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**Dr R Pranesh Kumar | Dr Sharmistha Purkayastha  
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# BODHI

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## **FOREWORD**

Art is an expression of ideas, thoughts and feelings in a creative manner. Visual arts expand its horizons to Pictures, Sculptures, Photography, Films, Architecture and much more. Visual arts are powerful to an extent that it can break the barriers of language in communicating and conveying meanings. As Language and Literature are interwoven and contribute to the growth of each other, so is Art and Literature. The latter is related to each other since time immemorial.

This conference on Visual Art and Literature attempts to explore the relationship between art and literature and to justify how their bond enriches each other. Both these expressions are fundamental to human that they let them express effectively to others. Moreover, the conference provides the platform for a number of scholars and teachers to present their papers and indulge in fruitful discussion to bring to light various new challenges and new concepts in the relevant field. The parallel sessions with eminent chairpersons and resourceful papers for presentations add meaning to the conference.

This compilation of the conference papers in Bodhi International Journal of Research in Humanities, Arts and Science will serve as an excellent reference material for young scholars and educators alike. I wish that this attempt will stimulate further research and learning and bear fruit to everyone concerned.

I thank all the authors, participants, the convener and co-conveners for their valuable contributions.

**Dr. R. Pranesh Kumar**  
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## **EDITORIAL**

We are glad to announce that the Bodhi International Journal of Research in Humanities, Arts and Science is developed with the aim to assist researchers to grow at all levels — research scholars and students who are seeking publishing opportunities for their research works. The Bodhi International Journal of Research in Humanities, Arts and Science has always stood for achieving social responsibility and academic innovations. The journal will not only attempt to expose the major developments in its field, but it will also reveal the author's own views of connecting visual art and literature. Great works of art have inspired great works of literature, and great works of literature have inspired art. Thus, Art and Literature can be seen weaving around each other. No matter how different the forms are, both aid in understanding the written world through visual imagery. Focusing on this unique idea of connecting Art with Literature, the authors put forth various stimulating and inspiring content in this journal. The presence of such content promotes the quality of research at all levels and a wide range of scholars benefit from the diversity of the subject matter, which is to be considered as valuable. The papers reveal authors' deeply stored trustful thoughts and provide the opportunity to display the enthusiasm of claiming their research and bring out a scholarly volume proving their insight and depth of commendable scholarship.



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Academic Excellence in research continues promoting research support for young Scholars. Humanities, Arts and Science researches motivate all aspects of encounters across disciplines and research fields in multidisciplinary views, by assembling research groups and consequently projects, supporting publications with this inclination and organizing programmes. Internationalization of research work is the unit that seeks to develop its scholarly profile in research through quality publications. And visibility of research creates sustainable platforms for research and publication, such as series of books; motivating dissemination of research results for people and society.

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# **Corporeality in Context: A Look at the Dimensions of corporeality in *The Seven Moons of Maali Almeida* by Shehan Karunatilaka**

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## **Abstract**

*The origin of 'body culture' has had a growing interest in literary discourses, which started in the 1920's and 1930's with those like Norbert Elias, Michel Foucault, and Pierre Bourdieu. In this context, corporeality has had a wide range of social and political influences that has been reflected in Literature over many years and recently it has included the facets that pertain to gender and culture within discourses of physicality. This paper explores the dynamics of corporeality in Shehan Karunatilaka's novel *The Seven Moons of Maali Almeida*, discussing the body as a text and the material spaces it occupies as a tool of power, a cultural symbol and as a technique in narratives to define the aesthetics of disability, and death. The narrative style used by Shehan Karunatilaka highlights corporeality and its political influences, in a war context. The study analyses Karunatilaka's description of Maali's sexual orientation through his spectatorship in corporeality. The practice of objectifying the body is what results in political and social chaos.*

**Keywords:** *Body culture, Corporeality, Political & Social influence of Corporeality, War context*

The embodiment or the physicality of human beings has its implication throughout literature. While we as humans perceive the importance of the body's physical being, we also assign or understand the physical body of every person's existence to different areas of life. But what does "body" mean? What meaning does the word hold in regard to literature? Bodies are organisms, but they also carry or hold meaning socially, culturally and historically. Anthropologist Mary Douglas implies that people who have created a highly structured universe would also invest great meaning and search for structure in the body's posture. This means that in today's power-ridden society, everybody position and movement carries meaning. In this context, the body is a text to be read, in light of its external control through other bodies.

An interesting implication of 'control of bodies' is seen in the novel *DaVinci Code* by Dan Brown. The monk Silas

is controlled by an external religious authority figure through whom he learns of a strict and conservative religious practice of self-flagellation. This is seen as the internalization of the institution's ordinances however gruesome it may be because of one's belief in it. In this case Silas, subdued to supremacy (be it in the form of God or the bishop) and indulged in self-flagellation which he regarded as punishment for his sin. Here, the body is a medium through which one can gain salvation, basically a way to appease the conscience of receiving ultimate punishment as the end of consequence. Silas' body is indirectly controlled, through the regulations or ordinances of religion. Similarly, in Karunatilaka's novel, while there are many other themes that are not concerned with the body or body politics, the central issue concerns the state's regulation of the body. The direct and indirect influences that the state has over an individual body are emphatic.

Karunatilaka's narrative highlights Louis Althusser's Repressive State Apparatuses, (RSA) (Klages 131) which in itself implies chaos, the author also brings to the forefront the extreme repressive mechanisms used by the nation. All of the repressive mechanisms are usually directed to the body, a physical consequence for those who don't submit to power. In the novel the protagonist suffers from the nation's power control and also brings to limelight the predicament of others who suffer without blame and the author illustrates through Maali, the protagonist, the enduring impact of society's power play even in the afterlife, an expression of his figment.

Maali Alemida uses this power control to satisfy his passions which help the reader understand his sexuality, kindled by mostly physical pleasures like others in the narrative. The novel mainly revolves around the afterlife of Maali Almeida, a Sri-Lankan journalist who is Half-Sinhalese and Half-Burgher and also identifies as a gay. Maali narrates his story as a dead man in the 'in-between' (a stage of the afterlife). During his life as a war-photographer, at a time when Sri Lanka experienced the extremities of civil war, Maali clicked controversial photos which reveal the Sri-Lankan government's ignorance of the 1983 riots. Maali's photos were eyed by an NGO and the Sri-Lankan authorities after his death.. This forms the progression of the narrative that also brings out the underlying racial violence carried out by the state. I would like to bring out through the study the differential impacts of one's physical embodiment as highlighted in the novel.

While many forms of corporal punishment exist, death is the ultimate form. Maali is killed because of power play in politics, Maali basically plays with fire throughout his life therefore his murder was organized by a group maintained indirectly by the State's authorities. Death is a tool used by people of power; it is organized by the state as a repressive mechanism. This was earlier exhibited by Michel Foucault in his *Discipline and Punish* where Foucault showed a punitive society that directed disciplinary measures towards the body. Similar to historical events, like the Holocaust, that was responsible for the genocide or systematic killing of a particular group of people, organized by the nation-state, Germany. (DeMello 83) The Nazi war was polemically fuelled by anti-semitism, which is a form of racial violence. The Holocaust exhibited a profound explication of hate culture in which

the State segregated bodies into a hierarchy of superiority over inferiority. (Britannica)

The narrator constantly draws an imagery of the riots, linking it to that of 1983:

You clicked her being dragged by the hair and doused in petrol.

And, right when the match was lit, the Nikon jammed. (Karunatilaka 60)

Dead children displayed on mats. The charred carcass of a village hut.

Women tied to poles with rags. Air-raid survivors trapped in camps staring back at the camera. (Karunatilaka 78)

Shehan pictures gruesome scenes of goriness that make the reader picture the embodiment of the scene within the narrative, which makes his narrative highly visual. Through his description Shehan tries to put forward the relations between power and violence. Moreover through descriptions such as this and others, Shehan brings to the forefront the impact of corporeality in a war narrative. It could be any kind of text. A photo just like a written text has textual capability. According to Mitchell, when pictures are used as an agency their power to influence has always provoked fear (Mitchell 7)

Through a close reading of body language and kinesthetics Shehan highlights the intertextuality of physical bodies and also reveals a psychosexual understanding of Maali. Maybe it was the size of the cheque, or the size of the shot Kuga poured, or the size of the forearms that passed you the drink, or the roughness of the palm that brushed against your back, but you found yourself warming to the company and the conversation. (110)

Through the stream of consciousness of Maali, the author shows first, his spectatorship of the bodies surrounding him. Maali makes a speculation of Kugarajah, expressing his sexual orientation; moreover a sort of powerplay is highlighted. Kugarajah coaxes Maali into working for him. In theorising Maali's sexual aesthetics, scholars such as Connell and Ward consider the engaging of men in same-sex behaviour. In this regard Maali's sexual desire for Kugarah is expressed through ethreism. These sexual aesthetics are considered as a proxy for other dimensions of sexuality. (Bridges 108) While Maali is advantaged for his Sinhalese origin, he is exploited for his

sexual orientation. Being a closeted gay, Maali is sexually exploited on his meeting with Major Raja.(250-52) The novel portrays Major Raja's exploitation of Maali as casual molestation in juxtaposition to casual racism that exists between the Tamils and Sinhalese. These factors bring out the physical emphasis of politics and bodily suppression through power in a society. According to Krause, "The needs and passions of the body have always been seen as powerful sources of motivation for human action, and hence the human body is widely recognized to have a role in instigating agency" (300). Krause's statement provides a lens into the workings of politics as an agency of instigation, very different from democratic politics.

In a society ridden by hierarchical power and controlled by racism, Maali is favoured and safeguarded because of his part-Sinhalese origin. This directly reveals the hierarchy of races or a system of classification embedded within the racial groups of the country. Sinhalese were favoured more since they were the majority against the Tamils, who claimed for an independent state. (Peiris) In an authoritarian government it is impossible to live in one's own individual rights, a dystopian society. According to Derinda Outram 'body' is the most personal and public thing that human beings possess, therefore it is also a basic political resource. On many incidents within the narrative, Shehan's mimesis makes the readers question the ownership of bodies. Do governments own the subjects' material bodies and their abstract products? Looking into colonial narratives, the negative activities thrust upon human bodies are brought into the limelight, through violence, brutal labour and other physical punishment. In this light, the body is seen as a site for conquest and subordination of the lower classes. (Stephanie 540)

Along the same lines of this discussion the procurement of dead bodies, is an interesting political phenomenon. Governments, countries, states usually retract the dead bodies' of their citizens in keeping with the rights and dignity of the dead person, however, Maali's corpse was not found nor retracted by his family or the authorities, his deceased body was mishandled by hit men and garbage disposers who toss his dismembered corpse into the Beira Lake. In the after-life Maali is unaware of the killer, but in the real world Maali's corpse is not handed to

his family. The reason for Maali's disappearance and death is kept confidential because of his suspicious job as a war-photographer and his actions that were against the convictions of the Sri-Lankan government. Shehan brings to the forefront the issues in corporeal ownership even after death, posing a more Marxist perspective. The working class has nothing to offer except their own labour which is a direct product from one's own body. In contrast the capitalist owns the labour and his social product.

In a society filled with political chaos and physical desire for power, the novel addresses the issues in a dystopia. The novel concerns itself with Sri-Lanka's political history and most of its representations are true. The influence of the physical body on politics and vice-versa is symbiotic. In the novel, Shehan Karunatilaka portrays the political and social chaotic scenario extended by death and murder as discussed above. In our lived society today too there are multiple indirect repressive mechanisms that suppress the uniqueness of individuality. The importance of such issues is analysed in the extent of physical exploitation in terms of sexual abuse, racism, and political power-play that advantages the superior body and disadvantages the inferior body. Although by no means does he study seek to reduce human existence to only its physical embodiment. Still, the novel contains much more to its narrative of Maali's after-life, which has to do with the human spirit. There are many themes, still discussed by the narrator in the novel and a more prominent display of Sri-Lanka's socio-political background, which can be analysed to further the study of the many themes of the novel through the lens of Cultural Materialism in order to attain a clear understanding of Sri-Lanka's political history. Corporeality iterates its footprint in political, social and historical discourses presented through the study.

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# “Beauty Lies in the Eyes of the Beholder”: Power, Control and Visual Art in Robert Browning’s “My Last Duchess”

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## Abstract

In particular, creative works such as painting, drawing, crafts, photography are used as a form of visual arts. The aspects of visual arts develop an aesthetic and artistic sense among people who have a keen interest in it. Based on the perception of the phrase ‘beauty lies in the eyes of the beholder,’ the purpose of the paper is to delineate how power and control are manifested in visual art with particular reference to Robert Browning’s poem “My Last Duchess” where the object of art created by an artist symbolises a duke’s command and authority over his former wife. In the poem, the egoistic and self-centred personality of the duke is projected through the representation of the artworks that he possesses in his house. The art gallery of his house resembles his pompous nature associated with cruelty and possessiveness towards his wife. The beautiful portrait of his last duchess showcases the duke as an art connoisseur. Therefore, the paper tries to explore how art can be used not just as a form of beauty but as a form of control and power.

**Keywords:** Power, Control, Visual Art, Beauty.

## Introduction

In particular, creative works such as painting, drawing, crafts, photography etc. are used as forms of visual arts. The aspects of visual arts develop an aesthetic and artistic sense among people who have a keen interest in it. Literature is generally supposed to be one of the significant forms of art as it helps to portray the characters in the stories in a significant way. In literature, visual arts basically take a greater role in creating the concrete objects based on the characters’ mental images. The different interpretations also take shape at the advent of visual imageries in the stories. It allows the readers to make a new notion of the inherent meanings that are hidden in the artistic works. So, in a sense, it engages the readers with the growth and development of the characters in the stories. The relationship between art and literature makes it clear that the great works of art, to a greater extent, have inspired each other. Therefore, art and literature are integrally associated as it complements each other in different ways.

First appeared in *Dramatic Lyrics* in 1842, “My Last Duchess” is one of the celebrated and discussed poems of Robert Browning. In the poem, the egoistic and self-centred personality of a duke is projected through the representation of the artworks that he possesses in his house. The poem is initiated by the duke with the

delineation of a woman’s portrait on the wall of his art gallery. Showcasing the unethical power of the duke is one of the main motifs of the poem. By showing the portrait of his wife to the messenger, the duke actually gives a hint of his past married life, and the power and supremacy that give him a supreme joy in life by controlling others. The shrewd and selfish personality of the duke of Ferrara is revealed when he talks about his wife’s behaviour and personality to the stranger. The duke’s power over his wife is vibrantly evident in his speech when he utters—

Oh sir, she smiled, no doubt,  
Whene’er I passed her; but who passed without  
Much the same smile? This grew; I gave commands;  
Then all smiles stopped together. (Loucks,  
lines 43-46)

To stop the duchess’ smile to opposite men, he commands to murder his wife. The phrase “all smiles stopped together” indicates that the duke commanded to kill his wife so that her smile for everyone can be put to an end. Now he has the complete control over his dead wife in the painting.

## Art Works and Supremacy

The object of art of the duchess created by an artist symbolises the duke’s command and authority over his former wife. The art gallery of his house resembles his pompous nature associated with cruelty and

possessiveness towards his wife. The beautiful portrait of his last duchess showcases the duke as an art connoisseur. Psychologically, the duke is obsessed with the artworks that resemble his enormous possessiveness about his dead wife whom he ordered to kill for her innocence and easy-going nature for everyone. Therefore, art and power are put together in the context of the duke's malice personality around his surroundings. By applying the poetic form of dramatic monologue, Robert Browning creates the tension in the poem in the description of the beautiful duchess who is murdered for her innocent look towards everyone whoever she came across, and is still alive in the artwork of Fra Pandolf. Being a duke, he should have called for a servant to do the task, but he does not do so. He possesses the complete power and control over his wife, and is the only one who has the power to uncover the portrait of his wife by removing the curtain from her painting. He keeps the painting always hidden behind a curtain on the wall. His supreme desire to keep the duchess in his control is perceptible when he himself decides to unveil his wife's painting as his absolute power to reveal his wife is only bestowed on him. Nobody has the power and authority to exhibit his wife's painting; he is only in the control of the charge— "since none puts by / The curtain I have drawn for you, but I" (Loucks, lines 9-10).

In the poem, the duke's love for his wife actually shows his control over her. A rare work of Neptune taming a sea-horse created by Claus of Innsbruck also shows the duke's interest in preserving the art works. At the same time, his dominant nature leads him to such a place that he cannot even hesitate to compare himself with Neptune- "Notice Neptune, though, / Taming a sea-horse, thought a rarity, / Which Claus of Innsbruck cast in bronze for me!" (Loucks, lines 54-56). Therefore, the art work of the statue of Neptune that he possesses in the art gallery shows his psychological state where he can only tame his sea-horse-like duchess. The duke who is compared to the God, has the supreme power to control the duchess who is embedded with all the characterises of nature -

As the Neptune in the statue tames the sea-horse, likely the duke has also all the power over the duchess... Being a Duke he thinks he has all the power like the God and no one dare to speak against him or take any decision without his order. He is the

law only who can rule and override others. If anyone goes against him he has the right to hang that person to death. By indicating himself as Neptune he called himself the 'God', who has the power to control the nature, as a lady to the Duke was like nature. (Sumayah and Mumu 4)

The portrait of the duchess is a marvellous artistic work that shows the duke's supremacy and power. He ruminates over the past about the easy-going nature of his free-minded wife. Hence, if we look at characteristics of the duke, it is presumed that he is kind of a metaphor of power and supremacy.

### **Art as an Object of Glory**

The duke does not even give any space and time for the listener to respond, he being the only powerful man who is completely in charge of the whole action of the poem. The poet has introduced the artistic description in order to delineate the characters, particularly the duke and the duchess. The poem begins with the description of the art work made by Fra Pandolf-

That's my last Duchess painted on the wall,  
Looking as if she were alive. I call  
That piece a wonder, now: Fra Pandolf's hands  
Worked busily a day, and there she stands.  
Will't please you sit and look at her? (Loucks,  
lines 1-5)

As the duke continues to describe about the paintings, he boasts about the painter whose creation has helped him to keep his dead wife alive in the art work. The beautiful smile of the duchess has been artistically preserved in the painting. This is only the place in which her smile is allowed by the painter, but, in reality, she is not made to do this by the duke as she is ordered to murder by her husband because of ever smiling face for everyone. He is infuriated by the behaviour of his wife who could have been avoided the explosive emotions of her husband by being the only object of his attention. The controlling nature of the duke is overwhelmed by his love for wife even after her dead. The duchess, as the duke considers, remains alive in the art work of the painter. He could not control his wife during her lifetime because of her carefree nature for everyone. But, finally, he has been able to control her by confining herself in the painting and it makes him content with utter joy and power.

The duke's fascination with extreme power is one of the major themes of the poem. His arrogance mixed with an overconfident sense of male superiority is clearly evident in the style of his speech and conversation with the stranger. The duke's power as a keeper of artistic portraits makes him pompous in nature. As artistic details are used to sketch characters in literature, the arts provide an explanation to the understanding of the characters in the poem. The possessive pronoun "My" in the title of the poem indicates that the duke wants to possess the duchess as an object of glory in the art work-

Ironically, the widower Duke admires the artistic quality of the portrait rather than the human being whom he made lifeless. It is simply a "piece of wonder" to him. The Duke looks upon the Duchess as an art object. He thinks she does not owe any respect to him. The word "last", "wall" and "alive" evoke a sense of terror. (Salunke 3)

### **The Duke as an Authoritarian**

As a symbol of male authority, the duke is very much engrossed with the art works in the poem. He shows off his control throughout the whole narrative of the poem.

The duke, the real image of a domineering man, is portrayed with all the personalities that are very much close to an arrogant person who likes to control over his surrounding people. The duke's authority over the surrounding environment along with his dead wife can be interpreted from the Marxist point of view-

"My Last Duchess" is a story of an authoritarian Duke and his Marxist Duchess. The extreme contrast between the nature of the Duke and that of the Duchess is the main source that triggers tension in the poem. (Salunke 2)

Artistic decorations embedded in the poem are the demonstrations of the duke's authority over his wife. The duke's art gallery filled with sculptures and paintings has a very unique portrait behind the curtain. When he unveils the painting of his late duchess and, the guest becomes impressed and mesmerised by the beautiful smile of the duchess in the painting. Therefore, the poem is not only about the description of the duchess but about the arrogant, controlling and powerful nature of the duke.

In the poem, Robert Browning has tried to delineate art in a completely different perspective. By delineating the

character of the duke, he tries to show how art can be not solely a form of attractiveness and beauty but also a form of control and power. The deep inherent meanings that lie in the description of the artworks show that art is an object which can be compared to power. The power of art is metaphorically delineated in the poem to discuss the protagonist character's ruminations over his past life. The image of the duchess painted on the wall helps to reveal the duke's fascination about his former wife whom he forced to die due to her commonplace behaviour with everyone. In the poem, art is used as an image that helps to delineate the duke's power and dominance over his former wife. His controlling nature is even shown by the description of the sculpture of Neptune, another art work in his art gallery. His admiration for his dead wife proves that he is very much interested in the duchess in painting rather than the wife in reality. The narrative of the poem is structured in such a way that it helps to reveal the inherent meaning that is embedded in the artworks. The technique of the dramatic monologue that is carried out by the duke while narrating the story of his former wife to an embassy, also emphasises his control to structure the whole narrative of the poem.

### **Conclusion**

Based on the perception of the phrase 'beauty lies in the eyes of the beholder,' the paper has tried to delineate how power and control are manifested in visual art with particular reference to Robert Browning's poem "My Last Duchess". In the paper, the theme of control and power has been demonstrated through the point of view of visual art of the portraits mentioned in the poem. As the narrative of the poem progresses, the readers can feel that there is a deep meaning behind the delineation of the art works and their visual imageries. So, it can be argued that "the relation between time and the visual arts lies in the eyes of the beholder" (Heffernan 113). The readers' perspective on the visual arts of the paintings suddenly shifts from the beauty of art to the rebellious nature of the duke towards his late duchess. Therefore, the paper has tried to explore how art can be used not just as a form of beauty but as a form of control and power.



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# **Brewster Place, an Ideal Abode of the Afflicted: A Thematic Glimpse into Gloria Naylor's *The Women of Brewster Place***

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## **Abstract**

*Women are the wealth of the Universe and they have contributed in almost every field and made the world feel proud at every occasion. They are in front, leading the whole world, making milestones and source of inspiration for many. However, another reality is that there is systematic discrimination and neglect of women all over the world that could be in terms of inadequate nutrition, denial or limited access to education, health and property rights, child labour, domestic violence etc. The hard truth is that even today, they are struggling for their own identity, shouting for diffusion of their voices and fighting for their own esteem. *The Women of Brewster Place* is the story of the group of African-American women who are daily subjugated because of their race, their class and their sex. Gloria Naylor, an American Novelist presents how Brewster Place soon becomes an abode of those women who are broken and shattered but with a strong wish to take charge of their life.*

**Keywords:** *Capitalism, White Supremacy, Subjugation, Exploitation, Gender Discrimination, racial marginalisation.*

Women are the wealth of the Universe and they have contributed in almost every field and made the world feel proud at every occasion. They are in front, leading the whole world, making milestones and source of inspiration for many. However, another reality is that there is systematic discrimination and neglect of women all over the world that could be in terms of inadequate nutrition, denial or limited access to education, health and property rights, child labour, domestic violence etc. The hard truth is that even today, they are struggling for their own identity, shouting for diffusion of their voices and fighting for their own esteem. *The Women of Brewster Place* is the story of the group of African-American women who are daily subjugated because of their race, their class and their sex.

These women have been mistreated both physically as well as psychology by Capitalism, by white supremacy, by their fathers, by their husbands, by their lovers and some of them by their own sons. Due to lack of any economic means and any possible choice, they established themselves in Brewster Place, an unspecified city in the North of the United States of America, hoping for a better future. *The Women of Brewster Place* reports the various form of subjugation that women are entitled to

Under go in the African American society. Apart from the gender discrimination, women in this novel are exposed to racial marginalisation also. Race determines everything in America. In addition, the Black women's responsibility is to battle racism in America. Racism is very cruel towards African-American women; it is a burden for them, as they cannot escape from it very easily.

This work of Naylor explores the experience of being Black in America, and the ways in which people cope with and confront prejudice. Symbolised by the wall separating Brewster Place from the life of the city, racism affects almost all the characters' lives. Racism prevents Blacks from moving beyond the boundaries of the ghetto and ascending the social ladder. Therefore, these women construct a community to isolate themselves from the other people. So that, they could feel safe and protected within the community. African-American women are also subjugated on the basis of classism and sexism. The women of Brewster are oppressed and subjugated because of male dominancy attitude of their husbands, fathers and sons. The women are left alone after getting pregnant; they are made responsible for caring their babies alone while men are busy proving their manliness

on the street. Some of them are obliged to abort, and they are physically and mentally mistreated. The men of Brewster desire to overcome their inferior status in the United States of America and to obtain recognition of their right to behave as real men within patriarchal system by presenting that they were the dominant figure in the Black family. In such condition, the men of Brewster decide to use violence as a means to assert the fact that they are the real heads of their families and that they can dominate their women as white men dominate them. This attitude of the Black men brings out frustration to their lives and those of their women too.

The extremity of marginalization in African-American societies is very much evident from the story of Ben's daughter. Ben's one and only little girl suffered repeated rape in the hands of the white boss. This sexual exploitation of Ben's daughter by the white-boss emphasizes the inaccessibility of white patriarchal power. A Black man is not able to break the shackles of it. This sexual exploitation takes place in the South, where Ben cannot earn sufficient money to support his own family. Black women are not only prey for white men but also for their own men itself. The gang rape of Lorraine brings this problem to the centre. The gang rape of Lorraine at the dead end wall clearly presents a helpless state of women in African-American community. A gang of teenagers attacks her. They rape her brutally. Her own men smash a Black woman and her struggle for life is really heart touching. Naylor depicts:

Lorraine was no longer conscious of the pain in her spine or stomach. She couldn't feel the skin that was rubbing off of her arms from being pressed against the rough cement. What was left of her mind was centered around the pounding motion that was ripping her insides apart. She couldn't tell when they changed places and the second weight, then the third and fourth, dropped on her-it was all one continuous hack sawing of torment that kept her eyes screaming the only word she was fated to utter again and again for the rest of her life. please. (171)

Through Lorraine's tragedy, Naylor intends to establish the societal forces that have shaped the gangrapers, who try to define themselves as men according to their terms their culture itself uses to signify them. Lorraine's futile attempts to stop the brutal gang rape all by herself through

her repeated begging with "please", the typical female way of confronting the world by begging mercy from the powerful male dominant society is totally ineffectual in the racist patriarch world. "Black women appear to endure unnecessary abusive relationships due to the limited numbers of eligible black males and the past negative experiences of their ancestors" says Z W Henriques in an article titled "African- American Women: The Oppressive Intersection of gender, class and race".

Patriarchal society has constructed African-American women as inferior and worthless human beings. They have been dehumanized for centuries. They have carried their own burdens, no one else would carry for them, and they have been inflicted sexual and physical abuses throughout history because of their race, class and gender. Subjugated by white society and Black men, and also by political institutions which have never catered for their needs, Black women have turned to other women who have gone through the same experiences like them in order to soothe their spiritual wounds, since only those women who are familiar with the suffering of oppressions have been able to identify them and their problems. Both Black men and women suffer the consequences of systems of oppressions that help them abandon the ghetto. Nevertheless, unless men, women also suffer the burden of sexism, which brings pain and sorrow to their lives and destruction of their relationships between black women and men.

The stories and the situations of these women of Brewster Place are the evidence that racism may not be the only forms of oppression they suffer since racism has culminated in bringing also sexual exploitation to the lives of women because of the attitude that Black men have adopted to fight against racism. These men wrongly believe that through violence, they can keep their women under control and they can act as real powers. Nevertheless, the women are victimized in every way. The category of race was therefore used to rationalize the ascendancy of one group of men over other groups because of their biological superiority and to promote the establishment of white masculinity, to which black manhood has been subjugated for centuries. When racial difference is argued from a sexual perspective, it also determines the type of objectification and oppression that women will face. If racism is a problem of masculinity

expressing male power through the ability of controlling others, the control of women and their sexuality is crucial for men to be men, they had to control "their" women. According to them, the mastery of women is a symbol of power, a status that men use to improve his ranking of credit with other men.

It is also clear from the lines and circumstances of these women of Brewster Place that racism is not the only form of oppression they face but they also suffer from sexual exploitation as a consequence of the attitude that black men used to fight against racism. Theresa and Lorraine is a couple of such characters who are subjugated because of their sexuality. As lesbians, they have fled from their own city to the Brewster Place hoping to find a place where they can live peacefully and express their love without fear. Lorraine and Theresa claim Brewster Place as their home. However, things change when other women of the community start to hate them because of their sexuality. The word 'lesbian' creates a wall between Lorraine and Theresa and those other women living in Brewster Place. Lesbianism is considered as a taboo in Brewster Place. As an outcome, the women of Brewster Place do not consider them as their sisters and they do not extend their bonds to Lorraine and Theresa, who become marginalized and excluded from the community. It is the female community of Brewster Place who feels threatened by the two women's presence and refuses to let the couple be part of the community. Black lesbians are considered as traitors. Thus, in isolating Lorraine and Theresa, the female community builds a symbolic space outside their community in which Lorraine and Theresa are obliged to occupy.

The incidents of sexism can be witnessed in Ciel's life when she feels compelled to have an abortion. Her husband, Eugene complains that he is tired of them never getting ahead and he keeps on talking about how he wants money for himself. Despite her own desires, when defending her abortion, she explains that he is her

husband and she has to think about what is best for him. She also says that this is for the best. This episode in Ciel's life illustrates how women have no right even to decide about their progeny. "Black women are often overlooked in people's conversations about racism and sexism even though they face a unique combination of both of these forms of discrimination simultaneously," said lead researcher Stewart Coles, a PhD candidate at the University of Michigan's Department of Communication and Media. "This 'intersectional invisibility' means that movements that are supposed to help Black women may be contributing to their marginalization" (qtd. in *press release* dated 13<sup>th</sup> July 2020).

The above mentioned tales of subjugation and oppression do not mean that women lack strength to define and establish themselves. Naylor provides with some women in the Brewster Place who also stand for liberating one from marginalisation. Brewster Place soon becomes an abode of those women who are broken and shattered but with a strong wish to take charge of their life. Naylor describes the women of Brewster Place as, "They came, they went, grew up, and grew old beyond their years, like an ebony phoenix, each in her own time and with her own season had a story" (5). Naylor compares the women of Brewster Place with the bird, phoenix. Like a phoenix, women will rise again with new life and vigour with each fall.

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# The Manifestation of Oriental Charm in William Henry Davenport Adams' *India: Pictorial and Descriptive*

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## Abstract

'Ask not what your country can do for you, ask what you can do for your country' - that's John F. Kennedy's inaugural Presidential address. If it is seen from the aspect of colonisation, one can comfortably say, 'Ask not what the colonised can do for you, ask what you can do for the colonised.' Should the researchers and colonisers be thinking on these lines too? In the times of humongous debates over reparations, it is healthy among the academic circles to discuss and look back at what the colonised did for the colonisers.

William Henry Davenport Adams' *India: Pictorial and Descriptive* (1888), as the author puts it, "is a book of description and not of criticism." It is a travelogue dazzled by pictures of gorgeous places, prosperous cities, glowing landscapes and inexhaustible resources. It focuses more on the place, topography rather than religion and education. The uniqueness of the book lies in the sketches which substantiate 'The Oriental Charm' or 'England's great Eastern dependency.' Though the author mentions it to be 'descriptive' the researcher tried to see the didactic nature of the text blended with the pictures exposing the Oriental charm. The descriptions may be contested with the popular contemporary critical opinion to see how India was in 1880's and how it is different from the India of present days. The pictures are interpreted in an academic flair to substantiate 'India is a gain to England.'

**Keywords:** Travelogue, Reparations, Visual Arts, Literature

## Introduction

Travel writing runs parallel to the actual journey that is undertaken. Travel writers see placing one's body on land as synonyms to inscribing a pen on paper. As they travel they use their creative energies to direct them to capture the essence of the place in the most appropriate ways possible. With the advent of technology, the way of capturing pictures and storing them became very unique and at the same time very easy. But, back in the days the travellers or travel writers had to depend on their memory to retain and remember the places they explored. However some artists took pleasure in preserving their memories by portraying sketches of the place instantly and they are passed onto the next generation. One such wholesome book is *India: Pictorial and Descriptive* (1888) by William Henry Davenport Adams, in which the text is equally substantiated by the portraits of the people, and sketches of landscapes.

India attracted people from different areas of life in history like the academicians, ambassadors, explorers, all registered their genes on this spectacular land. However, in the early writings on India, especially in European writings, the trade interests and their attempts to gain monopoly over trade is clearly evident.

Stephen Greenblatt in *Marvellous Possessions* (1991) talks of 'gaze' and 'possession' linking it to the theme of quest and proprietorship leading to conquest. What surprises anyone is the fact that the act of possession of uninhabited territories used to follow the natural law where they are owned by the first person either discovered or 'gazed' at them. Susan Bassnett relates the wandering knight of the 16th century, who is on his eternal quest through the forests was replaced by the seafarer bringing treasures from unknown lands beyond the horizon. Critics like Hammond, Firdous Azim brought in the idea of 'space' in travel writing where the gazes are contested with intentions.

There are numerous additional sources that shed light on how India is seen besides texts. Visual arts are unique in the field. When it comes to how something is shown, the paintings provide a wealth of information. That is where the notion of Oriental Art comes from. As Europeans romanticised the East, travellers used these paintings as postcards to communicate the East to everyone back home. Some paintings even occupied the pride of the place in their lavishly equipped palatial dwellings. So,

The notion of Orientalism is related to a particular tendency in visual arts to represent eastern subjects

or assume stylistic characteristics original to the East. Some of the important subjects include 'slaves and slave markets, nude exotic women'. Looking back on the cultural representations of the Orient in Western academic and artistic discourse, Said came to the conclusion that fictional depictions of the East were strongly tied to the European imperialist ambitions and Orientalism was constructed as a negative inversion of Western culture, conflating the different societies of the Eastern world into the homogeneous world of "the Orient". (Anika)

So, visual arts in eighteenth-century India also catered to the needs of the diasporic British society in India were thus multifaceted. (Chatterjee). Talking of the Oriental Art as a means of subject, Aananda Coomaraswamy opines, thus:

Those who look upon the East as mysterious and romantic have only themselves to thank for the creation of a novel unreality. What is romantic and mysterious to a foreigner is classic and self-evident to a native; and no one can be said to understand the art of the East or any other art so long as it remains to him a curiosity-only when he sees that it must have been as it is, does he begin to understand. (Coomaraswamy 18)

James Baillie Fraser, Johan Zoffany are notable artists cum painters who depicted some of the prominent events in the history of British India with no exception of glorification of their civilization. But William Adams narrative as portrayed in *India: Pictorial and Descriptive* (1888) is quite unique and straight to the point. As mentioned in the Preface, it is a "book of description and not of criticism." This work, like Havell's two volumes, *Indian Sculpture and Painting* (1908) and *The Ideals of Indian Art* (1911), were important texts of the new Orientalist discourse, attempting to improve Britishers' aesthetic perception of India.

### Of Places

Unlike habitually lying narratives from the European authors, this book gives an apt and exact description of different places and landscapes with special reference to their geographical details. The book starts on a positive note with "The great Indian peninsula..." (20) and goes on to describe the geographical features. Reiterating the fact

that India, "is not a country, but a continent", throughout the book the author puts forth justifications for its varied climatic conditions and geographical features. The rivers, it mentions, "are fed by the *secret* waters of Himalayas" (25). The Ganges is termed as 'sacred' and its significance is such, "brahmins are sworn upon it in the British courts of justice."(27)

Bombay harbour mesmerises him. He says, "The view from the harbour is one of the loveliest of the world's lovely scenes"(34). His preoccupation with the boats is very much evident because of his technical finesse in portraying the boats and the lifestyle of boatmen of different regions. *Sunder Boat at Bombay* (34), *Kashmirian Boatman*(99), *Boats and Boatmen on the Ganges*(27), *The Port of Kolkata*(218), each of these are the drawings that provide a delightful glimpse at the different kinds of boats and into the life of boatmen to the reader. The author has never turned a blind eye to the religious significance of any place of visit. The illustrations of the location are almost definitely followed by a description of the many rites that occur on that sacred site. He finds Allahabad, 'the model of a European city' owing to its facilities of means of commutation. Though he talks of the 'cleansing power of water at Triveni Sangam' (62), he never raises a brow at the sentiments of the people. The way he mentions the prayer routine of the Muslims is more secular than exhibiting superiority of one religion over the others. While describing Benaras the author notes, 'Nowhere else in a word is religion, so completely *materialised* and associated with a local habitation as in Banaras' (131). The author in a way makes exceptions for the tender sentiments, emotional gratitude and implicit faith of the people towards Banaras. His secular approach can also be very much evident in the paintings *The Madhoray Ghat and The Mosque of Aurangzeb, Banaras* (134) where, for example, he sketches the existence of a temple and a mosque in adjacent proximity to demonstrate Hindu-Muslim brotherhood. *Feast of Ganesha* (140) is a sketch where the visualisation has reference to many layers of meanings in a mythic narrative.

As the Mughals were very much obsessed with gardens, lawns and huge tracts of land with greenery everywhere, the paintings and sketches never ignored the greenery surrounding these architectural marvels. Some of the best examples are *Tower of Qutub, in the Plains of*

Delhi (78) *Grand Alley of the Taj Mahal*(107). The sketches like *An Imperial Darbar at Agra* (16), *Darbar of the Maharana of Oodeypur*(166), *At the Table of the Rais of Myhere*(194) depicts the opulence of the Indian royalty as well as the cordial reception given to Viceroy and Governors by the local kings.

### Of People

While depicting the life of India, he could appropriate literary images and descriptions within the bounds of what was visually beautiful and pleasing. He does, however, provide specific attention to many occupations without favouritism to any single profession. In *Boats and Boatman on the Ganges* (27) a more generalised narrative is mobilised rather than with reductionist imagery. The merchants are portrayed as civilised beings. The sketches of *Cotton Market Merchants at Bombay* (35), *Marwari Merchants in Kolkata* (226) actually depicts the business class and how they mind their own business and cheering in their own chit chat. He talks of *Water Carriers of Kolkata* (222) as someone who keeps the city moving by sprinkling water on the roadways to settle down the dust and sawdust in the city's bustling streets.

*The Guikwar in the Great Sowari, Baroda* (47) is a peculiar sketch of a procession that the author witnessed, which happened for the benediction of a diamond called the Star of the South acquired by the King. *The Procession of the Tazeeas*(178) is yet another procession the author is particularly interested in since it is the first procession of its sort he has seen among Muslim community..

Though this book was published in 1888 the author exhibits high regard towards the portrayal of people of all professions. The painting of Chandni Chowk in Delhi, a buzzing business centre depicts merchants of all kinds. There was no looking down on any vocation, whether merchants or labourers. The preoccupation for hunting, though, was strictly immoral, is evident. *Hunting party at Govindgarh* (198), *Tiger Hunting near Govindghar* (202), *Antelope-Hunting by Cheeta* (71), *Attack of Bheels* (161), a forest tribe in Central India are all captured with great attention. He was in a way very much fascinated by the different modes of commutation that came along with the geographical situations of the place. The best examples are the paintings of *Mailcart Travelling* (186), *Chopaya travelling*(190), *Caravan on the Road to Hurdwar* (216).

*Hanuman-the monkey God* (205) is hardly seen in Hindu mythology with a sword and a shield. But the sketch seems eye opening and peculiar to Indians too. Rather than portraying something as barbaric or uncivilised, these sketches are a realistic and uncomplicated portrayal of life in India. This reflects more on the 'gaze' of the author than anything else.

### Of Flora and Fauna

With changing geographic compositions, the maturity of the artist to explore flora and fauna kept on enhancing. *The Crocodile of the Ganges* (29) is a mention worthy sketch because the author so casually tells that they feed on the dead bodies which flow down the river Ganges from different sacred places. Neither a tinge of disgust is visible in both the descriptions as well as the portrait. In addition to its traditions and rituals, India's flora and fauna also drew the attention of Europeans. This book has a dedicated portion to describe, romanticise and document the flora and fauna of the country. The portraits of *Argus Pheasant* (94), *Indian Bison* (189), *Bamboo* (212) are some of the best examples.

As they reach Deccan, they are so fascinated by the way liquor (arrack) is prepared. According to the author, people are involved in the production of alcohol since the nearby arid area is unsuitable for cultivation and this serves as justification for the situation. *Coconut Palms- A Scene in the Vicinity of Bombay*(243) depicts the way people climb the coconut trees.

*The Opium Poppy* (241), *Banana tree* (243), *Cedrus Deodara* (248), all of them are shown in amazing detail. Among the fauna *The Indian Elephant* (251), *The Impeyan Pheasant*(259) *The Rhinoceros Hornbill* (261) *Nests of Grosbeck* (262) *Argalis or Adjuncts* (263) are all an example of his special interest towards the flora and fauna of India. One is reminded of what Ananda Coomaraswamy remarked about the oriental art after witnessing him express the minute details of India in such intriguing ways - What is romantic and mysterious to a foreigner is classic and self-evident to a native (Coomaraswamy 17).

### Conclusion

Travel tales are an endless source of creative output. As the reader assumes the role of the main character in their

own narrative, the views keep changing. Many geographic and demographic factors constantly have an impact on travel. This explains why we encounter several travel narratives on the same "space," yet they all capture our interest and keep us reading. Despite the fact that this is a coloniser's depiction of India, most of it is either positive or neutral about India and her ways. Despite the fact that some painters were commissioned to depict India, the traditional forms, motifs and conventions were not concretely explored. However this narrative which is just a 'description' makes it better appealing to both the Indians and foreigners. The fact that this book was published in 1888 hints us to the idea of cordial relationship and subtle rivalry that existed at that point of time.

With arguments on reparations looming big in the political sphere, the coloniser has benefited greatly from the colonised. India has provided the coloniser with more than just material and monetary advantages; it has also given them the freedom and space to engage in the exploration of the 'Oriental Charm'. Most foreign authors and artists have found inspiration in India. Nonetheless, there are still many untold tales concerning the illustrious history of India. Hence, in addition to reading the texts, the visual media offers us an entirely new way of looking at

how India was perceived, understood and portrayed in the past. To sum up what has been last said, a great part of the significance of Oriental art is to be read in the relation of art to life in Eastern societies. (Coomaraswamy 22)

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# Text and Visual Representation of Peripheral Identity in Easterine Kire's *Bitter Wormwood* and Nicholas Kharkongor's "Axone"

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## Abstract

*Art represents the essence of life and all forms of art enhance the creative and imaginative faculty of mankind. It is to be noted that literature and film have a common factor as they both are the narrative structure and impression of reality. Both the narrator of the text and the director of film emphasize the theme of their art in accordance with their goals and ideology. The feeling of alienation has been ideally presented in the respective works of art by Easterine Kire and Nicholas Kharkongor. The peripheral identity of the characters in the text and the movie arises primarily as a result of the dichotomous relationship between the Centre and the State. The present paper aims to illustrate how the people of Northeast India are marginalised in mainland India.*

**Keywords:** *Literature, Film, Periphery, Northeast*

Art is primarily intended for recreation and amusement. The verbal language is conveyed more effectively with the support of visuals. The essential unity of aesthetic, moral and natural experience can be felt through visuals. Language cannot do the job directly because it is no direct avenue for sensory contact with reality. Language helps us to name or understand what we have seen or heard or thought. It refers to nothing but perceptual experiences.

A correspondence between the verbal and visual art can be traced back to the works of the artists and philosophers. Both on the level of theory and that of praxis, many classical and renaissance artists (both literary and visual) successfully employed and established the interart correspondence through their individual medium of representation. Interarts inquiry is based on the analysis of two or more art works in interaction.

Rosita M Sands mentions in her article that:

The basic assumption of interarts inquiry is that a work or performance of art belonging to one artistic mode can yield knowledge not only about that work individually but also about works and performances from other artistic modes, and that study of these works can produce deeper and wider knowledge about the art works themselves, about the nature of art, and about the world from which they spring. (95)

Literature is believed to be the representation of life through the medium of a language. It is not a replica of life but an interpretation of life. Literature deals with life as it is seen and experienced by an individual writer. It may be described as an imaginative reconstruction of life. It is a form of art in which imagination plays a vital part. It has been rightly said by George Henry Lewes that "personal experience is the basis of all real literature". Aristotle hits the mark in his use of the word mimesis. He stresses on the representation of universal patterns of human behaviour from where an artist shapes his plot or structure of emotions and events. The artist is a creator, and his creative activity lies as much in his imaginative selection of life as in his rendering the same with the help of linguistic tools.

Literature employs devices of narrative to communicate human experiences, while movies or films mostly employ the spoken aspects of communication. Films stimulate our perception or sensory experience directly in comparison to reading. In verbal language, there are sounds, emotions, movements, languages, and so on. Literature enables the awakening of the imaginative faculties of the mind and films allow direct observation through sensory perception.

It can be stated that both literature and film are two different forms of art with a similar goal of creating

sublimity in human imagination and understanding. Both film and literature are complementary in nature and one is no substitute to the other, like letters and sounds in human communication. They work simultaneously to inspire and enrich their audience towards progress with greater imagination and perception. Literature and film ennoble human mind through action, images, words and replicating life of human beings.

The culmination of literature and film confirms the belief of the audience on certain issues that have been read as part of literature or seen in a film. Easterine Kire vividly portrays the image of a peripheral world of the Naga people in the midst of other people belonging to the Centre in her novel *Bitter Wormwood* (2011). A similar discrimination has been portrayed in "Axone", a movie directed by Nicholas Kharkongor in 2019.

Easterine Kire belongs to the Angami tribe of the Nagas from Nagaland. She is Nagaland's first novelist who writes in the English language. She is a poet, translator and a writer par excellence, who has been honoured with a number of awards like Governor's Medal for Excellence in 2011, the Free Voice Award by Catalan PEN, Barcelona in 2013, the Hindu Literary Prize in 2015 and Bal Sahitya Puraskar by Sahitya Akademy in 2018. Majority of her writings are based on the lived realities of the people in Nagaland in Northeast India. She is thus considered one of the most powerful voices coming out of Nagaland. Nicholas Kharkongor is an Indian film director. He hails from Shillong, the capital city of Meghalaya, while he has spent his early years in Nagaland. He made his directorial debut with his film "Fair and Lowly" in 2012. His feature films include the 2016 "Mantra" and the 2019 "Axone".

*Bitter Wormwood* narrates the story of a man named Moselie (Mose) from his birth in 1937 to his death in 2007. Through the life of Moselie, Kire paints a vivid picture of the customs, traditions, rituals and the common life of a Naga in and outside Nagaland. The novel induces the readers to understand the life and struggles of the people who have been most often misunderstood as the barbaric headhunters. The novel distinctly portrays how the memories, customs and the decisions of the past impact the present life of the common people in a society. Kire proficiently illustrates both the views from the centre and the periphery through the characters of Himmat and

Moselie, respectively, about the everyday realities of the Naga people living in Nagaland and outside.

Nicholas Kharkongor's movie, "Axone", is a stirring satire depicting the various issues regarding racial bias that the migrants from Northeast India have to face on a regular basis. The story revolves around a day's incident in the lives of a group of friends who are from the Northeast, wherein they make desperate efforts to prepare *akhuni* and surprise one of their friends on her wedding day. They try to cook *akhuni*, a special cuisine of the Naga people from Northeast, which is known to be unusually foul smelling as it is fermented soya bean paste. The director has very clearly portrayed the status of mental health of the Northeast migrants in a residential area in New Delhi. He visualises the long-term trauma and stress, suffered by victims of racism in various forms.

It should be noted that hunting is a major activity in the tribal culture. Hunting is done not only to exhibit the strength and courage of men in the society but it is also a means of foraging food for the family and due to this the tribals relish the meat of the hunted animals and also include different kinds of herbs in fresh and fermented forms as a part of their daily diet. Kire expresses the pride of the grandmother on seeing the hunting skills of her grandson Mose, when he hunts a squirrel. She remarks, "Squirrel meat is very good for you" (BW 35).

"Axone" shows how the landlady had shouted at her tenants, young ladies from Northeast saying, "When you rented this apartment, I had told you can't make that stinky food here, didn't I?" pointing to the aroma of delicacy being cooked in their rented home. The people from the periphery had been denied even to cook a food of their choice, which is part and parcel of their food culture.

Kire explains that the people from the northeastern region of the nation are changing and making remarkable achievements towards an advanced future. Nevertheless, the outlook of the Centre and their relationship with the people living in these peripheral regions are highly discriminative and mostly derogatory, which does make an impact on the society of the people residing in these marginal regions.

Kire quite expressively mentions in the novel how "Neibou was suddenly cornered by a senior who called him a *pahariya*, a hill dweller ... in an unmistakably offensive manner ..." (BW 181). Kharkongor depicts how the

landlady demeans Bendang on his physical appearance as she comments, "He can't even open his eyes" to refer to the small eyes, which is a characteristic feature of the majority of the people in Northeast as they belonging to the Mongolian race.

Kire, in her novel *Bitter Wormwood*, narrates about a newspaper's reporting about the atrocities faced by the women of North East in the country's capital. She writes "The targeting of girls from the Northeast had become a big problem in the city and he had read innumerable reports about these in the newspapers" (BW 182). There are instances of how indecent language had been uttered to the girls from Northeast by the people from the mainland, without any care for the self respect of the women. Kharkongor shows in "Axone", how two men hurled racist and sexist slurs like 'Malai' at Chanbi, one of the main characters in the movie.

Kire feels that this disparity in the outlook of people in the Centre towards the people in the periphery is because of the differences that exist between the two sets of people. She quotes the words of Rakesh's grandfather, "You know, the Naga hills are so different from the Indian mainland, one has this feeling that you are in a foreign country. Then there was the language barrier too" (BW 205).

Kire points out in her novel the fear of Mose's wife, Nielhounou, to travel beyond the boundaries of her land as she thinks that she would not be accepted by others. Similar fear is being experienced by Bendang in the movie "Axone". He finds himself rejected and faces severe stress as he is unable to sing Hindi songs in Delhi.

The constant racial discrimination is a living reality for the migrants in the Centre. These peripheral people from the Northeast migrate in large number to create a space for themselves and be a part of the mainland. Their continuous effort turns futile as they continue to remain as aliens in the midst of the hegemonic Centre.

Marginality is manifested through a deviation from a centre, which is created by a group of people who are positioned at the helm of this structure. They define the power structure in the society and when one is banned from this position, it becomes a part of the periphery or the marginalised sector of the society. It can be stated that the creation of the centre simultaneously construct a

periphery, which always relates to a specific society as a figure of lack and absence or loss. Hence, it is imperative to design and establish one's own centre and disintegrate the idea of periphery.

It is with reference to the above, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak rightfully mentions in her book *The Post-colonial Critic: Interviews, Strategies and Dialogues* that

In a certain sense, I think there is nothing that is central. The centre is always constituted in terms of its own marginality. However, having said that, in terms of the hegemonic historical narrative, certain peoples have always been asked to cathect the margins so others can be defined as central. ... In that kind of situation the only strategic thing to do is to absolutely present oneself at the centre. (40)

It is essential to realise that variety is spice of life and India is known for its diverse cultures and traditions. All people living within the geographical boundary of this sovereign nation should be treated with equal respect and dignity. It is important that people overcome the differences, however vast they are, and look towards building a united nation defying the power structure existing in the Centre - State dichotomy.

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# [In]Visible Victorian Women: Visual Representations of Cultural Leanings in Select Narratives

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## Abstract

Postmodernism looks at how conventional channels are employed to communicate identity, such as those generated through nationality, religion, caste, creed, family, and community, which no longer have the same gravity, leaving people without a solid foundation for their sense of identity. As a result, individuals are compelled to construct a self by employing whatever representational elements are at their disposal. An identity crisis can therefore be resolved visually by broadcasting appearance to manifest a public image. This creates space for "self-liberation," where a person's identity is malleable and flexible and can alter as needed. The mould on which to model one's 'self' is imposed by popular culture, human engagement, and other influences; this mould is only coherent in the context of a particular society. In turn, this awareness shapes expectations and develops visual literacy through systems of both praise and criticism. One of the physical pillars of visual culture is fashion, which usually serves as a strong indication of gender. Furthermore, fashionable attire also makes it easier to engage in sartorial trespassing, cross numerous identity boundaries, and engage in identification and concealment practices. In this ambient, the paper explores Victorian novelists' concerns about fashion, clothing, and appearance because they encouraged consumption practices, interrogated people as consumers, commodified identities, and facilitated performances of gender passing by allowing marginalised people to renegotiate boundaries set by identity politics.

**Keywords:** Feminism, Fashion, Culture, Sartorial Representations, Identity, Assertion, Society, Narrative art, Visual literature

Even if one could be provided, we do not require a particularly specific definition of aesthetic value to begin. Philosophers are not the only ones with an interest in aesthetic value and aesthetics in general. The idea is used in hair and beauty salons, cosmetic surgery, dentistry, and landscape architecture. Not to mention its importance in fields like politics, sociology, sports science, anthropology, and, more clearly, literary criticism, psychology, and art history.

Do these applications share any traits in common? Significantly, the majority have little to do with art; in fact, art starts to look like a unique example of the aesthetic rather than a paradigmatic one. In general, there are several areas where we can find similarities: most obviously, the many manifestations of beauty, the pleasure of how something looks, feels or creates an impression; the surfaces of things; colour; texture; the sensual; the immediate; the vibrant; the emotional; the expressive; and the pleasures of design. In essence, an interest in the appearance of items as opposed to their primarily functional, utilitarian, or reductive physical aspects, together with major dimensions of experience and sensibility.

How things appear, how they look, feel, or sound, or how they catch our attention—the sense that something is right, or fitting, or working well—concerns the impression we have of objects, and this tends to be holistic, often taking the shape of the gestalt, a sense of the whole as more than its parts. Moreover, there are several ways that aesthetic value can be expressed, thus in addition to having a focus, it also has what can be called a modality. Aesthetic worth is found in more complex qualities than mere levels of beauty or ugliness, such as elegance, tranquilly, vividness, delicacy, unity, lifelessness, rawness, sentimentality, and so on. They characterize parts of an object's look and point out what is vitally pertinent in that appearance. They are or may be, aesthetic ideas that identify modes of value. It is noteworthy that these thick descriptions can modify their evaluative valency in specific settings, in contrast to thin evaluative notions like beauty or ugliness, which exhibit positive or negative values by nature. Although elegance may appear to be favourable at first glance, too much or improperly executed elegance may be an aesthetic flaw that leaves a negative impression. This is the fundamental idea behind a certain

artistic particularism. There are no universal laws that connect non-aesthetic qualities to aesthetic ones.

Fashion combines ideas of future trends with historical iterations of "fashionable" items. By drawing comparisons between their perceived fashion orientation and that of other people in their social environment, consumers of daily fashion frequently use fashion discourse to build a sense of personal identity. In the nineteenth century, women adopted an "alternative" style of dressing that combined stylish women's attire with articles of men's clothing. The meaning of this "alternative" style is explored. Most single women who were working more outside of the house embraced this alternative fashion. It could be perceived as a nonverbal form of defiance towards the dominant culture as well as a set of indicators that formed a symbolic message about women's status as expressed through fashionable attire. Changes in dress and physical appearance that mirrored shifts in upper- and middle-class standards were occurring in peripheral contexts such as resorts, women's schools and universities, and women's sports such as horseback riding, swimming, and biking, in contrast to changes in appearances. In the twentieth century, these adjustments were made to current fashions. In the nineteenth century, the appearance was an illustration of the ability of nonverbal signals to convey social tensions and modify attitudes before structural modifications were implemented.

The Victorian era is seen as the start of a consumerist society because of growing industrial production and rising income that allowed for unprecedented spending on amenities. The way people lived underwent a significant change; suddenly, a huge number of people, as opposed to only a select few (the aristocrats and the royal family), could enjoy comfort. Britain had a rise in wealth and prosperity after 1846. Throughout the Victorian era, commerce and consumerism were centred on Britain. "Buying things, owning goods, even living up to goods—were suddenly virtues," (Flanders), as Judith Flanders put it. The phantasmagoria of commodity culture was first displayed to the world during the Great Exhibition (of industrial production and manufacture), which took place in London in May 1851. The commodity took centre stage in English public life after the Exhibition.

Massive improvements in manufacturing and industry had a significant impact on the creation of books, the

growth of literacy, and the number of people who read. Mass dissemination of newspapers and magazines was made feasible with advancements in printing technology and inexpensive paper. As a result, commercials were able to influence and reach a huge audience for the first time in history.

Throughout the Victorian era, there was a strong emphasis on the modest nature of women. This emphasis took many different forms. In advice, behaviour, and beauty books, women were urged to always maintain their modesty. Literature fostered the image of the selfless, humble, angelic heroine, and medical treatises emphasised that healthy women were submissive, sexually inert, and demure. Sexuality, hostility, and even energy were all viewed as indicators of sickness and madness. The angelic aspect of women was frequently emphasised in religious discourses. The ideal woman was shown in artwork as naive and reliant on males.

Understanding fashion's visual meditation on how female customers formed, evaluated, and valued identity depends on understanding how the male gaze was internalised into what could be considered a female regime of sartorial self-surveillance, regardless of whether they actually bought those items or just observed them in the window displays of a department store. The clothed body serves as a visual symbol, making it the subject of social examination, visual spectacle, as well as internal and external gaze. Victorian discourses highlight the detrimental impacts of the commodification of feminine identity as well as the extent to which the fashion industry promotes a male-dominated culture by maintaining women's subservient dependence on the approval of the male gaze. In terms of how they sartorially reflected or concealed class and gender, women from all social classes may be considered subjects of (self) surveillance.

In Rhys's work, visual and fashion culture is prevalent; her female heroines frequently peer through the department store window displays at the garments worn by mannequins while also being conscious of being observed by males and internalising the male gaze through acts of self-surveillance. In addition to other social and sexual inequalities women encounter in the male-dominated world, Rhys describes the deplorable sense of being badly clothed that results when their lives mimic the spectacle of femininity and gender exhibited by department store

mannequins. Nevertheless, Rhys depicts how women construct their consumer identities in ways that battle satire and even challenge conventional ideas of femininity. The pervasive power of fashion is criticised by Rhys and he attempts to do so by demonstrating how women internalised the male gaze as a form of unconscious self-surveillance through sartorial practises such as working as mannequins and self-reflection in mirrors.

The manner with which fashion of that time acknowledged the need for clothes to take into consideration the aesthetic and physical demands of various bodies—which came in a range of forms, sizes, ages, and complexions—was, in Margaret Oliphant's opinion, contemporary fashion's greatest accomplishment. Modern clothing "relieved the rigour of regulation" that had previously characterised fashion discourse and [allowed] such a space for individual flair as was scarcely conceived of even twenty years before" by endorsing variation. Modern clothes' ability to express and mould individuality was what, in Oliphant's opinion, made them a crucial social force, as they encouraged trend adaptation rather than slavish imitating centrally decided and set patterns. Hence, fashion is a place of possible societal upheaval in Oliphant's work. Published soon after her first volume of *Dress*, in *Phoebe Junior*, the sartorial clash motif is used to examine generational change. In particular, Phoebe's modern, fashionable wardrobe of simple yet elegant made-to-measure designer gowns in a variety of aesthetically appropriate muted tertiary colours contrasts with the dated tastes of her grandmother, who rustles noisily through the town in voluminous copper-coloured silk topped with a largely worked collar.

Beauty was considered a virtue if it merely served to facilitate a woman's marriage and made her a pleasing ornamental addition to her husband's living space. On the other hand, if it made a woman love herself, make her flirtatious, or make her doubt the patriarchal female destiny of marriage, submission, and motherhood, then beauty was a fault and led to immorality.

Villette by Charlotte Bronte engages in discourse within this ideological framework. Villette, in some ways, reflects notions about feminine modesty and attire. The protagonist and first-person narrator of the novel, Lucy Snowe, frequently choose simple clothes over extravagant attire. Lucy is astonished at how much more attractive she

seems after having her hair done, yet she sticks to a simple appearance. It is noteworthy that Lucy refers to Ginevra's appearance and attire at key points when their bond of identification grows. For instance, Ginevra's attractiveness and youthfulness first caught Lucy's attention at this time. Ginevra also visits the school to renew their relationship after Ginevra's marriage. Most significantly, Lucy emphasises Ginevra's attractiveness in the crucial scene in front of the looking glass, where their separation blurs and they both become reflections of each other. Contrast fosters a fleeting friendship in front of the looking glass, and identity becomes malleable. Villette's feminine universe is introduced through female beauty, the love of fashion, and fashion itself.

Beauty and clothing, like in the fashion designs, depict this world in a far different light from how the prevailing ideology portrayed it. The reality we live in is far from binary. In this society, cultural norms and personal preferences interact to determine female identity, which is not predetermined by nature. In this way, the ideal woman is the product of a certain ideology—the victim, if you will, of a particular set of expectations or assumptions that dominated views towards female conduct. By connecting narrative events to 'scopic custom,' or the usual, gendered ways of looking and being looked at that predominated Victorian society, incidents connected to the creation and reception of visual culture were significant for the visual experience more broadly defined. The power dressing was hazardous in that she posed a challenge to the moral foundations upon which views towards women were based. She did so by denying the prevalent assumptions about what it meant to be a woman and by challenging the notions of what it meant to be a victor. Through this deliberate blending of visual culture with Scopic custom, Victorian authors were able to highlight their interdependence as a socio-cultural dynamic of critical importance and shed light on their contribution to the cultural and social limitations affecting women as producers and objects of representation.

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# The Spatiality of Art in Nathanael West's *The Day of the Locusts*

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## Abstract

The paper 'The Spatiality of Art in Nathanael West's *The Day of the Locusts* explores the fake world of the film industry through the artworks portrayed in Nathanael West's novel. It engages with the meta-narrative of the book. It argues that the film industry and its shallowness is a significant factor behind societal destruction, and it is symbolized through how every piece of art builds upon the spatiality of the fake world of films—discussing the art of deception that the industry employs to manipulate viewers through its glamorization of wealth and its depiction of violence as entertainment. The paper serves as a testament to how Nathaniel builds up his masterpiece of art work from the pages of the novel. This novel provides a space to perform the artistic function of the author.

**Keywords:** Film Industry, Art, Shallowness, Deception, Masterpiece

Art has been used to depict the spatiality of physical and mental space; it provides insight into the lived space of the past. Art shows how physical and mental spaces interact and are structured and experienced. Art often depicts physical space as a representation of how people inhabit and interact with their environment, which is done through colour, form, and composition. Art can also be used to represent mental space; this is done through symbolism, storytelling, and metaphor. For example, an artist might use a painting of a tree to evoke feelings of calm and serenity or a painting of a storm to evoke feelings of chaos and tension. These visual cues can help to understand the spatiality of mental space and how it is experienced by those who inhabit it. Merging of mental and physical space is the chief characteristic of the art; however, when an artistic calibre is presented in the literature, it is worth the search to ascertain the natural mingling of these spaces within the reproduced work. Moreover, it is pertinent to know the chief artist of the work depicted therein, i.e., the author or the artist, and the categories of space they involve.

Nathanael West was an acclaimed American Writer of the early 20th century and is best known for his novel *The Day of the Locusts*, which is often considered the best literary representation of Hollywood. West was an avid observer of Hollywood culture, and he was passionate about examining the impact of celebrity, ambition, and fame on the human psyche. In *The Day of the Locusts*, West uses a unique blend of satire, irony, and surrealism

to explore these themes. For West, Hollywood is not a place of American dreams but one where those dreams are caught in a never-ending cycle of frustration and disillusion. The moral conflicts of the American film industry gain prominence in the novel, where every place, character, and narrative becomes the signifier of the tremendous American aspiration that has gone wrong. Hollywood was frequently used as a suitable emblem of American culture's moral and aesthetic hollowness because it was associated with vulgarity, shame, and deceit. The transition of space from 'dreamland' to 'wasteland' is symbolically captured through an idea of an artist and the paintings he draws. To expose the spatial reality of Hollywood, West emphatically employs the artistic medium; he tries to show the dreamland through the eye of an artist 'Tod Hackett'. Nathanael West offers a practical reality by comparing the artistic world with the context of the film world.

Unlike other works in Hollywood, where a central figure performs the engaging activities, this novel noticeably lacks a unifying person around whom the whole action revolves. This unique purpose and motive are to use Hollywood as the subject matter.

"West's major concern is not in implementing central figure at all, but rather Hollywood itself: a unique, social and material landscape dominated by a single occupation - movie making - whose excesses and illusions give rise to monstrous expectations and



desires, and produce a pervasive sense of unreality" (Springer, 440)

In a true sense, West wanted to tell Hollywood's real story in its totality. Thus he makes a performative action of showcasing Hollywood as the central piece of the action. By placing the film industry at the centre, he willingly portrays the darker side of the film world, where dreams are destroyed and souls are condemned. Los Angeles has created its degenerate communities of facades and duplicates since the city's enormous wealth was derived from artifice and deception.

Hollywood is a vast graveyard of dreams, broken hopes, and frustrated ambitions. However, the fact that West chose to use the film capital as a background for his work seems almost incidental, for *The Day of the Locust* is much more than just a Hollywood novel. Among the orange groves and motion picture studios West appears to have found in undiluted form certain social evils which are typical of the American society (Pisk, 64)

It is plausible to state that West wrote about Hollywood itself to let the world know about the industry in which he was intensely involved. It is also noticeable that he very much engages the characters who survive on the fringes of Hollywood, the so-called "coming to California to die". West's deeper involvement with art, the architectural style of the city, descriptions of characters from the point of view of models, and too much importance given to artworks suggest that West is trying to project something other than what is contained in the novel. The work is narrated from the viewpoint of an artist Tod Hackett, in whom West finds a mouthpiece to involve the reader in moral conflicts concerning the novel. *The Day of the Locust* follows Tod Hackett, a Yale-trained painter hired to handle Hollywood set design for a few months. He works on his monumental painting "The Burning of Los Angeles" in his free time to represent the fury of his culture. Tod becomes fixated on his neighbours, drawing sketches of them for his masterpiece. They include Faye Greener, a gorgeous but shallow seventeen-year-old aspiring starlet; Harry Greener, a dying vaudevillian clown; and Homer Simpson, an Iowan with consumption who has travelled to Los Angeles for his health. Though the novel revolves around art and architectural styles, the novel ends before the protagonist completes his masterpiece. "Tod's aesthetic

ambitions are, of course, only realized in a description of a painting that no real reader ever actually sees; how, or whether, West himself realizes a grotesque aesthetic is a different question." (Greenberg, 601) The elaborate detail of what would contain in Tod Hackett's magnum opus tells an artist's longing to have his creative work. The protagonist's masterpiece cannot remain incomplete when the whole work is more autobiographical. Thereby, it is critical to analyze the novel in its totality to find the real masterpiece West leaves for the reader, yet, it escapes the ordinary readers' attention.

The focus of attention has to be given to the artwork and the artist employed by West to shape the reality of the Hollywood. It would be incomprehensible to say Tod Hackett does not complete his desired artwork. In 'The Paintings in *The Day of the Locust*', Jeffrey Meyers analyses the novel's artworks. He gives a very detailed elaboration on how Nathaniel West borrows from Italian artists of modern times to bring modernity to the art work. This work details every art signature found in the novel but critically falls short of explaining the actual absence of the masterpiece. In 'Sex, Death, and Art in Hollywood: *The Day of the Locust* and *The Loved One*' Robert Murray Davis (Murray et al.) argues that West uses every character as mechanical models and dimensional figures, and these characters symbolically refer to the inevitability of death in Hollywood. George M. Pisk in 'The Graveyard of Dreams: A Study of Nathanael West's Last Novel *The Day of the Locust*' elucidates that Tod Hackett's visualization of characters in his artwork does resemble the characters shown in the novel, but elaboration has fallen short of. In 'Sounding American Surrealism: The Sensational Subject of "The Day of the Locust,"' Robin Blyn reflects upon the American Surrealist qualities of the art as reflected in the novel; he takes a special referencing point to the character Homer to derive his point to the home. He asserts that Homer becomes a model in the supposed masterpiece. Susan Edmunds in 'Modern taste and the body beautiful in Nathanael West's *The Day of the Locust*' focuses on the idea of body and feeling in Faye Greener's portrayal. She contends that Faye Greener is a reformative figure in the novel which is misunderstood and misjudged. Though she is not equated to a model in the artwork, it sheds light on the characteristics of Faye Greener as an artistic model. 'Nathanael West and the

mystery of feeling' by Greenberg offers an artistic and aesthetic commentary on Tod Hackett's renunciation of existing rules of naturalistic art and embracing new masters of art in his mode. Nevertheless, these research works do not illuminate the incomplete masterpiece West has brought forth through the artist Tod Hackett.

One of the book's main themes is the blurring of illusion and reality in Hollywood, which is depicted on the first page with a description of a Napoleonic army that gradually transforms into a procession of extras heading to a soundstage (West, 1). The movie studios and back lots serve as a zone for West where realities are fluid and ill-defined and where the ostensibly distinct categories of reality and fantasy converge. Also, Todd Hackett's observations of artifice in the dwellings and clothing are mirrored in the more incredible social world. The masterpiece Tod likes to draw explicitly serves this function. Tod has a vision of "The Burning of Los Angeles," his masterpiece, and throughout the book, he frequently returns to his ideas for the painting's many elements. The painting's most extended explanation, which Tod offers while being surrounded by onlookers outside Kahn's Persian Palace Theatre, suggests its purpose.

As he stood on his good leg, clinging desperately to the iron rail, he could see all the rough charcoal strokes with which he had blocked it out on the big canvas. Across the top, parallel with the frame, he had drawn the burning city, a great bonfire of architectural styles, ranging from Egyptian to Cape Cod colonial. Through the center, winding from left to right, was a long hill street and down it, spilling into the middle foreground, came the mob carrying baseball bats and torches. For the faces of its members, he was using the innumerable sketches he had made of the people who come to California to die; the cultists of all sorts, economic as well as religious, the wave, airplane, funeral and preview watchers—all those poor devils who can only be stirred by the promise of miracles and then only to violence. A super "Dr. Know-All Pierce-All" had made the necessary promise and they were marching behind his banner in a great united front of screwballs and screw-boxes to purify the land. No longer bored, they sang and danced joyously in the red light of the flames. (162-163)

The final visualization of the artist at the end of the novel throws back at the images considerably constructed throughout the novel as the model pieces of the art. The landscape described in the novel plays a particular function to West. He suitably subscribes to a modelling approach to the land. He explains everything to the sets set up by the artists to produce the film. The convergence of reality within the artistic category is apparent. "West's black humour and surreal vision, achieved by painting the most startling situations with the starkest of pen strokes, was admirably suited to describing the land in which he lived while a screenwriter." (ELLENBERGER, 227) The absences of permanent material like cement or bricks tell that the building serves only the artistic function. In a veiled manner, West refers to them as a canvas where he tries to paint his art.

When he noticed that they were all of plaster, lath and paper, he was charitable and blamed their shape on the materials used. Steel, stone and brick curb a builder's fancy a little, forcing him to distribute his stresses and weights and to keep his corners plumb, but plaster and paper know no law, not even that of gravity. (West, 3)

On this canvas of material description, West uses a beautiful landscape analogy to complete the background of his painting. He implies that the whole of 'Los Angeles' serves as a canvas, and its cityscape provides the background, "Only dynamite would be of any use against the Mexican ranch houses, Samoan huts, Mediterranean villas, Egyptian and Japanese temples, Swiss chalets, Tudor cottages, and every possible combination of these styles that lined the slopes of the canyon." (3). Furthermore, he compares this to 'a Sargasso of Imagination', where the artist's imagination is crucially at play.

If the whole city landscape becomes the basic canvas on which the art is drawn. The people described in the novel become the models of the canvas. People in the novel are described as a catalogue of items from which the artist can choose according to his preference, "The characters West's protagonist, Tod Hackett, encounters comprise a short catalogue of Hollywood types found in the studios and on the streets: the young, aspiring actress; the old, displaced vaudevillian; the aggressive mother ambitious for her child; the gambler and the Mexican

immigrant."(ELLENBERGER, 227) This is why none of the characters in the novel possess the vitality of life; they are peripheral figures who serve the function only as models rather than contributing to the culmination of the work. Every human person described in the novel is compared to mathematical automation and dimension implying that inherently they serve the function of modelling for the canvas; there for they are looked at as inanimate objects in the sight of the artist. The human body is reduced to cartoon characters, puppets, and dolls, with their faces locked into costumes. In West's book, human bodies are frequently compared to robots or puppets: Earle Shoop resembles a mechanical drawing, while Abe resembles a ventriloquist dummy (West, 6). Homer Simpson is sometimes contrasted with subpar or subpar automation (82). When having a seizure, Harry Greenr behaves like a mechanical toy that has been over wound (92). Claude Estee was compared to a dried-up man (14), the description of Mrs. Schwartzen is precisely how an artist would look at the body of a person (15), Harry Greener resembled a clown (24), Faye Greener represented a tree in appearance "structural like a tree's, not a quality of her mind or heart." The composition of people in the novel represents a faceless social crowd who just serves the purpose of background. All the characters of the novel just remain the symbolism of the periphery.

There is one more element in West's and Hackett's description of the social composition of the city: the faceless crowd, those who initiate the riot that brings the book to its crashing conclusion. Although appearing infrequently in the course of the novel, they are the background against which the antics of the Hollywood characters are played. (ELLENBERGER, 227)

These are the people who form the faceless crowd on the canvas. The masterpiece's background is filled with this social crowd whom West calls 'Came to California to die. 'A notable aspect of the background is the burning city, a great bonfire of architectural styles 'symbolized by the type of building he describes throughout the novel, made out of all types of materials which are not at all suitable to make a construction. The novel ends with the background of the canvas, but it cannot be brushed aside as incomplete because Tod imagines the rest part of it in the

fag-end of the novel; the finished part of it tells the whole story of the complete novel itself.

In the lower foreground, men and women fled wildly before the vanguard of the crusading mob. Among them were Faye, Harry, Homer, Claude and himself. Faye ran proudly, throwing her knees high. Harry stumbled along behind her, holding on to his beloved derby hat with both hands. Homer seemed to be falling out of the canvas, his face half-asleep, his big hands clawing the air in anguished pantomime. Claude turned his head as he ran to thumb his nose at his pursuers. Tod himself picked up a small stone to throw before continuing his flight. (West, 163)

The incomplete masterpiece contains all the critical personas of the novel, and their place and action on the canvas, reflect the action they perform in the novel. Faye running proudly by throwing her knee high is highly symbolic of her leaving the film industry and taking refuge in a brothel. The description about Harry tells of how he held on to his act till the end. Homer falling out of the canvas is highly symbolic of how the crowd lynched him, and his anguish is highly deplorable. Tod picking a stone tells about the incident of Adore throwing a stone at Homer, thereby causing his death, which makes the crowd run wild.

Tod breaks his leg to flee and prevent girls from being assaulted amid the mob's savagery. Tod's efforts are unsuccessful in the face of the mob's force, but it is also too late for him to connect his fantasy with reality conceptually. He is restrained and in pain but manages to get away by pretending to be drawing the finishing touches for his artwork.

He had almost forgotten both his leg and his predicament, and to make his escape still more complete he stood on a chair and worked at the flames in an upper corner of the canvas, modelling the tongues of fire so that they licked even more avidly at a corinthian column that held up the palm leaf roof of a nut burger stand. (163-164)

However, it cannot be said as the masterpiece is incomplete because the novel completes it. The continuous actions of every element of the novel become a matching puzzle or the filler of a part of the canvas. The canvas is complete in its totality when Tod hears the police siren, which signifies the fire alarm symbolizing the flaming

city of 'Las Angeles.' Tod becomes highly autobiographical in that West uses the novel as the perfect canvas to depict his artistic capabilities and to paint his magnum opus through the characters portrayed therein. Tod Heckett, as a character, fails to accomplish, while West fulfils the dream of completing his masterpieces. The novel serves as a perfect space for West to showcase his art. Thus novel becomes a generous space to paint the picture of imagination to critique the existing social order.

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# Words on Bathroom Walls: A Misrepresentation of Schizophrenia in Mainstream Media

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## Abstract

*This paper analyzes the narrative of the movie "Words on Bathroom Walls" through the perspective of the protagonist, Adam Petrazelli. The study attempts to understand the signs and symptoms associated with schizophrenia and see how accurately they are depicted through this movie. The movie is problematic in many senses as it romanticizes the life of a person with mental illness and how it makes them appear "eccentric" in the eyes of someone who does not face such problems. It highlights the misrepresentative narrative of the movie towards the lifestyle, experiences and obstacles which are faced by individuals with schizophrenia. Additionally, the movie portrays the struggles of an individual with schizophrenia who comes from a position of privilege and does not discuss the realities of those who belong to social and economic classes otherwise. Healthcare is shown to be easily and abundantly available to all, ignoring the economic implications that come with expensive medication and treatment charges. We see the presence of a fictional experimental drug being deemed as a "once-and-for-all" cure for the disorder, while existing medication is represented as ineffective. Lastly, it talks about the psychological implications that individuals with schizophrenia face on an everyday basis and the stereotypes and stigmatization that comes along with the diagnosis.*

**Keywords:** Schizophrenia, Misrepresentation, Media, Symptoms, Stigmatization, Healthcare, Mental Illness

## Introduction

The American film "Words on Bathroom Walls", released in 2020, was written by Nick Naveda and directed by Thor Freudenthal. It is a novel adaptation of the same name authored by Julia Walton. The movie shows how the protagonist- Adam Petrazelli, manages his life while battling a mental illness. After experiencing a psychotic episode in his school, he is diagnosed with schizophrenia. The main objective of the movie is to depict schizophrenia and its consequences. He is expelled from his school due to the psychotic episode that occurred and is forced to join another school mid-semester. Just before joining the new school, he is prescribed new medication. The film shows how Adam dealt with having to switch schools, establishing new friends, dealing with peer pressure, and managing schizophrenia on a daily basis.

Schizophrenia is a spectrum of severe psychiatric conditions with unknown etiology. It is considered a psychotic disorder. According to DSM-5, it is primarily characterized by disturbances in cognition, behaviour and emotional responsiveness, where a person experiences

"loss of contact" from reality. These disconnections can take place in several ways. The onset of schizophrenia occurs at different ages, depending upon an individual's sex. For males, it typically starts between the ages of 15 and 25, and for females it begins between 25 and 35 years of age. Symptoms can vary from one individual to another; some of the common signs of schizophrenia include changes in the emotional state where people often feel afraid, suspicious or paranoid. There is change in how the person relates to others, they often stop socializing and reduce interaction with close family and friends as well. We can also observe major changes in behaviour where they may struggle to focus or think and are demotivated. Their emotional expressions are also less visible. The symptoms can be broadly categorized into: positive, negative, and cognitive.

**Positive Symptoms-** This includes changes in the way in which an individual thinks, acts, and experiences the world. They may lose a shared sense of reality with others and experience the world in a distorted way.

Positive symptoms can include- *Hallucinations*: This is the experience of hearing, seeing, smelling, tasting, or feeling things that are not actually there. They are vivid and clear and often seem similar to normal perceptions. Auditory hallucinations, or hearing voices, are the most common symptom in schizophrenia and its associated disorders. *Delusions*: These are fixed false beliefs which are held despite there being clear and reasonable evidence that they are not true. They are false beliefs that are not based in reality. Individuals with schizophrenia often have paranoid delusions, where they believe that they are being harmed or harassed by another person or a group of people. *Disorganized thinking and speech*: This refers to ways of thinking that are illogical or unusual. Effective communication is often impaired in individuals with schizophrenia as they have difficulty in organizing their thoughts and speech. *Disorganized or abnormal motor behaviour*: This symptom can take various forms, from childlike silliness to unpredictable agitation, or can appear as repeated movements. Behaviour isn't focused on a goal, so it is difficult to perform tasks. In extreme cases, a person might have catatonia- a rare condition in which an individual stops moving or talking for a while.

**Negative Symptoms-** This refers to a reduced ability to function normally. This includes loss of motivation, loss of interest and decreased experience of pleasure, withdrawal from social life, difficulty expressing emotions. Additional symptoms can include having difficulty planning activities and sticking to schedules, reduced interest and enjoyment in everyday life, limited facial expressions and monotone speech, avoiding social interaction and social awkwardness. **COGNITIVE SYMPTOMS-** This includes problems in attention, memory and concentration. These symptoms make it difficult for a person with schizophrenia to follow a conversation, learn new things, or remember appointments. Symptoms include having difficulty in processing information to make decisions, difficulty in applying new information immediately after learning it and having trouble in paying attention or focusing.

According to the DSM-5, a schizophrenia diagnosis requires the following- *At least two of the five main symptoms*: delusions, hallucinations, disorganized thinking and speech, disorganized motor behaviour and negative symptoms. *Duration of symptoms*: The key symptoms must last for at least one month. Additionally, the

condition's effects (regardless of whether or not they meet the full criteria for symptoms) must also last for at least six months. *Social dysfunction*: This is when the condition hampers the person's ability to socialize, work or disrupt relationships.

### Research Method

This study uses the descriptive qualitative method integrated with the case study model. It aims at describing the portrayal of schizophrenia through this movie. According to Lawrence Leung (2015), qualitative research is to make sense of and recognize patterns among words to build up a meaningful picture without compromising its richness and dimensionality. Descriptive qualitative method and thematic analysis was used in this study as it focuses on schizophrenia, and the factors and symptoms associated with the disorder, which was depicted in the movie. The case study model was implemented as the paper focuses on one thing and attempts to take an in-depth view of it.

### Discussion

After analyzing the movie, the following themes have been identified.

#### Falsified Representation of Symptoms Associated with Schizophrenia

At the beginning of the movie, we can see the protagonist having a psychotic episode which is mainly characterized by delusions and his inability to distinguish between what is reality and imagination. We see mention of the major symptoms while he is admitted at the hospital, but the depiction of these symptoms throughout the duration of the movie is bleak. The primary focus of the movie, or rather fixation, is on his hallucinations and paranoia. We do not see symptoms associated with disorganized speech, thinking or motor functioning as much as hallucinations. Adam is predominantly shown to have audio-visual hallucinations, to the point where there are characters that almost seem life-like, and are shown to be fully functioning human beings. There are three main characters that Adam hallucinates, they are:

- (i) Rebecca, a psychic who reads tarot cards, is shown to have a zen personality and tranquil mindset.

She tries to calm Adam down whenever he is agitated or in distress.

(ii) The Bodyguard. This character is much older than Adam himself, and is portrayed to be extremely protective of him. He is temperamental yet loyal.

(iii) Finally, Joaquin, who appears to be the “best friend from a 90s movie”, is someone who follows you around, saying all your unfiltered raw thoughts.

We can see Adam engaging in full-fledged conversations with these characters, which is exaggerated as this is rarely experienced by people with schizophrenia in real life.



Fig.1 Adam's Interaction with Hallucinations



Fig.2 Main Characters of Adam's Hallucinations

### Portrayal of Inaccurate Outcomes of Medication

A major problematic aspect of this movie is that it distinctly names clinically approved medications used for treating schizophrenia- Abilify, Risperdal, Clozapine and Stelazine, and portrays them as ineffective for the protagonist. Furthermore, we can see depiction of a fictional experimental drug created in the movie called “Tozaprex” which somehow is more effective in reducing the symptoms of the protagonist to the point where it almost “cures” him. Additionally, this is hazardous as it can lead to self-medication by unaware and ignorant individuals. It also creates a sense of false hope for those affected with schizophrenia with a “miracle cure” to rid them of their diagnosis. This fictional medication is shown to have immediate effects on Adam as soon as he ingests it. His

hallucination begins to glitch within minutes and then starts to disappear. This stigmatizes mental illnesses and promotes the popular misconception how they can be “cured” by the use of medication only, which then invalidates the struggles faced by those suffering from the effects of various mental health illnesses on an everyday basis.



Fig 3, Fig 4, Fig 5, Fig 6 Medications Mentioned in the movie (Fig 7 Fictional medication - Tozaprex)

### Media Representation of Mental Illness

It is apparent since the beginning of the movie that there is a lack of adequate research into the everyday life experiences and the struggles of those diagnosed with

schizophrenia. This can be seen through the relentless fixation on hallucinations, and ignoring to portray the other symptoms that are associated with the disorder. There are other symptoms which have not been given much emphasis such as disorganized speech, cognitive effects, and abnormal motor functioning. It is misleading to those who are unaware and adds to the stereotype of the overall behavioural, cognitive and social implications that accompany the diagnosis. The movie also romanticizes mental illness which can be seen through Adam being showcased as an “weird and eccentric” figure whose diagnosis makes him more appealing to the love interest. This is a commonly seen pattern amongst movies that try to normalize mental illness and psychological disorders. But this does not apply in real life due to the judgment and stigma that is faced by those impacted with mental illnesses. This movie further shows Adam to be an individual with exceptional skills in the culinary arts. This creates a misconception that people with psychological disorders are “gifted”, whereas, this is a very rare occurrence in reality. This pattern can be observed in most movies that have a narrative involving mental illnesses and disorders. Throughout the movie, we get a glimpse into the healthcare system as well as the treatment for Adam’s diagnosis. A notable point is that Adam has access to some of the best hospitals and specialists, whereas this is not true for most people diagnosed with schizophrenia. Access to healthcare and medication is extremely tedious for many, due to the unreasonably high cost of treatment. Considering this, we can ascertain that the movie does not have an inclusive socio-economic representation or examine the various factors that influence the overall range of care that most people diagnosed with schizophrenia can access or afford.



**Fig 8 Adam in Hospital after a Psychotic Episode at Prom**



**Fig 9 Adam in Rehab After Being Admitted in the Hospital**

**Table 1 List of Movie that Delineate Schizophrenia**

SI. NO	Name of the Movie	Year of Release
1.	Benny and Joon	1993
2.	Angel Baby	1995
3.	Shine	1996
4.	A Beautiful Mind	2001
5.	Donnie Darko	2001
6.	Into the Mind of a Serial Killer (Schramm)	2001
7.	Memoirs of my Nervous Illness	2006
8.	Savage Grace	2007
9.	The Soloist	2009
10.	Take Shelter	2011

Additionally, we looked into a few of the popular movies from the 1990s- 2010s which attempted to depict schizophrenia and associated disorders. We noticed that the accuracy of the portrayal of schizophrenia through these two decades have neither regressed nor progressed, rather it fluctuates. The movie “A Beautiful Mind” is a good example of an extremely in accurate portrayal of schizophrenia. For narrative’s sake, the protagonist, John is shown interacting with full-fledged characters and it is mentioned that these were manifestations of his schizophrenia, while this is not the case at all. An exceptional portrayal of the disorder is seen through the movie “Savage Grace”. It walks us through the life of Antony Baekeland, his diagnosis of paranoid schizophrenia, and his family’s disapproval of attaining psychiatric help. In addition, we can see his mother’s homophobic beliefs and how that worsens his condition, ultimately leading him to committing homicide. This movie is a prime example of how things can go wrong when mental health conditions are ignored for a long period of time.



## Conclusion

It can be seen that the movie does not accurately depict the symptoms, lifestyles, healthcare and treatment of individuals with schizophrenia. It is unrealistic of the way in which schizophrenia is commonly perceived. The portrayal of the fictional drug as more effective can be misleading to the audience as it creates a sense of false hope. It also increases the risk of self-diagnosis and self-medicating amongst viewers. This movie does bring in a few positive aspects as well, such as, the nurturing relationship between Adam and his mother, which indicates that there are families which are accepting and supportive of those with mental illnesses. It also accurately portrays the presence of negative intrusive thoughts that target vulnerabilities, which is something that is frequently faced by individuals with schizophrenia, and in extension, other mental illnesses as well. The movie, ultimately, does not do justice to the everyday life experiences of people diagnosed with schizophrenia and it adds to the stigma surrounding the disorder. It is suggested that more research must be conducted before attempting to depict the life of a person diagnosed with mental disorders in mainstream media. This will ensure the reduction of further stigmatization of mental illnesses through media.

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# An Interdisciplinary Approach to Wrongful Conviction: Perspectives from Literature

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## Abstract

The interdisciplinary of law and literature has been a point of discussion ever since the publication of the essay *A List of Hundred Legal Novels* in 1908 by John Henry Wig more. Wig more listed novels that a lawyer must read, and later, Benjamin N Cardozo's essay *Law and Literature* in 1931 analysed judicial pronouncements with literature. The book *Legal Imagination* (1973) by James Boyd White marked a revised interest in law and literature relationships in the new millennium. White, in his book, proposes a new pedagogy of law using literature. However, beyond using literature as a tool for law studies, literature can evoke deep insights into errors in the legal system and violations of human rights. One of the gravest errors in the contemporary legal system is the conviction of innocent people. A wrongful conviction is a conviction of a factually innocent man, and this issue has been much discussed after the development of DNA technology, especially in the US. This research paper looks at the emergence of a new body of literature that solely talks about the experiences of the wrongly convicted through testimonials, biographies, memoirs, fiction and films. This study examines the significance of such literary narratives in curbing the pandemic of wrongful convictions.

**Keywords:** Law, Literature, Wrongful Conviction, Imagination

## Law and Literature

The academic discussion on the inter-relationship between the two disciplines, law and literature, has become more active and "increasingly serious" (Ward 3) in recent times. The inter disciplinarity of law and literature has been a point of discussion ever since the publication of the essay *A List of Hundred Legal Novels* in 1908 by John Henry Wig more. Wig more listed novels that a lawyer must read, and later, Benjamin N Cardozo's essay *Law and Literature* in 1931 analysed judicial pronouncements with literature. The book *Legal Imagination* (1973) by James Boyd White marked a revised interest in law and literature relationships in the new millennium. The question of what role literature has to play in the world of law has been much debated after the publication of James Boyd White's *Legal Imagination* in 1973. He proposes a new way of teaching and learning laws through the outer world experiences in the canonical texts of literature, and he believes this approach will humanise and better educate law students. Another claim is that "law and literature are intimately related because each depends on language and a way of reading, writing, and speaking that involves similar interpretive practices" (Minda).

The use of parables, metaphors or fictional narratives in law is not a new thing. Though they are absent in

contemporary legal theory, they can be traced in theological legal systems such as Sharia in Islam and Talmud in Jewish (ward 5). Two distinct approaches in the interdisciplinary study of law and literature are 'Law in Literature' and 'Law as Literature'. 'Law in Literature' approach is "the great book approach" that "examines the possible relevance of literary texts, particularly those which present themselves as telling a legal story" (Ward 3). In other words, understanding how Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice*, Kafka's *The Trial*, or Melville's *Billy Budd* can offer lessons to lawyers. Rather, 'Law as literature' "uses a broader range of methods and theoretical practices of literary criticism as a medium for analysing legal texts and exploring the nature of legal style and rhetoric" (Minda)

'Law as literature', to better understand the whole process of the legal proceeding per se, can be compared to the act of literary criticism. The literary methods of narration, description, evaluation, interpretation and critique often happen in legal proceedings as well. Law is taken as a narrative that needs interpretation. In other words, all cases that come to a court for resolution are written as stories with all narrative elements such as plot, character and setting and these stories are evaluated and interpreted in the court by lawyers with all evidence as well as detailing the characters that figure in the context. This

approach emphasises the unavoidability of a lawyer having narrative and interpretative skills. 'Law in Literature' uses "the great books" in literature "for discovering insights about meaning, use of rhetoric and the values of law" (Weisberg). The relevance of 'law in literature', as mentioned before, is to educate, sensitise and humanise legal practitioners so that legal systems can be improved.

Law talks about maintaining a peaceful society and treating everyone equally and fairly, whereas literature talks about the lived experiences of individuals in the legal reality. Furthermore, literature is capable of exposing the defects in the legal system, human rights violations or any other forms of miscarriages of justice which are more often lost in reality or escape the notice of the judicial system. Such narrative documents how the legal system fails to ensure justice for all and gives an explicit narration of human pain, suffering and futility of hope for survival. With such a conjecture in focus, this research article tries to locate wrongful convictions from a literary perspective through the lens of human rights so as to make evident the unnoticed or disregarded manipulations in the execution of justice and possible solutions through literature and "literary imagination" (Nussbaum).

### Wrongful Convictions

Wrongful conviction is a grave error and human rights violation that happens in the judicial system resulting in the punishment of an innocent man for a crime he did not commit. Black's Law Dictionary defines wrongful conviction as "a conviction of a person for a crime that he or she did not commit." In other words, the conviction of a factually innocent person. Though the concern over wrongful conviction is evident in all the extant and the extinct legal systems alike, the cases of miscarriages of justice are not less in number. The principle "innocent until proven guilty", a phrase coined by the British barrister Sir William Garrow, acts as a shield to protect innocents being wrongly punished. The idea of presumption of innocence can be traced back to history in the sixth century, in the Latin maxim introduced in Roman criminal law by Antonius Pius, "ei incumbit probatio qui dicit, non qui negat" (the burden of proof is on the one who declares, not on one who denies). Moreover, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights 1948 (UDHR) article 11 states: "everyone charged with a penal offence has the right to be presumed innocent until

proven guilty according to the law in a public trial at which he has had all the guarantees necessary for his defence". Article 14(2) of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) also ensures an accused the presumption of innocence until proven guilty beyond a reasonable doubt. Amidst all the national and international endeavours to curb wrongful convictions, a considerable number of wrongful convictions still occur. According to the National Registry of Exonerations, 3340 convicts were exonerated after 1989 in the US.

A systematized study of wrongful conviction was inaugurated by Edwin Borchard in 1932 with the publication of his book *Convicting the Innocent: Sixty-Five Actual Errors in Criminal Justice*. However, a remarkable focus on the subject, both scholarly and public uniformly, began in the US with the exoneration of hundreds of convicts in the 1990s who were either sentenced to internment or death. The advancements in forensic science in the late 1980s, specifically the development of DNA testing of biological evidence, helped in exposing the error. In Princeton, New Jersey, Centurion Ministries was established in 1983 as the first exonerations-focused organisation in the United States. In 1992 attorneys Barry Scheck and Peter Neufeld established the Innocence Project, a non-profit organisation to provide legal support to those wrongly convicted in the US, and later expanded its operation to many other countries. The organisation has proven the innocence of hundreds through DNA evidence.

### Wrongful Convictions and Literature

The pandemic of wrongful convictions and exonerations has led to the emergence of a new branch of literature, namely the literature of wrongful convictions. Several exonerated convicts and writers in the US have shared their life experiences through novels, biographies, memoirs and testimonies, such as *Better Not Bitter* (2021) by Yusef Salaam, *Redeeming Justice* (2021) by Anthony Wright, *Live to Tell* (2021) by Jarrett Adams, *The Guardians* (2020) by John Grisham, *Solitary* (2019) by Albert Woodfox, *Infinite Hopes* (2018) by Anthony Graves, *Anatomy of Innocence: Testimonies of Wrongfully Convicted* (2017) by Laura Caldwell and others, *Just Mercy* (2014) by Bryan Stevenson, *Picking Cotton* (2010) by Ronald Cotton and Jennifer Thompson, *Getting Life* (2014) by Michael Morton. Apart from these texts, a

number of documentaries and movies are also available, for example, *Bloods worth: An Innocent Man* (2015). All these books and movies give a heart-wrenching story of wrongful conviction. Most of them had spent a decade or more in internment for no crime before exonerating.

The emergence of literature of this kind is highly demanded to address the issue. Studies of wrongful convictions have pointed out several reasons for failure in judicial systems, such as eyewitness misidentification, perjury, police misconduct and use of junk science. But it is to be noted that, basically, the fundamental reason behind wrongful conviction is ruthlessness, lack of sentimentality and compassion of the police. According to Thomas Nigel, what licences ruthlessness in public life is public morality. He argues that public morality is heightened with the concern for results. The police, during the investigation, with their concern for results, often subject the suspects to inhumane treatment and torture. They overlook the exculpatory evidence and instead fabricate evidence to book an innocent that eventuate in wrongful convictions. The police are not at all concerned with the adverse effects of their actions on the individual being victimized.

The question of what literature can do in curbing wrongful convictions can be answered using the ideas of Martha Nussbaum. Nussbaum, in her book *Poetic Justice: The Literary Imagination and Public Life*, argues that "literature can provide guidance concerning the "construction" of institutions, including law, and the training of institutional actors (e.g., judges)" (Ward 55). Her idea of "literary imagination" is similar to 'the great books approach' of Weisberg, discussed in the beginning. Nussbaum argues that through literature and with the faculty of imagination, one gets the ability to understand the life of other people "whose lives are distant from our own". The literary imagination allows "rational emotions" such as compassion which are necessary to be a good human. She claims that "if we integrate such emotions into processes of practical deliberation, we can improve the quality of the principles on which we act" (Ward 56). She criticises the economist way of thinking, being mathematically precise and lacking emotion. She elaborates her idea using the philosophy of Gradgrind in Dicken's *Hard Times*.

Nussbaum claims literary imagination reflects in the public imagination, the imagination of the public officials,

"an imagination that will steer judges in their judging, legislators in their legislating, policy-makers in measuring the quality of life of people both near and far" (Nussbaum). So, a police officer or a judge, with the faculty of imagination and sensitized by literature, can act compassionately and understand the life of the man in front of them. Reading the literature that depicts the life experience of the wrongfully convicted will help in the public imagination and individual imagination. The ultimate purpose of literature and imaginative faculty is to help to become good human beings. Hence, the literature of wrongful convictions makes the individuals understand the seriousness of being a false witness and perjuring, and their adverse effect on the victim. In the same way, it helps the judges to consider the case morally without any prejudice or recklessness. When a judge approaches a case with an objective and compassionate mind, he can decipher the lacunae in the police investigation and their narrative implicating innocent people.

### Conclusion

To conclude this paper, the major arguments are summarised here. This paper looked at the development and major critical trajectories of law and literature. The thesis of this paper is to understand the concept of wrongful conviction as a serious issue in criminal justice and violation of human rights violation, to acknowledge the development of a literary branch in the new millennium that solely deals with the life experience of being wrongly convicted and punished, and to critique the relevance of such writings in educating and sensitizing the public officials and lay-men. This paper has looked at the third objective of this paper using the ideas of Martha Nussbaum. Nussbaum says, "all literary forms have a distinctively valuable, and in eliminable, contribution to make" (Nussbaum) in morally sensitizing people. Her idea of literary imagination is the capacity to perceive distant lives and evoke rational emotions. The ruthlessness of policing that causes wrongful convictions can only be humanised through literature that portrays the trauma and loss of the wrongly convicted. Hence, reading and researching such works should be motivated in literary mainstreams and academies as well for a better society.

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## **Roman Velasco and the Power of Graffiti Art in Francine Rivers's *The Masterpiece***

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### **Abstract**

*The American inspirational writer Francine Rivers's novel The Masterpiece introduces Roman Velasco, an artist who expresses himself through graffiti art. Throughout the novel, readers are given glimpses into Roman's traumatic past, and how it has shaped his art and his view of the world. Roman's childhood was marked by neglect and abuse, and his art is a way of coping with the trauma he experienced. Graffiti art serves as a reflection of his personality and his inner turmoil. For Roman, graffiti art is a way of life. His art is often provocative and controversial, and he uses his art as a way of highlighting the struggles of the marginalized. Despite the fact that Roman's graffiti art is illegal, he continues to create it, risking his own safety. As the novel progresses, readers begin to see Roman's art in a new light. After his transformation, his art is not about rebellion and defiance, but about healing and redemption. As he finishes a project with the help of the reformed young boys, the outcome is excellent. Roman's graffiti art is a backdrop, a central theme and also a powerful metaphor for the human condition and the struggle to find meaning and purpose in an unkind world. This paper analyses how The Masterpiece explores the complexities of human nature, the power of visual art, and its potential for healing and redemption. Roman Velasco's story and his graffiti art offer a powerful message of hope and resilience.*

**Keywords:** *Graffiti, Traumatic, Provocative, Illegal, Transformation, Resilience*

Francine Rivers's *The Masterpiece* follows the journey of Roman Velasco and Grace Moore who had encountered traumatic events from their childhood. The story is about the process through which they discover love, redemption, and purpose in life. Roman Velasco, a successful and wealthy artist, is known for his captivating graffiti art. His art is not just about spray painting on walls; it is about expressing his emotions and telling his story. Roman's art is his way of dealing with his past and finding a sense of meaning in life, for himself and for others.

As a child, Roman suffers severe mental trauma. Nothing is known of his mother Sheila Dean, who goes missing when the boy is only seven. This precipitates him into unrecoverable trauma. The fact that his mother works at a nightclub torments him. He craves for her presence: "Don't go. Please?..." 'Mama ...' He hugged her tightly.... He clung to her like ivy on a brick wall" (191). As his mother leaves him to go to the nightclub for the last time, he opens the box of pristine crayons which he bought with the stolen money from his mother's bag and starts drawing on a page of newsprint. He sits at the window looking for his mother's return and is enthralled to see a teenager's spray-painting on the wall across the street. He is fascinated with the colours and the way the painter

disappeared stashing his spray-paint and shouldering his bag, when they see the cop. At night, when his mother is away, he climbs on his bed and draws on the wall. He finds painting an apt medium to express his mind. "Art had always been his means of expression, a way to pour out his wrath and frustration" (424).

The following morning mama does not return as usual, and her disappearance throws the boy's life off beam. When he realises the shocking reality of his mother's death, it afflicts his heart so badly that his life becomes chaotic. His trauma intensifies when he loses his friends Reaper and Lardo. There is a lot of deep-seated anger in him which he expresses through art. Roman's passion for painting is further expressed when he doodles in his notebook, sitting in the last desk in Mr. Newman's class. As the teacher lectures on the Civil War, "Bobby Ray's thoughts drifted to the Ellis Street building. He'd like to paint it end-to-end with heads, each a different color, all with dark window eyes, doors like gaping mouths screaming, laughing, baring teeth. . . . He'd need a crew working with him. . . . He'd need lookouts and time. Problem was he liked working alone, with one guy on watch" (30). His mind wanders looking for the time and space to paint on public walls. Studying the picture in his

notebook, of a gangsta on the marble steps of city hall with a black briefcase in his hand, the teacher tells him, "Draw me a Confederate soldier and a Union soldier, and I'll count them toward the term paper you didn't turn in" (30). His flair for drawing is fueled by his teacher and later by Jasper, Chet and Susan, his mentors in Masterson Ranch.

During his life in Masterson Ranch, Roman does not join the other boys at play time; he secludes himself somewhere for he is overwhelmed with anger and dissatisfaction. Chet, the owner of Masterson Ranch finds him in the bedroom painting the wall when all other boys are at games. "Tense, he kept working. . . . The marker ran out of ink before he finished, but he figured he'd done enough. He tossed the empty marker into the wastebasket and sat on the floor at the end of his bed. He wished he had a couple more pens so he could finish what he'd started, but it didn't matter. He had done enough to get kicked off the ranch" (103-04). But Chet calmly studies the picture and feels that the boy has started to speak finally. Looking at his picture, Jasper Hawley, the teacher at Masterson Ranch, buys him pens, sketchbooks, a pile of art books which includes art history, the works of Leonardo da Vinci, Francisco Goya, Paul Cézanne, Vincent van Gogh, Hieronymus Bosch, Emil Nolde, and tells him that they are adding art to his curriculum. Roman finishes his chores and homework quickly and spends hours painting. He shows much enthusiasm when Hawley buys him a book on twentieth century muralists. Susan wonders at his pictures and offers him her kitchen wall for painting.

Whenever he is emotionally disturbed Roman takes his paint, goes to the city, and drives around for an hour before returning to the house. Not only as a boy but also as an adult he continues to deal with his emotions through graffiti. Jasper says, "Your art was a cry for help. . . . Graffiti was always your go-to medium when you were stressed" (200). Even when he possesses all that most Americans desire, a big house, a fast car, a rising career and money, he is not satisfied. Whenever he is stressed, his insatiable hunger and caving emptiness are expressed in his art. "Frustrated . . . Roman grabbed a random can of Krylon spray paint and headed for the back wall of his studio" (87).

Everyone of Roman's art has something to speak. Grace is baffled to see the mural of the great migration and wonders if art is all about interpretation. Roman tells her

that the people in the mural are "people I've known, exposed, but disguised so none can recognize them. . . . By the time I'm done painting, I don't even know who they are" (236). But he knows them when he starts to paint. He says, "Some I want to remember; others I wish I could forget" (236). They are his mother, the landlord of the Tender lion apartment house, foster family members, CPS workers, the girl who introduced him to sex, gang friends, and White Boy. Sitting at his drafting table, he stares "at the migrating wildebeests and zebras. Some were running, some walking, all going somewhere out of instinct. Roman felt like an outcast among his species" (86). Painting helps him to release his repressed emotions and sublimate them. It becomes a healthy outlet that allows him to express his emotions without judgment or shame.

Roman's journey as an artist begins when he is a troubled teenager living on the streets and takes a different direction that he ends painting graffiti which is an art form prohibited by the American Government. He learns how to survive by stealing and becomes involved with a gang. He spends most of his boyhood and adulthood with gang boys, tagging public walls at midnight and escaping the cops. Once he gets arrested for tagging walls and is tried in court. "He painted a red-faced devil around the front door of an apartment house. The entrance swallowed people going in and vomited them out. He painted a chef roasting rats over the garbage cans in the alley of a famous steak house. He turned an air-conditioner grille into a grinning monster" (406).

Roman finds an escape through graffiti art. He discovers that he could express himself and his emotions through his art. Roman whose original name was Bobby Ray Dean is known as the "Bird". As a gang kid tagger, he "used the black marker he'd made from PVC pipe to write *BRD*" (28) as his signature on his graffiti. He "added three small black interlocking letters that looked like a bird in flight" (2). He paints his graffiti in dangerously high places, where his work stays longer than those of the other taggers. "His initials, BRD, gained him a reputation as the Bird" (57). The police department has a file on the Bird's work. The gang kids address him as Bird. "The Bird had gained enough notoriety over the past few years" (4). When he is in a bad mood he paints a highly evocative picture of "the flock of blackbirds attacking a grotesque man crouched and twisted in self-defense" (203). Talia

finds the picture so appealing that she takes it to an art gallery.

Once, Susan asks him to paint something from Rome or something from Italy, or places Vasco da Gama saw on his voyage, he wrongly pronounces "Rome and Velasco." . . . 'Vasco.' She laughs and says, 'But wait. Roman Velasco. That would be a great name for an artist!' . . . 'Pseudonyms are for writers.' Chet laughed. . . . 'If pseudonyms are good enough for superheroes, why can't an artist have one?' Susan was kidding, but she planted a seed nonetheless" (105). Talia exclaims, "The name Roman Velasco has a nice ring to it, too, don't you think? Oh, so foreign and mysterious.' Grace caught her meaning. 'You don't think that's his real name?' 'Do you?' . . . 'Why would Roman make up a name? Did he have something to hide?'" (140). Roman himself is confused about his identity. He "didn't know who he was anymore. Somehow, Bobby Ray Dean had gotten lost between the Bird and Roman Velasco" (22).

As Roman grows older, he becomes more successful in his art, but he still struggles with his past. He uses his art as a way to escape and forget about his pain. However, his life takes a turn in his relationship with Grace Moore who challenges him to confront his past and find true healing. Through Grace's influence, Roman begins to see his art in a new light. He realizes that he could use his art to bring hope and inspiration to others. He starts to create pieces that are not just about his pain, but about the beauty and wonder of life. Roman's art becomes a way to connect with people and bring a message of hope. He soon establishes himself as a reputed, legitimate graffiti artist and gradually adopts the name Roman Velasco and finds his lost identity.

One of Roman's most significant works of art is a mural that he painted in a local park. The mural depicts a woman standing in the midst of chaos, holding a dove in her hand. The woman represents Grace, and the dove represents hope. The mural became a symbol of hope for the community, and people come from all over the city to see it. In the end, Roman discovers that his art can be a tool for healing and redemption. Through his journey, he finds a new sense of purpose and a new way of life.

Roman always has a preference for helping boys with unprotected childhood and also gang kids. His heart melts for Jaime Lopez, "another tough case just like him" (460),

whom he meets at Masterson Ranch. He does not want Jaime to perish. He wants the kid to be saved like him. "He recognized himself at fifteen: angry, broken, no family, no future, no hope. All that had changed on this ranch with these people, and would for this boy, too, if he cooperated. Roman told Jaime as much after lights-out" (460). He is happy to engage gangbangers in his most famous painting. "And that seemed to be enlisting a group of ex-gangbangers into helping him paint graffiti on a church wall" (423). Graffiti art, a destructive force and an illegal act is used by him for something positive and useful. Now, neither he nor the other gangsters need to fear the cops. They can work together peacefully and in daylight. A police officer comments, "You got permission this time. . . . Nice to see all these kids working on something constructive" (427).

Roman, an adamant recluse filled with negativity, is soon transformed into the coworker of a youth pastor. The one who lost his youth in worldly pleasures is turned into an animator of youth. He wonders at the miracle of God and the radical change within him. Redeeming the young gangsters is his mission now. Tuck Martin, a freelance reporter, exclaims at the change in Roman and appreciates his inclusion of gang kids in his project. According to the psychologist, "As you heal, as you feel more nourished, balanced, and whole, you will find that you have energy available to direct in creative and life-affirming pursuits. No longer struggling just to cope day-to-day, you can begin to make an impact in the world" (Bass and Davis 180). When Brian gives Roman an opportunity to paint something legal and useful for others, Roman, who was once a notorious painter always hunted by the cop, turns into an outstanding artist who becomes famous.

He actively finishes the project with the help of the reformed young boys. The idea of doing graffiti excites him, and the outcome is excellent. There is a sweeping difference in Roman's art, from the ones which were painted when he was edgy, angry, and eager to take flight. "It looked like someone else's work, not his own. God was in this, and Roman felt exhilarated, excited, *alive*. . . . He knew the One who had inspired him and why. This universal Christ triumphant hadn't come out of his mind, but had been planted by the Lord" (424). Roman's journey as an artist is a testament to the transformative power of art. His graffiti art becomes more than just a way to



express his emotions; it becomes a way to bring hope and inspiration to others. Roman's story shows that even the most broken individuals can find purpose and meaning in life through their talents and creativity.

Graffiti art and literature are two separate art forms that are creative and share a common thread of self-expression. Both mediums offer a platform for artists and writers to express their perspectives, emotions, feelings, ideas and experiences. Graffiti art is a form of visual art that involves creating images, designs, and messages on public spaces, using spray paint, markers, or stencils by artists who use this art form to communicate their opinions, messages, and personal experiences to the public. Similarly, literature is a form of written art wherein writers use language to communicate their ideas, emotions, messages and experiences to the readers. Francine Rivers has cleverly used graffiti art as a central element of Roman's character development, as it represents both his creative talent and his rebellious spirit. As the novel

progresses, Roman's graffiti art becomes a metaphor for his own journey of self-discovery and redemption. Through his art, he is able to confront his past, face his fears, and ultimately find peace and forgiveness. His art becomes a way to connect with God and to express his faith in a new and meaningful way. Roman's graffiti art is used by the writer as a powerful tool to explore the complexity of his character and to convey the themes of identity, redemption, and faith that are central to the novel. Graffiti art serves a backdrop, a central theme and also a powerful metaphor in Rivers's novel *The Masterpiece*.

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# The Question of Visual Art in the Anthropocene: A Study of Greed and Desire in Amitav Ghosh's *Jungle Nama*

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## Abstract

The planetary crisis, coming out of Anthropogenic climate change, is relatively a complicated and layered issue that cannot be simplified by a single thread of scientific explanation or environmental storytelling. It requires the engagement of diverse strategies and new ways of narrative in the conversation of climate change that is perceived as distant, complex, and abstract. Therefore, the field of visual art, such as painting, drawing, graphics, photography, crafts, videos, filmmaking etc. has been propounding the discussion of environmental changes through the artist's artwork, tugging at the strings of individual awareness and moral consciousness in response to the growing concerns of climate change. In illustrating the necessity of uncovering the relationship between visual art and literature, Amitav Ghosh, in his 2021 fiction *Jungle Nama*, renders a new approach by infusing vivid and wonderful images illustrated by the renowned Pakistani-American artist Salman Toor, to give a vision to the environmental story that is indigenous in nature and is about how people find a balance with the natural world. For example, in the book *Jungle Nama*, the title page-image is not just a mere form of art, rather it is the representation of how someone may try to confront their own demon under a kind of veil, which the artist himself has revealed. Therefore, based on the illustrations in the book, this paper will attempt to explore how art helps to make visible the colonial theme of plunder and power in the form of imprudent greed and desire, endangering the ethnicity, identity and culture of the indigenous people along with the intrinsic value of nature.

**Keywords:** Anthropocene, Visual art, Indigenous People, Greed, Desire.

## Introduction

In the era of rapid ecological decline, emerging out of the Anthropocene, only scientific explanations can no longer uphold the position of sole authoritative voice to simplify a relatively complicated and layered issue of climate change. Engagement of a variety of new approaches together with different ways of narrative is needed in the conversation of climate change that can foster the relationship between nature and culture recognizing the ecological urgencies, the planet is facing. Therefore, either the questioning the role of visual arts, such as painting, illustrations, photography, graphics, photography, crafts, multimedia work or other creative forms can play in propounding the awareness of the vulnerability in the ecosystem or question like, whether a painting can inspire progressive action on the behalf of nature- always appear within the complex discussion of environmental changes. Over the millennia, art has always enjoyed a close-knit relationship to the environment and more-than-human-life proffering environmental values through an artist's artwork, that tug at the strings of individual awareness and moral consciousness in response to the growing concerns of

global climate change. To put in the words of Hungarian-American artist Agnes Denes, art is what brings together the "philosophical and ecological concerns" (Denes 388).

Published in 2021, against the backdrop of alluring forests of the Sundarbans, the first-ever book in verse by one of the most powerful climate writers of our time Amitav Ghosh's *Jungle Nama* is a free adaptation of the very popular legend in the vast mangrove forest of the Sundarbans, Bon Bibi, a tale told entirely in a dwipodipoyar-like meter of twenty- four syllable couplets that replicate the intonation of the original medieval Bengali tale. The book imagines the disastrous deep-rooted impacts of the never-ending human desire and greediness on earth, altering the Earth's geochemical composition to an unprecedented extent of climate instability. In illustrating the necessity of uncovering the relationship between visual art and literature, Amitav Ghosh, in his book, renders a new approach by infusing vivid and wonderful images illustrated by the renowned Pakistani-American artist Salman Toor, to give a vision to the environmental story that is indigenous in nature, and is about how people find a balance with the natural world.

The story treads on the familiar theme of 'man versus nature' emphasizing man's transgression in places where he does not belong, through the character of avarice and greedy Dhona and the restoration of faith in humanity through the revered legend and deity Bonbibi, the protector of the forest and its inhabitants. Therefore, to give a strong visual component of this environmental story, Amitav Ghosh renders Salman Toor's illustrations. Moving beyond a static focus on the aesthetic representation of natural forms, the illustrations of Salman Toor provide an accessible and potential window for a cultural recognition to the most oppressed and indigenous communities' endangered ethnicity and identity.

### Art as a Vision in the Anthropocene

The hypothetical term 'Anthropocene' describes the resultant effects that humans make on earth and the current geological epoch of the Earth in which humans are considered to be the single largest impact on the planet to the point of a large-scale geological force. Ever since the atmospheric chemist Paul Crutzen popularized the term in 2000, it has become an environmental buzzword in the broad-catch-up field of Environmental Humanities, including social sciences, humanities, as well as in the spheres of arts. Referring to the concept of Anthropocene, literary scholar Jeremy Davies argues that it requires "a certain indirectness [because] one must imaginatively transfer oneself to the far future" to witness how environmental changes are "readily discernible" (Davies) in the future. The form of art, as an essential and universal aspect of expression, traverses beyond human minds and touches the depth of human hearts in ways that the other forms of communication cannot. Very few attention has been paid to the strategies of visual art that not merely helps to tackle the challenges the Anthropocene poses to the human imagination, but also conveys messages of global climate change that are too complicated to grasp with the language alone. In amplifying the conjunction between art and environmental changes, Heather Davis and Etienne Turpin, in their introduction of the book, "Art in the Anthropocene," aptly argues that art is "central to *thinking with* and *feeling through* the Anthropocene... To approach the panoply of complex issues that are aggregated within and adjacent to the Anthropocene, as well as their interconnections and intra- actions, it is

necessary to engage with and encounter art" (Davis and Turpin 3-4).

Illustrations by Salman Toor in *Jungle Nama* carries out the equivalent message of Davis and Turpin, for instance, the cover-page-illustration in the book is mysterious and fearsome, perfectly encapsulating what the Sundarbans stands for- it is not only a simple painting of tiger but also the demonstration of man's encounter with its own demonic self enforcing emotion, thinking, feeling in the reader's mind. Moreover, to familiarize readers with the environmental values and naturalistic understanding, the artist incorporates specific story lines from the book along with the visual representation, for example, "In this realm the shape- shifter was the reigning numen; /nothing escaped him, his eyes were not human" (Ghosh 30) that not just elucidates the boundary between human and other-than-human-life in Nature but instills fearsome and deadly consequences if not respected the boundary.

### Equilibrating the Human Greed and Need in Art

The age of Anthropocene has given one of the single greatest powers to the human beings to either change the planet for the good, maintaining a balance between man-nature relations, human and non-human-being relations or accelerate environmental destruction, upsetting the balance through the acts of their deadly greed and indifference towards nature. Needless to say, without this delicate balance, man would cease to even survive or thrive on this planet. For millennia, the field of art has always been the representation of natural forms like birds, plants, mountains, landscapes etc. in an aesthetic and sublime form; but in the recent past years, art engages Nature in diverse and, sometimes, in surprising ways postulating awareness of the vulnerable ecosystem, environmental values, and Nature's intrinsic ethics.

Apart from offering a vision and richness in the story of *Jungle Nama*, Salman Toor's the black and white illustrations or monochromic palette images speak about the mindless human greed and desire causing harm to nature and other more-than-human-lives on earth visualizing the impending danger and its consequences through an "unseen, yet active, like an invisible crowd" (Ghosh 42). The powerful and benevolent Goddess of a sprawling mangrove in the jungle of the Sundarbans, Bon Bibi is worshiped by both the Hindu and Muslim indigenous communities who belong to the lower caste in society and

is closely dependent on the environment for their livelihoods. Salman Toor's illustrations have unfolded the fatal consequences of excessive human greed, desire, and selfishness towards Nature along with the exploitation of indigenous people. For instance, Characters like Dukhey and her mother belong to the indigenous community who have been exploited for centuries by the settler community in the form of greed- driven, rich, avarice- like-character Dhona for fulfilling their selfish and never ending desires to acquire more. In the pages of *Jungle Nama*, the artist has beautifully picturized these concepts of exploitation and helplessness through Dukhey's mother, "Now with a farewell salaam, Dukhey got up to leave; / and so he went his way, leaving her to grieve" (Ghosh 26). Moreover, the illustrations where Dukhey's mother is witnessing her son's departure from her or the image of her mother's helpless cry in front of Dhona, pleading him to give his son back- are also an epitome of "Slow Violence," (Nixon) an invisible form of violence that is distinctively hard to grasp and imagine in the first place. But this phenomenon of gradual violence is slowly and unnoticeably killing the world's most vulnerable indigenous people's culture, ethnicity, and identity in the form of repeated exploitation and destruction of Nature's intrinsic value and boundary.

### Artistic Representation of Mythical Bon Bibi

Art infused with stories has always been a fascinating medium connecting religion, culture, and literature under a broad spectrum of society and the reality of life. Dated back to the Renaissance period, art and religion have shared a close relationship with each other. Moreover, since ancient times, the religion and religious figures have been remarkably portrayed and celebrated in the artwork of an artist. For millennia, indigenous people are creating indigenous arts, colliding their life, culture, and religion in it.

In Amitav Ghosh's *Jungle Nama*, Bon Bibi, the Goddess of the largest deltaic mangrove forest, is worshiped, as the most revered divinity, by both the Hindus and Muslims in the Sundarbans. The 'forest goddess' is more than a mythological figure for the people of the Sundarbans. She is revered as the mother, protector and guardian spirit for them. Since Munshi Mohammad Khatir and Abdur Rahim Sahib's composition of *Bon Bibi Johuranama*, written in late nineteenth century, the mythical beliefs of Bon Bibi have been told, retold, performed, and also reflected through diverse worship-artwork by these marginalized communities of the Sundarbans. The fabulous painting of Bon Bibi, seated on

a tiger with his mythical brother, Shah Jongoli, propagates the perennial philosophy of

All you need do, is be content with what you've got; to be always craving more, is a demon's lot.

A world of endless appetite is a world possessed, is what your munshi's learned, by way of this quest." (Ghosh 70)

### Conclusion

Based on the idea of how art can give a vision to an environmental story, this paper has attempted to define how human greed and desire is manifested within the spectrum of visual art endangering the indigenous culture, ethnicity, and identity of Nature with specific reference to Amitav Ghosh's fiction *Jungle Nama*. The theme of respecting the balance between human greed and need in Nature has been demonstrated through the illustration of artwork. As the narrative of the story progresses, the readers can feel that it is undoubtedly an ecological story about respecting Nature's intrinsic boundary between human needs and of other non-human-beings that would be incomplete without the visual effect of Salman Toor's illustrations. Therefore, it can be argued that the emergence of visual art in this age of planetary crisis is very much requisite to encourage empathy and sustainable action among human beings on behalf of protecting Nature together with unweaving the complexity of Anthropogenic climate change that is constantly threatening the world's most vulnerable people's culture, religion beliefs, ethnicity, and identity.

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## Text and Art: Poetic Portraits in Bindu Jagadeesh's *Song of the Witch*

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### Abstract

Poetry is an imaginative art. Illustrations in a poetry anthology confer the label of text, to the poems complemented. Being art forms, both poems and illustrations generate a new perception in the reader in acknowledging the meaning/purpose of the art forms. Text remains a monolithic entity, until it is bestowed with meaning contributed by imagination, subjectivity and cognition. Indoctrination is made easy through visual art. A poet can create visual perception in a reader through additives like images. The blend of text and art is a creative process, wherein, the poet demarcates a space for the interplay of themes through conscious mental rendering. The paper attempts a study of how the illustrations that supplement some poems in *Song of the Witch* are metaphorical portraits of the nuances of imagination encased in words. The paper argues that the illustrations are the alter egos of the poems supplemented. Text and art simultaneously efface as well as enrich each other.

**Keywords:** Illustrations, Text, Art, Visual Perception, Imagination

Poetry is an imaginative, philosophical expression of the self. A poem becomes a text when readers explore its possibilities at a semantic level. Existential instincts of human beings reverberate in their attempt to interpret an art work in multitude ways, whereby an art work is elevated to the ranks of text. The classical concept of art and reality presents a difficulty in the modern context. According to Plato, art "is a mere fiction twice removed from reality" and Aristotle considered that, "it might be a mode of knowledge in its own right, giving access to the most general truth." (Mulhern 80). Plato also observed that art is parasitic. Post structural theoretical premises hold that ideality in an art work gives way to actuality since a mere combination of words can lead to a universe of codes. Engagement with the actual existing world musters a host of meaningful codes into the ambit of an art work.

The relationship between poems and the supporting portraits in an anthology is that of nurturing differences and similarities simultaneously. Sven Sandström explains the semantic concept behind analysing poetic texts with a supporting image, as follows:

This meaning however is not only unsupported by language, but even, as to its bearing structure, decidedly different from linguistic structures of meaning. When it

comes to meaning out of visual observation it is possible for us to find linguistic expression for just selected aspects and restricted contexts within that which we see that. But we never really can expect to find words and phrases which even schematically can account for the content of the visual image and for its overall character which is so evident before our eyes, and for the inter play of its parts. (12)

Remaining the independent entities they are, poem and image join on the plane of perception to enhance the burgeoning scope of mutual enrichment.

Poems are artistic expressions; illustrations which complement the poems are value enriched additives that align the content to the source. Poetic portraits in Bindu Jagadeesh's *Song of the Witch* starts right with the front cover. She remarks about her poetry collection that "for me it has been a wonderful new experience to put together thoughts into words to create images and verses." (7) The titular "Witch" has been beautifully interpreted by Sarah Joseph, renowned novelist and short story writer in Malayalam, in the Preface to the collection as, "the women who did not tread the traditional ways, those who opted to open up new pathways." (9)

Poems entitled "Summer Breeze", "Fairy Tale", "Reader", "Day and Night", "Vertigo" and "Bird Watcher" written by Bindu Jagadeesh have been selected for study in this paper. Each poem has an image that enriches the

linguistic content. The black and white images speak the language of the poet, convincing the readers to engage in a thoughtful interface with art. "Summer Breeze" and "Fairy Tale" delineate how the women represented break away from the fetters and explore new pathways. Gloomy dormancy govern "Reader" and "Day and Night". These three poems are reminiscent of the confessional style of poetry in all its sophistication. Diminishing vigour dominates the linguistic contents of "Vertigo" and "Bird Watcher".

The bright hued front cover of the collection presents an image of a witch sitting on a horizontally placed broom, reminding us of charm and magic. The witch in the image has a featureless face and appears to be young and thoughtful. The tuft of hairs of the broom is painted bright purple. The purple colour symbolises the quality of being royal. The colour also represents empowerment and transformation. *Song of the Witch* is an ontological representation of the potential of women for self-transformation amidst chaos. The lack of colours in images which complement the poems points to the need of interpreting the text and art as independent entities in the spatial canvas of cognition which eventually will lead to the inextricable blending of linguistic and non-linguistic elements. Cognition plays a huge role in interpreting images. The images selected serve the purpose of augmenting the themes of the poems concerned.

Similitude of Romanticism in poetry is very evident in "Summer Breeze", majorly due to the sub-images that constitute the image. Peacock feather implicitly points to the Radha-Krishna myth, which is highly employed in love poems of Indo- Anglian poets. The text abounds with words denoting colours like "golden, red and yellow" (31), yet the image has no colours in it. The efficacy of the image lies in the representation of peacock feather in the backdrop of what appears to be a bright light, obviously denoting Indian summer. The sub-image on the extreme left bottom part, is suggestive of the 'rising' of the poet persona who has shed her 'leaves' to fly high, severing the bondages of love and life.

The image corresponding to "Fairy Tale" validates the concept of alter ego to legitimise a life that is "colourless and dreary", through transformation (33). The woman in the poem employs the Cinderella story to leap out of drudgery assimilating the power of a dragon whom she

describes as "fire-spitting" (33). The titular witch of the collection finds a space in this poem along with her broom. The witch is assigned the role of a magician. The realm of imagination opened by books is immeasurable. The woman and the dragon in the image seem to be entwined to each other on a spiritual ground. The dragon with its wings covers up the woman, presumably transferring the energy required to make the great leap towards liberation. The texture of the sketch used, leaves ample ground for the readers to identify the merging of two souls, not on clear lines, but with a play on light and dark. The lower part of the image is dark, symbolising the dark existence of the woman and the upper part is lighter, indicating emancipation.

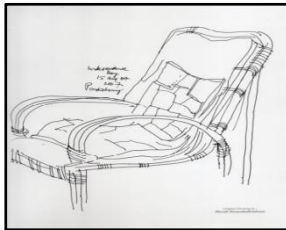


**Source:** *Song of the Witch: Poems by Bindu Jagadeesh*

The poet's vocation is confirmed in the poem entitled "Reader". She makes the statement of her choice with a detailed elucidation of her reading habit. The portraiture of the traditional chair is a well thought of one. The chair is the site of the intersection of perceptions gained from reading "Large never-ending books" (87). The cushion matting provides the comfort requisite for a life of colour. Yet the lines of the poem lead us to a paradoxical premise which posits life as colourless and dusty. Similar to "A small uninteresting book/In a dusty cover" (87), the chair too is unsophisticated which is evident from the thickness or rather the thinness of the lines used to create the image.

The background as well as the object have been rendered in almost the same monotone, suggestive of a non-progressive life.

The dichotomy of day and night is aesthetically rendered without compromising the latent objectivity, in the poem "Day and Night". The poem displays an abundance of personification. The portaiture consolidates the new and the old with the clock and the hour glass struggling to contain the exhaustion of the day with the soothing balm of the night. The minute and second hands of the clock seem to have gone awry, denoting the diminishing competence of the day to hold peace. The imagery of death in the poem is well projected in the image. The hour glass is grotesque and the castle appears disproportionate. The dark tone is evidence of the gloom pervading the life of the poet persona. The intensity of contrast maintained in the image upgrades it to the status of a text, from that of an artwork.



**Source:** *Song of the Witch: Poems by Bindu Jagadeesh*

In "Vertigo", the charming sense of the poetic text is its power to unfold illusions, whereas the image complementing the poem "Bird Watcher" is an artistic take on optical illusion. Both portraiture have recurrent patterns of lines. Vision is the key motif in both the poems. The high-rises and the cityscape depicted in the portraiture of "Vertigo" is a tacit (mis)representation of the distorted vision contributed by the physical imbalance. The image supplementing "Vertigo", does not display any evidence of the abundant Nature imagery given in the lines.



**Source:** *Song of the Witch: Poems by Bindu Jagadeesh*

The eye in the "Bird Watcher" image denotes the convergence of the passions of the poet persona. The significance of the eye of the image is linguistically hinted in the poem as follows – "I turned my lens" and also "I shifted my vision" (115). The smooth rotundity that dominates the image stands in stark contrast to the lucid language of the poem.

Bindu Jagadeesh has delineated what poetry is and what it represents in her poem titled "Poetry", which opens with the line "Poetry reveals you" (37). Subjectivity in poems are quite inevitable, though it can be suppressed to an extent. Works of art flourish unprecedentedly when the reins of interpretation is handed over to the attentive readers. Imaginative faculty coupled with the knowledge of linguistic patterning makes readers authentic interpreters. If the linguistic text is supported by a visual image, the process of understanding can be accelerated and made more pluralistic. The text and co-text notions can be inverted at any given point during the process of interpretation, even though it is generally accepted that the literary work is the text.

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# Unearthing Canadian Indigenous History, Spirit and Culture: A Study of Duke Redbird's "The Ballad of Norval Morriseau"

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## Abstract

*The paper is an attempt to show how Canadian First Nations artists and writers use art forms to disclose their history, culture and traditions. This is uncovered through a study of Duke Redbird's poem "The Ballad of Norval Morriseau" where the poet describes the paintings of an Artist called Norval Morriseau who depicts the cultural heritage of the Ojib ways through his native styled paintings. On the other hand, the poem on Morriseau by Redbird in turn complements the pictures queness of the indigenous artist works, through 'sculptures que' diction, that rever be rates the genius of tribal lineage that the poet exploits to serve as counter-culture.*

**Keywords:** *Indigenous Art, Painting, History, Culture, Cultural Genocide*

Canadian indigenous literature, which is deeply rooted in oral tradition, signifies the cultural transmission from one generation to the other. It works as a link between the past and the future generations that keeps the indigenous culture alive and intact. Their literature describes the history, culture, traditions pains and sufferings of the people of the First Nations. The Canadian Government imposed the Residential School system in an attempt to indoctrinate Western thoughts that also separated the indigenous children from their parents. This led to a forced adherence to Christianity that thus led to intense native cultural genocide.

Some of the major tribes of Canada are mentioned below.

### 1. Mik'maq

The Mik'maq community owns its own kind of literature which defines the values and beliefs of their culture. Gloos cap is the cultural hero who appears in "*The Legend of Gloos cap's door*" by Rita Joe. Some other notable poets are Lindsay Marshall, Shirley Bear etc.(Armstrong and Grauer 14)

### 2. Mohawk

Scattered across Canada and United States, their traditions and beliefs originate from The Great Law of

Peace, the Seventh Generation, the Two Row Wampum Treaty, the Confederacy and the creation story. Beth Brant and Peter Blue Cloud are renowned writers of the tribe. (Wallenfeldt)

### 3. Ojib way

This community recorded the first writing in English as George Cop way wrote his autobiography. It consists of century old traditions archived by Basil Johnston and Drew Hyden Taylor.(Bishop)

### 4. Cree

The largest Canadian indigenous tribe, discussed the abuses faced by the students under the Residential schooling system. The famous writers of this tribe include Marion Sarain, Emma La Rocque and Connie Fife.(Hanson)

Duke Redbird, the writer in concern, is a Saugeen First Nation Scholar, known for his "Love shine and Red wine" is a well-known poet and spokesperson of the Canadian Indigenous people, who propagates indigenous thoughts, culture and experiences through his performances and recitations. Being a powerful spokesperson himself, his works serve to conserve the typical indigenous spirit, which he depicts through a colloquial rhythm of indigenous language and "line



breaks that follow oral rhythm” and literally brings “ritual to poetry and to the printed page. His “Tobacco Burns” and “The Small Drum” are the finest instances where he speaks of how “...old people told of visions/ That were not seen by eyes/ But burned in the mind and mouth of men” and how “The small drum/ Throbbled a story” reflecting the counter culture of its time.”(Armstrong and Grauer 41)

Regarded as the “Grandfather of Indigenous Art” in Canada, Norval Morrisseau, (the focus of Redbird’s poem)- was born on 14<sup>th</sup> March, 1932 in Sand Point Reserve near Beardmore. He belonged to Ojibway, the second-largest community among indigenous tribal population. Their native language is Anishinaabemowin and is well-known for Birchbark Canoes, Birch bark Scrolls, mining and trading copper, cultivation of wild rice and maple syrup. Originating from the mouth of Saint Lawrence River on Atlantic Coast, now called Quebec, the inhabitants of this community are organised in groups called Bands.

Morrisseau is a self-taught artist, who originated the pictographic style, also referred to as “Woodland School” and “X-ray art.” It highlights the outlines of people, creatures and objects. A fusion of European and Ojib painting styles, this form of art uses bright colours and black outlines. The paintings include red ochre mostly and less commonly black white or yellow dye. The traces are done with fingers or brushes made up of animal or vegetal fibres. Introduced to the Canadian public by Pollock Gallery, this eminent artist is presented with Order of Canada in 1978. In an interview, Morrisseau mentioned, “All my painting and drawing is really a continuation of Shaman’s scrolls.” (Vandor)

The Mutuality in Redbird and Morrisseau is indeed intriguing as an artist, for, Morrisseau was described as the ‘Picasso of the North’ while Redbird’s poems brimmed with words that are ‘sculptures que’ or as vivid as canvas painting as quoted above that brought the reader vis-à-vis with indigenous lives and culture. Both forms of art served to alter and resist the invasive acculturation of the indigenous. Steeped each in his ethnicity, the two artists engaged their individual art forms to revolt against that which devoured the essence of their Saugeen Ojib way culture. Such that, as artists their works serve as counter-

culture that acted as a rich legacy to the indigenous lot. counter-culture, which according to Averyt

... foresees the solution not only of man’s economic and social difficulties through a liberating revolution, but also the solution of his deeper psychic problems e.g., his inability to commune with nature and with his fellowman. This quest for a lost sense of brotherhood and community runs like a nostalgic refrain ... (Averyt 20)

This explains why Redbird chooses Norval Morrisseau for a discussion. In the case of Morrisseau, visual representations stand for history, culture, experiences and revolt (as does poetic diction for Redbird). Their art forms served to reinvent themselves in terms of their lost history, retrieve themselves from the trauma of cultural erosion and hoard their memories with the brunt of their past, that in turn served as an impetus to defend and secure what remains of them, from a thorough cultural genocide.

His paintings picture the Ojibwe history, culture and spirituality, as well as the dissatisfaction of the Indigenous people in the Canadian social and political framework. A close connection of the people with their ancestors, traditions and convictions are depicted in the art forms. It accentuates the inequality that results from Canada’s colonial relationship with the First Nations, blending the traditional with the contemporary.



The above image titled as “The Shaman and the Turtle” which thereby is a recollection of an imprint of a very young Morrisseau around the age of six. In Morrisseau’s case he grew up listening to his grandfather Moses Potan Nanakonagos, a shaman trained within the Midewiwin spiritual tradition. While most tribes believed in the powers of shamans or as per the Ojibwas, the mystery men-Morrisseau’s grandfather as a shaman himself was said to have immense healing powers that included healing individuals and communities as well as leading the

dead to the spirit world. While the Midewiwin, was known as the Grand Medicine Society who were also responsible for their community's spiritual health and healing. This depiction is visual resistance to the dominant cultures that submerged and 'othered' the indigenous practices and beliefs. The combination of the shaman and the turtle in the painting stands for the mystery man and his sense of truth. Alongside which-

To most tribes the turtle also represents healing, wisdom, spirituality, health, safety, longevity, protection, and fertility. Some Native Americans believe that the turtle contributed to creation because the turtle dove into the primeval waters to retrieve mud to create Mother Earth. Additionally, the shell of the turtle represents protection and perseverance. (Native American Animals)

It asserts Morrisseau's engrossment with what is not merely conviction but breaks the (persistent) European intrusions that deprived them of their individuality as tribal bands and communities, that denied them their native practices, dowsed the power of their own languages and rituals, besides engulfing them with an incongruous and an alien culture altogether.



Yet another painting of Morrisseau, is that of the 'Sacred snake of good and evil', which has a rootedness to the Ojibwa culture. For, the natives believe that it is important to appease both good and evil though they do agree that the latter begets only negative powers for "most Indians worship evil as well as good, believing that it is better to appease the wrath of the evil, than to incur its enmity" (Qtd in. Danchevskaya 306). The acceptance of the co-existence of the two is much against the European beliefs, which justify that the good has greater power over evil but for the First Nations, their belief is about appeasing the two and is all the more about balances and imbalances of life as per discussions in Danchevskaya.



The painting above, called "Conquest of Thunderbird" is a masterpiece of Norval Morrisseau, created in the second-floor studio of Luis Ituarte, in Fan Tan Alley, Chinatown, Victoria in 1982. Influenced from the Mexican flag, the image highlights the importance of thunderbird in the Ojibway culture. The bird holds its roots to the Shaman belief of the tribe and appears once in 700 years. Apart from portraying the inner journey and mastery of the spirit, it also reflects his own role as a thunderbird, healing the society. (Tebbutt)



The image is another painting of Norval Morrisseau named "Sacred bear," which mentions yet another important figure in Anishinaabe mythology. Created in 1996 in Naïve Art style, the bear is supposed to have brought the Midewiwin ceremony and teachings to Anishinaabe people. Bear clan is associated with people related to medicine and healers, representing protectors and keepers of the community. It represents courage that is necessary to live a balanced life. The artist finds a spiritual connection with the animal as he considers it as his personal guardian spirit. (What we teach / the Seven Ojibwe teachings)

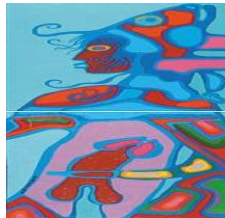


The picture denominated as "Sacred Buffalo," was painted in 1963, which represents dualities of life. The picture composes of traces of "cowrie shell" which is one of

the essentials in Midewiw in medicine bag of a Shaman. Buffalo symbolises respect because the individual's life sustains with it. As the individual depends the animal for survival. (Norval Morrisseau and His Painting Sacred Buffalo)



Painted in 1976 in the Naive Art style, the above painting is called "Song of Beaver." The animal is a representation of wisdom. It is expected to have positive impact on the society as it has the knowledge of creation. (What we teach / the Seven Ojib we teachings)



Besides this is the more significant Mystic in two parts, which is a comment on the indigenous art itself, according to White ford who observes that

Dreams provided guidance, stories and songs conveyed important knowledge, and sacred medicines and skilled shamans gave protection and helped to solve problems. Individual supernatural guardians were acquired through visions, and personal charms and songs were always kept available in a medicine bag or bundle. Verbal references to a manito, or the depiction in any way of one of the sacred forces, was roughly similar to offering a prayer. For these reasons, art of any kind was an important ingredient in maintaining equilibrium in the all-important, and often dangerous, relationship between the earthly people and the sacred world (75)

Therefore, the emphasis lies on how individual features contribute to a holistic indigenous sensation and thereby art of any form becomes an added ingredient that maintains the equilibrium of the indigenous world, the very sense of equilibrium that the mystic in two parts depict.

Under this scanner, Redbird's poem "The Ballad of Norval Morrisseau" is a eulogy to the artist that banishes the

European sensationalism and implants what is thoroughly indigenous in status. The poem selectively scoffs the settlers with sarcasm in the very opening lines that seem much against the colonizers and an extraordinary adulation for the shaman. Morrisseau was a name that the native forests echoed with, whose artistic skills drew forth the fears, the blood and the sweat with certain professionalism peculiar to the native soil. Every stroke on the canvas brought alive the innumerable instances of the past, be it nostalgia, frustrations, or glories of their lives. The "you" in the poem that stands up for the entire race, sarcastically reduces the white man to a mediocre status. Even though the humiliations that the natives suffer are too condescending, yet the Morrisseau's paintings rests on the exhilarating consciousness that "drown their pale faces in whiskey/ you painted their Jesus to expose their hypocrisy." (Redbird 45). He was familiar with their churches and jails and he was a prophet to the indigenous. The entire culture of the land was 'his', not of the colonizers, who now in turn, unabashedly kneel before them, with a thorough subservience flaunting indigenous art forms in the name of preserving the native culture. This very act becomes an insurmountable memory among the Indigenous whose words enable him to retrieve himself from the hidden cultural niche of the Indigenous lot.

Though the art forms are two different entities the pictures queness of Redbird's writing, the acute 'sculptures que' poignancy in Morrisseau's paintings are both records of a cultural heritage that mark indigenous history. The experiences of the two artists are conceptualized and from a literary lens, are destined to re-create an experiential sensation that would leave a lasting impact.

From these perspectives, artistic paintings and the poem provide a base as a well as a scope for cultural investigation and a retrieval of indigenous history. These in turn act as counter culture capturing the historical moments at different instances of the past. (Gruyter 3)

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## Depiction of Devastating Climate Change through Visual Art and Literature: A Study of James Bradley's *Clade*

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### Abstract

Climate change is one of the current environmental challenges facing by mankind at large. The impact of climate change is unpredictable and uncontrollable. It causes severe effects in the biodiversity, social health, coastal system, agriculture, rapid rise in temperature and other unpredictable weather changes. Rapid urbanisation, industrialization and anthropocentric activities make way for such drastic climate changes and it causes more stress on ecology. This paper titled "Depiction of Devastating Climate Change through visual Art and Literature: A Study of James Bradley's *Clade*" aims to analyse how art and literature goes hand in hand in visualising the impacts of climate changes. It also studies how the concept of climate change has been communicated to the society through the medium of visual art and fiction. The source chosen for this study is James Bradley's fiction *Clade* (2015) and a painting titled *Changing Climate- Effects on Oceans and Living Thing* (2018) by Meghna Unnikrishnan. The above works of art shows many common points and serious predictions about the climate changes.

**Keywords:** Anthropocentric Activities, Global Warming, Climate Change, Eco Degradation, Visual Arts, *Clade*.

Literature goes hand in hand with visual arts in expressing human emotions. Both works of art inspire one another to create more innovative piece of art and both together represent the emerging social and ecological issues. Art and literature reflect the human experience of the world and help us to understand our culture, our lives and history. James emphasized the close relationship between the novel and the visual arts as, "The forms are different, though with analogies; but the field is the same- the immense field of contemporary life observed for an artistic purpose" (*Picture and Text*).

Visual arts are a form of work of art that are visual in nature, such as painting, crafts, sculpture, photography and film making. Visual art has the ability to create an immediate action using its form, colour and technique to convey the meaning. The intent of visual art is either to please the viewers or to provoke thoughts on some important issues. The shape, colour, tone, size, perspective and texture are some of the characteristics of visual art. They are the building blocks of art and create a wide range of emotions that make up the deep subject of the art. Visual images generate a graphic representation of

scenes or particular situation of the characters in viewers' imagination and make them to capture the depth of the novel. Jane Doonan in his work *Looking at pictures in Picture Books*,

When we hold a picture book, we have in our hands a pictured world full of ideas. We play with these ideas and play our own ideas around the pictured world. The more skill full we are, and the more ideas the picture book contains, the more ideas go on bouncing. And in the process we create something of our very own. (Doonan)

With the help of visual art and literature, the concept of climate change and its impacts can be easily conveyed to the young people and students. It provides creative space to analyse the impacts of present day weather changes. Integrating such ecological issues in literature and other visual arts help to widen the knowledge of it among the students and help them in creating awareness with new transformative changes. Art enrich the narrative and go beyond its reach. Both works of art evokes emotion and convey the ideas in different ways.

Climate change is one of the major and terrible problems undergoing worldwide, which exploits nature and causes mass extinction of species, rise in sea level and extreme temperature. The long term shifts in temperatures and weather pattern is termed as climate change. Warmer temperature for long period of time changes the weather patterns and makes the nature unbalanced. It not only means the hotter temperature, but the whole earth system is changing. The anthropocentric activities act as major cause for rapid climate change which affects both human and other living beings.

The source for this study is taken from James Bradley's fiction *Clade* (2015) and a painting by Meghna Unnikrishnan's *Changing Climate- Effects on Oceans and living Things* (2018). The painting was drawn in the annual ocean awareness contest to create visual art on changing climate and to explore the impacts of climate change. The connecting bridge between both works is climate change and its impacts on earth. Both the work of art visualises the deadly impacts of climate change and fast approaching earth's degradation. Each situation in the novel elucidates the painting. Visual arts like paintings and films create an immediate reaction among the students. They can easily understand the reality of climate changes and its impacts at one glance.

James Bradley, the renowned Australian writer is known for his climate fictions which portray the world facing terrible climate catastrophes. His novel *Clade* (2015) represents the present climate changes and the extermination phase of the earth and all living beings in it. It explores the life of Adam Leith and his future generation surviving in the midst of threatening climate change. Bradley deeply analyses how human beings play a major role in the fast approaching climate change and themselves become the victims for it. This novel begins in Antarctica, as a climatologist Leith witnesses the after effects of global warming. In his words,

Each week there seemed to be new evidence that the process was hastening. In the Arctic the permafrost was melting; in Greenland and Antarctica the ice sheets were destabilising, their deterioration outpacing even the most pessimistic models; in the Atlantic the currents were growing more erratic, slowing down and shifting. Even the oceans

themselves seemed to be dying, their waters more acidic by the month. (17)

Fiction has the power to make the readers get immersed into the story and create a sustained experience through the characters in it. The struggles faced by Leith and other characters in this novel portray the terrible reality of climate change and it evokes a kind of awareness among the readers regarding climate change.

The visual form of art chosen for this study is a painting drawn by a fifteen years old School student, Meghna Unnikrishnan from Chennai, India. She participated in the contest of Bow Seat Ocean Awareness Programs and she received Distinguished Honourable Award for her painting. The painting is categorised under the title "Changing Climate- Effects on oceans and living things".



This painting by Meghna Unnikrishnan visualised how the earth was losing its life and the other living beings were losing their habitat. It creates awareness among the human beings to preserve nature and what will be the consequences if they were reckless. This painting discloses the harsh reality of our earth which is facing due to extreme climate changes and it is similar to Bradley's fiction *Clade*. Both works of art have connectivity in explaining the concept of climate change and its after effects.

In the painting, the mother earth is crying because the earth's natural resources are depleted by reckless mankind. Global warming, wild fire, earthquake, flood, extinction of species leads the earth towards its end. The painting illustrates varied impacts of the climate changes especially the rise in sea level, forest fire and the extinction of species. The main cause for climate change in the painting is deforestation. The head portion of the mother earth represents deforestation caused by climate changes. Due to industrialisation and over population people clear

off the land area and convert it into tall buildings for their living space. Logging particularly for economic purpose seems a cruel step in destroying land. It makes the earth warmer and the warming earth brings drastic changes in its system. Following this uncontrolled temperature the other climatic catastrophes such as global warming, glaciers melting, heavy storms, unpredicted downpour, and floods happen around the world frequently. Antonio Guterres, the Secretary –General of the United Nation makes a warning that,

We are on a fast track to climate disaster: Major cities under water. Unpredicted heat waves, terrifying storms, widespread water shortages. The extinction of a million species of plants and animals. This is not fiction or exaggeration. It is what science tells us will result from our current energy policies... And the results will be catastrophic. (Antonio)

The extreme temperature melts the glaciers in large amount and this process is quickened from last decade. Glaciers melting leads to rise in sea level, it causes many coastal areas to be taken up by the sea. Melting of glaciers in Arctic and Antarctic region makes the animal species to lose its habitat and also causes its extinction. The oceans level increases at large and thereby taking the living space of human beings too. People living around the coastal areas are facing lot of problems and they are forced to move out. Gradually the living areas are going under the sea. These impacts are promptly sketched in the one part of the painting.

This same situation is discussed by Bradley in his fiction *Clade*. The changing climate and changes in sea level is narrated through the character Leith. When Leith and his family once went to the beach they realise the distance between the sea beach and the road has changed. It gets shortened over a period of year. Leith as a climatologist, feels the changes happening in the sea level. In Leith words,

Travelling south he watched the temperate seas give way to the heaving swells of the Southern Ocean, the water growing darker, denser, heavier, before it changed again, the massive swells replaced first by icebergs and then by fields of drifting ice, their surfaces sculpted by wind and waves. (20)

The second part of the painting illustrates the forest fire and how it threatens the living beings. Human

influence through highway road construction, logging, conversion of land for agriculture purpose, industrialisation has resulted in fire in dry forest. Due to climate change wildfires get more intense. During the last few decades the mother earth experiences wildfire in large number of places which affects many vegetative environment and causes direct damage to the society. It also increases the emission of pollutants into the atmosphere. Wild fires influence the temperature and degrade the quality of atmospheric air. If the wildfire gets uncontrolled it will create a lot of health issues to the people and make the world a unhealthy place to live.

In a moderate scenario for global warming, the likelihood of extreme, catastrophic fires could increase by up to a third by 2050 and up to 52 percent by 2100, the report estimates. If emissions are not curbed and the planet heats up more, wildfire risks could rise by up to 57 percent by the end of the century. (Raymond)

Devastating wildfire leads to the extinction of animals and birds in large number. Small creatures and birds do not find shelter and lose their habitat. Majority species of plants, mammals, insects, reptiles and birds are also hit by such wildfires. The recent wild fires like the 2020 bush fire in Australia killed millions of animals and displaced local deer, bears and other species. When wildfire displaced the animals from their natural habitat, they tend to move towards the nearby villages. Wildfire not only affects the land animals but also the marine living beings are also affected. When wild fire burns plastics and other residues, it burns lots of heavy toxins and later it contaminated with water bodies. When rain sweeps with high concentration of acidify nutrients, these get into the marine ecosystem and become harmful for those living things underwater.

Bradley in his *clade* depicted the impacts of wildfire on birds. The characters are visualising the extreme hot and forest fire burning in their nearby regions and its consequences are reflected in their places. Seeing birds in their home yard becomes rare, because most of the birds get trapped in forest fires and also the toxic environment totally makes everything infertile. In Tom's voice,

They're dying, you know, he said,.. 'Not just here but all over the world.'... They might look fine but they've stopped breeding, or if they're still breeding their eggs aren't hatching or the heat is killing the chicks. The

ones you can see here are adults they're all that's life, and when they're gone that will be the end of them. (74-75)

Overall the work of art displays the deep reality lying under the climate change. It explores the gradual annihilation phase of mankind and other living beings. People can get the deep experience of the reality through visual arts and fiction. In a very concise form the fiction, Bradley elucidates the truth behind the painting in, "In the Unites States and India floods covered millions of square kilometres, in Africa and Europe the heat was growing ever more intense, in Indonesia and Brazil and Malaysia the forests were burning," (18).

Visual art and literature act as important tool for creating awareness. It makes young people and students to be aware of the environmental issues. The visual images in the painting and the characters in the fiction create great impacts on their thought and help them in understand the deep knowledge about the issue. It helps them to express their own ideas and experience about climate change and empower them to face such daunting global challenge with a positive approach towards the environment.

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# The Dinner Party: An Icon of Feminist Art

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## Abstract

Art, human rights and their discourses are not very far from each other. When we talk about women, we talk about their identity, their contribution and their status in the society. While looking up at western history we have an endless list of male artists featured and documented however we rarely find any woman artist mentioned and credited. The same realization happened to a 20th century American artist Judy Chicago in 1960. Since then she started to work on female subjects and their issues. Chicago has done installations, textile works, sculptures, spray painting etc. She also sensed it out that craft work and low art have always been associated to women only, in contrast fine arts was considered as something produced by male artists. Chicago worked as an iconoclast breaking away from these conventions. In early 1970's she learnt China plate painting, the skill that she later consumed in her most iconic installation work 'The Dinner Party'. The work became an iconic feminist piece of art due to its grandeur & overwhelming installation and concept. Completed in 1979, the work looks like an enclosed triangular dining table, with all three sides containing 13 place settings each, making overall 39 place settings. All these place settings are assigned to great female personalities throughout the history. The paper provides an account of Judy Chicago's career as a feminist artist and also discusses the details of her installation 'The Dinner Party'.

**Keywords:** Art, Iconic, Feminism, Artist

Judy Chicago, an American artist who excessively worked on feminist subjects was born in July 1939. Her father was a labor organizer and a Marxist who remained in association with American Communist Party. Her mother was earlier a dancer and she loved art, hence inherited the same in her children. Chicago became passionate for arts from the age of five and later started to attend Chicago School of Arts. She was academically trained in fine arts and earned the degrees of Bachelor of Fine Arts and Masters of Fine Arts, attended Art Institute of Chicago and University of California, Los Angeles. Earlier Chicago did minimalist artworks though she has worked in multiple mediums including painting, textile arts, sculpture, and installations. After her graduation she explored the techniques those were not in traditional framework of art. For instance she learnt to paint through sprays exploring the plastics surfaces and pigments.

Once in 1960 Chicago had one of her European History professor at UCLA (*University of California, Los Angeles*) to whom she asked about notable women in art

history, but he could not respond. The incident left a deep mark on Chicago's psyche (*The Dinner Party*). The incident became a turning point for her career. In art history there was no mention of any notable woman, the realization of this flaw encouraged feminists to build their literature. Chicago also remained active as a part of 'First generation feminist artists' during 1970's, as that was the time when feminist movement in Europe and United States was gaining momentum. She was also concerned with feminist art pedagogy and in 1970 started teaching at Fresno State College, where she introduced only for girls classes, which became the first feminist art program in United States (Bloch and Umansky, 317). In 1978 she founded *Through the Flower*, a non-profit feminist art organization that seeks to focus on art and educating public about how art can be used as a tool to emphasize women's achievements. This organization also maintained *The Dinner Party Curriculum*, which served as "living curriculum" for education about feminist art ideas and pedagogy.

### The Dinner Party

Chicago is best known for her installation work '*Dinner Party*' that celebrates multiple feminist subjects. First exhibited at Museum of Modern Art San Francisco in March 1979, this installation is considered as iconic feminist art work that represents symbolic elements about the history of women through civilizations. Initially Chicago started it alone but soon 400 volunteers joined the process. On its opening it was accompanied by a lecture delivered by Chicago. The work also contained banners, acknowledgement panel, timelines, and a three-book exhibition publication to provide information on each woman included in place settings. The *International Honor Quilt* is another collective feminist art project initiated in 1980 by her as a companion piece to *The Dinner Party*.

Currently *Dinner Party* is located at Brooklyn Museum, New York. The work was done as a collaborative project and produced from 1974 to 1979, took 5 years to complete. It has been exhibited at 16 different venues in six countries and three continents with viewers of around 15 million. Since 2007, it has been on permanent exhibition in the Elizabeth A. Sackler Center for Feminist Art at the Brooklyn Museum, New York. The installation can be seen as a dining setup, where table is like an enclosed triangle. First Chicago conceived the project in her Santa Monica studio as a large triangle, which measured 48-feet by 43-feet by 36-feet, consisting of 39 place settings. On each side are 13 place settings, making them 39 overall. Thirteen people together at a dining also resemble the idea of *The Last Supper*, where we see 12 apostles sitting on either sides of the Christ. In Last Supper all figures were of men, whereas in contrast to it Chicago's installation is dedicated to just women. On each place setting is a manually painted china plate, ceramic cutlery, chalice and a napkin with golden embroidery at the edges, all placed on a runner with individual woman's name inscribed with golden weaving. The embroidered table runners are stitched in the style and technique of the featured woman's time. Every place setting is attributed to a famous woman from history.

### Heritage Floor

The table is placed on a Heritage Floor which is composed up of around 2304 triangular white glazed tiles, where across tiles the names of 998 women who have marked a

great contribution in history are inscribed in the gold script. The names are written in Palmer cursive script, a twentieth-century American form. Chicago states that women whose names are written on the floor have made worthwhile contribution to society, tried to improve the lot of other women, their work illuminated significant aspects of women's history, and they provided a role model for future generations. The floor tiles include names of Anna Sophia, Elizabeth Lucar, Gracia Mendesa, Jane Weston, Maria Theresa, Oliva Sabuco, Sarah Jennings, and others.

### Dining Table

The female symbol is inverted triangle which is known as chalice. It represents the imaginary womb, which is the oldest symbol of feminine divinity. The three sides are described as wings, where Wing 1 is dedicated to women from Prehistory to Roman Empire, The second wing starts with the catholic saint Marcella and rise of Christianity and it ends with Anna van Schurman in 17th century at the time of Reformation. Wing 3 is for women from the American Revolution to Feminism, it represents the Age of Revolution that we see starts with Anne Hutchinson, a puritan spiritual adviser, and continues through 20th century and it ends with Virginia Woolf and Georgia O'Keeffe.

However the setup is full of craftworks as embroidery, china painting and weaving, Chicago wanted this work to be seen as a work of high art, because craftwork was always assumed to be a feminine product. The designs on the plates are flat but start to raise in high relief as the chronology proceeds, the more we move towards new age, the more dominant design we find. On many plates there are sculptural butterfly shaped vulvas.

Wing 1 spans prehistory to Classical Roman Empire. It covers goddesses and historic personalities. Examples include Primordial Goddess, Fertile Goddess, Ishtar, Amazon, Sophia, the concept of divine knowledge, Sappho, Nefertiti, and Lucretia. There are some controversial elements too here as noted by some critics for example Kali, the goddess of destruction. But Chicago portrayed Kali's evoking beauty, where she resonates the power of love.

Wing 2 is dedicated to period from beginning of Christianity to Reformation, that includes figures as Marcella, Saint Bridget, Theodora, Hrosvitha, Trota of

Salerno, Eleanor of Aquitaine, Hildegard of Bingen, Petronilla de Meath, Christine de Pisan, Isabella d'Este, Elizabeth I, Artemisia Gentileschi and Anna van Schurma. This refers to the rising social limitations on women.

The third wing contains place settings for women who spanned from American Revolution to Feminism. It includes Anne Hutchinson, Sacajawea, Caroline Herschel, Mary Wollstonecraft, Sojourner Truth, Susan B. Anthony, Elizabeth Blackwell, Emily Dickinson, Ethel Smyth, Margaret Sanger, Natalie Barney, Virginia Woolf and Georgia O'Keeffe.

### Back Story

In the summer of 1971 in Oregon, Chicago was around Northwest coast where she found an antique shop. She found there a hand painted China plate placed on velvet locked inside a cabinet. Chicago became curious about the gentle and soft hues of roses painted on it. Next year she moved to Europe for first time, and found her interest growing in porcelain and china painting. In 1972 Chicago enrolled herself in the classes provided at a shop in Los Angeles, where she learnt pigment mixing and China painting brushwork. Before starting her plate painting she was previously doing a series of paintings title '*Great Ladies*'. She soon realized that the skill of China painting, she can consume for her new plate series which will be related to her Great Ladies series. Since plates are used for eating, Chicago thought that the plates she will be painting will convey the fact that there are many women swallowed and eaten up by the history, who have little or no mention of their contribution. Earlier Chicago thought to hang the plates on wall; later idea of placing them on table came in her mind (Chicago, 8). In her book *Dinner Party: A symbol of our heritage* Chicago discussed her interesting encounters with China Painters. She describes that how she later learnt the techniques from her friend's friend Miriam Halpern. She brought Chicago to the magazines, organizations, and exhibitions related to China painting tradition, that amazed Chicago. China painting itself is associated with girls, as before its exposure developed in 1950's, the technique was only taught to girls by their mother or grandmother.

*The Dinner Party* is itself an instance of how craft works can be considered as fine arts, Chicago herself was very much interested in thinking about the similarities and

differences between low art and high art which was traditionally proclaimed by masculine tyranny. As a female artist Chicago learnt craft work including China plate painting and needle work about which she says:

...needle work in all its form was women's work and as long as I was compelled to deny my identity as a woman in my life and in my work. I never considered it as a medium for art making. It would have been humiliating to me if a male artist or art dealer discovered me sewing a button on my artist husband's shirt or setting on an embroidery machine or a loom. It would have been confirmed the already taken for granted idea that my place in life was either supporting my husband's aspirations or working in the minor arts.

It is noticeable that even in iconic Bauhaus School, which is celebrated as the originating centre for modern art, Josef Albers was instructor for painting whereas Anni Albers, like her other women fellows taught there needlework.

During the process of *The Dinner party* Chicago was in association with so many women workers, she has experienced there that how her own sex as a female is important. She got to know about various perspectives of her fellow artist. She was among the group of women over conversation about the food recipes and other things. As a keen observer Chicago tried to explain them that how craft works and needle works were omitted from the field of Fine Arts. She told them that, it is power that determines what is art and what is craft but most of the women did not understand and they were afraid of rejection and criticism. Some of the women were professionals while most of them were not. Chicago herself was very much professional and concerned about her work, her personality and professionalism by many of the other women was disliked. But again the installation has made a significant place in women's hearts, and was very much discussed and appreciated.

### Conclusion

As we have seen that Judy Chicago emerged as a fully flashed feminist artist, she not only worked on the installations discussed above but also experimented with other mediums like spray paintings and other craft works. The way Chicago explained the thin line between art and

craft was totally against the traditional notion of these two sub terms based on the gender discrimination. As she herself was influenced by other notable women figures of history, she too became an inspiration for later young artists who raised their voice and advocated women's rights. Her work *Dinner Party* is not only an installation to look at but serves like a time machine to enter and roam around the labyrinth of women's history. The mentions of mythical figures suggests that how important was the figure of woman in even earlier civilizations. Then in second wing she described how females grounded the confidence in every sphere of life including religion, science, and philosophy, whereas mention of literary figure as Virginia Woolf in the third wing allowed the audience to witness further great literary contributions of women. In last wing she very confidently credited the women who developed the base for feminist movements. She has also diminished the boundary between low art and high art, and considered art as just art without any patriarchal or political hierarchy. Her contribution is not just worth discussing in case of feminist's works but marked an impression on everything associated with women. It inspired female youth to relook and highlight the contributions of earlier great personalities.

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# Drama Techniques as a Source for Acquiring Linguistic Skills in An ESL Classroom

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## Abstract

*Drama is useful for language learning. It shifts the classroom perspective from teacher centric to learner centric. This study investigates the effectiveness of using drama techniques as a source for acquiring linguistic skills in ESL classrooms for rural students. The research question was: 'Can drama techniques enhance the linguistic intelligence and interpersonal intelligence among the ESL undergraduate rural students? The study was conducted in a rural undergraduate Government college from the perspective of teachers and students. The study was conducted from the 2<sup>nd</sup> of November 2021 to 2<sup>nd</sup> of February 2022. The 40 participants were from BCOM 3<sup>rd</sup> Semester. The text prescribed is Merchant of Venice. Drama techniques of Readers theatre, skit, and role-play were used to enhance linguistic skills. The methodology was both quantitative and qualitative. The study used document analysis, semi-structured interviews, feedback, and questionnaires. The study revealed that there was an enhancement in the linguistic intelligence and interpersonal intelligence*

**Keywords:** *Drama Techniques, Linguistic Skill, ESL Classroom, Undergraduate Rural Students*

## Introduction

Learning a language entails learning about one's interpersonal relationships. Language acquisition cannot take place in isolation. It is a process which involves two or more individuals. Language learning is impossible to do without the participation of those concerned in the situation. It is a collaborative process in which several individuals' needs and emotions are addressed. Learning, according to Lev Vygotsky, is considerably enhanced by collaborative social contact and communication. Discussions, comments, and idea exchange have a significant impact on learning. (Westwood)

The importance of activities and firsthand experience of people's situations in molding human learning and comprehension cannot be overstated. In any learning situation, the active learning increases the retention more than the passive learning. This Underlying Principle is emphasized in John Dewey's, Jean Piaget's, and Jeremy Bruner's theories. These early ideas also assumed that if a person has past knowledge and experience, any new information can be successfully linked in the learning process. When they become active participants of the learning process language learning can be very effective.

## Drama Techniques

NCERT (National Council Of Education Research and Training) Handbook argues that drama assists in the creation and organization of ideas and perspectives. This hand book was created to emphasize on the use of drama techniques in the classrooms. It creates an environment where learner takes the responsibility of learning rather than sitting passively in the class. (NCERT)

Burke and O'Sullivan (2002) identified seven reasons to incorporate drama in the second language classroom: (Burke and O'Sullivan)

- 1) Teachers and students can concentrate on pronunciation.
- 2) Students are motivated.
- 3) Students are relaxed.
- 4) Students use language for real purposes.
- 5) Risk-taking equals heightened language retention
- 6) Community is created.
- 7) Students and teachers can approach sensitive topics

Action and dialogue are two characteristics of drama, according to Blanch (1974), and both have a place in the foreign-language learning experience. Use of drama techniques like Readers Theatre, skit, Role play helps the

students to express their personality. These drama techniques greatly assist the students in their language learning. And the material, if culturally relevant, brings the foreign language's cultural background to life. (Krishnan) (Chemi)

Howard Gardner (1983) articulated his vision for schools that combine actual learning through the use of multiple intelligences. Because most of the intelligences are used in learning activities, drama has the potential to deliver true learning. (Gardner; Armstrong)

Drama techniques become very useful tools in the classrooms for second language learning. It encourages the group learning which acts as a necessity of language learning. Drama is useful in setting up situation for language learning. After all it is in group that we acquire language learning. Drama creates a non threatening environment for the learner. (Hodgson) Dorothy Heathcote who was a major influence in this field feels Students should embrace theatre to enhance their grasp of life experiences, to make sense of their reality in a new and deeper way. She argued that theatre brings discipline of learning. It enhances the learner's responsibility. Each student in the classroom must agree to be open to others and to accept the task of reacting appropriately. (Wagner)

The regular teacher centric classrooms make students passive listeners. Using drama activity in the classrooms brings democracy in the classroom. Each student's need is different. Individual pupils learn in different ways, so a range of unique teaching strategies are required. The language use of each student can be different from the other. When drama techniques are used in classrooms Teachers must create an environment that stimulates students' curiosity and critical thinking as part of the focus on the creative school. According to Jóhannsdóttir et al. (2012), students should learn that a question might have multiple answers and that everything is possible in the creative process. In language learning there are no fixed solutions. He advocates an open and flexible study plan in which students have a say in what happens in the classrooms, such as which study materials should be used and how courses should be planned. (Ása Helga Ragnarsdóttir and Hákon Sæberg Björnsson)

In 2021-22, at Government First Grade College, a research was conducted to study whether the linguistic skills in the ESL classrooms of undergraduate students

can be enhanced by using drama techniques in rural undergraduate classroom. The readers theatre, skit and role play techniques were used as part of drama techniques.

### **Readers Theatre**

According to Sloyer (1982) definition of the Reader's theatre is, it is an oral performance of drama, prose, or poetry by two or more readers. This is not enacted on stage rather all the characters read the script adding the voice modulation, emotion and fluency. In Western educational contexts, reader's theatre has been used to help pupils improve their reading fluency and comprehension. Readers read a story before adapting it into a multi-character screenplay. The script is then performed in front of a live audience. All the group members are assigned with characters. When playing a character, readers strive for "voice flexibility, adequate articulation, right pronunciation, and projection." (Dundar)

### **Role Play**

Through drama they learn to interact with each other in a non threatening environment. Role-playing and role-creation in drama can allow students to put themselves in the shoes of others in an imagined situation, prompting them to express themselves and communicate from other perspectives. (Thambu et al.) (Ása Helga Ragnarsdóttir and Hákon Sæberg Björnsson)

### **Skits**

Skits in the classroom can be flexible, interesting and of any length. This can be based on a play, short story or a passage. They are created and performed by students. They can create a beautiful learning experience for students. In addition, the nature of the task requires cooperation, communication and creativity, i.e. involvement and practice is the key to success in learning language. (Westwood) (Dundar)

Theatre students are constantly asked to persuade, argue, and negotiate with one another. This happens in real life situations. The ability to use language in real-life situations improves linguistic intelligence. (Ása Helga Ragnarsdóttir and Hákon Sæberg Björnsson; Zahid and Rohi)

## Methodology

The study was conducted on BCom III semester undergraduate students in Govt First College Alnavar, Dist Dharwad in the year 2021-22. The methodological approach of the studies was both quantitative and qualitative. Data were gathered through interviews, questionnaires, participant observations and an analysis of the curriculum. The current study places emphasis on their ability to learn through drama.

The aim of the research was to find out if, and how, drama can affect students' ability to learn. The research question was: 'Can drama techniques enhance the linguistic intelligence among the ESL undergraduate students?'

## Participants

The 40 students of B.Com third semester undergraduate were the participants of the study. The English textbook offered as syllabus by the University of Karnataka was *Merchant of Venice* by Shakespeare. The students belonged to rural background who did not have any exposure to theatre activities or English literature. 90% of the students had completed their previous studies in Kannada/Urdu/vernacular medium.

## Details of the Study

This study intended to investigate the effectiveness of using the theatre techniques in the ESL classroom of rural undergraduate students to enhance their linguistic intelligence from the perspective of teacher and students. The study was conducted between 2<sup>nd</sup> of November 2021 to 2<sup>nd</sup> of February 2022. Initially the students received the blue print of the syllabus and the course plan. Open discussion was conducted with the students regarding the study and its design. Students were enthusiastic to take active responsibility in their learning.

The experiment was conducted using the textbook "Merchant of Venice" by Shakespeare, which was prescribed as the syllabus for III Semester BCom class by Karnataka University Dharwad. These 40 students were divided into groups of 6 or 7 students in each group. The story was narrated to introduce them to the syllabus. Videos of the drama, *Merchant of Venice*, enacted was shown in the class, thus they had first experience of watching the text being brought on the theatre stage.

As a second stage, simple videos of animation stories on *Merchant of Venice* were shared in their class group. These were in simple English as well as vernacular languages. Among the participants, there was lack of exposure to theatre, lack of language fluency and lack of confidence. When students watched how the other schools children are performing the drama, their confidence level started rising. This activity involved LSRW skills.

In the next stage each group was asked to assign characters to its members. It was followed by each group writing a script of its own. All the groups were asked to design a script of ten to fifteen minutes. All the group members were actively involved in writing the dialogues. In this stage there was a peer learning at its peak as the teacher slowly distanced from the groups to allow the learning to take place in the most natural and non-threatening environment. The learning became very interesting in collaborative technique. They had to develop interpersonal intelligence and critical thinking. One group preferred writing the dialogues initially in mother tongue and then translates it into English. Other groups preferred writing in simple English directly.

The groups were asked to choose any method. Either Reader's theatre or skit was allowed. Expected outcome was improvement in pronunciation, vocabulary, sentence formation, reading ability, writing skill, interpersonal skill enhancement. The rural students initially found it very difficult to involve since they were never exposed to the discipline of theatre. They also had great apprehension to speak English on stage. They had to be continually motivated. Their pronunciation, stage courage, confidence lever body language, reading skill, writing skill was not meeting the requirement of the drama initially. After continues motivation, they came out of their inhibition, and participated with great enthusiasm.

## Data Gathering

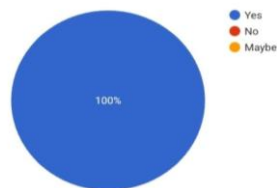
The data was gathered through videos, photos, Google form questionnaire, interview and observation. The questionnaire was in very simple English. The videos showed the gradual progress. The videos also indicated their enthusiasm of participating and the growth of Linguistic Intelligence.

**Results**

The interviews with students and their answers in the questionnaires revealed that students took active part in the learning process. They were responsible in their own learning. Though in the initial stages of the study it was difficult for them to participate actively since they lacked any exposure to theatre and western literature, slowly they came out of the cocoon and expressed themselves freely.

**Figure 1**

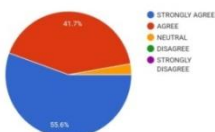
YOU CAN REMEMBER THE STORY BETTER FOR EXAMS BY PARTICIPATING IN THE DRAMA  
36 responses



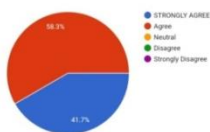
100% students agreed that learning through theatre techniques helps them to perform better in their exams. They can recollect the story and the characters to perform better in the exam.

**Figure 2**

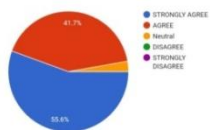
YOU UNDERSTOOD THE DRAMA BETTER BY PARTICIPATING IN THE DRAMA ACTIVITY  
36 responses



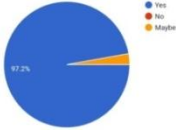
YOUR READING SKILL IMPROVED BY PARTICIPATING IN THE DRAMA  
36 responses



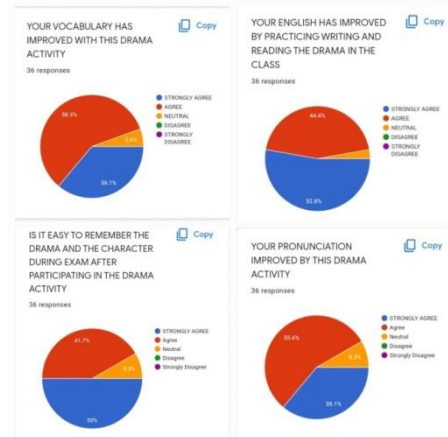
PARTICIPATING IN DRAMA OF MERCHANT OF VENICE WAS GOOD EXPERIENCE  
36 responses



DID YOU ENJOY WORKING IN GROUP  
36 responses



**Figure 3**



**Discussion**

95% students agreed that their reading skill improved in the activity. They had to practice reading their dialogue, with intonation and stress. This helped them get firsthand experience of rendering dialogue in real life like situation. All of them agreed that they can remember the characters and the details of the story to write exam. 98% agreed that their understanding of the drama increased by this drama activity. They strongly agreed that they enjoyed working in the groups which improved their interpersonal intelligence, and improve their communication with their peer. In the process of writing script, their vocabulary improved. 54% strongly agree and 42% agreed that learning through drama technique improved their English. 59% agreed and 36% strongly agreed that their vocabulary improved by participating in this activity.

Their interview revealed that the students took active part in the lessons through drama and had felt good connection with the characters they were creating. The peer learning in groups created a non threatening environment which helped them participate actively. The groups had diverse kind of learners. The slow learners were hand held by the others. The vernacular medium students developed courage to express themselves in English among the peers in their groups. All had equal opportunities while designing the script and performing in class. The peer learning helped them to observe the pronunciations, sentence formation, reading fluently, expressing feelings and writing script. They felt equal in drama. In constructive feedback they expressed that they



were able to overcome their language learning difficulties through drama techniques.

In the students interviews they expressed that it was fun to work in through drama. They talked about how this helped them get over the fear of using English since they come from they come from rural background. They said that they can remember the names of the characters and the story very well during exams. The drama technique helped them to connect to the story and they were able to understand the plot and now they are confident that they will write well in the exam.

### Conclusion

The findings suggest that when the stories were taught through drama, the students' vocabulary increased, and they remembered the story better. Their internal evaluation marks revealed that their performance in the internal exam was very good. The passive learner's role was reversed into an active and participative learner.

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# **A Visual Representation of Social Stigma on Obese People in The East-Asian Countries – An Analysis of *200 Pounds Beauty***

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## **Abstract**

*“Appearance is deceptive” says the well known proverb but the sad reality is that people get judged based on their appearance. Every community has its own set beauty standards and measure the gorgeousness of a person scaling on it. The first and foremost requirement for being beautiful is being slim. This notion automatically despises people who are obese. Fat studies, an interdisciplinary study on plight of fat people, promote Fat Acceptance Movement whose effectiveness on the society is questionable. The situation prevailing in East Asian countries is alarming with respect to beauty standards. In the competition of fitting into standard beauty, rigorous dieting and exercising is undertaken by young people of those countries. Apart from this, they have shifted to the next level of altering their facial features with the aid of plastic surgery without being concerned about the reparations. For these youngsters, getting accepted by the society plays significant role than their physical and mental well being. This research paper would analyze how these concepts of beauty standard play a pivotal role in the East Asian societies using a South Korean movie, 200 Pounds Beauty, as the reference*

**Keywords:** *Fat Studies, Fat Acceptance Movement, East Asian Countries, Obese people, Beauty standards, Dieting, Plastic Surgery, Snapchat Dysmorphia, Visual Media, Stereotypes, Ideal size.*

## **Introduction**

Media, when the term is uttered it immediately symbolizes visual media. Visual media inspires wider range of audience in many ways. Movies are considered to be the major source of visual art. People are easily influenced by movies. They believe that movies reflect the society. Some movies are meant for the purpose of entertainment and some movies are created to create awareness among the people. Movies are one of the prominent sources that set the ideal standards of the society on various concepts. They reflect the cultural norms across communities. It plays a vital role in shaping our belief system and values. Besides positivity, movies also generate negative impacts on the society as some movies are designed to corrupt the emotions and opinions of the audience by carrying forward the message it withholds with multiple interpretations. This same media promulgates beauty concepts based on the region that it works on.

Beauty standards have always existed in our society, later colonialism played a predominant role in upholding the beauty standards of the countries they colonized. The colonists from European and American countries described African and Asian people as fat, ugly, dark in order to shatter their confidence and overpower them. Descriptions about African young women say that they eat heavily. Colonialism brought a view that being heavy is abnormal and ugly. During the post colonial era, people generalised the notion that white people and elites have slender body type. In India, Britishers associated obesity among high class people with laziness and it is seen as a sign of weakness. People who were colonised thought that white people are superior to them. They related fair skin tone with authority, power and wealth. Thus the craze for fair complexion and slender shape of the body grew stronger even after colonisation. They believed that the ideologies of colonists and followed their footsteps. They

arrived at the conclusion that being slim is the ideal body type.

In current society, people are obsessed with the beauty standards set by the society across nations and visual media plays a significant role in establishing and instigating these standards deeply in the minds of people especially young generation. To be more precise, the beauty standards in East Asian countries are at its peak that they slowly and unconsciously spread their notion to other parts of the world through their media. The East Asian beauty standards include fair/pale skin tone, double eyelid, slender nose shape, V-shaped jaw line, slender body, straight hair, round and large eyes, thin heart-shaped lips and small face. The most astonishing fact is that there are medical procedures which help people to alter their body parts through surgery to attain the ideal beauty standard of their community. To this wave of modifying themselves, even celebrities do not stand a chance. Plastic surgeons have labelled a new visual media syndrome Snapchat Dysmorphia, which makes the younger generation to become dissatisfied with their appearance and go for plastic surgeries wherein they look like their filter in snapchat. In Korea, since 2003, the annual number for surgery on morbid obesity has increased including adjustable gastric banding (AGB), Roux-en-Y gastric bypass, sleeve gastrectomy, mini-gastric bypass and others.

Media is considered as the visual representation of the society. The role of movies in shaping the mind of individuals is inevitable. The media and fashion industry portray women with fair skin and slim body image to be beautiful and pretty. This creates greater impact in the mind of the audience by consciously and unconsciously promoting slender body size. The current threatening situation is that Chinese women in attempt to make them appear slim exceed the level of size zero and have moved to being extremely thin claiming it to be the beauty standard. This makes even the normal body type to appear as fat leading to another set of oppression and obsession. Jinbo He, researcher from Chinese University of Hong Kong states, "Media has played a major role in promoting the thin body ideal and encouraging women into self-objectification. But the public health authorities and the media industry are not yet aware of the harm this is causing."

As a discrimination against fat people increased, a new interdisciplinary study labelled fat studies emerged questioning, analyzing and criticizing the notions and stereotypes against obese people. Fat studies grew out of 1960's Fat Acceptance Movement. The Fat Acceptance Movement stood against discrimination of fat people at social and political level. The select movie *200 Pounds Beauty* analyzes the life of an obese woman, the discrimination faced, the trauma suffered and the resolution taken by her to become slim through plastic surgery but in turn missing her old self.

### **Social Stigma on Obese people in *200 Pounds Beauty***

The film *200 Pounds Beauty*, a comedy, released in 2006 was directed by a South Korean film director and screenwriter, Kim Yong-hwa. The film is based on the Japanese Manga *Kanna's Big Success!* which was written by Yumiko Suzuki about an overweight ghost singer who undergoes intensive plastic surgery to become a pop sensation. The protagonist of the film *200 Pounds Beauty* is Kang Hanna who as an obese woman faces a lot of struggles in her life on account of her appearance. She is an extraordinary singer. Despite her talent, she is obliged to work as a ghost singer. As any other young girls fantasize, she falls in love with Han Sang-jun, who is a wealthy, handsome young director and manager of the Entertainment Company wherein she works. The projected appearance of Han Sang-jun fits in the ideal beauty standard of East Asian countries. Hanna tries hard to convey her feelings for Sang-jun. But everybody around Hanna discourages her affection for him by pointing out her weight. They take every opportunity to convince Hanna saying that she is not beautiful enough to become a partner for Sang-jun.

Hanna's spirit does not allow her to give up on her love. Thus she visits an astrologer to inquire the possibility of Sang-jun falling in love with her. The astrologer looks irritated and annoyed with Hanna's visit. He shatters her hope into pieces by saying that "You don't stand a chance with this man. I wish otherwise but it's the truth" (01:39). He makes a judgemental statement that a handsome guy would never love an obese lady. The sole reason is that being obese denotes being ugly without even said. He also asks Hanna "Look at your hair when'd you wash it?" (02:04). He reflects the general assumption that fat people

are dirty and lazy to take care of themselves. He rushes her out without showing a glimpse of respect. Towards the end of the scene, it is projected as if fat people are clumsy and fit for nothing with a portion on Hanna falling down while trying to bow down to give her respect and destroying everything around her turning the place into a calamity.

Hanna's best friend Jung-min also has a mindset that men are not fond of obese women. She disappoints Hanna when she confesses that Sang-jun might be interested in her. She says that "There are 3 types of women for men. Look. Pretty ones. They're a treasure. The average ones. Where we are present. You? A reject! Get it now?" (10:46). Despite being her friend, Jung-min sounds rude to her and chides her for dreaming impossible things. She points out a picture of a celebrity stating that she is pretty, such sort of women are rare to find as a treasure. The influence of media in determining the beauty standards is clearly visible from this gesture. It appears as an unsaid rule that obese people must not possess the confidence and try to lead a normal life like any other people.

Jung-min assumes her to be in the category of average. Because she thinks that she is not slim enough to be pretty. And she places Hanna in the third and final category, which is isolated from the society and neglected by men, because obese people do not find a place in East Asian or any countries beauty standards. She draws a line between slim, pretty women and fat, ugly women. Hanna suddenly loses her patience and describes that she has an intuition that Sang-jun likes her. But her friend denies it by calling it out as an illusion. Even the true feelings of obese people are treated as illusions.

The flashback displays Hanna's love with a salesman, who sells diet pills. He pretends to love Hanna but his ultimate motive is to sell his pills to her and use her to earn profit for his business. As a cover up, he often says that she should not consume diet pills and he does not want her to lose weight as she is beautiful the way she is. After making a whole lot of money out of Hanna, he breaks up with her saying that she deserves someone better than him. Visual media presents obese people as ignorant and are vulnerable to get cheated. This shows how obese women are taken for granted by media and society that it represents

Han Sang-jun works as a Director of concerts and Manager for singers in the Entertainment Company where Hanna works as a ghost singer for Ammy. A slim woman named Ammy is portrayed as a singer to the audience, but in reality she lip syncs for Hanna's voice. Sang-jun and his company make profit out of Hanna's talent. This shows the plight of media where talents of obese women are hidden and go unrecognised by the world. He also pretends to like Hanna. On the other side he shows his repugnance over Hanna to Ammy to ease her jealousy on Hanna. "If so, you sing. You think I like her? You don't have to remind her what a turnoff she is. Leave her be. Be grateful she's come to us." (23:23). His only motive is to use Hanna's feelings and talent to make wealth. This scene brings forth the sad reality of people who do not fit into the beauty standards. If they are not the ideal type, their talent is of no use. The below dialogue of Han Sang-jun resonates this notion.

Give me back the keys to the house and the car. Then teach her a lesson. Why are you crying? Why? Hanna is the one to be crying. She's talented, but ugly and fat. You're untalented, but gorgeous and sexy. You got it all going. She exists for you. Listen. We're just using her. Understood? Be nice to her. If she walks, it's over." (23:46)

The impact of this incident on Hanna is huge that she confines herself, restricts eating anything and decides to go through a plastic surgery. The media indirectly throws a message that obese women who get rejected for any reason must starve themselves or should go through surgery to lose weight. It's an universal unwritten rule that when a person is angry, sad, disappointed, frustrated they either end up as a glutton or try to starve to death. To make it simple, it makes people suffer from eating disorder. The movie establishes the preconceived wrongful notion of losing weight. When Hanna overhears Sang-jun's comments on her, she is heart-broken. She takes up the courage to end her life but fortunately gets stopped by a phone call. So, she makes up her mind to have a colossal surgery. She requests the surgeon to operate on her despite the warning from the surgeon that it is a life-threatening operation. This shows the desperateness of a person who wants to be accepted by the society. Hanna says to the surgeon " I died yesterday." (28:05). She demands for a plastic surgery from head to toe to fit in the beauty standards. She tells the surgeon even after knowing that she may die from the surgery "My life is in

your hands. You can end it or save it." (28:47). She thinks it would make her lead a normal life.

Hanna's transformation from fat to slim women with the help of plastic surgery is depicted as a pleasant one. This puts forth the appearance that in order to look beautiful women can go under knife. In the movie Hanna takes up a new name, Jenny. Unlike obese Hanna who cringes and scrambles while she walks, the slim Jenny strides with confidence in her own pace. The society treats her with kindness and likes her. Her talent and beauty is recognised by Sang-jun and he even seems interested in her. Hanna turned Jenny projects as if she is a natural beauty. This scene again establishes how people do not want to showcase the acquired beauty as an artificial one instead they want to project it as a natural one. She has an anxiety that people would hate her for not being beautiful naturally. Her anxiety for getting rejected reaches the peak when she lets her sick father get attacked and pretends not to know him. All these events burden her and make her realize the cost she had paid for changing herself completely.

"I'm not Jenny. I'm Hanna. Kang Hanna. I was an ugly, fat girl. So... I sang for someone else hiding in the back. Then I got plastic surgery. From head to toe...Everything. Now that I'm pretty... I can sing. I've been in love. I was so happy being Jenny. But I'm sorry. I ruined it. I've deserted my friend. My dad. And myself. I don't know who I am anymore. I can't remember. What I looked like. I can't. I miss you, Hanna" (50:29)

Hanna feels miserable for getting plastic surgery. She faces identity crisis. She apologizes to the crowd for faking her identity. Accepting herself to be a fat and ugly girl, Hanna reveals the reason for opting such dangerous surgery. The Change in appearance and fitting into the beauty standard had helped Hanna to stride with confidence but it also has made her detach from her loved ones. She realises that she has come far away from the ones who accepted her solely for her character when she was Hanna. They did not care about the size of her body. She doesn't know who has she become. She doesn't remember how she looked like Hanna. She desperately misses her past self. She embraces her past and fat version of her body.

## Conclusion

The movie brings out the struggles and the stereotypes faced by obese people to a great extent. The stage crumbles when she dances; she gets mocked at for wearing flashy costume and tight dress. Her mere presence makes others feel uncomfortable and they look down on her. She is denied of the life of a common person. When Hanna lives as Jenny, her life is portrayed as perfect and happy. The movie emphasizes on the fact that having a perfect and happy life matters a lot than fitting into the recommended beauty standards of the society. This is the same notion that is promoted by Fat Acceptance Movement. In the quest of making the society accept them, the people who fail to fit into the denoted beauty standards lose themselves. Exercising and dieting for maintaining healthy weight must be promoted. But it should become a conviction for fitting into the stipulated appearance of the society. Healthy weight loss habits must be promoted instead of opting for plastic surgery or other methods of drastic weight loss. The consequences of being under medication or having other troubles due to plastic surgery must be strictly taken into consideration. In the post clip of the movie, the director has shown how people remain crazy over going through plastic surgery despite knowing the consequences caused due to it. In the same way, the society's view on fat people also does not change. This reflects the sad reality of the society. No matter how many movements arise, until people accept others for who they are rather than thrusting a set standard, the social stigma on obese people cannot be eradicated.

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# Unveiling Complexities through Visual Art: A Quest for Comprehension and Acceptance in Cece Bell's Graphic Memoir *El Deafo*

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## Abstract

Visual arts include paintings, sculptures, architecture, drawings and more serious forms of arts. Later, it evolved to include even fine arts, film making and crafts. The term 'art' broadly includes theatre, music and other modern visual media. Several literary movements were initiated by art movements and successfully instilled the idea to the public. Graphic novel, being largely visual, is categorised as a visual sequential art, where the narration is done through drawings and speech balloons with dialogues inside, indicating the progress of the story or conversation.

The readers of graphic content are mostly children and young adults; it discusses topics ranging from domestic conversation to instructing the respective age group regarding the social problems in the society. Cece Bell's memoir *El Deafo* traces her journey from being non-disabled to becoming disabled. The complex concept of acceptance and unexpected quest into disability is intertwined with humour and anthropomorphism. Bell uses the image of 'bunnies' to depict her struggle and resilience. She connects well with young audience and sensitises them regarding the necessity of treating people free from prejudices. The paper explores the role of visual art in educating young audience regarding disabilities and the need for acceptance and indiscrimination. The vibrant colours and images present in the text illuminate young minds about sensitive topics and instil scope for acceptance and equal treatment of the people with disabilities in the society.

**Keywords:** Visual, Art, Graphic, Dialogues, Anthropomorphism

Visual art plays a vital role in reaching out to young minds and appeals to the sense of refined audience, as well. Art, in any form, has a purpose to instruct the readers and enlighten them on the issue at question. It has the power to move minds and avail guidance to the people who look for advice. Art in its visual form is more appealing to children and helps them connect with an idea and comprehend an issue. It helps understand moralistic values and develop a comprehension of people with differences. Visual arts, in this case, in the graphic novels

are exemplary in the employing of vivid colours and story-telling with a virtuous message.

Cece Bell's *El Deafo*, probes into the issue of a child born without disabilities, but becoming disabled because of meningitis. This drift from the so-called 'normalcy' to disability is a difficult transition and the author makes sure not to misinterpret the idea of disability. In this graphic memoir, she records her experiences and her empowered feeling because of the presence of the electronic device that supports her in communication. This dense message of feeling above 'non-disabled' is new as people with

disabilities often succumb to the bullying of the society and retreat to the sub-human status. The progressive message of empowerment is comprehensive and made natural through the visual art and narrative style used by the author. Bell has anthropomorphised the characters in the novel into speaking bunnies with humanistic emotions.

The novel is colourful entirely and this is entirely instrumental in communicating the idea of disability and specifically 'deafness.' Art helps understand the experience of the individual and enables for more empathy and humanity. In Bell's memoir, she manipulates visual art for her benefit by writing for the intended audience and educating them about the disability. In this novel, visual arts serve a very serious role in instilling empathy and transcends beyond just aestheticism and personal experience. It evolves to a humanistic perspective by intertwining the struggles of a person with disabilities and explaining its percussions through wit and humour. She explains the process of losing her hearing capability by using empty speech balloons and instead, using the narrative part to explain the situation. This visual depiction of emptiness in the speech bubbles puts across the significant issue of not being able to hear whatever is said. She narrates, "I stay close to Mama, no matter where she is. But suddenly, I lose her. . . . she doesn't answer me! When I finally find her, I know that everything is different. I think she knows it, too. . . . I can't hear. . ." (11 – 13).

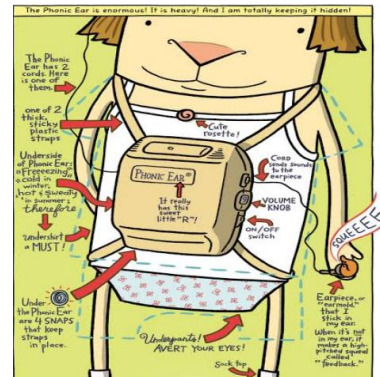


**Fig. 1 Empty Speech bubbles depicting Cece's inability to hear**

She gradually, delves into the serious topic of pain and disability through pictures where she portrays the reality of disability through visual art.

Visual arts aid the author, especially, in the description part, where she does not have to elaborate on the issues; rather use pictures to explain her point: pictures replace words. For instance, when she explains the potential of her powerful hearing device – the phonic ear,

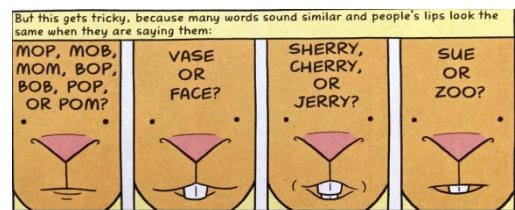
she introduces a picture of Cece as a bunny with the device strapped to her body.



**Fig. 2 Cece with 'The Phonic Ear'**

Visual art helps the author to explain and point at the different parts of the device. It also helps gain a perception on the actual size of the Phonic Ear in relevance to the child's body. Visual art ascends to be a tool to elaborate on the idea of disability. The drawings portray the different diagnostic aspects of deafness and visual art creates a possibility to look at the reality of disability, rather than looking at it through the lens of prejudices.

The novel details on the perks of the primitive version of the hearing device too, that is, how she cannot use it unless the lights are on and it could create a difficulty in communication without being accompanied by lip reading.



**Fig. 3 Confusion in reading lips**

Lip reading does not help if Cece fails to comprehend the context of the said conversation as lips are in similar positions while uttering certain words. Visual art helps understand the problems in communication, especially, in understanding people during the early stages of her deafness. When Emma, Cece's friend asks if she wants a 'coke' Cece hears it as 'goat.' With loads of humour and accompanying sketches, Bell enables the readers to understand disability from a lighter shade. The topic of disability is well-explained and rightly portrayed with the



help of visual art. Tony DiTerlizzi, the co-creator of *The Spiderwick Chronicles*, in the blurb comments on Bell's El Deafo: "Even with a hearing aid turned off, you hear Cece's plea for acceptance, friendship, and happiness through honest words and deftly drawn pictures". The appealing aspect of the visual prowess of the text is undeniable.

Cece's vision starts blurring after a while and the experience with blurred vision is intricately displayed through the visual art accompanied by the story line. The variation in vision and the gradual blurring is portrayed through art and enables an outlook of how it feels to lose eyesight.

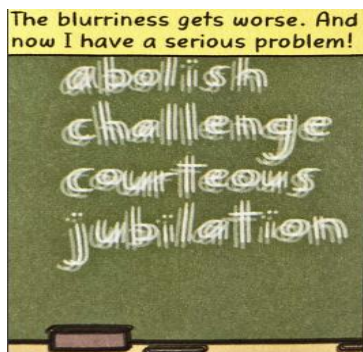


Fig. 4 Cece losing her eyesight

After wearing glasses, Cece's vision is restored and the author effectively uses the tools of visual art to depict the improvement in her sight.



Fig. 5 Cece comparing her vision

Visual art makes the text comprehensive and presents it heavy with humanistic perspective. It feels impossible to imagine the text being effective without the visual images. Bell takes utmost care in describing the transition from one phase to the other of disability. The transitory phase goes from being non-disabled to losing her hearing sense and then to her vision. The kindness

embodied in the child and how she often feels lonely because of her appearance is visually depicted as being inside a bubble of loneliness. When kids ask inappropriate questions like: ". . . you deaf?" . . . being different feels a lot like being alone. . . . I'm always inside my bubble" (45 – 47). Each page is embedded with visual stimuli aimed at offering better insight into the psyche and disability of the child.

Bullying is not a distant topic in literatures of disability. Cece is subjected to bullying and embarrassment because of her 'friends' who refuse to identify her beyond her disability. The visual images enhance the comprehension of the situation by presenting how the non-disabled kids bully her and are inappropriate. When Cece attends Ginny's birthday party, the kids are seemingly nice towards her but Ellen, an outgoing girl asks, "Why do you wear overalls so much? Are you death?" (89). In fact, Ginny, Cece's friend often addresses and introduces her, "Cece is my deaf friend" (90).



Fig. 6 Ginny calling Cece her 'deaf friend'

Cece, naturally, finds it offensive and anticipates for leaving home. During sleepover, the girls insist on doing a makeover for Cece as if she is some doll, despite her unwillingness. Being disabled makes the other children feel overpowered and not wanting the consent of Cece. The novel, through visual art, highlights Cece's quest for a true friend and acceptance beyond disability. She meets people who are rude and focus only on her disability; like Laura, who bullies Cece and makes decisions for her. She is dominant and forces Cece to march around the dining table during a sleepover. She commands her dog saying, "Get 'em Fluff! Eek! Ha ha! You shoulda seen how funny that looked! . . ." But you just let your dog bite me!" (54). This incident of intense embarrassment and emotional deprivation is presented through the vibrant images that capture Cece disappointment and embarrassment. Laura

is a bully and Cece manages to leave her toxic friend after a few days.

Though Cece suffers emotionally due to the lack of a good friend, she is overjoyed when she finds a perfect friend in Martha, a girl from a junior class. She is empathetic and loves Cece so much that she does not treat her indifferently; she treats her like how she should be – like a girl of her age. Disability becomes a judgemental factor in relationships and forces the people with biased opinions not to look at people with disabilities beyond their disability. In the beginning of the novel, Cece knows that she looks like everyone and after losing hearing, she realises that, with the hearing cords, she appears different than the other children.



Fig. 7 Children like Cece

She comes to understand that her friend Emma goes to a different school and she goes to a different one, but she feels at home when all the children in the school are like her; they have cords suspended from their ears. Cece finds it hard to acclimatise in the new town in the mainstream school where there is no one like her and all the kids stare at her weird. She struggles with the switch-over but manages to cope up with the situation with the Phonic Ear.

Media does not have abundant politically right representations of disability; they are either exaggerated or pitiable or villainous. Cece, through her childhood, explores for the right portrayal and longs to see people like her. She enjoys watching television though she cannot completely get the context. She is surprised when she comes across a character named on Deafo on television, which empowers her and makes her confident enough to the path of self-acceptance, thereby asserting the identity of El Deafo.



Fig. 8 Cece identifying with Deafo

This alter-ego does things in the fictive universe that Cece is unable to, in the real world; like, voicing against her bullies and humorously punishing them.



Fig. 9 Cece as El Deafo

The Phonic Ear, as pictured earlier, is a gadget that offers solace and resilience to the ailing mind of Cece. From the cover page to the intense episodes of the graphic novel, greatness is laid on the perspective of Cece looking at her Phonic Ear as empowering and converting her into a superhero. The idea of hero is directly resonated in the text due to the high-tech device. When people realise that Cece is capable of something impossible for them, they coronate her, “. . . You're a hero! Of course I'm a hero – I am El Deafo!” (221). The visual aid used in the book helps look at the alternate interpretation of disability where it could mean that Cece could evolve beyond the human status and transcend to be a super human. Tobin Siebers counter-argument for the cyborg theory, in “Disability in Theory: From Social Constructionism to the New Realism of the Body,” says, “It is easy to mythologize disability as an advantage. Disabled bodies are so unusual . . . mean something extraordinary. . . able-bodied people try to represent disability as a marvellous advantage” (Siebers 178).



**Fig. 10 Cece's alter-ego: El Deafo**

It is ironic because the mainstream insists on looking at people with disabilities at a sub-human status. The message of the book contradicts the popular notion and questions the stand-point of the presumably Omnipotent society. The device helps Cece function in the society and in fact, her hearing which was supposed to be defective is extremely powerful that she can hear her teacher from anywhere. The device compensates her inability and makes her super powerful than all the pupils in the locale. Visual art, in this novel, proves to be an aid of

illustration, wit and explaining disability; it engages the readers and functions more like a medium of experience and expression and is instrumental in providing a backdrop to the issue discussed: disability.

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# The Priority of Aesthetics in Music, Visual Arts, and Literature: Examining the Influences of Verbal Fluency, Age, and Gender

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## Abstract

*There is a dearth of research on aesthetic descriptors of art in various languages. The purpose of this study was to clarify the unexplored conceptual framework of aesthetic experiences of three different types of art (music, visual arts, and literature). It was intended to investigate if differences in art enjoyment might result from biological and cognitive characteristics like age and gender. To produce verbal descriptors under unrestricted word listing circumstances in order to gather words that describe the aesthetics-related semantic area of art. A variety of neuropsychological tests were used to measure verbal memory capacity. The most prevalent adjective that was chosen with a clear priority for all three types of art, according to an analysis of generated adjectives' frequency and salience, was "beautiful." Compared to music and literature, the dominance of "beautiful" in the visual arts was noticeably stronger. The primacy of "beautiful" relied on age and gender, being more stressed for young ladies than males and for old males than females, despite the fact that the aging-related reduction of verbal capacity was equivalent for males and females. According to an analysis of secondary descriptors and pairs of adjectives, affective and hedonistic experiences are fundamentally fixed in the semantic field of artistic reflection. Despite the appearance of diversity and richness in the idea of aesthetics, the Greek cultural environment, and various art forms demonstrate beauty's primacy. The findings also show that biological and cognitive elements have nuanced effects on how we view artistic art.*

**Keywords:** Verbal Fluency, Working Memory, Aging, Gender, Beauty, Music, Literature, Visual Arts, Emotions, and Aesthetics

## Introduction

Aesthetic experiences, which are a part of daily life, have long been of scientific interest (Fechner, 1876). But no thorough scientific theory has yet been put out to direct investigation into the origins of aesthetic reflections. The field has consistently followed many concepts and approaches for a very long period (Istok et al., 2009). Recent advances in the relationship between cognitive neuroscience and empirical aesthetics offer fresh perspectives and imply that aesthetic reflections result from neurocognitive processes involving perception, emotion, semantics, attention, and decision-making (Chatterjee & Vartanian, 2014, 2016; Pearce et al., 2016; Perlovsky, 2010; Skov & Nadal, 2020). Complex linkages between neural systems in the brain's sensory-motor, emotion-value, and meaning-knowledge regions have been identified as enabling aesthetic experiences (Chatterjee & Vartanian, 2014, 2016; Skov & Nadal, 2020). The understanding of how cognitive factors influence aesthetic judgements needs to be expanded in order to explain phenomena crucial to aesthetics in

general and to the perception of art in particular (Perlovsky, 2010; Skov & Nadal, 2020).

## Aesthetic Responses

When studying aesthetic responses in empirical aesthetics, one common method is to present participants with stimuli (such as visual or auditory, neutral or emotionally charged, complex or simple stimuli, for example, Giannouli, 2013a), and then ask them to respond to questions about their mood, satisfaction, or other positive and negative statements afterward (Madsen et al., 1993). In this process, the characteristics of stimulus material chosen through experimentation might bias or influence aesthetic reactions.

Another perspective emphasises the conceptual organisation of object aesthetics, so responses do not always match the stimuli Psychology Reports presentation (Jacobsen et al., 2004). Aesthetic terms are often verbal descriptions that are freely formed under such circumstances, most often adjectives. Free-form word-association exercises have been used to investigate the

conceptual architecture of aesthetic experiences and to infer the structure of the semantic field associated with aesthetics (Deese, 1965; Jacobsen et al., 2004; Nelson et al., 2000). Jacobsen et al. (2004) used a free listing job to gather terminology used for denoting aesthetically relevant dimensions of objects in an attempt to create the first systematic semantic "map" of the aesthetics field. Since more than 90% of German-speaking participants used the term "beautiful," this original study demonstrated that "beauty" was a crucial centre of the semantic field/structure of aesthetics (Jacobsen et al., 2004).

Importantly, using the same methods has also shown that "beautiful" is a fundamental idea in artistic aesthetics. The word "beautiful" was found to be the main component used to verbally correlate the aesthetic value of music with relevant descriptors in a research of participants who spoke Finnish (Istoket et al., 2009). The adjective "beautiful" again ranked highest in frequency when German-speaking participants were asked to choose adjectives to label aesthetic aspects of literature (Knoop et al., 2016). As a result, the concept of "beauty" arose as a central aesthetic reflection of art perception for various art modalities and for various languages, without any prior presentation of a material to be reflected. Such findings are significant because they establish connections between the general aesthetics of items and the aesthetics of art, the latter of which is linked to evaluative emotions at the highest levels of cognition and abstraction (Jacobsen et al., 2004; Skov & Nadal, 2020). (Perlovsky, 2010). It is also crucial to remember that the knowledge revealed by word associations reflects both lexical knowledge connected to the particular linguistic system and conceptual knowledge acquired over the course of a lifetime (Nelson et al., 2004; Santos et al., 2011).

It was intended to investigate whether the fundamental idea of "beauty" would become a significant verbal descriptor of aesthetic reflections of art among the Greek population, reflecting potential similarities or differences in the effects of linguistic/semantic or social factors on beauty appreciation. Another goal was to broaden the scope of this type of research by including music, visual art, and literature in order to investigate whether or not aesthetic verbal descriptors represent generalised or art-specific aesthetics. The decision to include visual arts in this study was originally made in

order to compare the findings from the two previously mentioned arts to one additional, as yet unstudied, artistic field. The three art conditions were chosen based on the existence of comparable observations in the Finnish language for the art of music (Istok et al., 2009) and in the German language for literature (Knoop et al., 2016). Recent research by Cheetal (2018) has shown that shared formal elements like symmetry, complexity, proportion, contour, brightness, and contrast are the basis for cross-cultural aesthetic preferences of items. To separate the aesthetic evaluation of sensory items from aesthetic art experiences, Skov and Nadal (2020) have made a proposal. Comparing verbal aesthetic responses from various art forms would assist to bring attention to the issue of the significance of objective sensory elements in art aesthetics because the aesthetic reflections of various arts are based on distinct sensory modalities (Chatterjee & Vartanian, 2014; Perlovsky, 2010). A number of potential future applications in pertinent linked sectors may be supported by clarifying the conceptual structure of aesthetics in various arts, considering the significant proactive role that beauty plays in several parts of daily life (Konstan, 2014) like cultural products, marketing, culture industry, etc.

By examining the impacts of gender and age on aesthetic verbal descriptors, the current study sought to further demonstrate the impact of cognitive abilities on aesthetic reflections of art (Skov & Nadal, 2020). Recent developments in neuroaesthetics suggest that biological and cognitive factors largely control whether or not people will find something to be beautiful (Skov, 2019; Skov & Nadal, 2020). Evaluations of beauty are influenced by the combination of objective features (Cheet al., 2018). However it is becoming more widely acknowledged that the hedonic value of aesthetic evaluation is a variable category controlled by context, cognitive demands scaled by processing capacity and general knowledge, and emotional processing incorporating also reward reactions (Skov & Nadal, 2020, 2021). According to a research by Skov and Nadal (2020), evaluating the beauty of art has also been demonstrated to specifically activate executive processes that facilitate the creation of explicit judgements. Gender disparities for each of the sensory systems that support perception and subsequent cognitive processes have been discovered in adults (Halpern, 2012). Males

have consistently shown an advantage in visual-spatial processing, particularly in mental rotation (Desrocher et al., 1995; Guerrieri et al., Psychological Reports 2016; Vuoksimaa et al., 2010), whereas females have shown an advantage in language function (de Frias et al., 2006; Nicholson & Kimura, 1996; Willingham & Cole, 1997) and emotional processing (Abbruzzese et al., 2019; Olderbak et al., 2019; Sullivan et al., 2017; Thompson & Voyer, 2014; Tracy & Giummarra, 2017). Decreases in cognitive control, attention, flexibility, inhibition, planning, verbal fluency, implicit decision-making, second-order and affective theory of mind, as well as other cognitive changes are associated with normal ageing (e.g., Calso et al., 2016; Cohen et al., 2019; Salthouse, 2010; Zanto & Gazzaley, 2019). Despite the fact that ageing does not affect emotional perception or emotional control, older persons are surprisingly more likely than young adults to report feeling cheerful (Gurera & Isaacowitz, 2019; Livingstone & Isaacowitz, 2019). The growing body of research on the impacts of ageing on lexical-semantic cognition also suggests that the semantic networks of older adults are less efficient, less linked, and less ordered (e.g., Wulff et al., 2019; Kretlow et al., 2020). Combined, these results imply that differences in aesthetic appreciation may result from the subtle cognitive changes brought on by gender and age. But little is known about how a person's gender, age, and responses to art could interact (Pariser & Zimmerman, 1990). Only adults and adolescents were the subjects of preliminary investigations, which revealed that adults evaluated aesthetics more highly and favourably and that women's aesthetic visual perception was more complex (Lin & IB, 2011). Several researches have confirmed that there are gender differences in music perception as well as visual aesthetic perception (Meyers-Levy & Zhu, 2010). Also, a research of Finnish young college students has revealed that gender differences (i.e., male vs. female) can influence the use of the term "beautiful." While senior adults were added as a group that had not previously been studied with regard to art aesthetics, young student adults were included in the study to give a sample equivalent to those employed in earlier studies (Istok et al., 2009; Jacobsen et al., 2004; Knoop et al., 2016). We make an effort to incorporate both gender and age characteristics because it is not yet clear how aging-related changes in cognitive capacities, lifestyle choices, emotional

intelligence, etc. may affect fundamental aesthetic reflections or whether gender may further modulate them (Bakaev et al., 2007). The current study further investigated whether aesthetic reactions based on the production of verbal descriptors might be further influenced by the capacity of verbal memory and semantic realm. To determine if verbally produced aesthetic assessments might be influenced by or confused by individual linguistic talents, the predictive value of three verbal memory tasks for aesthetic reflections was examined.

Therefore, the main issues raised here were: (1) Does the aesthetic dimension of "beauty" predominate in Greek people's descriptions of music, visual arts, and literature; and (2) Can biological (age, gender) and cognitive (Giannouli et al. cognitive) factors represented by verbal memory influence the production of aesthetic adjectives and, consequently, the semantic field/structure of aesthetics with regard to these three forms of art?

### **Procedures and Measurable Parameters of Aesthetic Responses**

Participants answered questions on their age, gender, years of schooling, profession, and occupation on a demographic questionnaire. They were then instructed to write as many descriptions and adjectives about music, visual arts, and literature as they could in five minutes (free listing task). To avoid order effects in this repeated measures design, the names of these three art forms were presented in a counterbalanced order. As a result, in accordance with earlier protocols (Istok et al., 2009; Jacobsen et al., 2004), participants were given a one-page blank questionnaire and instructed to: "Make a list of adjectives that may be used to define the aesthetics of the performing, written, and visual arts. Please stick to adjectives only."

Participants engaged in the digit span forward task (Wechsler, 1955) and the phonological fluency test (Kosmidis et al., 2004) during the breaks in between writing words or adjectives for each of the three types of art in order to divert their focus and prevent them from remembering previous responses (music-literature-visual arts, see next section for details). When any participant (n/4 15) expressed queries about the actual meaning of the word 'aesthetics', an additional prepared explanation was presented: "Aesthetics relate to a field of philosophy

dealing with the enjoyment of the nature of art and creative creativity". The order of the responses for the three arts—music, literature, and visual was different for each participant, and there were five-minute intervals between each condition. To gather terms without imposing any restrictions, a free listing activity involving three distinct arts was used. The emphasis was on a broad response to all works falling into these categories, hence there was no clear definition of literature (such as a poem, book, comedy, or tragedy), visual arts (such as painting, photography, sculpture, or architecture), or specific music genres. Participants who inquired about the scope of the visual arts were informed that they comprised visual items including images, faces, shapes, landscapes, etc. As previously mentioned, this procedure for assessing "language aesthetics" was based on earlier studies (Istok et al., 2009; Jacobsen et al., 2004), and it was chosen to enable comparisons with already-existing cross-culturally pertinent data.

### Total Number of Adjectives

The total number of adjectives produced by each participant was initially counted (including repetitions). Adjectives that couldn't be read were disregarded in the analytical process. The analysis was restricted to Greek adjectives or common foreign adjectives that are utilised in Greek (Babiniotis, 2012). The number of unique adjectives used (without repetitions) for each participant in the group was calculated after exclusions.

After deleting phrases that were unreadable or repetitive, the precise number of adjectives created for each genre of art's aesthetic reflection was counted. The total number of each adjective produced by all group members for each condition under study was the absolute frequency of occurrence.

The ratio between the total number of each specific adjective and the total number of all adjectives accepted for study produced by all subjects in the group for each examined condition served as the basis for computing relative frequency of occurrence. This index was created to reflect how frequently a verbal description appears in the lexical and semantic field of the population that is relevant to the condition. Core descriptions were predicted to appear most frequently, followed by peripheral and less important descriptors.

The group average position of each respective adjective produced for an aesthetic reflection of art in each examined condition was computed as the mean list rank. The parameter was applied to determine how important verbal descriptions were. A cognitive salience index (CSI) was computed in accordance with Sutrop (2001). In the list task, the frequency and mean location of a term are combined into one parameter in CSI to demonstrate the psychological salience. CSI is calculated using the formula  $CSI = \frac{F}{N \cdot mP}$ , where F is a term's frequency of occurrence in the list task, mP is the term's mean position, and N is the total number of subjects.

### Clustering

The normalised percentage of cases in the studied group (in%) in which two adjectives (a pair) were present in the list of all generated adjectives was used to calculate the co-occurrence of adjectives. Both synonyms and antonyms frequently occur in clusters, which is thought to be an important aspect of how lexicons are mentally organised across all languages (Cacciari et al., 2015; Gjergo&Delija, 2014). In order to more fully describe the lexical/semantic field connected with art-specific aesthetic reflections, analysis of co-occurrence was done in this case. In the Findings, the most common pairing of "beautiful's" antonym and synonym is presented systematically, demonstrating both contrasting and synonym pairings.

### Conclusion

Effects of art type — music, visual arts, literature: The present study's findings offer novel proof of the distinct lexical/semantic field of aesthetic perception of visual arts, among other forms of art examined here (music and literature). First, compared to music (mean 12.3) and literature (mean 12.4), the number of adjectives created for visual arts (mean 11.9) was much lower (mean 12.3). This finding suggests that the aesthetic experience of visual arts is the least verbalised and explicit, likely existing largely at the implicit level of the sub-conscious mind. The frequency and valence of the word "beautiful" were also much greater for visual arts than for music and literature. This finding makes it clear for the first time that, at least in the Greek language, the primacy of "beautiful" is particularly powerful in the visual arts. These effects may have come from the strongest associations between the

term "beautiful" and the appreciation of visual things because they were not influenced by age or gender (in the visual modality). This observation is significant because it suggests that the primacy of "beauty" in aesthetic experiences of art has a complex origin and is supported by Giannouli et al. "beauty" has at least three different connotations, including reference to a harmonic structure of physical features (Che et al., 2018; Reber et al., 2004), reference to a hedonic appreciation, and reference to a positive emotional state.

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