare freaks won't be able to say a word, because this thing feels no pain." (203)

The genetic engineering company does not stop at creating such hideous version of a hen, but they go on to create these creatures where they don't feel pain. This raises the question as to whether these creatures are living or artificial. In the novel, Jimmy who clearly appears sceptical of this creation, falls into the trend of synthetic food and gets used to eating these fried ChickieNobs', that at a point where he has the opportunity to eat a real chicken, he dislikes it and call the meat "wild" and goes on to say that the real chicken has tofu like texture. He seems to prefer the genetically created fake Chicken meat over the real one.

There are further references to such synthetically produced food items through out the course of the novel. Some of them are "Sveltana No-Meat Cocktail Sausages" and "SoyOBoy" sardines. The food appearing throughout the novel has been classified as natural and artificial, with the artificially generated food taking the higher toll. The abundance of artificial foods and the shortage of real food epitomise the world presented in this novel. Margaret Atwood paints a very disheartening and pessimistic picture of a futuristic or rather a possible current food industry, and even genetically modified food. Thus, in this novel, Atwood paints the picture of a world where science and genetic engineering has gone too far. In her world, food has become something synthetic and plastic manufactured by men in lab coats; a far cry from the naturally farm cultivated produce.

Moving on to the next novel, Charlie and the Chocolate Factory is a children's fiction written by Roald Dahl in 1964. This novel has images of fantastic and magical food items that would catch the curiosity and attention of children and adults alike. However, if we look closely into the nature of all the food items portrayed in the novel, none of them seem to originate from a natural source. Every fantastical food item presented in this novel ranging from "Everlasting gobstoppers", "Lickable wallpaper" to "Three course meal chewing gum", are a far way from the natural chocolate or sugar candies.

> This piece of gum I've just made happens to be tomato soup, roast beef, and blueberry pie, but you can have almost anything you want!(96)

Even though these innovative food imageries are presented in the novel, we come to realise that none of these are or could be naturally produced. These items are products of synthetic food processing. For instance, a chewing gum that gives an experience of a complete three course meals sounds very tempting and this concept has been taken up by many food biotechnological companies in the present to come up with a similar product, which would enable consumers such as ourselves to carry portable meals in our bags. Inspired by this gum, food architects Bompass and Parr, who specialize in creating food art using gelatine, began working on gum that could release different flavours one at a time and succeeded in inventing gum that could change flavours. They achieved this by the use of a synthetically produced substance called the colloidosome. These colloidosomes are nano capsules and these encase artificial flavouring substances that release only at the desired times. The invention of these colloidosomes have brought in the trend of the much popular boba tea or the bubble tea. The natural tapioca pearls that are typically used in a bubble tea have been elevated to bursting boba pearls with each pearl having a filling of your desired flavour that would burst in your mouth after a desired chewing time. All these innovations impress the generation of today and have started to slowly take over the natural food products. In other words, we could say that Roald Dahl, in this work manifested what would happen to the food industry in the 21st century. As each day pass, innovations in food industry keep popping up and we move one step away from the natural food, which in turn will have an impact on the environmental balance in the long run.

The final work to bring in reference about the plight of the world run by synthetic food is the sci-fi novel *Make Room! Make Room!* written by Harry Harrison in 1966. The story is set in a far future city that is very over populated and no resources to feed the entire population. This brings them to a state where the only food available to the people is something called the "soylent", made of soy and lentils. The film version of this novel went to the next level of artificial regenerating by presenting the only remaining main global food stuff as dead humans being processed to be sold as biscuits. This just shows what the world would come to if the current rate of artificial food production keeps going. This novel has given inspiration for the start up of a company called

Soylent in 2013 by a group of Silicon Valley engineers in an attempt to cut the money, time and effort put into preparing food. These engineers designed a solution that solved their issues and came up with a food source that was healthy, cheap, efficient and accessible. This experimentation gave life to a drink that could act as complete meal replacements in a person's diet providing them with carbs, fat, protein, fibre and essential micronutrients in a 400-calorie drink. This again took the food habits of people away from the natural way a human being was programmed by nature.

All these point to that fact that a parallel or alternative paradigm is being created where traditional natural produce and food are being replaced by the technologically generated and fabricated food. This might seem to be a solution to the present scarcity food to feed the entire population, but in the long run, this is going to cause drastic deterioration in the health of generations to come.

To support my statement, I present a short interview taken of Chef Bhushan Ingle, Sous Chef at The George in Rye, a medieval hotel dating back to 1575 located in East Sussex, England. He was asked about his take on the rise of technologically generated synthetic food and the decline of naturally grown food; and how this would impact the environment and human health.

> As a working professional handling food and serving people, it's very important that I procure and deliver the best quality food to the guests. However, as the population is increasing and there are too many people to feed, it's sad but the reality is that many companies will come up with synthetic food alternatives. It has its share in the food industry but definitely not going to be a mainstream option for professionals in the food industry. Synthetic food alternatives such as meatless burgers or vegan alternatives in my opinion are not worth the effort to save the environment. The environment still has to pay the price for these alternatives and I am sure these companies are not giving back to the environment to counter balance the impact which is similar to existing systems as far as the food industry is considered globally. As far as health is concerned, these synthetic food alternatives and many vegan products consist of many stabilizers and chemicals or taste enhancers that are not necessarily required by the human body in the first place.

When asked about how we could come out of this uncanny valley of food created by technological advancements, he said that it is very important to educate the people about local produce and make them connected with products which are possible to produce locally, which should include seasonality to go with nature in some way to have a more sustainable environment with lesser carbon footprint. As a chef, he also feels that as a counter alternative to the existing food system and upcoming synthetic food, any local and famous restaurant or any upcoming chef restaurateur should own a farm to raise at least basic staple products or even a very seasonal niche local product(s) which can help the environment as well as create awareness amongst locals and brings a sense of pride along with accountability to the restaurant.

I also present the opinion of another working profession from the food industry. Chef Rizwan Yargatti, is the Head of Culinary Arts Department at Symbiosis International University, Pune and is of the opinion that the debate about synthetic food needs to be taken into consideration. He says that people should ask themselves whether these lab-grown food is really going to solve issues of sustainability and food scarcity. According to him,

> It is quite evident that our ancestors lived a much healthier life. They ate everything, provided it was seasonal, healthy and nutritious. Also, they were more physically active, thanks to their farming and other natural means of food production.
>
> The food choices that are forced upon the present generation are driven by economical greed and false marketing. This is in turn leading to generational decline in public health.

He says that synthetic food is not the real long-term solution and that it is high time that people change their choices and lifestyle as it is the need of the hour and the right thing to do.

We have now entered a maze of uncanny food and are stuck there due to capitalism and other factors. We are under false consciousness that the artificially developed food is doing goof to people as well as the environment. But, does not seem to be the case in reality. We have come as far as 3D printing of food which is still at its infancy. In short, these synthetic foods have become the silent conquerors of naturally grown items and have thus dragged mankind into the uncanny valley. If this issue of synthetic food in not looked upon with seriousness, these advancements could go out of hand and a few years in, we would be looking at a generation for whom natural food is just a myth.

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# Uncanny Explorations :Evolving Representations of Female Monstrosity

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## ABSTRACT

History has often been dominated by male influences due to which portrayals of women frequently emerge as an 'other', where the norm is the masculine. When these women confront established hierarchies they become anomalous, deserving punishment . These women are uncanny, obscure and terrifying, daring to challenge the status quo; they become monstrous. Portrayals of female monstrosity have existed across the span of history, both in mythology and in contemporary media. It is through these depictions that one can gauge the changing perceptions of female agency and societal norms and expectations, as there is no better medium than storytelling that depicts the changing landscapes of human experience. This paper aims to trace the evolution of the female monster through mythological stories of the Medusa and Lilith, the myth of the vagina dentata, and the more contemporary depictions of Junji Ito's Tomie and Satoshi Kon's Mima. It is a study in understanding why these changes might have happened and what they represent.

**Keywords:** Female monstrosity, status quo, changing perceptions, female agency, mythological stories, contemporary depictions

## INTRODUCTION

My bride's breath soured, stank
in the grey bags of my lungs.
I'm foul mouthed now, foul tongued,
yellow fanged.
There are bullet tears in my eyes.
Are you terrified?

Be terrified.
It's you I love,
perfect man, Greek God, my own;
but I know you'll go, betray me, stray
from home.
So better be for me if you were stone (Duffy, 2015)

According to Ernst Jentsch, a German Psychiatrist, who was one of the first to explore the realm of the Uncanny, it is that which is familiar and unfamiliar, almost human in its sensibilities but not quite. Derived from the German word '*unheimlich*' which means not of the home, it describes the alien, the other, the almost. In historical contexts dominated by male influence, the portrayals of women often emerge as an 'other,' as these women challenge established hierarchies.

This portrayal of the female figure transcends traditional societal boundaries, she defies status quo, flaunts desires, unveils the hidden. If she is not a monster she is 'mentally ill'. It is through studying these portrayals of the anomalous feminine and female monstrosity that one is able to understand changing perceptions through time. From the mythological Medusa and Lilith to Junji Ito's Tomie and Satoshi Kon's Mima, the exploration of uncanny

women reveals shifting moralities and power dynamics.

**Literature Review**

In Barbara Creed's book The Monstrous-Feminine: Film, Feminism, Psychoanalysis (1993) she explores representation of women in horror films as well as the intersection of gender, sexuality, and monstrosity in cinema mainly through a psychoanalytic gaze, with a focus on Freud's Oedipus complex, and a fear of the feminine being rooted in fear of castration.

Both Felman and Showalter explore the historical intersection of gender and mental illness. Showalter describes madness as a coping mechanism to the pressures of society stating "Madness itself became intelligible as a strategy, a form of communication in response to the contradictory messages and demands about femininity women faced in patriarchal society." (Showalter, 1987, p. 222)

Both Ernst Jentsch and Sigmund Freud have written seminal works on the Uncanny with differing opinions. Jentsch in his essay titled "On the Psychology of the Uncanny" or "Zur Psychologie des Unheimlichen" (1906) describes the uncanny as not of the home, that is something which is almost but not quite human, bizarre and spine chilling, which could also be evoked by episodes of madness where one is unable to distinguish between reality and fiction. Freud on the other hand, although greatly influenced by Jentsch, links the fear of the uncanny to the childhood fear of bodily injury, mainly castration, drawing from his psychoanalytic theory. He also examines the double as another example of uncanniness, someone who looks just like you but isn't you ( Freud, 1919). Both authors use Hoffman's The Sandman as examples to explain this phenomenon.

**Discussion**

History and fiction are littered with depictions of monstrous women. That is not to say that the male monster does not exist, but that women are often turned into demonic creatures as punishment as opposed to being born in that flesh. This archetype is introduced to pose a lesson and a threat to women and also reveals the inherent perception that the abhorrent is just hidden from sight. The Medusa can be classified as one of the earliest examples of the demonic female. The story of Medusa is a well-known Greek myth that first began circulation in the 7th century BC. She is mentioned in the final section of the fourth chapter of Ovid's Metamorphosis and described by ancient poets Homer and Hesiod in the eighth century BC. She is punished by Athena for her dalliance with Poseidon in her temple, turning her into a grotesque monster with hair of writhing serpents and boar tusks as teeth, while Poseidon suffers no such consequence. She lives in isolation as her gaze can turn the onlooker into stone. Only those who seek her out suffer this consequence. When the hero Perseus kills her it is in her sleep, allowing her no defence against the intruder in her home.

She is a cautionary tale against promiscuity, immortalised in this warped form. Creed presents the psychoanalytic idea that Medusa's head is a representation of female genitalia which puts a fear in the hearts of men as they do not understand this female sexuality as they are confronted with a possibility of castration. By cutting her head off the male is essentially castrating her eliminating this unknown fear.

> Medusa's head takes the place of a representation of the female genitals, we can see that the Medusan myth is mediated by a narrative about the difference of female sexuality as a difference which is grounded in monstrousness and which invokes castration anxiety in the male spectator. The sight of the Medusa's head makes the spectator stiff with terror, turns him to stone. (Creed, 1993, p. 16)

A nuanced interpretation of the Medusa myth extends beyond Creed's literal readings of castration anxiety, albeit it holds merit, and delves into deeper socio-cultural implications. This perspective posits that the fear associated with Medusa symbolises a broader apprehension toward female sexuality and autonomy. It suggests that the monstrous portrayal of Medusa serves as a metaphor for the discomfort and emasculation some men may experience when confronted with assertive or empowered women, leading to a narrative that seeks to neutralise or eliminate such assertiveness, thereby preserving traditional gender power dynamics. Medusa isn't the only cautionary tale about female monstrosity employed by the ancients, with Arachne and Echidna among the ranks to name a few

Lilith is another figure in mythology who is excluded and demonised for her refusal to be subservient. From mother goddess to demonic stealer of babies, Lilith's fall from grace is monumental. Lilith's origins can be traced back to Jewish folklore as well as Israelite and pre-Israelite texts. Lilith's creation hearkens back to the advent of Adam and Eve in Genesis 1-3, where she is created as an equal to Adam, unlike Eve who was made from him. She is Adam's first wife, cast out from Eden for refusing to lie below him. She then becomes a demonic existence, mother of all demons and

harbinger of sickness (Carvalho, 2009, pp. 25- 26). Lilith is mentioned in detail in the Alphabet of Ben Sira, an anonymous work from the 7th to the 11th century C.E. This text is attributed to a fictional figure of the same name and is a midrash of the Genesis creation account, which describes Adam's first wife, Lilith, their equal creation, and her demonisation. (Carvalho, 2009, pp. 5- 6). Modern reinterpretations have been more favourable to Lilith as she has become a transformist symbol for Jewish feminist thought (Carvalho, 2009, p ii). Through reclaiming this identity of defiance and proudly wearing the badge of otherness, the Uncanny has been transformed into a badge of honour.

The myth of the vagina dentata is extremely prevalent in many cultures, and unlike Medusa and Lilith it has largely dominated as a problem of the "every- woman", a possible reality. " Despite local variations, the myth generally states that women are terrifying because they have teeth in their vaginas and that the women must be tamed or the teeth somehow removed or softened – usually by a hero figure – before intercourse can safely take place." (Creed, 1993, p. 15). It is often associated with themes of male fears, sexual anxiety, and cautionary tales surrounding sexuality.

It leads back to Freud's "The Uncanny" where the uncanny represents a fear of mutilation and castration, in this case done by the cannibalistic woman. Much like the myth of Lilith, vagina dentata has also been given a more feminist spin. Modern reinterpretations like the 2007 movie *Teeth*, have reshaped vagina dentata as a tool of self protection, castrating those who attempt assault, with only the consenting partner having a safe entry. What many of these modern reinterpretations fail to take into consideration is that the highly invasive nature of self protection is often dehumanising and traumatising. It might be better for some myths to remain in the past.

This delegation of monstrosity is not reserved simply for the fictional woman. Mary Wollstonecraft, an influential figure in the 18th-century Enlightenment era, was a pioneering thinker and writer whose work laid the groundwork for feminist philosophy and women's rights discourse. Her 1792 novel "A Vindication of the Rights of Woman" , is considered a foundational text in feminist philosophy. Upon its conception it was received well, as evidenced by Katha Pollitt's introduction in the 2001 publication of the book. "Contrary to myth Vindication's early reception was largely favourable… better candidates for heaven." (Pollitt, 2001, p. xii).

It is only after pushback from Thomas Taylor, the author of a satirical novel by name "Vindication of the Rights of Brutes", 1792, where he asks "If women have rights, why not animals too?" that public views started to shift. Wollstonecraft's image was completely overturned after her memoir " Memoirs of the Author of A Vindication of the Rights of Women", 1798 was published by her husband Godwin. This account of her personal life revealed the image of a woman who refused to adhere to the moral standards of the time, having a child outside of marriage and not following monogamy. She became a caricature of the ugly, demonic feminist.

The narrative surrounding Mary Wollstonecraft's legacy and public perception posthumously, embodies an uncanny convergence of societal anxieties and gendered expectations, as well as the haste at which they cast out the "other" despite many conducting themselves in the same manner as Wollstonecraft, only away from the public eye. It shows the readiness society has to cast out those who perform actions which it considers 'deviant', mainly those of the fairer sex, for challenging the status quo must not go 'unpunished'. This technique of demonising influential figures is one employed on many women in history, Mary I of England (1516–1558), Catherine the Great (1729–1796), and Marie Antoinette (1755-1793) to name a few.

Junji Ito, a highly acclaimed mangaka from Japan, is renowned for his exceptional contributions to the horror genre in manga. While manga is a highly underestimated medium of storytelling, it exhibits the horror genre exceptionally well, with a detailed narrative as well as grotesque imagery. He is a master of Lovecraftian horror and no one series exhibits it as well as his series Tomie, where she first appeared in 'Tomie' in 1987 and last appeared in 'Tomie Unlimited' in 2011.

The titular character Tomie resembles an Oiwa, a vengeance ghost. The series begins with Tomie, a fifteen year old student, being accidentally murdered by her boyfriend and a teacher she was having an affair with. She is then dismembered and divided into forty two pieces, one for each of her classmates to scatter on the way home. To everyone's horror Tomie returns to school the next day, fully formed and acts like nothing happened. It is then revealed that each of Tomie's body parts had regenerated into a new Tomie. She then torments the men around her, driving them to insanity until they finally hack her into pieces.

A recurring pattern unfolds across the manga series: Tomie's regeneration, ensuing chaos, and eventual demise, often at the hands of those she tormented. Sometimes there are doubles of Tomie as each part of her regenerates into a new being. Every manga ends with catharsis for the reader as Tomie is given the punishment she deserves, justifying the

horror heaped upon her. But is that necessarily true?

Delving deeper into this cycle prompts reflection on culpability. Despite the grotesque vengeance enacted upon her, questions arise regarding Tomie's responsibility for her demise. The narrative intricacies suggest a haunting dichotomy, hinting at latent malevolence within those she encounters. Tomie is canonically a fifteen year old girl. She is constantly preyed upon by older men, verbally and physically abused, and when they finally kill her they justify it by claiming that they were bewitched. Is Tomie responsible for her imminent murder? Or do these "victims" just have something latent inside them ready to boil over at the mere instance of a female slight? This idea is not without merit as in many instances there are good men who refuse her advances or protect her. In one of the stories, titled 'Gathering' (2001) one of the characters Umehara, does not succumb to Tomie's charms and instead tries to protect her from the hoards trying to murder her. Additionally, beyond Tomie being killed by her jilted lovers, she is also exploited posthumously. Parts of her body, her hair, her flesh are sold to sire new offspring. This raises questions as to whether her continuous exploitation and gruesome fate are justifiable or reflective of a deeper societal tendency to project malevolence onto vulnerable females, who might not fit the bill of a 'perfect victim'. She is selfish, rude, emotionless, and unafraid to use sex. She is 'asking for it'. There is no place in society for a victim who is unapologetic and vengeful.

It is through one of the unconsolidated chapters of 'Tomie', 'Tomie Takeover' (2018) that we finally get a glimpse of Tomie's interior; her thoughts and emotions and struggles. When a malicious entity swaps their body with Tomie, they quickly realise that they have a penchant for getting murdered and abused by men. Tomie on the other hand finally gets out of her cycle of abuse with this new male body. The entity is driven mad by living in Tomie's body. It is through this chapter that the reader is finally able to question their biases against Tomie and their readiness to blame her.

Tomie, unlike other monstrous or demonic women, is not grotesque or misshapen. She is considered to be beautiful and perfect. Her aura of uncanniness comes from her almost inanimate nature, expressionless, emotionless even in death. She is almost human, almost real, but not fundamentally so. (Freud, 1919, p. 14). There is also the sense of uncanniness around perfect doubles, of two people who look exactly alike, much like Tomie's duplicates. This is based on primitive beliefs about copies being made to continue the existence of the original, much like the Egyptians who made images of the dead.

> For the "double" was originally an insurance against destruction to the ego, an "energetic denial of the power of death," as Rank says; and probably the "immortal" soul was the first "double" of the body. This invention of doubling as a preservation against extinction has its counterpart in the language of dreams, which is fond of representing castration by a doubling or multiplication of the genital symbol; the same desire spurred on the ancient Egyptians to the art of making images of the dead in some lasting material.
>
> (Freud, 1919, p.9)

The multifaceted layers within the "Tomie" series warrant critical examination, inviting exploration into themes of vengeance, victimhood, and societal attitudes toward female agency and vulnerability. It shows changing societal perceptions towards feminine trauma, being more welcoming to the feminine monster, and acknowledging its power as a coping mechanism. It is a theme that has gained prominence in modern storytelling, as witnessed in movies such as 'Jennifer's Body' (2009) and Carrie (1976).

"Perfect Blue" (1997), a psychological thriller directed by Satoshi Kon and based on Yoshikazu Takeuchi's novel, is a masterclass on the intricate exploration of identity, fame, and the disintegration of reality, dismantling the invasive, autocratic media culture which pervades through every facet of personal life . The film navigates the tumultuous journey of Mima Kirigoe, a young pop idol who in her journey to transition into an acting career, slowly loses herself to weakening mental health and hallucinations, all while being shamed and subjected to threats by her 'beloved' fans who view her as their property. All through this internal struggle and the challenges of surviving in an industry which affords no sympathy, a serial killer targets those around Mima, murdering those who seem to wrong her, her managers who pushed her into filming a rape scene to be taken seriously, a photographer who pressurises her into shooting raunchy photographs whose bloody clothes she finds in her closet. Mima unearths a fansite, Mima's room, where her everyday life is recounted in extreme detail. Amid all this Mima begins to spiral and doubt reality believing she had murdered the people in a dissociative episode. Her reflection dressed in her pop star outfit begins to talk to her claiming to be the real Mima. After she murders her stalker who attempts to rape her, claiming that she is tarnishing the image of the 'real' Mima, she kills him in self defence. Her manager Rumi rescues her and takes her back home. Rumi is then found to be the culprit behind Mima's room and the murders. Rumi believes herself to be 'the pop star Mima' after developing an alter ego. She tries to kill

Mima to redeem her image but she manages to save herself. Rumi is then institutionalised in a mental facility, where Mima visits her.

It is very hard for the viewer to distinguish between reality and hallucination as Kon employs a mosaic of cinematic techniques, nonlinear storytelling, surreal imagery, and thematic symbolism, plunging the audience into Mima's fractured psyche. The film is thematically rich and does not simply rely on its suspense to horrify. It delves into the voyeuristic culture of the media, its obsession, and the price of celebrity in a world that thrives in controlling the mind and bodies of women. Perfect Blue flawlessly balances the juxtaposition of self and the 'idol image' as Mima herself loses this balance. It is a nuanced portrayal of the allure and perils of stardom, a world where identity is fragile in an era dominated by manufactured personas and media manipulation.

Parasocial relationships are taken to the zenith with Mima's fans believing that they have authority and say over what she does with her body. Little has changed since the public tarnishing of Mary Wollstonecraft's image, with Mima still being shamed for wanting to shed her innocent persona by trying more sexual scenes. At the same time her body is commodified with her acting manager's insistence that she shoot a rape scene. Since the beginning of time a woman's identity has been reduced to her virginity and purity. Mima must allow this scene of violence to be shot for her to be taken seriously. Her acting skills deserve no merit. She is driven to psychosis and hallucinations by those around her. Mental illness and hallucinations are the perfect uncanny as these episodes create a rift between reality and what is being experienced. (Jentsch, 1906)

Mima is framed from a distance in almost every scene, even in the privacy of her own home, as though an invisible voyeuristic viewer is intruding on every scene. It is claustrophobic and stifling. Mima is constantly looking at mirrors and reflective surfaces righting her appearance for this invisible viewer, and it is in these mirrors that she sees the 'idol Mima' who haunts her. The image of what Mima should be. It is only at the end of the film that the gaze shifts. Mima looks through the rearview mirror of the car mirror at the viewer " I am the real Mima Kirigoe." Mima represents a new modern fear of replacement, not by another entity but by a complete replacement of our character, wearing masks to become what's desirable, where eventually one forgets what we once were.

The character of Rumi is a tragic one, she is a victim to societal standards of beauty, rewarding those aesthetic. A woman must be perfect in form and temperament to satisfy the male audience who pervade the everyday. Her descent into madness is no surprise when she is enveloped in an industry that flatters the pretty. She is terrifying in her delusions not because she looks repulsive, but that she is completely immersed in this false reality, so much so that she sucks others in. Female madness as Shoshana Felman puts it is "quite the opposite of rebellion. Madness is the impasse confronting those whom cultural conditioning has deprived of the very means of protest or self-affirmation." ( Felman, 1993, p. 21)

**Conclusion**

The portrayals of Female monstrosity from ancient mythology to contemporary media reflect the ever changing socio-cultural norms and social anxieties, intertwined with patriarchal mandates of a society that is still largely apprehensive about female autonomy and agency. There is no better medium than storytelling that presents the landscape of human perceptions and experiences. It is often through explorations of female monstrosity that one is able to track the changing social fabrics and standards. The uncanny woman is often burdened with the disdain and fear of society at large who degrade any expression of self that differs from the norm, punishing her, much like the Medusa who represents the fallen woman, deviant and perverted. The monstrous woman, unlike the monstrous man, is 'turned' for her sins, as opposed to being born in that flesh. She serves as warning against those who dare to defy the social order.

This narrative has changed a bit in modern times with women wearing the title of uncanny and monstrous feminine as armour against those who wrong her. Tomie is a perfect example of the modern feminine monster, wrecking vengeance on the predators and exploitative patriarchy who claim their violence is justified as she does not let their arbitrary social rules bind her. Her form might be punishment for her but she uses it in her defence.

The vagina dentata and Lilith represent that which was once held as a cautionary tale over the heads of women. But has slowly been claimed and transformed into feminist thought. Lilith has become a figure of defiance and protest against the unjust hierarchy that demands submission, and the vagina dentata has become an amulet of protection against violence, as opposed to a demonic trait that must be tamed.

Both Mary Wollstonecraft and Mima from Perfect Blue are examples of the women preyed upon by society for not meeting their standards. Despite being centuries apart, demands for a perfect image never reduce. In the explorations of Mima's psyche and Rumi's mental collapse one sees monsters made by circumstances surrounding them. Either one imagines haunting figures or becomes a monster,

driven to the brink of collapse.

In later portrayals of feminine madness compared to the earlier texts of Medusa and Lilith, there is a tentative shift in the aggressor. While the patriarchy is still the opposing faction, it is not an all-powerful individual but an omniscient force while self-inflicted trauma and inner demons become the focus. It reclaims the power taken away from the monstrous female, lending agency to monstrosity.

Through these monstrous entities one can unravel the layers of social conditioning and biases that govern the 'other' and change the understanding of femininity and autonomy through the diverse spectrum of the human condition.

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# The Uncanny Explorations in Kafka's *"The Trial"* and *"The Castle"*

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## ABSTRACT

Franz Kafka's oeuvre has majorly been an insignia for the uncanny. His exploration of the uncanny delves into the eerie, highly unsettling, and oddly specific human experiences. The experiences of Josef K. and K. in The Trial and The Castle respectively ace the moments in literature where the familiar turns into the unfamiliar, known becomes unknown. In both the novels the ambiguous setting plays a huge role which blurs the differences between reality and imagination. Against the backdrop of the setting, mysterious characters come to play roles defying the norms, harboring unsettling emotions and feelings that somehow mirror the predicament of humans. It is the inherent correlation between absurdity and surrealism in Kafka's work that provokes a sense of the uncanny. This paper will therefore aim to discuss the foreboding sense and the haunting effects that both novels create through their protagonists and their travails.

**Keywords:** Uncanny, Unknown, Human Experiences, Absurdity, Surrealism

## INTRODUCTION

In his article "The Uncanny", Freud (1919) concludes pertinently that "An uncanny experience occurs either when repressed infantile complexes have been revived by some impression or when the primitive beliefs we have surmounted seem once more to be confirmed". The occurrences of the uncanny in fiction happen for both the reasons concluded by Freud. This is further corroborated in most of the works of Kafka. Even profoundly fixated on the novels *The Trial* and *The Castle*. In both novels, the protagonists are on a quest that never helps them reach the known. The reason why Josef K. is charged or is guilty is unknown. It stretches to an extent where he is punished by a horrible death without ever knowing the reason. K.'s predicament in *The Castle* is inscrutable where he is never able to reach the castle.

The setting of the novels plays a huge role in projecting the uncanny with the help of the characters. The human figures and bureaucratic institutions in *The Castle* display supernatural powers. Klamm has many forms and is omniscient, even the castle authorities are omniscient. The same predicament is faced by Josef K. in *The Trial.* The novel is set in a nameless city that is deemed as highly surreal and oppressive in nature. The ambiguity is intentional as well and there is a sufficient lack of details about the time and place of events. Both the protagonists are in societies that are in every sense bureaucratic and totalitarian. The powers that govern these places wield unfathomable authority and can act without providing any rhyme or reason. The setting cements the theme of absurdity and alienation where an individual power is at a loss since the system itself is incomprehensible. This further helps the reader to construe the disorientation present in the story and is also projected in Josef K.'s confusion. The unavailability of a setting multiplies the effect of dislocation and creates a prevailing sense in the minds of the reader that this can happen to anyone at

any point in time. This sense of unease and uncanny helps relate the readers to the confusion and absurdity.

It is an intense way of staging a narrative by Kafka that creates this effect in the reader. K.'s attempt to reach Klamm and Josef K.'s turmoil with the court immediately gives a feeling of strangeness. To most minds, it feels like an absurd dream-like sequence where the goal is always unattainable. Josef K. could have chosen to put an end to the mock court sessions by simply not showing up, but it seems to be an option that Josef never chooses. K. could have also stopped chasing the idea of Klamm and reaching the castle, could have enjoyed his stay in the village but chooses not to do so. The very thought of pursuing something that seems known and not being able to reach it makes it unknown.

Josef K.'s arrest can be easily paralleled with K.'s arrival in the village as a land surveyor. In The Trial Josef K.'s arrest was sudden and unexplained. Josef did not have any idea about the reason for his arrest. One morning ever so suddenly he was arrested without specifying the reason for his arrest. The arrest was completely unceremonious and created a sense of utter disorientation. The immediate thought that erupts is that he is not guilty but is a victim of a lie.

> "Someone must have been telling lies about Josef K., he knew he had done nothing wrong but, one morning, he was arrested" (Kafka 1956)

Josef K.'s utter frustration is identifiable for every morning Mrs. Gruback's cook would bring his breakfast but this morning the cook didn't turn up. The uncanny effect is easily accomplished since the protagonist's privacy is invaded and he is arrested immediately the first thing after he wakes up. The authorities were never properly identified and had the audacity to impose their authority with a total sense of detachment. Josef K. quizzes himself vehemently:

> "What sort of people were these? What were they talking about? What office did they belong to? K. was living in a free country, after all, everywhere was at peace, and all laws were decent and were upheld, who was it who dared accost him in his own home. He was always inclined to take life as lightly as he could, to cross bridges when he came to them, pay no heed for the future, even when everything seemed under threat. But here that did not seem the right thing to do." (Kafka 1956)

It was all the more queer that despite his arrest he was allowed to lead his normal, mundane life. This bizarre situation where the world even his routine life goes unchanged when he is trapped in this enigma prevails a sense of foreboding.

K.'s arrival in the village in Kafka's *The Castle* had the same kind of uncanniness as Josef K.'s arrest. K. arrives at the village as a land surveyor summoned by the castle authorities but the reason for his summoning is completely unknown. When he reaches the village because of the reason of his arrival is unknown he is met with a situation that is completely unsettling for a stranger. His arrival was so upsetting for the people of the village that Schwarzer begged Herr Fritz to enquire the bureau if a land surveyor was really expected.

> "His reply seemed quietly brief for Schwarzer hung up the receiver immediately, crying angrily: "Just what I said! Not a trace of the land surveyor. A common, lying tramp, probably worse." For a moment K. thought that all of them, Schwarzer, the peasants, the landlord, and the landlady, were going to fall upon him." (Kafka 2019)

The miscommunication was however clarified a little later:

> "Although it was improbable that this message also concerned K. they all stopped short and Schwarzer took up the receiver once more. He listened to a fairly long statement, and then said in a low voice : "A mistake, is it? I'm' sorry to hear that. The head of the department himself said so? Very queer, very queer. How am I to explain it all to the Land Surveyor?" (Kafka 2019)

K. did attempt to connect with the villagers about his proposition in the village, but it was immediately thwarted by the people because of their vague and obscure attitude. He was ill-treated in the village almost like a fish out of water. He was unable to follow the norms of the cryptic society adding to the uncanny feeling of an outsider. K. had his expectations regarding the visit, but the indifference of the villagers and the inscrutable bureaucracy put him at unease. In both Josef's K. and K.'s case, there was an assumption about the law and the society respectively but the treatment that both get increases the levels of absurdity.

The legal system in *The Trial* aced the idea of uncanny. It was heavily convoluted, terribly opaque, and impenetrable. The court plied in locations that were mysterious and the proceedings were somewhat esoteric.

> "K. went over to the stairway to get to the room where the hearing was to take place, but then stood still again as besides these steps he could see three other stairway

> entrances, and there also seemed to be a small passageway at the end of the yard leading into a second yard. It irritated him that he had not been given more precise directions to the room, it meant they were either being especially neglectful with him or especially indifferent, and he decided to make that clear to them very loudly and very unambiguously. In the end, he decided to climb up the stairs, his thoughts playing on something that he remembered the policeman, Willem, saying to him; that the court is attracted by the guilt, from which it followed that the courtroom must be on the stairway that K. selected by chance." (Kafka 1956)

Throughout the novel, the reason for the arrest is never known which questions the efficiency and the efficacy of the legal system. The legal system here is symbolic of a Kafkaesque prevalence wherein the accused is charged with a crime without understanding the nature of the crime. The operation of the court was irrational as it functioned without any directive. Even the instructions to the court were so hazy that Josef K. had a hard time locating the court. The legal body always has a moralistic stand in society but in *The Trial,* it stood for a purpose that is abortive and disastrous. The helplessness and alienation that Josef K. faced add up to the hopelessness and uncanny nature of the narrative.

On the other end K.'s travails with the bureaucratic system though different still spewed the same essence as Josef K.'s. The castle authority was unapproachable and impenetrable. They had differentiated themselves from the villagers. The village folks had little to no knowledge about the functioning of the castle authorities which created a disconnect between the authority and those whom they govern. The rules and regulations followed by the castle authorities were ever-changing without any prior notice. None of the procedures met its end, even the promises made by the castle authority were never fruitful. The German name for The Castle was *Der Schloss* which is a homonym for the word 'lock', therefore the title itself signifies an entity that cannot be permeated. When K. reached the village, he could never spot the castle, there wasn't even a glimmer of light in the castle which could have helped him perceive the castle.

> "The Castle hill was hidden, veiled in mist and darkness, nor was there even a glimmer of light to show that a castle was there. On the wooden bridge leading from the main road to the village K. stood for a long time gazing into the illusory emptiness above him." (Kafka 2019)

K. immediately was aware of the emptiness that the castle stood for. It was as if the reality of the place was uncertain. The villagers were also unsure about the authorities governing them. Their affinity toward the authority was severely paradoxical. They feared the authority as well as followed them blindly without even knowing who they were.

Both protagonists face the same culmination, K.'s quest was not fruitful, and Josef K. had a horrible death without knowing his crime. Apart from the uncanniness in the narrative, there was an insurmountable amount of uncanniness in the characteristic of the protagonist. Josef K. was highly passive in nature. He passively accepts his arrest. He blindly complies with the rules without even trying to question the legal system. It is as if innately he carries a guilt within him and believes that he deserves to be punished. Therefore, even if he feels that the legal system is irrational, he tries to find a logical reason for his arrest. His reactions to his travails too were very inconsistent. At times he was completely aloof from his situation and still would be curious about his predicament. At one point he even complained about the agents for asking him a bribe and when the agents were flogged as a punishment, he argued with him to stop the flogging. On the other hand, K.'s nature too had absurdities in them. He kept on relentlessly pursuing the castle and its authorities even though it was impenetrable. The bureaucratic authority itself had worked without any rhyme or reason still K. kept on trying to gain entry. He was also very adaptive to the norms of the village and kept on yielding to their whims and fantasies. His engagement and commitment to the village and the castle were ineffectual and yielded no results. Even after meeting with consistent dead ends, he still had a yearning to deliver as a land surveyor.

Needless to say, even the women in both novels purveyed a sense of surrealism. They were both elusive and enigmatic and appeared at the crux of the moment affecting the protagonist's decision but remain a mystery. The short-term association that Josef K. had with Leni was ambiguous and without any motivation. Almost all relationships with women in Kafka's work were suggestive of symbolism in the face of authority and desire.

The psychological depth of the protagonists also spews the sense of uncanny and absurdity. Both protagonists go through the same inner conflicts and turmoil. Josef K. had constant confusion and paranoia about his situation but did not do much to remove it. He was completely ridden with anxiety while following the legal system. Because of the opaqueness of the system, his internal struggle was multiplied adding up to his anxiety.

"Why was he being punished in this way, and who was it that was punishing him?"

> "He was convinced he had overlooked something, something important, something that would be decisive for the trial."
>
> "His mind was in a whirl; his thoughts raced madly around his head, but they always came back to the same point: 'What am I supposed to do?'" (Kafka 1956)

To add fuel to the fire, he was also alienated from the society. He had a complete disconnect from societal norms contributing to the uncanny. Even his identity in the novel remains an enigma. The decisions he made during his trial were taken without any calculation and just with curiosity. When his uncle tried to help him by fixing a lawyer for his trial, he refused any sort of help. K.'s inner struggle also has a deep-seated psychological effect on him. Even though the reason for his summoning to the castle was unknown he kept on pursuing the castle authorities and the castle. Because he was not able to acquire the norms of the village, he felt like a complete outsider contributing to the inner turmoil and conflicting reactions.

*The Trial* finally ended without any proper absolution. Till the end, he was not clear about the reason for his arrest. He never met the judge who could have resolved his issues. He reached the court which would have helped him understand the nature of his crime. These were the questions that disturbed him during his last breath.

> "Were there objections that had been forgotten? There must have been some. The logic cannot be refuted, but someone who wants to live will not resist it. Where was the judge he'd never seen? Where was the high court he had never reached? He raised both hands and spread out all his fingers.
>
> But the hands of one of the gentlemen were laid on K.'s throat, while the other pushed the knife deep into his heart and twisted it there, twice. As his eyesight failed, K. saw the two gentlemen cheek by cheek, close in front of his face, watching the result. "Like a dog!" he said, it was as if the shame of it should outlive him." (Kafka 1956)

K.'s ending in The Castle was as baffling as Josef K's. The whole plot of The Castle was about K. being summoned to the castle and never being able to reach it. The constant need to validate himself in front of the authorities, to get approval from them was left unattended. Despite his efforts, he stays outside of the bureaucracy. The novel did not even provide a sense of closure and was left open-ended with K.'s death. For the readers, the quest of K. remains unresolved becoming quite unsettling. It goes without saying that for the human mind, something which is incomprehensible is uncanny. Josef K.'s travails mirror human predicament. A life led by humans with regrets and guilt makes us believe that we need to be punished. This existential question of life highly projects the uncanny. Same way the quest of K. can be said as the quest of every human life. Frankly enough not all quests lead to the achievement of a desired goal.

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# Contextualizing the Uncanny Connotations of Death in Ritual Sacrifice: A Study of Wole Soyinka's *Death & the King's Horseman*

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## ABSTRACT

Uncanny in literature articulates even the darkest of the dark and the unfathomable deep when other subjects remain on life's surface of appearance. Amongst them, death as a subject or to discuss it implies the supernatural. The inevitable death becomes a theme of many artists who may choose to motif the mysterious horrors in their works of art. Playwrights like Wole Soyinka remain controversial for this mysterious stand in his drama Death & the King's Horseman. Soyinka terms it as death whereas the colonial presents it as a ritual sacrifice. The reason Soyinka agrees with the nomenclature of death is understandably a natural standpoint a native would take against colonial misrepresentation. However, the incident was real. Soyinka's praiseworthy attempt as a playwright to testify this veracious incident through drama and utilizing the liberty to bring forth the right perspective on this controversial subject. This drama presents a colonial setup, where the 'clash of culture' or strife between the subjugator and subjugated was inevitable, whereas the death of a son in place of a father baffles all triggering eerie questions that no one has attempted to answer yet. Furthermore, to add more fire to the anguished critic, Soyinka himself requested not to consider the drama merely about cultural clash. This paper therefore differentiates itself on the grounds of its uncanniness and attempts to discover its abnormality embedded within the theatrical production.

**Keywords:** Death, Sacrifice, Drama, Colonialism, Uncanny

## INTRODUCTION

The Nigerian Nobel laureate for literature, Wole Soyinka is known to the world for his treatment of unsettling conflicts related to life and death, disturbing confrontations between tradition and modernity, clash of beliefs between natives and colonials, rituals and colonial interventions, and dramatic works that provoke the uncanniness of this physical dimension and the others. In this context, *Death and the King's Horseman* is exemplary concerning its representation of death and life beyond. However, the available critiques of *Death & the King's Horseman* likewise share agreement and relate to Soyinka's drama more as a colonial conflict and not with its metaphysical dimensions. Therefore, the uncanny elements present in this drama need attention and this paper is an attempt in this direction.

Set in Oyo, Nigeria, this drama brings forth a real incident of colonial times. For a non-African reader, this reality may also seem unreal because the incident it represents was unfamiliar to the world beyond Africa. It portrays a character named Elesin Oba, the king's horseman, who accepts to execute ritual suicide as a part of their Yoruba tradition soon after the king's death. However, the Britishers couldn't accept the ritual sacrifice as the natives did and the

officers of the British colony prohibited Elesin from dying while unknowingly interfering with the tradition on a cosmic scale. This conflict paves the way for a new enigmatic situation where the son Olunde replaces his father in the ritual sacrifice and embraces death by slapping a hard lesson that the colonial power would never understand. Who was more justified between the colonizers and the natives? Can there be a justified modernity prescribed by the Britishers that could be imposed upon the natives? These questions and many more remain unanswered for the audience to ponder. Soyinka provokes thoughts of these uncanny questions through these questions over the mysterious morbid ritual practice of death.

This drama matters substantially in the context of African myths rather than reducing it to a conflict between the Colonizers and the Colonized. The essential conflict that Soyinka weaves through remains in death as a motif of this drama. Booth (1988) rightly asserts that the critic's consensus ensures this drama is identified more on metaphysical rather than sociological or historical bases and even argues that the ideals reflected in its fundamental sacrifice rite are African, which is unusual in literature. Booth (1988) opines that,

> "One should not exaggerate Soyinka's insistence on the exclusive Africanness of his theme here. It is the inner, metaphysical quality of the central conflict in Elesin's mind that Soyinka stresses, as much as the Yoruba identity of that mind." (P. 530)

What indulges the readers more in this drama is the notion of death and sacrifice. The captain of the ship sacrifices himself to safeguard his people's lives on earth rather than metaphysical safety, and this can be recognized as a deed done without any act of faith. However, the sacrifice of Olunde is foreshadowed primarily as a religious custom. This dichotomy in sacrifices highlights a motif throughout the play. The white characters' spectrum of notions and sentiments is constantly constrained by practical, secular, and often reductive constraints, whereas the African characters retain domination of the spiritual and metaphysical, both in voice and deed. (Booth, 1988) Olunde, in conversation with Jane, echoes the same:

OLUNDE. Mrs Pilkings, I came home to bury my father. As soon as I heard the news I booked my passage home. In fact we were fortunate. We travelled in the same convoy as your prince, so we had excellent protection.

JANE. But you don't think your father is also entitled to whatever protection is available to him?

OLUNDE. How can I make you understand? He *has* protection. No one can undertake what he does tonight without the deepest protection the mind can conceive. What can you offer him in place of his peace of mind, in place of the honour and veneration of his own people? What would you think of your Prince if he refused to accept the risk of losing his life on this voyage? This … showing-the-flag tour of colonial possessions.

JANE. I see. So it isn't just medicine you studied in England.

OLUNDE. Yet another error into which your people fall. You believe that everything which appears to make sense was learnt from you.

JANE. Not so fast Olunde. You have learnt to argue I can tell that, but I never said you made sense. However clearly you try to put it, it is still a barbaric custom. It is even worse-it's feudal! The king dies and a chieftain must be buried with him. How feudalistic can you get! (Death scene 4)

The mythical nature of the work is consistent with the drama's theme of death. The playwright deliberately chose to give a name to the drama as "Death and the King's Horseman". The drama begins with the celebration of the ritual death, which then leads to further events leading to the ending in death. The "mythical" essence of death, presented through the various dialogues and actions in the play, thus ensures a substantial presence of uncanny throughout the play. The acceptance of death in this drama continues from the drama's title to its setting, plot, and characters' attitudes toward death and ritual suicide.

Character like Olunde, who dies replacing his father Elesin, prefer to bow down and surrender to their death as a duty. Elder Elesin, captured by the Pilking family, was unable to stop his impending death. However, when Olunde sacrifices himself as his junior, representing his society and culture, as his responsibility and not his father's, Elesin follows the same path later. This represents a society with a very strong sense of the value of its beliefs, rituals, and customs. Unlike other social norms and traditions, the Yoruba rituals find human sacrifices to be a common custom in their life. They do not consider death through ritual sacrifice barbaric at all.

Jain (1986) rightly points out that death cannot be viewed as strictly barbarous or civilized because the ritual's inception carries multiple connotations. It must be understood in its correct perspective, which is not that modern civilizations are more "individual" and archaic societies are more "communal," but

rather how society views religion, time, death, and lineage.

This drama actualizes the concept of death to the known readers who associate it with African rituals and represents ritual sacrifices for the unknown readers who do not completely comprehend African customs and traditions. Ojaide (1992) expresses his observations from his practical experiences while teaching *Death and the King's Horseman* to American College students,

> "Students need background materials about the Yoruba people and/or traditional Africa—especially the place of traditional religion in the lives of the people—to give them a gradual induction into the world of the Old Oyo Kingdom in which the play is set. (Showing a feature film on African culture can help with this.) The living and the dead in traditional Africa are closely related, and the social set-up in Africa is such that the community takes precedence over the individual: the sacrifice of an individual for the harmony of the group is traditional in many areas."

This furthers the belief that this drama might be misunderstood as merely a post-colonial representation of a barbaric ritual if the readers do not comprehend the true African belief system in general and Yoruba worldview in particular. Ogundele (1994) also confirms the same and pertinently articulates that a traditional interpretation of the play would confirm Elesin as the only one who isn't dead. This is to see the play just as a ceremonial performance where the protagonist, who is also the celebrant, lets his focus get tragically distracted. Ralph-Bowman (1983) straightforwardly presents the enigmatic aspects of this drama,

> "Death and the King's Horseman is complex and tightly woven and, as one has come to expect from Soyinka, enigmatic. The enigma of this play is not of Soyinka's making, though it is of his choosing. At the heart of this play is a religious mystery. Not that Death and the King's Horseman is a religious treatise but, if one is to ap-preciate the full significance of the consternation caused by Elesin Oba's failure to "commit death" one has to appreciate something of the cosmology fundamental to the play." (P. 82)

However, this drama is much more complex concerning the uncanny aspects of death, life, and even the unborn. Soyinka depicts a society stuck in a life-or-death situation where the Yoruba people could take strange steps to prove what they have believed for years and can readily sacrifice themselves. The steps taken by Yoruba society may be considered regressive by the colonial powers and may appear so to those reading Soyinka for the first time, but for this heroic society, it is a matter of honour. It is also a question of the spiritual and cosmological balance of Yoruba society where the living and the dead both are in harmony. Although the title of the drama is not "The Death of King's Horseman," there is an intentional conjunction "and" that distinguishes King's Horseman's death as a different aspect from a normal demise of a person. There is some significance that Soyinka left behind for the dramatic death of the society, culture, and people who sacrificed their lives to protect what would soon collapse and symbolically sink along with the captain.

At the beginning of the drama, Death is already fixated on Elesin, but he delays it with his options influenced by desires and further, it is delayed by his captivity by the Pilkings. However, towards the end, death is incorporated into the dramatic plot, destroying the present with dark images of an uncertain future as this complex socio-religious ritual of death is not an individual's choice. Olunde's perception of the death of the captain is self-sacrifice, heroic, and honorable. He considers saving other's life as a virtue whereas Jane senses it to be nonsense.

> OLUNDE. I don't find it morbid at all. I find it rather inspiring. It is an affirmative commentary on life.
>
> JANE. What is?
>
> OLUNDE. That captain's self-sacrifice.
>
> JANE. Nonsense. Life should never be thrown deliberately away.
>
> OLUNDE. And the innocent people around the harbour?
>
> JANE. Oh, how does one know? The whole thing was probably exaggerated anyway. (Death scene 4)

Booth (1988) affirms that Soyinka has always loved creating imaginative dynamics by pushing metaphors to their literal and provocative limits. The effects are often great in a theatrical sense, but ultimately vicious. In this case, the playwright's search for a vivid dramatic metaphor for the "universe of the Yoruba mind" may have led him to confuse irreducibly primitive human sacrifice with true African self-sacrifice. According to George (1999), Elesin embodies the collective social and psychological aspirations of the Oyo community in a moment of self-sacrifice. He is the ritual scapegoat who mediates between the worlds of the living, the

dead, and the unborn. By purposefully dying in response to the call of his community, he enters the world of the dead in place of the living and the unborn. His death therefore guarantees a new harmony between his three planes of existence that form the traditional Yoruba cosmic order. Gilbertova (1995) is of the view that this work is essentially a reflection on life and death and the moments and meanings of their transitions. A man full of energy and love for life, Elesin, and his friends talk about the joys and sorrows of life and the fact that the peace of mind that comes from a sense of order in the world is stronger than the desires of earthly life and more than that, the sadness of parting. Ready (1988) opines,

> "A sampling of critical responses to this question discovers for us a play that ends in puzzlement and ambiguity. It seems possible to read the play in such a way that both deaths are meaningless, given the irreversible rupture in Yoruba affairs caused by the British presence at the historical time of the action. Or we can be plunged into the timeless, metaphysical qualities of the drama and consider only whether Elesin and Olunde are true to the one code they call their own." (P. 714)

There is a combination of the physical and spiritual worlds that reflects Yoruba cosmology and beliefs in this drama. Soyinka skillfully intertwines the uncanny elements of ancestral spirits with human greed, Rituals with Sacrifice, dreams with visions, culture with colonialism, and transcendence with the afterlife to weave a perfect dramatic plot that subtly substantiates the African presence over the colonial intervention. These uncanny matters help Soyinka achieve his elusive social mission through this dramatic production.

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# Desire and Survival: A Freudian Analysis of Octavia Butler's Lilith in *Dawn*

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## ABSTRACT

Sigmund Freud's tripartite division of human mind throws more light on human's choices and their actions. Institutions like religion, marriage, sexuality, etc. maintain certain norms that defy the exceptions such as the Others and the Otherness. Science fiction is an apt platform to talk about the concept of the Other. Octavia Butler did use the genre as her tool to comment on racism, slavery, hybridity, environmental crisis, religious oppression and the likes with the literal Other in her works. There are variable Others in her oeuvre - the alien Other, the sexual Other, the becoming Other and so on. *Lilith's Brood* (1987-89) is one of her popular novel series that has gene trade with the aliens as its main trope; the alien Oankali race invade and restore Earth to begin a gene trade with the surviving humans resulting in hybrids and constructs. The series consists of three novels - *Dawn* (1987), *Adulthood Rites* (1988), *Imago* (1989). Lilith Iyapo is the first human to enter into the gene trade with the alien Oankali. The aim of this paper is to anlayse Lilith's choices and actions through the lens of Freudian Id, Ego and Superego to justify her choosing the side of the Oankali and the novel taken for analysis is *Dawn*.

**Keywords:** Octavia Butler, Lilith Iyapo, Dawn, Id, Ego, Superego

## INTRODUCTION

Sigmund Freud's psychoanalytic theory of Id, Ego and Superego throws light on human's personality; of what makes them do certain actions, make certain choices and repress certain feelings. Human's actions are based on their choices and their choices are guided by their desires and aversions. Freud beautifully explained this through the tripartite division of the human mind. Id functions on the pleasure principle, ego on the reality principle and superego on the morality principle. This can be explained through many instances. When a person craves for a candy, the id pushes him or her to eat it immediately, superego reminds them to be cautious of their healthy lifestyle and ego tries to strike a compromise by making them eat in limits so that they do not feel the guilt trip or make them do some sort of coping mechanism to come out of the craving of sweets. This simple yet impactful theory can be applied in many disciplines to understand human actions and their choices. Octavia Butler has authored science fiction novels that revolve around human choices and their actions; though all her novels rely on the concept of posthumanism and critical racism, deep down they all have human choices and actions at the core that alter the fate of the humanity. All her protagonists must make tough choices and ensure the fate of the humanity; and their choices make some sense at times and futile at times. *Dawn* is full of transgressions and trespassing of the boundaries that are known to humans. The protagonist Lilith is in a position to make some tough choices in order to ensure her survival and the survival of humanity. Had she chosen differently, the fate of the humanity

would have been altered too.

In *Dawn*, a group of extraterrestrials called the Oankali invade Earth; they try to restore Earth which was already destroyed in a man-made nuclear war. The Oankali propose a gene trade with the surviving humans to continue their race. For this purpose, they choose Lilith after considerable deliberation to parent the group of humans who would inhabit the restored Earth. Lilith hates the aliens and she does not want to be the one deciding the future of the humanity; but if she refuses, the work will go to some other human and the Oankali are not ready to take that risk. Hence Lilith is chosen to parent the first group of humans that will inhabit the restored Earth. Though it might appear that Lilith is forced to accept her position, she does not agree to the task without her motives.

Human actions and choices revolve around their desires and aversions. The basic theory of Freud is that the Id is the reservoir of pleasures, the Superego is the morality principle that guides the humans and the Ego is the middle point of Id and Superego. Though Lilith's choices and her actions might seem forced to the readers, Lilith has her own designs. Jdahya reveals to Lilith that she has been chosen after serious and thorough consideration by the Oankali; this shocks Lilith as she is terrified of her predicament. If she agrees to the Oankali's plan, she will be trained for the role she has to perform. If she disagrees with them, the Oankali will probably put her to sleep in suspended animation. Lilith does not want to go to oblivion and hence she agrees to try her level best even every cell in her body screams the opposite. This is her id, her desire to survive makes her comply with the Oankali's mission.

Even before the war, Lilith has lost her husband her son in a vehicle accident. Lilith in an attempt to keep her busy and away from grief, plans to continue her college education. She chooses Anthropology as her major and it remains one of the reasons for the Oankali to choose her to parent the humans to be restored on Earth. Though she is repelled by the reproductive process of the Oankali at first, she comes to understand and accept this as a normality. She also realises that she can derive pleasure even if she is not able to enjoy conventional sex with a male. It is because the Oankali have made sure that the humans do not procreate. "Your people called it birth control. You are slightly changed. It was done while you slept, as it was done to all humans at first. It will be undone eventually" (Butler 96). This is one of the reasons why humans hate the Oankali, particularly human men. The human men feel like they are treated like animals, slaves. Since their manhood is striped off, they clearly despise the Oankali for their situation. And the Oankali make a promise of children which also lures Lilith. Since she has lost her own son, Lilith wishes to have kids of her own and this could happen only when she partners in the reproductive process with the Oankali.

The human beings who survived the nuclear attack are isolated in a cell and are continuously questioned by the Oanakali. Most of the survivors are put in suspended animation and the Oankali continue to question the rest. Lilith believes that she is captured by the enemy army or of their own regarding the questioning of the nuclear war. When Jdahya appears in front of her and lays down the purpose of her Awakening, she is baffled. But the glimpse of freedom which she tastes once Jdahya takes her out to explain the Oanakli project to her is enough to convince her to accept Jdahya's proposal. Kahguyaht to Lilith: "Define the relationship in any way that's comfortable to you. We have always called it parenting. . . It's a good thing that you'll be doing. You'll be in a position to help your own people in much the same way you're helping Nikanj now" (Butler 110). And this responsibility of Lilith comes with its own benefits. She becomes a posthuman in the process. Pramod K. Nayar, one of the leading critical theorists of Posthumanism gives the definition of the term as follows:

> 'Posthumanism' on the one hand merely refers to an ontological condition in which many humans now, and increasingly will, live with chemically, surgically, technologically modified bodies and/or in close conjunction (networked) with machines and other organic forms (such as body parts from other life forms through xenotransplantation). (Nayar 3)

Nikanj is partnered with Lilith to teach each other. When Liilth takes much time to learn the Oankali language, Nikanj makes alterations in her brain chemistry to make her remember things better. At first, Lilith protests that it is not right to treat people like that; tampering with their bodies like guinea pigs is not ok with Lilith in the beginning. But Nikanj does it anyway.

"On the back of her neck, she felt the promised touch, a harder pressure, then the puncture. It hurt more than she had expected, but the pain ended quickly. For a few seconds she drifted in painless semiconsciousness" (Butler 78). After this, she speaks Oankali without any difficulty. This makes her understand that there could be an upside to the whole process.

She gains more powers after another human Paul Titus attempts to rape her. Nikanj does not intervene when Paul tries to rape Lilith and Lilith is knocked off unconscious when she tries to protect herself. After this incident, Nikanj further alters her body chemistry so that she can defend herself in any

dangerous or unwanted situation. "She obeyed, touching the fingers of both hands to the wall. The wall indented, then began to open" (Butler 101). This ability makes her almost a posthuman. As the novel progresses, Lilith is able to control her fellow humans also. She is able to raise platforms and open doors with the help of her handprint and when the fellow humans see this, they believe Lilith to be an alien too. All her abilities make her a foe to the humans. "Within the new room, Lilith raised a bed platform, a table platform, and three chair platforms around the table" (Butler 126).

Above all, she learns to take pleasure in the sexual process with the Oankali. The Ooloi, the neuter gendered Oankali, is a mandatory entity for reproduction among the humans; since all the humans are sterilized once they were rescued by the aliens. "An ooloi needed a male and female pair to be able to play its part in reproduction, but it neither needed nor wanted two-way contact between that male and female. Oankali males and females never touched each other sexually. That worked fine for them. It could not possibly work for human beings" (Butler 220).

"The id operates unconsciously, accords with primary process, and impels the organism to engage in need satisfying, tension-reducing activities, which are experienced as pleasure" (Lapsley and Paul 5). This is not explained in the novel until Nikanj meets Joseph, one of the core members of Liilth's group. Though Joseph believes Lilith, he is not able to trust her after Nikanj demonstrates the sexual act in front of him. Jospeh is horrified for the first time but eventually he himself realises that he is not so against the Oankali set up. As Lilith explains him: "Neural stimulation. . . They hook into our nervous systems somehow. They're more sensitive than we are. Anything we feel a little, they feel a lot - and they feel it almost before we're conscious of it. That helps them stop doing anything painful before notice that they've begun" (Butler 169).

Towards the end of the novel, Nikanj makes her pregnant. Lilith is horrified at first; she screams: "It won't be a daughter . . . It will be a thing - not human. . . It's inside me, and it isn't human!" (Butler 246). Nevertheless, she cares for it and begets more in the future too. The above are the instances where Lilith's id is at full display. Be it the moment she realised that she could be more than a normal human being, or that she could beget children from her own body, or that she could save the humanity once and for all, or that she could simply enjoy the pleasure from her unconventional union with the Oankali - all these show that Lilith makes her choices based on her id.

Though Lilith agrees to help the Oankali in their gene trade, she is nevertheless tormented by her consciousness. Her tug-of-war between her consciousness and her desires is evident in her hatred for herself and for the Oankali. She is made to spend a year in a simulation of a tropical forest. After her training, she starts awakening people so that they all can be away from the Oankali at least for a while. "Learn and run!" (Butler 118) becomes the mantra for her survival. Lilith faces many problems with the awakened humans. When a woman named Jean demands meat despite the assertion that the Oankali prefer vegan diet, there comes a problem. "Jean lunged at Lilith, punching, kicking, obviously intending to overwhelm at once. Surprised, but far from overwhelmed, Lilith struck back. Two short, quick jabs. Jean collapsed, unconscious, bleeding from her mouth" (Butler 146). Lilith is accused of being a man because of her physical strength. "Allison looked down, then seemed to force herself to face Lilith again. "There isn't any nice way of saying this, but I've got to ask. Are you really human?"" (Butler 180). Above all, she wishes to have children and this is possible only with the Oankali.

> Nikanj focused on the intensity of their attraction, their union. It left Lilith no other sensation. It seemed, itself, to vanish. She sensed only Joseph, felt that he was aware only of her. Now their delight in one another ignited and burned. They moved together, sustaining an impossible intensity, both of them tireless, perfectly matched, ablaze in sensation, lost in one another. They seemed to rush upward. A long time later, they seemed to drift down slowly, gradually, savoring a few more moments wholly together. (Butler 163)

Lilith's ego comes out in the moments of conflict; but she represses them. Lilith feels that her actions will help the Oankali decide the fate of the humans. Thus when questioned by her fellow humans, she offers them hope. She is of the belief: "Learn and run" (Butler 118). "The ego masters external stimuli by becoming "aware," by storing up memories, by avoidance through flight, and by active adaptation" (Lapsley and Paul 6). When the awakened humans ask Lilith about her plan, she simply reiterates the same. Lilith's ego surfaces whenever she has to show her allegiance to her fellow humans. When Gabe and Tate, her friends, choose to leave the Oankali settlement in the belief that it is the real Earth, they ask Lilith to join them. Lilith on the other hand knows very well that they are in the simulation of Earth but nevertheless decides to join them. She does this to show that she is one among them too; but the group never trust her. "There was strangely little

conversation. Lilith went aside to relieve herself and when she stepped clear of the tree that had concealed her, every eye was on her. Then abruptly everyone found something else to notice - one another, a tree, a piece of food, their fingernails" (Butler 214).

Lilith is never the one to shy away from using her strength; she uses when the situation gets out of hand. In the course of the novel, she has awakened nearly forty people; they all have formed their group and alliances. When a woman named Allison is about to be raped, Lilith loses her cool. "She stepped up to the knot of people surrounding Allison, too furious to worry about their blocking her. Two of them caught her arms. She threw them aside without ever seeing their faces. For once she did not care what happened to them. Cavemen. *Fools!*" (Butler 176). She feels a release after these kinds of episodes. The awakened humans are not ready to trust her; some even believe that she is one of the aliens and that she is trying to manipulate them. Those who trust her even find themselves in a dilemma at times. The show of her strength alone keeps people - who want to hurt Lilith - away from her. Worse, the Oankali do not show their presence nor intervene whenever there is a problem among the humans. They expect Lilith to solve them all by herself. Hence in moments like these, where she spends her physical energy by venting them out, she almost feels normal. The utter violence displayed by her shocks many and they even wonder whether she is a human or not. "She hit him, catching him in midair, snapping his head back, collapsing him to the floor unconscious" (Butler 178). This is a kind of displacement, where she vents out all her anger and frustration, long controlled and almost never exhibited, on those who choose to torture others.

Lilith's superego is observed when she chooses to help the Oankali. She knows that she should not be participating the gene trade; but deep down she knows that the gene trade is the only possible way that the humans could survive again; to reclaim Earth. If she rejects the responsibility thrust upon her, probably the Oankali would have chosen another person to parent the group. Hence she accepts this too.

When Nikanj's arm gets hacked down by one of the humans, she immediately gets naked to help Nikanj without worrying about the accusatory glances she receives from the humans around her. "Nikanj penetrated her body with every head and body tentacle that could reach her, and for once it felt the way she had always imagined it should. It hurt! It was like abruptly being used as a pincushion. She gasped, but managed not to pull away. The pain was endurable, was probably nothing to what Nikanj was feeling - however it experienced pain" (Butler 232). She realises that she has lost her fellow humans and so she does not want to lose Nikanj also. Lilith's choice to help Nikanj instead of humans in the battle between humans and the Oankali marks her the enemy of humanity; though there is no other option available, Lilith is termed as the Judas of the humanity. " . . . the superego is the "conscience" of the personality, and it can retaliate against the imperfections of the ego by inducing guilt" (Lapsley and Paul 6). She feels guilty of her own choices and actions but she understands that the only possible way for humanity to survive is to exist in mutual symbiosis with the Oankali. This rankles her till the very end of the novel and she tries to get acclimatized to it. The humans hate Lilith for her choices. She is called as Judas, animal, whore and by various other derogatory terms just because she chose survival - her own and of the humanity's. They even try to seek revenge on the Oankali by killing her and her mates; but never once she gets angry or annoyed with the humans. Lilith is only too aware that their resentment towards her is the reflection of the resentment towards themselves and that she has become an object to vent them out. It is because of the threat to her life, Nikanj makes her pregnant at the end of the novel. Lilith accepts this too and this reflects her superego in display.

Thus *Dawn* displays all the three divisions of Lilith's psyche in perfect synchronisation. "The id is, in short, the source of all our aggression and desires. It is lawless, asocial, and amoral. Its function is to gratify our instincts for pleasure without regard for social conventions, legal ethics, or moral restraint" (Guerin 157). Lilith's decision to mate with Nikanj is non-conventional by human standards, but it is the way of life for the Oankali. And in turn, Lilith becomes a posthuman - longevity, healthy life, superhuman strength and above all sexual pleasure and children. The desires of Lilith get fulfilled by the Oankali though not without the compromise. Her ego oscillates between her desire to choose the Oankali and the loyalty to the humans. "In contrast to the id, the superego operates according to the morality principle and serves primarily to protect society and us from the id" (Bressler 151). But in the end, her superego wins the case. She makes the decision keeping the future of humanity in her mind and thus becomes a saviour of the human race. Thus, Freudian tripartite division of human mind is evident in Lilith's choices and actions perfectly.

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# Elements of Uncanny in the movie *Bulbbul* by Anvita Dutt

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## ABSTRACT

This paper draws a study on the film Bulbul by Anvitta Dutt through the lens of uncanny as Freud mentioned in the theory of psychoanalysis. The story is blend of a supernatural yet a culturally rich tale set in Bengal in the 19th century denotes injustices towards innocent women and naive girls by rich, high-class, aristocratic men. The villagers believing the existence of a 'Chudail', meaning a witch, which kills "innocent" men, the story of the movie unfolds. Bulbul is revived from the dead when she is granted reincarnation by a Goddess (Devi Ma) in the film. The writer has used a children's horror tale and given us an idea of how women were and still are hegemonized and repressed in the society. The movie Water by Deepa Mehta is also used as a reference. Both the movies have similar themes of subjugation of women through practices like child marriage, rape and widowhood.

**Keywords:** Uncanny, Oppression, Child Marriage, Widows, Rape, Revenge, Women's status in the society

## INTRODUCTION

"Uncanny is in reality nothing new or alien, but something which is familiar and old-established in the mind and which has become alienated from it only through the process of repression" according to Sigmund Freud.

The protagonist of the movie *Bulbbul*, is a young girl who is a child bride to a man named, Indranil. Indranil has two younger brothers, Mahendra and Satya. Mahendra is the twin of Indranil and is also mentally retarded. Satya, being the youngest brother and closest to Bulbul's age becomes really close to her. They both play together every day and write poetry; Satya even teaches Bulbul to read and write. Mahendra is married to Binodini, who is jealous of Bulbbul because Bulbbul has become the *'badi bahu'* (the eldest bride). Binodini and Indranil are sexually involved with each other as the both of them are married to people who cannot please them. Indranil has a soft space for Bulbbul and Binodini feels threatened by it. All the brothers favor Bulbbul, even Mahendra keeps trying to play with Bulbbul, as he tries to pull her hair or pushes her on the swing harshly.

One day while Binodini and Indranil are in bed together, Binodini warns Indranil that Satya and Bulbbul are becoming too close. Satya and Bulbbul were working on a book together when Indranil suddenly announce that Satya is going abroad for further studies. Indranil does not understand that they are just friends and that they are both young and could have been misled into believing that they like each other. One day when Indranil returns back from sending off Satya, he is very angry at Bulbbul and hits her brutally with a stick on her back. She is left on the bathroom floor alone unconscious. Then comes Dr.

Sudip who bandages her and informs that both her legs are fractured. The same night Mahendra comes to Bulbbul's room and rapes her animalistically. During the rape we see that she has died and Mahendra after seeing her, runs away. Then it is the supernatural power of Kaali-Maata that revives Bulbbul.

With the power of Kaali-Maata, Bulbbul takes her revenge from everyone who wronged her and also helps other women and little girls from the atrocities of aristocratic men.

The movie, *Water* by Deepa Mehta set in 1938, explores the lives of widows at an ashram in Varanasi, India. It is also a movie on Sati, widowhood, exploitation of women at the hands of rich men, subjugation of young girls all because of the rituals and practices of the patriarchal society during the 19th century in India. Chuhiya, an eight-year-old girl, is forced to stay at the ashram for widows after her husband dies suddenly. As per the societal norms of that time she has to shave her head, wear a white sari and live the rest of her life in renunciation. The ashram is controlled by Madhumati, a woman in her late 70s, she has a friend named Gulabi, who is a pimp. A young and beautiful widow at the ashram Kalyani, is forced into prostitution by Madhumati to support the ashram. Kalyani is exploited by the rich men and the women which later leads to her committing suicide.

**Literature Review**

A few researches on the movie are research papers titled as "A STUDY ON THE PANORAMIC TRUTH OF BULBBUL" by Dr. Sakshi Singh, Rehoboam Jude , Ch Nirmala Singha , Piyush Arpan Ganguly, Nitish Madhav , Brishti Roy; it focuses to examine the sexual violence and abuse committed against women in society, to explore the social stigmas associated with rape victims existing in the society, to study the human psyche and elements of human nature such as jealousy, hatred, revenge, and compassion, to investigate the supernatural element and its meaning projected by the movie, to promote women's empowerment.

"Endeavoring Woman's Awakening: An Analysis of Anvita Dutt's Bulbbul" by Jyotiparna Das. The paper goes through a deep analysis of the movie by using ideas and elements such as Feminism, Existentialism, Hegemony, Oppression and psychoanalysis. Overall, the research paper by Jyotiparna Das clearly depicts all the above elements in a detailed manner.

Another research paper written on this Netflix show is titled "Bulbbul: Not Just Another Feminist Tale" by P.R Mrudula in which most of the same elements as the previous one exists such as feminism and patriarchy but it also goes through elements such as habitat loss, Ecology and humanity. The research paper also presents the viewpoint of the Theatrics which was left unsaid such as the tone and atmosphere of the scenes at the beginning and at the end often making contrast and critiquing the way the scenes which are not pleasant are shown as comfortable scenes. It also points out the way the light mood changed to a dark one as the moon turned from white to red in the scene when Bulbbul was raped by Mahendra. The paper also applauses the use of flashbacks in the show where we are constantly been shown flashbacks and present scenes which adds more depth to the message which is conveyed.

"An Analysis of Deepa Mehta's Water" by Jasmin MAIRHOFER-MEHMOOD, she is interested in the strong reactions and protests the film attracted in its first shooting period. How can it be possible that this topic leads to such controversies? India has been having a status of a globalized and modern country since the 1990s, so how can it be possible that a socially critical movie is stopped by the government and protesters. This paper has overall two parts, a cultural analysis and a philological analysis of the film. In the first part she writes about the film in general and how it fits into the theory of Third Cinema) gives an overview of the situation of widows in India, especially Bengal, where the film is set and connect this cultural condition to the actual content of the film.

Above mentioned research papers talk about feminism, ecology, human loss, existentialism, oppression, human psyche and elements of human nature. This paper focuses on the elements of uncanny as mentioned by Freud. Portraying the patriarchal society and the subjugation of women with the hint of supernatural like the presence of a ghost, the protagonist coming back from the dead, secrets in the big mansion, the red moon etc.

**Research Methodology**

This paper employs a qualitative type of research, "**Qualitative research** is the naturalistic study of social meanings and processes, using interviews, observations, and the analysis of texts and images. In contrast to quantitative researchers, whose statistical methods enable broad generalizations about populations (for example, comparisons of the percentages of U.S. demographic groups who vote in particular ways), qualitative researchers use in-depth studies of the social world to analyze how and why groups think and act in particular ways (for instance, case studies of the experiences that shape political views)."

In relation with the definition for this research paper extensive qualitative research was done in terms of reading different research papers, interviews, watching both the movies.

The theory of uncanny by Freud explained by Ray Malewitz, Oregon State University Associate

Professor of American Literature, "Freud begins his essay with a strange observation. The word for uncanny in Freud's native language of German is "unheimlich," which means not from the home. In other words, not familiar. This definition seems to repeat about alien others—we fear that which is not from the home. But Freud also notes that unheimlich (or uncanny) has, in certain situations, been used to mean something hidden inside the home that was never meant to come to light. Freud turns to his general theory of the self and asks what might be hidden within us that suddenly comes to light and frightens us. As you may already know, Freud was absolutely obsessed with changes that take place in our minds as we move from childhood to adulthood. When we are children, Freud suggests, we are fiercely devoted to our mothers, because they nurture and protect us. Anything or anyone who gets in the way of this devotional love becomes, in our irrational baby minds, a threat that should be eliminated—even if that threat happens to be our father"

**Elements of Uncanny**

The movie begins with the child bride asking her aunt, "why do we wear toe rings?", the aunt replies "if it is not pressed, girls tend to fly away". To which Bulbbul says "like a bird?". Since the beginning it starts to make the viewers uncomfortable. After the marriage when they are on the way to the haveli, Satya is narrating the age-old folklore of a chudail (woman ghost) who has backward facing feet and lives in those forests. The road covered with trees, going from the middle of the forest gives a haunted aura. After reaching the mansion, Bulbbul is only happy till Satya is there. He makes her laugh, teaches her how to write and plays with her all day. But just after he leaves darkness falls on her life. Time and again the character of Mahendra coming near Bulbbul is agonizing.

After 20 years when Satya returns to the haveli, he is being driven in a horse drawn carriage. The driver warns him about the presence of a *Chudail,* which Satya does not believe. He thinks the killings in the village are the work of a man or an animal, to which Bulbbul says, "Why? It could also be a woman." Upon Satya's arrival everything has changed. Indranil has left, Mahendra is dead, Binodini is a widow who has to stay in an ashram with her head shaved and in a white saree. Bulbbul has a new doctor friend named Sudip and when Satya sees him with Bulbbul he feels insecure.

The element of supernatural comes to play when she is being raped and she dies from the torture. Bulbbul is revived by Kaali Mata. The story narrated by Satya to Bulbbul actually comes true. Just that before it was a folklore and now it has become true. The night Indranil hits Bulbbul with the stick, the sky takes up a different color. Her feet are turned backward because of the way Indranil hits her and then it does not heal and stays that way. Her wearing boots under her saree is uncanny as well. The moon being red is the sign of power given by the goddess to Bulbbul, i.e., the reincarnation. It can be seen through the cinematography as well. The huge forest which gives a dark aura, home to the most savage animals and the *Chudail* is a daunting place for the villagers.

Bulbbul's unsettling smile whenever she is with Satya and Binodini almost looks cruel as if she is mocking Binodini. Bulbbul calls Binodini *didi* (elder sister) but she was the reason for her downfall. Binodini was always jealous of the attention that Bulbbul received and also the cause for the atrocities faced by Bulbbul. Only if Binodini had been there for Bulbbul and protected her, everyone would have lived happily. The jealousy and greed for power made Binodini blind and heartless. It was her own karma that got her in the end.

**Contrast of Uncanny elements in *Bulbul a*nd *Water***

The movie *Bulbul* starts with Satya narrating a horror story which is famous as a bedtime story for kids in the village. It is this story of a *chudail* which later becomes real with Bulbul. She is very scared as a kid when she hears it for the first time. The director Anvitta Dutt, has used this story as a backdrop to address the important social issues, how women were subjects of indiscrimination. Young girls were married at a young age and later on raped as well. These women had no position in the society, no power to make decisions for themselves. They were a plaything for the aristocratic men and these men took advantage of the women by showing no mercy.

The red background of the movie to show the supernatural element of Kaali-Mata is also uncanny. It is during the festival of Durga-puja that Bulbul kills her first culprit. She takes her revenge from Mahendra by killing him brutally, just the way he had raped her without any guilt. With the genre of horror, it shows a different picture of the society in the 19th century.

Jamie Ruers, Freud Museum Researcher, talks about uncanny in art, "Waxwork dolls, automata, doubles, ghosts, mirrors, the home and its secrets, madness and severed limbs are mentioned throughout The Uncanny, influencing painters and sculptors to explore these themes and blur the boundaries between animate and inanimate, human and non-human, life and death." All of these elements are present in Bulbbul, the secrets of the big mansion, presence of the ghost, atrocities on the women, the

madness of the people which is created through the ghost, etc.

Even the movie *Water* by Deepa Mehta addresses the same issues as in the movie *Bulbul* but it does not have elements of uncanny. It is a movie which portrays the themes of social issues directly. Whereas *Bulbul* with the touch of supernatural makes it more interesting. It makes us think of what could be done for these girls. The possibility of killing these disgusting men who do not think of women as humans does seem very much possible only if there is a supernatural element. Whereas it is something that should be done in reality. Even in the movie *Water*, in the end the girl, Chuhiya does not get any justice for the way she was abused time and again by the society. The young girl is raped just like Bulbul but because Bulbul had Kaali-Maata with her, Chuhiya was all alone and therefore did not get her revenge from the abominable men who raped her.

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# Traces of Deep Ecology in the novels of Richard Powers

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## ABSTRACT

In a world overrun with a number of environmental issues such as deforestation, waste management, human overpopulation, water scarcity, climate variability, overfishing, soil, air, water and plastic pollution, research on these issues is the need of the hour. Ecocriticism has emerged as the result of the informed consciousness to the significance of ecological balance for sustenance of the earth, our common home. Deep Ecology is a modern ecological thought that recognizes the value of every living organism irrespective of its utility to man. It involves seeing ourselves as a part of the living earth and finding a role in protecting the planet. Deep ecology suggests two main ideas and contentions. The first one is, that there must be a shift away from anthropocentrism to ecocentrism in which every living thing is seen as having intrinsic value regardless of its utility. The second is that humans are a part of nature rather than superior and apart from it, and therefore we must protect all life on earth as they would protect their family or self. Anthropocentrism considers human beings as the most important or central entities on earth. Anthropocentric philosophical view accepts human beings as the central element of the universe. *The Overstory* by Richard Powers discovers the interconnectedness of humans and trees, through the lives of nine different characters. The novel explores the destructive impact of human activity on the natural world. The novel, *The Overstory,* explores the relationship between the human and the non-human world. Richard Powers in his novel *Bewilderment* (2021*),* times and again tries to stress upon the non-separableness of human beings and non-human world, who are our neighbors. The central characters in the novel transform themselves as eco-warriors who want to protect trees and the other life on the planet.

**Keywords:** Ecocriticism, deep ecology, anthropocentrism, deforestation, eco-epic

## INTRODUCTION

In a world overrun with a number of environmental issues such as deforestation, waste management, human overpopulation, water scarcity, climate variability, overfishing, soil, air, water and plastic pollution, research on these issues is the need of the hour. Being born and brought up in a locale with a deep affinity with nature, it is my firm contention that I need to contribute in my own ways to address these ecological concerns. Ecocriticism has emerged as the result of the informed consciousness to the significance of ecological balance for sustenance of the earth, our common home. Ecocriticism has been defined by a number of thinkers and critics focusing mainly on the relationship between humans and their environment. One of the generally accepted definitions is that it is an interdisciplinary approach of study that combines many branches of science in order to explore alternative solutions to the contemporary environmental concerns. Simply defined, 'ecocriticism is the study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment' (Cheryll Burgess Glotfelty).

The word ecocriticism is a combination of the term's 'ecology' and 'criticism.' Ecocriticism is known by a number of other designations such as, Green (cultural) studies, Eco-poetics,

Environmental literary criticism, Literary – ecology and Eco – theory. Ecocriticism is officially heralded by the publication of two seminal works, both published in mid 1990s, '*The Eco-criticism Reader: Landmark in Literary Ecology*' edited by Cheryll Glotfelty and Harold Fromm, and '*The Environmental Imagination*' by Lawrence Buell. If the scarce resources available on the earth are overused by some groups of people, the rest of humanity will be deprived of them. Human civilization is destroyed due to the impact of human intrusion with nature. They bring down mountains to make islands; they devastate the countryside and pump the seas with poison and trash; clone animals and kill wild animals; create scrap-yards in the sky and destroy birds; utilize all of the earth's abundance; build golf courses in the desert yet erode the fields through overutilization etc. Some of the concepts eco-critics wrestle with are connected with pollution, wilderness, deep-ecology, pastoral, apocalypse, dwelling, animals, and the earth.

**The concepts of *Deep Ecology and Anthropocene***

Deep Ecology is a modern ecological thought that recognizes the value of every living organism regardless of its utility to man. It involves seeing ourselves as a part of the living earth and finding a role in protecting the planet. The phrase "deep ecology" was coined by the Norwegian philosopher, Arne Naess in 1973. Deep ecology posits two main ideas and contentions. The first one is, that there must be a shift away from anthropocentrism to ecocentrism in which every living thing is seen as having intrinsic value regardless of its utility. The second is that humans are a part of nature rather than superior and apart from it, and therefore, must protect all life on earth as they would protect their family or self. Naess draws inspiration from the 17th century Jewish-Dutch philosopher Baruch Spinoza, an Enlightenment thinker, who explores the presence of God throughout nature. He also draws inspiration from Mahatma Gandhi and from the Buddhist teachings. The influences of earlier environmental advocates and philosophers are apparent in Naess's work. Henry David Thoreau, Emerson, John Muir, Aldo Leopold, William Wordsworth and John Keats contribute to the ideals of a non-human-centered world, the importance of preserving nature for its own sake, and an emphasis on a return to a perceived simpler way of life, less dependent on material things, that contribute to pollution and destruction of nature.

But for Naess, the crucial inspiration for deep ecology is Rachel Carson's 1962 book *Silent Spring* for its emphasis on the pressing, transformational change to emanate the tide of planetary destruction. Carson's book provides the much-needed momentum for the advent of modern environmentalism that sought limits on the widespread destruction of the earth's systems, particularly those posed by rigorous agribusiness and other industrial technologies. Her works draw clear scientific connections between human well-being and ecosystem and health. It is called 'deep' because it regards itself as looking more deeply into the actual reality of humanity's relationship with the natural world. As humans, our relationship with nature is not always unbiased. Deep ecology forces us to ask some questions about this inequitable, biased relationship. For example, whether human recognition of the value of nature be incidental on its usefulness to humans or whether we need to assign equal value to all living and non-living things. Deep ecologists would argue for the latter. For deep ecologists, human beings are of equal value to all other parts of nature. Nature must not be seen in correspondence with its utility to human beings. It is the duty of humans to help sustain nature and not the reverse. Deep ecology is eco-centric, ecologically conscious, and supports the idea of Holism. It is an emerging philosophical concept of ecology, which focuses on our moral responsibility to protect the environment. It is the deep-rooted idea that all life has the right to exist, that no one species is more important than another. This ecocentric philosophy rejects anthropocentrism entirely. Deep Ecology is a branch of ecological philosophy (eco-sophy) in which humankind is a part of its environment. The theory emphasizes the interdependency of human and non-human life as well as the importance of the environment and natural processes. Deep Ecology has been perhaps the single most influential theory of environmental activism in the United States and all over the world.

Anthropocentrism considers human beings as the most significant or central entities on earth. Anthropocentric philosophical view assumes human beings as the central element of the universe. It views and interprets everything in terms of human experience. Many ethicists find the roots of anthropocentrism in the creation story told in the book of Genesis in the Judeo-Christian Bible, in which humans are created in the reflection of God and are instructed to "subdue" Earth and to "have dominion" over all other living creatures.

Richard Powers is a contemporary writer who has received numerous awards, including a MacArthur Fellowship, a Lannan Literary Award, and the James Fenimore Cooper Prize for Historical Fiction. He is considered one of the America's greatest literary voices, his novels and characters

navigate everything from Artificial Intelligence to the American Dream, trees to astrobiology, virtual reality to the human genetic code, delving into the interconnectedness of individual human lives and forces much larger. Richard Powers, a computer programmer, is the author of thirteen novels that delve into connections among disciplines as contrasting as artificial intelligence, musical composition, ecology, genomics, game theory, virtual reality, race, biology and business. Richard Powers, particularly in his novels, *The Overstory* and *Bewilderment* laments that, "We're completely alienated from everything else alive." After reading, *The Overstory,* Barack Obama said that it "changed the way I thought about the Earth and our place in it." The novel is a love story to trees, ecology, conservancy and activism. *The Overstory* is a novel that brings people and non-human together into the same negotiating space. The novel challenges the notion of separatism between human beings and non-human beings. *The Overstory* by Richard Powers explores the interconnectedness of humans and trees, through the lives of nine different characters. The novel explores the destructive impact of human activity on the natural world.

In his Pulitzer Prize winning multi-generational novel, *The Overstory*, he explains that trees and humans have a common ancestor and a quarter of their genes. The novel is a sweeping, impassioned story of activism and resistance that is also a stunning evocation of and paen to the natural world-particularly-trees. It's a tale of trees, and the characters are connected to trees in some way or another. The text's narrative is arranged like a tree and has a meta-narrative. The entire book, of 625 pages, is organized like a tree. The novelist chastises the human connection to the non-human world. The novelist draws our attention to the mysterious lives of the trees. There is a world beside us that we share - vast, slow, interconnected, inventive and almost invisible to us. The novel is the tale about nine strangers who are called upon in different ways to see the world and are drawn into its unfolding tragedy. Though the plot of this 625-page epic is based on human beings, the real heroes are trees. We learn that trees are social beings that communicate with each other and form alliance with other trees, and other species. In fact, whole forests can act as a sort of super organism. The novel explores the relationship between the human and the non-human worlds, "What you make from a tree should be at least as miraculous as what you cut down (453)," Powers writes. Powers also presents trees as individuals who are closely connected to one another and have close relationships with them. They communicate with and protect each other, fight, live, and die in *The Overstory*. The novel brings to the forefront an uncontrolled population growth that leads to deforestation. *The Overstory,* Richard powers' eco-epic novel about the place of trees on this earth, is concerned with the relevance of trees. The novel is a work of art that challenges the notion of human isolation from the non-human world together in the same negotiating space. The novel, *The Overstory,* explores the relationship between the human and the non-human worlds. The novel also explores the inconsistency between the human and non-human worlds. Richard Powers', a multi-generation epic, *The Overstory* is about the mysterious lives of trees. In *Bewilderment,* he is concerned with endangered animals, including humans. Richard Powers explores the effect of science on human life in the novel. Powers, a novelist explores the climate change in space, and the love of a father and son. The novel blends the immediacy of a familiar dystopian reality, such as the climate crisis and the possibility of species extinction, with endangered species including humans, who have a habit of turning a blind eye to what doesn't, but also about humans' relationship with the earth and other animals.

*Bewilderment* is a human story about a father's overwhelming love for child. The novel is focused on people, a 39-year-old astrobiologist Theo and his nine-year old intense, unusual boy Robin. There is a third person, Robin's mother who died a couple of years before the start of the story. The story is narrated entirely by Theo. Richard Powers times and again tries to stress the non-separableness of human beings and non-human world, who are our neighbors. He is concerned about the alienation of human beings from other kinds of life forms. He also strongly objects the culture of human exceptionalism, and the culture of commodity mediated meaning has forgotten that there are other places to locate purpose. He stresses the importance of reciprocal interdependence, the inter-being of creation, the unfolding of life on the planet. The story is about the extra-ordinary relationship between the father and the son, it is also about nature, science and what is there in the cosmos.

Richard Powers strongly feels that trees are not our resources and we are one of the agents. We have evolved in the middle of all the other creatures, finding meaning and purpose, in figuring out how to survive in the world. Every planet that Robin and Theo visit, they make this intergalactic journey of the imagination. Everything is a dream from Theo's nascent field of astrobiology. Robin is the representation of the younger world, who is worried about, what the adults are allowing to happen to the earth, in fact to the living earth. Robin is consumed by grief after the death of his mother and he is also utterly consumed by the fate of the planet.

*Bewilderment* forays not only into science fiction world but also a book that forces us to consider what we are doing with the planet and what it means to be human.

Richard Powers, in his thirteenth novel, shifts his attention from plants to animals and his primary concern is with endangered species, including humans, whose habit of turning a blind eye to what doesn't immediately affect them has jeopardized our planet's future. The first quarter of the book describes a wilderness trip taken by Theo and Robin, who explore rivers and forests while sleeping under the stars. They can't live in nature forever, however. Robin must return to school and Theo to work, and the world they return to is broken and inhospitable. The novel Bewilderment is most eerie and emotional book, with its soaring descriptions of the natural world, enticing glimpses of life beyond, and the tale of a father and son's passionate love. The biggest challenge faced by the modern world is to preserve the diversity and lusciousness of the natural world and to live in harmony in the company of nature. This is a moving tale with two starkly opposite themes: the negative human impact on the natural world, as well as the struggle to be parents in the face of tragedy and adversity, especially in a world that seems so hostile to anything outside the norm.

Richard Powers writes, "Love for trees pours out of her-the grace of them, their supple experimentation, the constant variety and surprise. These slow, deliberate creatures with their elaborate vocabularies, each distinctive, shaping each other, breeding birds, sinking carbon, purifying water, filtering poisons from the ground, stabilizing the microclimate. Join enough living things together, through the air and underground, and you wind up with something that has intention." One of the central characters in the novel Patricia Westerford clearly states that, "You and the tree in your backyard come from a common ancestor." The idea of the intrinsic relationship between non-human world and human beings is presented by the author time and again.

**Conclusion**

In nature, there is an inseparable bond between human beings and non-human beings and the co-existence between the two leads to wholesome and ecologically diversified universe. The novels of Richard Powers provide strong evidence to the fact that 'in nature, nothing exists alone', to use the words of Rachel Carson. One of the central characters in the novel, *The Overstory,* Patricia Westerford clearly states that, "You and the tree in your backyard come from a common ancestor." The novelist continually stresses upon the importance of trees and wildlife and the role of human beings to protect them. Every living organism is important and has an intrinsic value.

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# Uncanny Play: Aesthetic Violence and Postcolonial Echoes in Caribbean Cricket Poetry

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## ABSTRACT

The harrowing experience of colonization has tormented Caribbean lives and history. Bearing the agony of a haunting past, the archipelago has come together in varied forms and arenas to articulate their anti-colonial struggles. Cricket is one such space that has facilitated the exposition of resistance and reclamation. This status of the sport is effectively used in Caribbean poetry to vocalize the collective sentiments of the community. This paper examines selected Caribbean poems and the representation of the sport as an uncanny postcolonial space. It explores the depiction of the cricket field as a battlefield characterized by violence and bloodshed. The poems construct cricketers as inhumane entities spiritually connected to the land and native elements. They are driven by an obsessive desire to mutilate the colonizer through a metaphorical confrontation. The repeated associations with ferocious natural phenomena and elements exalt their status as national warriors. The paper analyses this portrayal and its role in inducing the idea of the sublime. Thus, aesthetics of violence symbolically performed on the cricket field is explored to establish cricket as an uncanny postcolonial space.

**Keywords:** Uncanny, postcolonialism, violence, aesthetics, sublime

## INTRODUCTION

Cricket was introduced in the Caribbean as a symbolic reflection of 'Englishness'. Its promotion aimed to strengthen a shared cultural connection to the empire, intending to diminish the cultural and ethnic practices of the native populations. The white elites lead the sport preserving and promoting British mannerisms and Victorian moral codes while the natives occupied the periphery. With the passage of time, the colonized communities mastered the sport and began to foster a passion to defeat the oppressors in their own game. "While the colonial white elites imported and domesticated the game, branding it for respectability with the 'whites only' tag, equally important was its appropriation by the disenfranchised blacks who propelled its development as a site of racial and class contest" (Beckles, 2011, p. 160). From the prejudiced social confines, cricket evolved into an active space of self-expression and acknowledgement for the marginalized. It unified the archipelago contributing to the collective desire for political decolonization and nation building.

In the 1880s, the first combined West Indies team was formed and toured Canada and the United States. In the 1890s, representative squads were chosen to compete against visiting English teams. Despite the inclusion of native players in these teams, they were not given any significant positions with the colonizers maintaining control over the sport. In 1928, the team was granted test status and comprised

of players for different socio- political spaces. Gradually decolonizing and democratizing the sport, the native players began to assert their skill igniting anti-colonial consciousness in the nation. The 1950s and the 1980s saw the rise of the West Indian team as an independent and powerful force in world cricket. With their dominance "the game was ideologically restructured and energised to serve a purpose bigger than itself; the struggle for social justice and political freedom" (Beckles, 2011, p.163). This underlying politics in West Indian cricket, has given it a significant space in literature as well. Writers identified and used it as a potent metaphor to explore anticolonial sentiments and exhibit resistance. With strong elements of Calypso music and native style, poetry evolved as a fruitful genre to articulate the postcolonial voice.

The earliest poem identified by Gordon Rohlehr in his work "Music Literature and West Indian Cricket Values" is the sonnet "To Learie" (1939) by Eric Roach. With the development and achievements of the West Indian Cricket team, poetry celebrating them also began to flourish. The most prominent name in this regard is Kamau Brathwaite and his poem "Rites" (1969). This "was a defining moment for Caribbean cricket poetry" (Westell, 2011, p.149). The poems chosen for analysis in this paper are "Massa Day Done" (2003) by Ian McDonald, "Viv" and "Cricket's in My Blood" (1983) by Faustin Charles. The analysis aims to uncover how cricket's creative construction in poetry defamiliarizes the imperial sport and cultivates a distinct West Indian style motivated by the political aspirations of the nation.

**Playing Poetic Violence**

Cricket transcends the idea of a mere competitive sport owing to its complex colonial history. The sport which was once a manipulative invasion into the native culture has evolved into a dynamic space, potent enough to deconstruct imperial aspirations. Victory over the colonial masters in the colonial sport echoes the nation's triumph not just in a sporting arena, but symbolically over an array of inferiorizing colonial notions. Re-enacting the colonizer/ colonized dichotomy through its roles, cricket places the 'other' against the colonizers in a space that utmost represents the intricacies of their culture. Therefore, by mastering the sport and rising above the colonizer, the colonized indulge in an act of threatening the imperial culture. Motivated by the memory of a painful past, the sport in this scenario becomes a battlefield giving them the opportunity to subvert imperial power relations.

The rich political veins of cricket in the Caribbean and the sport's significant contribution towards national building asserts its remarkable place in the archipelago's history. In this progression, their cricketers have taken the role of a frontline soldier, a ferocious fighter, a war veteran who avenges the past and establishes the nation's identity on the global stage. They are revered and celebrated as heroes whose tireless endeavors reveal the grit of the nation. "West Indian nation have considered these heroes in much the same way that ancient Greek society celebrated warriors such as Hector and Achilles. Cricket for the crowd is their finest theatre where the turbulent past and divided present are acted out in epic, dramatic proportions" (Beckles, 2011, p.163). This perception of the national cricketer and the dramatization of the actions taking place in cricket have been ingeniously portrayed in Caribbean poetry as well. They use the grandeur of actions used in an epic to construct the hero's performance as a battle involving the reminiscence of their past and reclamation of their identity. In the poem "Massa Day Done," Ian McDonald imparts on the cricketer a warrior's persona similar to that of the Greek heroes:

> He pound the ball, look at that aha!
> Like he vex, he slash, he pull, he hook,
> he blast a way through the cover, man,
> he hoist the ball like cannon ball
> gone far and wild, scattering the enemy,
> and foe turn tremble, danger all about
> It's butchery today, bat spill blood

(McDonald, 2003)

The poem magnifies the image of Sir Vivian Richards and dramatizes his batting and actions as merciless attacks on the colonizer. It weaves together snapshots of his destructive batting as combat skills, to assert his dominance on the field. The artistic figure employed here is an audacious warrior whose symbolic victory on the cricket field decimates colonial notions. The poet relies on the dramatic visuals of a battlefield and compelling choice of words like 'slash', 'blast', 'butchery' and 'blood' attain this effect. A similar construction is made by Faustin Charles in the Poem "Cricket's in my Blood" (1983). "The batsman fashions play / And the game swells with blood." Evidently, Violence and bloodshed are at play here. "Violence is action. So when you play with it, you are playing with an action which you are not actually performing; you are playing at doing it ('rough and tumble' is what ethologists call it when animals and children do it), or at experiencing the doing of it in some way (a kind of voyeurism is involved)" (Applebaum, 2017, p.3). In these poems, the domineering batting performance of the hero is a metaphorical violence played upon the colonial masters. It is an aesthetic violence, "violence that isn't real, but that is experienced in the encounter with an artwork" (Applebaum, 2017). Thus, both poetry and

cricket become artworks that mediate an aesthetic violence.

**Postcolonial Violence**

Aesthetic violence invoked in cricket functions at two levels. On the first level it demonstrates the power and anger of the colonized and on the second level summons the dark colonial past of slavery and exploitation. The hero's encounter with the colonizer on the cricket field symbolically re-creates the violence of a colonial interaction.

Rising to conquer, propelled by a gift
And a hunger.
The ball Swerves, lifts and strikes
Widens with pain and anguish
Breaking heights beyond the sun,
And the light circles all,
Screaming in the extremity

Of lives laid out bare in the height of sacrifice. (Charles, 1983)

The poet here employs "historical patterns of violence, from pre-Colombian Aztec and Mayan rituals, through the imposed violence of the Spanish conquistadors, to that of 1980s Brixton. As in James's 'Garfield Sobers', the violence of cricket is not euphemised but equated with the violence of empire (with its ambivalent 'gift' of civilisation), and of decolonisation itself"' (Bateman, 2009, p.198). The hero's actions and performance here are significant contrasts to the Victorian nature of the sport. Its embedded British 'comeliness' and elegance are destabilized by a uniquely Caribbean aggression, evolving from strong anti-colonial sentiments. The sport itself becomes the hero's tool; a weapon to be used against the colonizer.

He holding the bat, it could be an axe.
Look how he grinding the jaw again, boy,
how he head hold cock an' high
and he smile, he gleam, like jaguar. (McDonald, 2003)

The hero here almost becomes an inhuman entity who waits to pounce on his prey. The animalistic appeal imparted on him threatens the norms of imperial civilization. He dominates the space with his supreme batting and demoralizes the colonial masters. Charles portrays similar vehement hunting images, further diminishing the imperial aura of the sport.

The fierce sun reels,
Scatters a ray of fielders
Stunned by the batsman's plunder;
The curving sling-shot of Ramadhin and Valentine,
Mesmerises, and into the trap
The striker plunges. (Charles, 1983)

The sport undergoes a performative detachment from the imperial culture and makes the colonizers feel alien and unfamiliar within their own space. The ensuing panic and uncertainty sabotage their colonial 'superiority' to facilitate the process of decolonization. This is highlighted in the poem using the words 'scatter', 'stun' and 'plunge.' "The historical entry of the West Indies into the field of cricket, their politically resonant reworking of its performative grammar, is not merely a re-configuration of the cricket field but is explicitly rendered as a 'shattering [of] the field', a revolutionary transformation of its discursive givenness" (Bateman, 2009, p.199). Embodying the transformative violence, the sport becomes an uncanny postcolonial space in poetry.

**Invoking the Sublime**

The heroic construction of cricketers in poetry involves recurrent associations with nature, native landscape, and natural elements. This gives them a superhuman position and elevates their status as the protectors of the nation. In the poem 'Viv' (1983), Charles opens with a series of similes that demonstrate the power of the hero. An intimidating amalgamation of elegance and ferociousness is employed through the comparisons.

Like the sun rising and setting
Like the thunderous roar of a bull rhino
Like the sleek grace of gazelle,
The player springs into the eye
And lights the world with fires.

Like Charles, McDonald in the poem "Massa Day Done" presents the image of Viv creating a "thunder shock" on the field. In both these poems, the association with the natural elements sun, fire, thunder, and lightning, reinforces his "affinity with Ogun, a Yoruban deity of fire, iron and warriorhood and 'Shango' the Yoruban god of thunder and lightning often linked to rebellion" (Westell, 2011, p.152). This heightens the magnitude of the nation's resistance and adds elements of divinity to the hero's performance.

Beyond the spiritual realm constructed by these associations, an aesthetic space invoking the sublime is manifested in the poems. 'Sublime' is a term that has been explored by many philosophers like Burke, Kant, and Schopenhauer. Unlike the idea of the 'beautiful' which is a wholly pleasurable experience, sublime is partly negative and mixed with pain. It is often defined as an experience of 'delightful horror', a state of elevation at the sight of something overwhelmingly vast or frightening. Kant divides Sublime into two; the mathematical sublime and the dynamical sublime. Mathematical sublime deals with quantity, grandeur and magnitude like the

vastness of an ocean. Dynamical sublime stems from an encounter with something extremely domineering, natural forces like hurricanes, volcanoes, cliffs, and thunder clouds. According to Kant, nature is dynamically sublime when man is overwhelmed by its destructive powers but overcomes it with the superiority of reason, inducing an understanding of his safe position. However, as Schopenhauer elaborates, it exposes his vulnerability, and threatens the superiority of his existence. In the poems, the association of heroes with fearsome natural elements like thunder, lightning, and volcanoes creates a similar effect. Their intimidating actions and performance are violent reactions that overwhelm the colonizers, but it is symbolic and cannot physically harm them. Nevertheless, the triggered colonial anxiety, the fear of the violent encounter, questions power relations and challenges their superiority.

**Conclusion**

The portrayal of cricket in Caribbean poetry relies on the heroic construction of the national cricketers. They are presented as war veterans whose performance embodies an aesthetic violence. The violence demonstrated by the hero is a symbolic attack on the colonizers and colonial notions. Contradicting the Victorian moral code of the imperial game, the heroes in Caribbean cricket poetry exhibit an intimidating aggression transforming it into space that facilitates subversion. The heroic figure created in association with strong natural elements invokes the sublime to threaten imperial notions. Thus, cricket in Caribbean poetry becomes an uncanny postcolonial space.

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# The phantasmagoric world of Satyajit Ray- A study of the uncanny in short story "Ratan Babu and That Man"

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## ABSTRACT

Satyajit Ray had been a gem contributor to Indian literature through his films, music and literary work. It is perhaps saddening that so little is known about his literary genius. The literary canon has somehow failed to acknowledge his excellence as a short story writer in the mammoth shadow of his own persona as a film maker. Ray's fictional world is uncanny, filled with horrific revelations, strange incidents, familiar places turning unfamiliar, the creation of a double or doppelganger and inanimate objects coming to life. His characters are almost always found in absurd situation being troubled by their own psyche. Sigmund Freud's definition of uncanny thus finds a scooping shelter in Ray's kaleidoscopic fictional world. The feeling of horror and the terrible follow a peculiar fashion in his stories. The stories evoke the feeling of "Sublime" and leads to "willing suspension of disbelief" among the readers. This dissertation is an approach to locate the uncanny elements in Satyajit Ray's short stories at large and an in-depth psychoanalytical judgement of the short story "Ratan Babu and that Man" (Ratn Babu aar shei lokta) written by Satyajit Ray and translated by Gopa Majumder (2020).

**Keywords:** Double, Fiction, Satyajit Ray, Short stories, Uncanny.

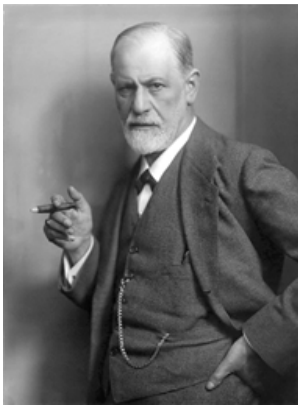
## INTRODUCTION



One can only begin to add accolades to the credit of the maestro that Satyajit Ray was. As a prolific screenwriter, documentary film maker, novelist, lyricist, illustrator, essayist of the 20th century, his works are a club house of realism and mystery. What is little known about him even today is his genius in writing short stories for children. His short stories are different and follows a peculiar fashion. Even though his target audience were children, adults can try but ignore getting hooked to his work. Of course, the world is aware of his fanatism with the creation of mystery, suspense and thriller. The sleuth character "Feluda" much like west's Sherlock Holmes is a household name in Bengal and in India at large. Ray's creation of something extra ordinary does have its influences coming from the genius bloodline he came from. His works perhaps induces a feeling of strangeness, and stories are nothing less than what we may perceive as "supernatural" or "macabre". His normal characters end up being in absurd situations and are chased by their own inner conflicts. There is a subtle pattern in his stories that represents the 20th century India. During the 20th century, modernism had hit India and it brought along the influences of science with it. However, India's unique identity of being a religiously delved country

remained and it remains till date. Satyajit Ray never believed in dogmatic practices but he always believed in the existence of something beyond the realms of science. The stories are thus an amalgamation of scientific exploration and the supernatural mysticism. These two words, "science" and "supernatural" are two extreme polar ends but Ray's stories perhaps bring them at the equator. The specific story "Ratan Babu and that Man" is a typical work of uncanny that transcends the readers scientific rational to question what really happens at end. The story ends evoking horror and disbelief among readers. The almost natural events are transitioned into a questionably dark ending.

## EMERGENCE OF SHORT STORIES AND INCLUSION OF "UNCANNY":



Short stories emerged largely during the 19th century even though it had always existed in the form of tales, myths, fables, "think of Scheherazade, Boccacio's Decameron, The Canterbury Tales, let alone bible, subplots in plays and novels, satires, pamphlets, sagas, narrative poems, essays, journalism" (The Quarter Summer 2006). Soon enough the popularity of such style of writing became a shelter to wide range of genres. The emergence of short story happened in the west but soon it transcended the borders with the colonisers and reached India. In 20th century India, Short stories became very popular among the masses. Many writers picked up their pens to write about the tremorous historical terrain of India. Short stories were popularised due to their short narrative style, accessibility and content. There were many more influences that effected its permanence and popularity in the west. The inclusion of the "uncanny" can be one such influence, especially in the west. Uncanny in fiction can be defined as "a kind of disturbing strangeness evoked in some kinds of horror story and related fiction" (Uncanny-oxfordrefernce.com). These elements of strange and horror specifically belong to the Gothic genre. The gothic and the uncanny align with one another like a bright constellation of stars. The gothic novels were popularized during the late 18th century in England with the works of writers like Horace Walpole, Ann Radcliffe, Clara Steeve etc. These writers were successful in evoking the feeling of "sublime" (Edmund Burke 1757) among the readers by creating an uncanny world of gothic fiction. The power of fiction was so strong that people were led by "willing suspension of disbelief" (Samuel Coleridge 1817). Coming back to short stories, it too like novels became a safe space for uncanny experiences. The familiar-strange needed hyperbolic space yet short stories with their limited length was successful in creating the required effect. Uncanny, for the simpler understanding of readers can be associated with something horrible or strange but it has more meanings to it. Of course, a lot has been researched upon this particular word but can we still come to a conclusion of what actually is uncanny? Perhaps because human emotions differ widely. What is normal to someone can b e absolutely abnormal to someone else and vice versa. The psyche of human being is not subjected to strict statements and hence we try to find a common ground for such matters. A psychoanalytical perspective then becomes an easy to examine the work of literature. Sigmund Freud, the founder father of Psychoanalysis has an interesting way to evaluate the uncanny. This is an approach to locate the elements of uncanny in Satyajit Ray's short stories. Ray writes, "যে চরিত্র বা মানুষগুলির সঙ্গে আমি বাস্তব জীবনে পরিচিত, আমার লেখা গল্পগুলি তারই প্রতিফলন। আমি ঊনিশ শতকের গল্প লিখি না।" which translates to the idea that his stories are made of every man he has ever met and his short stories are not the 19th century seriousness rather it serves the recreational format of short story by providing uncouth and uncanny experiences.

## UNDERSTANDING SIGMUND FREUD'S UNCANNY

Sigmund Freud defines Uncanny as "the class of frightening things that leads us back to what is known and familiar" (Freud 2011). In his study of the uncanny he brings out the idea of German terms "Heimlich" which translates to something withheld from the sight and from other and "Unheimlich" (what is inadvertently revealed) which is opposite to Heimlich. Freud draws the difference between the two terms and finally begins to draw attention upon how the human nature transcends the idea of these two and they ultimately overlap with their meanings. Freud stresses upon the how the uncertainty of situation rob oneself off their own eyes. The first argument of his thesis from his study of uncanny arises" due to the return of the repressed infantile material" (Gray 2016). The idea of "double" or "doppelganger" also falls under uncanny with respect to the infantile love one has for oneself. The

childhood is a sensitive time for an individual and during that time the child produces multiple projections of the self to ensure his or her immortality. But the uncanny is produced when one of those multiple projection resurfaces and is encountered later in life in the form of a double. This particular theoretical study of the double has been applied in many fictional stories to evoke a certain temperament of strange familiarity.

## SATYAJIT RAY'S WORLD OF PHANTASMAGORIA:

Satyajit Ray's world is a kaleidoscopic world and his stories are amalgamated with the elements of horror of the supernatural and the world of everything mysterious. The phantasmagoria that he creates through his characterisation and setting of mundane is unthinkably genius. The mundane mixes with magic. However, Satyajit Ray's world is not a world of plain supernaturalism, he himself advocated for the inclusion of science and reason. But he did believe in realms that science was yet to find answers for. To Andrew Robinson, Satyajit Ray phrases his idea of science and mystic and says, "I don't think everything can be explained by science at this stage, but a lot of things will come under science eventually" (Chatterjee 2021). It is evident that Ray understood the science and its far-reaching importance but he also believed in the existence of something that the science could not perhaps explain. The stories "Indigo", "Ratan Babu and that Man", "Fritz", "Khagam", "The Hungry Septopus", "A strange night for Mr. Shashmal", "Bhuto" etc. are stories that suspends the readers belief of what is real and what is unreal. All these stories evoke the feeling of uncanny among readers. Satyajit Ray comes from a stream of hereditary genius, his grandfather Upendra Kishore Ray was a novelist, his father Sukumar Ray was a famous Bengali poet of the nonsense and the gibberish genre. But what is little known to the world is the family line had a strange connection with the supernatural world. Ray's great grandfather's father was a tantric. His father Sukumar Ray had premonitory idea of his own death and of many different futuristic events. Satyajit Ray himself found out in a documentation from Shantiniketan, a conversation between the legend Rabindranath Tagore and his father which translates to,

> Tagore: Do you know I have started to paint?
> Sukumar Ray: yes, I am aware of everything that you do
> Tagore: will the paintings of mine be appreciated?
> Sukumar Ray: abroad at first!

The idea behind bringing this conversation is to put emphasis on the mystic outlook that Ray had perhaps grown up with and naturally so he said, "Some streak of mysticism or supernaturalism was in his blood" (Chatterjee 2021). The literary works he produced thus had a lot of influence from his background.



The stories begin with a usual natural day with a world in place, an educated Bengali protagonist travelling to somewhere and ultimately paving his way to the world of uncanny in between and a mysterious end making the readers quench for answers. "Fritz" is one such short story that is highly appreciated as a work of uncanny. In this story, the uncanny relies on an inanimate object coming back to life. The protagonist Jayanta Babu (a newspaper editor) travels to a place called Bundi in Rajasthan where he has visited earlier as a child. On reaching the circuit house where he had stayed earlier, the eeriness of the place surrounds him and readers are made aware that something unrevealed is bothering him. The story follows with "Fritz" coming back to life. An inanimate doll that was close to Jayanta as a kid. As a child when he visited the location, he had dug the doll under a Debdaru tree in the same circuit house. The uncanny occurs when at night he feels the doll walking over his chest and around the house. The psyche around his childhood activity resurfacing in his life after so many years arouse in him what Freud defines as "uncanny". The Heimlich that describes a secretive concealment of eye or self can also be related to this story. In another story "The Hungry Septopus" a botanist's fantasy of collecting rare species of plants turns into nightmare when the carnivorous plant starts to demand human flesh as well. His other stories too have the hint of uncanny be it the shapeshifting in "Khagam", reverse evolution or metamorphosis in "The Incident related to Mriganka Babu", inanimate objects coming to life as in "Fritz" and "Bhuto", and weird dreams turning real as in "Indigo terror". The streak continues to haunt the reader's mind. The other form of uncanny that meets at the blurring line between Ray's short story and Freudian concept of "uncanny" is the idea of the "Double" or the "Doppelganger".

UNFOLDING THE UNCANNY ELEMENTS IN "RATAN BABU AND THAT MAN":

The story of "Ratan Babu and that man" explores theme of uncanny. The Freudian theory of experiencing Uncanny through the double or doppelganger suggests, as a child, the narcissistic child out of self-love creates multiple projections of the self to assure his permanent identity which on resurfacing later on in life evokes the Uncanny. "Ratan Babu and that man" is a story about a man Ratan Babu who loves to travel to unexplored places. However, he laments over not finding a companion in his journey. Therefore, he travels alone. This time too he sets off on a journey to without anticipating what awaits him. The story begins with making the readers comfortable with a natural setting, specifically to put more emphasis on the tragedy that is supposed to befall the protagonist in the later part of the story. Ray opens the setting as,

"There was no sign of busyness in the few people around and a pleasant earthy smell was floating in the art. All in all, he found the surroundings most agreeable". (Ray, 2020, p. 19) Ratan Babu sets off to Shini, a village fifteen miles from Tata Nagar. Ratan Babu was a typical man of habits. He had the habit "of bathing twice a day in tepid water throughout the year" and "he needed to have rice and fish curry with rotis and vegetables" (Ray, 2020, p.21) on his arrival to Mahamaya hotel everything was specified to Pancha, the caretaker. Among the rigid habits that he had one was his habit of taking walks after meal. On his arrival to Shini, after having his lunch he went for a walk and explored the charming ponds, a herd of goat crossing the road and on walking further ahead he could see a bridge. The railway line passed under the weak bridge. The scene of the passing rail "thrilled him". The normal story now begins to take an uncanny turn when a "stranger clad in dhoti and shirt, a snuff-coloured shawl on his shoulder" (Ray, 2020, p.22) stood by him in the same bridge. Ratan Babu felt indifferent looking at that man. He started to think in his mind "wasn't there something familiar to him?" until he finally realised "he had seen this face too many times in his own mirror. The resemblance was uncanny" (Ray, 2020, p.27). The stranger looked exactly like him with same facial features, dressing style, and even same voice. The stranger reveals his name to be Manilal much like Ratan Babu's full name Ratanlal. Ratan Babu found it disturbingly odd and yet somehow the idea of someone so alike gave an inner pleasure. The pleasure he derived was from the fact that he finally might have found a companion in him. Soon enough, Ratan Babu realised not only their names and face matched but their behaviour, their thought processes, their birthdates and even their salaries were same. Much like Ratan Babu, Manilal Babu had also come here for a stay Perhaps the only difference between them was the hotels they were staying in. While Ratan Babu was staying in "Mahamaya hotel", Manilal Babu was staying in "Kalika hotel". Even though their meeting were delightful yet Ratan Babu felt off. He kept thinking about the strange occurrence and "sleep wouldn't come" that night. The story starts to taken eerie turn which is signified by "an owl screeching overhead", "silence had descended over the neighbourhood" (Ray, 2020, p.27). The next morning when Ratan Babu and Manilal Babu met at the local haat, a group of young boys teased them as "Tweedledee and Tweedledum" (Ray, 2020, p.28). Even though it was a funny comment and both of them seemed to have no effect on hearing it. In reality, this remark had far-reaching impact on Ratan Babu. The Freudian concept of double arousing an offence to the main anchor begins to formulate on Ratan Babu's mind. He soon wanted to get rid of Manilal Babu because according to him it made "no sense in both of them being alive at the same time". Freud relates the double to the formation of super ego" (Gray 2016). The double induces the feeling of self-criticism and later on turns offensive. "An unfulfilled but possible future to which we still like to cling in phantasy, all the strivings of the ego which adverse circumstances have crushed" (Freud 2011). The readers are hooked at the edge to figure out what happens to these two characters. Ratan Babu's mind starts to plan a murder of sorts for Manilal Babu and ultimately Ratan Babu pushes Manilal Babu from the same bridge where they had initially met. The last striking similarity between the two was both of them had a metal box of betel nuts in their pockets. A strange thing followed this incident. Instead of returning to "Mahamaya Hotel" he ends up landing in "Kalika Hotel" where Manilal Babu stayed. However, no guilt followed him. A day later he was just content that everyone around in the place thought it was a murder. The readers might ideally think the story ends here but Ray's unique style of ending with a "sublime" effect awaits. Ratan Babu went to visit that bridge once again before he left Shini. While he stood at the bridge with his thoughts of the large sky and the forest around, an anonymous almost unseen force pushed him from the shuddering bridge and the train passed below it (Ray, 2020, p.30). The reader's mind is suspended as to think if the end is real who had actually killed him? Willing suspension of disbelief as described by Dr Samual Coleridge is the wilful avoidance of reality. Perhaps that is how the world of fiction becomes successful in evoking the horror among readers much like in this short story by Ray. The unreal becomes a real world. The macabre fashion becomes an obsession for the readers much like the gothic fiction.

The uncanny in fiction has certain characteristics like

the story focuses on one central character and the external world is seen through the perspective of this central anchor. It is a fusion of the objective and the subjective narrative styles. Ratan Babu is the central anchor and the readers perceive Manilal Babu only as seen through the lens of Ratan Babu and the story is indeed a fusion of the objective and the subjective narrative.

**CONCLUSION:**

Satyajit Ray is a terrific writer. A genius like him deserves more inclusion in literature. It is indeed alarming how his stories have remained only to the limited understanding of bordered topography. The society, today is shaped with terrible fictions and stories, ranging from people's absurdity to uncertain discoveries. A fictional world like Ray's is perhaps the need of the hour. Ray's uncanny world of macabre and mystery awaits many readers even today. The short stories are a ware house of entertainment and ethnicity. The characters feel real and the twist of the story engages the mind of the readers by evoking a strange fear or "sublime". The super natural vagueness, the more explicit references to ghosts and the raw depiction of the recreational idea of story-telling and story writing perhaps became Ray's fashion. The psychological impact that his stories have on the readers is also uncanny. The strange relatability with his characters being puzzled without reason finds a scooping shelter in the reader's mind. The society today has forgotten the magic of short stories. While an entire generation is lost in the transition of visual entertainment, Ray, Ratan Babu and that man still awaits their deserved readers.



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# Facilitating Teaching and Learning process by using Translanguaging in a Bilingual Science Classroom

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## ABSTRACT

Translanguaging is a new pedagogical approach which is use in classroom for bilingual education, moderate number of research have been conducted to investigate whether translanguaging have an effect on teaching learning process for bilingual student. The purpose of this study is to evaluate the effect of having contributes to the knowledge base on translanguaging instruction through the design, implementation, and examination of students' engagement with the content taught in a set of lessons using translanguaging. For this study ten students were selected from grade 6. Mixed methods including experimental analysis with ethnographic observation, semi-structured interviews, and a critical discourse analysis of the research basis for an intervention curriculum used with particular students, the current work relies exclusively on data collected from ethnographic observation and field notes, and audio and video recordings of student interactions that were transcribed. Moreover, while the observations in the larger study covered entire school days across quarter of the year, the current study reports only on observations during science instructional time. Interactions during class time, including the delivery of instruction, student work, and assessment, were observed and audio recorded with the researcher taking field notes and occasionally serving as a participant-observer assisting in teaching and classroom management. These lessons were based on a language-based English reading curriculum for Tamil-English bilingual junior secondary students (grade 6). Our approach to translanguaging pedagogy was characterized by a) use of bilingual texts; b) flexible language use; and c) bilingual language instruction. Translanguaged instruction supported students' metalinguistic awareness and cognitive engagement, and enabled them to position themselves as expert linguists. This study provides evidence about the affordances of translanguaging instruction, which is needed to continue stimulating the ideological shift from monolingual to multilingual perspectives in the education of bilingual students.

**Keywords:** Translanguaging, Bilingual Education, Pedagogy, Cognition, Code switching, Code mixing, Translation

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.0 Introduction

#### 1.1 Statement of the research

This research aims to investigate the effectiveness of utilizing translanguaging strategies in facilitating the teaching and learning process in a bilingual science classroom context, with a specific focus on emergent bilingual students. The study seeks to address the challenges faced by emergent bilingual students in mastering educational standards while learning a new language, particularly in the domain of science education. Building upon the recognition of translanguaging as a promising pedagogical approach and linguistic phenomenon in bilingual education, this research endeavors to explore its application in the science classroom. It seeks to understand how translanguaging can bridge language barriers, promote effective communication, and enhance comprehension among emergent

bilingual students when engaging with scientific concepts and academic language. Drawing from the identified gap in understanding and implementing translanguaging practices in bilingual science classrooms, this research endeavors to contribute to the existing body of knowledge by providing empirical insights into its efficacy. By examining the experiences and perceptions of both teachers and students, this study aims to elucidate the potential benefits and challenges associated with incorporating translanguaging strategies in bilingual science instruction. The research further seeks to advocate for more inclusive teaching practices that recognize and value students' linguistic diversity while promoting academic success. Through an exploration of translanguaging as a means to preserve cultural and linguistic heritage while fostering academic achievement, this study aspires to inform educational policy and practice, ultimately striving for more equitable and effective bilingual education initiatives.

### *1.2 Background of the research*

Emergent bilingual students, particularly those in bilingual education programs, often face significant challenges in mastering educational standards while simultaneously learning a new language. Teachers frequently overlook the linguistic dimensions of their curriculum, which can lead to low test scores and academic attainment rates among bilingual students. However, it's essential to avoid solely attributing student low performance to language barriers, as this can result in their isolation into language-focused classrooms rather than addressing their broader learning needs rooted in literacy skills. In the context of science education, students encounter specific linguistic challenges as scientific disciplines rely on particular conventions, terms, and discursive norms. These aspects, collectively known as academic language or the language of science, are crucial for students to grasp for successful engagement with scientific content. Despite the recognized benefits of allowing the use of students' first language (L1) in learning tasks, emergent bilingual students often find themselves placed in English-only classrooms, which can hinder their learning process. Translanguaging has emerged as a promising pedagogical approach and linguistic phenomenon in bilingual education. It involves the dynamic and fluid use of two or more languages by individuals, allowing them to seamlessly blend languages to communicate effectively. Research suggests that translanguaging can enhance bilingual students' communication and comprehension abilities by leveraging their full linguistic repertoire. Additionally, translanguaging positively impacts cognitive development, fostering flexibility in thinking and problem-solving skills among bilingual learners. Despite these potential benefits, there is a lack of comprehensive understanding and implementation of translanguaging practices in bilingual science classrooms, particularly among emergent bilingual students from marginalized backgrounds. This research aims to address this gap by exploring the effectiveness of translanguaging in facilitating teaching and learning processes in a bilingual science classroom setting.

### *1.3 justifications*

This research investigates the use of translanguaging in bilingual science classrooms to address linguistic and academic challenges faced by emergent bilingual students. It aims to identify effective strategies for promoting academic language development while respecting students, linguistic diversity. Translanguaging can help educators adopt inclusive teaching practices that accommodate all students' linguistic needs. It improves learning outcomes by promoting effective communication and comprehension, empowering students to engage more deeply with scientific concepts and improve academic performance. Translanguaging also helps preserve and strengthen students' cultural and linguistic heritage, ensuring their connections to their language and culture are maintained while supporting their academic growth.

My research questions are

(1) Translanguaging, how to impact in teaching learning process?

(2) Is it helped to improve students learning outcomes?

The paper discusses the use of translanguaging in science education for students acquiring English and explores the theoretical frame work of translanguaging and socially oriented theories of language and language learning as foundations for effective science instruction of emergent bilingual students. It argues that translanguaging practices support students in developing scientific content knowledge and skills, but emphasizes the importance of authentic opportunities for input and modeling of target language practices. The paper reviews literature on science education for students acquiring English and translanguaging pedagogies, presenting the study's context, methodologies, and findings.

### *1.4 Objectives*

**General Objective:**

To investigate the effectiveness of utilizing translanguaging strategies in a bilingual science classroom to facilitate the teaching and learning process.

**Specific Objectives:**

To assess the impact of translanguaging on students' comprehension of scientific concepts in a bilingual

classroom setting.

To evaluate the extent to which translanguaging promotes active participation and engagement among students in science lessons.

To analyze the role of translanguaging in bridging language barriers and facilitating communication between teachers and students in a bilingual science classroom.

To investigate the influence of translanguaging on students' attitudes, towards learning science in bilingual environment.

To identify the most effective translanguaging strategies for enhancing, teaching and learning outcomes in the context of bilingual science education.

To explore the perceptions and experiences of teachers and students, regarding the use of translanguaging in the science classroom.

To examine the potential challenges and limitations associated with implementing translanguaging approaches in bilingual science instruction.

To propose recommendations and best practices for integrating translanguaging into the curriculum and pedagogical practices of bilingual science

**2.0 Literature review**

***2.1 Bilingual Education***

Bilingual education is an educational approach that focuses on teaching academic content in two languages to develop proficiency in both languages. It aims to help students become proficient in both their native language and a second language, recognizing the importance of maintaining linguistic and cultural diversity. There are several models of bilingual education, each with its own approach to language instruction. Common models include dual language programs, transitional bilingual education, maintenance bilingual education, and two-way bilingual education. Dual language programs involve a mix of native speakers of the target language and native speakers of the majority language, with instruction provided in both languages *(Wright and Baker 2017).* Transitional bilingual education is designed for students who speak a language other than their home language, with academic instruction initially in their native language and gradually transitioning to the majority language *(Genesee, F., 2006).* Maintenance bilingual education aims to maintain and develop students' proficiency in languages, promoting bilingualism and illiteracy *(Cummins, J., 2007).* Two-way bilingual program models in the United States aim to develop balanced bilingualism, ensuring equal competence in two languages across any context and with any speaker *(García 2009)*. Bilingual education can lead to improved cognitive skills, increased cultural awareness, and enhanced linguistic abilities. However, its success depends on quality instruction, parental and community support, and overall language policies in the educational system.

***2.2 Bilingual Education in Srilanka***

Bilingual Education (BE) can be broadly defined, under Sri lankan context as, an educational program, where English is used as a medium of instruction through effective pedagogy of Content and Language integrated Learning (CLIL), without ruining the position of the first language, from secondary level, for few selected subjects while History and Religion are taught in the first languages, due the embedded identity and cultural value in those subjects (Nanayakkara, 2017). It is important to note that primary grades are instructed in L1; Sinhala or Tamil. Sri lankan BE is aimed for additive bilingualism (Medawattegedera, 2011, as cited in NEC, 2014) where both languages are given, same value and recognition by systematic teaching and learning, throughout the years of schooling, with the aim of developing learners literacy and communication in two languages (UNESCO, 2016).

Good Language in Education policy underwent different dimensions depending on the socio-political situations throughout the history, to alleviate the created social inequality. Teaching English as a Second Language (ESL) failed to achieve the needs of combating the inequalities and meeting the growing demand for English under globalization context. And thereby teaching English through BE via CLIL was introduced as a countermeasure, to address above issues as well to transfer the students to the world of work and for higher education specially in Science (Medawattegedera, 2015). Apart from above mentioned why it was introduced, the following are considered national objectives of BE. Firstly, to develop social harmony and cohesion, in a multicultural society, by using English as tool. it is a link language of the globe. Secondly, ".to ensure equal opportunity for all the students to acquire ESL at secondary level, without jeopardizing Sinhala and Tamil as National and Official languages, irrespective of socio-economic and regional disparities" (Nanayakkara, 2017). Thirdly, to enable students to use local as well as English as means of reaching the knowledge society through information technology. Lastly, to link academic aspects commented. You need to give reference. And socio economic political and cultural aspects of the world of work through National languages and the link language at local and global level (Nanayakkara, 2017).

***2.3. Translanguaging***

One of the linguistic and pedagogical theory and practice known as translanguaging places emphasis on the flexible and dynamic ways in which multilingual people and societies use multiple

languages. It questions established notions of language barriers and promotes using every linguistic tool at one's disposal for efficient communication. Translanguaging acknowledges that a large number of people are not linguistically monolingual and frequently use a variety of languages to communicate. Translanguaging is characterized by a few important aspects that blur the lines between languages, seeing them as related rather than separate things. It recognizes that people commonly incorporate parts of many languages into their communication.

Through translanguaging, people may utilize their whole linguistic range, which includes utilizing both their first and second languages as needed, code-switching (alternating between languages), and code-mixing (combining elements from different languages in the same sentence or discourse). It is intimately related to a person's social and cultural identity. It acknowledges that language is a person's sense of self and community in addition to being a tool for communication.

Examples of what translanguaging might look like. Code-Switching refers; individuals may seamlessly switch between languages within a single conversation or even within a sentence. For example, in a bilingual conversation, a person might say, "I went to சந்தை (market) to buy some vegetables," seamlessly blending English and Tamil. Code-Mixing refers; this involves mixing elements of different languages within a sentence or discourse. For instance, someone might say, "I saw a film", ரோமின் வரலாற்றைப் பற்றியது.

"(I saw a film about the history of Rome), combining English and Tamil words in the same sentence. This can help ensure better comprehension and engagement. Written documents or online content may incorporate multiple languages. This could include labels on products, signs, or marketing materials that feature text in different languages. People may incorporate words or phrases from one language into another. For example, English has borrowed many words from other languages, such as "kindergarten" from German or "piano" from Italian. Translanguaging can extend to cultural expressions, where individuals use elements from their home culture's language and traditions in their daily lives, even when speaking predominantly in another language. People might use certain languages or language features to express their cultural or social identity. For example, someone may use specific dialects, accents, or linguistic markers to signal their belonging to a particular group. In multilingual regions, public signs, advertisements, and instructions may be written in multiple languages to accommodate the diverse population. This practice recognizes the importance of linguistic diversity in society.

Translanguaging is also evident in music, film, and other media where artists and creators may incorporate multiple languages to reach a broader and more diverse audience. It's important to note that translanguaging is context-dependent, and the specific manifestations can vary widely. The key idea is that it embraces the dynamic and fluid use of multiple languages, allowing individuals to draw from their linguistic repertoire to communicate effectively and express themselves in a way that feels most natural and meaningful to them.

### *2.4. Translanguaging as Pedagogy*

Using translanguaging to teach and learn in school mobilizes all of students' linguistic skills. When used in school, translanguaging has four goals: Support students as they engage with complex content and texts. Provide opportunities for students to develop academic language practices. Make space for students' bilingual or multilingual ways of knowing. Support students' social and emotional development and bilingual or multilingual identities.

Translanguaging as a pedagogical approach is an educational strategy that encourages the active and purposeful use of all the languages and linguistic resources available to multilingual students in the learning process. It challenges the traditional separation of languages in the classroom and recognizes that students often have rich linguistic repertoires beyond the language of instruction. Here are some key aspects of translanguaging as pedagogy, such as Translanguaging respects and values students' linguistic diversity. It acknowledges that students may be more comfortable or proficient in one language over another and that all languages should be recognized and valued in the learning process. Translanguaging encourages the use of students' home languages in the classroom. This can help students better understand and express complex ideas, fostering deeper learning. Teachers may use students' home languages strategically to scaffold instruction. For instance, they might explain a concept in a student's home language and then gradually transition to the language of instruction, making the material more accessible. Translanguaging sees language as a tool for learning, not just as the subject of instruction. It recognizes that language proficiency is essential for grasping content in various subjects. Translanguaging can support students in developing their language skills in all languages they use. It acknowledges that proficiency in one language can positively influence proficiency in others. It helps students maintain and strengthen their cultural and linguistic identity, boosting their confidence in the classroom. When students feel their language and culture are valued, it can lead to improved engagement and academic performance. Translanguaging can be applied to foster interaction and collaboration among students. It allows students to communicate more naturally, share ideas, and

build on each other's contributions. Translanguaging may involve more flexible assessment methods that allow students to demonstrate their understanding and skills in various languages. This can include written assignments, presentations, or projects in any language they are comfortable with. Educators may use bilingual or multilingual materials, such as textbooks, resources, and multimedia, to support learning. The extent and specific practices of translanguaging as pedagogy can vary depending on the student population, curriculum, and educational goals. It is adaptable to different educational contexts.

Translanguaging and Trans-semiotising Translanguaging is the 'the ability of multilingual speakers to shuttle between languages, treating the diverse languages that form their repertoire as an integrated system' (Canagarajah 2011, 401 as cited in Wijesekera et al., 2018). Here both MT instruction and English as a MOI can be practiced together in an integrated manner, wherever one feels it is necessary to mix languages. This is completely natural where there is only one system of languages that is functioning in a person with linguistic repertoire. Is the choice of words or phrases from whatever language once feels comfortable to express their standpoint? It is a method of scaffolding the content to make it easier to understand. Moreover, trans-smeiotising is another new method of using mixed languages with the use of semiotic means, in meaning making process in a conversation. This also can be effectively utilized in a CLIL classroom. Good ".the strategic use of translanguaging and trans-semiotising (e.g., between visual images, gestures, and sounds) plays a significant role in human communication during which the communication resources in the (partially) shared semiotic repertoires keep expanding with the co-contributions of the participants in the dynamic communication processes" ( He, Lai, & Lin, 2016; Lin, 2012 as cited in Lin & He, 2017). There were times when we were lacking a proper vocabulary to express our idea instantly. At that time it was our gestures and signs that we used in languaging. And tran-semiotising can be used as an effective pedagogy in CLIL classrooms to effectively scaffold the teaching and learning process.

Code switching (CS), according to Wardhaugh (2010, 84), is a "shift from one code [language] to another (as cited in Wijesekera et al., 2018). As such, "code-switching differs from translanguaging theoretically – code-switching considers shuttle between separate codes, and languages are considered as separate systems" (Wijesekera et al., 2018). Theoretically code switching and translanguaging are different from each other even though they are the same when it comes to languinglangauging. However. When code switching is done the person used to switch between two languages, in a single register or in a single sentence. Here the user completely goes out from one language to another to explain their viewpoint in a way the listener understands or in a way that he can explain much better. The teacher also can code switch from English to MT, when she finds that the students are not responding or when they show a gloomy face, indicating that they didn't get the idea. Then the teacher decides to change the language to make it clear in their MT. In code switching the user considers that he is switching between two languages whereas in translanguaging the user does not consider the languaging words coming from two different language systems, rather it is from one system within a linguistic repertoire. The one who is tranlanguing can assume that he is using a new language with a given mixture of words or creole. Almost many of us are using translanging in our daytoday life. We cannot solely stick to MT. Many of us cannot do so. This natural way of languaging can be effectively utilized in effective pedagogy. Good Translation Translation is a process of transferring linguistic entities from one language or source language to another language or target language and it is also referred to as a mental activity, where the meaning of given linguistic discourse is changed or transfered into another language(Rillo & Osman, 2017).

In CLIL classrooms teachers as well as students are actively participating in translating complicated terminologies into mother tongue. And its importance is even more emphasized in teaching English as a second language classroom. It is very difficult to convey the meaning if it cannot be translated into the mother tongue. In SLA it is a must that teachers do translation of text where necessary. Even students can talk with peers to translate sentences or words for their better understanding when the teacher is delivering the discourse. Moreover, one's ability to translate is a higher order thinking process, and it really increases the cognition of students. By using translanguaging, code switching and even by translating into different languages in bilingual CLIL classrooms the students' engagement can be enhanced, both by effective teaching and learning, of contents through, BE. As it was mentioned as ".translanguaging has been used as a pedagogical strategy to engage ethnic minoritized students to utilize their emerging academic language and multilingual repertoires both for CLIL and identity affirmation" (Cummins, 2015; García & Li Wei, 2015; Lin & Lo, 2016, as cited in Lin & He, 2017), it can even improve the comprehensive understanding of content, and as they are allowed to use their MT. Moreover, when they are in a minority in a multi ethnic classroom, their identity can also be affirmed and among other students and supra ethnic identity can be formed as a whole.

Translanguaging as pedagogy is often seen as a way to make education more culturally responsive, engaging, and effective for multilingual learners. It

aligns with the idea that multilingualism is an asset and should be leveraged to enhance learning outcomes. However, it's essential for educators to receive proper training and support to effectively implement translanguaging strategies in the classroom and ensure that students are benefiting from this approach.

### *2.5. Translanguaging in science pedagogy*

According to García, Ibarra Johnson, and Seltzer (2016), translanguaging pedagogy serves four purposes: it allows students to develop their linguistic practises for academic contexts; it supports learners' bilingual identities and socioemotional development; and it supports learners' engagement with and comprehension of complex texts and content. Apart from these four objectives, the use of translanguaging as teaching in formal.

Translanguaging is a method that allows students to express themselves in their native language(s) to enhance their understanding of scientific concepts. This approach can be particularly beneficial in science education, as it helps develop a deeper conceptual understanding of scientific principles. It also provides language support for students learning science in a language not their first language, offering additional support for comprehension and communication. Translanguaging also facilitates scientific discourse, allowing students to engage in discussions in a comfortable way, leading to more meaningful discussions and a better grasp of scientific ideas. It also fosters cultural connections between scientific concepts and students' cultural backgrounds, making science more relevant and relatable. Translanguaging is valuable in formative assessment processes, as it allows students to respond to questions or express their understanding in their native language(s), providing insights into their thought processes and comprehension levels. It also supports collaborative learning by allowing students to communicate and work together using their most comfortable languages, fostering a more inclusive and cooperative learning environment. Lastly, translanguaging can incorporate multilingual resources into science education, catering to the diverse linguistic backgrounds of students. By embracing translanguaging in science education, educators can create a more inclusive and effective learning environment that values linguistic diversity.

Translanguaging is used to clarify meanings of scientific terms, connect student prior knowledge with the topic at hand, and engage students in various scientific practices (e.g. observing, questioning, hypothesizing, and explaining). Translanguaging is the process of using a translanguaging strategy to build student scientific discursive behaviors rather than just teaching science knowledge. As science is often described in terms of its use of specific discursive practices (Kelly 2014), the following conversation can be taken as an example for how we can use translanguing, transsemiotising, code-switching and translation in a grade 7 science classroom:

1. Teacher: What is the difference between respiration and transpiration in plants?

2. Students: (silence)

3. Teacher: Respiration endral enna? (What is meant by respiration?)

4. Student 1: appadiendal moochi widuthala? (Is it breathing?)

5. Student 2: adu breathing a? (Is it breathing?)

6. Teacher: Yes, it is a process of breathing we called it as "moochu viduthal" in Tamil. And the teacher shows it by breathing by action.

7. Students 2: appa transpiration endal, what teacher? (Then, what is meant by transpiration)

8. Teacher: Yeah, then what is meant by Transpiration. (Teacher looking at student who asked the question, and shows the figure attached to the wall by hand and uses semiotic expression in face and tone)

9. Student 3; Is it water going out from plant?

10. Teacher: Yes, very good, it is removal of water from the plant Surfaces. (bright face of encouragement)

11. Students: surface enda enna teacher, konjam mudalla irundu solungale. (What is meant by surface, please explain from the start) .and as such scaffolding continues effectively Here they have used translanguaging 3, 5, etc, code switching in 4, translation of word respiration in 6 and trans - semiotising also used in 6,7 and 10 (Numbers are used for the easier identification, not pertaining to any chronological order) The National Education Commission recommends the use of techniques such as code-switching, translations, and translanguaging as a scaffolding as a tool for bilingual students who lack proficiency in their initial grades to make both content knowledge and the target language (English) more comprehensible(NEC,2014).

### *2.6. Translanguaging Strategies for Teachers*

Translanguaging strategies can be highly effective in promoting a supportive and inclusive learning environment for multilingual students. Teachers can employ these strategies by valuing all languages, understanding students' linguistic backgrounds, using students' home languages, providing bilingual or multilingual resources, scaffolded instruction, pairing students with different language

backgrounds as language buddies, allowing students to choose their preferred language, incorporating translanguaging in assessment, designing interactive activities, assigning multilingual assignments, culturally responsive teaching, engaging in professional development opportunities, involving families in the education process, reflecting and adapting to student feedback, and encouraging peer learning and support.

Valuing all languages and respecting students' linguistic backgrounds is crucial for creating a classroom atmosphere where they feel valued and respected. This involves actively using students' home languages, providing bilingual or multilingual materials, and allowing them to demonstrate their understanding in their home language or a language of their choice. Interactive activities encourage dialogue and collaboration in multiple languages, while multilingual assignments allow students to create products using a combination of languages and cultural references.

Family engagement is essential for creating a stronger support system for students. Teachers should continually assess the effectiveness of their translanguaging strategies and be open to adapting their approach based on student feedback and progress. Encouraging peer learning and support among students can help each other with language-related challenges and provide language support.

Teachers must be flexible and responsive to the needs of their multilingual students, creating a classroom environment that recognizes and leverages their linguistic diversity.

### *2.7. Translanguaging and metalinguistic awareness*

Metalinguistic awareness is the ability to understand language structure and its structural features. (Nagy & Anderson, 1995) Bilingual children have an advantage in developing metalinguistic awareness (Adesope et al., 2010). Compared to monolinguals due to their structural sensitivity. This advantage is attributed to having access to two languages with more salient structural similarities and differences, allowing them to form abstract representations of language structure. This advantage is attributed to their ability to distance themselves from language content. (Kuo & Anderson, 2010, p. 370).

Structural sensitivity theory suggests that bilinguals' ability to recognize and engage with language structural features is due to their ongoing experiences navigating multiple languages across multiple contexts. This theory encourages a translanguaged approach to language and literacy instruction, focusing on metalinguistic awareness rather than maintaining language transparency by focusing on target language use. It encourages students to become more attentive to language by establishing connections between structural features in their named languages, helping them understand how language works in meaningful contexts. (Cenoz & Gorter, 2011)

By providing students with the chance to analyze, contrast, and utilize their named languages in a flexible manner, translanguaged instruction can be designed to concentrate instruction solely on language and improve students' linguistic comprehension (Cenoz & Gorter, 2011; Cummins, 2013; Horst, White & Bell, 2010). Contrastive analysis is not the same as promoting metalinguistic awareness from a translanguaging approach (Lado, 1964). Theoretically, behaviorist theories that see language acquisition as the creation of habits have historically framed contrastive analysis, which theoretically guides approaches to teaching second languages (Valdes, Capitelli, & Alvarez, 2011).

Contrastive analysis views the relationship between learners' prior and new linguistic knowledge negatively, arguing that prior knowledge interferes with learning. (Brown, 2007). However, a translanguaging perspective views language learning as a dynamic process of adding new linguistic features through meaningful interactions. Language learning occurs in relationship with students' existing language practices and linguistic knowledge, with no target language. New language practices emerge in interrelationship with old ones without competing or threatening the established sense of being that language constitutes (Garcıa & Li, 2014, p. 79).

A translanguaged approach to metalinguistic awareness creates a translanguaging space where students engage in an active meaning-making process, not learning isolated grammatical structures. (Li, 2018). This allows them to establish connections between their prior linguistic knowledge and the new target language structures, fostering a deeper understanding of language structures. (Cenoz & Gorter, 2011; Cummins, 2013).

## 3.0 Methodology

The study commenced with an evaluation of students' language proficiency in both their native language (Tamil) and the target language (English). This involved the use of questionnaires and tests to assess listening, reading, speaking, and writing skills, particularly in English. Additionally, students were observed during classroom activities, and one-on-one conversations were conducted. Feedback was sought from the English language teacher. Subsequently, key problems and indicators were identified. Following this, translanguaging practices were implemented, focusing on the effective delivery of both language and content. This process included aligning language demands with unit goals, exploring facilitation methods, identifying linguistic and non-linguistic resources for translanguaging, and designing specific strategies for problem-

solving. Post-translanguaging, a comprehensive assessment was conducted, encompassing language proficiency evaluation, classroom observation, feedback collection, performance assessment, and post-implementation surveys. The conclusion drawn reflects on the effectiveness of the applied translanguaging strategies in addressing language proficiency challenges and enhancing overall learning experiences. To enhance the comprehension the methodology part is divided into steps as follows.

**Step 1. Identify Language Proficiency Levels of students**

Begin by assessing the language proficiency of each student in both L1 and target language (English). To assess the language proficiency of each student in both languages, the following strategies were employed:

1.1. Using language proficiency questionnaire for both L1 (Tamil) and English and language proficiency test to measure the language skills (listening, reading, speaking and writing) especially in English.

1.2. Observational Assessment - Observing students during classroom activities and interactions to measure their use of language, their fluency, and their comprehension in both languages.

1.3. One-on-One Conversations

1.4. Consult with English language teacher and receiving feedback.

**Step 2: Problem identification**

2.1. Identifying key problems along with indicators in science content

2.2. Identifying key problems along with indicators in target language

2.3. Test score analysis and problem confirmation

**Step 3: Employing translanguaging practices**

3.1. Acknowledge the goal of the unit – both language and content should be delivered appropariately

3.2. Explore how the language demand should be facilitated to achieve the goal of unit

3.3. Identifying the linguistic and non-linguistic resources to employ translanguaging

3.4. Design suitable translanguaging strategy for the problems identified and execution.

**Step 4: Post-Translanguaging Assessment**

4.1. Language Proficiency Assessment

4.2. Classroom observation and collecting feedback from students

4.3. Performance assessment

**Data collection**

Data sources for this study included; questionnaire data in Tamil and English to assess proficiency levels, detailed notes on individual student language use, fluency, and comprehension during interactions, audio records to analyze spoken language proficiency of students during conversations, detailed notes from discussions with the English language teacher and video transcripts of the translingual interactions in class during science activities.

**4.0 Results and Analysis**

As per the questionnaire survey employed in step 1 to identify language proficiency levels of students, it was able to find many challenges and strategies that are prevailed in bilingual science classroom among students. The table 1 indicates the key challenges and strategies as the opinion of majority of the students mentioned. The answers for the questions are measured in Likert scales of five point. The low desirability level has been given the lower scale and higher desirability level has been given the higher scale. For an example the question no 1 "How comfortable are you engaging in conversations in English in classroom?" is measured through five point Likert scale 1 = Not at all comfortable, 2 = Somewhat comfortable, 3 = Moderately comfortable, 4 = Very comfortable and 5 = Extremely comfortable. The mean score 1.8 indicates that the majority of the responses fell in between 1*(Not at all comfortable)* and 2 *(Somewhat comfortable).* However the 1.8 takes the 2`s side means majority say they or somewhat comfortable in engaging English classroom conversations. The SD is standard deviation 0.79 means the dispersion of the answer is low in the considered sample of students.

Likewise for the strategy "Do you find yourself naturally switching between Tamil and English when speaking or writing?" it also measured by five point Likert scale (*1= Never, 2 = Rarely, 3 = Occasionally, 4 = Frequently and 5 = Always)* the mean score is 4.1 and it take the 4`s side and indicates that majority of students frequently switching between Tamil and English when speaking or writing. The SD is 0.57 means all the answers are dispersed very less from the value four. Clearly saying that very less responses can be found for 3 (*Occasionally)* and 5 *(Always).*

*Table 1.* Challenges and strategies that are prevailed among students in bilingual science classroom.

| No | Key question | Mean | SD |
|---|---|---|---|
| | Key challenges identified | | |
| 1 | How comfortable are you engaging in conversations in English in classroom? | 1.8 | 0.79 |
| 2 | Rate your ability to express complex ideas and thoughts in English. | 1.6 | 0.7 |
| 3 | How confident are you in using English to communicate with others in a group setting? | 1.6 | 0.7 |
| 4 | How comfortable are you reading and comprehending technical or scientific texts in English? | 1.7 | 0.67 |
| 5 | Rate your ability to follow and comprehend spoken instructions in English | 1.9 | 0.88 |
| 6 | How comfortable are you writing essays or reports in English on scientific topics? | 1.5 | 0.71 |
| 7 | How often do you participate voluntarily in class discussions in English? | 1.8 | 0.63 |
| | Key strategies identified | | |
| 1 | Do you find yourself naturally switching between Tamil and English when speaking or writing? | 4.1 | 0.57 |
| 2 | Rate your ability to interpret and convey scientific concepts through visual means (symbols, graphs, concept maps). | 3.8 | 0.63 |
| 3 | How confident are you in using physical models to explain scientific principles? | 2.9 | 0.88 |
| 4 | How confident do you feel expressing scientific thoughts when given the flexibility to use both Tamil and English languages? | 3.7 | 0.95 |
| 5 | How often do you use strategies to remember and apply scientific terms when participating in class activities? | 2.9 | 1.29 |
| 6 | How often do you use symbols and visual representations to enhance your understanding of scientific concepts? | 3.4 | 1.07 |
| | | | |

The bilingual science teacher`s note based on the one-on-one conversation between student and the teacher and the feedback given by the teacher of English also serves as a valuable asset to pinpoint the problems associated with the target language. Sample note and feedback given by teacher of English are listed in the table 2.

*Table 2.* The data collected through one-on-one conversation, observation and feedback by teacher of English

| Category | Description | Example |
|---|---|---|
| Conversation notes | The note is made by the bilingual science teacher to find out the English language proficiency of the students. It is based on the one-on-one conversation between the teacher and the students individually | *Student: Kabi (Grade 8)* |
| | | *Date: NN/NN/NNNN* |
| | | Notes: During our conversation, Kabi demonstrated good vocabulary and expressed ideas comprehensibly. However, ABC struggled with using complex sentence structures. Recommend focusing on sentence variety in writing exercises to enhance fluency. |
| | | |
| | | *Student: Niru (Grade 8)* |
| | | *Date: NN/NN/NNNN* |
| | | Notes: Niru struggled with forming complete sentences during our conversation. Identified challenges in organizing thoughts verbally. Proposed incorporating structured speaking activities to support language development. |
| Observation notes | This note is based on the bilingual science teacher`s observation during the science lesson. | *Student: Sara (Grade 8)* |
| | | *Date: NN/NN/NNNN* |
| | | Observation: Participated actively in today's group discussion on micro-organisma. Demonstrated a strong understanding of vocabulary and expressed ideas clearly. Fluency has noticeably improved compared to the beginning of the term. |
| | | |
| | | *Student: Abi (Grade 8)* |
| | | *Date: NN/NN/NNNN* |
| | | Observation: Struggled with complex sentence structures during today's reading exercise. Recommended additional practice on sentence construction and use of conjunctions to enhance comprehension. Encourage reading more challenging texts to build vocabulary. |
| Feedback | This feedback is given by the teacher of English. This is based on the English teaching experience of the teacher for the particular class. The feedback is shared during the conversation between the bilingual science teacher and the teacher of English. | *Student: Ravi (Grade 8)* |
| | | *Discussion Date: October 5, 2023* |
| | | Notes: English teacher highlighted Ravi`s outstanding performance in the recent writing task. Discussed the possibility of offering advanced writing tasks to further challenge him. Both teachers agree to collaborate on providing additional resources. |
| | | |
| | | *Student: Arun (Grade 8)* |
| | | *Discussion Date: NN/NN/NNNN* |
| | | Notes: English teacher shared concerns about Arun's limited vocabulary during group activities. Discussed implementing vocabulary-building exercises in both English and other subjects. Suggested consistent feedback to track progress. |

By analyzing all the inputs mentioned in step one the key problems identified along with indicators and listed in table 3 and these problems were planned to be eliminated through translanguaging approach.

*Table 3.* Key problems identified along with indicators through the step 1.

| Problem | Indicator |
|---|---|
| Limited vocabulary | • Difficulty understanding and using subject-specific English terms. |
| | • Limited range of words and expressions in written and spoken communication. |
| Poor reading skills | • Slow reading pace. |
| | • Difficulty comprehending complex sentences and paragraphs. |
| | • Struggling with academic texts written in English. |
| Weak listening skills | • Difficulty following instructions given in English. |
| | • Misunderstanding spoken information during discussions. |
| | • Limited ability to answer questions based on verbal instructions. |
| Limited speaking fluency | • Hesitation while speaking in English. |
| | • Limited ability to express ideas clearly and coherently. |
| | • Avoidance of participation in English-speaking activities. |
| Writing challenges | • Grammatical errors in written texts. |
| | • Lack of organization in essays or written responses. |
| | • Limited use of varied sentence structures. |
| Lack of classroom participation | • Minimal contribution to English-language discussions. |
| | • Reluctance to answer questions or share opinions in English. |
| | • Limited engagement in group activities requiring English communication. |
| Difficulty in academic communication | • Struggling to articulate complex scientific concepts in English. |
| | • Limited use of academic language and appropriate terminology. |
| Limited exposure to English outside the classroom | • Lack of interest in English-language media or literature. |
| | • Limited engagement in extracurricular activities that involve English. |
| | • Limited use of English in daily life outside of the classroom. |

Effectively assessing English proficiency in bilingual science education opens up a multidimensional challenge. Students struggle with limited vocabulary, which limits their ability to engage in written and oral communication. Reading skills exhibit weaknesses in comprehension, as evidenced by slow reading speed and difficulty with academic complexity. Listening skills interfere with understanding spoken instructions and participation in oral communication. Spaeaking is constrained by hesitation. Written communication reveals grammatical and structural errors. Classroom achievement reflects limited engagement in English and affects oral and written academic communication. Limited exposure to English-language media and extracurricular activities hinders overall language development. Inadequate support and resources exacerbate these issues, and cultural and linguistic differences affect language use. This review highlights key areas of translanguaging the targeted intervention to increase English proficiency among bilingual science students.

| Problem | Translanguaging strategies | Description |
|---|---|---|
| Limited vocabulary | Word walls and Glossaries | Create bilingual word walls with science technical terms in both languages, alongside corresponding pictures and visuals. |
| | | Ask students to develop glossaries where they add terms found in the text, translating them and noting connections between languages. |
| Poor reading skills | Bilingual reading peer | Pair students with different reading proficiency, allowing them to read bilingual science texts together and discuss the content in both languages, providing mutual support and comprehension checks. |
| | Language-integrated reading comprehension tasks | Provide reading comprehension tasks that involve matching scientific texts with visual image or diagrams, allowing students to comprehend the text through linguistic and non-linguistic clues. |
| Weak listening skills | Interactive presentations and songs | Teach science content through interactive presentations that incorporate elements from both languages, such as songs and rhymes. |
| | Language Games | Design language games that address scientific vocabulary |
| Limited speaking fluency | Talk and draw | Employ talk and draw activities where students explain scientific concepts by drawing and describing in their preferred language, fostering self-expression and peer scaffolding. |
| | Translanguaging science presentations: | Allow students to present their science projects or findings in both languages, enabling them to express complex scientific ideas in their native language before translating into target language |
| Writing challenges | Collaborative writing | Pair the students and ask them to find and write prescribed scientific concept which is not available in the text book. Provide bilingual graphic organizers and sentence starters to scaffold writing. |
| Lack of classroom participation | Think-Pair-Share | Students first individually reflect in their preferred language, then discuss with partners in any language, before sharing with the scientific concept to the whole class. |
| | Role play | Ask students to engage in a role play as discussing scientific concept and ensure each should have role and dialogue |
| Difficulty in academic communication | Science debates | Organize structured debates where students can argue and defend scientific viewpoints in both languages, allowing them to develop academic communication skills in a bilingual context. |
| | Presentations | Ask students to do simple presentation by using visuals, formulae to facilitate their academic communication |
| Limited exposure to English outside the classroom: | Science Field Trips | Visits to English-speaking science institutions (Universities), providing students with real-world exposure to scientific concepts in an English-speaking environment. |

The translanguaging strategies are well designed and ensured their alignment with the goal of the unit. Based on the content the linguistic resources are well defined such as bilingual science textbooks or handouts, glossaries of scientific terms, language support from bilingual peer mentors. Non-linguistic resources also accommodated to enhance content comprehension by minimizing language demand such as tools for visual exploration (Microscope) images and videos, physical models and so on.

The results based on step 1 assessing the language proficiency in terms language skills indicates the score for listening, reading, speaking and writing (figure 1). Each skills received five as the maximum score and one as the minimum score. Accordingly the score indicated in the figure is the cumulative value of all the students` (n=15) score. For an instance the score for speaking is 21 before translanguing means the sum all individual score of each students is equal to 21. The figure 1 indicated that there is an improvement in all four language skills after employing the translanguaging approach. The improvement is further confirmed by the video and audio clip analysis. Through the audio and video clip analysis some of the identified translanguaging practices by students in the bilingual classroom are listed below.

1. Accommodating English scientific or technical jargons in discussion of scientific content in L1 (Tamil). This may be considered as `vocabulary scaffolding` by abled peer.

- *E.g. The following example explains, how the scientific or technical jargons (Electromagnetic waves) can be brought into the discussion of scientific content in L1.*

- *In L1* - உங்கள் நண்பர் தொலைபேசியில் அழைக்கும் போது தொலைபேசி ஒலிக்க காரணம் *Electromagnetic waves* ஆகும்.

- *(Uṅkaḷ naṇpar tolaipeṣiyil aḻaikum pōtu tolaipeṣi olika kaṟaṇam Electromagnetic waves ākum.)*

- *(Electromagnetic waves are responsible for your phone ringing when your friend calls.)*

2. Reading text in English and talking about it in L1

3. Talking about figures labeled in English using L1

4. Metacognitive prompts: Students reflect on how they are using their languages to learn science, promoting awareness of translanguaging as a valuable tool.

E.g. While learning the evaporation process – students ask from abled peer whether they can imagine what they can see while water boils in kettle in L1. This makes it easier for them to visualize and understand the process.

5. Using L1 to articulate English acronyms

E.g. (*AI – Artificial Intelligence, in L1 it is - say-ark-kai noo-n-ri-yu* - செயற்கை நுண்ணறிவு)

**5.0 Discussion**

A dynamic view of bilingualism captures the heteroglossic linguistic repertoires of learner language practices that include translation and code-switching between not only standard varieties but also vernaculars present in their homes and communities (García, Sylvan, and Witt 2011). García (2009) has made the emphatic point that the fluid and flexible language practices of bilingual homes and communities that is called translanguaging. It can be leveraged to promote learner ability to develop the scientific language practices required in schools. As is made clear through this analysis, translanguaging in education stands in opposition to traditional dual language program models that strictly demarcate language separation according to topic, teacher and time. Additionally, diglossic approaches to bilingual education do not consider how 'children pragmatically use both of their languages in order to maximize understanding and performance in the home, street, and school' (Lewis, Jones, and Baker 2012, 643), and therefore, academic contexts rooted in balanced bilingualism limit the linguistic, cognitive, and social resources learners have available to make meaning and render academic content more accessible and relevant (García and Lin 2017). The next section turns our attention to the leveraging and integration of translanguaging within formal learning environments, in particular, bilingual science classrooms.

The article discusses how students use translanguaging practices in elementary science classrooms to develop academic skills like technical vocabulary, information extraction, and object categorization. It highlights how teaching practice can be informed by translanguaging pedagogical practice and insights into students' languaging. Students' language practices defy the language boundaries of their bilingual program curriculum, demonstrating linguistic flexibility that supports meaning-making in the teaching learning process. They alternated features of Tamil and English across

speech, text, and visual/digital imagery. Translanguaging perspectives and pedagogies encourage students to examine their own and others' language through a communicative competence lens, helping them apprentice into target forms and recognize value in familiar practices. The study confirms that familiar languaging practices effectively scaffold access to content knowledge and skills in bilingual programs. It raises questions about the conceptualizations of language and second language acquisition and offers opportunities to reimagine these programs to allow students greater access to their linguistic repertoire, discuss and critique linguistic hierarchies, and discuss the expected outcomes of bilingual education. It emphasizes the importance of teaching practices that allow for translanguaging interactions by fostering collaboration spaces where language boundaries are not policed and students are encouraged to rely on their full bilingual repertoires.

Translanguaging pedagogies are transforming classrooms by replacing traditional roles with democratic and asset-oriented perspectives. Students are seen as bearers of knowledge and their communicative repertoires are valued for meaning-making. This approach allows students to bring their experiences, interests, and prior knowledge into scientific inquiry and literacy tasks. This approach fosters confident, collaborative, and learning-focused interactions in the classroom. However, it is crucial to recognize potential pitfalls in the adoption of translanguaging pedagogies. There are some issues also found out due to this practices which is students are using their mother tongue while answering. This practices should be prohibited. The purpose of using translanguaging is facilitate to understand the content not to use while answering.

**6.0 Conclusion**

Translanguaging is not a theory of second language acquisition but rather a normative behavior for multi-linguals. It encourages scholars and educators to view language as a dynamic repertoire of practices and features, but stresses sociocultural theories of learning to explain how practices become part of language users' repertoires. The risk is that translanguaging may be reduced to code switching and translation without socialization into target forms through authentic input and interaction. To effectively use translanguaging pedagogies for science learning, teachers must consider socially oriented theories of second language acquisition and heteroglossic theories of language, which emphasize socialization as a development tool. They should provide students with opportunities to interact meaningfully with target language practices.

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# Diabolical Verses through Mythological & Subliminal Perception in the Field of uncanny

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## ABSTRACT

This research delves into the intriguing realm of 'back masking' in music within the context of the uncanny, exploring subliminal messages and their unsettling impact on individuals. From a neurological perspective, the study unveils the connection between these hidden codes and the eerie sensations experienced by some. Extensive analyses of songs allegedly employing back masking shed light on the artistic dimension of this phenomenon. The paper also addresses the contemporary mental landscape of youth, exploring the pervasive quest for approval rooted in mythological concepts underlying current trends. Celebrity worship is examined through the metaphorical black veil, contributing to an understanding of the perpetual "satanic panic" debate among individuals leading ordinary lives. This research navigates the intricate interplay of music, psychology, and societal dynamics, inviting readers to contemplate the hidden layers within the auditory landscape and their profound implications on modern culture.

**Keywords:** Back Masking, Mythology, Satanic Panic, Subliminal Messages, Uncanny

## INTRODUCTION

### What is Back Masking?

The concept of **Back Masking or Backward Masking** according to the myth believers is fundamentally encoding music or montage of series, etc. that can only be deciphered when heard in reversed form (Stollznow, 2014). In simpler terms Back masking is a technique of recording secret diabolical messages in reversed format but is supposed to be heard in a forward sequence. The songs are meant to be heard normally, our subconscious mind understands the patterns and the codes without us knowing about it. Some believe in the idea that these secret messages instigate you to do something **unusual** or **uncanny**. According to this the messages coded in these records can be easily solved subliminally in our minds. These messages are said to manipulate human mind and they unconsciously forces them to indulge into illegal/malpractices. But, if it really effects our brain & life or not is the topic of debate. The idea of this myth is so unusual and alien that it can be considered as uncanny among the commoners. The believers say that it is related to something dark and mysterious which can evoke feeling of sublime.

**"Uncanny"** by Sigmund Freud refers to anything that is so unusual or strange or eerie that it is to a point very unsettling with something familiar but in a new context. In Freud's native German, the phrase for uncanny is "unheimlich," which translates to "not from the home." Stated differently, unfamiliar (*What Is the Uncanny? | | Definition & Examples*, 2023).

According to **Freud, the fear of the unknown and alien in different situations in which our childhood fears and terrors come true. One of the** necessary property of the uncanny, according to Freud is realism (*What Is the Uncanny? || Definition & Examples*, 2023). From various articles it is evident that there is uncanny effect of music on the minds of youth.






Source: (Taylor, 2023)

**Origination**

In the year 1877, **Thomas Elva Edison** developed phonograph, he noticed that music when listened reversely it felt novel but in a weird way (De Main, 2011). Since the 1960s, back masking has been used as a recording technique. When sound was recorded on magnetic tape, back masking called for the source reel-to-reel tape to actually be played backward. This was done by first winding the tape onto the original take up reel, then reversing the reels to use that reel as the source.

It is popularly believed that the concept came into being nearly in 1980s, it was suggested by 'Aleister Crowley' in 1913 in his book named "Magick book 4". He mentioned the idea to listen the records in reversed form (Metro, 2015). The first song ever made was *"car trouble"* by the **Eligible** by 1959, but was later popularized by *"the Beatles"*. In the recording process known as "back masking," a message is recorded backward onto a tape that is intended to be played forward.

In their song "*Rain,*" the Beatles were one of the first musical groups to employ back masking. In the 1970s and 1980s, back mapping was widely used on analog and digital recordings by artists for artistic, comedic, and satirical purposes. For "clean and censor free" releases of explicit songs, back masking has also been used to censor words or phrases (Draper, 2016).

**Songs accused to have Subliminal Messages**

Here are a few of the most well-known instances of back masking in music which are as follows:

**1."Stairway to Heaven" by Led Zeppelin**

It has long been believed that the iconic rock band **Led Zeppelin** sold their souls to the devil. And myths that couldn't be devilish and Halloween-like sprung to life. Original lyrics of the song "***Stairway to Heaven***" was *"If there's a bustle in your hedgerow, don't be alarmed now. It's just a spring clean from the May Queen. Yes, there are two paths you can go by; but in the long run. There's still time to change the road you're on."* When the same lyrics of the song "*Stairway to Heaven*" are sung backwards, they sound like "*oh here's to my sweet Satan. The person whose power is Satan and whose tiny journey would make me sad. He will deliver 666 to anyone present. Sad Satan, there was a little toolshed where he tortured us"* (De Main, 2011).

**2. Beatles – "Revolution 9"**

The idea that Paul McCartney had been replaced by a lookalike since 1966 is one of the conspiracy theories that has persisted the longest and with the most tenacity (Draper 2016). Supporters of the story assert that he passed away in an automobile accident. There was a testimonial that the song ***Revolution 9*** (White Album) was inverted that revealed the back masked words in the song. *"I'm on dead man, turn me on"* (Draper 2016). The original lyrics of the same song was *"Number 9… Number 9… Number 9…"* (De Main, 2011).

**3. AC/DC's – "Highway to Hell"**

A single version of the first song from AC/DC's 1979 album, "*Highway to Hell*," was made available. Since then, a lot of musicians have covered it, and it has topped the charts for a very long time. The song is about a person who continually tours and lives on the road. But other people interpreted the music differently. The song was purported to carry messages like "*I'm the law,*" "*My name is Lucifer,*" and "*She belongs in hell*" when it was reversed. Numerous other songs on the album have subliminal messages, and offenders have claimed that these were the reason they committed their crimes. "You didn't need to play backwards, because we never did", Angus Young said in response to the allegations (De Main, 2011).

**4. Billie Eilish – "The Party is over"**

Billie Eilish is also believed to have connection with back masking by the myth believers and even got called out for it on social media platforms. But there is absolutely no evidence that it was intentional or that it had any kind of negative effect on general public. The song *"the party is over"* original lyrics are "*Quiet, when I am coming home and I'm on my own. I could lie, say I like it like that, like it like that*" When the same lyrics was listened in a reversed format, it says, *"No way out. Wish to tell him in hell, walk in hell Satan…Yeah, I'm Billie Eilish. Hope you listen up. Marks the monster up and they fell on up. Kill it, Kill it, Kill it, and Kill it"* (De Main, 2011).

**Diabolical side of back masking**

There is no testimony to back this argument that the songs with backward masking really impact your life in any way. Though in psychological context our brain has stimulation in two hemispheres the left and the right. When brain takes any kind of information it is first registered in the conscious brain, which we are aware of and on the other hand, the information is also stored in the subconscious mind. This subliminal message received by the unconscious part of the brain is said to have some or little or sometimes no effect on life.

Youngsters today need validation, are insecure about themselves, getting affected peer pressure, acceptance in society, loneliness, media influence, normalization of explicit things, escapism, exploration, homosexuality, rebellious attitude. These factors have made them mentally disabled and even force some of them to fall in depression, anxiety, etc., with music being an integral part of our lives pop culture has taken over our minds. But the question is why are artists today using back masking in their songs? What do they gain from it?

Pop artists in the present scenario only care about their popularity, money, luxurious life style, respect, dominance in industry, immortality of their fame. The theory of back masking in pop culture is sometimes connected to ideas of cults and diabolical activities, dark rituals and believed that it is done intentionally. These messages can be either be a mockery, sadistic, satire, manipulative. The pop artists do it for their own success and career up liftment. Using different mediums like songs, animism, etc. these messages are for those people who are clairvoyant. In other words people whose psychic level are comparatively higher than an average human mind.

One of the similar case, in context to how different information's play a role on human psyche was the case of "**Harold Perelson**" he killed his wife using a hammer, and also attacked his 18 year old daughter and then himself consumed poison. The night of the murder when cops investigated the house they found an open copy of Dante's divine comedy with Canto 1. The supporters believe that he was psychologically immersed in the whole idea of the book that he got influenced. But there is no evidence that suggest that reading Dante's divine comedy caused him to kill everyone. The case till date remains to be a mystery and the main reason remains to be unknown (Pool, 2009). Cases like these leaves us in doubt, and makes us think about the same idea in a totally new dimension.

**The Panic in Bible believers**

Now-a-days according to the myth supporters the artists have different ways to promote this idea. They use the montage of series, secret societies, the effect of these myths or beliefs is creating a panic known as "**satanic panic**" (Taylor, 2023). This is a moral panic comprising of more than 12000 cases. This panic creates religious disturbances, instability, identity crisis, and a feeling of sublime. This led to increased number of criminal activities. Some of the accused are still facing problems and punishment for the crime probably they have not committed. **Satanic panic** never got over. It has changed over the years and is still going on. In the present days artists are inclined towards general public to worship them and get addicted to their work and genre and always remember them as their idol.

According to a **CBC video** on YouTube on Satanic Panic explains how there were allegations on groups to be involved in luring kids towards ritualistic practices (Yuhas, 2021). There was even a case on a babysitting service involving children in sexual and physical abuse. The dark world of ritualistic child abuse. There is a widely held opinion that what happened at the daycare was the tempter's handiwork. Children started to talk about animal worship, secret tunnels, blood rituals and even cannibalism. Police took some charges, the media would report uncritically what seemed to be a growing threat. But cases would generally fall apart at trial or during appeal or else they would find no evidence at all. Many of the accused also spent years in prison, while others faced financial ruin and damaged reputations (CBC News, 2020).

**The Mythological & Psychological perspective**

The concept has a major role in this present 21st century, a morally degraded society. This generation is psychologically and emotionally more dependent. In the last 20 years the society has gradually eroded and has become miscreant. The present scenario has turned topsy – turvy for fame, money, jealousy, power, business, dominance over others, etc. They are constantly trying to escape reality and engaging themselves in these occult.

ततश्चानुदिनं धर्मः सत्यं शौचं क्षमा दया *i* कालेन बलिना राजन् नङ्क्ष्यत्यायुर्बलं स्मृतिः ॥ ***(BG 12.2.1)***

According to **Shri Bhagvad Gita**, (Chapter 12, Verse 2.1: 12.2.1), Śukadeva Gosvāmī said: Then, O King, religion, truthfulness, cleanliness, tolerance, mercy, duration of life, physical strength and memory will all diminish day by day because of the powerful influence of the Age of Kali (Prabhupada, 1983).

According to "Shri Bhagvad Gita", people of **"Kali- Yuga"**( the age of the demon) will cross the threshold of the humanity and will do whatever it would take to get whatever they want and they will go against and far from god and from self (Prabhupada, 1983).

According to Hinduism "**Yuga**" refers to the cycle of universe or age of time. There are in total four Yuga's. In this Kali – Yuga is the most destructive of all four eras, will last till 428,899 CE.

The tale of Kaliyuga portrays story of **Kali and Kalki**, it states that Kali Yuga is interconnect with "**Kali**" the demon. In Kaliyuga it is believed that the discrepancy between humans and their spirituality will be elevated. Man won't be able to understand the true sense of god, so lord Krishna mentioned that there is no meaning of explaining the idea of god but rather explain the concept of devotion. By the time it ends, religion will be followed as an aesthetic, the size of creatures will reduce, famine, corruption, jealousy, spiritual places will lose its pure essence, etc. and humans will degenerate in every other way and when Kaliyuga will be at its extreme point and it is said when kali will be overpowered and challenge Kali by doing something so heinous then the 10$^{th}$ avatar of Vishnu will be born as "**Kalki**" to end the existence of Kali and will rescue the spiritual goodness of religion (India, 2023).

Present generation is unfortunately proving the signs of Kaliyuga and its existence true globally. There is evidence of all the disillusionment of how society is working now and how moral and ethics is day by day becoming a topic of decisive and this fact being so normalized is almost **unsettling** and **foreign**. Similarly, taking the reference of what Krishna said about this Yuga people today have to make effort to be spiritual and to understand the concept of devotion. The initiation of Ghor kaliyuga will be when people will start cannibalism to the extent that they will eat their own children. We will be blinded by illusion and materialistic life, when sun rays will be 6 times hotter and the moon will become partial and everything will be destroyed only and only then Kalki will be born to rescue people (Laksmipriya, 2016). Hindu mythology had mentioned about Kaliyuga and if we analyze today's scenario then it is not far from what we experience today.

The psychologists believe that the music through back masking might have some impact in our mundane life. Music is said to reach and activate many parts of brain in which the most pre-dominant part brain area is 'Limbic System'. Limbic system is said to be the emotional center of the brain which reacts emotionally to music and giving the listener chills, joy, sadness, excitement, pleasure and other wide array of feelings. Music has been playing an integral part of our lives, as music evokes all the feelings in conscious and even subconscious brain. "**Pop culture**" made its way through people in early 1920's after First World War, where people started to reflect their desires, ideas, and their mental state in absurd ways. The bible believers were dubious about the whole concept. Even todays artists like "Kanye west", Billie Eilish, etc. are accused for using the concept of back masking in their songs when reversed, send signals to the subconscious brain. Psychologist are skeptical about the whole idea as it is uncanny in the society and the society is already descending and in mode of self-sabotage (Kassem, 2010).

**Current scenario**

Keeping today's scenario in context can we say that people are somewhere or the other affected by these thing that are happening around them? The daily hustle is on, people are not at all satisfied with what they have, and envy what others have. People globally are wavering and constantly trying to fit in and get approval via someone or something. And the artists are taking advantage of these feelings and emotions or life experiences with pop music being a medium by writing lyrics that are designed in such a way that people relate to it on day to day basis, the feeling that they are not facing these problems, existential crisis alone.

In youth we can say that youth is some way or the other affected by the urge to woe everyone, look popular, dress according to society's standards, be a rebel, and is a basic mentality they carry. So the question is it because of the celeb worship and the trend of following of trends can be sometimes seen as results of these activities. Celebrity worship is a syndrome when the fans develop a parasocial relationship which generally occurs when admiration turns into obsession and preoccupation which is one of the dimensions of celebrity worship syndrome named as **Borderline-Pathological dimension** (Vinney, 2023).

There is no evidence that the things that are experienced is because of back masking. While some musicians have been accused of utilizing back masking to obfuscate hidden messages, others have

employed it for aesthetic, comic, or satiric purposes, or to conceal explicit language in radio versions of their songs. Furthermore, certain allegations of back masking in songs can be the consequence of pareidolia, in which the listener thinks they are hearing something that isn't there.

The different articles, journals, interviews on youtube reflected back masking, its origination, psychological perspectives, and the cases over the years and the probability of all the theories being true. The synthesis of this research is done to unfold back masking in music through the lens of Indian mythology and the idea of 'Kaliyuga'. The perspective of Hindu mythology for back masking was not looked at and was seen to be a research gap in the articles in relation to back masking. Paper attempts to find the reason for why back masking is done at first place in context to Hindu myth of Kali and Kalki. It revolves around the idea that how this mythology when viewed from the technique of back masking becomes **uncanny**. The uncertainty for where mankind is leading towards and the fear of the following things being true.

**Conclusion**

We still cannot conclude to what effects does back masking has on us in any way. But according to the above scenarios and some other people's take on the whole topic we can say even if the theory of back masking might be wrong or false, there is still some kind of panic, fear, and doubt or else the feeling of uncanny about the ritualistic practices. In psychology we study that music affects us, brings almost every kind of emotion, and impacts us and our lives. In Bhagavad Gita, Krishna said that music can play a tool to reach enlightenment, connect to the divine. He said that it is powerful to the extent that it can either be used for the good or for evil. There has been no evidence on back masking but there are instances about other occultist activities.

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# The Uncanniness of Power Hierarchy in Omegaverse Comics

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## ABSTRACT

Uncanny is something that is considered to be mystical, peculiar or unheard of. Sigmund Freud says that "uncanny is found in the familiar and not in the strange." This article examines the Omegaverse or Alpha/Beta/Omega (A/B/O) – a subgenre of sexually explicit fiction – and determines an insight into the power structure and social hierarchy which are commonly reflected in texts of this genre. Though there are heterosexual and lesbian omegaverse genres, this term mostly caters to male homosexual genres of *Boys' Love (BL)* and *Yaoi,* which are the most popular among readers and was chosen to be examined in this paper. Even in an alternate fictional world such as the Omegaverse, issues such as power dynamics and class dimensions are a source of oppression and violence in the social structure. This paper attempted to articulate the uncanniness of the world order of the Omegaverse through a Marxist lens using two comics, namely *Love Is an Illusion* and *Night by the Sea /Low Tide in Twilight,* which feature boys' love and Yaoi.

**Keywords:** Alpha, Beta, Omega, Hierarchy, Omegaverse, Power Structure, Uncanny, Yaoi.
Introduction

## INTRODUCTION

The "Amok Time" (1967) episode of the Star Trek franchise presented the idea of the Vulcan mating cycle, known as "pon farr", which is where the idea for the Omegaverse notion first appeared. As a result, fan fiction story writers started using these tropes in stories involving human beings. It got more traction in 2010 when characters talked about "alpha" males and "bitch" males in the context of the Supernatural television series. Omegaverse as a subgenre wasn't popularised in East Asia through the active creation of fan fictions; rather, it was directly imported from the West and used as a theme in boys' love tropes by Japanese and Korean publishing business. The differentiation male and female in the real world is clearer by comprehending the alpha-omega binary, which also makes it easier to comprehend how gendered power dynamics operate in society. Hence, most of the audience utilize it as a way to further explore the genre since they are made aware of the unequal power structure and socioeconomic hierarchy among the characters, as well as the concerns with consent that are highlighted in the plot.

In "*Omega Chronicles: Mapping the Landscape of Violence in Japanese Manga*", the author "focuses on understanding the dehumanizing factors of the omegaverse, which strip humans of the most basic value of reason". In *"Ripe for the Taking: Disrupting Narratives of a Queer Utopia in the Alpha/Beta/Omega Fanfiction Gift Economy"* the author investigates how interactions between male Omega characters and the desires of fanfiction writers and readers lead to the internal fetishization of these characters as cultural commodities. In *"Romancing the Beast: Intersections of Power, Gender, and Sexuality in Omegaverse Fan Fiction"*, the author contends that the Omegaverse fan fiction genre frequently criticizes existing cis-hetero-

patriarchal systems that shape much of the Western society that readers and writers in the Omegaverse community face on a daily basis. In *"What is an omega? Rewriting sex and gender in omegaverse fanfiction"*, the author uses three omegaverse fanfiction stories, to examine how they relate to sex and gender discourses. One common thing these research papers lack is an in-depth analysis of the power structure and social hierarchy that determines their life. This paper will give a brief account of such world order.

**Omegaverse**

The words "omega" and "universe" are combined to form the phrase "Omegaverse." In this alternate reality known as the "Omegaverse," there are three more secondary genders in addition to the two fundamental ones of man and female: alpha, beta, and omega. This yields a total of six genders, with each major gender further subdivided into three secondary genders. It follows a hierarchy like that of wolves—a social structure in which alphas, who has alpha wolf characteristics, are superior than omegas, who can reproduce whether they are male or female— that usually serves as the society's guiding principle. While the idea of male pregnancy (another sub-genre known as 'Mpreg') satisfies many homosexual couples' fantasies of starting a family in a socially acceptable norm, it also, in some ways, pushes humanity further away from being truly human by limiting our ability for reason and judgement.

This article factors into two comics, *Love Is an Illusion* and *Night by the Sea/Low Tide in Twilight,* that revolve around an existence of social inequalities and unfair power plays, though they are not bounded by such structures of our real world.

*Love Is an Illusion*

"There's no way that I'm an Omega!" Kim Hyesung who is twenty years old, had lived his entire life with the idea that he was an alpha, but when he experiences heat for the first time, he discovers to his shock that he is actually a lowly omega. At this point, he meets affluent alpha and singer Park Dojin who claims to despise omegas. Despite what he says, Dojin believes Hyesung to be a musical inspiration and is motivated by a great desire to keep him to himself. Even though Hyesung tries to fight their common attraction, it is impossible for them to resist falling into each other's arms due to their shared need for sexual gratification. The two men's relationship is put to the ultimate test when their physical connection causes a life-altering incident, where Hyesung got impregnated without him giving his consent. Naturally, he wanted to abort the baby as he was not ready to be a mother (omegas are called 'mother' regardless of gender, since they are the ones who give birth to the child) but Dojin forbids him from doing so. Dojin hopes to take advantage of the pregnancy to prevent Hyesung from leaving him.

After delivering the baby, Hyesung ran away out of fear that Dojin might keep him by force and even ran to another affluent Alpha to seek protection. It was here when Hyesung found out that he had bonded with Dojin and could die without him. (Bonding happens when a pair of alpha and omega pair claim each other. The pair could gradually lose vigour and die if they're not together with the one they've bonded with. Though this is often mutual, omegas can still be bonded against their will through knotting). Hyesung returned and reconciled with Dojin and his family and they eventually got married.

*Night by the Sea/Low Tide in Twilight*

"But why am I so turned on? You smell so f*cking good..." Kim Euihyun's life has never been simple- his omega mother abandoned him, his father betrayed and stole from him, and now he is left to care for his younger brother Kim Euiyoung by himself. But things only grow worse when he discovers one day that his father has racked up a sizable debt before fleeing and designating him as the "heir". He is "saved" by Yeo Taejoo, a wealthy and dangerous Alpha, just before he is able to plunge into the sea, to kill himself, while carrying his brother with him. The alpha rapidly reveals himself to be his father's financier, who wants to stop his money from being wasted. Now that his father is no longer responsible for paying the loan, Euihyun must pay the entire debt on his own, even if that means selling his body.

In exchange for the sexual gratification, Taejoo would provide Euihyun with money, food, a house and education for little Euiyoung. As this arrangement went on, tensions about their relationship also grows. Euihyun understands his position in society as a poor Omega – he is just a toy for the alphas to play with and could be easily discarded – so he is afraid that Taejoo will get sick of him and abandon him. On the other hand, Taejoo becomes increasingly insecure about his connection with Euihyun as he finds his feelings growing for him – he thinks that the "debt" is the only thing tying them together – so he is worried that Euihyun will disappear once he pays it off. Their relationship takes a tumultuous turn when Taejoo forcibly impregnated Euihyun and prohibits him from leaving.

**Alpha versus Omega**

Omegas are typically portrayed in Omegaverse stories as being inferior beings present primarily for the purpose of reproduction and to be used by the alphas to derive sexual pleasure from, whereas alphas are depicted as the upper class of society that holds the top positions in every industry.

The story of the comics, "*Love is an Illusion*", is written through the point of view of the main character Hyesung, who lived his whole life with the belief that he was an alpha. Usually in the omegaverse trope, people find out what gender they are (whether they are an alpha, beta or omega) after gettinga test, in a similar fashion to the blood group tests that we have. It turns out that his test results were incorrect and he had been an omega all along, but he would not find this out until he met Dojin, a dominant alpha, wherein he proceeded to go on a heat. His life was turned upside down from this point on.

During the days he lived as an alpha, people would treat him with respect and dignity, though he was poor. He would easily be accepted for the part-time jobs he applied for. After his new life as an omega, no one would hire him for any work, and he was offered opportunities to become a sex worker instead, or rather, coerced. Omegas are only used for their body and are the lowest class in the social hierarchy. Hyesung has no parents and he was destitute – doing odd jobs since he was a kid to earn his bread – he has no one to turn to except Dojin, who tries to persuade him to stay with him. Since he evidently do not want to sell his body, he went to live with Dojin where he had to tolerate his possessive and obsessive tendencies, to the point that he forbade him to leave the house.

It should be noted that Hyesung did not just blindly submit to Dojin, he actually always looked for ways to earn money for himself and leave the house as soon as he could. However, he could not find any job as mentioned earlier, he was even scammed by a trusted acquaintance and almost became an escort.

The story of the comic, "*Night by the Sea/Low Tide in Twilight*", is written through the point of view of the main character Euihyun, an omega who is burdened by a huge debt his father passed on to him. To add to his hardship, he has a little baby brother who was left in his care. He had to leave his schooling to work multiple jobs to save money and pay up the debt, but he was taken advantage of in every job and even faced an attempted rape from a snobby alpha. Euihyun was strong and vicious in character so he fought back and seriously injured this alpha, but he was hunted down this man's subordinates. Having nowhere to run to and with no hope for their future, he took his brother with him to the sea in order to drown themselves. Here he is caught by Taejoo, a dominant alpha and to whom Euihyun's father is indebted to.

Taejoo is not a good person, throughout his life he lives an alpha who uses omegas as playthings. Naturally, he tries to convince Euihyun to work as a prostitute in order to pay his father's debt. But Euihyun was deadly afraid of selling his body like this to multiple persons, so he accepted Taejoo's other offer of becoming his personal gigolo, in return, he would get money and shelter.

In these two stories, there is a similar theme of omegas being a subject of domination and servitude, they are merely treated as toys for amusement and carnal pleasure. Even if they try to fight back or find an escape from their situation, there is always someone from the top who is pinning them down.

**The Concept of Consent**

In practically every Omegaverse story, there is always a negative misconception about omegas and their heat. When an alpha sees an omega in heat, his only motivation is to knot and impregnate the omega, and omegas are designed to submit to the superior alpha for this reason. This loss of judgment is seen as either a legitimate social construct or the omega's duty to regulate its heat. In a world where alphas rule and omegas are expected to submit, the concept of consent appears to be non-existent.

Every month during the mating cycle, alphas go through ruts where their mating impulses are heightened and they produce pheromones in attempt to attract omegas. Alphas also have knots in their penises that resemble those of male wolves. In a similar way as how women menstruate, omegas experience monthly heats during which they yearn for alpha partners for sex and exude omega pheromones. They frequently lose their sense of reason during ruts and heats and are no longer in a human state of mind, which is why alphas and omegas are frequently compared to beasts. The aspect of a lifetime psychic tie which happens when an alpha marks an omega by biting their nape (the back of their neck) during their heat, called 'Marking', is another common characteristic of the Omegaverse.

The question of the pheromones tread a troubled track and it is in direct conjunction with the expression of consent, they are not used only as a tool for attraction. The pheromones ejected by an alpha is extremely powerful and unbearable when used against an omega, it has the power to force submission. We see similar instances from both the texts – [*Love is an Illusion*] Dojin would often engage in sexual activities with Hyesung, with the latter telling him to stop but unable to fight back against his strength. Hyesung had enough of this and tried to leave the house. Dojin then released his pheromones on him, which rendered him completely weak and helpless Here, he took him back to the house and had another non-consensual sex with him wherein Hyesung eventually got pregnant; [*Night by the Sea/Low Tide in Twilight*] Though Euihyun agreed to become Taejoo's personal sex toy, he never willingly goes along with his whims and always fights back,

even physically, when he does not like what he is doing. However, Taejoo would use his pheromones to subdue him and have his way.

Alphas can release their pheromones whenever they like and use it however they like it, yet no one gives complaints against them. On the other hand, Omegas are strictly warned to control their pheromones, the reason being that they will make the alphas around them lose their minds. While in heat, it is difficult for them to regulate their pheromones so there are special medications, called 'inhibitors' that were developed to control the intensity of their heat – this concept is similar to how women have a menstrual cycle and we buy different sanitary accessories for our periods. Sometimes the omegas' heat cycles changes or they forget to take their inhibitors, hence they are at risk of uncontrolled pheromones and sexual urge. In such cases, if they are assaulted or molested against their will, it is seen as their own fault and would be blamed for something they have no control over.

## Conclusion

The whole genre of Omegaverse itself is something that can be under the definition of uncanny. Just explaining the entire hierarchy and power structure to someone who has never heard of it before, may evoke unsavoury and bitter reactions. But the main takeaway is that even in a fictional alternate universe, the oppression and abuse faced by the lower class from the ruling class is highly similar to the incidents we see in our real world.

Having an understanding of such unequal institution through these fictional worlds may lead to recognition, and even solutions, to tackle such state of affairs. Though in these comics, the omega always fall in love with the alpha in the end, no matter how much they are used and abused – the fictional element of the genre cannot be taken away at the end of the day. Hence, it might not be wise to take the whole concept for study.

Moreover, there are only a handful of research done on topics pertaining to this genre. There could be so much more that could be done in the future especially with the rapid rise in popularity of the Boys' Love and Yaoi genre. In addition, there are more and more variations around this genre that are being newly written, wherein the social construct between alphas and omegas are interchanged – here, the omegas are the ruling class and the alphas become the lowly class. Further studies can be made possible that compares the traditional style of omegaverse with such variations. Further research can also be done on the Omegaverse genre using more theories such as Comic Theory, Feminist Theory and Queer Theory among others.

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# Krafft-Ebing's Masochism in *Venus in Furs*: Freud's Uncanny and Burke's Sublime

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## ABSTRACT

In Leopold von Sacher-Masoch's *Venus in Furs*, the conjunction of masochistic elements and the sublime create an uncanny feeling. Through the lens of Freudian theory, the book explores into the uncanny as the familiar becomes unfamiliar and therefore unsettling. The protagonist's masochistic tendencies, intertwined with love evokes a painful pleasure as seen through Richard von Krafft-Ebing's *Psychopathia Sexualis*. The sublime, analysing through Burke's perspective emerges along with it because of this delightful terror, amplifying the uncanny by challenging conventional boundaries of pleasure and delight to interplay between the known and the unfamiliar. As these coexist together, the repetitive nature of masochistic scenarios and the admiration of the power, contribute to the uncanny atmosphere, unveiling repressed desires and pleasure. *Venus in Furs* thus intricately weaves masochism and the sublime into an uncanny embroidery for the readers to explore and ponder over.

**Keywords:** Burke, Freud, Masochism, Sublime, Uncanny, Venus in Furs

## INTRODUCTION

According to the dictionary, the term "masochism" means "pleasure in being abused or dominated" (Merriam-Webster, n.d.). This word was first coined by the German psychiatrist Richard von Krafft-Ebing after the novelist Leopold von Sacher-Masoch as he wrote in his book *Psychopathia Sexualis*, "I feel justified in calling this sexual anomaly "Masochism," because the author Sacher-Masoch frequently made this perversion, which up to his time was quite unknown to the scientific world as such, the substratum of his writings" (n.d., p.132). Sacher-Masoch's works are therefore one of the primary sources that teach us about the dimensions of masochism of which *Venus in Furs* is a particularly famous novel published in 1870. It is a story of a man named Severin who is in love with an attractive woman named Wanda to whom he willingly submits, desiring himself to be her slave and to live under her dominance. Apart from the themes of Masochism this paper will also be venturing into finding the presence of sublime in the novel Venus in Furs and how closely it cohabits with the feelings of masochism as derived by the protagonist. Sublime comes under the study of Aesthetics and in general is defined by the dictionary as "lofty, grand, or exalted in thought, expression, or manner" (Merriam-Webster, n.d.). The term was brought widely into attention by Edmund Burke and therefore his theory will form the lens of this investigation of this novel. This feeling of sublime residing in a masochist is to a certain degree uncanny which will be looked at through Freud's theory of Uncanny. This paper aims to show how the protagonist feels pleasure as a masochist but also sublime as they morph and

become a grey emotion in his mind, the presence of which is uncanny.

The literature harbouring to the fusion of masochism and the sublime unfolds as an appealing investigation of the unique dimensions of human experience. Texts like Leopold von Sacher-Masoch's *Venus in Furs* and Marquis de Sade's *Justine* illustrate the distinct interplay between pleasure-seeking through pain and the blunt sadism that emphasizes masochistic tendencies. Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* introduces the sublime as a substance for existential contemplation, blurring natural and supernatural boundaries. Although there has been a numerous amount of works on these topics individually, works based on the assimilation of the two are sporadic. The same is also viewed in Peter Cosgrow's *Edmund Burke, Gilles Deleuze, and the Subversive Masochism of the Image,* and is relayed from the statement:

"The category of the sublime has not escaped the suspicion of concealing a sadistic component, though the category of the beautiful, tied to the sublime as a complement and an antithesis ever since Burke's decisive intervention in the history of aesthetics, has never been considered in the light of the masochistic" (1999, p.405).

This particular essay covers the interconnection of masochism, sublime and uncanny through the definition of Richard von Krafft-Ebing, Burke and Freud respectively and only in the book *Venus in Furs*. This constraint helps us look into it deeply and acutely but the presence of this might be able to found in other books as well. Crossing genres and historical eras, these three particular works collectively contribute to an important aspect of literature that grapples with the contradictory and uncanny allure of pain and pleasure and the unsettling beauty of the sublime, tempting ongoing scholarly investigation into this study.

Masochism in *Venus in Furs* is one of the main themes of the novel. It is mainly prevalent in the protagonist Severin but hints of it can be seen in different characters throughout the book. In regard to Severin there are many instances that prove that he had been a masochist.

Through the understanding of Krafft-Ebing in his book *Psychopathia Sexualis*, Masochism means:

"By masochism I understand a peculiar perversion of the psychical vita sexualis in which the individual affected, in sexual feeling and thought, is controlled by the idea of being completely and unconditionally subject to the will of a person of the opposite sex; of being treated by this person as by a master, humiliated and abused" (n.d., p.131).

Severin clearly portrays these characteristics of subversion to Wanda who is his mistress and lover. He is many a times whipped and humiliated under her and yet as a true masochist he likes it. He himself is the one who proposes this idea of wanting to be her slave and goes as far as to beg her for it several times until she gives in. "Yes, in all seriousness, I want to be your slave" (Sacher-Masoch, 2018, p.57).

If taken into account how a masochist thinks and what its aims are then it can be seen that the degree of masochism varies in person to person. Some going so far as to wanting to give away their life in hands of another. That is exactly what Severin does in the book. He legally gives Wanda the right to use him as her slave but also his right to life. While this arises queries socially about the civic rights of a person, the mere taboo nature of this act also aids as a pleasurable release to a masochist. "Just this unlimited power of life and death, as exercised over slaves and domestic animals, is the aim and end of all masochistic ideas" (Krafft-Ebing, n.d., p.150). This had been the statement given by a masochist in the case study recorder in *Psychopathia Sexualis.* This is depicted by Severin as he writes a suicide note in advance to Wanda, for if she wishes to take away his life then she could easily do so and would never fall into any legal trouble. "Having since many years become weary of existence and its illusions, I have of my own free will put an end to my worthless life" (Sacher-Masoch, 2018, p.83). This suicide note clearly shows Severin's servitude and love for Wanda.

Abuse and submission therefore play key roles in the sexual gratification to a masochist. "The essential thing, from the psychopathic point of view, and the common element in all these cases, is the fact that the sexual instinct is directed to ideas of subjugation and abuse by the opposite sex" (Krafft-Ebing, n.d., p.133). Severin's will to submit himself to Wanda's abuse and even seeking delight in her whipping and degradation shows that to a masochist this is the way he can extract pleasure. Love exists and is practised through these acts of violence. "I approached the beautiful woman. Never did she seem more seductive to me than to-day in spite of all her cruelty and contempt" (Sacher-Masoch, 2018, p.87).

The emotion sublime was usually equalled to feelings of pleasure and often associated with beauty in the past, that is at least before Edmund Burke came up with his extensive study on this term. In his essay, *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* he gives a clearer understanding of this word and the difference that it pertains to other relative feelings of pleasure and beauty. He alludes the derivation of sublime through horror, terror, admiration and respect. "A MODE of terror or pain is always the cause of the sublime" (Burke, 1970, p.197). Another meaning that he gives in that same essay is

as follows:

"The passions which belong to self-preservation, turn on pain and danger; they are simply painful when their causes immediately affect us; they are delightful when we have an idea of pain and danger, without being actually in such circumstances; this delight I have not called pleasure, because it turns on pain, and because it is different enough from any idea of positive pleasure. Whatever excites this delight, I call sublime" (Burke, 1970, p.65).

Using his theories on sublime a distinction between pleasure and sublime can be made and how there is a presence of sublime in the novel Venus in Furs, felt by the protagonist Severin.

Sublime as noted by Burke is caused by pain or terror primarily, and Severin, dominantly through the novel feels the presence of these emotions with respect to Wanda and her actions. "Whip me, I beg you, it is a joy to me" (Sacher-Masoch, 2018, p.48). As he derives these feelings of joy or "delight" because of pain it can be said that he is feeling sublime. Besides this sublime, according to Burke is usually represented in dark colours. Wanda when taking on the role of a mistress and dominant is seen wearing dark or black furs to please Severin.

The derivation of sublime is also made from power as stated by Burke in his essay, "BESIDES those things which directly suggest the idea of danger, and those which produce a similar effect from a mechanical cause, I know of nothing sublime, which is not some modification of power" (1970, p.85). The source of this power that produce terror can be various things of which the supreme power or a divine being is most widely known. Gods and Goddesses can cause a feeling of delightful terror. The comparison of Wanda here to that of Venus, the goddess of love shows how Severin perceived her. The feelings he therefore extracted from her was that of admiration, fear, delight which together would give us a feeling of sublime. In one instance the word sublime itself is used to describe the body of Venus for which Wanda is posing for a painting to be made.

"I imagine the goddess of love as having descended from Mount Olympus for the sake of some mortal man. And always cold in this modern world of ours, she seeks to keep her sublime body warm in a large heavy fur and her feet in the lap of her lover. I imagine the favourite of a beautiful despot, who whips her slave, when she is tired of kissing him, and the more she treads him underfoot, the more insanely he loves her. And so, I shall call the picture: Venus in Furs" (Sacher-Masoch, 2018, p.105).

The word magnificence is also a reference to sublime as Burke says, "MAGNIFICENCE is likewise a source of the sublime" (1970, p.107). Here magnificence doesn't mean the use of the general word in itself but the derivation of the extreme emotion behind it either by a description of words or by a work of art. Wanda in reference to this is often described in such magnificence and description that leave the readers in awe and admiration:

"The very thought that this extra-ordinary beauty is to be lost to the world," I continued still watching her enthusiastically, "is horrible—all this glorious facial expression, this mysterious eye with its green fires, this demonic hair, this magnificence of body. The idea fills me with a horror of death, of annihilation…" (Sacher-Masoch, 2018, p.103).

The feeling of sublime thus present in this novel is sensed by the protagonist, Severin, along with the feelings of pleasure in regard to his traits of masochism. The two emotions coexist and coincide to a certain degree forming the beautiful grey emotion of pleasure and sublime that he undergoes under the dominance of Wanda. The feeling of sublime here is therefore a result of the masochistic preference of Severin. If Severin hadn't been masochistic then he wouldn't have taken delight in the presence of pain and terror. It therefore forms a correlational pattern. Sublime is only felt when a person knows that they are safe and harmless even when in the presence of some danger or pain. When they are aware and admire it from a distance knowing that even when they are deriving strong emotions of delight through it in some way they are not in the risk of their lives. Severin here in the same way when he gives away his life to Wanda, though not clearly mentioned must know subconsciously to a certain extent that Wanda wouldn't actually dare to take his life. The presence of sublime and masochism merges very closely here as he derives pleasure and delight from the power that she holds over his life. The characteristics and the reasons of the presence of pleasure and sublime are therefore common and one in this book and that being the sexual nature of Severin being a masochist. It can therefore also be said that sublime in this context is a masochistic feeling derived from the masochism felt by Severin.

"I felt there was something sacred in sex; in fact, it was the only sacred thing. In woman and her beauty I saw something divine, because the most important function of existence—the continuation of the species—is her vocation. To me woman represented a personification of nature, Isis, and man was her priest, her slave. In contrast to him she was cruel like nature herself who tosses aside whatever has served her purposes as soon as she no longer has need for it. To him her cruelties, even death itself, still were sensual raptures" (Sacher-Masoch, 2018, p.41).

By the above displayed quote of a dialogue by Severin one can extract how sublime because of

admiration and pleasure through submission coexist as feelings derived from his masochistic nature.

On the other hand, in very simple terms uncanny according to Freud in his essay "The Uncanny", is something strange that was supposed to be familiar, "The German word unheimlich is obviously the opposite of heimlich, heimisch, meaning "familiar," "native," "belonging to the home"; and we are tempted to conclude that what is "uncanny" is frightening precisely because it is not known and familiar (1919, p.2). The occurrence of sublime and masochism in this world is although rare is an acknowledged truth but for them to occur simultaneously is rarer than their own individual presences. They aren't usually perceived together and that is what derives a feeling of uncanny in this book.

The second cause of uncanny according to Freud, results from the castration complex. Sublime and masochism both arises an echo of this in a human being's subconscious mind. The threat of castration occurs from a fatherly figure or a role of someone superior. Similarly, the submission to a dominant by a masochist and the feelings of sublime felt and derived through power is in some ways pertaining to that castration complex.

"As we already know, this kind of uncanniness springs from its association with the castration-complex. To many people the idea of being buried alive while appearing to be dead is the most uncanny thing of all. And yet psychoanalysis has taught us that this terrifying phantasy is only a transformation of another phantasy which had originally nothing terrifying about it at all, but was filled with a certain lustful pleasure—the phantasy, I mean, of intra-uterine existence" (Freud, 1919, p.14).

The third cause of uncanny could be derived from a repetitive nature of certain incidents or actions. In the book Venus in Furs the presence of sublime and masochism occur repetitively and for such coincidence to happen over and over again extracts a strange feeling among the readers and that expresses a feeling of uncanny within them.

"Taking another class of things, it is easy to see that here, too, it is only this factor of involuntary repetition which surrounds with an uncanny atmosphere what would otherwise be innocent enough, and forces upon us the idea of something fateful and unescapable where otherwise we should have spoken of "chance" only" (Freud, 1919, p.11).

In conclusion, the entwined presence of masochism and the sublime in Leopold von Sacher-Masoch's Venus in Furs, creates a narrative that is inherently uncanny. The convergence of pleasure and pain, power dynamics, and the overwhelming experiences associated with the sublime brings forth a paradoxical realm where the familiar becomes unsettling. Through the lens of Freudian theory, the uncanny emerges as these elements disrupt conventional norms, challenging our understanding of desire and the boundaries between pleasure and discomfort. The repetitive nature of these scenarios intensifies the uncanny atmosphere, inviting the readers to confront the shadows of repressed desires. This interplay between the known and the unfamiliar, the pleasurable and the sublime, leaves a mark, emphasizing the complexity of human psychology. As we navigate the interplay of masochism and the sublime, we are compelled to recognize the unsettling familiarity within the recesses of our own subconscious desires and fears.

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# Transgression and Fear in Achebe's *Things Fall Apart:* The Gothic Element of African Storytelling

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## ABSTRACT

Chinua Achebe's novel *Things Fall Apart* addresses the forced shift from indigenous tribal practice to Christianity, orchestrated by colonial strategy in the Igbo community. The presence of the elders and a traditional ritual faith being opposed gradually by an invasive occupation of the white man's religion and his ways create dual narratives of the gothic perceptions of two contrasting cultures. To the Igbo, the Christian religion is to be feared for its tendency to anger the native deity, and to the invading coloniser, the tribal deity must be overthrown, both to upend belief systems and to dislodge power operations. With emphasis on Achebe's central character Okonkwo's response to his exposure to both faiths, this paper aims to trace the strictures of the Igbo community's perceptions of the impending coloniser's faith in the light of the vehement strategy used by the white man to manipulate power. The paper will also address the inherent gothic nature of the coloniser's gaze on the Dark Continent.

**Keywords:** Achebe, Gothic, Africa, religion, transgression

## INTRODUCTION

Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* looks into the very beginning of the unravelling of the mind of the native African with the introduction of a new culture and religion in the very heart of the Igbo community. Achebe builds on and drives his narrative through a rather intense and layered account of Okonkwo's experience with the transition from worshipping African deities to encountering the white man and his religion. It is only in the later part of Achebe's text that he begins to look into the colonial gaze that startles and intimidates the natives. However, the reader is made to encounter a dual gaze: the coloniser's imposed impression of religion and culture, which operates through the native's confused curiosity and lands its presence in the text as a passive, colonial understanding of imposed change. It is this expression, this startled and unexpected encounter with the ways of the west that bear a gothic semblance to the native. At the same time, although far less filled with naïve curiosity, the white man's experience and conquest of native deities exposes how fear operates within the mind of the coloniser in a foreign land.

In his *Survival of the Gothic Response*, James Keech tries to understand the primary definition of a Gothic text. He looks into how the gothic genre has been delineated in texts through the ascription to dark atmospheres, fatalistic settings, post-sunset hours, coffins, and castles. Keech notes how in the recent past, more and more novels are being included into the gothic genre although their narratives are predominantly far from the gothic intent. The intention of the gothic, in that sense, he decides, is fulfilled when the novel evokes a particular response

in the reader. The initial stock devices are no longer necessary to determine a certain kind of fear. It is the very expectation of fear itself that lends to the novel taking on a gothic identity. The origins of this fear in the mind of the reader can be traced to the growing notions of transgression within the text. Transgressions within familial relationships, within the moral sphere, and of religious norms govern the gothic understanding.

Keech momentarily mentions Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, which is an interesting allusion in a moment of definition. He speaks about the difference between the "gothic by device" and the "gothic by effect", and Conrad's work falls in the latter category. In contrast to Achebe's portrayal of Africa, Conrad's Africa is one that is more gothic. In his essay "An Image of Africa: Racism in Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*" Achebe points out the difference in the way Africa and her natives are perceived by the white man as beings that are described as "invisible" "inscrutable", and such. The use of ambiguous words to refer to an entire race of people when they are not very different from the white men in form and shape is a moment that Achebe calls racist. In the context of the gothic, the coloniser's gaze on Africa as depicted in *Heart of Darkness* is layered to a great extent with a latent fear of the unknown. In moments of description, there is the inability to recognise the human aspect of the African natives to the point that they become inscrutable, unrecognisable beings whose forms are shadowy and dangerous. The death of Kurtz in this dark land seals the ideation that Africa is a land where the white man loses himself intellectually, where darkness overpowers his senses. However, Achebe contests this notion by declaring the intent of using Africa as a setting for the unravelling of one man's mind as racist.

Behind this racist view, the white man also exhibits a gothic understanding of Africa. The nomenclature assigned to the land itself is reminiscent of the perceived negligence to investigate the true nature of the continent. "Dark Continent" seems to have to suffice in enumerating and representing all of African culture, customs, and traditions, apart from hinting at the necessary diversity of language and people. The coloniser's gaze on this land overcomes the curiosity that provoked a voyage to the land in the first place. The generalisation of such a vast people into a simple adjectival understanding as "dark" undoes what the very intention of a voyage purported to do. Achebe makes this intent clear in his critique of Conrad's exposition of the Congo people. Ultimately, the white man perceives the African as a gothic symbol, a being without legs, arms, and a voice. The African native is viewed only as a being that can utter inarticulate sounds, and perform savage acts. There is a necessary correlation with savagery in Achebe's reading of the racist view of imperialist Africa.

The coloniser assumes his expertise above the natural experience of the people, and deems himself superior. The inferiority accorded to the African people also points towards the fear and horror that is associated with the dark places and setting in more typical gothic novels. The great absence of a justificatory voice is prominent among the imperialist descriptions. The slave, or the colonised is able to articulate on much more elaborate terms what his condition is. Okonkwo, Oika, and the town elders are able to proverbially explain what has happened to them, but outside a fanatic rage against the converts and natives, the imperialist missionary is unable to proclaim his understanding of the and he is an outsider to. He simply orders, or speaks. His actions do not project a meaningful response to his surroundings. Mr. Brown's character is written with a slightly more interpersonal sensibility, but Reverend James Smith revokes the consideration his predecessor shows and takes on a far more savage reflection of the kind of gospel he preaches to the natives. The absence of suitable descriptions, and of the articulations that transfer experience and meaning evoke fear, which completes the gothic portrait of the white man's visuals on the land.

Okonkwo's Umuofia is a land that steers clear of the gothic identity until Okonkwo himself lends one to it. Okonkwo becomes the one who invokes fear in the land, through his actions and responses in various situations. On the surface, Okonkwo is a man who enrages the people enabled with the undeniable resources he comes with. He can afford to live out the consequences of his actions when he breaks the peace of the sacred week of peace by beating his young wife for negligence. He is a man who is able to stand tall, and confidently recover his abilities to strengthen his standing before his clansmen when he kills Ikemefuna. However, through these actions, Okonkwo displays a response to fear, which is what Keech says is the primary definition of the gothic.

Okonkwo's base fear is that he will turn into his father. He frets over the possibility that he will one day turn into his father, and that he will die like him. His inherent disregard for his father's fate propels him to take on the rage of the gods. Therefore, he transgresses against the deities. He ridicules the power that threatens his own. Botting speaks of the reputation of the Goths in eighteenth-century Europe as,

> "During this time and on to the French Revolution, the Goths were remembered and admired for their opposition to the tyrannical expansionism of the Roman Empire,…" (Mabura 204, 2008)

Mabura, pitching the protagonist of Achebe's work against the more recognised fury of the Goths, while defining in her paper, highlights the role of the gothic in African literature. She also notes how the description of the surrounding land, geographic location, lends to the reader a sense of the gothic through an avowal of the nostalgia for barbaric adventure.

> "From this it might be argued that most, if not all, African literature, by virtue of its effort to preserve and reclaim older traditions and cultures, is imbued with Gothic trappings and demonstrates varying degrees of commitment to the genre's topography and stock features. Indeed, such literature in the twentieth century has contributed to the emergence of the "postcolonial Gothic." (Mabura 205, 2008)

About Achebe's work in particular, Mabura is of the opinion that Umuofia's setting, a village that is surrounded by a wall of dark forests offers it a castle-like presence. It bears the appearance of something good because it houses deities, while also bearing the appearance of evil as a cursed landscape of disease and death. Mabura cites the examples of the ritual killings of twins and the murder of Ikemefuna.

Post Okonkwo's exile, the novel shifts its focus more on Okonkwo as a father who wields power over the decisions of his daughters to marry. Before plunging him into the western world, Achebe offers Okonkwo a reprieve. His ignorance of the condition of Umuofia points to the native gaze on the land: one that is heavily guided by the village strata, vastly different from the holistic gaze of the coloniser. It is because Okonkwo has such a blinkered awareness of his community and surroundings that his encounter with the white man becomes a heightened experience of horror and fear.

The three deaths that occur in Okonkwo's clan, Ikemefuna's, the district officers, and his own, project on to the reader the alternative views of the powerful and the oppressed. Okonkwo occupies both these positions. In the first instance, as a man in power, he exhibits a brattish, arrogant display of protecting his honour in stooping to the extent of killing another man. If Ikemefuna had been an outsider to the clan, or an enemy, Okonkwo would have been deemed valiant, but his choice to protect himself against a son becomes an act that goes against the laws of the land. He soiled his hands with the blood of his own, for which he must offer penance to the land. The first death, then, becomes the catalyst that leads him away from his home, into the state of ignorance that emphasises his transgressive quality. The inherent tendency to challenge his deities which Okonkwo becomes defined by begins the discourse on how the gothic sensibility within Achebe's work comes into being. With the second death, the gothic becomes a reality on African soil leading to the third death, sealing the horror and fear of the deities as an undeniable feature of the text.

James Smethurst reiterates the categorisation of transgression within African American texts in "Invented by Horror: The Gothic and African-American Literary Ideology in Native Son". Smethurst uses the term "veil" as implied by W.E.B. DuBois as a deliberate concealment of the white world from the blacks, and the black world from the white. In sending Okonkwo on exile, Achebe performs the act of veiling one world from the other. Okonkwo revels in his African identity for seven years longer than the other members of his clan before he is able to come to terms with the invasion of the white settlers who have altered the geography of his town. The white man is also one who lays waste to the abstract desires of Okonkwo's heart and the plans he had of amassing wealth and power through his daughters. This becomes a barrier in the reception Okonkwo has for the white man's religion.

Momentarily, in an extremely passive turn, Achebe allows Okonkwo to transgress sexualities. Okonkwo becomes exceedingly proud of his daughter Ezinma, filled with adoration for his daughter's ability to understand him better than anyone else. He is the only person she is able to stand during her sudden moods, and she is the only one who truly understands his feelings. Okonkwo's undying desire is for his daughter to have been a son.

For a writer whose tongue grapples with both the language of the coloniser and the native tongue, Achebe reserves the whiplash upon the white man for the end of his novel. He breaks his protagonist and his culture before he attacks the white man. The voice of Oika when he repeats the proverb about the toad jumping around in the daylight points to the consensus of opinion among the Igbo people against the white man. However, Achebe also allows the native to transgress the ways of his own tradition repeatedly instead of the western religion. He insists that any and all transgression in the text happen solely based on the Igbo way. The worst that the Christian tradition does in the text is create fanatics like Enoch among the converts. One of the things that Alison Searle notes in her work on the role of missions in Achebe's novel is how the explication of the missionary characters is inherent to the Englishness of Achebe's experience of imperialism. But Achebe's decision to oppose the power of the coloniser becomes evident in his consistent return to Okonkwo's rigid opposition of the white man's ways even to the point of death.

The second murder that Okonkwo commits against the white officer ends the passive opposition in the text. Okonkwo becomes a rebel, an open outlaw to the way the land now operates. The white officer's death implies the first Christian transgression in a land newly converted. The gothic element of the white man that persisted in the text's undertone gets broken temporarily. The fear he invoked among the natives gets transferred to Okonkwo, making him the bearer of a heavy burden, one of the conqueror and lawbreaker. The man who dared to anger the gods during the week of peace once again makes an appearance, proving the fear of the people when Ikemefuna first died.

Finally, when Okonkwo commits suicide, he become a double transgressor. The fear that resounds at the mention of his name begins to also imply a horror at the end meted out to a man whose rebellion was unfounded on social causes. The arrogance of a man who disregarded the deities comes to the fore, and his presence as a post-exile disrupter of the land becomes what is remembered. His fear of the imperialist religion becomes magnified in the fear that the natives have in touching his body. He has sinned in taking his own life, angering multiple gods in one single act. The Christian God and the Igbo deity both forbid the taking of one's life. Achebe's ending to the novel along this vein emphasises Keech's definition: the gothic is anything that invokes in the reader a response of fear.

Achebe's novel shifts from the native to the colonised through the English language. He tells the story of the fearful through a language that brings to mind the horror of an entire race. The transgressive quality of such storytelling constantly shifts focus from one end of the war to the other against the invading influence of the coloniser, his religion, and his rise to prominence in Africa. Many times in the concluding chapter, Achebe records his true sentiments towards the invasion in descriptions like "lunatic religion", "abominable religions", and so on. Yet, the invasion persists. It continues to happen in the text as it did in reality, in the minds of the people. Achebe's storytelling is accompanied with frenzied expressions of horror, which all point towards the gothic nature of the experience of colonisation as it stands even today as a scar in history on the face of Africa, and a mark of great contempt on the imperialists.

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# The future is us and the future is now: A study with a special reference to Youth in politics

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## ABSTRACT

Young people are the lifeblood of any democracy. Tomorrow's leaders are tomorrow's leaders, and tomorrow's innovators can already bring new solutions to global issues. However, youth representation in parliament remains at an all-time low. For more than a decade, the India parliament union (IPU) has been advocating for the empowerment of young politicians in order to consolidate and revitalize democracy and increase the number of representatives of all generations. As the torchbearers of societal change, young individuals are increasingly becoming significant players in political arenas worldwide. The study investigates the motivations, challenges, and impact of youth engagement in politics, with a focus on understanding their influence on policy-making and democratic processes. Through a comprehensive review of existing literature, interviews, and case studies, this paper aims to provide insights into the evolving relationship between the youth demographic and political structures. By analyzing the experiences of young political leaders and activists, the research seeks to unravel the potential benefits and obstacles associated with empowering youth in political decision-making. The findings contribute to a nuanced understanding of the crucial role that youth play in shaping the future of governance and policy, emphasizing the importance of fostering an inclusive and participatory political environment for the continued development of democratic societies. This research, emphasizing the concept that "The Future is Us and the Future is Now." The study seeks to understand the dynamics of youth involvement in politics, their aspirations, challenges, and the potential transformative effects on political landscapes. Special attention will be given to exploring how the youth's active participation can shape the future of governance and civic engagement.

**Keywords:** Youth, Political participation,Torchbearers, Dynamic, Democratic, Governance, Societies, Transformative, Future

## INTRODUCTION

Politics should set the stage for the exploration of the role of youth in shaping the political landscape, because "Politics is not a game, it's a very serious mission in service of people."Begin by providing context on the increasing involvement of young people in political activities globally. Highlight the significance of understanding their impact on political dynamics and decision-making processes. Emphasize the need to examine the challenges and opportunities faced by youth in the realm of politics, as well as the potential implications for the future. Conclude the introduction by outlining the paper's objectives and the relevance of the study in comprehending the evolving nature of politics in the contemporary era."Young of today are not the leaders of tomorrow, but the young of today are the leaders of today!"

## HISTORY:

The involvement of youth in Indian politics has a rich and dynamic history. Notable figures like Bhagat Singh, Subash Chandra Bose, Savarkar, and many such ideal leadersplayed a crucial role in the freedom struggle, emphasizing the importance of youth participation.Post-independence, the youth continued to be active in political movements, contributing to social and economic changes. The rise of youth-led political parties and movements in different states reflects their ongoing impact on Indian politics. The emergence of leaders like Annamalai, Tejasvi Surya, Raghav Chadda, Shreyasi Began,Rivaba Jadeja, Nikhil Kumarswamy,Rahul Gandhi, Adhitya Thackeray, Chandrani Murmu, and others highlights the evolving role of youth in shaping the political landscape.India's election history dates back to its first general elections in 1952 after gaining independence in 1947. The electoral system is based on universal adult suffrage, allowing all citizens aged 18 and above to vote. However, the 2014 and 2019 elections witnessed increased youth voter turnout, indicating a growing political consciousness.Youth involvement isn't without challenges, including issues like unemployment and education. However, their active participation remains pivotal in shaping policies and driving social change, showcasing a dynamic interplay between the youth and India's political history.

## REVIEW OF LITERATURE

One of the reasons for this is that today's young adults are more impenetrable in achieving the developmental milestones of adulthood ("Arnett (2014) and "Tagliabue (2014)"). As a result, this impenetrability results in an irrevocable delay in political involvement. In a study of the relationship between political participation among young adults and adults ("Quintelier (2007)"), the authors found that "Young adults and adults appear to share similar political attitudes, with young people having fewer opportunities to participate in political life." They further noted that there are differences in terms of engagement in particular forms of political participation, as young adults are more likely to engage in non-institutionalized forms of political participation. As a result, "it appears that the issue of youth political participation may be less a question of participation and more a question of participation location" ("Rainsford (2017, p. 2)

## OBJECTIVES:

- To understand the dynamics of youth involvement in politics, ability and interest of Youth's in Politics.
- It seeks to unravel the potential benefits and obstacles associated with empowering youth in political decision-making.
- To understand the need of Youth's in Politics and the impact of the same on the welfare of the society.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY:

- In this study, the authors used secondary data. Data was collected through various articles, magazines, and websites. This can be published data or unpublished data. Published data are available from a variety of sources including; Printed publications, Public records, Journals.
- A descriptive survey was used in this study. To achieve the goals of this research project. The authors used qualitative data to explore and analyze the impact on the society and economy of India. The authors sought to fill research gaps by analyzing the secondary data collected.

## NEED OF YOUTH'S IN POLITICS

Politics refers to the activities, actions, and policies used to gain and hold power in a government or to influence the government. It involves the process by which decisions are made within groups or societies, ranging from local communities to international relations. Politics encompasses a wide range of activities, including voting, lobbying, campaigning, and governing, and it plays a crucial role in shaping the laws, policies, and systems that govern societies.Youth are crucial to society across all sectors because they bring fresh perspectives, innovation, and energy. Their dynamism fosters progress, adaptability, and the development of new ideas, contributing to the overall growth and vitality of communities.Youth in politics bring diverse viewpoints, increased representation, and a connection to contemporary issues. Their involvement fosters a more inclusive political landscape, ensuring decisions consider the long-term interests of upcoming generations. Additionally, youth engagement promotes civic participation and strengthens democratic values."Strong political stability has always created prosperity for the young."

Fresh Perspectives: Youth in politics bring new ideas and perspectives, breaking away from traditional approaches.

Technological Savvy: Growing up in a tech-centric era, young individuals often possess strong digital

skills, enhancing communication and outreach in political activities.

Energy and Enthusiasm: Youthful energy can inject dynamism into political campaigns, leading to increased engagement and participation.

Representation of Diverse Issues: Young politicians often advocate for a broad range of issues, including those directly affecting the younger generation, promoting a more inclusive political agenda.

Long-Term Vision: With a longer expected future, youth politicians may focus on sustainable and long-term policies, considering the impact on future generations.

Adaptability: Youth are generally more adaptable to change, crucial in navigating evolving political landscapes and addressing emerging challenges.

Connecting with Youth Voters: Having young representatives can help political entities connect better with the youth demographic, fostering increased voter turnout and civic participation.

Promoting Civic Education: Youth involvement in politics can inspire civic education initiatives, encouraging a more informed and engaged electorate.

Overcoming Stagnation: Introducing youth into politics helps prevent stagnation and promotes the continual evolution of political systems.

Inspiring Future Leaders: Youth in politics serve as role models, inspiring other young individuals to become active participants and potential leaders in the political arena.

Amrit Generation:This current young generation of India are not only the future of India, but also the Present of India, as it is the most blessed and most opportune generation of the country.

## IMPACT OF YOUTH PARTICIPATION IN POLITICS

A balanced mix of youth and adult participation can create a synergistic effect. While youth infuse vitality and innovation, adults provide stability, experience, and a historical perspective. Collaboration between generations in politics can lead to well-rounded decision-making and the addressing of diverse societal needs.

There is no right time to join politics as such, but it happens whenever the calling comes within that this is the cause that I want to work towards. Politics is all about variables more than constants. Hence, unless the larger ideal/cause that truly motivates don't enter politics looking at it as a career, but if one enters politics who is driven by the idealism, triggered by a strong conviction to do something, then that sense of conviction and idealism is what will keep us going even in tough times. Before one completely decides to join politics/ involve in politics, he/she certainly should be financially independent (employed). Democracy essentially means that we are the masters of our own craft; we are the masters of our own destiny. Therefore, Democracy means, A platform which we have created by our own will to craft our own destiny.

## YOUTH INTO POLITICS: CHALLENGES

- Limited Resources: Young individuals may face challenges in mobilizing financial and organizational resources compared to more established political figures.
- Skepticism from Older Generations: Older voters and politicians might be skeptical about the capabilities of young leaders, questioning their readiness for political responsibilities.
- Institutional Barriers: Existing political structures may pose obstacles to the entry of youth, with established hierarchies sometimes resisting change.
- Media Scrutiny: Youth in politics might face intensified media scrutiny, potentially magnifying mistakes or inexperience and making it harder to build a positive public image.
- Political Stereotypes: Stereotypes associating youth with impulsiveness or lack of seriousness can hinder their credibility in the political arena.
- Limited Representation: Youth may find it challenging to represent the diverse needs of their age group, as their experiences and perspectives might vary widely.
- Lack of Networking: Building political networks takes time, and youth may encounter difficulties in establishing connections compared to their more experienced counterparts.
- Electoral Challenges: Young candidates may struggle in elections where name recognition and experience are often crucial factors influencing voter decisions.
- Balancing Personal and Political Life: Juggling personal and political responsibilities can be demanding for youth, potentially leading to burnout or challenges in maintaining a work-life balance.

**SUGGESTIONS:**

- Promote civic education in schools to raise awareness about political processes and responsibilities.
- Ensure easy access to political information through digital platforms, workshops, and community events.
- Establish mentorship programs connecting experienced politicians with young individuals interested in politics.
- Implement policies that address youth concerns and provide platforms for their voices to be heard.
- Develop interactive platforms where youth can engage with political leaders, ask questions, and express their opinions.
- Create opportunities for young people to gain practical experience through internships within political offices.
- Encourage political parties to include more youth candidates, ensuring a diverse and representative political landscape.
- Conduct outreach programs in communities to inform and involve youth in local political activities.
- Promote healthy debates and discussions on political issues in schools and communities to foster critical thinking.
- Acknowledge and support youth-led initiatives that contribute positively to society, encouraging further engagement.

**CONCLUSION:**

"To own a greater vision for tomorrow, the Youth's must lead today!" Youth involvement in politics is vital for a dynamic and inclusive democracy. Their fresh perspectives, energy, and passion can drive positive change. As young people engage in political processes, they contribute to a more representative and forward-thinking society. In conclusion, fostering active youth participation in politics is essential for the growth and resilience of democratic systems worldwide."One may or may not be interested in politics, but the impact of politics is all pervasive."

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# Happily Ever After in Angela Carter's *The Bloody Chamber and Other Stories*

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## ABSTRACT

The uncanny is an aesthetic that subverts social scrutiny by imposing the idea of the unfamiliar onto the familiar. It is an effective writing style to question societal taboos, norms and patriarchal values, used by women writers to rewrite their stories. Therefore, this paper attempts to understand the ways in "happily ever after" is constituted for the female characters in Angela Carter's collection of short stories titled *The Bloody Chamber and Other Stories* (1979). It will look at how Carter has rewritten European fairytales, originally serving as moral lessons for women, using the style of the uncanny as defined by Sigmund Freud (1919) in his essay *The Uncanny*. Using examples from the last three short stories revolving around wolves, this paper will look closely at Carter's use of the uncanny to slip from one identity or aspect to another, both in terms of content and form, to understand what "happily ever after" really means, despite the fear, trauma and patriarchal norms enforced on women.

**Keywords:** Uncanny, Familiar, Unfamiliar, Women Rewriting Themselves, *The Bloody Chamber and Other Stories*, Angela Carter

## INTRODUCTION

### Once Upon a Time…

Women writing fiction, including within the genre of the Female Gothic which makes use of the idea of the uncanny, is not a new concept. The ideas and literature surrounding the same has existed at least since the 18th century (Goswami and Gogoi, 2023). Wallace and Smith define the Female Gothic as "a politically subversive genre articulating women's dissatisfactions with patriarchal structures and offering a coded expression of their fears of entrapment within the domestic and the female body." (as cited in Goswami and Gogoi, 2023).

Women writers seem to use the genre to write, or rather, rewrite women who have originally been written by men, in turn questioning societal taboos, norms and patriarchal values, often resorting to the use of the uncanny. The common themes and ideas centre around sexual encounters, social injustice, blood, death and dirt among others, in order to uncover the fears and pleasures of society, that are otherwise taboo. Since these are often repressed and feared and therefore garner no acknowledgement from society, it is not surprising that female writers employ the device of the uncanny to express themselves for who they are rather than depend on male writers and the latter's distortions of the feminine or female characteristics (Pflaumer 2023).

According to Valerie Pflaumer (2023), male writers have long since used language that is oppressive and patriarchal. This is evident even in the way they portray domesticity, describing women as merely homely creatures with no independence, personality or minds of their own. The idea of the homely relates

to the idea of the uncanny, as defined by Sigmund Freud (1919) in his essay *The Uncanny*. In this essay, Freud discusses the idea of *Heimlich* which translates to homely or the familiar and *Unheimlich* which is unhomely or the unfamiliar and hidden from view. Although each term has a distinct meaning, according to Freud, the uncanny is a result of the blurring of the two, or the addition of something unfamiliar or odd to that which is familiar, transforming what we are used to into what we are not used to, thus inducing fear in the reader or observer. Freud also addresses the idea of the double which seems to equate to the formation of the super-ego and is manifested in media and literature through mirrors and doppelgangers.

In a journal article titled "On Female Identity and Writing by Women" by Gardiner (1981), the author elaborates on the impact of a woman's identity, which she considers a process rather than something fixed, on a woman's reading and writing process. Women's experiences differ from those of men, resulting in women writers recreating their own experiences in various forms that do not fit into men's linear representations or imaginations. These recreations tend to interpret a disconnect between their outer and inner selves in a variety of ways, lending a unique truth in terms of reality.

This paper will use three stories revolving around wolves in Angela Carter's collection of short stories titled *The Bloody Chamber and Other Stories* (1979), to take a closer look at her use of the uncanny to slip from one identity or aspect to another, both in terms of content and form, to understand what "happily ever after" really means, despite the fear, trauma and patriarchal norms enforced on women.

**Fairy Tales or Furry Tales?**

Angela Carter once said, "My intention was not to do 'versions' or, as the American edition of the book said, horribly, 'adult' fairy tales, but to extract the latent content from the traditional stories and to use it as the beginnings of new stories." (Simpson, 2006). And she did exactly that with her short story collection titled *The Bloody Chamber and Other Stories* (1979). She created new stories, using European fairytales as inspiration, but adding her own voice without the inherently patriarchal moral standpoint taken by her male predecessors like Charles Perrault.

*The Bloody Chamber and Other Stories* consists of ten short stories, with the first one, titled "The Bloody Chamber", based on the story of Bluebeard. It follows a woman who discovers the corpses of her new husband's previous wives in his mansion and realises she is doomed as well. However, in Carter's version, the moral is not a warning regarding the consequences of female curiosity but a depiction of women taking charge of their own fate. The climax of the story involves the woman's mother arriving on horseback and shooting the husband with a gun. The story ends with the woman selling off the property she has inherited from her dead husband, living out the rest of her life with her blind lover, a piano tuner she befriends at the mansion.

The next three stories revolve around cats, with the first two being renditions of *The Beauty and the Beast* and the third based on *Puss in Boots*. They all deal with the idea of the animal or the beast both within and without the female characters. In the second story from the collection, titled "The Courtship of Mr. Lyon", a lion's fur falls away to reveal a man the moment the woman kisses his paws. In the third story, titled "The Tiger's Bride", a tiger licks away the skin of the woman to reveal fur and subsequently the beast within. The fourth story is titled "Puss-in-Boots".

The following three stories, titled "The Erl-King", "The Snow Child" and "The Lady of the House of Love", revolve around the push and pull of desire as well as the male gaze. They take inspiration from the stories of vampires and Snow White to portray the difficulties in attaining desire. One of the female characters is also depicted as an aggressor, questioning the stereotypical idea of the good, virgin woman and the bad, aggressive man.

The final three stories are based on the story of Red Riding Hood, with wolves and werewolves used as a device to dissect desire and the fear it induces due to societal and patriarchal norms that prevent women from displaying them. The relationship between women and their libido is portrayed by the half human, half wolf characters that sometimes succumb to the woman or are attacked by them.

In the eighth story, titled "The Werewolf", the girl is not afraid when attacked by the wolf and instead cuts off its paw. However, the wolf turns out to be a werewolf and also the girl's grandmother. The villagers believe the grandmother to be a witch and beat her to death, after which the girl begins to live in her grandmother's house and prospers. Thus, she chooses wealth over the uncanny or the witch's or werewolf's powers. In the ninth story, titled "The Company of Wolves", the wolf ends up eating the grandmother but when Red Riding Hood arrives, she is unafraid and gives in to the wolf's desires, ending up sleeping peacefully in his now tender paws. The final story, titled "Wolf-Alice", seems to take inspiration from François Truffaut's *L'Enfant sauvage* (Makinen, 1992), where a child brought up by wolves, learns the ways of humans and nurses a werewolf Duke back to health after he is shot with a silver bullet.

This paper will particularly focus on the last three stories portraying wolves and werewolves to

understand the idea of the uncanny, focusing on the idea of dirt or impurity, castration and sexual desire to flesh out the same. Carter uses all three to counter patriarchal stereotypes surrounding women, giving them agency, especially in terms of the female characters giving in to their desires and pleasures, both human and beastly. These aspects redefine the conventional idea of the "happily ever after" where a man and woman fall in love and face no more hardship. These stories are a reflection of reality through the unreal or unfamiliar, where women can be villains, can take ownership of their pleasure and desires and can live happily after without a male companion.

Carter also makes use of a particular style of writing that seems uncanny. Although she uses normative language and syntax, the prose do not always make sense to the reader at the first go. There is a certain fluidity of thought and prose that merges one idea or thought with another, making it difficult to separate the human from the beast or the pleasure from the disgust.

**Of Wolves and Werewolves**

***Uncanny Content***

When it comes to Carter's *The Bloody Chamber*, she is adept at blurring the binaries of the familiar and unfamiliar with reference to the uncanny, using her female protagonists to portray the same. In the last three stories involving the wolves and werewolves, sexual pleasure is combined with pain to achieve the "happy endings" of and for the female protagonists. For example, in the short story titled "The Werewolf", the little girl is not afraid of the wolf who approaches her in the forest and instead proceeds to chop off its paw. She discovers only later on that the werewolf is her own grandmother, leading the villagers to beat the old woman to death because they suspect her of being a witch. The girl then begins to live in her grandmother's house and prospers. This shows the character's human flaws, that she is only mortal and prefers material wealth over the strangeness of the werewolf or the witch, that she prefers to live not within society's norms, but on her own terms, a woman alone and successful.

This merging of her desires to take charge of her own life by destroying her grandmother yet seeking the bourgeois lifestyle, depicts the merging of the unfamiliar and the familiar, as elaborated upon by Freud. In his essay *The Uncanny*, Freud (1919) also discusses the fear of castration through mutilation by using the example of the Sandman fable, equating the fear of the loss of one's eyes by the Sandman to the fear of castration. In both "The Werewolf" and "The Company of Wolves", the werewolf is mutilated and his/her limbs and/or head are chopped off, thus alluding to the fear of castration, as in Freud's theory of the uncanny. However, the women who perform the castration are not afraid of the wolf, werewolf or the man who symbolises desire and pleasure.

In "The Company of Wolves", the majority consists of short tales regarding several different werewolves, constantly describing them as "carnivore incarnate". This sets the stage for the latter part which finally introduces a Red Riding Hood-like character. These short tales describe the werewolves' appetite for flesh, who when they are confronted by hunters and husbands, return to their human form. This constant shape-shifting and merging of identities between man and animal blurs the boundaries between sexual pleasure or desire and violence embodied in the killing of the werewolf or its human prey. This may also be read as the husband's control of a woman's sexual awakening or pleasure-seeking behaviour, thereby portraying the very patriarchal values that Carter seeks to shed in her short stories. However, it may also be read as a cautionary tale to women by a woman, urging them to take charge of their own desires rather than depending on others, especially men, to save them.

When the virgin Red Riding Hood is finally introduced in "The Company of Wolves", she allows the werewolf to win the race to her grandmother's house, where upon arriving there, he devours the old woman. When the girl realises the werewolf has made a meal of her grandmother, she ceases to be afraid, as made clear in the line "The girl burst out laughing; she knew she was nobody's meat." Towards the end of this particular story, the virgin Red Riding Hood gives in to the werewolf's demands to disrobe, setting down her knife and burning her clothes, symbolising a point of no return. The death of the old woman and the triumph of the young girl can be seen as an initiation into the contemporary world where women are not consumed by another's desire or lust, but are in control of their own.

In this story, the idea of meat turning into flesh alludes to the libido transforming when her sensuality meets the werewolf's (Makinen, 1992). The girl asks the werewolf what she should do with her virgin body and when he tells her to disrobe, she does so, eventually proceeding to take off his clothes as well. Throughout the story, the werewolf is described as a carnivore who cannot be satiated except with "immaculate flesh" and when the girl finally and voluntarily gives it to him, he becomes tender, sleeping in her arms. The wolf thus seems to symbolise the girl's sexual desire.

This shows the journey of a woman who accepts her desires, through a process that does not shy away from the gory and the uncanny. For example, there is mention of the girl picking out and eating the lice form the pelt of the werewolf and not being disgusted by it, instead understanding it to be a sacred marriage

ceremony. This shows that whatever desires a woman may have, it is acceptable to her, even if it is not acceptable to the patriarchal, heteronormative society at large. The presence of lice too seems to symbolise that dirt or animal-like characteristics are not out of the ordinary, but acceptable.

In the final story titled "Wolf-Alice", Carter has taken inspiration from the character of Alice from Lewis Carroll's "The Adventures of Alice in Wonderland", Jacques Lacan's ideas of the mirror stage as well as the Truffaut's *L'Enfant sauvage* (Makinen, 1992). Here, Wolf-Alice is found in the forest beside the corpse of her foster mother, a wolf. Although raised by wolves, she slowly teaches herself the ways of humans and begins to take care of a Duke she is placed in the care of, who is himself a werewolf. She learns to recognise herself and her desires from her reflection in the mirror, alluding to Lacan and Freud's idea of the uncanny doppelganger, as she has no human teachers or caregivers. On one of the Duke's nightly rampages, he is shot by a silver bullet, but Wolf-Alice nurses him back to health by licking his wounds, turning him into a complete human. This is made clear from the fact that up until Wolf-Alice licked him back to health, his reflection was never visible in the mirror.

This story questions the stereotyped characteristics of wolves, where they are not always as brave or evil as they seem. She brings him back to the world of the rational from where he can be humanised again, just as she has done to herself, learning from her reflection and experiences. In this story too, as in the previous one, there is the idea of dirt in terms of animal pelt, carnivorous creatures and blood which does not seem to disgust the female characters in the stories.

Wolf-Alice grows up in a world where she cannot name what she can perceive because she does not have the ability of language, so the story probes her thought process in several instances – how does she think and what does she think about – especially as she is stuck between human form and wolf behaviour. This questions the process of socialisation and attempts to give the reader a glimpse of what women are capable of when they are not forced to conform to conventional societal norms or toe the line of prejudice.

When Wolf-Alice gets her first menses, she believes it to be a wolf bite on her vagina that causes the bleeding. However, once she learns that this bleeding occurs in synchronisation with the lunar cycle, she learns to anticipate it. This is in contrast to the Duke who behaves like a wild creature, unable to see his reflection in the mirror, and therefore unable to understand who he is. When he is finally shot with a silver bullet, it is Wolf-Alice, who, without disgust licks the blood and dirt off him, thus gradually revealing his reflection in the mirror as he finally transforms from a feral beast to a human. It is this constant shifting between the familiar and the unfamiliar and the blurring of the lines and forms between the two that lend the stories its uncanny voice.

***Uncanny Form***

Carter's style of writing too flows between the *Heimlich* and the *Unheimlich* leading to uncertainty, confusion and fear in the reader. Her uncanny writing style can be demonstrated with an example from "The Company of Wolves" where she has sentences that run into one another, constantly changing ideas without explanation.

> "She will lay his fearful head on her lap and she will pick out the lice from his pelt and perhaps she will put the lice into her mouth and eat them, as he will bid her, as she would do in a savage marriage ceremony."

The sentences are strange, both in terms of syntax and semantics and end in a way that is sudden and shocking. In "The Werewolf", for example, the final paragraph of the story describes the girl's present and future in an abrupt way, almost as if they are one, merging into each other without a distinct change in time.

> "The child crossed herself and cried out so loud the neighbours heard her and come rushing in. They knew the wart on the hand at once for a witch's nipple; they drove the old woman, in her shift as she was, out into the snow with sticks, beating her old carcass as far as the edge of the forest, and pelted her with stones until she fell down dead. Now the child lived in her grandmother's house; she prospered."

The form of the language is not smooth as Carter uses random cuts, punctuations and jumps in time and space, yet there is a certain fluidity of thought, of action, where the decisions of the female protagonists lead to a conclusion that benefits or pleasures them, where they take matters into their own hands without waiting for anyone, specifically any male, to rescue them, in fact rescuing the men in some stories. While "they" may not live "happily ever after" together, the female characters certainly live according to their own terms, their own "happily ever after".

**…And They Lived Happily Ever After**

Angela Carter's collection of short stories is inspired by fairytales, but in no way resembles them, either in form or content. She uses them as a base to write new stories altogether, from a Feminist perspective. Many critics are of the opinion that in trying to break free from sexist stereotypes and male-centric

pornographic imagery, Carter has unwittingly perpetuated those very same stereotypes, therefore compromising the feminist standpoint (Makinen, 1992). This paper argues that the stories, in fact, have strong female protagonists who take charge of their own fate and sexuality, despite resistance from the societal norms that press down on them from all sides, creating their own happy endings.

All the stories' female protagonists have minds and desires of their own, making them independent characters who determine their own futures and are not cowed down by the decisions and futures otherwise ordained by the men in the stories. By using stories that are in the public domain and popular among the masses, Carter took what readers were familiar with and rewrote them as new stories bringing the latent content to the fore. This is a surprise to the readers, pushing them to think beyond the binaries of male and female, pleasure and pain, purity and impurity as well as disgust and desire by portraying characters as animals or mythical creatures that shapeshift and change genders, gain pleasure from pain, accept blood and dirt as part of life and accept one's desires without prejudice.

As mentioned earlier, Gardiner (1981) proposes that "female identity is a process", one that is more flexible and relative than men's identity. Female social roles are more rigid and female identity crisis is less stable than their male counterparts depending on the male unit of measurement according to her. This complexity and continuous adjustment that females have to make in relation to males leads to a troubled sense of self for the former, or a fluidity that is evident in their writings. According to Gardiner, women writers have a distinct relationship with their writing and protagonists, resulting in storytelling that is "less linear, unified, and chronological" and far more based on memory than men's writing, thereby explaining the continuous back and forth and the easy slipping from one idea or identity to another present in *The Bloody Chamber*.

This paper argues that this very quality is what lends an uncanny character to *The Bloody Chamber*, using its strong female protagonists to depict an alternative where they can embrace desire in the face of patriarchal opposition. In "The Werewolf", "The Company of Wolves" and "Wolf-Alice", Carter uses the image of a wolf or werewolf merging with the human body and having sexual relations with them, bringing home the idea of the uncanny without adverse repercussions for the female characters, in fact giving many of them their own version of a happy ending. It is not surprising that women writers of the 20th century, expressed experiences of their identity through what they wrote and how they wrote it. According to Gardiner (1981), "Often they communicate a consciousness of their identity through paradoxes of sameness and difference – from other women, especially their mothers; from men; and from social injunctions for what women should be, including those inscribed in the literary canon."

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# The Essence of Modern Horror: The Prevalence of Literature, Art and Cinematography Heightening the Feeling of the Supernatural and Extraordinary with Reference to the Movie "*The Lighthouse*" by Robert Eggers

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## ABSTRACT

This study examines how horror cinema has changed over time, concentrating on Robert Eggers' 2019 release, "The Lighthouse." The article examines the film's use of literature, art, and cinematography to produce an eerie and unsettling experience, tracing the genre back to its Gothic beginnings. In addition to allusions to books like "Moby Dick" and "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner," the story explores Christian allegories, Greek mythology, and the subliminal depiction of the seven deadly sins. The overt reference to "Hypnosis," a painting by Sascha Schneider, elevates the mood of the movie artistically. The unusual aspect ratio and black-and-white images heighten the sinister feeling from a cinematographic standpoint. The study ends by pointing out a subtle plot surprise that subverts conventional horror storytelling and establishes "The Lighthouse" as a seminal work of contemporary horror.

**Keywords :** Horror, Film, Mythology, Robert Eggers, symbolism, Christian allegory.

## INTRODUCTION

Horror movies have been an integral part of cinema throughout the ages and have evolved in accordance with the numerous cultural modifications and shifts that have happened in the western world. Starting somewhere amidst the emergence of gothic literature, art and culture where the presence of uncanny elements and occurrences were the salient element, the feature of horror grasped the attention of the audience.

The very first horror movie was "Le Manoir du Diable," sometimes known in English as "The Haunted Castle" or "The House of the Devil," created in 1895 by Mellies. Since then, the attributes and essence of horror, especially in the spectrum of movies, has undergone modifications creating a robust hold over the world of cinema. Even though the age old and conventional practice of portraying ghosts in movies still persists to enhance the feeling of fear and surprise, modern horror however, tends to use the power of the uncanny and supernatural to convey feelings which cannot be entirely expressed with the show of fearful creatures and jump scares. Some critically acclaimed modern horror movies are "The Witch" (2015) by Robert Eggers, "Midsommar" (2019) by Ari Aster and "Get Out" (2017) by Jordan Peele"

Though not the first modern horror movie by Robert Eggers, "The Lighthouse" stands out among numerous other such films creeping up in this generation. Released in 2019, starring William Dafoe and Robert Pattinson, the movie was entirely shot in black and white with the use of different frames,

trying to convey underlying issues and analytical concepts of the film, which would be later talked about in this paper. With the immaculate use of mystifying, chilling and haunting imagery, and references to some of the most notable pieces of literature and art, "The Lighthouse" has become a crucial movie to discuss and review in the genre of Modern Horror.

As a brief overview of the movie, the plot of "The Lighthouse" is very mildly complex. There are two sailors having the same name, "Thomas" who spends their lives by the sea controlling the functioning of a lighthouse. However, there are grave secrets hidden at the altar of the lighthouse which the younger Thomas is unaware of and is desperate to know. A series of extremely uncanny and fearful events trigger the audiences' thoughts and perceptions. The movie does not have any specific resolution and lies entirely with what the viewer makes and understands about the ending. This paper would further delve into the presence of extraordinary and uncanny aspects portrayed through texts, paintings and cinematography present in the movie and how these aspects enhance the sensation of fear and prove the recent surge of modern horror in the industry.

**Literature Review**

Robert Eggers has blended cinematography, literature and art impeccably in his movie, where the implicit references to famous novels and poems, mythical and biblical ideologies, and prominent paintings enhance the feeling of unease in the viewers and also make the occurrences and circumstances in the movie "The Lighthouse'' even more uncanny. Explaining hidden meanings in the movie and also revealing the secrets deep seated within the two sailors is done very cleverly with the use of lighting, the angle of the screen, specific scenes foreshadowing what might happen eventually in the movie. If the movie is seen with a lot of attention to detail, the connections to mention worthy American novels become apparent, and if the viewer is able to spot them and relate them to the scene in the movie, they might even be able to understand why that specific reference to the text, story or poem is being used and also predict what might happen later on in the movie.

Creating a movie in itself is an artform, and when paintings are incorporated with the filming and an entire clip becomes the replication of the painting, it becomes a marvel to behold. The scene in this movie, depicting a painting would give goose bumps to any viewer and the way the two actors have masterfully acted it out makes the atmosphere even more uncanny, even when someone is enjoying the movie in the comfort of their homes. This essay would break down each of these aspects about the movie and try to articulate and explain the importance of all of them, specifically, the cinematography, the use of literary references and the mention of paintings to show how they are skillfully blended to create the most haunting and uncanny experience that movie buffs look forward to in horror movies and series.

**Implicit References and Correlations to Significant Literary Pieces, Underlining the Uncanny Aspect in "The Lighthouse"**

Relations to Famous Novels and Literary Pieces

When someone sees a poster or even a picture with the sea, and two sailors with huge beards and ragged clothes, the first novel that would come to mind is "Moby Dick" (1851) by Herman Melville. The reference to this novel is not even implicit, rather the context of the novel is what made the basis of the movie while Egger and his brother started creating the script. The two sailors Wake and Winslow being willingly trapped near the lighthouse and numerous bone chilling experiences happening to them is in itself supernatural. However, the way everything is actually linked and how it affects the mental health of the two characters is actually what makes the movie all the more uncanny. The audience would be in awe when they reach the final scene and see Winslow at the top of the lighthouse, where he desperately wanted to be, however, being engulfed by an extremely bright light. The movie ends there and it is open to interpretations about what the light could have been,

Another immensely significant literary piece that would come to mind when the audience notices that the turbulent sea becomes a major aspect of the movie is Samuel Taylor Coleridge's "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner". The mystical sea creatures and the wrath of the sea are both prevalent in the poem and the movie. Moreover, in one of the scenes we see Winslow killing a seagull because of his uncontrollable frustration and wrath and quite similarly the mariner kills his albatross in the poem. What makes this incident uncanny is the circumstances and occurrences that follow. In the poem, after the albatross was murdered the conditions of the sea became exceedingly harsh. Extremely abnormal things started to creep up and no one was able to have control over the situation. In the movie "The Lighthouse" from the moment Winslow kills that seagull, we would notice that everything started going haywire. He slowly was falling into insanity and losing the conception of right and wrong. Alcohol became his companion to keep his agitation temporarily at bay and stay in a slight delusional state.

Earnest Hemingway can never be left out when it comes to literature or writings with reference to the sea or ocean. His love for the waters and even fishing being a hobby has been a topic discussed throughout the ages. His magnificent novella, "Old Man and the Sea", surely has some hidden resemblance in the movie "The Lighthouse" as well. The way that the sea, being a force of nature proves, that a man can have a prowess of his own, but can never overpower nature, is evident in the movie and is also one of the most important themes of the novella. Moreover, one would be astounded to notice the extremely uncanny resemblance Thomas Wake, the older sailor in the movie has with Hemingway himself. Their features and looks are extremely similar and the deep waters played a very crucial part of both their lives. It cannot be said for sure if Eggers purposely designed that character in that manner, however the similarity in their looks and their love for the sea is surely uncanny and eerie.

Tinge of Greek Mythology in the Movie

Apart from popular novels and famous literary texts, Eggers does not stand back from sneaking in references from Greek mythology and Christian ideologies. With the entire movie being shot in black and white, what makes the scenes even more uncanny is the how perfectly the references fit in and the fear within the viewers is dispersed when they realise the grave truth about the two sailors and how each connection to the mythological texts and Biblical allusions become all the more highlighted when one pays attention to the behaviour portrayed by the actors according to the specific situation. At times the shots are nerve wracking because of how perfectly a textual reference fits in and the audience is themselves able to understand the foreshadowing of the metaphorical implications of the movie.

In an interview Robert Eggers said "Then we realised, "*Well, Prometheus and Proteus never hung out in any Greek myths before, but that seems to be what is kind of happening here*," and Prometheus might be taking on some characteristics that he hasn't in the past. But you know what? The classical authors did that all the time." As the Greek legend states that Prometheus stole fire from Olympus to give to the humans, and the fire is often interpreted and believed to be a metaphor for knowledge. Ephraim Winslow or Thomas Howard desperately wants to visit the top of the Lighthouse and wants to know the secret that Thomas Wake knows and enjoys every night when he visits the top of that structure. He yearns to gain that "knowledge" like Prometheus and when he eventually does get to experience what Wake has been hiding, it leads to his doom, which is surely quite uncanny. Wake is never affected by what is there at the top, but the one time when Howard visits the place, we can see the fear and agony on his face. He is also overtaken by misery just like Prometheus was eternally chained to a rock as a punishment. One can also make a reference to Proteus who happens to be the son of Poseidon, the Greek god of the sea. A lighthouse holds no meaning without a sea, and being the son of the sea god, the mention of Proteus becomes significant.

The Biblical Allusions if the Movie is seen from a Christian Angle

The use of Christian beliefs is often a very favourite aspect when a director or a script writer is writing a movie. Moreover, when it comes to horror movies, Christianity becomes even more crucial to have a part to play, so that the contradictions and contrasting images can be made even more heightened and visible to the audience. They mention of the Devil, or the use of a ram being the personification of Satan himself as written in the Bible, use of blood and gore, the image of an inverted cross, all of these are Christian allusions and when something is portrayed with these famous "Anti-Christian" symbols in a movie, situations mostly start deteriorating, uncanny occurrences creep up and real essence of fear and terror is felt in a horror movie.

The mention of the seven deadly sins in cinema is somewhat common and most movie writers use this concept immaculately. Robert Eggers does not stand back either. If a closer attention is given to both the sailors and how they tend to deal with different situations, the viewers would be able to spot out how even these two "Thomas'" might implicitly denote or symbolise each of the seven deadly sins of the Bible.

We find that both the sailors are stuck on an island abiding by their duties to control the lighthouse. This island can be interpreted from a Christian angle. The island can be a metaphor for purgatory, and Winslow embarking on his journey towards heaven. In the movie, Winslow once mentions that he had murdered a person which is surely a sin in Christianity. Moreover, if the island is actually purgatory, then the top of the lighthouse, where Wake spends the nights, can be interpreted to be the gateway to heaven. The feeling of the uncanny is highlighted when the audience realises that Winslow is slowly but quite steadily committing all the seven deadly sins which drives him further away from purgation and his chance in being accepted by heaven.

If the instances where there are implications of Winslow or "Thomas Howard" committing the sins are enlisted, they might stand as follows:

Lust: Mermaids, especially sirens have always been a symbol of sexuality and sirens have the notorious record of enticing sailors and luring them

to turbulent waters, leading them towards their death. The scene where the siren or mermaid is lying on the ruptured boat becomes a very pivotal image in the movie. Previously we see Winslow being sexually attracted to the small sculpture of a mermaid so much so that he even masturbates to that toy. Later on when a real life mermaid or siren surfaces to that island and is seen lying on a ruptured boat, the audience is shaken and there is a sense of realisation that Winslow's lust and craving for sexual satisfaction was slowly driving him towards insanity, quite similar to how the sirens make the sailors hallucinate with their songs and make them move on their own towards their impending doom. It is extremely uncanny how Winslow continuously tries to move away from dangerous and terrifying situations, but is carried towards committing sins no matter what. We can also see Winslow making love to the mermaid, moments after which she shows her real character. The audience is often unable to understand what is happening, which is one of the most important aspects of ideas that are uncanny. However, when all these come together, and the movie ends, it becomes clear that every incident was foreshadowed. Winslow's lust and sexual frustration embodied by the mermaid becomes a tick mark in the list of the seven deadly sins.

Gluttony: Half way through the movie we see the two sailors having a conversation late at night. The atmosphere is very dark and we can barely see the characters. A dimly lit candle becomes the only source of light which enhances the sensation of the uncanny and discomfort of the horror movie. Their conversation nearly has no meaning and they talk about unrelated topics. The next morning, when they wake up with a hangover, they realise they have no ration left to fill their stomachs. They finish their food without keeping a track on how much they have left and ate to their hearts desire. This is a direct implication towards another deadly sin, gluttony. Winslow puts another tick mark on his list of sins.

Greed: In one of the clips in the movie, Thomas Wake mentions something about a lighthouse mission which when completed would fetch the person a sum of a thousand dollars. A thousand dollars is not a small amount and anyone would be willing to earn it. Naturally, Winslow is attracted to this offer and sure wants to get a hold of the money. He is also ready to fight his way through. The audience would notice that the craving for the fortune becomes more important to the character than his mere survival. The greed and materialistic notion of Winslow becomes extremely apparent to the viewers and how this want adds to his deep seated frustration. Hence, Tomas Howard or Ephraim Winslow gets consumed by another deadly sin and drifts further away from purgation.

Sloth: From the very beginning of the movie we are made aware that Winslow has an alcohol addiction. We often find him sloshed out and having a hangover. He tends to be lazy and gets cross when the older sailor Thomas Wake points out that he has not completed his chores. In one incident he even drank himself to sleep and on that very particular day a ship was to come to rescue them. Just because of his laziness and "sloth" he probably loses his only chance of rescue and survival.

Wrath: This deadly sin is committed overtly at the very beginning of the film itself. Thomas Howard kills the seagull because of his anger and "wrath" and this has the uncanny resemblance to Coleridge's "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner". After the seagull is murdered, the downfall of the movie begins and that very scene can be said to be the stepping stone of "The Lighthouse" becoming a significant piece in the genre of modern horror movies.

Envy: The feeling of envy that resides within Winslow is visible from the very initial stage of the movie itself. He desperately wants to see what is up there at the Lighthouse that Wake has kept a well hidden secret and he grows extremely envious of him, all the more as he is strictly not allowed permission to go there. He can be so close to the top, clean the rest of the place, but not climb up and get the knowledge that is only accessible to Wake.

Pride: it is not really explicitly portrayed that Thomas Howard is a proud sailor. However, when he breaks the mermaid toy and claims that he saw through it, and was able to understand the ulterior motives, he is holding the toy as his own possession and claiming that what he did was correct. This act could not have been done if he did not have a sense of pride deep seated within him. And finally, Ephraim Winslow or Thomas Howard completes the checklist of committing all the seven deadly sins.

It is probable that this is the reason why, when he eventually does visit the top of the lighthouse, the extremely bright light pushed him away and knocked him down the stairs. He is finally naked and being eaten by the souls of people as well as creatures he killed. The reference of Prometheus again becomes prominent, who was eaten by an eagle. The lighthouse being the gateway to heaven and the top being the final destination, Winslow was rejected by heaven and thrown down to eternal misery in hell. All of this is extremely uncanny, more so because the viewers do not really anticipate the buildup of Howard's gradual leaning towards hell or doom. And when the dots are joined, the terror actually steps up. This is one of the most mesmerising factors about modern horror. These movies would

never have ghosts or the conventional jumpscares to scare the audience. They scare the audience through the most uncanny realisations and revelations that keep them stunned.

**The Overt Reference to Sascha Schneider's Painting "Hypnosis"**



Sascha Schneider's "Hypnosis", (1904)



The Specific Clip from the Movie Referring to the Painting

In a vision, Ephraim is unable to scale the tower and is then seized by a naked Thomas, whose eyes are just as powerful and hypnotic as the lighthouse'. The composition of this clip or scene was inspired by the painting mentioned above. "Hypnosis" is a painting by a 1940's French painter, Sascha Schneider whose work has been a prominent subject for research and often read through queer interpretations. However, in stark contrast, Thomas's stance differs from that of the hypnotizer in Schneider's picture. Rather, his position strikingly resembles that of the famous Artemision Bronze, a bronze figure said to represent either Zeus or the sea god Poseidon.

Following this hypothesis, the notion that Thomas embodies Poseidon (or Zeus) implies a parallel where Ephraim assumes the role of Prometheus, a prophetic ocean deity subservient to Poseidon. Throughout the film, the younger man is consistently depicted adorned with tentacles and sea creatures attached to his body, meeting a demise reminiscent of Prometheus. In Greek mythology, Prometheus, condemned by Poseidon and punished by Zeus, suffers eternal torment, chained to a mountain peak where his liver is perpetually torn out and consumed by birds.

The resonance between these artistic and mythological elements in the film may be open to interpretation, yet the undeniable influence of mythology and artistry on the narrative is evident. Ultimately, just as Prometheus faced retribution for defying the Olympians, Winslow endures punishment for disobeying Wake's directive not to ascend to the pinnacle of the Lighthouse.

**The Immaculate Use of Cinematography to Enhance the Feeling of the Uncanny**

One of the most unique features of the movie is the fact that it is shot with a nearly-square 1.19:1 aspect ratio. The entire film is in black and white with a lot of scenes shot in pitch darkness which heightens the feeling of the supernatural and uncanny, because darkness has always been associated with a sensation of fear and terror.

Smaller spaces often tend to cause claustrophobia and the screen is comparatively a lot smaller from the conventional movie screens. One reason is probably to set the atmosphere according to the age the movie portrays other cinematic influences. Another uncanny yet justified reason can be to make the audience feel the claustrophobia that the two sailors, especially Winslow, feels when he is willingly stranded on that island with someone as mysterious as Thomas Wake. The screen as well as the scenarios and occurrences mingle magically to make the viewers uncomfortable and claustrophobic and be even more immersed in the experience.

Taking a deeper dive into the movie and how it has been filmed, a lot of implicit metaphors and symbols rise up to the surface. The use of imagery and angles becomes significant and we even get a glimpse into the psyche of the characters. The Lighthouse can be interpreted to be a symbol of masculinity, or even considered to be a phallic object when the structure is considered. Both the sailors are extremely rough and masculine, which is made even more apparent with the dialogues and words they use. They do not stand back from using curses and unpolished language, and they are bound to the duties of the Lighthouse. On another clip where we see Winslow masturbating, the scene changes quite suddenly and the next clip is of the lighthouse, however the shot is horizontal. If the two scenes are considered in succession to each other, the Lighthouse being a metaphor for a phallus or a direct reference to masculinity becomes clearer. This is surely uncanny as we never get to know what Wake sees at the top of the lighthouse. He seems to enjoy extreme pleasure

whenever he visits there, but from what, that is left a secret. Moreover, Winslow was not able to gain that knowledge even though he tried his level best, probably because he failed his test of masculinity during his stay at the island.

It is important to mention another scene when it comes to the cinematography that makes the movie uncanny and fearful. We see Thomas Wake chasing Ephraim Winslow with an axe after they had an argument. However just afterwards something unexpected is brought about. Winslow states that his real name is Thomas Howard. The fact that both of them have the same name and there is no one else on that island is what makes the entire setting uncanny. Why would they have the same name and why they would always be at loggerheads with each other; this question and dilemma might lead to another striking interpretation or even revelation about the truth. In the luminous solitude of the lighthouse, Thomas Wake embodies the subconscious of Thomas Howard. Their existence converges in a unique event, with Howard toiling through the day and Wake emerging with the night. Only in the delicate transitions of sleep and awakening do they cross paths, freely conversing under the influence of intoxication. Wake's omniscience regarding Howard's past, meticulous notes, and harsh critique stem from this symbiotic relationship, where the subconscious dictates compliance.

Haunted by a regrettable past, Howard seeks refuge within the lighthouse's confines, yearning for tranquillity. However, the storm unleashed by the seagull's demise propels him into a harrowing confrontation with his subconscious, spiralling toward madness. In the heart of this tumult, Howard grapples with an insatiable curiosity, driven by the need to unveil the hidden truth that Wake, in his nightly visions, smiles upon—a truth even Howard himself remains uncertain of. The underlying reality that both the characters might actually be a single person fighting with his own psyche is increasingly uncanny. Initially burdened by their individual baggage, the two men arrive at the lighthouse. In the transformative aftermath of confronting their concealed truths, two figures emerge, now sharing the weight of their burdens as they depart from the beacon's embrace. Throughout the movie the audience is made to believe in the plot that there are two sailors on the island, but when the truth is revealed and the realisation sets in everyone sits back in awe and marvels at the mastery of Eggers to make the movie this uncanny and jaw dropping without the use of any ghosts or sudden frights.

**Conclusion**

"The Lighthouse" by Robert Eggers has gained its very own pedestal in the genre of modern horror. Every aspect is intricately woven and a magnificent tapestry created with the story of the two sailors, stranded on the island, bound to the duties of a Lighthouse. The production, lighting, angles and proportions all add up to create the flawless cinematography. References to famous paintings and overtly using it as a crucial scene in the movie intensifies the uncanny aspect and makes the audience even more engrossed in the plot. Art enthusiasts, people interested in mythology and Christianity and most specifically people who enjoy movies, every individual would surely appreciate the film and also understand why modern horror is on the verge of becoming a major genre in the world of cinema and has already started creating an impact in the industry and how the audience perceives horror. There are people who enjoy reading rather than watching. Hence, bookworms who have read novels mentioned previously in the essay would find the uncanny resemblances with the movie and might even be able to understand why that specific text has been chosen or why a specific clip seemed so similar to a book. "The Lighthouse" relies on its haunting visuals, disorienting sound design, and a narrative that delves deep into the recesses of human psychology. The film's exploration of isolation, madness, and the fragility of the human mind elevates it beyond mere frights, offering a thought-provoking and introspective journey. By creating a cinematic experience that goes beyond the conventions of classic horror, Eggers leaves a lasting impression on the field of contemporary filmmaking. "The Lighthouse" rises up as a well-known and iconic work in the genre that demonstrates that real terror may be found not only in the dark and monsters but also in the recesses of the human mind.

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# *This whole world is wild at heart and weird on top:* Exploring the Uncanny in David Lynch's *Twin* Peaks

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## ABSTRACT

David Lynch, the celebrated filmmaker and artist, is renowned for his distinctive and often disquieting exploration of the uncanny within his cinema and television productions. Through his idiosyncratic storytelling, enigmatic characterizations, and artistic vision, Lynch constructs a realm where the ordinary metamorphoses into the unfamiliar, and the demarcation between reality and the surreal becomes blurred. A quintessential illustration of this phenomenon can be found in his television series, Twin Peaks. Lynch habitually obfuscates the demarcation between dreams and reality, instilling an ethereal and surreal ambiance that leaves the audience in a bewildered state, affording the distance essential for introspection and contemplation of their own actions. The incorporation of ambient sounds and haunting musical compositions further amplifies the eerie ambiance, intensifying the overall sense of the uncanny. He delves into the darker recesses of the human psyche, scrutinizing the subconscious, and the decay of societal norms,all of which contribute to the unsettling nature of his oeuvre. Lynch's defiance of conventional storytelling and societal norms stimulates reflection and challenges established beliefs and traditions, fostering societal evolution and adaptability. Lynch brings attention to issues that necessitate recognition and resolution, thereby propelling societal growth and reformation. The portrayal of complex and flawed characters serves as a poignant reminder of the intricate nature of humanity, promoting a nuanced comprehension of individuals and human behavior. In essence, Lynch's works, by defying conventions, fostering critical thinking, nurturing empathy, and addressing pressing societal concerns, contributes to the cultivation of an enlightened, open-minded, and compassionate society. This paper delves into Lynch's filmmaking techniques and his treatment of the real and unreal, elucidating how they accommodate the notion of otherness and enhance our understanding of the human psyche.
**Keywords :** David Lynch, unconventional storytelling, surrealism, subconscious, film, intertextual analysis.

## INTRODUCTION

"Uncanny" refers to something strange or unsettling in a way that seems unnatural or eerie. It often describes situations or experiences where something is familiar yet unfamiliar at the same time, creating a sense of discomfort or unease. The feeling of uncanniness can arise from encountering something that is similar to what is expected, but with subtle differences that disrupt expectations or challenge one's understanding of reality (Chakravarty, 2023). In his book, 'Catching Big Fish,' Lynch describes how his creative process involves plumbing the depths of his subconscious through meditation and daydreaming to catch ideas (Lynch. 2006). He then attempts to translate those ideas as honestly as possible into whatever medium he is working in.Whether you adore or detest *Twin Peaks* or have never encountered it due to its eccentricity, the 90s TV series, helmed by David Lynch, unfolds in the fictitious town of *Twin Peaks* in Washington. Following the mysterious murder of high school senior Laura Palmer, a series of peculiar events ensue, prompting the arrival of Special Agent Dale Cooper to unravel the enigma surrounding her

death. Despite being grounded in the classic battle of good versus evil, the show nuances this dichotomy by suggesting that both forces coexist within everyone and everything. Notorious for its eccentricity, peculiar characters, and suspenseful narrative, *Twin Peaks* tackles weighty themes like murder, rape, and drug trafficking. Beneath its surface lies a disturbing reality—the portrayal of the murder and abuse of a young woman.. While some view *Twin Peaks* as glorifying female victimization, others interpret it as a critique of a patriarchal society. Central to the narrative of *Twin Peaks* is the ongoing battle between good and evil. This theme is embodied in characters like FBI Special Agent Dale Cooper, who represents virtue and order, and figures like BOB and the malevolent spirits of the Black Lodge, who embody chaos and darkness. The series delves into the complexity of human nature and the constant struggle between light and darkness. Characters such as Agent Dale Cooper and Laura Palmer navigate a world where the boundaries between the conscious and unconscious are blurred, leading to a profound sense of disorientation and unease among viewers. Through the portrayal of complex and flawed characters, Lynch offers a glimpse into the intricacies of human behavior and the underlying motivations that drive individuals to commit both virtuous and heinous acts. The enigmatic figure of Agent Dale Cooper serves as a conduit for exploring the complexities of identity, morality, and the pursuit of truth amidst a web of deception and deceit. Heidegger's emphasis on temporal and ontological dimensions of the uncanny resonates with Lynch's nonlinear narrative structure and metaphysical underpinnings (Withy, 2015). In *Twin Peaks,* time and identity are fluid, reality is mutable, and characters navigate a world where the boundaries between dreams and waking life blur, echoing Heidegger's exploration of the temporal and ontological dimensions of being-in-the-world. Lynch's incorporation of ambient sounds and haunting musical compositions further amplifies the eerie ambiance of *Twin Peaks* intensifying the overall sense of the uncanny. The use of atmospheric elements such as flickering lights, ominous landscapes, and unsettling visuals serves to immerse viewers in a world where the familiar becomes unsettlingly strange. Season 1 introduces viewers to the quirky inhabitants of *Twin Peaks*, from the eccentric Log Lady to the enigmatic Giant, as Cooper delves into Laura's murder and encounters supernatural phenomena like the Red Room and the mysterious entity known as BOB. Season 2 delves deeper into the town's secrets, including the revelation of Laura's killer and the emergence of doppelgängers and alternate realities. The prequel film *Twin Peaks: Fire Walk with Me* delves into the events leading up to Laura's death, exploring her troubled relationship with her father, Leland, and her encounters with the malevolent entity BOB. The film delves into themes of trauma, abuse, and the darkness lurking within seemingly ordinary lives, offering a haunting and visceral portrayal of Laura's descent into darkness. The series returns with *Twin Peaks: The Return*, a continuation that picks up decades after the events of the original series. Cooper, trapped in the Black Lodge, embarks on a surreal journey through multiple timelines and dimensions in his quest to save Laura Palmer and confront the forces of evil that threaten *Twin Peaks*. Lynch's defiance of conventional storytelling and societal norms in *Twin Peaks* stimulates reflection and challenges established beliefs and traditions. By subverting narrative expectations and eschewing linear plot structures, Lynch encourages viewers to engage in active interpretation and decipherment of the underlying symbolism and thematic motifs. The fragmented nature of the narrative mirrors the fragmented nature of reality itself, inviting audiences to embrace the inherent ambiguity and embrace the multiplicity of interpretations. Lynch brings attention to issues that necessitate recognition and resolution, thereby propelling societal growth and reformation. His probing exploration of the subconscious and mental states contributes to raising awareness about mental health issues, sparking dialogue, reducing stigma, and promoting overall mental well-being within society.

Tzvetan Todorov, a literary theorist, is known for his distinction between the uncanny and the fantastical in literature. In his influential work "The Fantastic: A Structural Approach to a Literary Genre," Todorov proposes a framework for understanding the fantastic as a genre characterized by the hesitation between two conflicting interpretations: the supernatural explanation and the rational or naturalistic explanation (Todorov, 1975) . According to Todorov, the *fantastic* arises when there is a moment of uncertainty or ambiguity within the narrative, where the reader or viewer is unsure whether the events unfolding have a rational explanation or if they are truly supernatural in nature. This ambiguity creates a sense of unease and tension, blurring the boundaries between the real and the unreal. In the uncanny mode of the fantastic (le fantastique étrange), the hesitation between the supernatural and the rational is eventually resolved within the narrative. In *Twin Peaks,* Lynch frequently introduces elements that evoke a sense of the uncanny. For example, characters like the Log Lady, the Man from Another Place, and the mysterious Black Lodge all contribute to the eerie atmosphere of the series. Initially, these elements appear supernatural or otherworldly, creating a sense of unease and ambiguity. However, as the narrative unfolds, Lynch often provides rational or psychological explanations for these occurrences,

resolving the ambiguity and fitting them into the fabric of the story. This mirrors Todorov's notion of the uncanny, where the hesitation between the supernatural and the rational is eventually resolved within the narrative. In contrast, the marvelous mode of the fantastic maintains ambiguity throughout the narrative, leaving the supernatural elements unresolved and open to interpretation. *Twin Peaks* also contains elements that align more closely with Todorov's concept of the marvelous (le fantastique merveilleux). Throughout the series, Lynch maintains ambiguity and leaves many supernatural phenomena unexplained. The Red Room, with its surreal imagery and cryptic dialogue, exemplifies this aspect of the marvelous. Despite efforts to rationalize or interpret these phenomena, they remain elusive and open to multiple interpretations, inviting viewers to engage with the text on a deeper level and allowing for a sense of wonder and uncertainty to persist.

David Lynch's *Twin Peaks* is rich with elements that resonate with Sigmund Freud's concept of the uncanny. Freud suggests that the uncanny often emerges from the familiar becoming unfamiliar (Freud, 1919). In *Twin Peaks,* the small town setting initially appears quaint and familiar, but as the series progresses, the veneer of normalcy is peeled away to reveal dark secrets, mysteries, and supernatural occurrences. This disruption of the ordinary with the extraordinary creates a pervasive sense of uncanniness that permeates the narrative. A recurrent theme of David Lynch is duality. To quote David Lynch, he says, “The world we live in is a world of opposites, and the trick is to reconcile opposing things.” Freud discusses the fear of encountering one's double or doppelgänger as a manifestation of the uncanny. In "Twin Peaks," characters often grapple with duality and the presence of alter egos or shadow selves. For example, the character of Laura Palmer is portrayed as both the virtuous homecoming queen and a troubled young woman leading a double life. Similarly, Agent Dale Cooper encounters his own doppelgänger in the series, adding layers of psychological complexity to the narrative. These instances show David Lynch's obsession with exploring the morally ambiguous side.

**Discussion:**

In his seminal work "The History of Sexuality," Foucault examines how discourse surrounding sexuality has been used as a mechanism of power and control throughout history (Foucault, 1978). He argues that the repression and regulation of sexual expression are indicative of broader structures of power and surveillance within society. According to Foucault, the ability to openly discuss and engage with sexuality is essential for achieving individual freedom and social liberation. Throughout the series, characters in *Twin Peaks* are shown grappling with their sexual desires and identities, often in ways that reflect broader power dynamics and societal norms. For example, Laura Palmer's secret life as a prostitute and victim of incest highlights the ways in which sexual expression can be used as a tool of exploitation and control, particularly within the confines of familial and social structures. "Twin Peaks" subtly addresses the taboo subject of child abuse, particularly through the character of Laura Palmer, whose murder reveals a history of trauma and abuse. The show highlights the vulnerability of children and the ways in which systemic inequalities and power dynamics can perpetuate cycles of abuse and exploitation. The uncanny feeling of confronting the dark side of traditional values and societal expectations reflects the complexities of navigating cultural norms and challenging ingrained patterns of behavior. *Twin Peaks* explores the lingering effects of trauma and the ways in which individuals cope with and attempt to heal from experiences of abuse. The portrayal of Laura Palmer's multiple sexual partners in "Twin Peaks" adds layers of complexity to her character and contributes to the thematic exploration of sexuality, identity, and the darker aspects of human nature. Laura Palmer's relationships with multiple partners shed light on her exploration of her own sexual identity and desires. In the series, Laura grapples with complex emotions and experiences, navigating her sexuality in the context of a small, conservative town. This aspect of her character challenges traditional norms and stereotypes surrounding female sexuality, highlighting the nuances and complexities of sexual expression. Laura's promiscuity can also be interpreted as a manifestation of trauma and abuse. Throughout the series, it is revealed that Laura has endured significant trauma in her life, including sexual abuse at the hands of her father. Her relationships with multiple partners may serve as a coping mechanism or a way of seeking validation and control in the face of her traumatic experiences. This aspect of her character adds depth to the exploration of trauma and its impact on sexual behavior. The portrayal of Laura's sexual relationships also highlights the social stigma and judgment surrounding female sexuality. In the conservative community of *Twin Peaks*, Laura's behavior is often met with condemnation and gossip, reflecting broader societal attitudes towards women who are perceived as sexually promiscuous. This aspect of the narrative underscores the double standards and societal pressures faced by women when it comes to sexual expression and agency. Laura Palmer's character subverts stereotypes and challenges conventional representations of young women in the media. Rather than being reduced to a victim or a femme fatale, Laura is depicted as a

complex and multifaceted individual with agency and autonomy over her own sexuality. This subversion of stereotypes adds depth to the narrative and encourages viewers to question preconceived notions about gender, sexuality, and morality. Similarly, the portrayal of the town's brothel, One-Eyed Jack's, and its connection to figures of authority like Ben Horne, underscores Foucault's argument that sexuality is intertwined with systems of power and surveillance. The existence of such establishments suggests a hidden coercion that operates beneath the surface of small-town life, reflecting the ways in which sexual discourse can be shaped and controlled by those in positions of authority. The show's exploration of characters like Audrey Horne, who grapples with her own sexual agency and desire for liberation, reflects Foucault's assertion that the ability to openly discuss and engage with sexuality is crucial for achieving individual freedom and social liberation. Audrey's defiance of social norms and her willingness to challenge patriarchal structures align with Foucault's emphasis on the importance of resisting oppressive forms of sexual discourse in order to achieve greater autonomy and self-determination.

Lynch's emphasis on the subconscious encourages creativity and imagination. His surreal imagery and dreamlike narratives inspire viewers to think outside the box and embrace unconventional storytelling techniques. By blurring the boundaries between the natural and supernatural, Lynch encourages viewers to question their preconceived notions of reality and embrace the possibility of the unknown. One notable example is the recurring use of Angelo Badalamenti's haunting theme music, which serves as a leitmotif for the series and underscores the pervasive sense of unease and foreboding that permeates the narrative. Lynch employs atmospheric sound design to create a disconcerting auditory landscape, such as the unsettling hum of electricity in the Red Room or the haunting cries of the owls that inhabit the woods surrounding *Twin Peaks*, heightening the overall sense of the uncanny. Lynch's defiance of conventional storytelling and societal norms in *Twin Peaks* stimulates reflection and challenges established beliefs and traditions. One striking example is the character of the Log Lady, who communicates with spirits through her sentient log and serves as a conduit for mystical insights and prophetic visions. Her cryptic messages often hint at the hidden truths lurking beneath the surface of the town, challenging the repressive facade of normalcy. She says, "Electricity is humming. You hear it in the mountains and rivers. You see it dance among the seas and stars and glowing around the moon, but in these days, the glow is dying." The notion of incompleteness is also present in Lynch's works. It often leaves audiences with a sense of ambiguity and unresolved tension, "Twin Peaks" embraces narrative gaps and moments of uncertainty. This deliberate incompleteness heightens the sense of menace and absurdity in both Lynch's creations, inviting viewers and readers to grapple with the existential questions raised by their narratives. By presenting familiar settings tainted by evil impulses, Lynch's cinema challenges the notion of escapism, revealing the horrors lurking beneath the surface of our fantasies. By delving into the subconscious mind, Lynch's work offers insights into human psychology and the complexities of the human experience. This fosters empathy and understanding, as viewers connect with characters and themes on a deeper level. Lynch's willingness to explore taboo subjects and push the boundaries of traditional storytelling encourages freedom of expression in the arts. His work demonstrates the power of creativity and the importance of challenging societal norms and conventions. Throughout the series, Laura is subjected to various forms of repression, including familial expectations, societal norms, and the influence of malevolent forces such as her murderer, BOB. These repressive forces act as the metaphorical "roof" that shuts out the sky, limiting Laura's freedom and perpetuating a cycle of fear and obedience. The townspeople of *Twin Peaks* are often complicit in maintaining the status quo and adhering to the facade of normalcy, despite the underlying darkness that lurks beneath the surface. The Red Room, a surreal and otherworldly space that Agent Cooper encounters in his dreams, represents a realm beyond the constraints of reality. Within the Red Room, time and space are distorted, and characters speak in cryptic riddles, reflecting the subconscious fears and desires that are repressed in waking life. The malevolent entity known as BOB represents the dark side of the town, exerting control and manipulation over the town's inhabitants. BOB preys on individuals' fears and vulnerabilities, driving them to commit acts of violence and depravity while remaining hidden from view, symbolizing the insidious nature of repression and its ability to corrupt. Many characters in the show lead double lives, concealing their true selves behind a mask of conformity. Whether it's the outwardly respectable businessman who harbors dark secrets or the seemingly innocent high school student with a hidden dark side, these dualities reflect the pervasive influence of repression and the lengths to which individuals will go to maintain appearances. *Twin Peaks* picks at a scab many people see but often ignore or aren't able to recognize. What contributes to the compelling nature of *Twin Peaks* is how it resonates with unsettling realities that many people have encountered but struggle to confront directly. In the face of such horrors, Cooper embodies the idealized

response – standing up against evil to seek justice for Laura. However, the tragedy lies in the realization that even someone as inherently decent as Cooper cannot fully rectify the damage inflicted. Despite the demise of BOB and Leland, the lingering scars persist, and heroic efforts alone cannot erase the lasting impact of such profound trauma. Characters in "Twin Peaks" often find themselves in states of anticipation and waiting, whether it's waiting for answers to mysteries, awaiting the arrival of ominous events, or anticipating the unknown. Calibrated waiting, despite its attempt to rationalize time and distract from existential anxiety, is depicted as inherently flawed, unable to fully escape the uncanny shadow of anticipation. In contrast, anticipation immerses one in the present moment, revealing the world's strangeness and one's interconnectedness with it. While waiting provides a sense of direction and purpose through end-oriented narratives, it also obscures the deeper existential insights offered by anticipation. Anticipation, in its formlessness and detachment from specific outcomes, exposes the groundlessness of human existence, challenging conventional notions of meaning and identity.

The revelation of Laura Palmer's incestuous relationship with her father, Leland Palmer, is a shocking and taboo-breaking moment in the series. Lynch explores the dark underbelly of familial relationships, exposing the horrors of abuse and manipulation that can occur behind closed doors. The series is rife with scenes of violence and trauma, from Laura Palmer's brutal murder to the physical and psychological abuse suffered by various characters. Lynch doesn't shy away from depicting the visceral reality of violence, forcing viewers to confront the uncomfortable truths of human cruelty and suffering. Characters like Denise Bryson, a transgender DEA agent, challenge traditional gender norms and stereotypes. Lynch exposes the hypocrisy and moral decay lurking beneath the surface of small-town America. Characters like the seemingly wholesome Laura Palmer are revealed to have secret lives filled with deception, promiscuity, and moral ambiguity, challenging the idealized image of small-town life. These examples show how David Lynch fearlessly tackles social taboos in the show to explore the darkest corners of human behavior and societal dysfunction. Through his nuanced storytelling and provocative imagery, Lynch invites viewers to confront uncomfortable truths and reevaluate their own beliefs and values. The show's willingness to confront taboo topics sparks debate about the responsibilities of entertainment media in addressing real-world issues. Should audiences engage with *Twin Peaks* purely for its entertainment value, or should they grapple with its unsettling themes and underlying commentary on patriarchy and violence?

Life is full of circles and Lynch is the one drawing the circles in *Twin Peaks*. In the pivotal scene from the de facto third season of the show the focus is on the profound themes of abuse, recovered memory, and family trauma. The scene depicts Laura Palmer's mother, Sarah, portrayed by Grace Zabriskie, in a state of distress, screaming and attempting to break a framed photo of Laura with a bottle. While interpretations of this scene vary, it perhaps symbolizes Sarah's desperate attempt to rid herself of guilt over her failure to stop the abuse inflicted on Laura by her father, Leland. This interpretation underscores the long-term impacts of childhood sexual abuse, as depicted through Sarah's anguish and Carrie White's, a doppelgänger of Laura, repressed memories resurfacing. Through Sarah and Carrie's experiences, the scene poignantly highlights the enduring trauma of abuse and the profound effects it has on survivors, emphasizing that the scars of such trauma can never truly be erased.

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# Uncanny in Visual Literature: Presenting *Shutter Island* by Martin Scorsese as a Gothic Noir

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## ABSTRACT

While researching on the uncanny impact in visual literature, the American film 'Shutter Island' was discovered. It is mostly regarded as a neo-noir movie, and there has been little discussion about the eeriness of the plot as well as its gothic theme. This research paper explores the concept of the uncanny in visual literature, utilizing Martin Scorsese's film "Shutter Island" as an example from the gothic noir genre. The paper examines how Scorsese uses cinematic tactics to induce feelings of uncertainty and ambiguity in viewers, drawing on Freudian theories of the uncanny as well as known tropes from the gothic and noir genres. Through a careful investigation of symbolism, cinematography, background music and character development, the article contends that "Shutter Island" effectively depicts the uncanny within the framework of gothic noir, prompting its viewer to explore identity, reality, and psychological instability.

**Keywords:** *Freudian Uncanny, Gothic, Gothic noir, Gothic Noir, Psychological instability, Visual literature*

## INTRODUCTION

Martin Scorsese directed the 2010 picture Shutter Island, which was adapted by Laeta Kalogridis from a novel by Dennis Lehane. Its plot is based on the concept of the uncanny in psychological context, as the protagonist character's perspective gradually shifts throughout the film. The narrator masterfully blurs the lines between fiction and reality, causing the listener to strain to tell the difference. To some extent, it is obvious from the start that something does not seem proper or clear. Scorsese claims that the narrator is untrustworthy "without explicitly revealing where his viewpoint diverges from a neutral account of events"; as a result, we can never truly trust what we are shown. Many films distinguish between "dream sequences, flashbacks, and concrete reality. Shutter Island contains all these elements, yet it is difficult to tell which is which.

However, the name Shutter Island is a symbol, a physical depiction of what it means to be insane – to be locked in, removed and incapable of escape.

### Film Noir and Gothic Literature



*124Fig 1: Shutter Island as a Neo-Noir.*

By the nineteenth century, writers including Hans Christian Andersen, Oscar Wilde, Edgar Allan Poe, and Fyodor Dostoevsky had popularised this style of writing, which "characterised elements of fear, horror, death, doom, as well as romantic components, such as the natural world, individuality, and extreme emotion". These authors' writings were instrumental in ushering in a new period of "film noir" not long after.

Gothic literature depicts the various locations and architectural that are required to visualise Gothic. The setting is important in this story because it adds horror and anxiety to the mood and horrible weakness to the people. According to Snodgrass, Gothic literary works' surroundings give an extensional symbolic psychological situation to its human protagonists (Snodgrass, 2005). Gothic fiction is typically situated in remote landscapes or heavily locked prisons, hidden passageways or hallways, old castles or spooky dwellings, and graveyards.

According to Hogle, Gothic locations could be "a castle, a foreign place, an abbey, a vast prison, subterranean crypt, a graveyard, a primaeval frontier, or island, a large old house or theatre... (Snodgrass, 2005)." Historically, most Gothic works were created in castles. However, at present times, they are in caverns, secret passageways, or tours where it is simpleto conjure horrific visions of supernatural or dismal incomprehensible happenings such as ghosts and strange, frightened spirits.

Film noir, which translates as "black cinema" in French, swiftly introduced the same darkness and horror to the surroundings that Gothic Literature did. Film noir, which initially appeared in the early years of the 1940s, provided the public its first glimpse of what we now call "the thriller." Film noir, like Gothic literature, pioneered the path for the utilisation of interior scenes with supernatural themes. These mystical components introduced longing, tiredness, perplexity, and nightmare to film, presenting the viewer with a world outside from reality (Latham, 2016). The Gothic Literature not only produced a completely new take on setting, but it also created new atmospheric circumstances for the world of film. Emotions, being one of the primary criteria upon which these writers worked, were also a means for them to portray expressionism on the big screen. The expressionism in the film's feeling was created by the way the scenes were shot on film. The way that the camera moved across the facial features of a character displaying a momentary expression of discomfort or terror might bring the emotions to life. One of the other prominent methods these Gothic works conveyed their ideas was through weather, which was usually where the climax of the plot being told occurred. The notion of "insanity" was another significant motif borrowed from Gothic fiction and incorporated into the noir film.

**Martin Scorsese's Shutter Island: As A Gothic Noir with Uncanny Theme**

By using unique visual styles and themes, noir films typically depict the unpleasant, brutal, and occasionally weird parts of the world. Neo-noir is a genre that is technically comparable to classic noir but with a modern perspective that became popular in post-World War II Europe. Shutter Island is about two US marshals, Teddy Daniels and Chuck Aule, whoare sent to Ashecliffe Hospital, which used to be previously an old Civil War Fort located on a remote island, to investigate a patient who killed multiple people and has recently vanished from the hospital. A fusion of neo-noir and uncanny themes can be detected from the opening of the film-

*Background Music:* If we consider a first musical note that begins before the film begins, it has a doomed sense that indicates an evil aim or indicates a tragic progression throughout the tale, just as an unidentified terror can be felt in horror movies prior to something awful happening. This sets the tone for the film.



*Fig 2: A collage of original Dachau Concentration Camp and Teddy's nightmare in Shutter Island.*

*Historical Context:* Shutter Island's historical background is the Second World War. One of the historic Civil War forts has been converted into a jail for criminally insane people, with ominous, icy, grey walls erupting. This awakened Teddy's latent anguish from helping to liberate a nazi camp called Dachau Concentration Camp. Teddy's post-traumatic disorder not only adds a dark undertone

to the film noir, but it also blurs the barrier between reality and fantasy.

*Nature and Natural Calamity:* There always exists a link between the strange and natural. The film begins with rain and progresses into a larger natural disaster as the plot progresses. The arrival of the hurricane, the sorrowful sound of the wind, the stormy, dark night—all of these generate terror. The faraway area of the island, surrounded by stormy waters, adds to the film's sense of segregation. They approach it via boat through lowering sky, and the sensation is like that of approaching King Kong's island: It fills its visitor with dread as it looms in the distance from the sea. All these images contribute to the uncanny theme.



*Fig 3: Architecture of Shutter Island from bird's eye view.*

*Architecture of the Island*: The Island plays an essential part of every high and low of the scenes in the movie to generate an intense effect of the plot physiologically, to unease the viewers through the style of acting in its architectural surroundings. Teddy Daniels, the main character, reveals the mystery island and his subliminal thoughts spinning in circles.



*Fig 4: Entering Ward C.*

*Construction of Ward C*: Ward C's construction differs from the rest of the three blocks. The structure is constructed of grey stones placed on top of one another, with green landscape on the roof. Ward C is the section that is nearest to the water, with a single entry and exit, displaying the jail setting. This block is without any windows and just iron bars to keep the outside world in the dark about what is going on within the lofty walls. The leads are allowed to go inside Ward C for the very first time since the hurricane the night before to control the mentally hazardous patients.

Water leaking from all over in the passageway with no sunlight and the artificial dim light not lit as usual affects the mysterious effect of the place, with the metal staircase in between emphasising on the rustic circumstance of the scene between two characters on a dispute enhancing the tension in the middle of the film, making the audience sit on the edge of their seats.



*Fig 5: The Lighthouse.*

*Gothic Structure:* The setting is crucial in Gothic literature. It depicts the various locations and architectural that are required to visualise Gothic. Shutter Island's environment has many Gothic aspects depicted in the island, as well as its surrounds, including the lighthouse, caves, underground tunnels, heavily protected jails, cemeteries, and ferry. Islands expose characters in stories to great isolation, either physically or emotionally, in a far broader spectrum than other settings. It instils fear and dread since it is a dark and foreboding desolate terrain. The frightening gothic design of the facility heightens the sense of confinement. Teddy gets increasingly constrained, blocked off from the main area, and increasingly unsure of his very own mental state as the test progresses.

**Freud's Uncanny Double: A Theoretical Study of Doubles in Film Referring Shutter Island**

**Mahler's Musical Fragments**



*Gustav Mahler*.

When sound is used effectively, the audience not only hears but also feels it. The sound will influence the audience's engagement with the scene. Gustav Mahler's use of chamber music in Shutter Island, except for the opening soundtrack, may have elicited a similar emotional response from spectators unfamiliar with the genre. Another Mahler composition may have been chosen for the film, but the tune utilized is Mahler's "Piano Quartet in A Minor", also known as Piano Quartet.

Audiences correlate specific sounds with the intended emotional response. Strings can evoke strong emotions, prompting audiences to react accordingly. The quivering of the chords will elicit worry and fear. The strings in the current setting have a deeper meaning due to the arranger's interpretation of the scene. The song begins when Teddy Daniels and the audience get introduced to the doctor's residential quarters.

The composition stands out among Mahler's other works since it was created so early (in 1876 or 1877 (Johnson 100)), yet it remained incomplete, with only the initial movement completed. The fact that the piece never got finished reflects on our primary character, Teddy Daniels. He is a fractured individual trying frantically to comprehend the violence and chaos all around him. His own terrible existence is marked by the loss of his spouse and the harsh environment he had to witness. His failure to comprehend the tragedy in his life leads to a fracture of the "self." This song's incompleteness reflects Teddy's incompleteness. He feels alienated, shattered, and incapable of rebuilding himself.

Teddy enters the doctor's residence, and the Mahler piece begins to play. The tune proceeds to play during Teddy's flashback to the first time he heard the piece. Teddy appears to have first heard the music during World War II. The music plays over images of Teddy in the concentration camp and, more disturbingly, the Nazi officer's suicide attempt. As Teddy goes in, the room is filled with floating documents that mirror the Piano Quartet's cascading melodic notes. We feel Teddy's distress since the lightness of the piece contrasts with the corpses of criminals. The slower speed, combined with the enthusiasm with which those notes are performed, conveys a sense of longing. The prisoners yearn for their liberation from death, whilst the Nazi officer pines for the liberty that death will provide. The song addresses both sides while portraying Teddy's psychological turmoil.

The entire scenario and film have fairy-tale aspects, although a darker one. The song's melodic lines, including its rich tone and short piano notes, help achieve this. These two characteristics suggest a Grimm fairy tale atmosphere in which the protagonist traverses the dark forest on a quest. In his memory, Teddy enters the prison camp's dark woods in an effort to rescue the detainees, while in the movie, he ventures into the gloomy forests of Shutter Island to rescue a prisoner. Teddy feels disoriented and searches for explanations, as well as his own psyche. These fairy tales rely on enchantment, superstitions, and disobedience. In the story of Hansel and Gretel, a witch tricks them into entering the dark woods. The film employs the same ideas, but instead of magic, Teddy confronts deception through science.

The song not only reflects Teddy's psychological state, but the complexities of Teddy's identity are linked to the provocative nature of using Mahler in the first place. Mahler's work is known for its use of irony to highlight the piece's construction. Irony becomes an important aspect of the picture after a second watching. The viewers are aware that the phrase frequently takes on an additional meaning as they watch it again. The music operates in the same way. The audience is urged to consider if Teddy remembers the tune in the manner he perceives. Questioning Teddy's recollection highlights the manufactured nature of the song as well as his identity. To further appreciate this, we can start with the concentration camp, which is where Teddy remembers hearing the song for the first time.

Teddy's flashback shows the Nazi commander listening to the song on vinyl while lying in a pool of his own blood. The situation has a nice irony because Mahler was Jewish. During WWII, Germany prohibited his music. His music does not fit in this context. Teddy is out of place, and so is the music. The song's level varies depending on whether it is heard by Teddy Daniels or in memory. When it is in the present, it remains at the bottom of the sonority hierarchy, with dialogue being much louder, revealing his hidden recollections, but when it is in the memory, it rises to the top.

The enchanting quality of the song, juxtaposed with the violence, recalls the irony along with fairy tale aspects that make Mahler an appropriate choice for the picture. The music remained unfinished, much as Teddy Daniels' was unfinished and fragmented. This song showcases the sound depth and skill of Shutter Island.




*Fig 6: Shutter Island poster.*

The German word 'Doppelgänger' means 'double walker,' and alludes to the mythical concept of a shadow self that follows each individual. Freud describes the "double" in his article The Uncanny:

"They involve the concept of the 'double' (the Doppelgänger) in all its subtleties and manifestations - that is, the appearance of people who must be considered identical as they look alike." This link is heightened by the involuntary transmission of mental functions from one of these individuals to the other - a phenomenon known as telepathy - such that one becomes a co-owner of the other's knowledge, feelings, and experience.

Furthermore, one person may identify with another and consequently become unclear about his own self; or he may swap the other person's identity for his own. This self can be replicated, divided, and interchanged". (Freud, 1919)

Furthermore, there are countless characters in Gothic fiction who have a dual personality. It is not a split personality in which neither side is aware of the other, yet rather one personality lives as a disguise for the other, generally darker side. In a sense, them become their own doppelganger, as they look to be the same person but behave in totally different ways. Though the people differ from tale to tale, the essential essence of both sides remains similar, forming what could be termed a traditional "good" or bright side and the "bad" or darker side throughout the set of doubles.

While the idea of the "double" has remained widespread, the interpretations and connotations associated with it have not. Again, the question of "what is it regarding the concept of the "double" resulting in the uncanny and fear within a person, particularly in film/cinema, arises."

Pilar Andrade's text Cinema's Doubles, Their Meaning, as well as Literary Intertexts contains a perceptive observation about the "double" and how it is viewed. But, as the Romantics/Gothics were well aware, the double can also be viewed from a different angle because it disrupts our regular vision of reality. With the existence or impression of another self or "other," some significant doubts emerge, questioning first the identification of this double (who are you?), but also, and as a parallel, the original's self-identity (who am I?) as well as perception of truth (is what I am witnessing real? Is it hallucination or imagination?). As a result, the double calls into doubt one of logic's most fundamental rules: the rule of non- contradiction. It demonstrates that the proposition "A is always equal to A and different from B" is false (since A is the original and B is the copy). Another proposition works with an exact duplicate of a human being: "A is always equal to A and equal to A and equal to B..." (Andrade, 2008)

*Identity Crisis of Teddy Daniels in Shutter Island:* This hypothesis of Doppelgänger can be applied to Teddy Daniels' role in Shutter Island. Edward "Teddy" Daniels, who is subsequently discovered to be Andrew Laeddis, a US Marshal who killed his wife two years prior, and his companion Chuck Aule, who later turns out to be Dr. Lester Sheehan, Teddy's regular psychiatrist, are both present.



*Fig 7: Teddy is using lit matches.*

*Usage of Lighting:* Shutter Island is divided into scenes that use three forms of lighting, varying from fully exposed pictures to nearly the complete darkness.

The film's first main source of light is low-key lighting absence of fill light. In scenes where Teddy uses lit matches to see, for example, light is focused solely on his face and any nearby stuff,

keeping the rest of the scene in darkness. This gives Teddy the impression that he is alone, but it additionally establishes that he's got something to be afraid of hiding in the darkness. In these scenes, minimal or no fill light is used. These are the most powerful sequences, and they are a wonderful example of how lighting affects the horror genre.The second type of lighting used is main light with little fill light. For example, in a few scenes, the primary source of light in a room is usually a lamp or a window. The use of backlighting illuminates the entire scene and offers the viewers a sense of confidence because they are able to see what is going on. A small amount of fill light is utilised to appropriately light the actor's face, but not sufficient to overpower the backlight that creates the scene. Nonetheless, this utilisation of light leaves the place covered in shade and obscurity. This usage of lighting delivers a respite from the strong action of total darkness and the unusual exhilaration of intermittent flashes of brighter light.

Finally, Teddy's thoughts and flashbacks are fully exposed with natural light. These pictures are not technically high key, but there is sufficient light that sets them apart from the other sequences in the film. For example, in Teddy's climactic flashback, where he realises the truth, the scene is lighted by daylight, exposing all characters and elements. This is also true for the vast majority of scenes in which Teddy sees his deceased wife and child. The lone exception is when it is discovered that Teddy is actually Andrew Laeddis. As Andrew has returned to reality, the illumination in this shot has been limited to backlighting, like in others.



*Fig 8: Fire in the cavern.*

*Symbolizing Water and Fire:* Water and fire are important symbols in the story. For Andrew, or 'Teddy', they are the line between real and phoney. Andrew is in his dream world whenever there is fire, like the flames in the cavern with Dr. Rachel Solando, the matches that he fires in Ward C and when he burns up Dr. Cawley's automobile in the end. Andrew has hallucinations whenever he gets near fire.



*Fig 9: Teddy standing in the gust of rain.*

Water, on the other hand, represents his reality. Water brings him back to reality. His spouse, Rachel, drowned their kids in water, leaving him unsettled, unwell, and tense. He got seasick again on the ferry, just like he was before. When Andrew drifts into his recollections of his spouse, a tiny drop of water falls on him as he awakens. To keep Teddy from forgetting who he is, Andrew continuously refers to himself as "marshal" to everyone he speaks to on the island.

**Theoretical Foregrounding in the examples of Other Works**

There are many references of previous masterpieces in Scorsese's Shutter Island like multiple films directed by Alfred Hitchcock, Stanley Kubrick's The Shining, which is based on a novel written by Stephen King, and one more Stephen King's short story 'The Reach'. All these references are described below —



*Fig 10: Collage of the shower-scene from Psycho and Scorsese's Shutter Island.*

*Homage to Hitchcock:* The camera is positioned directly beneath a showerhead. Water runs down the drain on both sides of the camera, a blatant reference to Psycho.

Leonardo DiCaprio, who plays Teddy, looks over a terrifying clifftop plunge and knows he must get down somehow. Expect him to scramble down to the seashore and hang over the rock face, much like Cary Grant in 'North by Northwest'.

DiCaprio gets a rifle and makes his way fearfully up an extremely tall structure. It is a lighthouse on Shutter Island. Like Teddy's psychiatric disease, we can see it in Vertigo, when the protagonist Jimmy Stewart Mk 2 climbs a bridge to overcome his Acrophobia, which is why he had to quit from his job.



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*Fig 11: The stairway-scene from Shutter Island.*

[https://www.digitalmediaworld.tv/images/stories/June10/Shutter_Island-5.jpg ]Also, its usage of winding vertical stairways that escalate towards lunacy, as well as its bright dream scenes, is also very similar to Vertigo.

Shutter Island contains its own terrifying Nazi-type figure: Max von Sydow, whose initial appearance suspiciously lurks in Ben Kingsley's beautiful living room. Scorsese got the idea for presenting him through the backside of his head from Cary Grant's moody observation of a couple dancing in 'N



*Fig 12: Collage of the landscape of Shutter Island and The shining.*

*Allusion to The Shining:* Both Shutter Island and The Shining feature untrustworthy protagonists. The "heroes" get introduced to the audience, followed by their steady descent into madness. Isolation and madness are prevalent in each scene of both films, transforming normal and caring fathers into mad and psychotic murders that ultimately led to their deaths. In addition, The Shining is situated in a secluded Rocky Mountain hotel wherein the family faces natural and supernatural stressors, whereas Shutter Island is located on a virtually uninhabited island bounded by rocks and sea. Daniels gets stuck on the island owing to a hurricane, much way Jack is imprisoned inside the hotel due to snowstorms.





*Fig 13 & 14: The rocky barrier with high cliffs and one of the frightening patients from Shutter Island.*

*Similarity with 'The Reach'*: In Shutter Island, mental patients are kept on an island that resembles a haunted one, featuring oppressive weather, terrifying inhabitants, and a dreary atmosphere that instantly evokes terror or fear. Although both story lines are not connected to the same plot thread, the concepts, elements, and effects do, which prompted us to immediately associate Shutter Island with "The Reach." The description of the island in "The Reach" reminded readers of the island portrayed in the movie, with its towering cliffs and jagged edges leading to the bitter cold ocean.




*Fig 15 & 16: One unused poster of Shutter Island and relatable cover picture of Dr. Jekyll & Mr. Hyde.*

*Correlation with Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde:* The psychic conflict of doubles was given its most "explicit treatment" in The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde, which corresponded to Shutter Island. Both pieces try to depict the idea of man's duality by employing the classic Doppelgänger approach, which is characterised by split personalities living two "separate" lives with rotating identities.

**Conclusion**



*Fig 17: Climax scene of Shutter Island.*

"Shutter Island" remains an example of director Martin Scorsese's command of the power of spine chillers, with the investigation of seclusion, franticness, which may also be called a crucial investigation of separation as well as frenzy, and the unseen line between reality and dream created by incredible setups and breathtaking graphics. The film's historical context, visual styles such as Nature and Natural Calamity, and Gothic structures are successfully exploited to establish its uncanny theme. It is an effective effort to establish a powerful uncanny psychological notion underlying the plot using Freud's Uncanny Double or Doppelgänger hypothesis. Throughout the article, it is argued that 'Shutter Island' belongs to the gothic noir genre. The ending, in particular, will remain ambiguous for decades to come, which will aid future studies.

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# Reconstitution of a lost identity in a globalised world: An exploration of postcolonial theory and the nature of identity

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## ABSTRACT

Imperialism and colonialism are oft-quoted terms in the fields of political science, sociology, international relations, journalism and numerous others. However, the convergence of history and literature is often overlooked; the emergence of post-colonial literature and a disillusioned populace seeking to reconstitute and reclaim their own history, undeterred by the obstructions introduced by colonial structures that persist and affect almost every facet of an individual's existence. This paper seeks to explore the confluence between the concepts of globalisation in a post-colonial framework and explore the nature of identity- both societal and individual. The impact of colonialism on the political and social identity of individuals will be discussed in general, briefly highlighting the nature of identity in an Indian setting.

The essay also highlights the importance of the usage of Postcolonial theory and its similarities and overlap with feminist and queer reconstruction of identity in a postcolonial world. Additionally, the paper will briefly highlight the challenges to these endeavours particularly those of linguistic acceptability and the aforementioned concept of identity, especially within academic spheres.

**Keywords:** Colonialism, Postcolonialism, Postcolonial Theory, Literature, Globalisation, Identity, Linguistics, Feminist, Queer Theory

## INTRODUCTION

Colonialism and postcolonialism, oft-repeated terms within the realm of political science, international relations and sociology, frequently rear its head in the analysis of history and even more so in our everyday life, manifested through socio-cultural attitudes and trends. These ubiquitous terms, amongst most, spark recognition of classroom teachings of colonialism and imperialistic exploits of countries such as Great Britain, Spain, Portugal, France and more. The concept of colonisation is a topic that even today fans the flames of political and academic discussion due to its far-reaching impacts that have stood not only the test of time but also irrevocably shaped human history and geopolitical interactions.

Briefly one may view the emergence of colonialism as seen in what had once started as an endeavour for trade and commerce soon snowballing into the economic and political dominance by imperial nations that had since captured colonies in the wake of exploration including territories in Africa, Asia and the Americas. This led to a new ideological shift in the policies of these "imperial nations" toward their colonies whom they now deemed fit to serve the purpose of a mere source of extraction of raw materials, cheap labour and exploitation while simultaneously transforming both the physical and psychological landscape of these areas and their inhabitants. The terms imperialism and colonialism herein will be used interchangeably owing to the overlap of ideology and methods of implementation.

To preface the impacts of postcolonialism on the nature of identity, one must draw a preliminary distinction between the concepts of imperialism and neo-imperialism owing to the distinct nature of the two as well as the key players and methods involved in their propagation. The age of exploration from 1450 to 1650 approximately is often hailed as the temporal frame of "Old Imperialism" wherein sea routes, trade routes and settlements were established by nations such as Spain and Portugal (mostly 1500s), Britain, Netherlands and France (1600s). Additionally, the expansion of territory became less prominent until the 1870s, until the Industrial Revolution sowed seeds of great conquest, acquisition of land and trade and commerce led to mercantile capitalism and more "aggressive expansion".

This, in turn, begot the age of "New Imperialism" or "Neo-Imperialism", primarily the period from 1870 to 1914 in its more traditional sense; later evolving after the emergence of independent states from former colonies, wherein the ideology continued to persist to this

day. The key imperial powers during this period included the previously mentioned nations while also introducing the relatively new imperial powers of Germany, Italy, Japan, Russia, and the United States.

**Neo-colonialism**

Additionally, post the aforementioned periods we also see the new categorization of "Neo-colonialism" being the period spanning the 1990s to the present day; seen after the

transpiration of the resolution of the Cold War and the disintegration of the Soviet Union. Neo-colonialism is further expanded upon with its linkage to Dependency theory and the emphasis placed on "soft power" and socio-cultural influences rather than "hard power" and the display of military supremacy, outright violence or threat of harm.

**Postcolonialism**

With this brief introduction to the framework of the systems in operation, it is also further necessary to delineate what is meant by the term "postcolonialism" in order to truly gauge the impacts it has had on the concepts of modernity and the identity an individual possesses.

Postcolonialism is an all-encompassing term colloquially used to refer to the period immediately following the decolonisation process in states or regions that were previouslycolonies and were now free from direct European control. In India, this concept is also referred to as the post-independence phase.

However, in academia, the term has two definitions. The early usage of this term is in its hyphenated form "post-colonial" referring specifically to the chronological period following decolonisation, similar to the aforementioned colloquial usage. Meanwhile, the "postcolonial" unhyphenated word gained popularity academically in the seventies to refer to the multifaceted study of colonialism and its impact on former colonies- politically, socially, culturally, linguistically, academically, economically, etc.

These various effects are evident and observable in the modern globalised world.

**Globalisation and the Time-Space compression**

The Time-Space compression succinctly summarises globalisation as the proverbial "shrinking" of the world and increased connectivity between different states and societies. This theory of globalisation pioneered by Marxist geographer David Harvey essentially emphasises the "capitalist expansionist alteration of the relationship between space and time" as felt in the world today.

To put it simply, what Harvey alluded to is seen in the realisation of the values of free-market capitalism, industrialisation, competitive multinational corporations and international trade (borderless, as the ideal) in countries that strive to be "democratic" politically and economically. This conceptualisation, propagated by mostly Western nations has had an impact primarily, on the economic transactions of former colonies; China, India and more, especially trade relations between France and former African colonies, as well as those states with little to no colonial history but still act accordingly due to the spheres of influence.

In addition to mere economic impact, the effects of colonialism are also seen socially and politically- particularly more so in the conceptualisation and realisation of the self and the subsequent nature of identity as formed by an individual with reference to the society around them.

**Postcolonial theory**

Here we see the introduction of postcolonial theory; the theoretical and critical approach to studying and analysing the literary works that were produced in previously colonised states. Furthermore, since it also seeks to understand the broader interactions between colonisers and colonised, it confronts and comprises the topic of identity. The foundational

principle of postcolonial theory is its relation to the concept of otherness and resistance to the colonisers and the culture, language and values consequently imposed on them. This gave rise to the need for these states to cast off the roles they were made to play by their colonisers and instead explore and reclaim an identity for themselves, independent from their foisted

colonial identity. Presently, Postcolonial theory also explores the representation of minorities in media while also tackling neo-colonialism and socio-cultural influences or "soft power" as well as the relationships seen according to Dependency theory.

This method of analysis- Postcolonial studies- was pioneered by Edward Said, the Palestinian-American political thinker, when "Orientalism" was first published in 1978 and further propounded upon by Gayatri Spivak with the essay "Can the Subaltern Speak" which focused on Eurocentrism, feminist perspectives in postcolonial society and "strategic essentialism," lending further insight into the reconstitution and reclamation of the identities of subaltern groups such as women, sexual minorities/queer individuals, those of the "lower castes" and more.The Nature of Identity

The formation of independent states gave rise to a post-colonial era wherein there began a quest by states with colonial history to seek to reclaim the history and culture of the nation as well as to trace the evolution of the nation to the present. Postcolonial theory when boiled down to its bare essence in the field of literature and academia, came about to 'rewrite the wrongs" so to speak, of the Western interpretations of indigenous culture and traditions. This is commonly referred to as Post-colonial literature and is often simultaneously coupled with subaltern studies.

However, with "respected" academic circles conversing and operating primarily in the English language this gave rise to a new problem of how postcolonial studies and literature were to be reviewed. With this emphasis on colonialism, the history and academic literature of the post-colonial state was further divided into colonial and post-colonial.

Pre-independence and post-independence - the defining moment being that of foreign influence and outside action rather than a focus on domestic culture, arts and tradition; further alienating a people from their own history. Additionally, the main aim of this literature was to break free from the shackles of colonialism, yet they were restricted to sharing their views

and exposing the realities of their situation only in the language of the coloniser simply to ensure that their voices were heard.

As stated previously, we see an inexorable interwoven connection between imperialism and identity that translates into various spheres of influence, especially politics, society, education and linguistic development.

Concerning politics, we see the postcolonial identity being heavily influenced by Western notions of what is acceptable in the Indian political atmosphere (the concept of homophobia or Sati as a cultural practice) as well as the struggle to define oneself in a postcolonial structure. Socially, postcolonial theory overlaps with feminist perspectives and queer identity when dealing with the concept of "otherness" and resistance to an oppressor or dictates of supposed normativity. The dominance of the English language in India is a clear indicator of the effects of colonialism and the struggle to reclaim one's own regional and vernacular language is apparent in the emphasis placed by states on learning "second languages."

**Postcolonial feminism**

With the advent of the first and second phases of the feminist movement in North America and Europe culminating in women gaining voting rights and the fight for bodily autonomy, the feminist movement spread globally. At its core, feminism was based on resistance to the dominance and prevalence of patriarchy and heteronormativity; bearing striking similarities to the postcolonial movement which was also based on resistance. This added another layer of opposition to hetero-normativity with the introduction of multiculturalism and overlapping identities in a globalised world. No longer was the feminist movement confined only to white women in the West; it spread to various parts of the world which in turn begot the need for a new phase- that of intersectional feminism and more room for inclusivity.

Herein we also see the issue of strategic essentialism as proposed by Gayatri Spivak, where initially the movement rallied together women to oppose a common enemy- patriarchy.

However, with intersectional feminism, strategic essentialism was nigh impossible given the numerous cultural, ethnic and class-based divisions that are undeniably prevalent due to a patriarchal capitalist system. This saw the fracturing of the movement unable to rally together under one particular cause and splintering into various subsects giving birth to Marxist orsocialist feminists, Trans-exclusionary feminists, neo-liberal feminists and numerous other subsects sometimes even coming into conflict with each other.

However, that is not to say the feminist movement

has failed; it could be categorised as the commonly observed inherent characteristic of most ideological movements following a similar pattern of branching leading to the formation of various subsects- socialism, marxism, even religious movements.

This concept of intersectional feminism is even more prominent in India with the movement's advocation for equal rights for women of differing identities, especially those marginalised due to being part of a "lower caste." We see the discrimination faced by these women through the lives and literature of writers like Malathi Maithri, a Marxist Tamil Dalit poet, Salma, a Muslim Tamil Dalit writer, Sukirtharani, A Christian Dalit author and myriad other writers.

These writers in particular differed from their predecessors and contemporaries who tended to view women as a homogenous monoloth rather than those involving subaltern communities overlapping caste, class, sexuality, gender, etc. The writings of these women are of particular interest as they divulge their experiences growing up and existing in a world where they are "disadvantaged" due to their identity, not only as women but also as belonging to a "lower caste." In Salma and Sukirthanrani's case, the additional identity of belonging to a religious minority in India. Their writings would not traditionally fall within the scope of postcolonial studies but they certainly are eligible due to the likeness between the resistance to the norm and oppression they face which has to a certain extent, cast them in a role they ought to play which they have discarded.

As Sukirtharani details in 'I Speak Up Bluntly,' she exposits her experiences as a Dalit individual and being ashamed of her identity as a child but later reclaiming her caste's title with pride; introducing an exemplary parallel to the nationalist fervour of the post-independence phase and the reclamation of national identity with pride.

**National identity**

This reclamation of national identity, despite being seen throughout the globe during the decolonisation phase, can also be termed as merely temporary due to the nature of this association. Once again, we see the strategic essentialism that was utilised during the freedom struggle attempt to differentiate the Indian populace from that of the colonisers. This resistance due to the feeling of otherness is what brought the masses together under strong

and charismatic leadership. Yet, with the colonisers leaving, the strategic essentialist factor of "otherness" that bound the people together was taken away, leaving a host of different separate identities based on religious identity, linguistic groups, cultural practices, tribal populations and more.

This discordance in society in place of harmonious existence following the decolonisation process was not unique to just India but most former colonies at the time as well. This was capitalised upon by those who were opposed to decolonisation as they believed the colonies to be of an uncivilised demeanour and unable to coexist civilly. Needless to say, this perspective was born of a feeling of supremacy that arose out of classist and racial distinctions. We see this overlap with the socio-cultural perspective which calls to the forefront Eurocentrism and its significant impacts on the concepts of beauty, language, clothing, cuisine, education and various other spheres. In this respect, we encounter the philosophy of the "White man's burden" popularised by poet and author Rudyard Kipling who framed European imperialism and colonialism as an altruistic endeavour by Europeans to bring civility to "uncivilised savages"; the epitome of civilisation, of course, being thewestern ideal. "The phrase 'Take up the white man's burden' became a clarion call for those supporting imperialism. Imperialism may be arduous, it may be costly, it may be dangerous, but it is the duty of the white man to make sacrifices for the good of native populations in Africa and Asia, they argued." Africa Addio or Farewell Africa (1962), a mondo film documentary on the decolonisation of Africa also paints a similar picture with its opening lines criticised by Robert Ebert in 1967, "Europe has abandoned her baby," the narrator mourns, "Just when it needs her the most." Who has taken over, now that the colonialists have left? The advertising spells it out for us: "Raw, wild, brutal, modern-day savages!" depicting scenes of egg cartons, alcohol barrels and vegetables trampled underfoot by a violent mob. This aids in the depiction of certain races as inherently inferior and savage in nature, further perpetuating stereotypes that harm the community in spheres of employment, education and everyday life.

To lend credence to this, we look no further than our classroom study material- the works of Shakespeare. Despite being written in the early 17th century and too early to be called postcolonial literature 'The Tempest' outlines the same mindset of the colonisers when viewed through a postcolonial lens. The main proponent of this value is the protagonist, Prospero, the magician stranded on an island with his daughter Miranda who enslaves the spirit Ariel and "monstrous" Caliban- both indigenous to the island; mimicking the way in which the West viewed the natives of the colonies. The demonisation of Caliban,

because he refused to willingly submit and openly resents Prospero's control of the island, stands in stark opposition to Ariel's impression of a "good colonised native" who quickly takes to the culture and language Prospero partakes in as well as treating Prospero with reverence. This distinction between the two highlights how the coloniser viewed the colonised to be uncultured and uncivilised, only respecting them when they emulated the ways of the West.

Farhana Haque writes, "Caliban was the only one who observed the colonial anarchy and injustice by Prospero. Caliban was a serious victim of European imperialism and colonization. He was deprived of his rights and experienced a kind of imprisonment." Additionally, Shakespeare also laments the fate that awaits Caliban and Prospero should he choose to leave the island, which he eventually does. The question remains of whether or not the original inhabitants would retain the practices imposed on them by Prospero, the coloniser, or if they would revert to their life before his arrival.

The same is seen today with the emphasis on neoliberal democracy, free-market capitalism, and cooperation with the West, and the demonisation of 'Caliban' countries like China, North Korea or Russia who do not strictly adhere to these values. Irrespective of the validity or morality of these values, there is an acceptable norm that the West expects the global community to emulate, even if it did not originate in those countries or is incongruous with their cultural practices and way of life; praising the former colonies who do choose to carry on the culture of the coloniser.

**Despite the proffered binary, there exists a third option, that of hybridisation.**

According to Homi Bhabha, hybridisation "refers to the emergence of new mixed identities as a result of the intermingling of different cultures. The process of hybridisation can occur when two or more cultures operate in close proximity." This theory is based on the idealisation of a space where "cultural borders open up to each other, and the creation of a new hybrid culture that combines their features and atones their differences." Additionally, Margaret Petersson elaborates, "It is argued that people from "the peripheries" do not simply passively absorb ideologies, values or literary forms, but recreate them, perhaps in a way not visible inside the traditional comparative paradigm," especially when dealing with the Indian

context and literature produced. "The concept of hybridity has often been made to express theundecidability of cultural encounters. When cultures meet and interact, a "contact zone" is established that leads to the dissolution of the binary opposition between them." "According to Bakhtin, hybridisation can be conscious or unconscious; it can be used as an

opportunity for dialogue or simply for the organic welding together of different elements," as is seen in Indian society; the foremost example of the conscious could be the dominance of English in Indian society, possessing the largest number of English speakers in the world with approximately 10% of the population. We also see the preference for Western-style education over the Gurukul system in India alongside the preferred medium of instruction in English.

Similarly, the Meiji restoration in Japan and its adoption of Western values and education is also an example of the realisation of this phenomenon.

**Queer Identity**

This hybridisation process naturally allowed for these colonial societies to be heavily influenced by Western society and sensibility which is also observed in the analysis of queer identity in India. Similar to the overlap between feminist perspectives of history and postcolonial studies, the concept of resistance and otherness is viewed in Queer theory whose primary base is the identification of the self as "other" differing from the accepted heteronormative standards placed in society. The idea of "essentialism" is also seen here with queer theory essentially rejecting the proposed binaries; this rejection of binaries is similarly viewed by postcolonial theorists "for their instrumentality in justifying colonial and state violences against marginalized bodies and cultures." Postcolonial theorists and queer

theorists further analyse the impact of colonialism on the marginalised sexual minorities, particularly in India. Rahul Rao in his book highlights the existence and celebration of queer societies in "indigenous cultures." Rao proposes the notion that homophobia is a Western ideology that was propagated through the means of colonial endeavours, particularly through Britain's anti-sodomy laws. "To do so Rao takes us to Westminster, where Britain's responsibility for laws criminalizing homosexuality in many parts of the world is being increasingly acknowledged," as stated by Olimpia Burchiellaro in their inference of Rao's works. We see evidence of queer history in Ancient civilisations, untouched by the Abrahamic faiths- Norse mythology and the mention of transsexual individuals and lack of stringent prescribed gender roles, openly homosexual relationships in Ancient Greece and Rome, Ancient

Egypt and their exploration of the feminine identity and various emerging identities and minorities based on worship of various deities. India too had not viewed queerness as other as evidenced by the mentions of homosexual activities in the Karmasutra." The demonisation and criminalisation of queerness and homosexuality only later entered the Indian socio-political sphere with Section 377 of the Indian Penal Code, modelled on the Buggery Act of 1533, and drafted by Thomas Macaulay in 1838

**Conclusion**

In short, one would not be remiss in remarking that colonialism as an ideology and historical event has certainly made an indelible mark on the psyche of a populace, across the globe.

Postcolonial theory has greatly aided in unravelling history and various nuances intertwined with the notion of the self and the ideals of a nation, free from colonial subjugation.

Postcolonial theory overall is uniquely helpful in the analysis and understanding of minority identities or the peripheries in society, particularly those involving caste, gender and sexuality- specific to the Indian diaspora in this particular case. The utility of postcolonial theory is indeed multifaceted and must certainly be included in more research methods, particularly involving those related to the areas of literature, history and sociology as seen with the works of the Tamil Dalit women poets and the nature of postcolonialism and colonial identity as seen in revered works of Shakespeare. These applications of postcolonialtheory would undoubtedly produce a well-rounded scope and insight into the topics undertaken aiding in further research.

**Methodology**

The research methodology for this academic research paper utilises a qualitative research method; primarily through a review of literature in the forms of archives, articles, research articles, books and various such documents that were sourced mainly through academic portals, archives and self-published internet forums through the course of the research process for this essay.

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# The Uncanny in three Selected Victorian Novels

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## ABSTRACT

The paper attempts to understand what goes to create the uncanny or the bizarre in literature, like, elements of Nature, landscape, characters, unexplained feelings, unknown past, intriguing stories and /or mysterious circumstances, as seen in three selected novels of the Victorian period – *Wuthering Heights*, *Mill on the Floss* and *Jane Eyre*. The manner in which these elements contribute to the uncanniness of the novel depends on the intention of the author and the effect she/he wants to create. Aspects of Material Culture like Architecture of the manors and castles typically Victorian in style adding up to produce the effect of the uncanny, are attempted to be explored through this paper. It also tries to find out how the unexpected starts being expected, be it of circumstances, events or feelings of negativity (like hatred, revenge, sadism, horror and depression). For example, an unfulfilling childhood giving rise to a confused adulthood; or thunder and lightning as foreboding omens of an unpleasant event, can be expected in uncanny literature. The authors' imagination coupled with psychoanalysts' interpretation gives 'the uncanny', the status of an exclusive genre in both visual and verbal mediums. Finally, it attempts to open up questions like, how the readers over time, have changing perceptions towards the uncanny; what kind of things are considered strange in the present.

**Keywords:** Uncanny in Literature, Victorian Novel, material culture, changing perceptions, psychoanalysis

## INTRODUCTION

Ernst Jentsch, a German psychiatrist, first used the term 'uncanny' (originating from the German 'unheimlich' or unholy), in his essay *On the Psychology of the Uncanny* to describe a psychological experience surrounding an occurrence or a person which is not only mysterious but also frightening by virtue of its being inexplicably familiar. According to Freud, uncanniness is the dread we feel in situations in which our childish fantasies and fears appear more real and truer than our adult worldviews. The uncanny definitely has a negative connotation, an uncertainty and generally a very nebulous construction of ideas in the mind; as a shrouded unease with the circumstances. The themes of such ideas are familiar but they are placed in an odd setting or in a taboo context. The nature of such uncanny feeling is set as a premonition or foreboding of an event occurring in the future based on the past and present experiences. Most often, the outcome of an uncanny experience is disastrous, is something beyond the control of humans to avert or modify the consequences. The paper attempts to understand what goes to create the uncanny or the bizarre in literature, like, elements of Nature, of supernatural elements, landscape, buildings and architecture, characters, unexplained feelings, unknown past, intriguing stories and /or mysterious circumstances, with the help of readings from the three Victorian novels of *Jane Eyre* by Charlotte Bronte, *Wuthering Heights* by Emily Bronte and *The Mill on the Floss* by George Eliot.

Gothic Literature from the early 18th century has explored the uncanny elements within narratives making it a unique genre in itself. Among other things, the dark and gloomy settings in Wuthering Heights, the supernatural elements in Jane Eyre and the recurring appearance of childhood memories in The Mill on the Floss are cases in point.

The influence of the landscape and the natural elements on the characters of the Heights and the Grange in Wuthering Heights is discussed interestingly by Lord David Cecil in *Early Victorian Novelists* (1934) which drew attention to the contrast between the two main settings in *Wuthering Heights*:

> We have Wuthering Heights, the land of storm; high on the barren moorland, naked to the shock of the elements, the natural home of the Earnshaw family, fiery, untamed children of the storm. On the other hand, sheltered in the leafy valley below, stands Thrushcross Grange, the appropriate home of the children of calm, the gentle, passive, timid Lintons. (Fletcher, 2009) [1]

The meaning and the purpose of the name given to the novel is explicitly mentioned in the beginning, so that the readers and the author can imagine in the same way:

> Wuthering Heights is the name of Mr. Heathcliff's dwelling. 'Wuthering' being a significant provincial adjective, descriptive of the atmospheric tumult to which its station is exposed in stormy weather. one may guess the power of the north wind blowing over the edge, by the excessive slant of a few stunted firs at the end of the house; and by a range of gaunt thorns all stretching their limbs one way, as if craving alms of the sun. Happily, the architect had foresight to build it strong: the narrow windows are deeply set in the wall, and the corners defended with large jutting stones. (Bronte, 1847) [2]

On the stormy night when Mr. Lockwood took shelter in the Heights due to snowfall, he encounters the ghost of Catherine Linton. He goes to close the window and mistakes her thin, bony hand to be a branch rubbing against the window pane, making an insistent noise. He clutches her hand and then *she* does not let go of *his*. His blood chills when he hears the apparition sobbing and pleading to be let in. Out of sheer terror, Lockwood rubs her wrist against the broken pane till it starts bleeding and the blood soaks the bedsheets below. Here, the border between the real and the imaginary blurs beyond recognition.

The themes are of revenge and calculated moves in Wuthering Heights. The feelings of hatred are handed down generations which only deepen, and goes to the point of irrationality. The novel spans over three generations between two families leading to detriment, degradation and degeneration.

In Jane Eyre, the woman hidden in the attic attacks Jane in the dead of night and tears the latter's wedding veil. Much as she wanted to dismiss this uncanny occurrence as a nightmare, Jane had to but believe this as real when the next morning she sees the veil split into two long strips lying on the floor. Material evidence such as these disprove the ethereal or unnatural in certain circumstances.

As a child, Jane suffers the lack of affection and is ill-treated by everyone around including the servants in the house. On a certain night, she is locked in the red room, the dreaded room, where she becomes delirious and imagines the ghost of Mr. Reed coming near her.

> I thought the swift darting beam was a herald of some coming vision from another world. My heart beat thick, my head grew hot; a sound filled my ears which I deemed the rushing of wings; something seemed near me; I was oppressed, suffocated: endurance broke down… (Bronte, 1847) [3]

Jane is charged of being precocious, unnatural and vindictive, all qualities farthest from being child-like, for which she is constantly reproached and punished. Her growing – up years were also equally filled with misery when she is sent to Lowood school; a forsaken place of deprivation and death. While there, her only solace and friend, dies from the dreaded consumption, which pushes Jane to a life of irrevocable dejection. The novel proceeds to find Jane thrown in the company of the Byronic hero, Mr. Rochester.

Shortly after Jane Eyre and Mr. Rochester declare their love for each other, there is a raging storm when thunder strikes the grand old chestnut tree. The tree is split into two; the symbolism is not lost on the readers and it is very accurately indicative of the future events threatening to disturb the tranquil progression of their intimacy. Eyre's clairvoyance is exhibited when she personifies the tree by saying that there is yet the possibility of uniting with its loved one.

> I think, scathed as you look, and charred and scorched, there must be a little sense of life in you yet, rising out of that adhesion at the faithful, honest roots: you will never have green leaves more – never see birds more - making nests and singing idyls in your boughs; the time of pleasure and love is over

> with you: but you are not desolate: each of you has a comrade to sympathise with him in his decay. (Bronte, 1847) [4]

At the end of the novel, Rochester alludes to that once majestic chestnut tree; compares it with his own limbless, sightless being and laments his incompatibility with the young and energetic Jane, in the following words:

> I am no better than the old lightning-struck chestnut-tree in Thornfield orchard, he remarked ere long. And what right would that ruin have to bid a budding woodbine cover its decay with freshness[5]

Perhaps, the most talked about and discussed coincidence in the novel comes at the end when Jane 'experiences' the call of Rochester (who is far removed from her). He calls out her name in distress and in utmost need at a certain time and day which is 'heard' by her at exactly the same time. At a later time, when they talk about the uneasy feeling that each of them had felt, it is discovered that it was indeed an uncanny coincidence. The underlying thread of the inexplicable and uncanny runs throughout the novel; whenever she had premonition or foreboding of the coming disaster. Though Jane could not comprehend the spectacle of which she was the lone witness, she had a strange and anxious thought tormenting her.

The very idea of hiding a woman (a mad wife) in the upper stories of the manor comes as a most unexpected and intriguing one. Her existence is shrouded in mystery and nobody is let into the secret except for a faithful servant. Her ghost-like appearance and beast-like

movements are in conformation with the elements of gothic literature. Her introduction strikes as uncanny because no mention whatsoever of her existence is made till about three quarters of the story is in progress. The sudden and unexpected hostile attack of Mrs. Rochester on Jane gives the readers the full and intended impact of the bizarre and the horrifying.

In the novel by George Eliot, The Mill on the Floss, the character of Maggie Tulliver is quite untraditional; she is a tragic heroine and with unconventional looks, for which she is accused of being a witch (even by her mother). The contrast between brother and sister in the novel is pronounced and yet Maggie worships Tom in her childhood and carries these memories into her adulthood. She treasures and recollects these memories at every stage of growing up and says "I desire no future that will break the ties of the past." The Floss is a symbol of life and death for the Tullivers. The novel opens with the description of the river, how it is a means of livelihood and how in the end, the brother and sister meet their watery death in it. Maggie seeks to gain her brother's favour and approbation to erase the earlier disapproval shown by him due to her unconventional (as per the society then) ideologies and actions during her youth. She gets the opportunity to be with him in death if not in life; the Floss gets flooded and she goes to meet her brother in a boat which capsizes taking both of them down with it.

> The boat reappeared, but brother and sister had gone down in an embrace never to be parted; living through again in one supreme moment the days when they had clasped their little hands in love, and roamed the daisied fields together. (Eliot, 1860) [6]

The fates of brother and sister are inseparably intertwined with each other, in life and in death. All animosity is erased, all apprehensions mitigated when Nature decides to play havoc. This time, it unites them in a world beyond the living.

It is interesting to see how the binaries within class, morals, education, ideologies and affections are addressed in the novel, *The Mill on the Floss*. The name itself suggests the precarious location of Dorlcote Mill, on river Floss which is extremely susceptible to the vagaries of Nature. The readers have a foreboding of the sequence of events and how they might end. The flood scene in the novel takes everything in its sweep, feelings of guilt and acceptance, disapprobation of Tom for his sister, Maggie, her memories of their childhood, class distinctions, entire edifices, whole ideologies, the physical, the psychological and the spiritual.

The impact of buildings and architecture in creating an atmosphere can be seen as an interesting subject to study. For example, there is Little Dorrit by Dickens in which descriptions of inside and outside the Marshalsea prison give the full impact of life in captivity and that of freedom.

> It (the prison) received such light as it got through a grating of iron bars fashioned like a pretty large window, by means of which it could be always inspected from the gloomy staircase on which the grating gave. There was a broad strong ledge of stone to this grating where the bottom of it was let into the masonry, three or four feet above the ground. … As the captive men were faded and haggard, so the iron was rusty, the stone was slimy, the wood was rotten, the air was faint, the light was dim. (Dickens, 1857) [7]

Dickens's works are also famed for the

exploration of the uncanny in the form of strange characters and incongruous settings. Miss Havisham, in Great expectations, is indelibly etched in any reader's memory- bitter, twisted and eternally waiting in the remnants of her bridal finery, in the ironically named 'Satis House'. Her cruel nature is shown in the way she manipulates Estella, her protege of tender years, much to her downfall as an adult. This plotline fittingly ends with Satis House and Miss Havisham meeting their demise in a fire, and her bridal gown reduced to cinders.

The second half of the twentieth century saw the simultaneous flourishing of Gothic literature with its various elements and the novels satirizing such typical uncanny elements. For example, the much-read typical Gothic novels like Walpole's The Castle of Otranto (1764) and Jane Austen's novel, Northanger Abbey, in the year 1798 were equally well-received. The former is the first of its kind to qualify as a Gothic novel and the latter, a strong satire of the same. The owner of the Abbey, Henry Tilney teases Catherine to amuse himself by giving an imaginary account of an eerie atmosphere in Northanger Abbey, which was a strong satire on conventional novels of polite society; and the female protagonist Catherine Morland learns not to 'interpret the world through her reading of Gothic thrillers'. On their journey to the Abbey, Tilney asks Catherine,

> And are you prepared to encounter all the horrors that a building such as 'what one reads about' may produce? Have you a stout heart, Nerves fit for sliding panels and tapestry? (Austen, 1817)[8]

He tries to frighten her further by describing how a guest is always shown to isolated gloomy chambers led through dark and long passages, where somebody close to the family would have died not very long ago. The massive and dark furniture would give a decidedly funeral appearance, would her heart be equal to reside in such quarters?

The concept of the uncanny is definitely broadening with the passage of time; like any other theory, it has been admitting more within its definition and scope. While tracing the perception of the uncanny by several psychologists like Freud, Lacan, Masahiro Mori, Kristeva, Nietzsche and others, the researcher has come across the concept of Mori's Uncanny Valley effect. The concept of human-like wax dolls, mannequins and robots is uncanny; the closer they are to humans, the scarier they get because they are almost human-like but not quite.

Of late, the concept of uncanny is changing; it has multi-disciplinary connotations and "is a consideration in a number of areas of design include ng robotics, video game art, training simulators and 3-D animation." Attempts have begun to bridge the valley of the uncanny by designers who are increasingly using cartoons and more 'acceptable' features. Even artificial intelligence (AI), for all its undoubted benefits, gives the sense of uncanny to the user in the human-like way it interprets commands and executes them with the efficiency of a machine, straddling the threshold of sentience.

Contrasting with the Victorian reliance on atmosphere and Nature to set the tone for uncanny or unnatural elements, modern day media appears to delve inwards- into the human psyche, into interpersonal relationships- for the bizarre, the twisted and the macabre. In the scientific fiction genre, while pioneering works such as Mary Shelley's Frankenstein introduced the concept of a monster created by men, the archetype has possibly now shifted to technology and Artificial Intelligence as the villain created by man. Pop culture is filled with such examples- HAL 9000 from 2001: A Space Odyssey, the Matrix, and more recently- the popular series Black Mirror.

The researcher wants to problematise the concept of uncanny and open the debate of superheroes, zombies, aliens, mythological hybrid creatures also as being unnatural and uncanny, most of which evoke feelings of awe, disgust, terror, mystery, indestructability and otherworldly experiences. So, though the forms have changed slightly with time, the concept remains more or less the same.

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# Deconstructing the Uncanny; Myth of Medusa and German New Medicine

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## ABSTRACT

Literature and science are often placed on either side of the discussion where the former is highlighted for its fictional nature while the latter is dominated by factual information. The uncanny is one category that can be common to both the spheres, as uncanny can be anything that is unfamiliarly familiar. A popular example in this context is that of the Greek Gorgon, Medusa. Medusa is considered uncanny primarily because of her snake head and cold stare. This paper aims at deconstructing the notion of the uncanny associated with Medusa by using Dr. Ryke Geerd Hamer's German New Medicine as a theory to provide a medical reason for Medusa's infamous hair. The events in Medusa's life are connected to her emotional state which is then connected to a condition called Plica Polonica – where the hair becomes matted and irreversibly entangled. This study also looks into Athena's curse and links the effects of the curse to Medusa's sensitivity as opposed to the supernatural element of the curse. While the study remains loyal to Ovid's narration of Medusa's story in Metamorphosis, it gives a medical explanation for her snake-like hair. This way, through the lens of German New Medicine, the uncanny aspect of Medusa is undermined through a rational, deductive analysis of her internal struggles which are placed in the context with her external circumstances. Thus, this research introduces German New Medical as a new medical theory into the canon of medical humanities that furthers the inter-disciplinary nature of contemporary research.

**Keywords:** Uncanny, Medusa, German New Medicine, Medical humanities, Deconstruction

## INTRODUCTION

The uncanny is an umbrella term that encompasses anything that cannot be easily comprehended by the human mind. In a conditioned society, there are clear demarcations between the binaries of normal and abnormal. In such a social context, the apparent and the uncanny take positions on either side of the pendulum. Anything that isn't apparent automatically becomes a part of the uncanny. Despite the clear boundary between the two, the uncanny ironically has no boundaries as it cannot be contained into a definition. Myths are an apt example for the uncanny as they include magic, superstition and illogical happenings that are backed by the fact that they are mostly works of fiction. Ernst Jentsch in his work 'On the Psychology of the Uncanny' (1906), writes that 'the essence of uncanny' cannot be defined as it is different for every person. He adds that the same stimulus need not always appear as uncanny to the same person (Jentsch). Sigmund Freud in his essay 'The Uncanny' (1919) uses words such as eerie, familiar and strange to describe the nature of the uncanny (Freud).

One such myth is that of Medusa. According to Ovid's Metamorphoses, Medusa was the high priestess of Minerva (Athena) who was raped by Neptune (Poseidon) in Athena's temple. Enraged by this, Athena curses Medusa's hair to turn into snakes, her skin into a pale, greenish colour and her sweet

breath is turned into a pungent odour. The once beautiful and powerful priestess is turned into a horrid monster (Nasonis).

Another example of the uncanny is illnesses that have visually unpleasing, physical manifestations (Madiera and Leat). The victims of these diseases are looked at as different from the normal people. They are often marginalised from the society, on the bases of their looks and are mocked at. The uncanny element stems from the obvious strange features but also from the curiosity caused by "intellectual uncertainty" (Jentsch). Frederik Svenaeus in his seminal text, "The Hermeneutics of Medicine and the Phenomenology of Health: Steps Towards a Philosophy of Medical Practice" draws parallels between illness and Freud's understanding of the uncanny (Svenaeus). Myth and disease are representations of the uncanny as they do not have a logical explanation or cannot be registered easily by the perceivers. This paper attempts to show how Medusa's hair sits comfortable in the intersection of myth and disease.

**2. Method**

The meaning behind Medusa's hair has changed with times. In the Greek mythology, the myth of Medusa stood as a warning story for mortals who dared to cross the boundaries between themselves and the Gods. Medusa's hideous appearance was a lesson for the lower, mortal beings to always keep their head bowed before the Gods (Wolkom). In the Middle Ages, the head of Medusa became a famous symbol of the victory of power over life. This was seen from a patriarchal perspective where any woman who tried to challenge a man was not only defeated but also humiliated. In the early eighteenth century, Sigmund Freud wrote about Medusa's head being a symbol for a castration complex. This perspective placed man at the centre and a woman was seen through the man's eyes. Late eighteenth century saw the reconstruction of the myth of Medusa from a feministic perspective. Helen Cixous' "The Laugh of Medusa" portrays the society's fear of a powerful woman. She presents an opposing view to Frued's castration complex where Medusa is presented as a "femme fatale" who instils the fear of castration in the opposite gender (Cixous). In the most contemporary representation of Medusa, she is seen as the embodiment of the Me-Too movement as she was sexually harassed by the man who was above her in the hierarchical ladder.

All these representations have a sense of uncanny attached to them. The feeling of uncanny can arise from the knowledge of Medusa's story, the visual of her decapitated head or due to the contextual understanding of her appearance. In all these cases, her hair is represented in the same way. Modern art has transformed her unseeable face into that of a beautiful face, her body is sculpted to the standards of the conventional society but her hair in every depiction remains the same. Whether it's from the Freudian perspective or a feministic perspective, whether Medusa's head is represented as a symbol or metaphor, these texts do not question the fact that she was a woman with a head full of snakes! While the aesthetics of Greek mythology make it convenient to overlook the absurd aspect of snakes for hair tendril, this paper focuses on a rational understanding of why medusa's hair was depicted as snakes through a medical perspective.

In Greek mythology, flaws are often backed by a myth which is steeped in superstition and magic. These flaws are overlooked in the larger sense of the plot. The flaws become a mere part of a whole. German New Medicine is an efficient theory that can be applied to analyse literary characters with flaws. German New Medicine is the culmination of Dr. Ryke Geerd Hamer's extensive study on the relation between the mind, body and the soul. German New Medicine believes that every part of the body is associated with a particular part in the brain which is connected to a specific conflict. In the case of Medusa, the part that was primarily affected was her hair. In Metamorphosis, Ovid describes her hair as "foul snakes" (Nasonis). The uncanny aspect here is associated with her snake-hair.

Dr. Ryke Hamer refers to diseases as "significant biological special programs" and maintains (SBS) that "every SBS runs synchronously on the level of the psyche, the brain, and the organ." He traces back the SBS to what he calls "Dirk Hamer Syndrome (DHS)" which is "an unexpected conflict shock that occurs simultaneously in the psyche, the brain, and on the corresponding organ" (Markolin). The term 'corresponding organ' is used as Dr. Ryke's scientific study of different brain lesions caused by different conflicts proves that every organ is associated with a particular part of the brain. This connection between the conflict, brain and the organ is subjective and depends entirely on the individual's psyche and sensitivity.

This paper looks into the element of uncanny present in one such character whose appearance becomes her defining characteristic. Medusa is known for her serpentine hair. The myth behind the story is very typical of Greek mythology. The injury or illness of a character in Greek mythology is often associated with a curse or myth. In Medusa's case, it was Athena's curse that changed her beautiful hair into snakes which made her scary looking. The element of uncanny is associated primarily with her hair. While this paper approaches Medusa's hair from a medical perspective, it does not negate the effect of the curse. It rather attempts to establish

Medusa's sensitivity as the cause for the manifestation of the curse.

Ernst Jentsch termed 'Intellectual uncertainty' as the primary ingredient in eliciting feelings of the uncanny (Jentsch). Medusa's snake head is not only a visual shock but is also confusing to comprehend. This sense of uncertainty is what makes the Greek Gordon scary and hideous. German New Medicine deconstructs Medusa's uncanniness by taking into account her biographical information and her emotional state and places them in the context of the myth and the curse.

**3. Results**

Medusa was known to be the high priestess of a temple dedicated to Athena. In Greek mythology, the role of a high priestess is considered to be of the utmost importance. In a hierarchical society where gods coexisted with human, the importance associated with mortal women was minimal. To be a mortal and a woman meant they would go unnoticed in the society. The high priestess, however, rises above this condition as she is a mortal woman with powers. She acts as the bridge between the Goddess and the community. Joan Breton in her work "Portrait of a Priestess: Women and Ritual in Ancient Greece" writes that the position of a high priestess was considered equal to the position of men in the society. She possesses immense wisdom and holds generational wisdom within her. However, the powers she wielded came at a cost. The high priestess was to follow a certain lifestyle that proved her worthy of her position. One of the main rules she had to follow was that of chastity. She was to always keep their head down and not even look at a man. If any man were to approach her, she was to immediately reject the man. She was to dedicate her life to the goddess with no forms of distractions (Breton).

Medusa was the high priestess of the temple of Athena. She dedicated her life to the virgin goddess and took a vow of chastity. In the most popular myth of medusa which has its roots in writings of Hesiod and Ovid, she was a beautiful young girl who was trained to be a priestess from a very young age. She was conditioned to never look at a man, let alone allow him to touch her. She was raised in an environment where her entire purpose was to serve Athena. It is said that many mortal men and Gods liked to admire her beauty but Medusa never dared to look at them. This changed when Poseidon laid his gaze on her.

Germen New Medicine believes that every injury, disease and illness is caused by an initial conflict shock (Markolin). According to Dr. Ryke Hamer, the conflict shock is an "unexpected, stressful event". This conflict shock is a personal incident that is conditioned by one's beliefs and values. Medusa believed in remaining a chaste virgin in order to show her devotion to Athena. When she was raped by Poseidon in Athena's temple – her holy place – this event becomes the conflict shock. For someone who would have never thought about looking at a man, being taken by him was unforeseeable.

According to Dr. Ryke, every organ in the body is liked to a pre-determined area in the brain. Depending in the conflict that has occurred – which is subjective to the individual and stems from their beliefs – a particular part of the brain send signals to the organ it is associated with. In German New Medicine's A-Z Index, the head is associated with authority and the hair is associated with identity issues (Markolin). The conflict shock in Medusa's case was the incident of being raped by Poseidon in Athena's temple. The focus is on the effect of the act on Medusa's psyche. Medusa had dedicated her life to Athena's service. Her sole purpose was to keep Athena happy. She placed Athena above everyone else and gave the Goddess an authoritative position. When Athena learnt about the incident between her high priestess and Poseidon, she took her wrath out on Medusa. From Medusa's perspective, her authority figure to whom she had dedicated her whole life to was enraged by her actions. This shows a conflict with authority which in German New Medicine is linked to the head region.

For a woman who has never looked at a man, to participate in the act of admiring a man, albeit a beautiful God, is a cause for an identity crisis. According to psychologist, Erik Erikson, identity crisis is development stage that "features a conflict between two opposing forces". For Medusa, on one end is the vow of virginity and on the other end is the sexual act she has partaken in with Poseidon. Her identity as a high priestess which has been mentioned earlier to be the most esteemed position for a mortal woman, is in danger. Her entire life's work has been made redundant because of a God who couldn't control his urges. While it might be just another day for Poseidon, for Medusa that day defined the rest of her life.

Identity crisis, according to German New Medicine, is linked to hair (Markolin). There have been studies in the field of theology and spirituality where hair is considered to be extended roots of the mind that store energies. In "The Autobiography of a Yogi", Paramahamsa Yogananda writes about the how the hair absorbs energies that are good for the body. Ascetics maintain that hair stores knowledge and generational wisdom. When Medusa had dedicated her life to her role as a high priestess, she had exceptionally long, beautiful hair. Her mind was focused on serving Athena. When Poseidon took her,

her identity as a chaste high priestess was endangered. This caused the conflict shock to reflect on her hair.

What mythology, classics, art and contemporary writings depict as snake hair, when seen through a medical lens can be classified as a rare condition called Plica Polonica. In 1884, Le Page was the first to use the term "plica polonica" to describe the matted hair of a 17-year-old girl. Patients of plica polonica have twisted, tangled, matted and moist hair (Kumar and Rajmohan). This condition is usually associated with unhygienic habits or external factors like allergens, tight caps and superstitious beliefs (Sakalauskaite). Through the lens of German New Medicine, plica polonica can been seen as a result of an identity crisis associated with a conflict with authority (Markolin). The uncanny aspect of Medusa's hair is in actuality a condition that stems from her internal struggles.



The study employs a comparative analysis between a real image of the condition and an image of Medusa's statue. The first picture represents the clinical condition of plica polonica while the second picture is a depiction of Medusa's "snake hair". For a person who is unaware of the myth of Medusa and her infamous hair, these two images are merely different illustration of plica polonica. This goes on to prove that the knowledge of Medusa's myth as conditioned the eyes of the viewers to look at her hair as made up of snakes. From a medical perspective, Medusa's hair resembles the condition of plica polonica.

The mythical reason behind Medusa's hair turning into snakes is Athena's curse. This study does not negate the presence of a curse but gives a rational explanation for the effect of the curse on Medusa's hair. The conflict shock – the sexual act with Poseidon – brought about an identity crisis in Medusa's psyche. When Medusa saw Athena's wrath, she knew that Athena was not going to take this disrespect lightly. As Medusa considered Athena to be her authority, the conflict with authority and the identity crisis sensitised her head and hair. Athena catching her with Poseidon in the sexual act was the sudden, unexpected conflict shock that sent signals to the already sensitised area – her hair. When Athena cursed Medusa, the latter's emotions multiplied and in a moment of utter crisis, she was vulnerable to be affected by the conflict shock. The myth in Ovid's Metamorphoses, for dramatic purposes makes it seem like Medusa's Rapunzel-esque hair changed into snakes as soon as the curse was uttered. However, from a rational perspective, her once beautiful hair slowly started to rot along with her internal crisis and turned into long, matted and tangled dreadlocks.

The "intellectual uncertainty" (Jentsch) in the mythical reason for Medusa's hair is solved through a rational analysis of the medical cause of Medusa's hair looking like a head of snakes. German New Medicine locates the identity crisis and conflict with authority in the myth of Medusa which is then analysed to prove that she was a victim of a rare condition called plica polonica. The magical element of the curse is replaced by a logical understanding of Medusa's internal struggles that caused her head, upon which is the hair to be sensitive. What the Greek myth depicts as the effect of a curse is deconstructed through German New Medicine.

**4. Conclusion**

Since the 8th century CE, Medusa's hair has been seen through multiple perspectives in forms of symbols and metaphor. Through all these perspectives, the uncanniness of the snake head remains common. The uncertainty of how to comprehend a woman who defies all conventional forms of beauty is conveniently explained in form of a myth. Her strange look is portrayed as a result of external factors. Her internal struggles and conflicts have not been taken into consideration. While this myth has been re-constructed through various lens, this paper looks at the cause behind Medusa's snake head from a medical perspective. The events in the myth are retained and are used to analyse Medusa's internal struggles. Her conflict with Athena and her identity crisis are placed in the context of Athena's curse which reveals that the mythical snake head is actually a condition called plica polonica. The individuals with this condition have thing, matted, tangled hair that makes it look very different from hair tendrils. The study introduces German New Medicine as a theory that can be used in medical humanities to understand the medical reason behind the physical flaws of fictional characters. This way, the aspect of the uncanny in Medusa which cannot be easily comprehended by the mind is dissected by Dr. Ryke Hamer's German New Medicine.

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# Fanfiction as a Queer Narrative Revolution: Exploring Themes, Impact, and Representation in Fan-Created Worlds

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## ABSTRACT

This research paper explores the vast realm of fanfiction, focussing on queer relationships and examining how such narratives contradict the way LGBTQIA+ characters are portrayed in mainstream media. The study highlights the transformational potential of fan-created content by analysing fan preferences and perspectives through an investigation of fanfiction platforms.

The study analyses the effects of fanfiction on creating inclusive environments, correcting underrepresentation, and giving current characters and relationships more nuance by drawing on works that have already been published.

Furthermore, the study looks into the possible drawbacks of the fanfiction phenomena, like fetishization.

The Methodology involves an online survey in the approach to get information about the reading habits, platform preferences, and fanfiction perceptions of individuals of Indian heritage.

The study intends to expand comprehension regarding fanfiction's role in subverting conventional narratives and promoting varied and authentic storytelling through examining issues including queerbaiting, investigating sexuality and gender representation, and addressing underrepresentation in Media.

**Keywords :** Gender studies, fan studies, fan-fiction, uncanny, sub-culture, media.

## INTRODUCTION

Fanfiction (or fanfic) refers to fictional writing written by fans based on an existing work of fiction, involving popular fictional characters which is then posted on the internet. Popular fanfiction sites include Archive Of Our Own, Fanfiction.net, Wattpad, Tumblr, etc. It is one of the most popular forms of fan labour based on fictional (and on occasion, non-fictional) subjects.

Fanfiction serves as a canvas for both readers and writers to reimagine beloved narratives, transforming cherished stories into something entirely new. It invites enthusiasts to explore diverse plots and envision possibilities that transcend the confines of the original film, television series, book, or game. Venturing beyond the realms of 'Canon'—the official source material—fanfiction thrives in the territory of 'Fanon.' Here, unofficial yet widely accepted ideas among fans flourish, shaping an alternate narrative landscape that exists independently of the author's original vision or official endorsement.

These could include alternate universes (AUs), one true pairings (OTPs), or Y/N (Your Name) character stories in which the reader becomes part of the action. Some fanfictions have attained levels of such popularity that they have been adapted into independent books and then even movies or TV

shows.

Creative Communities within which Fanfiction was written and popularised are referred to as 'Fandoms', and they have been around for centuries. Hugo Gernsback's fans in Belgium in the 1800s are credited with creating fanfiction, according to a Cultural Science Journal article by Henry Jenkins. Hugo Gernsback, the editor of the first Science Fiction Magazine, '*Amazing Stories*', is also credited as the father of modern science fiction.

Jenkins notes Gernsback's belief in literature's potential as an educational tool. His enthralling science fiction narratives in popular publications inspired readers to engage further, spurring them to craft their own tales. The inception of fanfiction took a notable step forward with the first Worldcon, or World Science Fiction Convention, in 1939. Here, fans embraced the practice of sharing and reading each other's creative works, marking the formal emergence of fanfiction.

Present-day fanfiction, widely accessible through popular platforms such as Archive of Our Own, Tumblr, and Wattpad, boasts a substantial and devoted following. These platforms empower fans to share their creative theories and literary works. Additionally, resources like Fandom Wiki provide enthusiasts with canonical information about beloved characters, solidifying the foundation of fan-created narratives. Notably, these platforms and applications are freely available to all users, functioning primarily through fundraisers and the support of dedicated fans. The deliberate lack of emphasis on monetary gain within these platforms stands as a significant contributor to their remarkable success.

The top five 'ships' (short for relationships that fans prefer in a fandom) on Archive of Our Own (AO3), the widely favoured fanfiction platform, all centre around queer pairings.. According to the AO3 Ship Stats project by user *centrumlumina,* the top 5 ships on AO3 are as follows.

**Table 1**

*Top five 'Ships' on Archive of Our Own, compiled by* centrumlumina

| Rank | Relationship | Fandom | Works | Type | Race | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Dean Winchester/ Castiel | Supernatural (TV) | 114,989 | M/M | White | White |
| 2 | Derek Hale/Stiles Stilinski | Teen Wolf (TV) | 72,852 | M/M | White | White |
| 3 | Harry Potter/Draco Malfoy | Harry Potter (Books) | 68,757 | M/M | White | White |
| 4 | Sherlock Holmes/John Watson | Sherlock (TV) | 65,660 | M/M | White | White |
| 5 | James 'Bucky' Barnes/ Steve Rogers | Captain America (Movies) | 62,650 | M/M | White | White |

*Note* M/M refers to Male/Male

Examining the data presented in Table 1 reveals a notable trend: queer pairings, particularly those categorised as MLM (Men Loving Men), dominate as the most prevalent relationships explored by users and fans. Despite many of these characters being canonically depicted as straight or engaged in heterosexual relationships within the book series, movies, or TV shows, fans exhibit a preference for pairing them with male characters they share close connections with.

Fanfiction, particularly in the realm of queer relationships, is a revolutionary space that challenges conventional story structures, addresses a lack of representation, and offers a platform for a variety of identity expressions. This paper aims to study and explore the themes, impacts and representation as seen within Fanfiction, highlighting its importance in promoting inclusive environments and changing the cultural landscape

**Review of Literature**

*i. LGBTQIA+ Representation in Literature and Media*

The LGBTQIA+ Community, encompassed within the Queer Community umbrella term, grapples with widespread misconceptions, largely due to the inadequacies of mainstream media in portraying diverse queer narratives. This shortfall has fueled the flourishing Queer Fanfiction Community as an alternative space for genuine portrayals.

In popular media, Queer characters are often typecast—fetishized, vilified, or reduced to comedic stereotypes. Consequently, these portrayals cast Queer individuals as societal outliers, perpetuating the notion that their experiences diverge from societal norms. Their narratives frequently lack the promise of fulfilment, depicted either in secondary roles alongside cisgender, heterosexual characters or confined to offering guidance without substantial personal depth, typified by the common 'Gay Best Friend' trope.

When Queer narratives step into their own voice, they commonly tend toward tragic conclusions, a recurrent theme observed in films like Brokeback Mountain, Call Me by Your Name, Carol, The Danish Girl, and similar works. This recurrence of tragic endings not only limits the diversity of Queer storytelling in mainstream media but also reinforces stereotypes, impeding nuanced and multifaceted portrayals of Queer individuals.

On the flip side, there's a surge in new shows

and books portraying uplifting Queer relationships with joyful conclusions. These narratives diverge from the theme of navigating Queerness in a predominantly homophobic environment. Instead, they present heartwarming romances and coming-of-age tales. These stories not only foster audience connections with the characters but also contribute positively to the everyday struggle faced by the Queer community.

These narratives offer more than just a glimpse into Queer lives; they provide a platform for audiences to empathise with and support characters attempting to validate their choices in a world often unwilling to accept their authenticity. These portrayals are pivotal in challenging societal expectations that seek to confine Queer individuals within restrictive stereotypes. Notable examples such as Heartstopper, Red White and Royal Blue, Yuri on Ice, From Sasaki to Miyano, Bloom into You, among others, exemplify these narratives of Queer romance and slice-of-life storytelling in contemporary media.

*ii. A Space Where Queer Is Normalized: The Online World and Fanfictions as Heterotopias for WLW*

*by Anna Llewellyn, PhD*

In her study, Anna Llewellyn examines fanfiction communities and the internet as heterotopias, emphasising how important these spaces are as supportive spaces for WLW (Women Loving Women) identities. Llewellyn uses Foucault's idea of heterotopias to frame these spaces as places that subvert social norms. The study illustrates, via analysis and interviews, how fanfiction platforms function as transformative places that enable WLW people to express a variety of identities and connections outside of traditional social boundaries.

The main argument stems from how Fanfiction communities offer WLW a sense of autonomy, representation, connection, and belonging. These fan spaces allow readers and writers to explore, understand and consequently celebrate romantic and emotional bonds frequently overlooked in mainstream media.

The paper also brushes upon the use of fanfiction as a potential for social activism, where it is used as a medium that challenges societal heteronormative narratives popular in mainstream media. The study also recognises specific obstacles within these spaces, such as problems regarding inclusivity and representation.

Regardless of this, Llewellyn's research emphasises how crucial fanfiction spaces are as heterotopic settings that mainstream WLW identities and promote transparency, acknowledgment, and empowerment in online communities. Fandoms and Fanfictions are seen as spaces that can operate as places of resistance for marginalised groups.

However, this paper yields ambiguous findings when it comes to WLW communities, especially regarding characters who are women of colour.

Through her research, Llewellyn states that 'the physical world does not operate as a safe or queer centric place for WLW, this instead can be provided by the online world and particular spaces within it.'

*iii. "Write the story you want to read": world-queering through slash fanfiction creation*

*By Diana Floegel, PhD*

In her paper "Write the story you want to read": world-queering through slash fanfiction creation, Diana Foegel examines how 'Slash Fanfiction' can alter traditional storytelling conventions and queer narratives. She explores the genre of 'Slash Fanfictions' (or 'Slash Fics') which is a genre of fanfiction that focuses on romantic or sexual relationships between fictional characters who identify as queer or are of the same gender. Through this study, Floegel emphasises the importance of fan generated content in regards to diversifying and increasing representation in popular media narratives.

Floegel highlights the autonomy Fanfiction writers hold, and emphasises their capacity to challenge pre-existing storylines, question the traditional heteronormative framework and create storylines that put emphasis upon queer relationships and experiences.

Through her analysis and research of fan written texts, this paper illustrates how slash fanfiction empowers creators and readers within the LGBTQIA+ community and gives queer communities a platform to express themselves.

In this paper, we understand how fanfiction not only allows individuals to reimagine and reclaim narratives that are specially gate kept for characters who are typically portrayed in heterosexual plots. The paper delves into the notion of 'world-queering,' highlighting the ways in which fan-made literature challenges traditional narratives and worlds. Furthermore, the paper addresses the liberating advantages that accompany fanfiction, offering an environment for fans and creators, especially those marginalised within the popular press, to investigate varied identities and relationships openly.

Using a theoretical sampling method including ten semi-structured interviews with queer slash writers and content analysis of both Captain America slash and material features found on two online fanfiction platforms, Archive of Our Own and fanfiction.net, Floegel's work casts a critical lens on the examination of the socio-cultural impacts and implications of slash fics.

World-queering practices are constituted by participants' interactions with and creation of slash fanfiction, in which people reorient cis/heteronormative content, build systems, and form communities while gradually developing their identities.

These findings indicate ways in which queer creators respond to, resist, and reframe the cis/heteronormative narratives that are promoted by Entertainment Media (EM) and other mediums, as well as ways that institutional dynamics of power restrict their creative endeavours.

The research in this paper was limited to only ten interviews and the participant sample lacks racial diversity. The content sample also focuses only on one fandom (Captain America). The results of this paper help broaden the theoretical structures surrounding small worlds and the manner in which marginalised people struggle with normative exclusion.

*iv. Analysis of Literature*

Both the mentioned papers, *A Space Where Queer Is Normalized: The Online World and Fanfictions as Heterotopias for WLW* by Anna Llewellyn and *"Write the story you want to read": world-queering through slash fanfiction creation* by Diana Floegel provide different but complementary viewpoints on the transformative power of fanfiction within LGBTQ+ communities.

In her study, Llewellyn mainly examines online spaces such as fanfiction communities as heterotopic settings that offer comfort and acceptance to WLW communities. It illustrates how important these spaces are in terms of questioning conventional societal norms while offering queer women a sense of belonging, empowerment, and representation.

Llewellyn explores the effective impacts of the internet, emphasising fanfiction as a place that challenges conventions, promotes inclusivity, and offers several kinds of WLW identities to be represented.

On the other hand, Floegel's paper focuses on the creation of Slash Fanfictions and how it contributes to world queering, which is the deconstruction and reconstruction of conventional narratives through fan-generated material. Floegel's study concentrates largely on slash fanfiction, highlighting its ability to challenge heteronormativity as seen within existing fictional universes, in contrast to Llewellyn's focus on the broader inclusivity of fanfiction communities.

Floegel places a strong emphasis on the importance of fanfiction writers in queer pop culture, challenging conventional narratives, and giving queer relationships and experiences priority.

Though they focus on different topics—one on the empowering spaces for WLW and the other explores how queer slash fanfiction writers reorient cis/heteronormative entertainment media content to create queer information worlds—both papers advance our comprehension of the critical role that fanfiction plays in fostering inclusive spaces that challenge leading narratives.

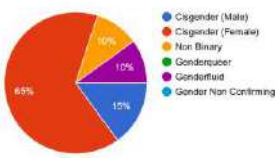
Both papers concur on the profound impact of online spaces and fanfiction realms. They both acknowledge these platforms' exceptional power to catalyse activism, specifically advocating for the inclusivity and representation of Queer characters, relationships, and emotions within widely accessible media formats.

**Methodology**

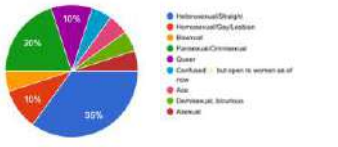
This article centres on findings derived from an online survey conducted in December 2023, involving a total of 20 participants whose input forms the basis of this study. All participants of the survey are of Indian descent.

There were a total of 20 participants who took the given survey. 80% of the participants were in the age bracket of 18-21 years. 15% were in the age bracket of 22-25. 5% were in the age bracket of 15-18.

Their gender identities and sexual orientations are seen in the pie charts below.




*Identities of participants*



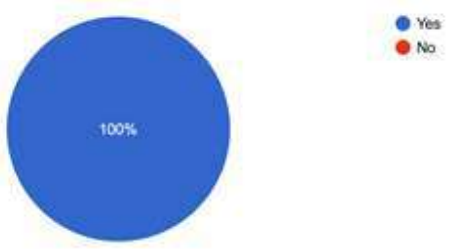

*Gender Sexual Orientations of participants*

The participant demographics leaned toward cisgender females comprising 65% of the sample, trailed by cisgender males at 15%, with non-binary and genderfluid individuals each accounting for 10%.

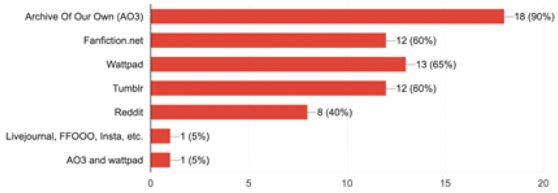
Regarding sexual orientation, the majority

identified as straight (35%), followed by pansexual/omnisexual (20%), and homosexual/gay/lesbian (10%). Asexual, queer, and demisexual/bicurious individuals each represented 10%, while 5% identified as demisexual/bicurious

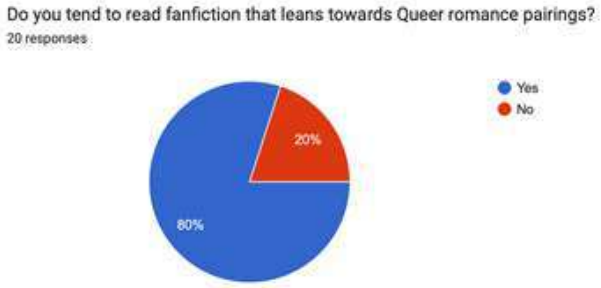
All 20 participants read Fanfiction.



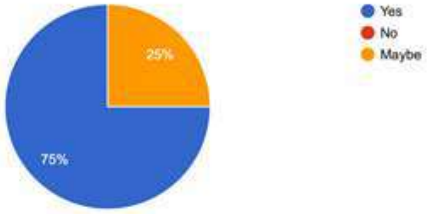

The favoured platform for reading fanfiction is Archive of Our Own (AO3), with 90% of the participants using this medium. Subsequently, Wattpad follows closely at 65%, while both Fanfiction.net and Tumblr are used by 60% of the participants. Reddit, on the other hand, has a minority of users, with only 40% utilising this platform for accessing fanfiction.



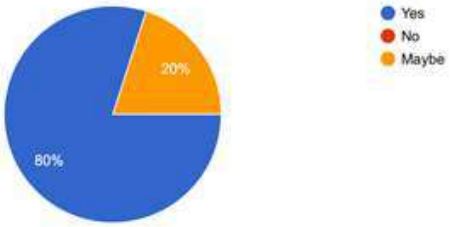

80% of the participants prefer fanfictions with Queer relationships, in contrast to the 20% who don't.




The survey revealed that 75% of participants consider fanfiction to offer more diverse and authentic portrayals of queer romance compared to mainstream media. Conversely, the remaining 25% opted for a neutral stance, selecting the 'maybe' option.




80% of the participants perceive fanfiction as providing a more inclusive portrayal of queer relationships when juxtaposed with the original source material, while the remaining 20% remain undecided on this matter.




**Analysis of Themes**

*i. Queer Baiting in Media*

Queerbaiting is a marketing tactic employed within fiction and entertainment that hint at, but do not depict Queer romances or depiction. There is a specific lack of evidence in the story that would confirm or deny a character's sexuality. The main purpose of employing this tactic is to attract Queer or Allied individuals with promises of having positive Queer representation (the Bait) which never gets fulfilled (the Switch). This frustrating dance of Bait-and-Switch draws in fans who hope to see themselves represented in media, and are forever left hanging, waiting for the representation to occur.

It must be understood, however, that Queerbaiting is different from Bad Representation. Bad representation refers to poor representation of a Queer characters. This could be Negative Representation (eg. the Singaporean Chinese Drama 'My Guardian Angel' where the queer character was Gay, paedophilic and spread STDs to young teenage boys) or Token Representation (Occurs when queer characters are sidelined in the storyline or their identities aren't meaningfully explored. Often, this is a strategy only to prevent criticism as an attempt to show that people are being treated fairly, resembling a shallow nod to diversity rather than genuine and impactful representation.)

Queerbaiting, on the other hand, is the inclusion of scenes that suggest that a character *might* be in the Queer community, with no evidence to confirm or deny it. Queerbaiting was especially popular during the early- to mid-2010s, according to Raina Deerwater (entertainment research and analysis manager for the GLAAD Media Institute.), a time during which the general public considered queer representation in the media to be taboo.

"It was still seen as a 'risk' to include queer characters and queer couples on popular shows, and so it was essentially these shows not portraying and not giving representation to the LGBTQ community, but teasing it so they would still get higher numbers

and they would still maintain a fan base. So it's kind of like having your cake and eating it too." explained Deerwater.

Research has linked queerbaiting to mental health concerns. When mainstream media removes or denies representation from Queer characters, individuals experience a significant loss. This bait-and-switch tactic has been associated with mental health challenges like depression and anxiety.

Thus, fans often take initiative to reimagine Queerbaited characters in a more positive light, envisioning what they could become if given meaningful treatment. Notably, the pairing of Sherlock Holmes/John Watson from BBC's Sherlock and Derek Hale/Stiles Stilinski from Teen Wolf are among the most prominent examples of Queerbaited relationships. Fans have embraced these pairings, reshaping their narratives through fanfiction, providing them with a fresh and distinctive voice.

*ii. Exploring Sexuality and Gender Representation*

Until very recently, being a fan, much like other marginalised identities, has historically been perceived as "deviant." Consequently, fandom often draws in marginalised communities and is seen as dissenting, resistant, and subversive.

Through fan fiction, there's an avenue to challenge the ongoing absence of diverse commercially published texts. It offers a critical intellectual space where marginalised fans can craft their own reflections, gain insights through different perspectives, or access alternative avenues to explore identities often overlooked elsewhere.

Fanfiction serves as a haven for numerous closeted queer teenagers, catering to their emotional needs by presenting characters they already admire and relate to. This mode of expression provides a unique opportunity for these individuals to witness their own identities mirrored through beloved characters. By infusing these characters' narratives with authentic queer struggles and experiences, fanfiction delivers a profound message: you are not alone. It becomes a validating space, offering solace and affirmation to those navigating their identity in seclusion, reassuring them that their experiences and emotions are recognized and shared.

Simultaneously, for the writers behind these fanfictions, it's a platform to project their personal journey onto familiar personas. It cultivates a safe haven, fostering a symbiotic relationship between the writer and the reader. Within this creative realm, writers find the freedom to explore avenues and themes that might remain too precarious or unexplored in their offline lives.

Fanfiction helps its audience and creators relate and deal with emotional situations in real life by practising writing these situations. Having read a sensitive situation through fanfiction, authors and readers alike are better prepared to deal with real-life scenarios.

It becomes a sanctuary for self-expression, enabling writers to navigate and articulate aspects of their identity, struggles, and aspirations that may not yet find acceptance or safety in their immediate environment. In this shared landscape of storytelling, a bond is formed between creators and consumers, each finding solace and enrichment in the other's narratives.

*iii. Adding Depth to Existing Characters and Relationships*

One of the most popular ships in the anime community comes from the anime/manga series *Boku no Hero Academia* (*trans.* My Hero Academia) where the relationship of Midoriya 'Deku' Izuku and Bakugo 'Kacchan' Katsuki (ship name: Bakudeku, often shortened to bkdk) has over 43,747 works on just Archive of Our Own.

This pairing has evolved from the intricacies of their dynamic relationship portrayed throughout the manga. Initially childhood best friends, their narrative took a turn in middle school when Bakugo began bullying Deku. However, this complex dynamic didn't end in animosity but rather transformed into a reluctant admiration and a robust rivalry. Beneath these layers lies profound and unchanging love and affection for each other, evident in moments of extreme peril where their last thoughts are consistently directed towards one another.

Their interactions, which are characterised by Bakugo's brashness and fierce competitiveness and Deku's unflinching determination give fans an intriguing setting in which to explore a range of interactions, from friendship to romantic relationships.

The ship's allure stems from the intricate layers of their relationship depicted in the official canon storyline. Deku remains a steadfast supporter of Bakugo, even amid the latter's aggressive demeanour toward his once best friend. Conversely, Bakugo conceals his insecurities and pride while witnessing Deku's remarkable growth. Considering their individual journeys marked by personal traumas, it's evident that a profound connection forms between these characters, serving as rich fodder for their fans' enduring fascination with their bond.

Fans often delve into the unexplored potentials within their relationship, imagining

scenarios where mutual respect and understanding evolve into something deeper. Beyond the boundaries set by the canon material, this ship offers an alternative lens to explore character complexities, emotional depths, and the untapped facets of their relationship dynamics.

Shipping Midoriya Izuku and Bakugo Katsuki is ultimately appealing because it allows fans to delve deeper into their relationship through fanfiction, fan art, and fandom discussions, all of which highlight the complex layers of their relationship within the series.

Therefore, Bakudeku serves as an example of how fanfiction contributes depth to existing characters and relationships established in canon. These intricately crafted relationships, grounded in depth, rationale, and chemistry, frequently remain unexplored within the official narrative. Publishers often shy away from making these relationships canon due to apprehensions about diverging from heteronormative conventions, fearing potential backlash from traditional backgrounds and higher-ups.

*iv. Addressing Underrepresentation of Positive Queer Idols in Media*

The preference for Queer Literature in Fanfiction, as highlighted in our survey, primarily stems from the lack of positive Queer role models in mainstream media. While some contemporary shows, books, and anime have started to focus on Queer narratives and challenges, prominent multimillion-dollar franchises like Jurassic Park, Transformers, or the Fast and Furious noticeably lack any representation of Queer characters.

This absence compels consumers to pair their beloved characters together. For instance, in male-dominated sports anime like Haikyuu or Free!!, the scarcity of female characters, coupled with deep friendships and intricate character dynamics, prompts fans to create their own pairings, leading to a vast array of fanon material supporting these relationships.

In franchises like the original Harry Potter series, where no confirmed Queer characters exist, fans seek to explore relationships, such as that of Sirius Black and Remus Lupin (popularly known as 'Wolfstar'), through Fanfiction, often embracing these creations as an unofficial part of the narrative. A very popular example of this would be a Fanfiction published on Archive of Our Own called 'All The Young Dudes' by user *MsKingBean89*, which follows the Marauders (James Potter, Sirius Black, Remus Lupin, Peter Pettigrew), characters who had little to no interaction in the canon series, through the seven years they spend at Hogwarts. This fanfiction, published in 2017, spans around 188 chapters and over 500,000 words. It is popularly known as many fans' 'favourite Harry Potter book".

This trend reveals how the absence of Queer representation motivates fans to generate their own, filling the void left by mainstream media. These fan-created narratives not only fulfil fans' desires and resonate deeply within fan communities, but also carve moments in pop culture that will surely endure.

*vi. Fetishization of the LGBTQIA+ community in Narrative Depictions*

While one of the major reasons for the rise of Queer Fanfiction is to address the issues of representation and exploration, a negative side to it is the increasing fetishisation of Queer people and characters.

Fetishisation refers to the reduction of a person to aspects of their physical body, identity or relationship structure. A character is found to be attractive because of these characteristics.

Media plays a very big role in the fetishisation of Queer people.

The realms of fanfiction, webcomics, and young adult queer romance novels have witnessed a surge in stories crafted by women that centre around love between men. This trend appears rooted, like many others, in underlying misogyny.

The scarcity of well-rounded, developed female characters in mainstream films and TV leads to most intriguing and detailed relationship dynamics, including friendships, being depicted between two men, with minimal representation of such dynamics between two women.

Fandoms engaging with these narratives seek to delve into the most compelling relationships within their fan-created content. As visibility of queer individuals increased, this gave rise to the realm of "slash fiction" that began to centre around gay men specifically.

These fandoms, which are largely composed of teenage girls, have influenced similar patterns in other media geared toward this demographic, like romance novels and webcomics. The prevalence of narratives depicting gay men, authored by women, has become so dominant in these mediums that claims suggest straight, white women are compensated more than gay men by publishers to craft gay romances. In the majority of these stories, relationships unfold between white, cisgender, able-bodied men without any depiction of body fat.

Despite their queerness, these relationships

adhere to heteronormative gender roles. Typically, one man embodies traits of being taller, muscular, experienced, and often dark-haired, while the other assumes characteristics of being shorter, less experienced, often lighter-haired, and occasionally exhibits traditionally feminine physical attributes such as longer hair and wider hips and thighs. Men who fit the first archetype will take the position of the 'Top', while the latter would take the position of the 'Bottom' in the many, incorrect and explicit sex scenes that are often the entire plot of these stories and are central to their target audiences' enjoyment.

Many teenage girls learn misleading and damaging views about LGBTQIA+ relationships from this form of media.

**Conclusion**

Fanfiction emerges as a dynamic and influential space for fans to reinvent, reclaim, and redefine narratives that frequently fall short of providing an acceptable depiction of Queer experiences.

According to this study, fanfiction not only offers a forum for the exploration of various relationships but also poses a challenge to the constraints of mainstream media in terms of accurately portraying LGBTQIA+ storylines.

The study identifies the benefits of fanfiction but also draws attention to the risks of fetishization and the fallout from the mainstream media's neglect of the wide range of identities that fall under the LGBTQIA+ community.

All things considered, fanfiction is seen as an important medium that allows fans to actively engage in the creation of stories, questioning conventions and advancing the development of more diverse storytelling.

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# Devi's *Dopdi*: A Struggle to Unleash from Self Erosion

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## ABSTRACT

Ceaseless struggles by Dalit Bahujans against the shackles of humiliation and denial in various spheres is yet to achieve a substantial transformation. A multi- genre comparison is employed to study the short story Dopdi by Mahasweta Devi, highlighting the interplay between one's physical self and their sense of identity that mirrors psychological struggles. A qualitative research methodology is adopted for this study. This paper intends to elucidate on representation of body and how the protagonist's body forms a symbol of unique identity transcending resistance to forced identity and to look into the literary strategies that contribute to this nuanced portrayal.

**Keywords:** Agency, Body, Breaking silence, Identity, Loss of innocence, Resilience, Normalisation.

## INTRODUCTION

Society normalizes transformation or change, reasoning it as a requirement to lead a better life. One also needs to contemplate the loss of conventional identity. In this paper the self and social identity that is formed consciously or unconsciously with the will of an individual is referred as conventional identity and the identity which is forced upon the individual in their rejection is referred as imposed identity. The paradox here is people seek to hold on to their identity but also seek change which means an end to the identity which is original.

Mahasweta Devi's "Dopdi" is a seldom discussed narrative that emerges in her renowned collection, *Breast stories.* Devi highlights the conditions of unprivileged like landless labourers, tribals, untouchables, so on from Bihar and West Bengal. She refuses to be labelled by her gender and objects to be addressed as women writer, regarding herself not a feminist but a humanist and activist. The story unfolds against a turbulent backdrop of political unrest where the protagonist, Dopdi from Santal tribe of West Bengal along with her husband Dhulna kills a wealthy landlord to have access to the wells, they are declared as criminals by state eventually killing Dhulna and capturing Dopdi. She endures the pain and refuses to succumb to the violence inflicted upon her by the state forces. She defies the conventional sexual and social standards and represents her unique identity.

The topology of unique identity begins with societal changes, in this case it is due to oppression and violence inflicted upon the protagonist leading to loss of innocence, later becoming a threat of self erosion. Which makes her persistent in the situation of difficulty not holding onto the imposed or

conventional identity but emerging as unique identity. Here Dopdi's persistence is beyond resistance. Resistance becomes the foundational tool that used in case of emergency but persistence like that of Dopdi's requires infusing anger and fear and channelizing it into a wilful effort to overcome challenging and difficult situations. Her persistence to reject the idea of nakedness and modesty, victimization of body, so on, boldly walking towards Senanayak raising her head high and gives an unexpected laugh which brought fear in Senanayak.

I . The protagonist becomes the symbol of psycho-corporeal agency within the ubiquitous webs of Biopower. The Post-Freudian perspective of unique authenticity of inner self is somehow obscured by conditioning, repression, trauma, normalisation, so on, which has to be unleashed for an individual to be completely self realized and autonomous. Heyes, student of Foucault, talks about normalized bodies stating that one cannot eradicate normalisation, but one must find tactics for living ethnically and creatively within its confines. She argues that it is not that we lack agency but rather that we lack strategy. There are various instances in the text where one could observe that Dopdi's body does not become the docile dog that is controlled by the leash of power but the one which barks. She pours the water on ground when offered to her after the inhumane act, she tears her piece of cloth with her teeth. Only tears of pain fall out, she does not wail or weep at her plight but stands naked with her wounds and walks to senanayak, with a laugh she says "The object of your search, Dopdi Mejhen." Considering Heyes view of lack of strategy which seems to be addressed in this text through Dopdi's non-conventional way of representing agency. "Draupadi's black body comes even closer. Draupadi shakes with an indomitable laughter that Senanayak simply cannot understand. Her ravaged lips bleed as she begins laughing. Draupadi wipes the blood on her palm and says in a voice that is as terrifying, sky splitting, and sharp as her ululation, what's the use of clothes? You can strip me, but how can you clothe me again? Are you a man?" she chooses to spit a bloody gob on Senanayak's white shirt and says "There isn't a man here that I should be ashamed. "(Devi.pg.36)She terrifies Senanayak with her unarmed body. She transcends beyond the norm ascribed to a women body which is expected to be passive and beautiful. Her active body that breaks the norms of victimized body and it is considered as pathologization according to the concept given by Foucault.

Body is the source pain, suffering and ultimately death. In the lens of philosophy body can be considered as a hinge between internal and external world. "Besides this body is light; it is transparent; it is imponderable. Nothing is less thing than my body: it runs, it acts, it leaves, it desires. It lets itself to be traversed, with no resistance, by all my intentions. sure. But until the day when I hurt…And then, I cease to be light, imponderable, et cetera. I become a thing… fantastic ruminated architecture. "(Trans. Jones, pg.231). One can consider it in the context of Dopdi ,a nomadic tribe, her body can be seen as the site of both liberation and a sense of oppressed. Similarly, comparing it with *The Branded* an autobiographical novel by Laxman Gaikwad, who comes from a denotified tribe, experiences whipping and the bodies are ill-maintained due to poverty causing diseases leading to unhealthy body that rises a sense of inferiority complex, whilst in his case education became a tool to liberate his body and form a new identity. This shows a continuous affirmation of an individual's capacity to move out beyond the boundaries of their own body into external sharable world. Dopdi does not allow the nakedness of her body intimidate her or feel shame and does not allow the act of rape diminish her rejecting the conventional idea of modesty and imposed binary of victim and victor. She becomes the maker of her own meaning representing unique identity.

"One should descend beneath the clothes. One should perhaps reach the flesh itself, and then one would see in some cases even the body itself turns its own utopian power against itself, allowing all the space of the religious and sacred, all the space of the other world, all the space of the counter world, to enter into the space that is reserved for it." . Society imposes the idea of beauty on body, having which is appreciated, the beauty of Dopdi's body is disrupted with the violence inflicted upon her. She accepts the reality of change and voices out her pain by admonishing all the men who were involved in it. In this situation, her own body turns against her, yet she does not allow her mind to identity herself with it. "My body with the virtue of this utopias has disappeared".(Trans.Jonas, pg.230) As Foucault says, those utopias could not reduce his body so easily as the body possess some placeless places, Dopdi's body was extremly strong and didn't reduce into docile body. On July 15th 2004, a group of Manipuri women protested against rape and killing of Thangjam Manorama Devi by Indian army. The woman were members of Meira paibi, a woman's social movement in Manipur. The woman stripped naked in front of the Assam rifles camp in Imphal, the state capital, and wrapped themselves in the banner that said, "Indian army rape us". This protest emphasises on how violence on body is protested through body, similar to how Dopdi's body that is made by the state forces becomes unique identity terrifying them. Dopdi saves her body from becoming an object of survival, a body that is to be saved and a body that saves. She grabs her body's possession over mind. She lets the body bear the witness, she does not suppress it or hide it, but

provides space in her mindscape, yet not letting it affect her sense of body. This is proved when she does not get terrified looking at her body. She knows that it is the extreme that a body can experience for that is near the end point for both torturer and victim, as death is the end that stops experience, the base of any identity.

One may ponder on the aspect of bodies becoming the victim of racial profiling. It is beyond surface level scrutiny extending to the transformative journey they undergo, ultimately seeking refuge by trying to construct new identity. Moreover, a compelling example can be drawn from *The Branded* by Laxman Gaikwad , where the protagonist experiences and struggles to see physical abuse extorted by police upon their community though sometimes they were not part of the theiving. Later, he loses his patience and seeks to claim his identity as an upper class as nobody was ready to rent homes for uchalya community even in the time of their adversity. Conversely, Dopdi does not budge the labels of addressing her as notorious women, naxalite, whose people are defined by the police as criminals. She does not seek the identity of upper class, neither does she stick to the traditional one. Though she and her husband were involved in killing Surja Sahu, all other members of their community were seen as the people who commit crime. One such parallel that can be observed in visual medium is in the film, *Jai Bhim* (2021) where the character named Rajakannu is brutally whipped and murdered because he was not ready to accept the crime which he never did. Hence body becomes the end point of his experiences that has become a part of erasing bodies carrying an imposed identity.

II . Body is not a vessel filled with shame by anybody who can access it, but it is a continuous identity that flows with its own power and identity. Overcoming adversity imposed on body is one of the major aspect in both Mahasweta Devi's "Dopdi" and Maya Angelou's "And still rise". The specificity in there details serves to amplify the uniqueness of their identities and highlights the power embedded in their bodies. Maya questions her oppressors by her lines, "Did you want to see me broken? Bowed head and lowered eyes? Shoulders falling out like tear drops, Weakened by my soulful cries?" (pf)

In the same vein, Dopdi's resilience is seen through her expression wherein the state men are terrified by it and cannot comprehend her behaviour as it is not the conventional reaction that they expected from her. She rejects to consume water even though she felt extremely thirsty and tears her cloth with her teeth. The fear that she has gone crazy and runs for orders. Dopdi was even sure that even if her mind and body gave away for the torture, she would bite off her tongue but would never give in to the police or military personnel.

Maya Angelou also questions whether her haughtiness offends the oppressors as she laughs like she has got gold mines in her backyard. Similarly Dopdi laughs with her ravaged lips which are bleeding. There response to the oppression seems to be similar, the very first reaction is of their anger and pain which are converted into basic form of expressions, later responses are in assertive tone.

One can say that body is perceived to engage with world before any verbal reflection comes into play which forms a base to what an individual thinks and says. It is not to state that physical prevails over mental aspects but to state that one can equally affect other disproving early western thinkers who treated body secondary to mind, just an object in the world of objects. Merleau Ponty substantiates on that idea that there are two types of bodies objective and lived. To elaborate on it in terms of semiotics, the objective body is the signifier, a physical form, while the lived body is the signified, the memories and experiences attached to the body, sign can be considered as the combination of both that affects mind. Hence it is not just a space where mind resides but body is also who we are and it is not just ground of perception as it contains instruments that transmit signals to mind.

"I observe external objects with my body, I handle them, inspect them, walk around them. But as for my own body, I do not observe it: to do so, I would need a second body, which would itself be unobservable. "(ponty.1945) Dopdi engages with other bodies through her body, for instance, she pushes Senanayak with her mangled breasts but at the same she

cannot perceive her own body as other bodies perceives her. Ponty draws an analogy between the indispensability of the body and the peripheral elements like clothes that is always worn. He argues against the perspectives that relegate bodily parts to mere spatial proximity to mind, positing that their enduring closeness does not confer upon them an essential status comparable to organs within the cognitive framework. Furthermore, Merleau Ponty postulates that clear distinction between body and mind becomes tricky when boundaries between body and external objects are blurred. To illustrate its significance in this context Dopdi's clothes can be seen as peripheral object which is torn by her as symbol of defiance against the brutal assault, her organs are marred and carries no cloth when she walks out, which terrifies everyone more than her use of words. When she carries nothing material, her scares and wounds become peripheral objects which for which the responses arise from mind hence difficulty arises to draw lines between them.

The outcome of her experiences is new identity

because usually people choose between significant and other. Applying bare life concept, where people escape from socio-political aspects and live in isolation, prioritizing biological aspects of life opposed to homo sacer. Dopdi does not fall under both the categories as she is neither much aware of political affairs nor does she isolates herself. she stands up for her community and self.

Ⅲ. The literary scape drawn by Devi is an artful incorporation of techniques which acts as a catalyst, propelling the narrative into realm of heightened significance. Given two mediums the one that is visible would receive more attention than that of spoken. When one imagines or feels the pain, it is certain whilst the heard attributes of pain a doubt may rise. Devi pictures Dopdi's external body with wounds as weapon, a version of agency against assault and her internal body accompanies her pain. She employs the device of imagery over verbal expression. "she feels her arms and legs still tied to four posts. Something sticky under her ass and waist. Her own blood." She also describes her body as "her breasts are bitten raw, the nipples are torn." which gives a picture of her situation with details and can also be considered an explicit narration which increases reader's response which might be anger, sympathy or empathy. Furthermore, one can observe how Devi disproves the notion that the tendency of population to vocalise or suppress cries is culturally stipulated responses of pain. As she does not stick to conventional responses but represents her own agency over her narrative that any imposed identity cannot change. Devi chooses third person narrative to make it even more descriptive. Considering immediacy and tact at a scenario, she tries to skilfully employ both by choosing emotions and metaphors to create the picture and diluting the aspects around her body to highlight the immediacy of body over mind. An allegory is brought in with the name play, the term Dopdi is a colloquial pronunciation of Sanskrit term Draupadi, a mythological character. On comparison of a particular scene of assault the mythical character seeks help from men, placing them in superior position and wails for justice but her body does not act upon it. While Devi's Dopdi fights back for her own self acts upon it demonstrating her agency. The tone employed by the protagonist is a mockery of power, though the power could access her body it could not impose identity that it wished. Extreme experiences require victims to undertake some degree of work in their mind and to employ language in a new way, one that affects the whole identity, transforming it in such a way as to make all the modifications irreversible. Spoken language is unreliable narrator of body as there no words that can describe the complete felt emotions of violence. Each word has two meanings the ordinary and the experienced that is light and weighted down respectively. There arises a difficulty to interpret the meaning of weighted words as it is subjective. Hence Devi chooses to make Dopdi talk through her body, though it is few lines it exposes a lot of attributes without much difficulty.

Devi chooses non linear narrative structure which creates a contrast between past and present and highlights Dopdi's transformation from passive object to active subject. It underscores the fragmented nature of her identity shaped by society and personal experiences,which enables the readers empathise with her by experiencing her story in a way that mirrors her own disjointed reality. Though chronological order makes it simpler, non linear narrative fosters a deeper connection to the themes. Silence is used as a technique to demonstrate defiance and agency of protagonist's body. Dopdi refuses to confess to the state, even after

being tortured and raped repeatedly maintaining her silence. The narrative also uses silence to reclaim her agency by countering men around with her naked body as a powerful act of subversion which arises out of her new unique identity.

## CONCLUSION

In the nutshell, the paper underscores the importance of body and its representation in the texts on bahujans, highlighting the subjectivity of body that contributes to the unique identity. This identity is formed contradicting the dichotomy of conventional and imposed identity which may be considered as a resolution for the issue of identity crisis and erosion of bahujans. Only when one forms a subjective identity accompanied with some attributes of change the survival out of bare life is possible. Dopdi is one such character who blurs the lines between reality and fiction and emerges as unique identity.

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# "Rebirth, Resurrection, Eternal Life": Liminality and Otherness in Vampire Culture in *Midnight Mass*

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## ABSTRACT

Posthumanism seeks to radically decenter the autonomous human being and engage with ideas of its constant evolution. Monster theory is one such facet which explores the idea of the liminal being. This research will delve into monster theory through which it will contend with the idea of the vampire as a liminal being and further as a stand-in for cultures of otherness through the narrative of *Midnight Mass*. The ontological liminality of the vampire is examined in terms of its manifestation among the characters, borne out of a desire to transcend the boundaries of human existence; and further, the likening of the creature to a posthuman god is based on similarities between its existence and certain biblical passages. Cultures of otherness are delved into to understand the misuse of religious scripture by specific characters to spread vitriol. Lastly, this inverse categorisation of humans as the Other and the vampiric liminal being as the posthuman god in *Midnight Mass* were analysed through the lens of Jeffrey Cohen's seven theses on monster culture to understand the monster as a manifestation of its culture.

**Keywords:** Monster Theory, Liminal Being, Posthuman God, Cultures of Otherness

## INTRODUCTION

Posthumanism, arising as a response to humanism, is a school of critical thought that seeks to radically decenter the autonomous human being and engage with ideas of its constant evolution through both other life forms as well as machines. Majorly, posthumanism bears linkages to transhumanism, i.e. the biotechnological advancement of the human. However, there are other facets that constitute posthumanism such as antihumanism and post-anthropocentrism.

One important non-transhumanist facet of posthumanism is monster theory. Here, Victor Turner's (1967) concept of the liminal being gains relevance. Liminality is understood as the space between stages, or existing at the boundary or the threshold. In terms of the posthuman, the liminal being is one that cannot be neatly confined to one category of existence. Rather, it can embody different ways of being and open up spaces to wider, heterogeneous perspectives. A common example, and one directly relevant to this research, is that of the vampire: a being not entirely human but not completely divorced from the human either that grapples with the question of human evolution.

In critical posthumanism, the 'monster' in posthuman literature often seeks to represent the human Other. For instance, the 1922 silent German expressionist film Nosferatu, based on Stoker's Dracula, contains anti-Semetic undertones and deals with the fear of the Other. Thus, the posthuman liminal being is often a stand-in for exploring themes of Otherness and exclusion wrought by domination, incarceration, elimination of certain life forms, etc. (Nayar, 2017), i.e. it engages with the deliberate reconstruction of what

constitutes the 'human' and what lies outside that categorisation. Braidotti (2015) reinforced this idea: the human is not a neutral term, but rather one that "indexes access to privileges and entitlements" (11:37).

Flanagan, discussing his vision for *Midnight Mass*, described the genre of horror as incredibly powerful because it allows human beings to face their own existence as a species, their hopes and fears, as individuals and as a society. Religion becomes a driving force in the narrative of *Midnight Mass* for the acceptance and othering of individuals in the island town (Romano, 2021) which is based on Flanagan's own disillusionment with Christianity which prompted him to explore the way "beliefs shape how we treat each other" (King, 2021).

The primary text chosen for this research is *Midnight Mass*, a gothic supernatural streaming television series released in 2021 which, through the genre of horror, grapples with questions of grief, faith and love. *Midnight Mass* consists of seven episodes with each episode named after a book from the Bible; the number seven itself biblically symbolises completion or perfection. The first four episodes—titled Book I: Genesis, Book II: Psalms, Book III: Proverbs, Book IV: Lamentations—are based off of books from the Christian Old Testament. The other three episodes—titled Book V: Gospel, Book VI: Acts of the Apostles, Book VII: Revelation—are based on the Christian New Testament.

Directed by Mike Flanagan, the series follows a young man named Riley Flynn moving back home to his small island town after being incarcerated for four years because of a drunk-driving accident. His return coincides with the arrival of a young priest who revitalises the religious faith of the town by performing miracles. In actuality, the priest has brought a vampire with him, mistaking it for an angel of the lord, and the miracles are borne of its blood which has healing properties. The townsfolk are restored to their youth, their faith revived, and on the night of Easter Vigil, in its spirit of rebirth and resurrection, all the true devotees die and are reborn as vampires. And as the faith of the Christian townsfolk strengthens, tensions are heightened as religion is perverted by characters such as Bev Keane, a fundamentalist Christian resident close to the church, who wins town favour and ostracises anyone who diverges from her personal understanding of the Christian faith. This is where cultures of otherness become prominent in the narrative, allowing for some to be excluded and isolated from the mainstream. Mike Flanagan expertly utilises the horror genre to contend with ideas of alcoholism and religious zealousness to question what constitutes a monster.

Interestingly, the word 'vampire' itself is never used in the series, but its presence at the heart of the narrative is based on Flanagan's realisation that there are similarities between this liminal being and New Testament liturgy. "The step from the eternal life through the blood and body of Jesus into vampirism is not a wide step, I think," laughs Flanagan. "The parallels are clear" (Bernstein, 2021).

### *"An angel of the Lord": Ontological Liminality and the Posthuman God*

Monster theory argues that the vampire as a liminal being cannot be confined to one category of existence. This ontology that places it between the human and the alien means that it exists on a spectrum of human evolution where it can be considered as an advanced species. Through the lens of religion, such an advancement could be misconstrued as evidence of its biblical nature of existence, tying it to Bishop's (2010) concept of the posthuman god: religious traditions have often sought the transcendence of the human beyond the current boundaries of existence, i.e. to commune with the gods. Originally derived from the field of transhumanism, the posthuman god refers to advancement of the posthuman liminal to a higher stage where it is considered divine. This section will trace the development of that narrative in *Midnight Mass*.

The first uncomprehending view that the viewers get of the vampire are its glowing eyes, glimpsed in the dark by Riley Flynn's teenage brother, Warren. Warren's friend, Ooker, further remarks seeing something "like a heron, or a monster pelican" ("Book I: Genesis", 12:42) with huge wings. Later, Sheriff Hassan informs the town drunk, Joe Collie, that he'd been blabbing about being followed by a giant albatross with "wings as big as lawn chairs" ("Book I: Genesis", 19:48). Multiple people over the course of the narrative witness the glowing eyes outside their windows, but dismiss it as a trick of the light. The first full glimpse of the vampire is seen at the end of the first episode: Riley, believing it to be old Monsignor Pruitt, attempts to bring it inside from the heavy storm. With a preternatural gait, the creature flees from him.

During communion at the local church, St. Patrick's, Father Paul preaches the old translation with reference to the blood of Christ, foreshadowing the events that the presence of the vampire will herald: "This is my blood, the blood of the new and everlasting covenant. It will be shed for you and for all so that sins may be forgiven" ("Book I: Genesis", 40:06). Furthermore, on Ash Wednesday, Father Paul aptly sermonises about

rebirth, resurrection and eternal life, all the while feeding the congregation the blood of the vampire which will ascertain that for them. The first miracle occurs soon to Leeza Scarborough: a shooting accident by Joe Collie had left the teenager in a wheelchair, paralysed from the waist down; the vampire blood heals her injury and she can walk again. Miracles such as this reaffirm for Father Paul his belief that the vampire is divine, sent by God Himself.

As news of the miracle spreads through town, Father Paul's health fails and in a violent coughing fit of blood, he falls to the ground, dead. A flashback reveals the truth: the town priest, Monsignor Pruitt, on a pilgrimage in Damascus stumbled upon a cave that housed the vampire. It drank his blood and in return, fed him its own blood; the startling similarity to communion led Pruitt to mistake the creature for an angel of the lord. His youth restored, he renames himself Paul, after the apostle. The narrative jumps back to the present as Father Paul wakes from the dead. He is the first of the resurrected and symbolises the beginning of this apparent New Covenant.

The next to be turned by the vampire is Riley who is a non-believer since his incarceration. His ability to clearly see the truth lies in sharp contrast to Father Paul's descent into zealotry wherein he likens himself to Jesus's successor. Father Paul further reveals that he killed Joe Collie and then justifies it by quoting Hebrews 9:14, "How much more, then, will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal spirit offered himself unblemished to God, *cleanse our consciences from acts that lead to death so that we may serve the living God*" (emphasis added based on repetition). He is blinded by the existence and the presence of the vampire into using the Good Book to justify something as heinous as murder. Riley's final response to Father Paul is, "Remember we are dust and to dust we shall return", a sacred belief of Christianity that Father Paul has conveniently chosen to eschew.

As the night of Easter Vigil dawns, Father Paul, along with Bev Keane, the mayor and his wife, Wade and Dolly Scarborough, and another resident named Sturge, plan to divulge the truth to the congregation. As everyone gathers in the pews, the doors are locked, the believers are handed cups of rat poison and the vampire is unveiled as a supposed angel of God. What follows next is a horrific bloodbath where those who drink the poison are resurrected but those who don't become food.

The horror worsens as the doors of St. Patrick's are opened and a horde of hungry vampires runs into town, breaking into homes and turning or drinking from people. Houses of non-believers are set on fire, and boats and cell towers are destroyed. Complete pandemonium with no routes of escape. Bev Keane watches over the proceedings with a smug sense of self-righteousness; she believes that those who turn are chosen by God and with satisfaction, she watches this "New Covenant" descend upon them.

The narrative of *Midnight Mass* expertly deals with the crossing of the ontological boundary through the lens of religion. The vampire is elevated to the position of posthuman god based on the desire of the religious to transcend the boundaries of human existence. As seen towards the end, it was used to justify atrocious acts and heightened the othering of individuals to anarchic levels, and this culture of othering is discussed further in the next section.

***"Viper's brood": The Human as the Other***

Posthuman literature, when contending with the 'monster', is allegorically seeking to represent the human Other. Cohen, too, viewed monster culture as a way of understanding human culture and the monsters it creates. That creation allows for the exploration of groupism, and *Midnight Mass* explores how members of the congregation on Crockett Island misuse religious scripture for the exclusion and othering of individuals.

Bev Keane is the catalyst driving this exclusion against people such as Erin Greene, Riley's childhood friend who is now a single pregnant woman, and Sheriff Hassan, who is Muslim. Although both individuals are religious and believe in God, Bev openly views them as existing outside the bounds of "true believers". Furthermore, she pushes for Bibles to be distributed at the public school and for sections to be read out during homeroom. She dislikes Joe Collie's dog and poisons it. In the past, she urged townsfolk to accept an unfair money settlement from an oil spill that adversely impacted the fishermen's trade; that money eventually flowed to the church and she happily set up a recreation centre. Here, too, Riley sees the truth clearly, remarking that it's always these "small, starving villages with big, fancy churches" ("Book II: Psalms", 46:27).

The vitriol and culture of exclusion that Bev ignites can be seen in the other townsfolk as well. Sheriff Hassan's teenage son, Ali, begins to attend Mass at St. Patrick's and Riley's mother, Annie, comments, "The courage it had to take to leave that behind, to come to church alone, at his age? With his upbringing? All that tradition. It just shows you. God finds a way" ("Book IV: Lamentations", 01:00:11). Her innocent tone belies hypocrisy; Muslims pray to the same Allah that Christians pray to because there is one God, and Christianity is just

as traditional in its purview as Islam. Similarly, Joe Collie's death at the hands of Father Paul is also viewed in a sanctimonious way. Because Joe disabled Leeza, his life is viewed as worthless. Father Paul himself refers to Joe as "beyond repair", despite Joe's recent sincere efforts to clean up his act.

Towards the conclusion of the narrative, i.e. in the last couple of episodes, Bev's zealotry and hostile othering, based on her desperate desire to be one of God's chosen few, takes on a more dangerous form. She goes against Father Paul's orders and unlocks the church doors after the resurrection of the congregation, allowing the newly turned vampires to run amok all over town, devouring everything in their path. She practically plays at being God when she states in no uncertain terms that she and Father Paul will decide who lives and who dies. And when Father Paul, finally comprehending the hell that he has unleashed, regrets his actions, she turns on him as quick as a serpent, quoting the Bible: "Jesus himself, he warned us against the scribes, against the priests. In Matthew: "Do not call anyone on Earth 'father', you have one father and he is in heaven." … Viper's brood" ("Book VII: Revelation", 31:51). That scene establishes that Bev's loyalty lies only to herself and she will cherry-pick from the Bible to hold onto her 'moral' high ground.

Bev's dangerous anger becomes further unstable as the end nears. When Sheriff Hassan along with his accomplices attempts to burn down the recreation centre, the only building left unscathed in town, Bev barely hesitates before shooting him in the leg. Soaring in the heights of hypocrisy, she yells, "You disgusting viper! You would burn us in our homes? I knew the day you set foot on this island, of course you would. Terrorist" ("Book VII: Revelation", 43:07). Her face is furthermore completely impassive when Sheriff Hassan's son, Ali, sets the centre on fire; she shoots Sheriff Hassan in the chest without flinching

The character of Bev Keane mostly acutely harkens back to Nayar's (2014) understanding of cultures of exclusion being wrought by domination, incarceration, elimination of certain life forms, etc. The coming of the "angel" and the subsequent miracles its blood performs gives a platform to Bev's self-righteousness and allows her to further her personal agenda of vitriol, disguised as religious fervour. The presence of the vampire functions almost as a narrative tool to unmask Bev and her deep-seated venom for those who do not share her faith.

***"A flood of fire, and St. Patrick's will be the ark": Cohen's Seven Theses***

Through the interplay of the vampire being boosted to the position of posthuman god and human beings being relegated to the Other, *Midnight Mass* deals with the intricacies of monster culture. Its narrative and this interplay is analysed here through the lens of Jeffrey Cohen's seven theses on monster culture (1997). These theses function as a *modus legendi*: a way of reading cultures based on the monsters they create.

Thesis I: The Monster's Body is a Cultural Body. Etymologically, *monstrum* means "that which reveals". A monster is an allegory, it signifies something other than itself. Cohen proposes that a monster is always an embodiment of a time and a place, and a feeling – "a certain cultural moment" (4), i.e. it embodies cultural fantasies, desires, fears and anxieties. These are clearly visible in the churchgoers on Crockett Island. The only people who go to church everyday are Annie, who prays for Riley since his incarceration, and Leeza. As the first miracle occurs, those desires and anxieties are ignited in the other townsfolk as well who begin to flock to church regularly. Their faith establishes them as a community, but one based on the rejection and exclusion of certain folk around town.

Thesis II: The Monster Always Escapes. A monster is a product of its socio-cultural and literary-historical context; it leaves behind material destruction but itself vanishes into the night. In *Midnight Mass*, to speak only of the material monster, i.e. the vampire Father Paul brings to Crockett Island, it does die. When all the townsfolk are turned either into vampires or their food, there are no survivors left. And since all buildings in the town have been burned down, there is nowhere for these vampires to hide from the light of the sun that can turn them to ash. At sunrise, all of Crockett Island is burned, its population decimated. So too does the vampire die. But what it stands for is too virulent to be destroyed: it is a representation of the vitriol spread by exclusionary groupism and hate like that can outlive the life span of any living being.

Thesis III: The Monster is the Harbinger of Category Crisis. A monster is a disturbing hybrid that appears at times of crisis and questions the set-in-stone binary ways of thinking defying the laws of science. When faced by the monster, rationality crumbles. Erin Greene, along with the town doctor, Sarah Gunning, and her mother, Mildred, are some of the few who see plainly the hypocrisy that Bev espouses. They attempt to understand how the miracles are occurring, and the closest they get is the medical explanation of a blood disorder, but far heightened beyond anything science has ever. seen. However, all their rationalisations turn to dust when they see the vampire itself during Easter Vigil. The creature represents a category crisis where it is

neither a biblical angel, nor a scientific being; it is on a different ontological plane of existence. The narrative makes it clear that there are no easy answers.

Thesis IV: The Monster Dwells at the Gates of Difference. A monster represents the alterities of culture, politics, race, sexuality, etc. as arbitrary and mutable. Erin Greene as a pregnant woman without a husband, Sheriff Hassan as a Muslim, Dr. Sarah Gunning as a lesbian, Riley Flynn as an alcoholic: these individuals occupy spaces outside the dominant heteronormative Christian worldview adopted by a majority of the residents of Crockett Island. Their labelling as "sinners" allows the congregation to exclude them and justify it as "right" through the aforementioned worldview. However, God himself does not discriminate between the sinners and the saints; Sheriff Hassan quotes from the Bible to Bev in his last moments, "He makes the sun rise on the evil and the good" ("Book VII: Revelation", 45:06). In death, they are all alike.

Thesis V: The Monster Polices the Borders of the Possible. The monster is a warning against exploring outside the domestic sphere; it prevents mobility, not just geographic but also intellectual and sexual. In this way, it functions as a monster of prohibition. This works in two ways in *Midnight Mass*. First, it binds the townsfolk to rigid conventions of behaviour, as discussed in the previous thesis. Second, it also creates borders against heresy, such as likening oneself to the divine or murder, borders that must not be crossed. Thus, the monster can function as a prohibitive force on two levels.

Thesis VI: Fear of the Monster is Really a Kind of Desire. A monster becomes something to be loathed but also something to be envied. An apt example from *Midnight Mass* occurs during the conversation between Father Paul and Riley after both have become vampires. Riley is disgusted by Father Paul's lack of guilt over killing Joe, but when Father Paul pushes, Riley brokenly confesses that he is actually jealous. Riley killed someone, too, in the drunk-driving accident and that burden of guilt lives within him every day. And yet, he both loathes and envies the freedom Father Paul experiences in that regard.

Thesis VII: The Monster Stands at the Threshold … of Becoming. At last, a monster asks us to reevaluate our perception of the world and the ways in which we have misunderstood it, particularly in terms of gender, sexuality, race and other forms of difference and exclusion. The last scenes of *Midnight Mass* express this perfectly: as the sun begins to rise, the realisation that all the townsfolk will die begins to settle in. And in those moments, they let go of their fears and their ghosts. They stand with the people they love and they pray with the people they love. Father Paul had preached in one of his sermons, "That's what it means to have faith, that in the darkness, in the worst of it, in the absence of light and hope, we sing" ("Book II: Psalms", 30:07). The people of Crockett Island look out at the horizon and as the sky lightens, they sing.

Thus, analysing the narrative of the series through Cohen's theses allows for a comprehension of the monster beyond its material existence to a representation of the culture it is born from. It further cements the earlier exploration into the inverse categorisation of humans as the Other and the vampiric liminal being as the posthuman god in *Midnight Mass*.

**Conclusion**

This research examined monster theory and cultures of otherness through the lens of organised religion in the narrative of the streaming series, *Midnight Mass*. The analysis began with an examination of the ontological liminality of the vampire in terms of its manifestation among the characters, borne out of a desire to transcend the boundaries of human existence; and further, the likening of the creature to a posthuman god is based on similarities between its existence and certain biblical passages. Next, the essay analysed the human as the Other, based on the notion of monsters constituting representations of cultures of otherness to examine the ways in which characters such as Bev misused religious scripture to spread their personal agenda of vitriol. Lastly, the framework of Cohen's seven theses was employed to analyse the culture of the narrative text and its allegorical creation of the monster.

The field of posthumanism occupies itself predominantly with the transhuman, and where it does concern itself with monster theory, it does not correlate it too closely with religion. Those are the gaps that this research aimed to fill and it will hopefully inspire more analysis into the intersections between posthumanism and organised faith. Outside the field of academia, this research becomes relevant in terms of its engagement with Cohen's seven theses of monster culture. Cohen maintains a perspective firmly grounded in reality about the monsters that culture creates and what those monsters embody, and this research allows for a deeper understanding of those elements in terms of their linkages with religion.

It must be taken into consideration that I, the author, am not Christian and while the understanding of biblical references in the analysis are based on extensive research, it is entirely likely

that certain allusions might have been missed. No doubt, someone better versed with the religion could carry out an increasingly detailed study. It must also be said that *Midnight Mass* as a narrative work has a lot to offer outside a posthuman understanding. The creator of the series employs a liberal humanist outlook where vampirism functions as an allegory for desire, love and hunger, and there are also interesting parallels between Riley's alcoholism and Father Paul's thirst for blood as a vampire. Most of Mike Flanagan's works can be opened up for a deeper exploration into the human spirit and *Midnight Mass* is no exception.

To conclude, it is important to remember Father Paul's words from the first AA meeting with Riley: "Alcohol isn't good or bad. Not itself. But it's people" ("Book II: Psalms", 47:13). The same can be said for the cultures of otherness that were created on Crockett Island and are created around the world today. Religious scripture in itself isn't good or bad. It's people and what they do with it.

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# Mystery in the Forest of Mizoram with the Elements of *Frankenstein* and Freud Uncanny

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## ABSTRACT

What is uncanny, it's something which is unfamiliar to the commoners, something which is mysterious which cannot be solve and it is there by mystery it evokes sublime which is pity and fear. According to Frankenstein he said ""The 'Uncanny'"as an approximation of the German word unheimlich, meaning literally 'unhomely.' The uncanny is both familiar and unfamiliar, both of the self and not", whereas according to my research paper the highlighted point will be sublime that is it creates pity and fear. On the topic of my research paper which creates pity for the victims of khawmu chawi and the pity of the victim itself as there are incidence where the victims never come back. The delusion of seeing things which creates an abnormality in the affected person's content of thought. The false belief is not accounted for by the person's cultural or religious background or his or her level of intelligence. Also, it creates fear for the people as there is nothing which can differentiate what is delusion and what is not. The mystery of not being real but the feeling of what is true, the creation of confusion not only for the people but also for the investigators. It creates the history of something's which no one can explain till now, this incident of being vanished without no trails and some coming back as a different person who was from different time, the experience of something different which a normal human cannot experience in the real world. Thus, in khawmu chawi it creates uncanny in its presence from all angles respectively. All the incidents that have happened to the human nature is the element of uncanniness for the world.

**Keywords:** Delusion, Experience, Highlighted, Investigators, Mystery, Uncanny, Vanished

## INTRODUCTION

There are many research and thesis papers written on Mizo folklore but there has not been a paper on the content of Khawimu chawi, there might be some works where the word Khawimu chawi is added but there is no particular definition given to it. There is research on topics like lasi, Pheichham, Keimi, Phung, Huai, Van Chung Nula and more topic on folk tales, myths.

In Mizo myth there is an entity*called khawimu chawi in which the term is used to prefer to a sprit taking away a human, this can be regarded as delusion of people as disbelieve. But on bases of proof, we can say that this Khawimu chawi do exist. Khawimu chawi happens when someone is alone in the woods and have the desire of something to do which a normal human cannot, for instance going on the top of the hill or tree, walking on the edge of the hills and going through a path which a normal human cannot. A khawimu chawi does not have a particular gender, according to the victims they treat them with good food, good cloths. Instance happened that some who are taken by the khawimu

never come back, some of them were found dead. Mizoram and its folk tales have been known for a long time, as many other regions Mizoram have plenty of folk tales. Mizoram was one of the union territories that no one knew about, it was a region where "lal" (kings) and many chiefs were the heads of a small, isolated region. The britishers ruled over many places near Mizoram, before the britishers came they worship animals, rocks, moons, spirits and they even sacrifice animals to moon so that the goddess of Mother Nature does not get angry. The British government organised expedition on Mizoram named Lushai Expedition during 1871-72. This is the result of Mizoram planting their vegetation in an area of Assam named Cachar area which lasted for two decades and due to this many were killed from both the sides. They governed over the Lushai Hills but due to the illiteracy in Mizoram it was burdensome for the governors due to this there was still the impact of the regions law, orders, beliefs as well as another reason was the language barriers. The only way to improve their situation is through introducing education with the help of the Christian missionary. The arrival of William Williams, a pastor from the Welsh Presbyterian missionary form Bangladesh saw the contingency of starting the mission in Mizoram, but he unfortunately died due to Typhoid and for his remembrance this day was announced as Missionary Day by the Presbyterian Church of Mizoram. The Arthington Aborigines Mission in 1889, spreading the words of God in Mizoram, sent two of their missionaries from South Gate London Baptist Church named J. H. Lorraine and F. W. Savidge also their arrival is considered to be Missionary Day by the Baptist church. Even though they were from the Baptist church, Presbyterian became the first church to be established in Aizawl, Mizoram in 1897. Majority of the citizens from the state follow the Presbyterian church and followed by Baptist, United Pentecostal Church, Salvation Army and many more. The erratic development of the state from a state that believed in non-existing things, worshipping rock, believing in superstition, and believing in folklore and myths, now started having faith in Christianity which is the most followed religion in the state. Mizoram has also placed no.11 in highest literacy rate in India. As people started to get modernised and since education started to spread over the state people started to believe what they saw rather than what their ancestors have said or what they believed in, the folktales, myths, fairy tales started to see this thing as bedtime story, stories from the novels. But there are still some myths that are still believed to exist.

Myth can be defined in many ways according to the Cambridge dictionary myth is "an ancient story or set of stories, especially explaining the early history of a group of people or about natural events and facts" Cambridge dictionary. According to Judy Lal Tuan thu (myth) is that "mizo myth comprises of the creation myth as well as beliefs that are related to spirits and supernatural beings. This may also include the Mizo beliefs related to the human soul and their journey to the other world "pialrial"" Judy, 2018, p.17. Myth is something where there cannot be a perfect definition as there are still some debates happening on what the meaning of myth really is. Many people and scholars say that myths are not real but at some point, there are incidents that have really happened which can be proven by the victim who went through the incident. Myth does not have a particular age or era, but it is something that had happened in our past and which have been shared through people throughout years, who knows our present can also be a part of a myth for the future, as it deals with human nature, good or evil and can also be some incident which did not occurred often. The definition of myth can also differ from region, religion. Myth is also seen as stories that have really happened and which have been told from generation to generation because of this it becomes an imitation of action, twice removed from reality. This can make reality lose its pureness which Aristotle was completely against. Myths can be a definition of the society how it uses to be during our ancestor's time, for instance we can see Pandora's Box, Daedalus and Icarus, Aphrodite the common thing we can see is that who they were gods and how they disobeyed the law of the world and then being punished. Whereas the Mizo myths like lasi, Keimi, phung, van chung nula, here we see them being supernatural. many Mizo writers had written books about the myth in Mizoram, Cherrie Lalnunziri Chhangte one of the first writers to write a whole book on Mizo myth, her novels are about the supernatural love affair of many creatures, and not just one edition by more editions. Some Mizo books have been translated by A. G. Mc Call "The Lushai Chrysalis" in 1919. C. Vanlalawma published a small collection of Mizo stories under the title, 'Hmanlai hian mawm' containing 13 stories, six of which have myth element, in 1994.

Mizoram has plenty of folktales which is shared in the form of myth, poems, bedtime stories, but all these were not in a written form as the source of writing came quite late in Mizoram. Most of the folklore we know were orally shared by generations. So, most of the folklore's might be filtered many times, some might be true some might not. But there are incidents that took place which can prove that some of the tales which is regarded as "just" story, bedtime stories to make children's sleep or even to make other companion have the feeling of tragic irony, no one knew if the folklore can be true. In Mizoram there are some incidents that took place which can be seen as something which is a false talk of

the society but through the victims, we can say that the incident is actually happening. Sigmund Freud has given different definition on what is Uncanny, he talks about different things on uncanny "There is no doubt that this belongs to the realm of the frightening, of what evokes fear and dread. It is equally beyond doubt that the word is not always used in a clearly definable sense, and so it commonly merges with what arouses fear in general." (Freud, 2003, 123) also he says that "This work explores the connections that link the double with mirror-images, shadows, guardian spirits, the doctrine of the soul and the fear of death." (Freud, 2003, 142) even the uncanny can lead to other or different meanings.

In Mizo folklores the Khawimu chawi meaning taken by a sprit, as a say by the past generation Khawimu chawi helps people to take them to a place where a normal being cannot go for instance places like the top of the tree, caves, hills and more. About this Khawimu chawi has not been written or have not been researched in many other platforms. Khawimu chawi does not have any written proof or scientific proof, but there are theories that there are multiple dimensions and those residing in a higher dimension that are called higher celestial beings, this proofs that we humans and animals are not the only existing being in the whole universe. Some folklores are in the sense of narrative only, but from the experience of some Mizo citizens we can say that Khawimu chawi is real. This can also lead to death of the person who has experienced, it evokes fear and death as according to Freud's theory of Uncanny.

The story of Pi Nunzawni age 73 who was was found after three days since she was lost in Kolasib Tumpui area near Baibing (Alocasia Fornicate) plant. According to her a woman Ana three men came and took her to place to place without a particular direction. As a state filled with woods and many undiscovered areas, it was impossible of for the Kolasib Br YMA (Young Mizo Association) to go through each and every area of the mountain. Mizo as a society of togetherness, they prefer society work more than individual work. This has been going since their ancestors before the police it was the members of Zawlbuk who took actions under their hands. Also, Mizoram is a very religious state where believes are high regarded in every aspect of their life, along with prayers was like an answer to every question. So, even in the case of Pi Nunzawni there was no record of police complain except from the YMAs. There was almost nothing the YMAs can do regarding this, so another way was to take the help an intercession. The intercession said there are four people who took her, and he tell where she was the other day, also he said that the sprits hide her. When she was found the location was near to the place where the intercession mentioned. This can be regrading as Uncanny something which is difficult to explain and something which is mysterious. When Pi Nunzawni was found according to her, she heads some sound which she thought to be her daughter "Lapui". When Pu Thanga and his companion heard someone call "lapui" twice they thought her to be the old lady who was lost. The place where she was at when Pu Thanga found her was filled with copes, tall bushed where no one can see. Pu Thanga who found her said that it is impossible for a one to go through this path, as the path was far from what a normal path is supposed to be fro going to the field, also the land of that particular place was highly intense for landslide. The writer of the article also went to the place where she was found, and he clarified that the place is highly intense for landslide as it was the time of monsoon where only pasaltha (warriors, who played an important role for their safety) can go to such place. Pi Nunzawni was waiting a rap around skirt which was clean and not even a single stain of dirt was to find, along with her hair which is supposed to be in a tousled way was well kept as if nothing happens. According to the article writer it was rain for the past three day since she was lost but according to her it was not raining, even her body was cold as a dead person when she was found. After the incident she was taken to Civil Hospital. From all these proofs we can say that what the society of Kolasib have experienced is a every Uncanny element even for the readers. The Uncanniness in this can be the mystery of Pi Nunzawni being lost in a place where an ordinary person cannot go, as being a 73-year-old lady, it is impossible for her to travel in such high pedestrian, also being in such a good health.

Another event that took place it was before the independence, in 1980 the incident happened between Kulikawn and Thakthing bazar. A family who lived happily, the father of the house like other normal days went to hunt, but on this day he did not return his the khawtlang (locality). After they called a search rescue, they found him near the Tlawng river, he was found with not clothes on him along with a rock in his hand. According to the interviewer he kept on looking at the Same thing until the rock was taken away from him, as soon the rock was taken away, he came back to his sense and explain what happened to him. What he said that while waiting for the hunt, a wild boar came from the bushes on top of the wild board there was a woman sitting and he described her as a woman with long hair, a beautiful woman. The spirit of the women shows him a rock, it was the rock he was carrying with him. He said she took him to many different places where he was well feed with meat, but when he put down the rock, he comes back to his sense, and he realise what he is eating is an earthworm. Also, he realised he was not in a city

place, but he is in the middle of tall bushes. After he was found they took him home were some members of khawtlang (society) were staying with the family for some nights, during these nights they were not sleeping well as the victim have attacks during night and say, "they are coming to take me, please help me". The people were saw or experienced Khawimu chawi returned with no harm, but there are some of the victims who did not return ever. These incidents not only happened in Mizoram but also in other part of the world, they might call it as time travel, time door, some people say during those years that they have be taken away by the vampires and now a day we can also call it as shapeshifter. The only thing that is common is that they vanish without any traces, there are many instances that took place on this side of the work one instance is Benjamin Bathurst. In the year 1809, a British diplomat Benjamin Bathurst vanished suddenly while he was with his friends. He was sent to Germany as part of diplomatic work during the Niplolianic war, his sudden disappearance took place in Perleberg where he was staying during his travels. His sudden disappearance made the world in think about different conspiracy theory. Therefore, there are different incidents that took place which we cannot define in human behaviour, these incidents happen in many places but often we can see this in places where people are little fare away from civilisation. In one of the blog pages by PERMISSION2SPEAK "The Woods went Silent" here the author writes about people who went missing in the forest and people who almost went missing, she took these incidents from her experience and from a former police detective David blog, books, podcast. Here her main focus in on the people who vanished suddenly and were never to be seen again or were found at different places where its impossible to reach, a place no one had wondered if that route is assessable. Here she gave many incidents some of them were of a man and his dog, the dog who was able to sense energies was alerted of what was happening and the owner who was being drifted by the energy but was brought by his loyal friend (dog), according to victim he said that.

> I heard nothing. I heard literally nothing. No wind, no snapping twigs, not even any birds. Then, I began to feel really weird. I can't really describe it as a gut feeling, but suddenly my body felt very queasy and over sensitive, and worse, I had the distinct feeling that I was being watched. Fatty was scared and trembling. Call it being an edgy teenager or anything else, but I felt this strange pull into the woods. There was no sound but I felt like something was calling me, luring me deeper into the woods. (PERMISSION2SPEAK, 2021)

The narrator of this incident also mentioned the unidentified time travel in the sense that, he usually takes ten minutes to walk his dog but on this particular day it took him three hours to reach home. One of the other incidents take the author mentioned was the story of a Reddit user named uclathemach, his camping in the state of New Hampshire. At the end of the trip, he decides to a walk down a hill by himself, but then was also caught a strong force and it was pulling him deeper into the woods. All these was making his mental investigate, for him it was like someone calling him, calling him to look, "*As I was about to take another step forward, another separate feeling from the depths of my being started screaming at me to stop immediately. In an instant, viscerally, I knew that despite how enticing this call was, if I proceeded forward towards those trees, I would be lost to the world.*" (PERMISSION2SPEAK, 2021)

From the above incidents that too place, it justifies these things do exist, but it has never reached the outer world as much as the other activities. These incidents can also be seen as a Khawimu chawi it has similarities between themselves, the unexpected energy of the forest, unexpected places, lost of time sometimes its like they had been lost for years, months, day. It is the time, which was moving constantly not them and all their experience felt like a gradual moment. All these experiences is narrated by the victims and some by their loved once, the existence of another power that existed on their side and hold them to not go further. In this world we have two kinds of energies good (positive) and evil (negative) energy, as long as human are alive in this earth there is a spiritual warfare happening on the other side of the world, these incidents can be believed to be a paranormal or supernatural or spiritual. There is a place called Aokigahara Forest (suicide forest), a horror movie is also made on it, inside the forest Sara found the unexpected things. According to the Japanese legends the forest is haunted by yurei (Japanese ghost or sprit), now as the world has developed it has now been regarded to be a mythology, Japan being unique in its on spiritual world. The forest of Japan, United State and Mizoram following the uncanny effect of Freud bring human closer to the unworldly elements which existed in the histories only. One of the points of Uncanny is that it is fearful and frightening, something which is neglected from the society of history. In comparison to Khawimu chawi, we can relate will all these incidents from different part of the world. Traces of the ancestors are still there, the unwanted sprits which our ancestors believed and worshiped. The unexpected thing that happening in human nature is the uncanny element in the human circle. Form Mary Shelly's novel Frankenstein can connect him with his finds of solace in nature, seeking companionship and understanding from its beauty and simplicity, also his wanting to known more about the human life and

want to be connect with them, he invested his time learning humans. As for Khawmu Chawi, do they seek the connection they had with our ancestors like Frankenstein? As Christianity and modernity has taken over there is less connection with the nature and with the disbelief of any extra existence, and when the chance is given to them they tend to follow it. The connection that they had before with our ancestors is lost, people cutting trees for civilisation and destroying the house of the living beings can also be one of the reasons for all these incidents happening.

To conclude the given statement, we can say that uncanny is there in the forest of Mizoram with the element of Frankenstein Uncanny. Khawmu chawi can happen in any places, but in this research paper we are focusing on one of the states in India. This nature of uncanniness can be a part of human life, not just a particular place but it can take place in any part of the world. Some say this as aline, people who do not believe will always say this to be a story, mirage, hallucination but the fact is that it is not, it is the non-existing power of unseen being. But we need to find what interpretation the other part of the world has taken. From this paper we can say, or we can stand to the fact that Khawmu chawi do exist and precaution has been taken for this to happen for instance there is a board sign on top of a hill in Mizoram. The unsettled, unfamiliarity of the unwillingness of inhuman nature can be seen in different part. Hence, uncanny being something mysterious, supernatural, strange and more can be justified with the given uncanniness element of the forest in Mizoram with some of the similar stories around the world.

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# Paradigmatic approach on Transgender: The Uncanny Trend

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## ABSTRACT

According to Freud *"Uncanny is 'that class of the frightening which leads back to what is known of old and long familiar'* (p. 220). *Heimlich means belonging to the house, not strange, familiar, tame, intimate, friendly, etc. It also, however, can mean concealed, kept from sight, or withheld from others. '"Unheimlich" is the name for everything that ought to have remained . . .*

*secret and hidden but has come to light' (Freud's 1).*

Uncanny is an intricate and enigmatic term which has a wide terminology with different meaning. It may attempt to arise from the new set of vile and nefarious roots found in the society or it may lurch off abruptly from elsewhere, after being subsisted for a very long time in the realm of existence. The thought of discrimination has deeply embedded in the nooks and corner of the society. The intensity of discrimination could differ depending on the society's expectations. But what remains unchanged throughout these years are the thoughts of social stratification and discrimination that are prevailing in the world. The results and effects of the discrimination like unjust, prejudice, violence, oppression and many more social barriers against transgender and women were increasing day by day, nor the effect is heightened by the fact that they were poignantly alienated from specific social categories.

**Key Words:** Uncanny trend, transgender, social exclusion, I Am Vidya, Super Deluxe

## INTRODUCTION

This paper highlights the sufferings and hardships that is being continuously endured by the Transgender people. It emphasizes the fact that they are being ostracized from obtaining the rights that are accorded to each and every single person in the world. The reason behind bringing women and transgender in one single equilibrium is that they both shared and experienced the misery of social exclusion and were bounded to certain limitations pertained by the society. Similar to how women were totally obliterated from all their fundamental human rights in the past, at present transgender people are currently experiencing the same scenario. This specific transgender community is currently dealing with a serious, enormous issues, parallel to the sufferings women endured in the past. Even though we human beings have the profound knowledge about how each individual should inherit their basic human rights, nonetheless they recur and lead them to the global stratification. This is like a repetitive cyclic process that seems to be perpetuated by people from the society. It appears that the community in large has the tendency to criticize or disparage a

specific community in order to derive pleasure from it.

There are few global goals which were formulated by the United Nation General Assembly in 2015. A notable attribute and a distinctive feature of these 17 goals is that they have associated milestones to achieve that leads to the advancement and progress among individuals. And these goals are meant to be universally applicable to all different nations. The main objective of these Sustainable Development Goals is to change the world into a more fair, accessible, equitable and inclusive space to live, by the year 2030. The fundamental aim is not to leave any individual or a group of community behind. Additionally, making sure that the necessities and the requirements are catered for without compromising the ability and power for the upcoming generations.

Eradication of poverty might be a key focus of the Sustainable Development Goals but striving for equality and development in all other spheres including attaining decent work, gender equality, education, health, economic growth, reduced disparity, and resilient institutions like justice, peace are also considered as their central goal. But there are few hindrances faced by a selective group of individuals in society attaining these goals. Transgender people are hindered from attaining a few Sustainable Development Goals. The 2030 agenda, which acts as a blueprint for the different challenges faced globally includes all the 17 goals, they are no poverty, zero hunger, good health and well-being, quality education, gender equality, clean water and sanitation, affordable and clean energy, decent work and economic growth, industry, innovation and infrastructure, reduced inequalities, sustainable cities and communities, responsible consumption and production, climate action, life below water, life on land, peace and justice strong institutions and partnerships for the goals.

Transgender people being constantly hindered from both public and private spaces may create a sense of seclusion which leads in affecting their physical and mental health. The socio ecology framework or paradigm is being employed to demonstrate how the transgender stigma accompanying them affects their health on different layers. Most commonly, individuals experiencing mental issues are higher. As they face prejudice, discrimination and exploitation frequently, access to healthcare services is low. Many discrepancies are continuously encountered by transgender patients. They also fear of getting treated by undertrained or inexperienced professionals, which is also linked with goal 16 that is peace, justice and strong institutions. These SDGs 3 and 16 are being undermined by these obstacles, which also hinders universal health coverage. Few promising goals can be done to them by lowering the stigma and its strong impact attached to them. Goal 4 and 5 quality education and gender equality are two important goals that are restrained from reaching transgender. Despite all the efforts that are being taken to promote these two goals, we can see the constant decline from people attaining it. Goal 10 Reduced inequality, are faced by them in various forms of marginalization and preconceived notions.

Through the book "I Am Vidya" written by Living Smile Vidya we could evidently visualize how a transgenders life would be and it also helps to experience the daily struggles of life faced in accordance with the characters. The author takes the readers through a darkest journey of the Transgender named Vidya. Being an autobiographical work, we could able to get a reliable and authentic source on their lifestyle. This book is apt to depict the struggles undergone by a school boy during his transformation as a Transgender. Especially Trans people who identify their gender at a young age often get rejected by their own family and are also shunned from cultural and social spheres without asserting any minimal opportunities. All these environments turn into an unwelcoming surrounding that alienates them. These Individuals who have traditionally been ostracized by society, face a high range of vulnerability to their livelihood as they are socially and economically marginalized. This situation should be addressed with extreme caution and with utmost importance. The extreme violence shown towards a community of members who challenge the conventional standards about gender are often led to face enmity and a sense of seclusion. This prejudiced and exclusionary atmosphere exacerbates their societal disadvantage leading to higher rate of joblessness and also face and excessive amount of poverty and impoverishment.

The protagonist of the story "I Am Vidya" is in a state that he realized that revealing his true nature would bring him only hard times and so he tried his best not to reveal them to any of his friends. He is well aware of the consequences that he should encounter with as he experienced it in his previous schools.

*"I passed my tenth grade exams with 84% marks. For eleventh, my father put me in a different school – another branch of Bishop Heber near Rock Fort, Tiruchi. It was another boys' school. The new school and*

*new atmosphere were even more unfriendly than the old. I had no friends; no one to share my likes and dislikes; no one to understand me. On the contrary, there*

*was no shortage of taunts and jibes. Even though I was extra careful not to reveal myself, my irrepressible femininity exposed me. Once again, I became an object of ridicule, and inevitably my studies were affected."* (Vidya 26)

One of the major concerns for Saravana was not to become '*an object of ridicule*'. There are few instances where Saravana was ridiculed by strangers from the street, a woman named Rasalu who resides nearby used to tease him a lot by calling him as sissy, his classmates and his juniors teases him by shouting after him as 'Look at this lady'. Additionally, the grown men and women teased him for expressing his feminine demeanor which directly made him feel lonely and that led to disturb his studies.

*"Saravana, You are Nine, isn't that why you are standing ninth?' he jeered.*

*Everyone laughed – I felt humiliated. After that, I was ever watchful not to stand in the ninth position at the assembly. I made sure every time that I was a different number, and only then did I breathe a sigh of relief"*

*"Crude puns were invented by my classmates to scribble with my name on the blackboard"* (Vidya 27)

Saravana tends to be more careful when he is surrounded by people but when he is not alert, then his classmates find the exact opportunity to make fun of him. He is been traumatized after an incident that he encountered with, during their school assembly prayer when he unconsciously stood in the ninth place then he will be immediately teased for standing in the ninth position as it *"is the offensive epithet in Tamil for eunuchs or transgender"* (Vidya 27)

*"I had to grin and bear it. What else could I do, if this was my destiny?"* (Vidya 27)

When thing doesn't go according to his plan, then Saravana has the tendency to believe that everything happening to him is flawed and he assesses his situation by comparing it to his reason of existence.

*"The time I spent with the children was peaceful, but I wasn't comfortable when Mama was around. I thought he was the one relative to see through me and recognize my abnormality,*

*when all the others saw me only as eccentric."* (Vidya 32)

After encountering all the situations in this aspect, he vents out all his anger towards his father, who pressurizes him to keep his score high. When he decides to visit his sister's house, he feels uncomfortable with the presence of his uncle as he feels that his uncle sees through his heart and has the ability to identify his innate nature.

*"I liked to wrap a soft towel around my head and pretend it was my long hair – pretend to be in a shampoo commercial and preen before the mirror, shaking my head this way and that.*

*Sometimes I danced to music I had already recorded – the songs of Chitra, Swarnalata and Anupama. I liked to imitate popular TV anchors standing in front of the mirror, or walk like a fashion model and enjoy my own reflection. My secret life was the best medicine for my depression, but even that was fraught with risk."* (Vidya 33)

The only time Saravana feels relaxed is when he wears his sister's saree and ties the towel around his head and imagines it as his long hair. He dances to some of the popular songs by imagining himself in the place of main character. So right from the beginning he felt to urge to give himself a feminine look but he was restricted by the people around him. At first, people saw him as a playful kid and later if becomes a real struggle for him to come out and to speak the truth. The aftermath of his childhood days is even more traumatizing. As we could see his transformation from Saravana to Vidya through the surgery called Nirvana. This is one of the best books to view the struggles faced by a young boy during his childhood days.

As cinema is used as a medium that can express different facets of human life and it also subtly examines both the positive and negative aspects of the community, we live in. Especially, Indian films have a profound impact on the viewers perceptions. It is mentioned that the advancement of technology led to the advancement in the theatre, multi-media and largely in the film industry. The evolution during each era is evident through the films that are being produced. A real authentic movie helps the viewers to take a peek into both the contemporary as well as the historical society that prevailed. The movie titled as '*Super Deluxe*' belongs to the genre of Dark comedy and Neo-noir. This is a Tamil movie directed by Thiagarajan Kumararaja and three other screenplay writers. The cast and crew of the film is employed with the most talented actors from the industry like Fahadh Faasil, Vijay Sethupathi, Samantha and Ramya Krishnan. '*Super Deluxe*' belongs to the hyperlink film genre, which connecting multiple stories with interconnecting plots and narratives. This is one of the main reasons for the movie featuring these three screenplay writers- Mysskin, Nalan Kumarasamy

and Neelan. Having given the freedom and liberty to write, they came up with their own creative plot. As a result of this, the movie '*Super Deluxe*' delves deep into the beliefs on how society constructs the world around human being, their emotions, their meaning and purpose of life. People readily allows the society to decide who they are and what their identity is. Society shapes human beings' life, despite the fact that they are inherently shaped. Society and community play an important role in minds of each and every individual life. If we observe the entire movie, we could get to know that the father figure Manickam departs his house the night of his marriage as he felt apprehensive within himself. He felt more like a woman than a man, then he eventually learns a lot about his own self, his desires and then he unexpectedly changes his outward appearance by turning into a woman. This abrupt transformation from man to woman left him with a lot of hurdles to face in the society. When Manickam transformed into Shilpa she was instantly ostracized, shunned by the public and was treated like an animal. She endured and withstood all the pain by believing that her own problem would not impact or affect her family. This choice is considered to be selfish since her ideas and thoughts revolved only around her, she failed to think about the pain, anguish and misery she caused on her son and to her wife Jyoti. The director of the movie implemented a key component to show to her transformation from Manickam to Shilpa. Right before the arrival of Shilpa a particular frame was shown twice, displaying an orange color saree on one side and on the other side Jothi and Raasu Kutti's dress hanging in the drying area was shown. This frame indicates Manickam's transformation from man to a transwoman. Raasu Kutti, the son of Shilpa is said to have patiently waited for his father's arrival and so he could introduce him to his friends. During her arrival everyone was awe-struck by the way she presented herself. Although Shilpa's transition to a trans woman brought discomfort for other people around her, her family members welcomed and embraced her completely. Shilpa was overwhelmed by her wife and son's gesture as she had been confined with the preconceived notion that they would not accept her for who she really was. To her amazement her wife and her son accepted her whole heartedly. Towards the end of the movie, when Shilpa walks into the house, the camera angle is fixed in a specific frame where a wall painting can be seen. The picture depicted an image of two women standing beside each other and this might be interpreted as a sign that Shilpa and Jyoti will lead a happy life together. In the present modern world Transgender people are evolving, emerging and becoming a well-recognized gender.

**Conclusion**

With the help of the book '*I Am Vidya*' and through the movie '*Super Deluxe*' we are able to comprehend how transgenders are portrayed in the society, how unfairly they are treated right from their younger days and what forms of prejudice they encounter on their daily routine. Finally, to highlight the point that not everyone adheres to the social norms and values. There are people and characters like Jyoti and Raasu Kutti who break down the barriers and accepts transgender people as their fellow humans. They set us an example that each and every human has the right to be happy and deserves to be treated with dignity.

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# Deconstructing the Uncanny Colonialism of Palestinian Food Systems Through Palestinian Cookbooks

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## ABSTRACT

This paper attempts to explore the complex nuances of food as a weapon of colonialism, as a tool of resistance against colonialism and a crucial component of decolonization. Israeli occupation has laid siege over Palestinian food systems since the last 75 years through multiple practices. Ecocide and active practices of genocide has plundered the statehood to oblivion and rubble. While numerous contradictory sources cite 'Palestine' as the roots of conflict, this paper attempts to understand the role of food that becomes crucial in the resistance against occupation through cookbooks. Cookbooks have conventionally been viewed as non-fiction that serves in kitchens that overflow with resources. Here. cookbooks that emerged from the heart of a nation under occupation have an important role to play in resistance. Food is an integral part of one's cultural identity and food colonialism is one of the tried and tested practices of colonialism to engage in erasure of cultural identities in one's own homeland. When one's identity is taken away from them, they reach a breaking point, a line that blemishes and takes away the difference between what is familiar and what is unfamiliar. As Palestinians are forced to confront their uncanny realities and suffer food insecurities, recipes of survival and resilience serve as the only tool that might aid in preservation of a culture that is present and not left in the past. The three cookbooks that have been extensively relied upon in this paper are- *Zaitoun-Recipes from the Palestinian Kitchen* by Yasmin Khan, *The Gaza Kitchen: A Palestinian Culinary Jounrney* by Laila el-Haddad and Maggie Schmitt and *Falastin: A Cookbook* by Sami Tamini and Tara Wigley.

**Keywords:** Palestinian cuisine, otherness, food colonialism, resistance, occupation

## INTRODUCTION

J.M. Coetzee writes in 'Waiting for the Barbarians':

The new men of Empire are the ones who believe in fresh starts, new chapters, new pages; I struggle on with the old story, hoping that before it is finished it will reveal to me why it was that I thought it worth the trouble.

The Uncanny Politics of Food

Edward Said writes in 'Culture and Imperialism', the process of geographical colonization is three-fold. First, the settler attempts to rebuild a colony that is diametrically opposed to what the nation has had for centuries. In India, it was the shift to cash crops to fill British treasuries. In Palestine, it was the ecocide that followed the ruin of local herbs and trees, especially olive trees, called 'zaitoun', in the native language. Environmental imbalances, food shortage follows closely after the *morte main*, as Said refers, is geographically altered to an extent where the natives find little to no similarity to what once was. Second, the goal is to make the land useful or profitable. There are reports of plans to build the Ben

Gurion Canal, an alternate to the heavily populated and profitable Suez Canal. The claims report that the destruction of Gaza is integral to the construction of this canal which would be a more profitable way in terms of sea trade.

Similar practices have been carried out in Bengal and Ireland by the British and Algeria by French Occupation.

Colonial space must be transformed sufficiently so as no longer to appear foreign to the imperial eye. More than any other of its colonies, Britain's Ireland was subjected to innumerable metamorphoses through repeated settling projects.(Said, 1978, pp.225) The area that was previously named Palestine has undergone several name changes since the Occupation. The following is a quote from an article by Jonathan Cook published in *The Electronic Intifada* in 2009:

Israel Katz, the transport minister, announced this week that signs on all major roads in Israel, East Jerusalem and possibly parts of the West Bank would be "standardised," converting English and Arabic place names into straight transliterations of the Hebrew name.Currently, road signs include the place name as it is traditionally rendered in all three languages. Under the new scheme, the Arab identity of important Palestinian communities will be obscured: Jerusalem, or "al-Quds" in Arabic, will be Hebraized to "Yerushalayim"; Nazareth, or "al-Nasra" in Arabic, the city of Jesus's childhood, will become "Natzrat"; and Jaffa, the port city after which Palestine's oranges were named, will be "Yafo."

While the land is geographically altered to fit the settlers' consciousness and exploit the rights of the indigenous, native population, similar attempts to erode cultural practices take place in a parallel fashion. In this paper, I attempt to mainly explore the various attempts made by the Israeli occupation to brand Palestinian cuisine as their own and engage in deliberate redundancy of the name 'Palestine' and how reclaiming one's cuisine can be crucial during resistance and decolonization.

In this paper, we will explore four cookbooks that trace the ins and outs of kitchens in Gaza, the local spices and the history and story of every ingredient that goes into the making of traditional dishes and how the influence of the Occupation has infiltrated the kitchens and destroyed the authenticity of the food culture. While such reclamation is crucial, we must be careful to not 'exoticize' or fetishise it in eyes of the White viewer who may be inclined to club all food from the Middle East or any food that is not primarily a staple of the settler to fall under 'Middle Eastern food' or 'Persian food.' Every food from a particular region has its own unique set of ingredients and method of preparation. While it may seem largely unconnected from the politics at hand under initial observations, when hybridised seeds displace traditional heirlooms in favour to fill the coffers of politicians and war-mongers of apartheid, the art of cooking and cuisine becomes an important focal point of a heavy, political conversation that is not limited to geopolitics.

**Jeffrey Pilcher notes:**

Just as nations have been described as "imagined communities," one could question whether national cuisines exist except as artificial collections of foods eaten by people within arbitrary political boundaries. Culinary practices invariably differ from one region to the next, so for national cuisines to exist at all, they must likewise be imagined from diverse local foods.

The anthropologist Arjun Appadurai has also highlighted the role of cookbooks in the construction of national identity, and in a related vein Liora Gvion writes, "Food is one of the means through which distinct national and ethnic identities are formed and practiced." For humans, food is much more than biological fuel for our bodies. It can have social, cultural, political and historical meanings for understanding collective and individual identities. (Baron, 2016, 269)

Food is often construed and posited as the symbol of safety and feelings of familiarity. When the familiar is misconstrued and destroyed by imperialist forces into unfamiliar territory due to attempts as part of attacks on indigenous food systems, food is brandished into a tool of colonialism. Traditional Palestinian food like hummus and falafel grace the streets of New York as either Middle Eastern cuisine, or Israeli cuisine. Beginning in the late 1950s, in the context of its industrial production and of attempts to forge an "Israeli cuisine," hummus was gradually "nationalised" and its Arab identity suppressed, with Jewish immigrants from Middle Eastern countries acting as intermediaries. (Hirsch, 2011) While Palestinian cuisine has travelled from Bethlehem to Beirut, Berlin to Brooklyn, often it is consumed under the guise of either a) Israeli cuisine or b) eating the Other.

The concept of '*eating the Other*' translates to white consumption of staple diets from the 'Eastern' ends of the world as a way to overcome hidden or rather, exposed racial prejudices and welcome the Other into their own repertoire. This post-colonial idea can however be interpreted as a double edged sword as well. While overcoming racial prejudices is an objective under the agenda of decolonisation, when such consumption attempts to again serve white

desires, it emerges as a problem in postcolonial discourse. White acceptance or acceptance of the dishes of the 'Other' is relied upon and to some extent wished for. This creates an unequal power balance between the settler and the formerly colonised. In the context of Palestine and Israel, the colonisation is present, it has not shifted to the process of decolonisation and hence such consumption takes place not under the guise of 'eating the Other' but as one's own. The settlers' found the food, they are here to claim the food as their own.

Post the reported attacks on October 7th, there has been a surge in social media campaigns that run on behalf of Israeli occupation that attempts to rebrand Palestinian cuisine as Israeli, trying to erase the cultural identity of Palestinians. Palestinian cuisine has been created over recipes

shared orally and through the cultural practice of storytelling, which was the only method of preservation in war-stricken regions. As Refaat Alareer states in '*Gaza Writes Back*', "For Palestinians, stories were the much needed talent for life.". His statement holds true for recipes that were meshed with stories that were passed down from one kitchen to the next. Recipes that were passed down as stories to keep a culture alive have been stolen from traditional kitchens and used to wage propaganda wars.

This process of taking over indigenous cuisine and branding it as one's own or downgrading it into a ceased existence can be termed as culinary whitewashing. Either, one's cultural food practices may be removed permanently from the palette and the food of the coloniser may be used to displace the dish from its authentic origins.

Erasure of cultural food practices is one of the many ways in which colonisers exert control over the territory. Another practice is by ruining the agricultural practices of the region as has been happening in Palestine. According to *The Gaza Kitchen, Sumagiyya,* a quintessential Palestinian dish requires red tahina as a primary ingredient. Unlike the creamy-coloured Middle Eastern version, Gaza red tahina is made from toasted sesame, which gives it a richer colour and flavour. Since exports are forbidden under Israeli occupation, the market is strictly local, within Gaza itself. Similarly, the traditional bowl *zibbadiya* that is used to crush spices in the kitchen can only be found locally and hence the cuisine cannot be easily replicated in other kitchens, limiting the travel of the cuisine across the world and restricting it to grow and rot in the same region.

This is where cookbooks become political covertly. Apart from the recipes, they trace the history and origin of each ingredient and suggest clever alternatives to keep the art of cooking and the cultural identity of the Palestinians alive and preserved for years to come. The recipes presented in these books stand out for their bright and piquant tastes and their lavish use of the chile hot peppers that is unique to Gaza as most Middle Eastern food lie on the lower end of the spicy spectrum. Food narrates the story of a place, its history and its descendants and these cookbooks attempt at a chance at preservation of this history.

Racial melancholia is born from a region where uncanny feelings persist. What was once familiar may seemingly appear unfamiliar and force feelings of conflict and paranoia in the individual forced to confront such realities. When what was once known becomes starkly different or altered by conflict, it produces feelings of longing for something that existed and is now lost. Many Palestinians who fled the country and adopted the tag of immigrants confront this reality in their day to day living. The assimilation of one's food under the commonplace tag of 'Middle Eastern food' or dealing with the complexities of cultural misappropriation is a hurdle for the displaced.

Cookbooks such as *Falastin* by Sami Tamini and Tara Wrigley, *Zaitoun* by Yasmin Khan and *The Gaza Kitchen* trace the difficulties of confronting and recreating a cuisine that has been passed off either something of the 'past' or rebranded into something else entirely. Such books play important advocates in the ultimate politics of living. The recipe of *za'atar* bread may carry the weight of colonialism more than a regular, off the rack recipe for a pancake from a cookbook off the magazine stands in a bookstore in New York or Central London. Recipes of the Western world and the colonised world cannot and should not be equated or put under the same category, because while one narrates stories of laughter and celebration, another narrates a story of resilience and hope for survival under occupation. This polarity in the undercurrent of the language used in the books must be noticed and registered during postcolonial discourse concerning culinary books or the covert politics of the culinary world.

Food as Resistance, Food Insecurity, Boycotts and Cooking As a Form of Resistance

*Ahlan wa sahlan* is a commonplace utterance used frequently by local falafel vendors and fruit sellers, *knafeh* makers and *khubz* bakers to guests, especially guests that are foreign to Palestine. (Zaitoun, 2018) The author, Yasmin Khan, an Iranian-Pakistani writer based in London arrived in Palestine and wrote the book while travelling the lands and having politically charged and friendly conversations in the

homes of the Palestinian families she stayed with. Recipes and opinions were often passed on in the same breath. While tracing the politics of the land, Khan takes care to also credit the various influences on the local cuisine and the changes it has been exposed to including Armenian, Bedouin, Jewish, Roman, Arabic, Persian and Turkish cultures.While *Falastin* is a direct plunge into Palestinian cuisine interlaced with photographs of the region and the food, *Zaitoun* is more political than a regular book on a culinary journey.

Khan uses every opportunity to narrate or provide insight into the conflict behind every recipe. She deliberately includes recipes that she confronted at the Canaan Fair Trade food co-operative in the north of the West Bank that promotes agriculture in the region. Agriculture in the region has faded in the past years due to the tensions and the aggressive use of white phosphorus.

In contrast to the subtlety of the above two books. The *Gaza Kitchen* delves into the various ways in which the cuisine faces peril and the danger of extinction. High prices on imports, ban on exports of local produce, the endangerment of local animal husbandry systems and the emergence of profit based Dutch dairy farming. The authors, Laila el-Haddad and Maggie Schmitt have also been responsible to trace the differences between urban, rural and nomadic variations of the cuisine and separate distinctions between coastal, northern and southern preparations. The book also carries a map of Palestine before 1948, that is the region before the Six Day War or the *Nakba,* loosely translated to the mass exodus of Palestinians from the region. The food that existed prior to the war and post war has considerably changed, thus.

Salads for sixty percent of the Palestinian cuisine. However, during interviews, locals said that they preferred to shop at the farm directly because people fell sick often after consuming the produce around them, including cancer. Watermelon poisoning is a very common problem in Gaza due to the uncontrolled entry of pesticides, some of which have been banned internationally due to their high levels of toxicity. The soil has also been contaminated due to the constant use of depleted uranium and white phosphorus due to Israeli attacks. Most naturally available food is thus, in short and lack of a better word, poisoned. Studies have begun to correlate the effects of the attacks and the presence of birth defects and various kinds of cancers.

The naming of the books under study in this paper is a pivotal process in resistance. The sound /p/ does not exist in Arabic and thus Palestine is pronounced as '*Falastin*' in the native tongue. The Anglicanization of Arabic names has already been discussed in the earlier portion of this paper. Similarly, *Zaitoun* is the Arabic word for olive trees. Virgin olive oil is a crucial ingredient in Palestinian cuisine and is used in every recipe, be it salads or rice dishes, like *maqlooba*.

Bottles of virgin olive oil are found in every kitchen dedicated to cooking Palestinian cuisine, as explored in *Zaitoun.* Apart from this, the bombardment of olive trees, woodlands and citrus trees, all ingredients in the cuisine, has risen over the years. Various officials including the Ministry of Agriculture of Lebanon have termed the act as 'ecocide'. To top all that off, the frequent usage of phosphorus has also caused irreversible damage to the people inhabiting the regions and the flora and fauna of the regions. Many activists like Bisan Owda, Motaz Azaiza, Plestia and news

outlets like Al-Jazeera, The Electronic Intifada etc. has documented the ecocide and the genocide that has been ongoing actively. The name '*The Gaza Kitchen*' could also be construed as a way to claim and advocate for the existence and safe functioning of kitchens and also hint at a problem that often gets swept under the politics of cuisine- food insecurity.

As per World Food Programme reports, 2.2 million of the population face acute hunger and catastrophic levels of food insecurity, while 576, 600 face starvation. In a conversation about the politics of food under decolonization discourse, it is imperative to discuss the starvation inflicted on the colonised. One may even be reminded of the Irish and Bengal famines that took place

under the British colonial regime. Starvation of the public is just another of the many atrocities that is actively committed against the colonised.

In the face of such atrocities, how can food hope to be political and pave not just discussion about decolonization in the 21st century but provoke immediate action for relief?

Food as a form of resistance can take many forms – from hunting and foraging – to acquiring food out of capitalist hands. Linda Black Elk, an ethnobotanist and Food Sovereignty Coordinator at United Tribes Technical College in Bismarck, North Dakota opted to fight back against a system that makes Indigenous communities (among others marginalised or oppressed) more dependent on resources provided by the capitalist, industrial and colonial food system. She teaches members of her community how to use and prepare plants into traditional dishes. Her work enables Indigenous peoples to cut down on overpriced grocery items and recreate connections to the land. (Maiga, 2021)

While it is important to tackle consumerism at the grassroot level and enable consumers to participate in responsible consumer habits, it inadvertently places the blame on the consumer to take accountability and action for the actions of conglomerates. The palm oil used in the production of Nutella directly impacts the habitat of orangutans in the Amazon rainforest and threatens the delicate life and food systems of the Amazonian tribes. While the conglomerate behind the production benefits from the profits more than the individual consumer, there is room for consumer action. Consumers can hold conglomerates responsible for the damage inflicted.

The direct links between colonialism and capitalism cannot be ignored. When organisations like Starbucks, McDonald's and Sabra hummus (an Israeli company that emerged as the result of a joint venture between PepsiCo and the Strauss Group that provides financial support to Israeli army) continue to foster policies in support of Israel, targeted consumer boycotts may be one of the ways to participate in the process of ending the occupation. Loss of money or public favour may result in a pushback or complete withdrawal of policies in favour of Israeli apartheid.

Boycotts have always been a part of resistance movements across the world. Refusing to wear imported cotton and resorting to *khadi* and the Salt March of the Indian independence movement were crucial milestones that led to the eventual independence of the country.

Cookbooks carry the stories of foods from different lands. Palestinian cookbooks carry recipes that also serve as vehicles of stories of life under occupation. Just like language, Palestinian cuisine has undergone changes from the time of its conception to what it is now due to the unforeseeable changes. Despite that, there are common staples, for instance yogurt or za'taar bread. The cuisine would be incomplete without these staples, their stories would be rendered incomplete. In *Gaza Writes Back*, one of the authors, Hanan Habashi, narrates a short story 'L for Life' in which a father is killed halfway into his bedtime story to his daughter. His life, her life and the story is rendered incomplete immediately due to this attack. Every incomplete recipe is an incomplete story from a kitchen, every Western influence or colonial interference to the authenticity of a recipe or dish is a direct attack on the cultural identity of the colonised.

One of the activists documenting the genocide and ecocide in the region, Motaz Azaiza, is using his Instagram account to document the war. While rubble and death forms the primary content, Azaiza also provokes cultural sentiment through his documentation of the food practices under the war. Be it refugee camps or active sites of shooting, Palestinian cuisine is meant to be enjoyed by many, at a single table, as reiterated in the cookbooks. Videos of refugees breaking bread together, *khub'z* or feasting over *maqlooba* has been doing the rounds on social media. Why is this kind of documentation crucial to resistance?

Every story is a step in establishing a narrative. While the coloniser works on their end to create contradictory stories, it fall on the colonised to rely on media outlets to ensure their struggles, their joys and their ordinary, yet extraordinary ways of living is publicised to win public support and increase pressure on international governments to provoke a ceasefire, and ultimately, an end to the occupation.

In this context, cooking becomes one of the greatest acts of protest against the regime. While procuring ingredients for the same is tedious and impossible under current systems, the survival of a culture that has been forced out, across the borders, is resistance and cookbooks aid and carry forth not just recipes to a dish, but also the stories of hands that fight tooth and nail to preserve their cultural integrity in plates.

**Conclusion**

Recipes being stories or heirlooms being passed on from generation to the next has been fairly argued upon in this paper and in the cookbooks that had been mentioned throughout the entirety of this paper. However, not every author or chef operates from the same vantage point. While the advocacy for a free Palestine with firmly established borders and end to occupation remains the same, there have been conversations around co-existence of the multicultural ethnic communities that inhabit the land. While some argue that coexistence is the best option of all, many demand an end to occupation itself. However, coexistence is not a secure solution. It is not possible to start a clean slate or forget atrocities of the past. As J.M. Coetzee puts it, it is on the people who colonise to forget the past, it is not on the colonised to forget and start fresh. This is also why the colonised are often confronted with the white desire to 'eat the Other' in attempts to forge a new beginning. It exists ultimately to serve white guilt and desire. Memory, history and narratives hold volume in postcolonial discourse and literature reminds time and again that it is not possible to start fresh and forge new beginnings with honesty. In *Orientalism*, Edward Said reminds that it also cannot be on the settlers to narrate the story of the colonised as intentionally or unintentionally, their loyalty will remain towards the Empire. Secondly, viewing the Middle East through Orientalist lens will only further and propagate the idea that the colonised are

"religious savages and barbarians". Thus, it was crucial to pick and select authors who are Palestinian to navigate the intricate politics of food from conflict ridden regions juxtaposed against the rest of the cookbooks that decorate the markets.

Often, the colonised finds himself in a unique position that expects him to narrate his struggles in a language the white settler can grasp and understand. He is expected to career out the obligation of asking for help or demand an end to war in a tongue that is not his and he looks for help to those who colonised him in the first place. This is one of the primary reasons as to why these cookbooks are also published in the English language. To invite international attention, it is crucial to converse in the language of the colonised. But at the same time, it is important to remember that the more we rely on using the master's tool to dismantle his house, the more we are looking at chances of failure. (Lorde, 1979) This is why it is important to keep the conversations around culture, food, fashion and tradition alive and purposeful. The transmission of this vital information proves necessary in this context as documented literature is evidence of lives lived, lost and remembered. Hence, every piece of writing is transformed into a political landmine capable of provoking powerful discussions.

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# The Future is us and the Future is Now: A study with a Special Reference to Youth's in Politics.

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## ABSTRACT

Young people are the lifeblood of any democracy. Tomorrow's leaders are tomorrow's leaders, and tomorrow's innovators can already bring new solutions to global issues. However, youth representation in parliament remains at an all-time low. For more than a decade, the India parliament union (IPU) has been advocating for the empowerment of young politicians in order to consolidate and revitalize democracy and increase the number of representatives of all generations. As the torchbearers of societal change, young individuals are increasingly becoming significant players in political arenas worldwide. The study investigates the motivations, challenges, and impact of youth engagement in politics, with a focus on understanding their influence on policy-making and democratic processes. Through a comprehensive review of existing literature, interviews, and case studies, this paper aims to provide insights into the evolving relationship between the youth demographic and political structures. By analyzing the experiences of young political leaders and activists, the research seeks to unravel the potential benefits and obstacles associated with empowering youth in political decision-making. The findings contribute to a nuanced understanding of the crucial role that youth play in shaping the future of governance and policy, emphasizing the importance of fostering an inclusive and participatory political environment for the continued development of democratic societies. This research, emphasizing the concept that "The Future is Us and the Future is Now." The study seeks to understand the dynamics of youth involvement in politics, their aspirations, challenges, and the potential transformative effects on political landscapes. Special attention will be given to exploring how the youth's active participation can shape the future of governance and civic engagement.

**Key words:** Youth, Political participation, Torchbearers, Dynamic, Democratic, Governance, Societies, Transformative, Future,

## INTRODUCTION

Politics should set the stage for the exploration of the role of youth in shaping the political landscape, because "Politics is not a game, it's a very serious mission in service of people."Begin by providing context on the increasing involvement of young people in political activities globally. Highlight the significance of understanding their impact on political dynamics and decision-making processes. Emphasize the need to examine the challenges and opportunities faced by youth in the realm of politics, as well as the potential implications for the future. Conclude the introduction by outlining the paper's objectives and the relevance of the study in comprehending the evolving nature of politics in the contemporary era."Young of today are not the leaders of tomorrow, but the young of today are the leaders of today!"

## HISTORY:

The involvement of youth in Indian politics has a rich and dynamic history. Notable figures like Bhagat Singh, Subash Chandra Bose, Savarkar, and many

such ideal leadersplayed a crucial role in the freedom struggle, emphasizing the importance of youth participation.Post-independence, the youth continued to be active in political movements, contributing to social and economic changes. The rise of youth-led political parties and movements in different states reflects their ongoing impact on Indian politics. The emergence of leaders like Annamalai, Tejasvi Surya, Raghav Chadda, Shreyasi Began,Rivaba Jadeja, Nikhil Kumarswamy,Rahul Gandhi, Adhitya Thackeray, Chandrani Murmu, and others highlights the evolving role of youth in shaping the political landscape.India's election history dates back to its first general elections in 1952 after gaining independence in 1947. The electoral system is based on universal adult suffrage, allowing all citizens aged 18 and above to vote. However, the 2014 and 2019 elections witnessed increased youth voter turnout, indicating a growing political consciousness.Youth involvement isn't without challenges, including issues like unemployment and education. However, their active participation remains pivotal in shaping policies and driving social change, showcasing a dynamic interplay between the youth and India's political history.

## REVIEW OF LITERATURE

One of the reasons for this is that today's young adults are more impenetrable in achieving the developmental milestones of adulthood ("Arnett (2014) and "Tagliabue (2014)"). As a result, this impenetrability results in an irrevocable delay in political involvement. In a study of the relationship between political participation among young adults and adults ("Quintelier (2007)"), the authors found that "Young adults and adults appear to share similar political attitudes, with young people having fewer opportunities to participate in political life." They further noted that there are differences in terms of engagement in particular forms of political participation, as young adults are more likely to engage in non-institutionalized forms of political participation. As a result, "it appears that the issue of youth political participation may be less a question of participation and more a question of participation location" ("Rainsford (2017, p. 2)

## OBJECTIVES:

- To understand the dynamics of youth involvement in politics, ability and interest of Youth's in Politics.
- It seeks to unravel the potential benefits and obstacles associated with empowering youth in political decision-making.
- To understand the need of Youth's in Politics and the impact of the same on the welfare of the society.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY:

- In this study, the authors used secondary data. Data was collected through various articles, magazines, and websites. This can be published data or unpublished data. Published data are available from a variety of sources including; Printed publications, Public records, Journals.
- A descriptive survey was used in this study. To achieve the goals of this research project. The authors used qualitative data to explore and analyze the impact on the society and economy of India. The authors sought to fill research gaps by analyzing the secondary data collected.

## NEED OF YOUTH'S IN POLITICS

Politics refers to the activities, actions, and policies used to gain and hold power in a government or to influence the government. It involves the process by which decisions are made within groups or societies, ranging from local communities to international relations. Politics encompasses a wide range of activities, including voting, lobbying, campaigning, and governing, and it plays a crucial role in shaping the laws, policies, and systems that govern societies.Youth are crucial to society across all sectors because they bring fresh perspectives, innovation, and energy. Their dynamism fosters progress, adaptability, and the development of new ideas, contributing to the overall growth and vitality of communities.Youth in politics bring diverse viewpoints, increased representation, and a connection to contemporary issues. Their involvement fosters a more inclusive political landscape, ensuring decisions consider the long-term interests of upcoming generations. Additionally, youth engagement promotes civic participation and strengthens democratic values."Strong political stability has always created prosperity for the young."

Fresh Perspectives: Youth in politics bring new ideas and perspectives, breaking away from traditional approaches.

Technological Savvy: Growing up in a tech-centric era, young individuals often possess strong digital skills, enhancing communication and outreach in political activities.

Energy and Enthusiasm: Youthful energy can inject dynamism into political campaigns, leading to increased engagement and participation.

Representation of Diverse Issues: Young politicians

often advocate for a broad range of issues, including those directly affecting the younger generation, promoting a more inclusive political agenda.

Long-Term Vision: With a longer expected future, youth politicians may focus on sustainable and long-term policies, considering the impact on future generations.

Adaptability: Youth are generally more adaptable to change, crucial in navigating evolving political landscapes and addressing emerging challenges.

Connecting with Youth Voters: Having young representatives can help political entities connect better with the youth demographic, fostering increased voter turnout and civic participation.

Promoting Civic Education: Youth involvement in politics can inspire civic education initiatives, encouraging a more informed and engaged electorate.

Overcoming Stagnation: Introducing youth into politics helps prevent stagnation and promotes the continual evolution of political systems.

Inspiring Future Leaders: Youth in politics serve as role models, inspiring other young individuals to become active participants and potential leaders in the political arena.

Amrit Generation:This current young generation of India are not only the future of India, but also the Present of India, as it is the most blessed and most opportune generation of the country.

## IMPACT OF YOUTH PARTICIPATION IN POLITICS

A balanced mix of youth and adult participation can create a synergistic effect. While youth infuse vitality and innovation, adults provide stability, experience, and a historical perspective. Collaboration between generations in politics can lead to well-rounded decision-making and the addressing of diverse societal needs.

There is no right time to join politics as such, but it happens whenever the calling comes within that this is the cause that I want to work towards. Politics is all about variables more than constants. Hence, unless the larger ideal/cause that truly motivates don't enter politics looking at it as a career, but if one enters politics who is driven by the idealism, triggered by a strong conviction to do something, then that sense of conviction and idealism is what will keep us going even in tough times. Before one completely decides to join politics/ involve in politics, he/she certainly should be financially independent (employed). Democracy essentially means that we are the masters of our own craft; we are the masters of our own destiny. Therefore, Democracy means, A platform which we have created by our own will to craft our own destiny.

## YOUTH INTO POLITICS: CHALLENGES

- Limited Resources: Young individuals may face challenges in mobilizing financial and organizational resources compared to more established political figures.
- Skepticism from Older Generations: Older voters and politicians might be skeptical about the capabilities of young leaders, questioning their readiness for political responsibilities.
- Institutional Barriers: Existing political structures may pose obstacles to the entry of youth, with established hierarchies sometimes resisting change.
- Media Scrutiny: Youth in politics might face intensified media scrutiny, potentially magnifying mistakes or inexperience and making it harder to build a positive public image.
- Political Stereotypes: Stereotypes associating youth with impulsiveness or lack of seriousness can hinder their credibility in the political arena.
- Limited Representation: Youth may find it challenging to represent the diverse needs of their age group, as their experiences and perspectives might vary widely.
- Lack of Networking: Building political networks takes time, and youth may encounter difficulties in establishing connections compared to their more experienced counterparts.
- Electoral Challenges: Young candidates may struggle in elections where name recognition and experience are often crucial factors influencing voter decisions.
- Balancing Personal and Political Life: Juggling personal and political responsibilities can be demanding for youth, potentially leading to burnout or challenges in maintaining a work-life balance.

## SUGGESTIONS:

- Promote civic education in schools to raise awareness about political processes and responsibilities.
- Ensure easy access to political information

through digital platforms, workshops, and community events.

- Establish mentorship programs connecting experienced politicians with young individuals interested in politics.
- Implement policies that address youth concerns and provide platforms for their voices to be heard.
- Develop interactive platforms where youth can engage with political leaders, ask questions, and express their opinions.
- Create opportunities for young people to gain practical experience through internships within political offices.
- Encourage political parties to include more youth candidates, ensuring a diverse and representative political landscape.
- Conduct outreach programs in communities to inform and involve youth in local political activities.
- Promote healthy debates and discussions on political issues in schools and communities to foster critical thinking.
- Acknowledge and support youth-led initiatives that contribute positively to society, encouraging further engagement.

**CONCLUSION:**

"To own a greater vision for tomorrow, the Youth's must lead today!" Youth involvement in politics is vital for a dynamic and inclusive democracy. Their fresh perspectives, energy, and passion can drive positive change. As young people engage in political processes, they contribute to a more representative and forward-thinking society. In conclusion, fostering active youth participation in politics is essential for the growth and resilience of democratic systems worldwide."One may or may not be interested in politics, but the impact of politics is all pervasive."

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# The Dance of Masks

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## ABSTRACT

Our land, India, has been a celebrated patron for a plethora of artforms. It has nurtured every art of each state that have flourished since ages. Amidst the ones that were lucky enough to take a plunge onto the mainstream world stage, there are some folk and traditional artforms that create vibrance and cadence on streets or the local platforms that whole heartedly embrace them. This attempt focuses upon exploring the nuances and strange similarities between two such illustrious folk and traditional artforms Yakshagana or Bayalaata, prominently practised in the coastal Karnataka and Bhaona which is performed in the Majuli district of Assam with the help of Mukhashilpa, an integral part of a Bhaona performance. The use of masks in both of these artforms is an added element of strange similarity. Assam and Karnataka are evidently disconnected considering the geography, ethnicity and culture. There has been no solid record that defines the connect between coastal Karnataka and Majuli of Assam. There exist a lot of differences if these two states are considered in general. But, Yakshagana, Bhaona and its integral part Mukhashilpa have contemporarily flourished as two wholesome theatrical performances that are unique, yet having uncanny resemblance which is strange and beautiful to explore at the same time.

**Keywords:** Yakshagana, Mukhashilpa, Majuli, Uncanny, Resemblance, Artforms.

## INTRODUCTION

Yakshagana has been a celebrated traditional and partly folk artform since ages. The ability to capture the audience with their uniquely vibrant costumes which are surprising and at times tend to invoke an eerie feeling. This artform is a rich ensemble of music, dance and intense drama. As the Yakshagana taalamaddale begins, a similar beat can be heard from Assam's Majuli in the form of Bhaona. If we ever happen to witness Bhaona and Yakshagana side to side on the same stage, we might forget that we are looking at two different artforms from two different states. The best part being the cultural and ethnic disconnect. Bhaona, Mukhashilpa and Yakshagana instill our faith in cultural unity and will make the audience of both regions whole heartedly appreciate the art without getting succumbed to any form of biases. These artforms have successfully imparted messages of morality, deep rooted culture, shades of tradition, sense of unity and have enhanced the glory of literature that took birth in both Kannada and Assamese languages. Both Yakshagana and Bhaona are a perfect blend of mythological stories and religious discourse. Even though the cultural context, stories and regional influences shape their distinctive identities, the uncanny resemblance between the two arises from their common emphasis on vibrant presentations, enigmatic footwork and the orchestral touch that is displayed effortlessly on the stage.

**History of Yakshagana**

There are multiple theories and beliefs with respect to the origin of Yakshagana. According to the artists and historians this artform originated around 11th to 16th century. It is also believed that it was introduced in Udupi by Madhvacharya's follower Narahari. The earliest glimpses of Yakshagana were found in parts of Kasargodu situated in Malabar district of Kerala, one of the most adored folk theatre arts of Karnataka and Kasargodu, Yakshagana, has been a priceless and a timeless possession for the art admirers belonging to these two places. This artform is closer to them than their respective mother tongues, making Yakshagana, a cherished celebration. This artform invokes some of the major and minor mythological episodes from the epics like Ramayana and Mahabharata on stage with sheer cadence. The performances also include stories from Bhaagavata Mahapuraanam



Fig. 1. Swati Pandit as Abhimanyu, Yakshagana Mela, 2022,.



Fig. 2. Raavana and Kumbhakarna in Rama Raavana Kaalaga, Chittaani Mela, 2015

Though it is widely recognised as folk art, it contains certain classical elements.

Yakshagana seems to be influenced by a renowned classical text Natyashaastra, authored by Sage Bharatha. The aim of Yakshagana is to inculcate religious, cultural, ethical and ethnic values and to instil harmony amongst the thriving communities.

Yakshagana, the name finds its root in Sanskrit. Yaksha refers to the celestial beings who are famous appearances in the mythological stories and Gana refers to music. Hence, Yakshagana is a musical performance of the celestial beings. It is also known as Bayalaata in some parts of Karnataka as it was performed in the open air. This dance drama is broadly classified into Moodalapaaya which further branches out into Doddaata and Sannaata which are most basic, crude and purely folk forms and Paduvalapaaya which is divided into Thenkutittu and Badagutittu. Thenku style is famously practised in South Canara districts whereas Badagu style finds its popularity in North Canara districts of Karnataka. The two styles are distinguished by the style of dancing, costumes and use of makeup. Some of the famous Yakshagana artists are Parthisubha, (a pioneer who chiselled the Yakshagana styles), Chittani Ramachandra Hegde, (First Yakshagana artist to be awarded with Padma Shri by the Government of India), Prasad Cherkady (Thenku style Yakshagana artist)



Fig. 1.3. Thenkutittu Yakshagana Mela, Sri Gopalakrishna Yakshagana Mandali, Edaneeru Mela, Devathegalu, 2015.



Fig. 1.4. Badagutittu Yakshagana Mela, The Hindu, Sadarame, Chittani Mela, 2018.

The master stage craft

The stage crafting carries utmost importance in Yakshagana. It creates an uncanny realm rendering a supernatural ambience where various familiar yet strange characters come to life leaving the audience spellbound. Since performances usually start at

night and continue until the next morning, they are known as Ahoraatri (all night) performances. The artists dance to the peculiar tunes followed by intense dialogues in Kannada language. The dialogues are either scripted or impromptu. As per my experience of being a Yakshagana artist for the past six years, it requires rigorous training in dance, music, dialogue delivery and Mukhavarnike (face painting/face mask). It contains the elements of a complete theatre and possesses the ability to entertain and enlighten both the learned and the illiterate.

Yakshagana being a rich musical dance drama uses myriad properties. The dancers are clad in vibrant costumes that weigh upto 2½ to 3 kilograms, an attractive headgear and some weapons made of bamboo or wood that goes well with the characters that are being

portrayed. Mukhavarnike, (face painting/face masks) is a pivotal part of the costume. The makeup is done based on the character persona and masks are used to portray a few intense characters like Duryodhana from Mahabharata, Mahishasura (the buffalo demon), Ganapati (the elephant headed God), Varaha (Boar), Narasimha (man-lion), Raavana (the demon king of Lanka) and Goddesses like Durga.

Mukhavarnike varies from character to character. The colour palette of masks and makeup do not just enhance the character portrayal but also help the actor internalise the character. Mukhavarnike basically is an effective non-verbal visual communication. The majestic makeup is an attractive way to grab audience's attention. Since, Yakshagana was usually performed in open air during night time amidst the dim lit oil lamps. The characters are classified hierarchically based on the plot namely,

Peetike Vesha (introductory role), Eradane Vesha (secondary role), Yeduru Banna (opposing role), and certain supporting roles like Hennu Vesha (female role) Kodangi (clown), Bedana Vesha (hunter), Muni Vesha (sage). Every troupe has a difficult yet interesting characters like Jambavantha, Jatayu, Maayajinke, (the magical deer), and Hanuman from Ramayana. The prasangaas (Yakshagana episodes) also present the incarnations of Lord Vishnu based on Bhaagavata and Vishnu Puraana. Both Bhaoriyas (The Bhaona Performers of Assam) and Yakshagana make use of vibrant masks while portraying these incarnations on stage. Shreedhar Rao who hails from Kasargodu has contributed more than eighty varieties of masks to Yakshagana. He was one of the pioneers who introduced advanced way of Mukhavarnike and mask making in Yakshagana.

The colour of the costumes is another interesting aspect to be emphasized upon as the colours worn by a performer playing the demon role or a negative role varies from that of the ones worn by a performer who portrays the role of God, Demigod or a pious natured character.

The actor playing the role of a demon is dominantly clad in black tunic along with the red cloth around the neck. These characters also have a grand and sophisticated entry onto the stage. Two members from the Mela (troupe) hold a huge red cloth to form a curtain before the antagonists as they enter the stage. Initially, the headgear is visible to the audience followed by the footwork and finally the dark Mukhavarnike. The demon character gradually unveils behind the deep red curtain and is on its own once established on stage. The theory behind the red and black theme is that these colours symbolic of their Rajasika (rage, passion, wickedness,) Tamasika (dark, evil, violent) nature. Some of the seasoned Yakshagana artists and scholars also compare the character's struggled footwork behind the curtain to that of the struggle of being born. The fascinating aspect is that these characteristics of costumes and stage entry ritual can be found in the Bhaona performances as well. The demon characters of both Bhaona and Yakshagana have thick painted moustache and enter the stage with similar rhythmic footwork. They also carry a mace or a sword adhering to the demand of the character. The masks are usually made of clay, bamboo, rice flour and jute. The art of Mukhashilpa too uses some of these raw materials in the mask making process.

**Use of instruments in Yakshagana**

The music being the delightful element of this artform becomes an inseparable part of every prasanga (Yakshagana text). The music troupe is called Bhaagavatike mela. All the members of this troupe are clad in white wearing a red turban called Mundasa. The Bhaagavatha (lead singer) who sits on an elevated area on the stage is accompanied by Taalamaddale (instrumentalists) who play Chende (a high struck drum), Maddale (similar to Mridangam), Taala (finger bells) and Chakrataala (bigger cymbals). A subtle reciprocation takes place between the Bhaagavatha and the character on stage throughout the prasanga. The songs are based various raagas and are sung in a unique style. The music guides the build of the

characters and their footwork. This troupe is also known as Himmela (the troupe on the hind side of the stage) (Karantha 101)



Fig 1.5. Gaayan Baayan, Onkiya Naat Sitaharan Balibadh, Uttar Kamalabari Sattra, Majuli, November 2017.



Fig. 1.6. Yakshagana, Himmela, Bhaagavatike, Chakrachandike Prasanga, Havyaka Mahasabha, Malleswaram, Bengaluru, 2018.

**The culture of Bhaona and Mukhashilpa**

An aesthetic traditional artform native to Majuli district in Brahmaputra valley in Assam is 'Bhaona'. Mukhashilpa or mask culture is an inseparable element of Bhaona performance. Both Bhaona and Mukhashilpa were directly patronised under 'Satra', a Hindu monastery. These not only enhanced the cultural heritage of the society but also invoked spiritual feelings amongst the people. This artform finds its origin during 15th to 16th century.

Mukhashilpa and Bhaona were the contributions of Shrimanta Sankaradeva, an Assamese polymath who himself was a religious reformer, musician, playwright, poet, scholar, dancer and actor who paved the way for cultural revolution in Assam. The aim of Srimantha Sankaradeva was to inculcate the spiritual feelings and to make people aware about the rich mythological legacy. Bhaona and Mukhashilpa are not merely the source of entertainment but are the way of life. He also considered Bhaona and Mukhashilpa to be one of the major elements through which he aimed at establishing in the then evolving Assamese society.

Masks played a prominent role in building emotional connect between the audience and the character being portrayed on stage. Mukhashilpa originated in the Vaishnavaite Sattras of Majuli located in the Brahmaputra valley. Sattras promoted dance dramas, music and literature. We can find major influence of Vaishnavism on the theatrical performance, Bhaona. Since, Srimantha Sankaradeva artistically composed Onkiya Naat (one act play) and immersed it in Bhaona, this dance musical is also known as Onkiya Bhaona. When the Bhaona was performed for the very first time, Sankaradeva himself had enacted the role of Vishnu as a symbolic of propagating Neo-Vaishnavism. We can find similar popular one act prasangaas in Yakshagana as well. Bhaona is performed based on the selected stories from Ramayana, Mahabharata and Bhaagavata Mahapurana. Bhaona defines the socio-cultural and religious ideologies of Assamese culture. Bhaona has evolved into a full-fledged theatrical performance by acquiring various artistic elements from the different social systems of Majuli. Sankaradeva was succeeded by Madhabadeva, an ardent disciple who composed some more Onkiya Naat. Some of the anonymous compositions are available in the handwritten format.

Essence of Mukhashilpa in Bhaona

Bhaona is usually performed in open air similar to Yakshagana and the realm created through costumes, attractive backdrop and stage craft play a major role to make Bhaona reach the audience effectively. Mukhashilpa in Bhaona are the most unique medium through which religious and moral messages are spread. We can find some evidences regarding Mukhashilpa in minor artform that existed in the ancient society of Assam. They were Khuliya Bhaona, Dhuliya Bhaona, Putala Nach etc. Bhaona took its shape as a complete dramatized dance with the rhythmic and lyrical elements by 15th century. The dialogues are delivered in Brajawali language. The recent Bhaona dialogues make use of modern Assamese language as well.

There are some norms known as 'Mudra' which is followed throughout the play to fulfil the rhythmic gesture. Similar to the concept of Bhagavatha, Sutradhar in Bhaona is present throughout and exit of the characters on stage. The Bhaona performers are known as Bhaoriya. The strange aspect that can be noticed is that both Yakshagana and Bhaona evolved as contemporaries with absolute geographical and cultural disconnect. They have uncanny resemblance to each other when the history of evolution is traced. The initial form of Yakshagana was Bombeyaata (puppetry) that was practised in parts of Kasargod similar to Putala Nach. Some elements of puppetry subtly continues to exist in the hand movements and footwork of both of these performances till date.



Fig. 1.7. Onkiya Naat, Mukhashilpa,



Fig. 1.8. Onkiya Naat, Mukhashilpa,



" ৰাহৰ সুপৰ মুখাভিনয় / Assamese Bhaona/ Khati Axomiya". Youtube. Uploaded by Pranjal Rajkhowa. 10 Sept 2022.

Mukhashilpa as the protagonist of Bhaona

Bhaona and Mukhashilpa tend to co-exist. Mukhashilpa has efficiently evolved from ancient to modern age Bhaona. These masks tend to make the uncanny, believable. Mukhashilpa of Samaguri Satra and Narasimha Atengi Satra are the famous ones in Majuli. The social setup has been influencing Mukhashilpa due to which we are able witness various interesting expressions in the Bhaona performances. Some Sattras hold the pride of Mukhashilpa since four hundred years. Natun Samaguri Satra of Majuli and Khatpar Satra of Shivsagar are two of those legacies. One of the pioneers of Mukhashilpa was Rebokanto Mahonto who was also known Shilpaguru for his enticing contribution to the mask making tradition. One of the interesting facts of the 16th century Majuli was that only a Bhaona performer could depict the king with the help Mukha (mask) and none others were allowed to do so. In modern day Assam there are twenty-two Satras where innumerable varieties of masks are designed.

Some of the raw materials used in Mukhashilpa are bamboo, cow dung, cloth, paper, cotton, limestone powder. The appearance of a character is given to the Mukha (mask) in a step known as 'Chehra dia' which translates to 'give the appearance'. The final touch up is done under the process of Kam Kathi. Finishing is done by polishing and scrubbing the surface of the mask. An advanced way of Mukhashilpa was introduced by an expert artisan of Samaguri Satra known as Rudrakanta Dev Goswami. He began to make use of zinc oxide instead of chalk and glue. During the evolution period of Mukhashilpa some of the naturally extracted Hengul (bright red) and Haital (crimson red) were used to paint the facial features of the masks. These materials were used carefully since they were poisonous. Today, Mukhashilpa uses synthetic materials to paint and design the masks. The masks are not discarded after a few performances. They are preserved carefully as the mask making art is considered to be highly sacred in the Sattras and also by the artists. To enhance the durability of the mask and to protect them from the infestation, kerosene is added to the kumarmati (the clay). An uncanny element can be noticed in the usage of colours in both Mukhavarnike and Yakshagana. The demon characters are painted with bright red and black colours. The divine characters are coloured with skin shade. Similar to Yakshagana Mukhavarnike, the demon characters of Mukhashilpa have exaggerated eyes. Thick black outlines define eyes, nose and other facial features in both of these artforms.

**Types of Mukhashilpa in Bhaona**

- Bor Mukha – The word Bor translates to Big/huge in Assamese. These are huge in stature to depict the fullness or wholesomeness of a character. These are not flexible in nature. They are usually around two to five feet in height.
- Lutukori Mukha – These mukhas are big that are flexible. They usually cover the whole body of the Bhaoriya.
- Mukh Mukha – These are small masks that cover the face until the neck region. These masks are extensively used across Bhaona performances.

Even though the Bor Mukhas look massive, Bhaoriyas who wear these are able to perform effortlessly on stage not only due to the light weight and flexibility that these Mukhas offer, but also due to

the rigorous training in Bhaona. The facial expressions of Bhaona are intense and unique to Mukhashilpa. The expressions showcased through masks provide us with the glimpses of socio-cultural elements of rich Assamese tradition. They depict ethical values and artistic legacies. Mukhavarnike and Mukhashilpa of a demon character evidently depict the eternal fear, chaos, trauma etc. In contrast, the technical beauty can be observed when Lord Narasimha or Narosingho is portrayed in both the artforms. Even though the character Narasimha is wild in nature, the masks made are symbolic of piousness, divinity and righteousness. (Goswami 28) All of the masks used in Yakshagana and Mukhashilpa are either theomorphic (animal faced) or anthropomorphic (humanoid) in nature. Both the theomorphic and anthropomorphic masks not only entertain the audience but leave them engrossed in the element of sublime. It is strangely beautiful to find these intricate similarities even in the usage and portrayal of masks.

**The grandeur of entry and exit**

The Bhaoriyas enacting certain roles enter in a sophisticated manner through a specific path called 'Agni Garh' the path of fire. This is a symbolic of rage and the actor being reborn as Bhaoriya on stage. The philosophical theory behind the Tere (curtain) of Yakshagana and Agni Garh of Bhaona are quite similar. Some characters of Bhaona enter the stage in a rhythmic manner which looks similar to the Oddolaga of Yakshagana where the characters perform the rhythmic entry dance. The footwork while entering and exiting the stage of Bhaona and Yakshagana also look strangely similar. Yakshagana and Bhaona performances start at night and continue until the next morning.

**The blend of melody**

Yakshagana has Bhagavatige or Himmela and Bhaona has 'Gaayan' and 'Baayan', a music troupe comprising of singers and instrumentalists. They give an orchestral effect to the Onkiya naat and also mimic the sounds of certain animals and humanoid characters giving them life on stage. They are clad in white and wear white turbans. The way Bhaagavatha narrates the story while the prasanga commences, the 'Sutradhaar' narrates the story of the act in Bhaona along with the orchestral background score. Members of Gaayan sing in a

high-pitched voice. (Goswami 12) These songs that are performed have a classical touch and sound similar to Borgeet or Bhotima. These were composed by Sankaradeva during his pilgrimage. They invoke Vaishnavite Gods. Gaayan also sings 'Bol' that define the footwork of Bhaoriya. Various interesting instruments like 'Khol', 'Taal', 'Doba' and 'Nagara' are played throughout the act by 'Baayan'. They provide a strong sense of rhythm to the act and to the Bhaoriyas. The lead singer holds Taal which looks very similar to Taala or Chakrataala that Bhaagavatha uses in Yakshagana. The songs of these artforms also sound similar since both contain the essence of classical music. All the instruments used in Bhaona were the creative contribution of Sankaradeva himself.

Generally, Gaayan-Baayan troupe comprises of men. But, in a Bhaona performance of 'Rukmini Horon' which was directed by Trishna Boragohain, staged on 25th of March 2023 at Srimantha Sankaradev Kalakshetra, Guwahati, the Gayan-Bayan were female artistes. They also enacted various characters of the play. This was the first time in the history of Bhaona held in Assam where all the Bhaoriyas and the music troupe consisted of female artistes exclusively.

**Conclusion**

Yakshagana has become a worldwide phenomenon in the recent times due to the emergence of social media and Pan-Indian cinemas like Kaantaara. The audience are now able to witness the aesthetics of Yakshagana on the mainstream platforms. Bhaona and Mukhashilpa have grown out of Assam and have been successful in casting a spell on the national and international audience. The cultural forums and the tourism departments are making heartfelt efforts to bring Bhaona from the heart of Majuli to various parts of the world.

There is no well-known evidence about the cultural crossover that might have occurred between Assam and Coastal Karnataka. It is extremely unusual to find such major similarities while exploring these two aesthetic artforms. Considering that these states are geographically, culturally and linguistically disconnected from each other, they have imparted similar messages and have positively impacted the hearts of the audience. They have sprinkled the prime colours of art and have snuck their way into the minds of the society by striking the right chords. They have performed not just for entertainment but to unite the diverse thoughts and to help them break through the shackles of biases. The rhythm of Bhaona, the creativity of Mukhashilpa and the expressions of Yakshagana shall continue to render the theatrical ensemble of cultural unity on the limitless ethnic stage of India. This study is a humble attempt that provides a bird's eye view of the intricacies and nuances of both Bhaona and Yakshagana. The similarities and differences between the religious ideologies and their influence on both of these artforms are yet to be explored. The nuances regarding the Sattras and Namghar are yet to be looked into intricately.

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# Fiction on Uploading and Immortality: Exploring Possibilities or Warning Humanity?

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## ABSTRACT

mmortality is often deemed as one of the major objectives of transhumanism. Literature and popular media have explored the possibility of a future that promises immortality at length. Fiction that involves "uploading" one's consciousness and memories to preserve the human mind, and even transferring or "downloading" it to another body or clone has gained much attention in popular media over the years. In an era of artificial intelligence and virtual reality, the idea of such a digital existence might seem quite plausible although the process is not close to becoming a reality yet. Exploring the idea of immortality through technology, the paper analyses the film Transcendence, the television series Upload and the novel Mindscan in an attempt to understand how science fiction contributes to the discussion on the topic.

**Keywords:** Uploading, Digital immortality, Self, Identity, Consciousness.

## INTRODUCTION

The term "uploading" can be understood as "the process by which a human will be able to transfer the entire contents of their brain to a more suitable supercomputational medium" (Harle, 2002, p. 73). Uploading the human mind into a more durable substrate would seemingly free one from the limits of their physical body, offering the promise of digital immortality.

Although the plausibility of the process is only a cloud of speculation at present, the concept has garnered much attention over the years and has been extensively debated on.

Harle (2002) discusses "uploading" and immortality, two of the most controversial aspects of Extropianism, and notes that since the uploaded entity exists as a software, "immortality is virtually assured" (p. 73). While many claim that immortality through uploading would be possible in the near future, Harle argues that these claims are misguided and absurd from both pragmatic and philosophical perspectives. Harle also notes that even if the uploaded entity was on-line in a vast network, it would still be subject to dissolution or destruction, therefore defeating the purpose of immortality (p.81).

One of the major problems that Harle raises in his paper against the idea of uploading is not being able to determine what exactly is to be uploaded in order to preserve or transfer the human mind since the "essence of our thinking" is yet to be determined (p. 79). While discussing the concept of uploading, this becomes highly significant. If the brain is the part of the body that is scanned in order to transfer the human mind (considering that mind is an abstraction produced or situated in the brain), is the concept of cellular memory not relevant?

At a time when the process of uploading or transferring the mind itself is quite ambiguous, it is difficult to provide definitive answers to the concerns and queries related to the concept. However, the genre of science fiction takes the liberty of imagining a world where the process is possible and often in action. Keeping the technicalities of the process aside, fictional worlds present how the process might take place and what might follow. When even the plausibility of the process of uploading might be decades away, what is the intention with which science fiction displays the process today? This paper examines the film *Transcendence*, the television series *Upload* and the novel *Mindscan* by Robert J. Sawyer to explore the idea of digital immortality through uploading in an attempt to understand how these texts contribute to the discussion on the concept.

The American science fiction thriller film *Transcendence* written by Jack Paglen and directed by Wally Pfister explores the idea of digital immortality by uploading the mind and memories of the protagonist Will Caster through extensive brain scans, and coupling it with the software of an artificial intelligence system. Once connected to the internet, the uploaded entity gains power over the entire planet and begins duplicating itself through every available medium. One of the major concerns raised in the film is whether the digital copy is the same person whose memories were uploaded. The film constantly questions if it is possible for a digital entity to develop or retain human values and qualities.

Chalmers (2014) discusses the different possible forms of "uploading" and notes that the process may involve "gradual replacement of brain parts (gradual uploading), instant scanning and activation (instant uploading), or scanning followed by later activation (delayed uploading)" (p. 102). Kurzweil's (1999) argument of the imaginary Jack, who starts out as a normal human being and gradually replaces his body parts with artificial ones, would come under "gradual uploading". Beginning with small devices like cochlear implants, Jack slowly moves up to replace larger and more significant parts of his body, finally replacing his whole brain and neural system with electronic circuits. Kurzweil raises the argument that if Jack is considered to be the same person after getting cochlear implants, then essentially, he should be considered the same person even after replacing his brain. Kurzweil is of the opinion that whether Jack's body is replaced gradually or at once does not really make a difference and even if the transition is from an organic body to a machine, Jack will remain the same. Kurzweil's argument could be considered as a variation of the ancient paradox known as the Ship of Theseus[1]. However, things get more complicated here as it is a living human being that is dealt with, not a lifeless object.

One of the factors that convince some of the characters in the film that the digital entity is not the same person is its wish to gain more power and change the world, while when human,

Will merely wished to understand the world. While this distinction in the nature of the person and his later digital self is evident, the digital entity also retains certain aspects of Will's nature like his love for his wife. Since feelings and emotions take up a great part of being human and the digital entity is capable of having feelings (or at least claims to possess them), it becomes significant to identify what exactly makes one human. One could also argue that change is an essential part of human nature and in that case, would minor changes that the uploaded entity exhibits be enough to not consider it the same person?

While the material body plays a significant role in the identity of a person, it would be wrong to dismiss the role of their perceptions, feelings, personality, and ideas in recognising them as a human being. It would be interesting to note how the term humanity, which is used to refer to human beings collectively, is also used synonymously with the quality of being humane or compassionate, which has more to do with the mental realm than the physical one. Therefore, will it be wrong to assume that a human being can exist outside the material body since their human nature is not always concerned with the human body? The fact that one's self-identity is also influenced by society cannot be neglected either when considering the transfer of identity into a computerised system. If the person survives the transfer or upload, will their identity change accordingly or will it be retained. If retained, would there not be a dissonance between their current and past selves and therefore identities?

Bamford and Danaher (2017) argue that personal identity is, in large part, a social construct and therefore, whether the identity of a person survives a process of transfer (like upload) depends on social factors. They note that whether we continue to exist depends not only on the satisfaction of psychological or biological conditions, but also on that of social conditions, the networks of interaction within society, as well as systems of collective belief" (Bamford & Danaher, 2017, p. 7).

Hauskeller (2012) understands the human mind as "a distinct (though evolving) mental entity that can be indefinitely replicated in various forms without thereby changing its identity" (p. 192). Discussing the ideas of the human self, graduality and identity, Hauskeller argues that there is "little

reason to suppose that an exact functional copy of the brain will actually produce similar phenomenological effects (if any at all), and even less reason to believe that the uploaded mind, even if similar, will be the same self as the one on whose brain it was modelled" (p. 187).

Another major aspect of being human that is highlighted in the film is that of self- awareness. Throughout the film, the AI is questioned at multiple points whether it is self-aware to which it replies, "That is a difficult question. Can you prove that you are self-aware?" Although such a reply is considered as a running joke in the film, it poses a major question about human nature. The question of identity is one that humans have always struggled with. Perhaps self-awareness has more to do with attempting to understand oneself than knowing oneself in entirety. Self-awareness seems to be the major factor that distinguishes humans from AI in the film and if self-awareness is more about acknowledging that it is nearly impossible to understand oneself completely, it might be this lack of complexity with AI which sets it apart from humans who are prone to complicating everything. In that case, one might as well argue that the AI in the film is quite human in its attempt at answering the question on self-awareness.

The concept of consciousness is also equally important while considering the possibility of AI being a sentient being. Chalmers (2014) points out that while biological theorists of consciousness argue that consciousness is essentially biological and that non-biological systems cannot be conscious, functionalist theorists of consciousness are of the opinion that causal structure and causal role matter more than the biological makeup with regard to consciousness, and therefore, even a non-biological system can be conscious as long as it is organised rightly (p. 104). However, Harle (2002) believes that "disembodied consciousness is an impossibility" (p.78).

Can consciousness be created or transferred? If not, will the mindless manipulation of uninterpreted symbols by a non-human entity be misunderstood as its consciousness as Searle (1980) suggests with his example of the Chinese room experiment[2]?Towards the end of the film, the digital entity with the memories of Will reveals all the projects that were being undertaken in the laboratory. Although the idea of cellular regeneration being able to help individuals with physical ailments and deformities sounded quite desirable in the beginning, with the AI being in control of the development of this project, it gradually unveils itself to be an attempt of the digital entity to duplicate itself within humans and bring them under its control. This brings out the horrors of the possibility of AI takeover in the future with technology rooting itself in humans with the offer of a healthier or stronger body. However, although the plan of the AI to duplicate itself through all possible mediums on the planet sounded terrifying at first, it is revealed later that it was in turn healing the planet as well by eliminating pollution and regrowing the forests. This goes on to show how the film offers a glance at the infinite possibilities of technological advancements with AI but simultaneously warns about the consequences that might follow the same.

In the American science fiction comedy-drama television series Upload, the idea of a digital afterlife is presented in the future, where humans are able to upload their mind and memories to a software so as to live online even after death. The series dives into the economical aspect of the idea, showing how such advancements in technology could ultimately be monetised to gain power over humanity. The idea of humans being treated as the property of capitalist companies after signing off their rights to the offer of a digital afterlife is indeed frightening.

While *Transcendence* discusses possible AI takeover with "uploading" the human mind, *Upload* has a different approach that looks at the possibility of reducing human beings to mere computer programs with no rights. Although the "uploads" are initially shown to lead a good afterlife while being able to meet their family and loved ones, the scene gradually shifts to reveal the downside of uploading, which ultimately becomes a way of extracting money from people even after their death.

Although *Upload* does not raise concerns about whether the person's consciousness survives in the process of uploading, it poses the question of whether uploads should be treated as human beings with rights. With the protagonist being an upload and the capitalist companies in the antagonistic roles, the series tends to gather sympathy for the uploads instead of projecting

them as a threat to humanity. In the series, the protagonist and his supporters appeal for the rights of uploads, including the right to vote and the right to work, claiming that they are still human beings with consciousness and feelings although they no longer possess material bodies. The series challenges the limits of being human and questions whether humanity is limited to the physical realm.

The series looks at the lives of uploads, who continue to perform human activities due to habit even when the lack of human bodies frees them from having to ingest or egest. This detail seems to add to their human nature in the series, where they

wish to continue functioning like humans and not mere digital entities. Uploads in the series seem to be quite self-aware and able to make conscious decisions like any human being. The only aspect that sets them apart from humans in the real world is the lack of physical bodies. The question of whether one ceases to be human once they lose their physical body becomes prominent then.

Later in the series, this problem is further complicated when attempts are made at "downloading" an upload into a clone body. The downloaded protagonist in the clone body behaves like his real self before death and functions like any other human being in the society although he was dead and preserved in the digital realm for a while.

While the idea of being able to continue life, digitally or otherwise, even after the death of the physical body might appear as the ultimate aim of transhumanists, the series urges its viewers to practise caution while treading the boundaries of the real and digital worlds. *Upload* warns against the possible consequences of digital immortality by blurring the lines between the physical and the digital realms. When humans can merely copy their mind into a digital medium and exist as a software until they grow a physical clone to download into, life and death are reduced to mere words with almost no significance. Life in *Upload* is similar to a utopian (or dystopian, depending on how one perceives it) video game where man has conquered death.

However, it would be interesting to think about whether one could still be considered human after defeating death since mortality is one of the significant aspects of being human.

Although the series offers a glimpse into the future possibilities of preserving human minds within computerised mediums, it also warns about the real world consequences of such a situation that takes away all meaning and value of life. Many might argue that the value of life emerges from its fleeting nature. Perhaps mortality adds to the meaning of human life. With digital immortality and the option to continue existing even after death, choices in life become less prominent, possibly reducing life to a series of choices with decreased happiness on desirable outcomes and less severe consequences on undesirable outcomes.

Another important question raised in the series is that of individuality and the problem of duplication. With the uploads being mere computer programmes, it is possible for one to duplicate an upload with the click of a button. The fact that the possibility of an exact copy of a person with the same mind and consciousness could be made with such ease is both intriguing and frightening at the same time. The series features episodes in which the downloaded version of the protagonist and his digital copy fight to establish who the real person is when in reality, they are both copies of the original person's mind. With the same core memories and the same thought process, the only difference between these versions is the time they have spent from the day of the upload to the present and therefore the difference in the choices they made during the time after upload. With such a situation, one's individuality in the digital realm is brought to question. When human lives are reduced to computer programmes, it becomes easy to duplicate or even delete uploads like mere files in a computer, taking away all the value of human life.

The problem of duplication is one that is dealt with in detail in Robert J Sawyer's novel *Mindscan* as well. In the novel, the protagonist who suffers from an inoperable brain tumour opts to undergo a "mindscan" and upload his brain configuration into a computer and transfer it into an android body that is modelled using his own body. The novel gets complicated owing to the fact that the real person continues to exist simultaneously. Upon uploading, his material possessions would be transferred to the android, who will be the new bearer of his consciousness. His "original copy", which will die soon anyway, would live out the rest of his life in a colony on the moon. The "original copy" is stripped of his legal identity, which is quite jarring. Although the protagonist was initially enthusiastic about the process, there is a moment of reflection right after the mindscan:

> "I shook my head. "You just scanned my consciousness, making a duplicate of my mind, right?" My voice was sneering. "And since I'm aware of things after you finished the scanning, that means I – this version – isn't that copy. The copy doesn't have to worry about becoming a vegetable anymore. It's free. Finally and at last, it's free of everything that's been hanging over my head for the last twenty-seven years. We've diverged now, and the cured me has started down its path. But this me is still doomed." (Sawyer, 2005, p. 44-45)

This moment in the novel notes the protagonist's concern about his real self having to suffer even after the process of mindscan. He realises that he has simply given birth to a new version of himself that is perfect and immortal, while his original self remains the same and would continue to be in agony. Schneider (2009) calls it the "reduplication problem", a "challenge to patternism", and notes that according to patternism, both the entities are the same person since they share "the very same psychological configuration" (p. 268). However, Schneider points

out that while the android created through the mindscan process may be a person, it is not the very same person as the protagonist, highlighting that "sameness of pattern is not sufficient for sameness of person" (p. 268).

The "reduplication problem" that Schneider focuses on is based on the fact that when uploaded, the mind or consciousness becomes open to duplication several times, while each of the duplicates would believe themselves as the "original copy". This problem is depicted later in the novel when multiple copies of the protagonist are made, all believing that they are the real person, leading to legal and ethical issues.

The court trials in the novel to prove the character Karen Bessarian's artificial body's personhood leads to some of the most complicated and thought provoking conversations in the text. The arguments from both sides are presented quite convincingly, constantly questioning the reader's position on the problem. One of the arguments against the copy's personhood goes:

> "... humans have always put a special value on originals, on first printings, on real paintings. Counterfeit money, forged passports: they're not the real thing, and they should never be accorded the status of reality. You good men and women of the jury have the power here to put a stop to this nonsense, to halt this notion that a human being is nothing more than data that can be copied as easily as one copies a song or a photograph. We are more than that. You know it, and I know it: let's make sure the whole world knows it."
>
> "... perhaps you think that it is a person." … "Maybe it is. But, even if it is, it's emphatically not Karen Bessarian; it's someone else, some new creation. Welcome it as such, if you so choose—but don't let it masquerade as someone it's not."
>
> "Without the same body, you're not the same individual." (Sawyer, 2005, p. 249-250)

The counter arguments are also shockingly convincing to an extent. In defending the artificial body's personhood, the lawyer states:

"There's a concept in the law known as scienter—it refers to the knowledge that a person possesses, the awareness. This Karen Bessarian has the knowledge of the original; she is the same person.

More than that, she has the same feelings, the same hopes, the same aspirations, the same creativity, and the same desires she always did." (Sawyer, 2005, p. 252)

Although the novel initially proposes a seemingly desirable situation where people with terminal illnesses could be offered new, improved and immortal bodies to continue life, it later unveils the philosophical, legal and ethical problems that might follow the process of uploading. With the copies leading normal lives amidst biological human beings using the legal identity of their biological counterparts who are no longer entitled to their real identity, the novel builds an interesting irony. It questions whether our wish for immortality and a better body would eventually strip us of our own identity and give rise to a new kind of humanity that sheds their human skin for perfect, artificial containers, while our real selves would continue to suffer in isolation and die without an identity or a proper farewell.

The selected texts of fiction discussed above seem to address both the sides of the debate on uploading. Initially presenting the boons of the process and showing its desirability, the texts later delve into the hidden issues and concerns that the process would entail. The texts not only explore the limitless possibilities of the process, but also warn about the possible dangers of it. Apart from presenting predictions of the future of AI, texts of science fiction dealing with the concept of uploading suggest that there is much more to think about the process besides its technicalities. The texts make it clear that it is necessary to think deeper before diving into making the concept a reality, having been fooled by its promises that might not even hold true in the long run.

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# Analysing the Gothic elements in *Twilight* series by Stephanie Meyer

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## ABSTRACT

Uncanny exploration is something that has supernatural and eerie in which the elements that tends to be paranormal. In layman terms, the mysterious and dark impossible conditions that cannot be explained is said to be Uncanny. How does a human being can survive with the paranormal, eerie elements in life? *Twilight* series, focusses on the vast depiction of Vampires and werewolves, where Bella as a normal human being turning into a Vampire at the end of the series only because of her love towards Edward. Edward and the Cullen family were long rooted Vampires, who had strong sense of morality and self-control and was a unique Vampire coven. Bella inherently was drawn into the world of Vampires, but she also couldn't leave Jacob, her friend, who is a werewolf. Edward and the Cullen Family are against the Quileute tribe. These tribes are rooted in the American mythology who has the ability to transform into wolves. Bella being a normal human being in the midst of these two, experiences the tension and the emotional fluctuations that permeates the uncanny nature of the Twilight series. Comparing with both contrastive sides, there are many elements of supernatural and qualities of superhuman strength contributing to the concept of Uncanniness in the novels. This paper will put forth the challenging and extraordinary uncanny qualities of the characters involving in the *Twilight* series.

Key words: Twilight, Vampires, gothic, supernatural, uncanny

## INTRODUCTION

"The Uncanny is something hidden which ought to have remained missed, but which is brought to light"
-Sigmund Freud

The term Uncanny refers to the psychological experiences that happen with strange and eerie elements that is often considered to be supernatural. In literature, the term and the concept can be considered by various names of Gothic literature, vampire literature etc. the basic concept of Uncanny literature is to make a blurry line between the reality and the unfamiliar events. Mostly, uncanniness in a work mainly plays a greater role in the reader's expectations, changes in the perceptions of reality and the discomfort by unsettling plots. Sigmund Freud exposes his thoughts on Uncanny literature by his essay titled, *"The Uncanny"*, which was published in the year 1919. According to Freud, something that causes an event to be perceived tends to be Uncanny. His, explorations are rooted in the idea of psychoanalysis, that the experiences that repress the emotions and just surface into the consciousness. As Mark Windsor explains in the book *Philosophy and Literature (2020)*, that a good way to initiate Freud's views on Uncanny literature, is to introduce his theory on *"The Sandman"* where it gained the degree of notoriety and the attention of

many inadequacies (2). Freud's concepts of uncanniness have worked out apart from the psychoanalytic traditions. In literature, Freud's ideas were setup as an inspiration to other writers, to evoke the sense of uncanny in their literary works. The psychological underpinnings of his ideas are not fully accepted, but the insights in uncanny experiences.

In literature, writers use this concept of psychoanalysis with the repressed characters, that their inner desires or fears come to the fore. Writers like Edgar Allan Poe, Fyodor Dostoevsky, Hoffman used properties like dolls to elevate the uncanny quality in the works. The difference in the animate and inanimate things may also be considered as uncanny quality in literature. Famous classical literary works like *Frankenstein, The Turn of the Screw, The Metamorphosis, House of Leaves* and many expresses the theme of uncanniness. The objects like giant insect, remote English estates gives the ambience of isolation, unnatural scenes in the stories. In American Literature, uncanny literature is emerged with the American Gothic Literature during 19th century. Writers like, Edgar Alan Poe, Washington Irving and Nathaniel Hawthorne made stories of eerie and unsettling events. The narratives in these stories infused American Literature to the next fascination genre. The Southern American Literature gave out many unsettling events such as themes of decay, headless horsemen, disgusting, grotesquerie, and the bizarre environment of this.

The literary tradition in America was exploring the darker side of human nature. The human psyche and the uncomplexities of it can be explained when the subconscious. Many writers in America had diverse thoughts about the exploration of Uncanny Literature in different time periods and genres. These works challenged the conventional modes of reality. The themes were all circulated inside social, cultural, and psychological. Toni Morrison embodied, the concept of Uncanny. Allan Poe has huge contributions in American Literature, that he mastered in gothic elements and themes. The psychological tension in his works, evoked the challenging situation to the readers. According to Sara Ayachi and Meriem Benzahra, in their research on *Gothicism in Edgar Allan Poe's Works* states that, gothic traditions at American Literary traditions were initiated and supervised by Edgar Allan Poe. This popular literary tradition was discovered and dealt with mystery, strangeness, and horror. The contrary depiction and presence of supernatural elements are characterised by the setting, eerie atmosphere, loneliness, and supernatural force (11). Harold Bloom in his analysis of "Inescapable Poe" gives a brief observation of this idea.

> Understanding Poe, the man, who had medical problems that caused erratic behaviour and depression among many other things, is to understand the true meaning hidden behind the words of his poetry. Poe established himself as a major figure in American letters with his tales of the strange and fantastic, short stories that are structurally brilliant and are regarded as forerunners of many forms and themes in subsequent American and European Literature (Bloom 491).

Poe's legacy tolerates throughout the imaginative and dark tales, that inspires many writers today. This legacy has been passed through ages and writers like, Stephanie Meyer, Cassandra Clare, Lauren Kate in 19th century has huge contribution towards, the gothic traditions of American Literature. Lauren Kate's *Fallen* series have paranormal and eerie elements that the themes of destiny, supernatural love between the fallen angel and a mortal girl is very well explained. Similarly, Stephanie Meyer's *Twilight* series, the writer gives out the love relationship between Edward and Bella in which they face much of the hurdles through supernatural elements like, envisioning the real future, vampire family and so on. Uncanny exploration that dealt with the psychological effects, made the stories woven with literary and political life. Uncanny concepts also include the setting of the story, the environment, desolate landscapes to make the story line intense. These gothic elements, have poignant inner self and unbridled ambition.

Gothic Literature was initiated in the 18th century. It was transferred from the European Literature to America. Several writers have contributed their works in Gothic Literature that includes the regions and cultural elements in it. So, this involves, the psychoanalytic and past human experiences that tend to be repressed inside oneself. Gothic literature also focusses on the forbidden love in which Stephanie Meyer uses this in all her works. The themes of classic Gothic tales are embodied with the mortal and immortal adds complexity to her novels. The gothic element in *Twilight* series is highlighted in this paper. Each character in the novels, possess some kind of supernatural elements by which Bella a normal human being sustains all over it. The blend of romance with uncanny, paranormal struggles gives the rich tapestry of gothic story telling. In this, the characters with the Gothic elements and the experiences of Bella in the world of Vampires and werewolves have been explained.

**Analysing the Gothic elements in *Twilight* series**

Gothic Literature lies in the fascination of uncanny. Gothic fiction holds most of suspicious events, dark inclinations throughout the story. Meyer's this experience of quintessential theme of love in the Gothic themes have been given as

romances that exceed the ordinary and supernatural. The supernatural and beyond imaginative setting of the novel and the portrayal of the characters makes more strange and eerie gothic tradition. The ambiance in the novel has been highlighted through the historical background of the Cullen family and Quillette tribe. Their ancestral history is where the real story begins. By these undertakings, the Gothic undertones are deepened in the story.

Stephanie Meyer debut novel *Twilight* has a huge impact on the paranormal romance, that turned the realm of modern American Literature. Her literary sensation was not confined into the young adult fiction but has an indelible milestone in the American Literary tradition. She infused the theme of love and danger through a blurry line. The real romance between Bella swan and Edward Cullen becomes complicated through various paranormal and supernatural activities. In layman Terms, the series revolves around the concept of vampires and werewolves.

The story begins with Bella swan who has a dark family background. Her mother and father had separated earlier, and she did not experience the family conditions of being united. Meyer depiction of Bella claims that her love towards strangeness and being different in every aspect of the novel. She is the protagonist of the series, where the story wholly revolves around her. She upholds the supernatural world, and in search of her self-identity. Bella addresses her father by his name in the novel where she finds her own path in the small cold city called Forks. This ambiance which was stated here gives out the ***gloomy atmosphere*** while reading about the city of Forks. In her first day at college, she witnesses the Cullen family in the very corner of the room, where they were separated, calm and talking within themselves. Meyer describes the setting as,

> They were sitting in the corner of the cafeteria, as far away from where I sat as possible in the long room. There were five of them…they didn't look anything alike…the girls were opposites…every one of them was chalky pale, the palest of all students living in this sunless town. They also had dark shadows under those eyes—purplish bruise like shadows (16).

The depiction of the Cullen family gives out the gloomy texture between the students and the family, as Meyer adds a note that they are all separated from rest of the students. The way of words here used like the palest of all, bruise like, eerie ambiance enhances the gothic element in the novel.

As the novel moves on Meyer gives out different kinds of supernatural and gothic structures to every character in the novel. Starting with the Cullen family, Meyer introduces them as the Vampires who were long rooted in the American Mythology turned to be good and lived in midst of the normal people changing the places time to time. Vampires was a part of myths over many centuries. The name was derived from Russian Slavic folklores. They are ***immortals*** which are also adds up to the concept of Gothic identity. In another perspective, the writer demolishes the default idea of vampires which is portrayed in history. The readers find a different perspective of a vampire, handsome, immortal, rich love story who is head over heels with a human. In *A Feast of blood,* the depiction of vampires is stated as the bloodsucking creatures in which blood refers to their lifeforce and adds essence to their eternal life (Rymer,1972). This is also a different kind of Gothic genre that Meyer wants to impose.

Gothic themes are not only confined with strangeness and eerie things but also ***forbidden love***. Forbidden love comes with the offended tone of something that must not unite. Clearly, throughout the series, the romance between Edward and Bella tends to be forbidden where the gloomy background of their love was always in stake. Because of these situations, the ***female protagonist*** in the gothic tales survives through ***perilous situations***. In various places, it is portrayed as Bella would be safe without Cullen family, as in Part 2, there are situations that Jasper, one of the cullens couldn't control the urge to jump at Bella and suck her blood as it was so intriguing and craving to the vampires.

Meyer says that all the cullens especially, Edward was so craving for her blood, but he controlled it with the symbol of love. The literatures during the 18th and 19th centuries had enlightens towards the logical reasons. There were no limitations of reason and had a political strain of being a female protagonist. As in *The handbook to Gothic Literature* by Mulvey, American fiction began during the first substantial American efforts that linked with the European and British gothic. The important strand in America Gothicism is that the female in the novel predominantly has the masculinist culture (2). Meyer not only focusses on the Vampires who are in their hundreds but also infuses yet another supernatural element of werewolves. Juxtaposed ideas of vampires who are bloodsuckers and werewolves who are human friendly creatures and warm-blooded than of the vampires coincide in the life of Bella Swan. Bella concludes that Edward is a vampire, and she is totally fine with it. In Chapter 9 in book 1, Edward and Bella conversation depicts so. "You don't care If I'm a monster? If I'm not *human*?" (161). Through this, the Gothic element is much more highlighted. The Cullen family with Alice, Jasper, Carlisle, Rosalaine have different powers like, future visioning, mind reading, rapid fast as light etc. Bella falls in love with the friendly vampire Edward. So, these supernatural events revolve around all the characters. Somehow,

Edward and Bella get married and even their daughter has ***supernatural element*** of foreseeing. The series has a typical fairytale with a vampire.

Now, to protect these humans, the werewolves stand between the vampires and people. Jacob, the young werewolf, part of the Quillette tribe, tries to protect Bella from Edward, which inherits many consequences in the novels. As Bella discovers, Edward as a Vampire in Book 1, in sequential book 2, she finds out Jacob was a werewolf too, where she thought he was a human. In the second book of *Twilight Saga*, Bella finds out saying, "There was no cult. There had never been a cult, never been a gang. No, it was much worse than that. It was a *pack"* (260). These Werewolves and Gothic has an ambitious connection in literature. According to many critics, in myths werewolves are depicted as the instable creatures that delve between human and supernatural world.

Finally, there are many vocabularies and word play in twilight series. This is also a Gothic characteristic of a making the story. ***Gothic Vocabulary*** are used in various parts of the novel. For instance, Edward and his family are portrayed as the creatures who lived for centuries way back from 17th century. So, the old English and the formal way of talking elevates the ambience of the novel. The names like Edward, Esme, Jasper, Alice denotes the old kind of English vocabularies, which was used in old American accents. Even the cultural vocabularies of Edward's time and Bella's time must be differentiated to enhance the theme of Gothic vocabularies. Words like, Macabre, pallor, Cimmerian, ethereal, nocturnal makes the readers, to be involved in the world of Edward and Bella's classic love story.

Mark Shelly's *Frankenstein* is a classic gothic work. Her traits of resurrecting the dead, eerie sentiments in her works, makes the Gothic deepened in literature. Similarly, Stephanie Meyer's *Twilight* series, has many gothic elements that makes the novel to be uncanny and strange.

**Conclusion**

Meyer's *Twilight* series was released decades before, but still, it holds American Gothic elements in it. It didn't lose its passionate, riveting and deeply moving story in the modernist era. The gripping story makes the readers realise that the dark atmospheric setting, gloomy atmosphere, supernatural or paranormal elements, female protagonist in distress and the ability to reflect societal fears are the concept of Gothic literature. "The principle of the Gothic architecture is infinity made imaginable" says Samuel Taylor Coleridge. The imaginations used in this novel is truly beyond super reality. It also elevates, the loss of humanity that all the vampire characters are pushed into immortality without their concern. This is where the psychoanalysis of the characters is analysed. The specific genre of Gothicism has been given beyond the universal theme of elements.

In Gothic narrations, the analysis of human psyche may lead into the exploration of eerie settings. The symbolic element of Gothicism highlights the importance of the traumas that each character faces. The elements explained in this paper can be decoded by the background of psycho analysis. This creates a rich tapestry of emotions in Gothic literature.

Apart from the supernatural elements, the darker aspects of human psyche will be highlighted in a gothic novel. The writers used this aspect in their novels, enhancing it into imaginary techniques. As mentioned earlier, Sigmund Freud's psychoanalytic themes are also justified with gothic elements in the novels. The internal desires of Bella (Id) but her moral values and constraints also play a role in her life (superego). The symbolic interpretations these supernatural elements are brought out by the human psyche, that the mind must discover and navigate. The psychological struggles that every character in the novel undergoes are when they are a vampire. In this series, these elements worked out well with overall atmosphere. Taking the inspiration from Freud's theory, the gothic traits in the characters are enhanced with the subconscious lens. The identity of love and tragedy are analysed through psychological point of view. This can be concluded as the psychological trauma of the past has been exemplified into the unique vampire characteristics of the novel.

In *Psychoanalysis and the Gothic* by Masse analyses that if these characters are analysed according to previous traumas, each has its own histories and have both historical development and particular interpretations (301). For instance, Rosalie from the Cullen family, died with the trauma of her love life. She wanted to bear children where, while vampires cannot do so. So, when Bella gets pregnant, she is the only one who stood against the whole family to take care of the baby. In this paper, it is analysed that, all the main characters have undergone, some important traumatic experiences that has been turned into Gothic elements and considered to be Gothic literature.

Another interpretation that should be noted in the vampires is that they all are surrounded by the theme of tragic love. All had past traumatic experiences and are connected only because they are vampires at different places. In the twentieth century, the portrayal of vampires was so different that they were concentrated in sexuality. Many characters were depicted as the polymorph perverse (Carol,11). *Twilight* was transferred into movies, where the

sexual, erotic part of the vampire is well enhanced.

In conclusion, *Twilight* entwines the concepts of Gothic literature in a different perspective through psychoanalytic ideas as the root cause. The twentieth century gothic literary traditions have been broken out in this series. With the concepts of emotions, supernatural intrigue and fantasy, psychoanalytic ideas also blend well with the characters.in this paper, the gothic elements were highlighted with respective references. Behind those elements, they also have psychological elements blend with it. In postmodern gothic literature, Gothic elements are associated with psychological elements and *Twilight* stands as a pioneer example of it.

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# Beyond Metal and Flesh: A posthuman analysis of the film *Chappie*

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## ABSTRACT

*Chappie* is a science fiction film directed by Neill Blomkamp in 2015. The film focuses on an AI prototype named Chappie who mimics a human mind to the point of feeling emotions and having opinions. Chappie is exposed to a world filled with both danger and the potential for innocence. The robot finds itself at a crossroads between good and evil as people want to use him for their own gain and he ends up becoming a pawn in the hands of humans.

There appears to be an absence of a comprehensive literary analysis of the film from a posthuman perspective. This research bridges this gap by conducting an in-depth examination of *Chappie* through a posthuman lens. The film is analysed using posthuman concepts of Cyborgs, Personhood and Consciousness as provided by Donna Haraway, Pramod K Nayar and Masataka Watanabe respectively. The key findings of this research are that the AI creation Chappie aptlyfits in the definition of cyborg, person and possesses consciousness which makes him an advanced posthuman being. The study further dissects intricate scientific concepts visually depicted in the film, positioning it within the contemporary landscape of advancing technology.

## INTRODUCTION

Posthumanism is a philosophical, cultural and critical framework that redefines the principles and ideas of what it means to be human. It came about as a response to technological developments, especially in the areas of robotics, biotechnology, and artificial intelligence. These fields have the potential to alter or enhance human capabilities. It emerged after the criticism of Critical Humanism for "autonomous rationality of human mind, agency of an individual and exclusion of certain races" (Nayar, 2014). The focus of critical posthumanism is on the ways in which organic bodies, humans, machines, and other living forms are now interdependent and coevolving. Posthumanism provides a more inclusive understanding of life.

Science fiction films have always included posthuman elements. Films like *Blade Runner* (1982), *Her* (2013) and *Ex Machina* (2014) have elements that blur the lines between human and non-human. By presenting complex concepts visually, these films serve as a catalyst to simplify scientific ideas. This helps the audience to expand their awareness of research and science. *Chappie* is an addition to this collection of science fiction films.

*Chappie* was directed by Neill Blomkamp in 2015. The film is set in a near-future Johannesburg, South Africa, where crime rates are rising, and law

enforcement turns to robotic police officers to maintain order. The storyline becomes interesting when an engineer named Deon successfully develops an AI prototype that replicates the human mind, capable of experiencing emotions and forming opinions. When his project is rejected by the manager, he steals one of the decommissioned robot police and programs the new code into this stolen robot. The newly awakened robot is named Chappie and is exposed to a world filled with both danger and the potential for innocence.

Chappie's journey unfolds as he learns from his surroundings, displaying childlike innocence and curiosity. However, his development is complicated by his exposure to criminal activities by a gang of street thugs. Deon aims to use Chappie's potential for good, while the gangsters intend to exploit him for their crimes like stealing and killing. As tensions escalate between the criminal underworld and Deon, Chappie becomes a pawn in a larger conflict. The film explores questions about the nature of free will, the consequences of upbringing, and the blurred lines between good and evil in a world where man and machine coexist.

This research aims to conduct an in-depth literary analysis of the posthuman aspects of the film *Chappie* to bring forth the scientific concepts simplified by the makers of the film in the posthuman era.

**Rationale for primary text**

*Chappie* is chosen as a primary text for this research as it has a higher rating than other films that focus on robots. The film introduces newer concepts in robotics compared to films like *Terminator* and *Robo-Dog* from 2015, which do not explore ideas like cyborgs and consciousness. Another factor in selecting *Chappie* is Neill Blomkamp's reputation as a science fiction director, with his earlier films being widely recognized, watched, and positively reviewed by certain critics.

**Literature Review**

The existing body of research is relatively limited for the film *Chappie* yet researchers have brought out the good, bad and the ugly side of robots and technology. Within this scholarly landscape, particular attention is dedicated to exploring the film's portrayal of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and its broader technological implications.

In the article 'The Image of Future Human Represented in *Chappie*', the author Muchammad Sofyan Firmansyah uses representation theory given by Stuart Hall to analyse the film. According to Hall, representation is an essential part of the process by which meaning is produced and exchanged between members of a culture (Hall, 1997).

The author analyses Chappie as an embodied vision of the future human and highlights the shift in the representation of technology in Hollywood after 2010. In the past, technology was often depicted as an extension of humanity, such as Iron Man's suit, but films like *Chappie* portray a "future human" where individuals transcend their physical bodies, fully transforming into a state of consciousness. This transformation leaves behind any semblance of blood, flesh, or bones. According to the author, Chappie's existence as a robot with artificial intelligence signifies that technological creations are not primarily designed to replace or alter humans but rather to assist.

The author concludes by stating that the film shows the radical evolution of humans into technological machines called robots. The film implies that technology and science cannot be blamed for the change of human nature because it is humans who invent and use this technology. The film provides the idea that transferring the human consciousness to the AI robot will erase the concept of lifespan as the robot can be electrically charged. Here, AI robots come as a new figure of human beings in the future era as they are not worried about death and can live normally without human body limitations (Firmansyah, 2022).

Seth Fletcher in his article, 'What *Chappie* says and doesn't say about Artificial Intelligence', shares similar views of Firmansyah. He offers his perspective on the debate surrounding whether we should embrace or fear AI. Fletcher contrasts Chappie, an innocent and honest robot, with the human characters in the film, whom he describes as "incarnations of the worst of humanity." The author emphasises that robots ultimately reflect what humans shape them to be, as seen when Chappie interacts with criminals in the film, leading to his transformation into an evil-minded entity. Chappie, in the film, is portrayed as humanity's last hope.

Fletcher notes that on one hand, Elon Musk, Stephen Hawking and Nick Bostrom are warning humans that superintelligent machines could pose an existential threat to humanity. On the other, we have AI researchers and experts telling us these fears are misplaced. Meanwhile, technology is evolving quickly. The author states the existence of Chappie underscores that discussions about AI's risks and benefits are neither paranoid nor fantastical but essential.

As Firmansyah and Fletcher state that technology is used for the good and depends on humans, some researchers present a counter

narrative and research upon the anxiety and the bad parts of AI and technology. In the article 'Digital Integration', the author Jacob C. Boccio, focuses on the anxiety that surrounds humans around technology. The author argues that the depiction of AI in recent films urges that we reevaluate the ways that we define our own identity. According to the author, posthumanism is where humans exist beyond the human condition, literally becoming cyborgs.

In contrast to the previous article, Boccio discusses that there is a fear that the robots will not act the way we are shown in the film. He investigates how a new consciousness is created in the film and how a robot is representative of the intersection between reality and fiction. The author notes that in the film, technology has become a central role in society and daily lives. The author concludes by suggesting that AI is often envisioned as inheriting our quest for meaning, as they are perceived as direct reflections of humanity itself.

Scott Midson in his article, '*Chappie*- What if only Machines can Save us now?', moves in the same direction of noticing how Hollywood films portray technology like it was an enemy we were supposed to overcome. The rationale for portraying them this way is that technology is alienating us from our own nature, leading to a loss of freedom and identity.

Midson explains the fears of humans about robots such as Chappie as they take away the uniqueness of humans. This uniqueness is linked to rationality, use of language and bipedalism. Building robots like Chappie, challenges that. This causes a state of discomfort as machines and robots become a little too like humans and we as humans feel like we need to overcome the threat.

The author states that Chappie's autonomy is dangerous. The focus is on the anxiety of man who always wants to be ahead of robots and remain our 'slaves'. The author states that "With Chappie, we are exposed to the threat of the other (i.e. the uncontrollable), as well as to the threat of the same (i.e. that which encroaches upon safeguards of human uniqueness, such as freedom or agency). These threats come from the same position that begins with the human as a starting point, though" (Midson, 2015).

There is some research done on the film that focuses on the postcolonial aspects that are present in posthumanism and analyses the film using a postcolonial lens. In the book chapter titled 'Subaltern imaginings of Artificial In *Enthiran* and *Chappie*', William Brown analyses how films relating to AI make use of labour carried out by the people of 'subaltern' especially from Asia. The author highlights the contributions of these 'subaltern' individuals in shaping the posthuman world. This connection between postcolonialism and the Eurocentric perspective on technology and AI underscores how films like *Enthiran* and *Chappie* can facilitate the development of a more inclusive understanding of posthumanism as a whole. Brown categorises *Chappie* as 'Postcolonial science fiction'. According to his analysis, the film shifts its focus away from the dominance of Western nations. Brown highlights the film's portrayal of programmer Deon Wilson, played by Dev Patel, who goes to great lengths, even risking his life, to create Chappie, despite facing opposition from his boss. This aspect of the narrative underscores the presence of postcolonial themes in the film.

The author proceeds to discuss the film's conclusion, where Chappie transfers Deon's consciousness into another robot, presenting a transhumanist fantasy. The author interprets this act as an empowerment narrative, particularly for Dev Patel and his ethnicity.

The author concludes by highlighting the film's unusual setting in Johannesburg which challenges the Western AI narrative (which are set in locations like Los Angeles, New York or London). It symbolises inclusivity and expresses both empowerment and disempowerment, shifting the focus from the typical Western locations for technological advancement.

**Research Problem**

There appears to be an absence of a comprehensive literary analysis of the film from a posthuman perspective. As our society advances with the coexistence of humans and technology, new versions of robots are created. This study aims to delve into the posthuman dimensions of the film *Chappie*, focusing on three evolving scientific concepts: Cyborg, Personhood, and Consciousness. These areas represent developing frontiers in science. By exploring these concepts within the visual narrative of the film, the research aims to facilitate a clearer understanding of these scientific ideas among the audience.

**Research Objectives**

- To examine the film *Chappie* through the lens of Donna Haraway's *A Cyborg Manifesto.*
- To analyse the characteristics of personhood in the robot Chappie.
- To understand the portrayal of consciousness in the film *Chappie*.

**Theoretical Framework**

The theoretical framework used in this research to analyse *Chappie* is Critical

Posthumanism. Critical posthumanism challenges traditional conceptions of subjectivity, agency and human identity by examining the impact of technology, culture, and socio-political forces on the human condition. It is a broad spectrum that is made up of a lot of smaller concepts. Three of the major concepts that constitute posthumanism are: Cyborgs, Personhood and Consciousness. These conceptual frameworks are used to analyse the film *Chappie* in this research.

Donna Haraway's *A Cyborg Manifesto: Science, Technology, and Socialist-Feminism in the Late Twentieth Century* was first published in 1985. Haraway, a prominent feminist theorist and cultural critic, explores the intersections of gender, technology, and identity in the context of late 20th-century society.

According to Haraway, "A cyborg is a cybernetic organism, a hybrid of machine and organism, a creature of social reality as well as a creature of fiction" (Haraway, 1991). In the essay, Haraway presents the concept of cyborg which represents the hybrid of three boundary breakdowns: human and animal (brought about by evolution and changing human attitudes about the relationship between humans and animals), human and machine (brought about by the advancement of machine technology in the late twentieth century), and physical and non-physical (brought about by microelectronic devices and the political invisibility of cyborgs). (Jennifer, 2020). Haraway's definition of cyborgs is going to be used to analyse the film *Chappie*. The second dimension of posthumanism which will be discussed is the concept of Personhood. Pramod K Nayar in his book *Posthumanism* provides a rich understanding of the concept of personhood. Nayar defines it as "Personhood may be defined here as an individual who is a moral agent. A moral agent is a being who is able to make moral judgements about moral matters and is able to act on those judgments." According to Nayar, it is not necessary to be human to be a person. The concept of personhood as presented by Pramod K Nayar will be used.

The last dimension analysed in this research is consciousness. There is a long standing debate about consciousness in the posthuman world. In theory, consciousness can be shifted to a machine (Watanabe, 2022). The theoretical concept of uploading human consciousness to a non-biological digital medium, often referred to as "mind uploading" (Ledbetter, 2023).

Associate Professor Masataka Watanabe at the University of Tokyo believes that mind uploading will become a reality in the near future. In his book named, *From Biological to Artificial Consciousness,* Watanabe presents a process where our own consciousness seamlessly continues in a digital arena. He suggests processes in the way it is done. Watanabe's book will be used to analyse consciousness in the film *Chappie*.

**Methodology**

This research will use literary analysis to examine the film. This study draws upon concepts presented in Pramod K Nayar's book *Posthumanism,* Donna Haraway's *A cyborg Manifesto* and Masatas Waranabe's *From Biological to Artificial Consciousness* as a theoretical framework for the analysis.

The analysis is divided into three parts, the first will focus on the analysis of Cyborg in the film. The second part of the analysis includes the concepts of Personhood and lastly, the idea of consciousness will be explored.

**Analysis**

1. Cyborg

In *A Cyborg Manifesto,* Donna Haraway defines a cyborg. She writes, "A cyborg is a cybernetic organism, a hybrid of machine and organism, a creature of social reality as well as a creature of fiction" (Haraway, 1991). This definition can be divided into four different parts. Haraway talks about:

- Cybernetic organism
- A hybrid of Machine and organism
- Creature of social reality
- Creature of fiction

The AI creation in the film *Chappie* fits all four components of the definition given by Donna Haraway. Firstly, breaking down the definition, we understand that Cybernetics is the study of communication and control processes in biological, mechanical, and electronic systems. Accordingly, a "cybernetic organism" functions according to a communication and control network.

Chappie was created by a scientist named Deon Wilson. Upon its initial activation, Chappie adapts to the social environment, operating without knowledge of language for communication. The AI's functionality relies on external control, and Deon, Yolandi, and Amerika take on the roles of mentors, teaching Chappie everything it needs to know. Chappie calls Deon his maker, Yolandi his mother, and Amerika his father. Chappie's operations are guided by a communication and control network, or as Haraway would put it, a Cybernetic organism.

Secondly, Haraway talks about a hybrid of machines and organisms. Put another way, a cyborg would have elements that would qualify it as classically "alive" and, then again, not (Senft, 2001). Chappie is a robot but has a lot of human qualities.

As soon as Chappie gets activated, he shows the emotions of fear. Emotions are classified as human qualities, not ones that robots possess. Empathy is a prominent aspect of Chappie's character. He continually persuades himself and the audience of his realness. He says, "Chappie is real. Chappie does not want fears" (Chappie, Blomkamp, 00:52:41).

According to Haraway, the third and fourth parts of the definition are creatures of social reality and creatures of fiction. Haraway argues that in philosophical terms, there is no real space between "lived social reality" and "fiction" because one category is constantly defining and refining the other (Senft, 2001).

Here, social reality is understanding the world that we live in in relation to social aspects and our interactions with other beings. Chappie becomes a prime example of a creature shaped by social reality. Upon activation, he emerges as a metaphorical newborn, devoid of knowledge and even unfamiliar with the English language. Yolandi says, "He is like a baby," (Chappie, Blomkamp, 00:27:04) and reassures him that no one is going to hurt him. Chappie analyses the world around him by learning words like "watch" and "chicken". The robot starts copying, imitating, and learning from what they teach him. Being a product of social reality and introduced into an environment dominated by gangsters, Chappie undergoes a transformation. He acquires skills such as shooting and using profanity, adopting a set of undesirable qualities reflective of his upbringing. Consequently, his demeanour and presentation undergoes a huge shift.



Figure A

Figure A shows that Chappie is a creature of his social reality, and he mirrors his surroundings. His looks are of a typical gangster holding a gun and neck filled with gold chains. Haraway then further defines cyborgs, "Cyborgs is a condensed image of both imagination and material reality" (Haraway, 1991). This again holds true because Chappie was the idea of Deon, his maker. Deon worked day and night to transform Chappie from a conceptual idea into a tangible material reality. In line with Haraway's perspective, Chappie is a condensed image of imagination and reality, categorising him as a cyborg.

In the next few paragraphs of her essay, Haraway says, "The main trouble with cyborgs, of course, is that they are the illegitimate offspring of militarism and patriarchal capitalism, not to mention state socialism. But illegitimate offspring are often exceedingly unfaithful to their origins. Their fathers, after all, are inessential" (Haraway, 1991).

She calls cyborgs the illegitimate offspring of three major fathers: militarism, patriarchal capitalism, and state socialism. According to the Cambridge Dictionary, militarism is "the belief that it is necessary to have strong armed forces and that they should be used in order to win political or economic advantages." This stands perfectly true to the film *Chappie*. The opening scenes of the film portray the escalating crime rates in Johannesburg, South Africa, prompting the creation of a fleet of robotic cops designed to combat the rising criminal activities. In the film, this scout of robocops is introduced by the chief of police by saying, "Today, we usher in a new day, one that represents the end of crime, the end of corruption, and the start of the rebirth of our city! Welcome to the world's first robotic police force" (Chappie, Blomkamp, 00:1:19).

Secondly, capitalism comes to play here as these robocops are made by a weapon manufacturing company named Tetravaal. After this robocop was introduced to South Africa, there were new orders and interests from China, South Korea, and the US. It becomes evident from the first few minutes of the novel that the motives behind the creation of this cyborg are inherently capitalistic in nature. The CEO of Tetravaal announces to the employees, "The police chief has just requested to place an order for 100 scouts. This is very, very good news" (Chappie, Blomkamp, 00:10:02).

Haraway's theory of it being an illegitimate child of militarism, capitalism, and state socialism holds true. In the next sentence, Haraway suggests that these offsprings are unfaithful to their origins. This holds partly true for the film. Even though his creator is Deon, the robot Chappie gets into the bad influence of Yolandi and Amerika and starts doing criminal things. Even when the creator asks him to stop, he does not. So, in a way, Chappie is unfaithful to its creator, Deon.

Haraway then offers two different perspectives of looking at Cyborgs. In the first perspective, she views a cyborg world as the culmination of a process where a grid of control is finally imposed on the entire planet. It is seen from a defensive manner where there is widespread control, which will lead to destruction. In another perspective, she envisions a cyborg world where people embrace and live with the social and bodily

realities of being connected with animals and machines (Haraway, 1991).

*Chappie* can be looked at from a second perspective rather than the first. In the second, Haraway says, "From another perspective, a cyborg world might be about lived social and bodily realities in which people are not afraid of their joint kinship with animals and machines, not afraid of permanently partial identities and contradictory standpoints" (Haraway, 1991). As the film progresses, it becomes apparent that Chappie and the humans forge a path toward a life characterised by kinship. Chappie goes to the extent of considering them his family, referring to them as mother, father, and creator. There is an absence of attempts to disrupt or destroy this familial and friendly bond. Despite the advanced nature of the robot, a peaceful and harmonious relationship develops between humans and Chappie.

**2. Personhood**

According to Pramod K Nayar, "Personhood may be defined here as an individual who is a moral agent. A moral agent is a being who is able to make moral judgments about moral matters and is able to act on those judgments" (Nayar, 2014). Any individual who can take moral responsibility for his or her action is a moral agent and a person. According to this definition given by Pramod K Nayar, Chappie is a person.

Chappie's personhood is underscored by instances where he demonstrates the ability to make moral judgments and act upon them. The film portrays a humanization of the cyborg, leading him to operate in accordance with his own will. These aspects contribute to Chappie's transformation from a mere machine to a person, as defined by the attributes of personhood.

When Deon creates the code for the cyborg, he says, "Ma'am, I think I have cracked it. The world's first proper full artificial intelligence. This is a computer system that might be smarter than a human. I could show it a piece of art, and this thing, this being, could judge that art. It could decide if it liked it. It could write music and poetry" (Chappie, Blomkamp, 00:17:21). This ability to make a judgement is what makes Chappie a person. Deon first refers to the cyborg as "this" and in the next sentence itself calls it a "being". It is as if he believes that he has created another human.

According to Nayar, an increase in the emotionalism of the cyborg is another indicator of personhood. From being unfeeling machines, we see them evolving into creatures who think (according to their programming) and feel (beyond their programming) (Nayar, 2014). Chappie expresses emotions right from the moment of activation. The progression is evident, starting with the emotion of fear, evolving into empathy, and eventually transforming into a profound love for his mother, Yolandi. This emotional journey culminates in observable actions as Chappie takes some action fueled by his affection for Yolandi after her death.

Even though there are no physical tears when Yolandi dies, Chappie makes crying sounds, as he cries loudly for his mother. He shouts and tries to bring her back to life. His environment and extended interaction with the human species enables him to acquire the features and characteristics of humans (Nayar, 2014). He knows that Deon's colleague Vincent Moore is responsible for killing his mother, and Chappie goes to take revenge. This revenge stems from his love for Yolandi. He goes angrily with the intention to kill Vincent Moore. In this scene, Chappie's intense anger is evident in his demeanour and overall attitude. He hits Vincent Moore and says, "I'm going to crush you, bad man. I am going to crush you for hurting mommy!" (Chappie, Blomkamp, 1:43:52). Chappie then says, "I am going to teach you a lesson. You are a very bad man" (Chappie, Blomkamp, 1:44:12).

Here, a genuine emotional shift and a profound moral judgement is seen in Chappie— a judgement that might be challenging even for a human to make. In this moment of the film, the characteristic of personhood is most evident. Chappie hits Vincent Moore some more, but then he says, "Now, I forgive you, bad man" (Chappie, Blomkamp, 1:44:41). The capacity for forgiveness is traditionally considered a distinctly human emotion. The fact that Chappie, a cyborg, demonstrates this emotion is a testament to his personhood. It is shocking that Chappie has forgiven someone he had held so much anger against. This ability to act upon complex moral judgments reinforces the notion that Chappie transcends his robotic nature, embodying the qualities that define a person.

One other characteristic of a person that Pramod K Nayar talks about is that of the "arrival of self-consciousness" (Nayar 2014). As the film progresses, Chappie becomes aware of his existence, and the concept of self-consciousness comes to him. In a part in the film, Chappie is sitting on the bed with his mother Yolandi, and she explains to him that "it is not how you look. It is special, like what is inside. That is what makes you different." She proceeds to touch his chest and say, "Inside there is a Chappie. It is really who you are. Your Soul" (Chappie, Blomkamp, 00:57:42). When Chappie is able to make a copy of Yolandi's consciousness, he says, "I know what consciousness is. I know myself." (Chappie, Blomkamp, 1:24:00). This awareness of his existence makes Chappie a person.

**3. Consciousness**

In the book *From Biological to Artificial Consciousness*, author Masataka Watanabe discusses the possibility of uploading one's consciousness to a machine. He believes that in the future, this is possible. He writes, "I believe that at some point in the future, we humans will inevitably learn how to transfer consciousness and extend our lives in some mechanical form" (Watanabe, 2022). According to Watanabe, being certain of one's own existence is what consciousness is (Watanabe, 2022). As observed in the personhood theory, Chappie knew of his own existence, so even though he is a cyborg, he was a person with consciousness.

Watanabe then poses the question of whether human consciousness can truly reside in a machine (Watanabe, 2022). He further says that Ray Kurzweil, Director of Engineering at Google, predicts this will be possible by the middle of this century. According to him, transplanting human consciousness into a machine will be an invasive and time-consuming process.

In the film, we can see that Chappie cracks the code of transferring consciousness. He makes a copy of his mother's consciousness and he uploads it to another robot after her death. This ensures that his mother can live forever. He follows a similar procedure after Deon is shot. In the film, it is shown that the process of transferring consciousness takes only a few minutes, but it opens up the thought to the audience that it is possible. With the rise of posthumanism, transfer of consciousness and mind uploading is possible. Maybe not in the way shown in the film, but it is possible, and scientists are researching it extensively.

Watanabe then suggests ways in which this transfer can occur. He says that for this to occur, a transition state must be provided where the left biological hemisphere is connected and consciously integrated into a device that plays the role of the right hemisphere and vice versa. He puts forward a three-step procedure to realise this transition state. Firstly, a device with neutral consciousness is prepared, then this is connected to our own brain while we are alive, and gradually, our memory is transferred over.

In the film, for the process of transferring consciousness, Chappie steals a helmet called a neural transmitter from the lab that can read the thoughts of humans. He then makes Yolandi sit down and places the neural transmitter on her head. He says, "Consciousness is like energy. This helmet reads the energy from you and me" (Chappie, Blomkamp, 1:22:00). In a research paper, McFadden posits that consciousness is the brain's energy field, and this theory can pave the way towards the development of a conscious AI, with robots that are aware and have the ability to think becoming a reality.

Similar to this theory, Chappie says, "I just need to figure out how to get it out." (Chappie, Blomkamp, 1:23:00). He takes the help of the internet to learn about all that is related to consciousness. Chappie then types in various codes to materialise the consciousness. It fails a couple of times before the code is successful, but he is able to get Yolandi's consciousness out.

When Deon is at the verge of dying, Chappie tells him that he has figured it out. Chappie connects the neural transmitter to Deon's head and the wires connected to another robot in front of the police scout. When Deon is ready, Chappie types a code, and as soon as he presses enter, Deon's body dies. But soon, the robot wakes up, and Deon is alive in the form of the robot. This way is very similar to what Professor Watanabe has suggested: "Firstly, a device with neutral consciousness is prepared, then this is connected to our own brain while we are alive, and gradually our memory is transferred over" (Watanabe, 2023). Even though this is not the scientific way to do it, it provokes the audience to think about consciousness in a new light.

**Conclusion**

The film *Chappie* explores the concepts of posthumanism through the lens of Donna Haraway's cyborg manifesto. Chappie embodies Haraway's definition of a cyborg as a cybernetic organism—a machine that functions within a communication and control network, exhibiting a hybrid of machine and organism qualities. Chappie's journey unfolds as a product of his social reality, navigating a world dominated by militarism, capitalism, and state socialism. The film explores Chappie's personhood, as he evolves from a machine to a moral agent capable of making complex judgments, displaying emotions, and even exhibiting self-consciousness. Finally, the film introduces the concept of consciousness, pushing the boundaries of scientific possibilities in transferring and uploading consciousness into machines.

The concepts of Cyborg, personhood and consciousness in the film raises thought-provoking questions about the future of artificial intelligence and its potential impact on human-machine relationships. As technology continues to advance, the film enables the audiences to think about the ethical and moral implications of Artificial Intelligence. The film also brings in some kind of awareness to the audience about scientific concepts like mind uploading, a topic currently at the forefront of research.

While *Chappie* prompts the audience to explore posthumanism, it is important to acknowledge certain limitations. The film is a work

of fiction, and its portrayal of AI, consciousness transfer, and posthuman elements is dramatised for cinematic purposes. Real-world implications may differ significantly from the depicted scenarios. As Masataka Watanabe notes, "In film and television depictions, consciousness transplantation usually occurs through some noninvasive procedure with some fancy device scanning the brain from outside the cranium in a matter of minutes. Having read this far, you no doubt see how this would be impossible; transplanting human consciousness into a machine will be an invasive time-consuming process" (Watanabe, 2022). Additionally, the film's focus on individual cases, such as Chappie's, may not capture the broader complexities and challenges that could arise in a society populated by intelligent machines. The audience would have to do their own research after watching the film and not just merely trust the fictional narrative presented to them.

While this research has delved into the posthuman themes within *Chappie*, it is essential to acknowledge the vastness and complexity of the broader posthumanism discourse. Posthumanism encompasses a plethora of concepts, theories, and interdisciplinary perspectives that extend beyond the scope of this research. This research merely scratches the surface of the multifaceted discourse of posthumanism.

Chappie serves as an exploration of the evolving relationship between humans and machines in a posthuman world. As society progresses towards an era where artificial intelligence becomes a part of our day to day life, films like Chappie become more relevant. It encourages audiences to engage in meaningful conversations about AI and a technologically advanced future.

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# The Sound, the Space and the Uncanny: A Critique of *Kantara: A Legend*

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## ABSTRACT

The movie *Kantara:* A Legend deals with how myth, beliefs and traditional customs determine the lives of a local village community living near the forest. The myth says that if the God has to give happiness and peace to the King, the King has to give the villagers the land the across which the sound (of the God) traversed. The presence of the God is indicated by a terrifying sound produced by the man who comes as the Bhootakola. The perception of the supernatural done through the strange and wild cry of Bhootakola, fills the villagers minds with awe and piety. The paper is an attempt to analyze how sound and space are intricately intertwined with the plot and how it plays a significant role in the lives of the village community.

**Keywords :** Film, Regional cinema, Legend and Myth, Rural spaces, Kanthara.

## INTRODUCTION

The corelation between the sense of space and the existence of human beings has been the interest of scholars and literary critics. The concept of space is significant for human beings as it takes part in forming the identity of human beings and defines mutual relations thus actively participates in the construction of human history. Space is abstract and concrete at the same time and it include multiple aspects like geography, landscape and architecture. The contemporary research in spatiality can be traced back to scholars like Foucault and Bakhtin. Conkan, Marius, and Daiana Gârdan say, "The spatial turn in the 1970s can be seen as a "big bang" reasserting the importance of spatiality in socio-cultural studies, a path opened by Michel Foucault's "archaeologies" and "heterotopologies" and …traced back to the chronotopic inquiries of Mikhail Bakhtin, in the poetics of space delivered by Gaston Bachelard, the poststructuralist geo-philosophy of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, the postcolonial critique of Edward Said and Homi Bhabha, and in the feminist theories developed by Gloria Anzaldúa and Doreen Massey." (25)

Sound is a sense, a sense of perception though ears. Sound implies either physical proximity or distance. Thus, sound plays an integral part in geographical awareness and in determining spatial relationships. Neal Alexander says that, "Sensory perceptions are at once fundamental to any geographical awareness – which means making sense of the places and spaces we inhabit or encounter – and crucial to the aesthetic dimensions of literature…"Sense" is both a material encounter within the world and an act of understanding directed towards that world, as though from outside it. Sense implies physical proximity and mental distance, immersion and detachment simultaneously." (39)

Landscape is one of the most important elements of space which is closely connected with human lives. The study of

landscapes includes landscape and the supernatural, landscape and human life, landscape and culture are to be taken into consideration. Landscape plays a vital role in the life of living beings; other than any other external entity, it is the landscape that determines the lives of those who occupy that space.

Space which is abstract and concrete at the same time is identified with different senses. The sense of sound can recognize concrete space through measuring distance and proximity. In the movies *Kantara: A Legend*, the recurring motives of sound and space are intertwined as sound is used to measure geographical space. In the movie Kantara landscape/space encompasses a broader meaning which includes occupancy, ownership, class struggle, spirituality, legitimacy and so on. Interestingly, space or landscape in Kantara is inseparable from the sound that creates the boundary for the space. It is the sense of space and sense of sound that controls the plot in the movie. Kantara the name suggests forest, a geographical perception where there is a co-existence of human beings and non-human beings. From a historical perspective, forest symbolises harmony and peace; at the same time there is an uncanny feeling that causes fear. History says that during the ancient times, the whole earth was nothing but a big forest and later human beings converted it into land for their convenience.

The king in search of peace leaves the palace- his comfortable space and reaches a forest, a strange place with strange people. It is from that strange place that he gets peace. At first, he listens to the sound, sound of an anklet. When he saw the Stone God, his eyes filled with tears and he feels a kind of infinite happiness. As requests the people around him to let him take the stone God, the God through an oracle, puts forward a condition. The Demi-God asks him to give them the land to which his sound traversed- he makes a loud roar. Here the method of understanding the space is done -not through the sense of sight- but through ears. The space is measured through the sound. Thus the inhabitants of the forest received land from the king when Panjuruli (the Demi-God) asked him give away the land to the local community as the God is ready to leave them for the King. He exchanged his land with peace; Panjuruli brought peace to his home.

When sound becomes an indispensable part of the space, there is a dramatization of the narrative space in a special way. Lily Alexander says,

> Symbolically, architecture and space are used to convey condensed meanings affiliated with particular symbolic forms in the cultural history of humankind. Dramatically, they represent and reinforce the films' most important dramatic moments, and reflect the films' dramatic structure. Psychologically, their shapes and meanings express and emphasize the characters' emotional states. Cinematographically, they provide a means of creating unique angles and perspectives, which enrich visual imagery. (33)

Throughout the film, the spectators are taken to a realm of uncanny space defined by mysterious sound. Shiva's hunting at night is portrayed in such a way that the audience get an experience of fear that the characters experience. When Shiva and his friends go for hunting, they happen to shoot a wild boar. It escapes and runs away while Shiva listens to the voice of an anklet- anklet of the Bhootakola. It is the sound that startles Shiva and it reminds him of something and he runs away with fear. The same thing gets repeated when he accompanies the landlord to the house of his mistress. In both these scenes we see Shiva who is shivering with fear. Shiva, who is bold and chivalrous at daytime, transforms himself to a totally different person, when he listens to the sound-sound of an anklet from the forest. And of course, there is a glimpse of a wild boar (the Varaha) which is visible only to Shiva.

Shiva's father's disappearance to the forest is the result of a conflict between the then landlord and the Bhootakola. The landlord asks whether the voice heard through the Bhootakola really comes from the God. In order to prove that it is the God who speaks, the Bhootakola vanishes into the forest. Nobody sees him after that. Later the present landlord asks Guruva to manipulate his voice to support the interest of the landlord, he refuses. As a result, he kills Guruva. Thus sound turns out to be a recurring motif in the film.

There is a constant reference to the space throughout the movie. The plot revolves around the community's authority over the land and the landlord's attempt to snatch it away from them. The third party involved here is the government represented by the Forest Department. The forest dept attempts make a survey of the land so as to decide the boundary of the reserve forest. Thus the boundary of the same space is done through two different ways. The forest is restricted space: the villagers are not allowed to enter the forest. -it is a space owned by the government. There are two ways of creating the boundary-one is done by the demi God who did it with his loud voice. The other way of creating boundary is done by the forest department. The first incident gives land to the villagers whereas the second one is to snatch the land from them

The space; sound paradigm dominates the narrative rather the narrative, acts as a connecting

link between the characters and their space. The sound comes from the forest is a reminder that the God is watching over the land and his people. The awe -inspiring and mysterious sound controls the movement of the plot. The fearful sound terrorises Shiva and forces him to drink more to escape from the reality. Though he resisted the sound for a long time, by end of the movie, Shiva accepts and sound listens to it and he tells the Forest Officer that the forest spoke and he has heard it. Justifying the myth-mythological story telling- the myth behind the land/space allotted to this local community.

In the last part, the landlord asks them to take the stone and leave his space. He no more needs the stone God. He needs his land and wants these people to leave the people. Even during that time, Shiva's transformation is accompanied by his loud roar. The supernatural power helps him to destroy the landlord who stood against him. The myth is justified at last. Like his father Shiva too disappears to the forest.

The conflict in the movie is for acquiring the space rather for the ownership of the space. The disappearance of Shiva's father into the thick forest is an enigma of which nobody has a clear idea. Nobody knows where he has gone. In the end, Shiva too disappears to the forest and the movie comes to an abrupt end. The space-the forest again proves to be an uncanny environment.

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