

Literary Journal



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EDITORIAL

"My imagination makes me human and makes me a fool; it gives me all the world and exiles me from it."

Ursula K. Le Guin

The world of Fantasy fiction has been a popular genre for close to two centuries - from Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* to Rowling's *Harry Potter* series. This year, Stella Maris' Department of English conducted an Intercollegiate Students' Seminar, titled "Of Dragons, Demons, and Droids", to celebrate this world of Fantasy and Speculative fiction in honour of the late Ursula Le Guin - the American Fantasy and Science Fiction writer, whose novels often contained unconventional themes. The genre has gained much popularity of late - the idea of escaping from one world into another finding much appeal with the modern audience. From the magical landscapes of fairy tales to the dystopian societies portrayed in recent novels and films, works of Fantasy and Speculative fiction have garnered a faithful audience in those who enjoy the idea of entering an alternate reality.

Fantasy means many things to different people, and what we love about the genre is the sense of creation that comes with it - of building a whole new world and stretching the imagination as far as one can, because our imagination makes us what we are - human.

So with this issue of the Literary Journal, we invite you to experience the many facets of the genre, and delve into the world of Fantasy!

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I.B.A.

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A Psychoanalytic Reading: Identity Crisis Faced by Alice in *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* with respect to Nonsense Literature

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Awarded Best Paper in Students' Seminar 2018

Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, the famous story of a girl named Alice falling into a rabbit hole and encountering numerous animals, portrays the identity crisis faced by the titular character. Alice's identity crisis becomes evident through her conversation with herself and with others in Wonderland. This paper will attempt a psychoanalytic reading of the identity crisis faced by Alice in *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* with respect to nonsense literature.

Identity crisis is a situation characterised by uncertainty, confusion, and insecurity regarding one's identity, where the individual feels estranged from oneself, and from his or her surroundings. In the novel, the identity crisis faced by Alice is associated with the "Wonderland" in which she falls. The magical Wonderland initially excites Alice but her constantly changing physique in terms of size, coupled with the strange behaviour of Wonderland's inhabitants forces her to experience a disconnect between her psyche and her physique.

The initial excitement felt by Alice, in Wonderland, induced a desire to enter through a small door to a beautiful garden. However, since she was too big for the door, she had to drink the potion from the bottle labelled "DRINK ME" (Carroll 9). As a result, she shrank. The process of eating and drinking substances which alter Alice's physical stature constantly, between gigantic and pygmy build, occurs throughout the novel. The rapid changes in her body cause Alice to question her identity. "I wonder if I've been changed in the night? Let me think: was I the same when I got up this morning? I almost think I can remember feeling a little different. But if I'm not the same, the next question is, Who in the world am I? Ah, that's the great puzzle!" (19). This shows that the psyche of Alice is alienated from the individual Alice.

It can be seen that the inhabitants of Wonderland play a major role in further developing Alice's sense of alienation from herself. When the Rabbit addresses Alice with his maid's name Mary Ann, Alice is surprised but does not seem to mind the Rabbit calling her by that name. However, later when the caterpillar poses the question "Who are you?" (60). Alice's reply makes the physical and psychological disconnect of the character evident.

"I hardly know, sir, just at present - at least I know who I was when I got up this morning, but I think I must have changed several times since then" (60). Therefore, the gap between Alice's psyche and physique widens when the creatures in Wonderland either question her identity or when an identity is imposed on her. In Mikhchi's view, "Alice's interaction with other creatures in Wonderland leads her into further distance from her own needs, makes her find herself distressed and forces her to abide by illogical wishes of the characters therein. Therefore, she falls into a desperate state in which protection of her true self demands the creation of multiple false selves in the hope that they play a part in defending her from more feelings of abandonment and loneliness"(51).

The most acclaimed element of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* is the use of nonsense verses. Nonsense in the writings of Carroll is not "gibberish; it is not chaos, but the opposite of chaos.

It is a closed field of language in which the meaning of any single unit is dependent on its relationship to the system of the other constituents" (Holquist 104). Holquist, in the essay "What is a Boojum? Nonsense and Modernism", also adds that nonsense is "a collection of words of events which in their arrangement do not fit into some recognized system but which constitute a new system of their own" (104). In the novel, it is important to note that whenever Alice's identity crisis is at its peak, her dialogues tend to be nonsensical. According to psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan, "the signifier represents the subject for another signifier" (Hill 45). For Lacan, an individual is represented through the words and words reveal one's state of mind. Lacan also states that use of language is the best way to communicate. Nevertheless, it bears the risk of being misunderstood. Therefore, individuals are both joined and separated by language, and the subject (individual) is inseparable from language.

On the basis of Lacan's argument, it can be said that the nonsensical utterances of Alice in the novel can be considered as an explicit symbol of the identity crisis that Alice faces. One of the prominent instances of nonsense in the novel is the Mouse's tale. "'Mine is a long and sad tale!' said the Mouse, turning to Alice, and sighing. 'It is a long tail, certainly,' said Alice, looking down with wonder at the Mouse's tail; 'but why do you call it sad?'" (36). When the Mouse realises that Alice had mistaken "tale" to be "tail," and thought the tale had reached the "fifth bend," it says "You insult me by talking such nonsense!" (38). Alice thinks of the tail when the Mouse says "tale" because her mind is addled by the disorientation of her body and mind. The events in the tunnel which caused her body size to change many times disturb her mind and make her inattentive. The disturbance of her mind is reflected in her misunderstanding, which in turn results in her speaking nonsense. It is to be noted that the Mouse's tale is not nonsensical, but Alice's interpretation of it as a tail is.

It is noteworthy that when Alice meets the Caterpillar he asks her to recite "You are old Father William", and she fails to do it right. The Caterpillar confuses her all the more by asking her what size she wants herself to be. Alice, who is already confused and distressed with her height of three inches and a changing physique, does not know what she wants. She does not know the reason behind her encounters in Wonderland, and searches for a resolution to the problem of her changing body size. It is in this situation that the Caterpillar hands her the mushroom without specifying the changes in her physique that each side would make. Her internal confusion and crisis is reflected in her unsatisfactory answers to the Caterpillar's questions. Her altered sentences and loss of words while answering the Caterpillar evidently indicate her identity crisis

In Alice's Adventures in Wonderland, identity crisis faced by Alice is reflected in the way she uses language. The nonsensical dialogues and conversations in the novel are hilarious, and thereby is both entertaining and thought provoking for children and adults. Although this fantastical novel appears to be far from reality, upon deeper analysis, the theme and style of the novel suggest realism in every way, including the nonsensical jabber. Thus, Anna Neill rightly says, "Both child and adult readers, like Alice, are marooned from the world of common meaning that enables the leaps and bounds of human ingenuity" (381).

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'Feeling at Home' in the Forests: Analysing Wildernesses in *A Song of Ice and Fire*¹ Sayujya Sankar

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"Nature presents itself as it is, now cruel, now generous. It does not seek to deceive; it may reserve many an unpleasant surprise for us, but it never lies." (Lefebvre, 81)

Lefebvre distinguishes between nature and society; he notes that any social categorisation of nature falls within a "dual, multiple, plural" form of reality and is therefore not considered a reality at all. He distinctly separates the cultivated lands from that of wildernesses. Cultivated and appropriated lands are spaces of production as well as spaces of property, which is not true of uncultivated land (81). Yet, in *A Song of Ice and Fire*, this distinction gets blurred- the notion of home as well as the wilderness, of cultivated and uncultivated lands merge; i.e. the spaces become plural spaces.

Arne Naess notes, "In the deep ecology movement we are biocentric or ecocentric. For us it is the ecosphere, the whole planet, Gaia, that is the basic unit, and every living being has an intrinsic value." (Glasser 18) This ecocentric notion is seen in the way the First Men as well as the people of Winterfell interact with the natural world around them, where humans are more attuned to nature: nature is not only a god, but also a home (thereby also collapsing the distinction between the fear of the sacred and the comfort of the home). Thus, an inherently deep ecological ethic, with a non-anthropocentric view is apparent in these characters. This paper shall analyse the ecological ethic seen in the notion of hearth and home.

The land of Westeros in *A Song of Ice and Fire* comprises of the North which is populated by numerous groups of people, including the Wardens of the North (the Starks of Winterfell), the Mudmen, the free folk beyond the massive ice wall and the children of the forest. The Starks were the descendents of the First Men, or the people who had landed on Westeros. They had fought with the children of the forest who had initially inhabited the land, but eventually they signed a pact that enabled the two groups of humans to co-exist with each other. This paper shall analyse the portrayal of homes in the North, where humans are an innate part of the natural world instead of being distanced or separate from it.

Quoting M. Morris's "Crazy Talk is not Enough" (1996), Geraldine Pratt notes that "neither origin nor destination, 'home' is an effort to organize a 'limited space' that is never sealed in, and so it

is not an enclosure but a way of going outside" (159). The castle of Winterfell in *A Song of Ice and Fire*, the region guarded by the Starks, does have an outer wall that separates it from the land outside. However, it is often stated that Winterfell is a land that constantly protects itself. This is seen in the description of the castle, as rooted in the earth: "Winterfell was a grey stone labyrinth of walls and towers and courtyards and tunnels spreading out in all directions. In the older parts of the castle, the halls slanted up and down so that you couldn't even be sure what floor you were on. The place had grown over the centuries like some monstrous stone tree... and its branches were gnarled and thick and twisted, its roots sunk deep into the earth." (GoT 75) Here, the castle is not a means of going outside, but rather that the outside has entered the "limited space" of the home.

The castle of Winterfell, just like the land dissuades visitors from tarrying in the region. No guest from the southern regions stay with a willing heart. Just as forests act as a home to animals but would be terrifying for the city-dweller, Winterfell deters outsiders. This is seen in various instances. For instance, when Tyrion Lannister visits Winterfell, he realises how different the lands can be from the maps that he knew well: "he went north on forever. Tyrion Lannister knew the maps as well as anyone, but a fortnight on the wild track that passed for the kingsroad up here had brought home the lesson that the map was one thing and the land quite another." (GoT 113). Even Lady Catelyn Stark who is essentially from the southern region but is married to Lord Eddard Stark of the North, finds the place dreary though she had spent years in her husband's home. Eddard points out to his wife, "I know how little you like this place," (GoT 22) speaking of the dark and brooding godswood, the forest of worship in the North.

The Mudmen or the crannogmen of the North were people who lived amongst the marshes. Bran Stark says that they "dwelt amongst the bogs of the Neck and seldom left their wetlands. They were a poor folk, fishers and frog-hunters who lived in houses of thatch and woven reeds on floating islands hidden in the deeps of the swamp. It was said that they were a cowardly people who fought with poisoned weapons and preferred to hide from foes rather than face them in open battle." (ACoK, 299) The Reeds, who were the head of the crannogmen, belonged to the marshes. They were a part of the wetlands that surrounded them. Even their method of warfare was like that of the marshes- deceptive. As Rodney Giblett notes, the reflection provided in the marshes only reveal distorted images and colours which are changeable. This creates a feeling of horror and the uncanny (6).

The Reeds live in a world that is constantly moving. When Bran asks Meera Reed, "Who keeps your ravens?" she replies, "Ravens can't find Greywater Watch, no more than our enemies can... Because it moves" (ACoK 394). Even when Theon Greyjoy searches for them, a companion of his states about the Reeds: "Their houses move, even the castles like Greywater Watch" (ACoK, 662). While human concepts of houses mostly do not involve locomotion, the Reeds live not as a separate entity within nature, but rather as a part of nature. They hide and change and distort what the others think they see just as the marshes do.

While the children of the forest used to live on the land, once the First Men occupied it, and the years passed, they began to occupy the lands beneath the earth. Bran describes his descent into their world:

"Bran saw great white snakes slithering in and out of the earth around him, and his heart thumped in fear... But when the girl child stopped to let them catch her, the torchlight steadied, and Bran realized that the snakes were only white roots like the one he'd hit his head on. "It's weirwood roots," he said... The roots were everywhere, twisting through earth and stone, closing off some passages and holding up the roofs of others. "All the color is gone", Bran realized suddenly. The world was black soil and white wood. The heart tree at Winterfell had roots as thick around as a giant's legs, but these were even thicker. And Bran had never seen so many of them. He realises that "there must be a whole grove of weirwoods growing up above us" (ADwD 176-77).

George R. R. Martin shows the reader that homes are not always stable and walling out the natural world. They can also be moving and shifting, they can also be dark and underground and they can be walls which are a part of the apparent chaos of nature.

A Song of Ice and Fire also portrays a world which is in harmony with Nature. Quoting Andrew Brennan, Michael P. Levine notes, "In terms of ecological humanism, our alienation from nature is also a kind of alienation from ourselves, a failure to recognise ourselves in our real location in the world ... any ethic by which we are to live has to recognise our location in natural and social systems, and take account of our place in history ... Objects, systems, even the land forms around me deserve my respect, deserve ethical consideration simply by being what they are, where they are and interacting with other items in the way they do." (129). It is precisely this locatedness in a space, place and time that George R. R. Martin's work provides its readers. The characters of Winterfell and the north believe in the powers of the earth and worship them, even as they reside in the shifting or chaotic wilderness around them. It is this that provides the ecological ethic within the world of fantasy in A Song of Ice and Fire.

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Abjection, Monstrous Feminine and Horror: A Psychoanalytic Approach to *Stranger Things*

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Carol Maria Sunny

III B.A. English

Stranger Things, a science fiction horror web series, packs thrill, action, and mystery into a small cozy package which has everyone at the edge of their seats mesmerized. The series is not merely a brilliant mashup of 80s popular culture with themes from science fiction movies of the decade which evoked nostalgia, it also opens up up interesting areas for further exploration. The strange things that happen in the little sleepy town of Hawkins, Indiana follow the mysterious

disappearance of Will Byers. One is soon introduced to Eleven, a young girl who was a test subject, who escapes from Hawkins National Laboratory under even stranger circumstances. Eleven who has telekinetic powers accidentally released a creature during an experiment which Mike, Dustin, and Lucas (Will's friends) call the Demogorgon. The bloodthirsty Demogorgon goes hunting animals and humans and takes them to the Upside Down.

This paper explores the character of Eleven and the Demogorgon with the help of Julia Kristeva's Theory of Abjection. Abjection is a process or operation by which a subject rejects something that is disgusting, filthy and unacceptable. According to Kristeva a corpse, "is the utmost of abjection. It is death infecting life. Abject. It is something rejected from which one does not part, from which one does not protect oneself as from an object... it beckons to us and ends up engulfing us." It is also a state of being, a state of being 'wretched'. The abject is neither a subject nor an object "it disturbs identity, system and order".

Eleven, a child continually used as a test subject in Hawkins Lab, has telekinetic powers. The continuous experiments were a great torture to Eleven - frustrated, she screams and yells but all her efforts turn futile. It is well known that torture can backfire and produce danger. Eleven is initially disgusted and frightened when she encounters the monster from the Upside Down. She, through abjection, tries to repel it but fails and releases it. The Demogorgon therefore is the abject. Kristeva points out that the subject will be disgusted by the abject, provokes tears and bile, increases heartbeat, causes perspiration. Eleven, along with the residents of Hawkins, experience the same on encountering it. Eleven is a deject according to Kristeva's theory because it is through her that the abject exists, thereby making her situate herself away from others. She identifies with the monster, as she believes that she is a source of misery to others. Kristeva says "Often, moreover, he includes himself among them, thus casting within himself the scalpel that carries out his separations."

Jouissance refers to enjoyment or deriving pleasure. The abject draws his jouissance by straying into what Kristeva calls the excluded ground but he is never separated from the land of oblivion. The Demogorgon, being the abject, draws its jouissance out of straying into excluded ground - Hawkins and going on a killing spree. The land of oblivion is the Upside Down, which is something that the dejected constantly tries to separate herself from. Kristeva writes that the ashes of oblivion reflect aversion - so does the upside down. This points out the dual existence of Hawkins and the Upside Down. She also says that the abject always acts on strength "to tear the veil of oblivion but also to set up its object as inoperative". This is reflected in the Demogorgon's action of creating the portal through Eleven's powers.

This leads one to infer that Eleven and the Demogorgon are part of Eleven's psyche - her resistance that turns out to be a physical monster. The term 'Demogorgon' (used to refer to the monster) is the result of an error made by monks copying Greek texts who mixed the word 'Demiurge' - meaning an entity that creates, with 'Gorgon' meaning monster. The Demiurge is considered evil as it fashioned the earth out of chaos. This explains the use of such a term to refer to the Demogorgon that is an agent of chaos in *Stranger Things*. This leads to the concept of the Monstrous Feminine. Barbara Creed points out that all horror films include a violation of boundaries as it "is central to the construction of the monstrous". The monster threatens a breakdown of boundaries as "it reminds us of the fragility of the boundaries which regulate social life and our sense of meaning and identity". According to Creed "the horror film is populated by female monsters, many of which seem to have evolved from images that haunted the dreams, myths and artistic practices of our forebears many centuries ago." She identifies a variety of monsters which include the "monstrous girl-boy and the woman as non-human animal" - both archetypes of Eleven and the Demogorgon respectively.

In line with Creed's theory of *Vagina Dentata*, the head of the Demogorgon resembles the orchid, with toothed petals. Though etymology is suggestive of the phallus, the appearance is close

to that of a vagina. Vagina Dentata, is an archetype of a woman who castrates a man using her toothed vagina. The female genitalia is a terrifying symbol and provokes horror in the male. The Demogorgon feasts on humans and animals through it. The monstrous Demogorgon can be analysed using Gyanae horror which was formulated by Erin Harrington. Gyanae horror is the horror that deals with all aspects of female reproductive horror. The monster which possesses the Vagina Dentata kills people using the mouth, which is the labial opening. The monster is able to mutilate and kill those who attack it. The Demogorgon's form of monstrosity exploits the fear of gender-crossing inspired by Vagina Dentata, where the head of the monster displays labial lips as well as phallic fangs. The mother Demogorgon breaks barriers as she spreads her own seed inside Will, who later regurgitates the worm in the sink. The worm is seen as a symbol of the phallus and grows inside Will thereby emphasizing the importance of gender in the construction of its monstrosity.

The Upside Down is portrayed as a dark reflection of the existing world. The entrance - the portal created by Eleven and the monster resembles a womb. An unclean space - a womb filled with death, decay, and filth. Margaret Miles points out that in Christianity, Hell is often represented as a "lurid and rotting uterus". The Demogorgon emerges out of it to abduct and murder, to take back and torture. This monstrosity can be seen as a result of the tortures meted out on Eleven as she is the one who unleashes it. The Upside Down therefore evokes a picture of a desolate abyss.

The dark and mysterious Demogorgon residing in the Upside Down consisting of a head which resembles a Toothed Vagina, seems far more horrifying in its appearance than its true nature. Sigmund Freud in his essay "Medusa's Head" posits that Medusa's head is a representation of the female genitals. The sight of Medusa's head makes the spectator stiff with terror, eventually consoling the spectator that he is still in possession of his penis. Likewise, the characters in the series are horrified by just looking at the Demogorgon. The obnoxious appearance of the monster affects the male characters more, as they seem to be rooted to the ground, unable to move while facing the monster. The monster's mouth symbolises 'entry into the unknown' as it happens to be synonymous to the 'fear of the feminine'.

The horror in the series acts as a window through which one views a world presented without a mask. It reflects on the different other types of horror one encounters everyday. The portrayal of the struggle between the good and the evil usually ends with the evil defeated, but this series leaves the ending open - showing that the evil is never truly eliminated as one lives in a world of binaries.

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Ms. Marvel - A Reflection of Younglings

Srishty Mahesh

I B.A.

Comics provide us hope and respite from the dark happenings in the world around us. Comics, especially superhero comics, have been an integral part of many societies. They have a significant impact on the lives of the youth, as they reflect the prevalent culture and shape their values, attitudes and behavior. Superhero comics have played a very important role in American History. The year 1934 was marked as the beginning of a new form of entertainment, as it was the year when Superheroes were introduced, and since comic books were the cheapest form of entertainment, these comics quickly flourished especially during World War II (1939-1945). This paper presents a snapshot of the role of comics in society and elaborates on the character of Ms. Marvel, who represents the predominant values and aspirations of the millennial generation (Generation Z).

The evolution of Superhero comics have reflected historical trends, addressed societal issues, and influenced social changes. During World War II it was observed that the writers were extremely bold with their plot (considering the period they lived in), in order to give hope to people during dark times. Marvel's Captain America was portrayed punching Adolf Hitler in Captain America Volume 1 published in 1941.

Since the beginning of the comic book era, the concept of diversity has always been associated with its history - be it the Jewish writers who used it as a medium of voicing out their opinion against Nazi Germany to America, or the various characters with their distinctive personality and story. This led to an increase in demand for these comics and the craze is still observed across generations. The superhero craze (or as we now call it - "fandom") continues to live out, and has expanded to different forms of media, such as movies, T.V. series, cartoons etc., and continues to bring hope and carry out the tradition to voice out opinions about social and political issues.

In 2014 Marvel introduced a new character who grew instantly popular due to her relatable and intriguing story. This character, aptly named Ms. Marvel, has been the epitome of the present generation and their aspirations.

Ms. Marvel, whose original name is Kamala Khan, is the first Muslim and brown female superhero to have a comic storyline of her own. Kamala Khan is portrayed as a 16-year-old Pakistani girl living in New Jersey, who grew up idolizing legendary heroes like Iron Man, Captain America and Captain Marvel. Her family includes her mother Muneeba Khan - a strict woman who worries for her daughter's future because she is her only hope, her father Yusuf Khan - a wise yet overprotective person and her brother, who is an underachiever.

After gaining superpowers, as a side effect of "terrigen mist", she took the former title of her idol, Carol Danvers, and came to be known as "Ms. Marvel". Her powers include shape shifting, and healing factor, but her body is vulnerable to EMPs, which can weaken her elasticity. She is also a member of a genetically enhanced species known as 'The Inhuman; and she embraces it as she embraced her legacy as a hero. She is a part of: S.H.I.E.L.D, The Avengers, Champions (A group of young heroes who banded together after the Civil War II, disillusioned by their elders such as the Original Avengers), Protectors (a group of Asian-American heroes who come together to protect a

group of civilians from an alien abduction), and Warriors (a team of Inhumans who find other Inhumans who could help take Captain America down).

She is portrayed as a teenage high school girl whose hobbies include writing superhero fan fictions. She tries to fit in, but her overprotective parents, and her cultural background, hinders it. The character is portrayed as a person who feels uncomfortable - an outsider who finds it difficult to mingle with people. She thinks she does not fit in with people due to her background (which she considers to be an obstacle). The story also focuses on the problems faced by her as a Muslim, and as a child of immigrants in America. She also faces problems regarding her newly obtained powers - to prove that she is worthy of the title while trying to keep up with her parents' expectations.

More than her superpowers, and her unique personality, her relatable 'teenage problems' makes her special due to which the character has attracted a diverse audience, including Muslim readers across the world. She is also projected as a fangirl who isn't comfortable with herself, and tends to indulge in her imagination to escape from reality. Due to her young age, people do not take her seriously and her parents often tell her that she is just a teenager underneath the mask, but she is shown as a stubborn girl who rebels and fights for what she feels is right (and often wins). All these are typical characteristics of present day younglings. Even though she took over Carol Danvers' former title, she made that name her own. She redesigned her old costume to her comfort, to make it more "socially acceptable". Her costume is inspired by a burkini and she also wears a scarf around her neck which displays her pride in her cultural identity. Even though the story contains a lot of characters based on stereotypes, the readers tend not to focus on that due to the diversity and the social message conveyed by the main character. Initially people felt that Muslim representation was based on stereotypes, but the fandom grew instantly and people were just happy to see a Brown-Muslim girl have her own storyline. This outshined the negative aspects of the story and made it reach #2 on New York Times Best Seller list by November 2014. She made her first appearance in March 2014 in All-New Marvel NOW! Point One Vol. 1.

As a prominent protagonist of color, she has become a protest symbol, - inspiring fan art, and is a vital part of Tumblr Convention and Comic-Con. After the impact she made in comics, Marvel has announced a movie featuring her in the future. Just like the comics, her introduction in the upcoming Captain Marvel movie is something to hope for and is awaited by her ardent fans. It is unclear if she'll make an appearance on the Captain Marvel movie but her fans are hoping for it as she made her debut in comic as a cameo in Captain Marvel Vol 7 #14, published in September 2013.

Kamala Khan is loved by Muslim Americans, and fangirls alike. In our current political climate, people have drawn and painted Kamala in order to rally their spirits. Men and women have cosplayed as her. People have written think-pieces and personal essays about how important Kamala Khan is to them and the world, and it is important that more people know about her wonderful story

Ms. Marvel is considered as the superhero of the current generation as she is portrayed as someone who is trying to figure out the role of a superheroism and tries to save the world from the alternate path that could threaten to destroy the hope, joy, and faith people have in humanity. Moreover she understands that being a hero is not about superpowers at all; she values friendship and family, embraces hardship, she stands up for what she believes in, understands people better than others, cares a lot about others, and always maintains hope, and this is what makes her a great/legendary hero. In a true sense Ms. Marvel is a reflection of the aspirations and expectations of the society and the millennial generation.

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Greener Consciousness: Ecocide and Evolution of Emotions in Disney Pixar's *WALL-E*

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Over the past few decades, with the rapid advancements in technology, the "what-ifs" of the future have slowly started becoming theoretical possibilities. With the emergence of Speculative Fiction as an established genre, literature has transformed into a platform for realising the eventualities of the future. Science Fiction has combined disparate disciplines of science and fantasy to create a field of study whose boundaries encompass the plausibility of a technology driven future spearheaded by post-human, often mechanised, entities.

Film and media have given a recognisable form and a concrete identity to the future of mankind and their likely non-human companions. Cinematic Science Fiction envisions the apocalypse and a resultant dystopia almost as the inevitable future of the Earth. Andrew Stanton's animated feature film *WALL-E* is one such "cautionary tale" that warns of the disturbing consequences of a global ecocide through a light-hearted romance between two anthropomorphic robots living in a toxic, deserted Earth. The film presents the imminent catastrophe of ecocide as a direct consequence of consumerism and environmental negligence. Cynthia Deitering, in her essay "The Postnatural Novel", examines toxic consciousness in fiction and identifies toxic waste as "a cultural metaphor for a society's most general fears about its collective future." *WALL-E* opens 800 years into the future when Earth has clearly been a victim of a large scale environmental crisis. The disconcerting image of a dry, barren, garbage-filled planet is an extension of today's ecocide-in-progress.

By developing an ecological consciousness through the speculative mode, films like *WALL-E* confront the potential horrors of an apocalyptic ecocide. Science Fiction usually relates the apocalypse to the extinction of mankind following an alien invasion or irreparable destruction of the

Earth. WALL-E, however, imagines a post-ecocide Earth consumed by the vestiges of a purely commercial, technological boom. Humans seem to have found a solution in abandoning the dying planet and seeking refuge in an unmanned, self-sufficient spaceship. Alexa Mossner considers WALL-E's Earth to be "not only post-natural, (but) also quite literally post-human, because not a single human being is left on the planet." Ecocritical theories like deep ecology attempt to formulate alternative, ethical views of existence by forging a symbiotic relationship with Earth. WALL-E's spaceship, Axiom, is a critique of the increasing synthetic and mechanised way of living which has severed the human-nature bond.

The film's titular character, WALL-E, symbolises the extent of dependence of humans on robots. Following the Earth becoming uninhabitable, the humans leave it upon these scavenger robots to "clean up their mess." The futuristic humans of WALL-E can be viewed as having eschewed the principles of deep ecology devised by Arne Naess which profess questioning the ethical aspects of exploiting nature. 800 years on, they lead a comfortable, inert lifestyle on their spaceship, oblivious of the possibility of reviving planet Earth. Over generations, human disregard for nature has slowly transformed into complete ignorance. WALL-E's robotic companion EVE - Extraterrestrial Vegetation Evaluator - who combs the Earth for signs of life, continues to follow 'directives' set by the ancestors of these ignorant humans. This shows that when encountered with the global ecocide, humans seem to have developed a sense of ecological consciousness, albeit belatedly.

Joseph Meeker, in his essay "The Comic Mode", studies the influence of literature on human behaviour and the natural environment. From an ecological standpoint, he identifies comedy as the mode of literature best suited to "affirm man's capacity for survival and to celebrate the continuity of life itself." WALL-E appropriates the comic mode and emerges as an accidental "comic eco-hero." According to Meeker, a comic hero is one who "manages to...evade his enemies, slip by the oppressive authorities, avoid drastic punishment, and to stay alive." WALL-E's discovery of the lone, viable, green sapling on Earth turns him into the unassuming saviour. Despite being anthropomorphised and having had an emotional awakening, WALL-E does not comprehend the significance of the plant in restoring life on Earth.

The innovations in the field of Artificial Intelligence have been used extensively by Science Fiction enthusiasts to speculate the rise of sentient robots. While cognitive machines are an intriguing concept, it continues to be presented in Speculative Fiction as a possible threat to the survival of mankind. Post-human entities with subjective consciousness are usually portrayed as harbingers of a technology-aided apocalypse. WALL-E seeks to partially subvert this popular belief by introducing endearing robots endowed with human emotions. While the anthropomorphisation of these characters is an attempt at likening them to humans, they continue to be 'lesser beings' and share almost a master-slave relationship, merely following 'directives' of an almost dictatorial corporate giant.

Reggia, Katz and Davis, in their study on cognitive humanoid robots, identify "imitation learning" as a possible means of developing thought processes in robots. During imitation learning, "a robot watches a person perform the task to be learned, and then imitates what it observed." WALL-E develops an emotional personality by watching the musical Hello, Dolly! His understanding of human emotions is limited to what he observes and imbibes from this 800 year old tape. After meeting EVE, WALL-E acts on his new-found emotions of friendship and love by imitating what he sees on screen. Initially, the only companion WALL-E has on the post-ecocide Earth is a cockroach. WALL-E's relationship with this cockroach echoes of empathy and camaraderie. The seemingly insignificant cockroach can also be read as a tool used by Disney to

comment on the present toxic lifestyle. The insect is surprisingly resilient and survives on an alarmingly fresh 800-year old Twinkie.

While the film focuses on the marked evolution in the affections of the gendered robots, it is also observed that they slowly develop a conscience and the ability to discern unethical behaviour. Though lacking a true sense of environmental conscience, their compulsion to preserve the only surviving plant is suggestive of a still-evolving psyche. While proposing the possibility of cognitive robots turning into potential allies of humans, WALL-E does not wholly discredit a robot uprising. The spaceship's control, AUTO, represents the fear of human beings - that their own inventions could be the reason for the destruction of Earth. It is interesting to note that WALL-E juxtaposes the emotional evolution in robots with a degeneration of human faculties. Robin L. Murray and Joseph K. Heumann notice how "In this cruise ship hell, WALL-E becomes the force of nostalgia, reminding humans and other robots of the value of human relations." WALL-E's role as a mediator in restoring humans to Earth reiterates the idea of peaceful coexistence between humans and the hypothetical futuristic cognitive machines.

Leo Marx, in his book *The Machine in the Garden*, expounds the intrusion of the machine into the American pastoral literary landscape. He writes, "A machine, or some other token of industrial power, suddenly intrudes upon the serenity [of] a natural, perhaps idyllic, setting...The recurrence of the "interrupted idyll" testifies to the salience of the conflict of meaning and value generated by the onset of industrial capitalism." WALL-E opens into the after-effects of this very "ecological holocaust." However, by tracing the evolution of ecological insight in both the human as well as 'post-human' characters, the film gradually transforms into an ecologically optimistic narrative. The montage accompanying the end credits shows a pastoral setting with humans and robots working together to rebuild and recolonise Earth. They incorporate technological assistance in rehabilitating the planet in a manner reminiscent of ancient humans evolving into social beings. WALL-E maintains an Ecocritical stance while appropriating the technology dominated genre of Science Fiction to argue that a "return to nature" is a feasible solution for the current ecological predicament.

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Real World Within Fantasy: An Attempt To Discover Hidden Reality In *The Hunger Games*

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It is a common misconception that fantasy portrays a world and life that is unreal and illusionary. This paper aims at proving that fantasy fiction or fantastic elements portrayed in novels are drawn from reality or real life. Through the application of Foucault's panopticism, and Louis Althusser's theoretical concept of ideological state apparatus and repressive state apparatus, this papers attempts at proving that the real world exists within the fantasy world.

The concept of panopticon was first put forth by the English philosopher and writer, Jeremy Bentham, in the mid nineteenth Century as an architectural design for asylums, prison, schools, hospitals and factories - as a means of controlling and asserting power without violence. Foucault in his essay *Discipline and Punish* further develops this concept of panopticism, to demonstrate the impact of constant surveillance on people. He begins his essay by describing the measures taken during *The Great Plague* in the seventeenth century. These measures were aimed to purify and discipline the society. There were strict spatial partitioning, closing of houses, constant surveillance, and registration. Regular quarantine and purification processes were carried out. Individuals were fixed in their space. If they move, they move at the risk of their life or punishment. They were inspected and guarded ceaselessly with the magistrate exercising full control over all matters regarding the people.

Foucault then discusses Bentham's panopticon - an architectural structure with a central tower and an annular building at the periphery. This structure allows perfect vision from the tower to each cell of the annular building, but the separation of the cell makes the inmates incapable of observing the tower. "He is seen but does not see; he is the object of information but never a subject of communication. In the peripheral ring one is totally seen without ever seeing, in the central tower one sees everything without being seen" (Foucault 202). Panoptic control is achieved through what Foucault calls as 'disciplinary power' - a form of power that is constant, unnoticeable, and internalised. The people are not sure if they are being watched or not, and thus they act according to the rule. Hence, control is achieved through self-surveillance as fear of being caught, and the punishment, keep the people in line.

This paper studies panopticism in *The Hunger Games*, a dystopian novel by Suzanne Collins. The protagonist, Katniss Everdeen, lives in the post apocalyptic nation of Panem (supposedly situated in North America). The nation of Panem is divided into twelve districts which are governed by the highly advanced metropolis 'The Capitol'.

The Capitol takes the place of the central tower and the districts represent the peripheral annular building. The Capitol, at the centre, exercises complete power over the districts, enforcing its dominance through an army of peacekeepers, capital punishment, nuclear devastation, and through the *Hunger Games*. The districts are under constant surveillance - their every move being monitored while they don't have any access to knowledge about The Capitol. Thus they are constantly being seen, but never see. This creates a sense of fear in them and they abstain from

breaking any rules from fear of punishment and death. It is interesting to note that during The Great Plague, the guards constantly kept a check on the plague, while in the districts the peacekeepers were appointed to quell any uprisings against the capitol. The separation of the nation into districts represents the separated cells of the annular building of the panopticon. This denies any communication between the districts like in the cells. They are completely unaware of their surroundings. The Capitol deliberately curbs the growth of the districts to keep them under control. The constant surveillance during The Plague was a measure to purify and discipline the society, while in the districts it was to oppress them into unquestioning submission to the law.

The annual Hunger Games were a means of reminding the people of their status in the nation. The people of different districts were considered as mere pawns the Capitol plays with for their own pleasure and recreation. There is a stark difference in the culture of The Capitol and the districts, further emphasising their existence as two distinct classes with a rigid hierarchical order.

One can also see the mechanisms of repressive state apparatus and ideological state apparatus working in the dystopian society of Panem. Louis Althusser, a French Marxist theorist, talks about these state apparatuses in his essay "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses" in which he differentiates between the ideological state apparatus and repressive state apparatus. He states in his essay "... the repressive state apparatus functions 'by violence' whereas the ideological state apparatuses functions 'by ideology'." (Althusser 93).

Neither one can exist without the other, and both state apparatuses work hand in hand to control and discipline the society according to the law laid out by the dominant ruling class. The ideological and repressive state apparatuses comprise of the schools, churches, family, and police force, the army, prison etc. respectively. The law is laid out by the state - comprising of the ruling class who are not affected by these apparatuses as they are above the law. The state enforces its ideologies through the ideological state apparatus and makes sure that the people do not deviate from the law through the repressive state apparatuses.

In The Hunger Games the repressive state apparatuses works through the peacekeepers stationed at every districts. They make sure that the law and order is maintained, but through violent means. Public whippings are carried out in the town square and sometimes people are killed. During Katniss' and Peeta's victory tour, the people of District Eleven show their protest by saluting Katniss, but immediately after the meeting is dispersed, the person who saluted first is taken captive and shot to death. The Hunger Games is another brutal way of showing their dominance and might. The deaths in the Games is a reminder to the general public about their fate if they rebel against The Capitol.

The public reaping carried out every year, the midyear victory tour through all the districts, and the daily live broadcast of the Hunger Games work as the ideological state apparatus, that reiterate in the minds of the people their subjugated status in the nation. Furthermore, in families and schools, the children are taught about the wars and the rebellion that caused the complete annihilation of District Thirteen. They learn to be passive receptors of all aggression inflicted upon them, and to suppress their anger against The Capitol as voicing their frustration will only result in their death.

The constant surveillance by The Capitol, the rigid rules, the brutal punishment, and the annual Hunger Games generate fear in people. Every year, at the Reapings there is the fear of their names being called, of being yet another pawn in The Capitol's games, and of losing their loved ones in the Games. The Capitol instills fear in the minds of people, and uses it to manipulate and control the people to suit their needs. They exploit the districts of their resources to meet the needs of the people of The Capitol while the people of the districts starve to death.

The people of Panem are trapped in a vicious circle of violence, tyranny, poverty, and

oppression, where hope is just an illusion. They moved from the governance of one tyrannical government to another. Most of the people are still subjected to violence. There is still poverty, hunger, rebellion, and oppression. Most of them lost their families and their dear ones. The violence of the past still haunts them and will continue to do so.

This paper has looked at the workings of panopticism, and the repressive and ideological state apparatus. Foucault derived his theory of panopticism from social reality - so does Althusser with his theory of state apparatuses. The application of these theories to the novel leads to the conclusion that the novel is a depiction of reality and real life as much as it is fantasy. With the raging wars between nations, violence, and mass destruction, the increasing poverty, and the presence of oppressive governments show that the present real world is not far from reaching the dystopian society that is presented in *The Hunger Games*. The novel is a possible reflection of the near future.

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V for Vendetta in the Contemporary World

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Work on *V for Vendetta* started out in the early 1980s as a plan to create a thirties mystery strip. This initial theme was scrapped, however, and Alan Moore and David Lloyd decided that a comic set in the near future would "create the same sense of mingled exoticism and familiarity", and their shared 'political pessimism' led them to create a bleak, totalitarian England of the (then) near future.

The world they envisioned was based upon their prediction that the Conservative party in Britain would lose the 1983 elections. Moore visualised a world where the Liberal government would remove American missiles from British soil, leaving the country relatively unscathed in a world torn apart by nuclear war. The effects of the war - both political and environmental - on this dystopian England are evident - cities are submerged and the skies fill with smoke, as right-wing groups rise to power with the help of the surviving big corporations. The triumphant party, Norsefire, imposes its fascist ideologies on people, getting rid of 'radicals', people of colour, homosexuals - anyone who is different. The England in *V for Vendetta* is a place where there is no diversity in the population, and the people are constantly monitored and fed propaganda. The media is run by the government, and the government has its agenda.

Despite being a product of Thatcher's Britain, Lloyd maintains that the story doesn't age, and even goes so far as to imply that its relevance is a constant - perhaps he means that *V for Vendetta* inspires the same zeal for activism in everyone who reads it, across decades. There are times, however, when its harsh, dystopian world comes close to reality - it has certainly become startlingly

more familiar than exotic these past few years, especially when one considers the success of right-wing politicians, political parties and ideologies (The BJP's electoral triumph in India in 2015, Trump's in the 2016 American elections, and the vote in favour of Brexit in 2016, for example). There is also the loss of one's privacy, not solely because in the age of the internet, people might unwittingly reveal more information than they ought to, but because of internet conglomerates' hidden agendas.

The significance of such a story in these times is, in the end, the very element that makes it ageless - its ability to inspire readers to take charge of their own lives, and to resist oppressive systems. *V for Vendetta* is far from didactic - none of the characters are typical heroes or villains, guiding the readers towards all that is 'good' and away from all that isn't, but morally ambiguous people caught up in their own lives and interests. One of the protagonists, V, commits what are generally considered acts of terrorism, in the name of freedom (a confusing binary in today's world - that of the terrorist and the freedom fighter). The leader of Norsefire, Adam Susan, is portrayed sympathetically, as someone who yearns for love and seems to genuinely care for the people, albeit in his own misguided way. *V for Vendetta* makes one think, and brings up questions in the minds of readers, allowing them to grow with characters like Evey and Finch, learning as they do that ideas and questions are the best forms of resistance.

A feature of dystopian novels, particularly critical dystopias, is the presence of hope within the narrative - a hope that not only leads the protagonist to break, or attempt to break, the shackles that bind them within their oppressive social or political system, but that manifests itself within the readers as well. This feeling of hope is built up over the course of the novel; as the characters develop, learning how to deal with the situation they're in, so does the reader, and with *V for Vendetta*, Moore and Lloyd have made use of the partly visual medium to take the narrative to the next level, making readers more invested and heightening this sense of hope.

Graphic novels bridge the gap between entirely visual and textual mediums, leaving scope for a narrative that has a certain cinematic quality to it, rendering it heavy with drama. Even the text is largely dialogic - with no thought bubbles, sound effects and caption boxes; it relies on conversations (and pictures) to carry the story and adequately relay the "nuances of character", something Alan Moore was initially anxious about. Though these three features are typical of comics, their absence doesn't leave *V for Vendetta* lacking - for example, it's almost as if the absence of sound effects leaves the readers to witness the atrocities committed by the government just as apathetic citizens might - in silence. During the strip's first run with *Warrior*, the comics were published in black and white, which might have been a statement in itself, but the current Vertigo edition has a wash of mostly muted colouring (there are some scenes that have splashes of bright colour amidst the shadows, but this seems to be used to create a sense of wonder, or to bring out the strange coexistence of the glamorous and disreputable). The shadows are striking, and the contrast between light and dark is stark, emphasising the atmosphere of different settings. Streets, Adam Susan's office, bars, and V's house (called the Shadow Gallery) are either engulfed in darkness or harshly lit; there are relatively few scenes where the lighting is neutral. These choices seem to reflect the general tone of the book.

More than this, the parallel narrative - showing two different scenes playing out simultaneously - has been used throughout the book, allowing it to play out just as a movie would, with the added advantage of being able to linger on each panel or go back and truly appreciate the similarities between the two situations shown. The opening scene of the book is a prime example of this, where both V and Evey are getting ready in their homes - it is the beginning of the book, of a revolution, and a new chapter in their lives. It's these little techniques used that make *V for Vendetta*

all the more interesting and compelling to the reader, allowing one to immerse themselves in the story.

The movie doesn't do the original justice - it is very often hard for a movie to do such a vast text justice, perhaps owing to the limitation of time. The original contains a multitude of nuanced characters, each in a different position on the scale of morality, and focuses on how each of these people play a role in the system and in the politics of their world, while the movie insists on romanticising its protagonists and their relationships with each other. The creators themselves disagree about the value of the movie - Moore distances himself from it, as he generally does with Hollywood adaptations of his work, while Lloyd maintains that the movie has largely remained faithful to the original.

It is necessary to compare these two different mediums of storytelling, both in terms of aesthetics and content, especially when it's possible that one has a wider reach than the other. *V for Vendetta* has inspired activist groups, most famously Anonymous, a hacktivist network. The group adopted *V*'s Guy Fawkes mask in 2012, and the face is now often associated with them. They might have been influenced by the graphic novel or the movie, which is why it's important that both mediums contain that spark of inspiration (which they do, accented by compelling aesthetic visuals and dramatic narrative style) but remains a thought-provoking story at the same time. There is a certain degree of introspection and contemplation that is required to balance out aggressive zeal, making stories such as this one potential fodder for responsible activism. *V for Vendetta*, the graphic novel, has all this, which makes it all the more relevant in the contemporary world.

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The Theme of Time in "The Curious Case of Benjamin Button"

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The arrow of time isn't just about simple mechanical processes; it's a necessary feature of the existence of life itself. It is also responsible for a deep feature of what it means to be a conscious person: the fact that we remember the past, and not the future. (Carroll 2010) Science fiction allows us - in imaginary time, at least - to reverse the flow of time. The "arrow of time" is a simple metaphor (coined by Sir Arthur Eddington, in 1927) based upon our perception of time as having direction. The story of Benjamin Button is "...the reversal of a single consciousness within the context of a "normal" flow of time". (Sawyer 2002)

Though the patterns of everyday life follow a predominantly chronological principle (although there is a certain degree of variance in terms of how slow or fast time passes), fiction is not obligated to this "realistic" model. By highlighting the temporality of stories, "time" becomes the primary themes of such narratives. They result in what Joan Silber calls "fabulous time," i.e.

alternative time conceptions which doesn't operate on the usual "rules and laws" of time and space. (Basseler 2015)

There are some symbols that appear in the film 'The Curious Case of Benjamin Button', and the symbols materialize the concept that "time goes backwards", which is referred to in the original story, though this indication is very subtle. By adding symbols, the film makes the concept of "time moving backwards" more visible, and it adds more meaning than that found in the original story. The name of the protagonist Benjamin can be shortened as "Ben", which can be associated with the Big Ben clock, in London; Benjamin serves as a symbol of time. In the original short story, this symbolization is not explicitly shown and the concept of time is slowing introduced by repeatedly referring to the exact years and Benjamin's growing-up process. The concept that "time goes back" is made by comparing Benjamin's live with others - his father, his wife, his son, and so on. In the film adaptation, the symbol of the clock and its association with time is explicitly shown in the beginning by introducing the story of a clockmaker. With the film's depiction of an actual clock that goes backward, the theme of "time going backwards" is made more obvious than in the original story. Since this symbol is set at the beginning, it serves as a guideline and introduction to the whole story so that the audience is more aware of how the story will be told and how to understand the story. Adding symbols also adds meaning, and provides foreshadowing: it adds meanings of repenting guilt, wars, family issues and remorse, all of which happen later in the story. When the clockmaker says that he wished that time could go back and wishes his son to live a "long, full life", it offers insight into what Benjamin's life will be like. This serves as a prelude to what will happen in the movie.

Another symbol that is closely associated with the concept that "time goes backwards" is the hummingbird, since it's the only bird that can fly backwards. It always appears when some character dies; it appears when Benjamin goes to war and reappears when Daisy dies in the hospital. Accordingly, the hummingbird can be considered to be the carrier of the message of death. The film indicates that the hummingbird is the symbol of "infinity" since it always draws the symbol of "?" with its wings, while flying. It suggests that death does not bring the end to the story but opens up a new start, just as Benjamin dies as a baby, though his death signifies something new in life. The hummingbird connects itself to the symbol of the clock: no matter how the clock goes (backwards or forwards), it goes in an infinite circle. Although Benjamin's time is inordinate, it still goes through an infinite circle from one point to another. By adding these symbols to the story, the film explores and discusses the concept of time, and deepens its meaning.

Henry Alexander notes, it is as if, for Benjamin, "there had never been any life at all"- his whole existence just fades into nothing. In a world of otherwise perfect chronology, Benjamin is the only one living "against the clock." The movie 'The Curious Case of Benjamin Button', provides many descriptions of time, which contradict with our common understanding of linear time. Since Benjamin, the leading character of the movie, lives his life "backwards," he is relatively unaffected by the common notions of linear time. Our understanding of time has been mostly confined by the concept of linear time. By exploring Benjamin's peculiar reversed life, which in a sense breaks away with the idea of linear time, we observe the effects of different time frames on our ways of living. Benjamin's reversed life emphasizes the effort made by a human being to feel his way in a world of non-linear time, which paradoxically encourages us to make the most of our life. This reversal of time encourages us to attempt leaving the constraints of linear time aside which might lead to the productive handling of our lives. The very clock turns out to be a symbol of Benjamin's reversed life, which begins immediately after the scene with the clockmaker. The appearances of the hummingbird in the movie serves as a certain metaphor with the implication that life can be made

different once we break away with the rigid constraints of what time should be and how we shape time.

Kathryn Lee Seidel notes that the film appeals to the anxiety of aging baby boomers, focusing on the desire to be young again and the reality that "what we love, we will lose". Referring back to Mark Twain's words, it is yet to be considered whether we would develop a similar opinion if the development of our physical state does not go with our age as it is supposed to be.

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Subversive Representation of Lycanthropes in Werewolf Literature

Vineetha A.V
III B.A.

Lycanthropes, by mythical convention, are human beings who are believed to have the ability to transform themselves into animal-like forms. The most popular lycanthrope, since ancient times, is the werewolf and hence, it is conceivable that very often the terms lycanthrope and werewolf are interchangeably used. The idea of a man turning into a wolf has its roots in mythologies and folklore. Starting out as oral tradition in the ancient times, the stories about the fearsome, malicious creatures called werewolves spread across territories. Werewolves have no solid textual incarnation. However, literary traditions based on the theme of werewolves were seen in the form of poems, and the first significant expression of this in literature was in Virgil's eighth "Eclogue" (39 B.C), where the character undergoes metamorphosis willingly and becomes a wolf by eating magical herbs (Sconduto 8). In the work "Metamorphoses" by the Roman poet Ovid, this theme is showcased in the popular story of Lycaon, a tyrannical king, who is transformed into a howling wolf due to a curse. Years later, in A.D 55, Petronius's *Satyricon*, a Latin work, became the first prose work to feature a werewolf. The latter part of the twelfth century saw the introduction of this motif in English Literature in the work "The Lay of the Bisclavret" by Marie de France (Frost 50-1).

The presence of the full moon was almost always associated with the process of transformation of a werewolf, and it still holds true in the present as in the case of Remus Lupin, who becomes a wolf with the rise of the full moon in *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban* by J.K Rowling. Traditionally, werewolves have been depicted as the manifestation of evil - they were emblems of treachery, savagery, and blood-thirstiness (Frost 3). Nevertheless, many writers have

portrayed werewolves in a positive light and have often introduced other lycanthropes to act as a foil to the werewolf or to support it. A popular example of this is J.K Rowling's Harry Potter series, where the author introduces the concept of "animagus" and "metamorphmagus" - the former referring to wizards and witches who can transform into animals at will, and the latter referring to those for whom the skill is hereditary. Lupin, the werewolf, belongs to the latter category while Sirius Black, Peter Pettigrew, Professor McGonagall, and Rita Skeeter, who can transform into a dog, a rat, a cat and a beetle respectively, come under the former category. Lycanthropes in literature mostly revolve around humans who become animals and rarely the other way round. In this light, this paper aims to explore how different the representation of a werewolf is, in the short story 'The Wife's Story' by Ursula K. Le Guin and to understand how the reinterpretation of legends and the usage of fantasy in these works attempt to make social, political and cultural statements.

"The Wife's Story" is a short story written by Ursula K. Le Guin, an American novelist, who generally focussed on fantasy and science fiction. This work is an example of werewolf literature, despite being unconventional in its own ways. The title "The Wife's Story" plays a very important role in influencing the understanding of the short story by the readers. It evidently suggests that the story is that of a wife, most probably narrated by her and is most likely to involve her husband because it is "The Wife's Story" and not "The Woman's Story" - emphasising her role in relation to her husband. The tale starts with the line "He was a good husband, a good father" and this proves the reader right (Le Guin). As the story progresses, the reader finds out that the wife had led a very happy life with her husband and their children until she notices certain changes in her husband which arouses her suspicions. His frequent hunting trips in the glaring sun, the change in his demeanour, the weird smell that he carries after the trip, his baby girl's aversion towards him, and the foreboding glare that he directs towards his own child, prepare the wife as well as the reader for the catastrophe that follows. Ursula K. Le Guin drops hints here and there to make the readers understand in advance that the husband is a werewolf. While talking about her husband, the wife plainly states "It's the moon's fault, and the blood" (Le Guin). This reference to the moon and the blood can be traced centuries back, when the myth of werewolves was associated with the onset of the full moon and the curse in one's blood. It is believed that the trait of being a werewolf is hereditary and in the short story, the curse was in the husband's father's blood, which was later passed on to him and manifested in "the dark of the moon". The readers who, by now, know that the wife is married to a werewolf, along with the wife, witness the expected transformation of the husband towards the end of the short story. It is at this point that Le Guin makes her readers realise that they have been deceived. The metamorphosis, as narrated by the wife is as follows:

I saw the changing. In his feet, it was, first. They got long, each foot got longer, stretching out, the toes stretching out and the foot getting long, and fleshy, and white. And no hair on them. The hair begun to come away all over his body. It was like his hair fried away in the sunlight and was gone. He was white all over then, like a worm's skin. And he turned his face. It was changing while I looked, it got flatter and flatter, the mouth flat and wide, and the teeth grinning flat and dull, and the nose just a knob of flesh with nostril holes, and the ears gone, and the eyes gone blue - blue, with white rims around the blue - staring at me out of that flat, soft, white face. He stood up then on two legs. (Le Guin)

This is when the reader realises that the transition takes place from a wolf to a man. The wife, who is the narrator, is, in fact, a wolf and not a human being. The community that the husband and wife belonged to, is a wolf-pack and not a human society. The author cleverly manipulates the readers' minds into thinking that they are being served an apparently conventional werewolf story

when in fact they are made to consume a subversive tale - a truth that they come to know of only at the end of the story. The husband, who becomes a man, turns against his wolf wife and their children and is confronted by an angry, snarling, and howling mother. The 'wife' is taken over by maternal instincts and becomes the 'mother' who would protect her children at any cost. She howls and calls her pack together, who hunts down the human husband and kills him. Le Guin questions the human prejudice of man's supremacy over animals. It is humans' tendency to place themselves in the centre and construct the world around them. Lycanthropic literature predominantly sees the human centre transforming into peripheral animals while maintaining the former's supremacy that comes with its central position. This human-centered nature of werewolf literature is questioned and subverted by 'The Wife's Story'. Le Guin deconstructs the broad idea of lycanthropes, in particular, the werewolves, by finding the gaps in the conventional definition given to these terms and filling them with unconventional 'truths'.

She redefines lycanthropy by de-centring human beings and placing wolves in their position. This shifting in the centre is an attempt to question the binaries of human and animals. According to Selden, dualisms in philosophy and religion are the very foundations of entire worldviews (55). "The concept of 'privatives' is also important in this context. We can describe the world in terms of the absence of certain qualities" (Selden 55). Humans have always placed animals at the bottom rung of the ladder of hierarchy. The latter is identified through privatives- they are identified in terms of the absence of civilisation, refinedness, and intellect, to name a few. In other words, animals have been thought to be savages, barbarous and foolish. In a binary, one always has the upper hand over the other. By convention, man has the upper hand over an animal. 'The Wife's Story' flips the power politics of this binary and gives significance to wolves over man. While in conventional werewolf literature animality is feared and looked down upon in human beings, in this short story, humanness is feared and looked upon with disgust in wolves. The repugnant smell of the human blood overpowers the wolf pack with disgust. In their perspective, man is way below them in terms of hierarchy.

Ursula K. Le Guin uses an unreliable narrator and ambiguity to deceive the reader and introduces a number of gaps that remain hollow in the first reading. When the narrator says "I met him by himself coming back from a hunting trip", it is assumed that 'he' had been pursuing the hunting sports that humans often indulge in (Le Guin). On a second reading, this gap is filled as the reader understands that 'he' refers to the wolf who had been hunting to feed himself. The narrator describes the events in retrospection, in a way that steers clear from mentioning the precise setting of the events, or the name of her sister's and husband's houses. For instance, when the wife says "my parents had moved out the year before and gone south" while talking about her home, or "when I first met him he was still living with his mother, over near Spring Lake" while talking about the husband, or "and she moved out - just down the way" while she talks about her sister, she is being ambiguous (Le Guin). This ambiguity helps in retaining the impression of the story's characters being human beings, in the readers' minds. Le Guin also plays with the concept of the full moon. The characters of the story are seen having regular meetings under the full moon before the 'tragic' incident happens. The wife blames the change in the moon for being the cause of her husband's fate. This 'change' is in fact called "the dark of the moon" which, in other words, mean the disappearance of the moon and the onset of sunlight. The transformation of the werewolf to its 'normal' state in conventional lycanthropic literature is from wolf to man, which takes place in the sunlight while in 'The Wife's Story', the normal state is that of a wolf and the transformation of the wolf-husband to a human being taking place under the sunlight is scary and abnormal. This short story identifies night time as the

'normal' time for activities and daytime as the 'normal' time for sleeping, which is true for wolves but not for humans. Hence through this short story, Le Guin also questions the very idea of normalcy.

The title of the story also plays a significant role in misleading the readers as it makes them assume that the 'wife' referred to here is a human female who is married. The story also bears some of the tenets of feminism as it features the transformation of a timid, homely, caregiving wife into a strong-willed, brave, and fearless mother capable of defending herself and her kids from her husband. All these clearly show how differently the element of fantasy can be used in fiction to voice opinions. Ursula K. Le Guin reinterprets the myth of werewolves in legends to make social, political, and cultural statements by being subversive, and shunning conventional representation of lycanthropes in fantasy fiction. This resonance of the suppressed voices is seen in the short story, 'The Wife's Story'.

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Feminism and Female characters in "The Goose Girl"

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Fairy tales, for many years, were a source of both morals and entertainment, and a way of helping children dream of the impossible. This interspersing of fun and didacticism is what makes fairy tales so universally appealing. And this appeal is what makes it necessary for these tales to be retold to be relevant in the current times. John Stephens and Robyn McCallum in 'Retelling Stories, Framing Culture' say,

- Retold stories have important cultural functions. Under the guise of offering children access to strange and exciting worlds removed from daily experiences, they serve to initiate children into aspects of a social heritage, transmitting many of a culture's central values and assumptions and a body of shared allusions and experiences.

Fairy tales have created many stereotypes, one of them being that women cannot succeed or even live on their own and are always in need of male intervention. Retelling stories helps break these stereotypes, because as we progress towards a more open-minded and tolerant society, authors tend to rewrite the same stories but without restricting their characters to certain conventions. While retelling stories, authors usually focus on one aspect of the original that they want to change. This change is done usually to make the overall story more topical, or add dimension to one or more characters. This is what Shannon Hale does in her retelling of "The Goose Girl", originally written by the Grimm Brothers. Unlike in the original where Princess Ani plays a passive role, Hale gives substance to Ani's character, thereby making her a feminist inspiration and this paper, will be a study of the same.

In the original story, the princess is sent far away to marry a prince. On the way, her waiting maid betrays her, takes her place, deceives the prince, and almost marries him. The King however finds out the truth and brings justice to the real princess. This is written in just 7 pages whereas the retelling is a novel, which is part of a series. The original has a fast-paced plot, and there is no clear establishment of settings and character. The readers are not given a proper context, and are forced to derive a character's qualities on their own because there is nothing told about why they act the way they do. Hale makes a complete change in this aspect. She gives the readers a proper setting, and background for the characters which helps justify their actions.

Generally, in fairy tales, there is an emphasis on the magical and fantastical elements of the story rather than the characters, but in her retelling, Hale foregrounds Ani's development from a voiceless, ostracized princess to a Queen who wants the best for her people and is ready to fight for it. Hale also introduces many significant female characters such as the aunt, Gilsa, Enna, and Ideca, who aid in the development of Ani's character. She gives them a significant role to play, unlike in the original where there are hardly any female characters and the plot is carried forward only by the male characters. All the action is done by the male characters, thereby making the very namesake of the story play a very passive role where everything happens to her and nothing is done by her. Dr. Nanda.S, in her paper, 'The Portrayal of Women in the Fairy Tales', examines this stereotype of women being inferior to men and says, "Fairy tales embody the ways that societies attempted to silence and oppress women making them passive... In the fairy tales, passivity is the most valued and honored attribute a woman can possess in life. It is not the female who can save herself from harm or an undesirable situation; it is the male that must save her."

The Grimm Brothers stick to this convention in almost all their writings. In the original version of "The Goose Girl", the Princess is seen as quite a pushover and as a person who doesn't do anything about the things she's not happy with, and accepts everything as her fate. Whereas in the retelling, Ani takes matters into her own hands and does not accept the injustice that was done to her. This further supports the notion that Ani is a feminist inspiration. Hale introducing more female characters and thereby giving representation to women in her writing, makes this novel feminist.

The theme of identity is present throughout the novel - specifically through Princess Ani. Hale envisions Ani as a woman who easily blends into whatever identity she is forced to take upon and makes the best use of it. The book is divided into 3 parts, which coincides with the 3 identities Ani has in the story.

In the first part she is the Crown Princess of Kildenree, who is ostracised because of her ability to speak to animals. She desperately tries to fit in and strives to meet her mother's expectations. In the second part of the book, Princess Ani is disguised as a goose girl working on the palace grounds of Bayern. This identity is the most important one of all because it is in this part of the story that Ani learns to fend for herself, gets a job and earns a living. It is during this time that Ani realises that she has an earnest desire to be Queen and help change the lives of those who deserve it. She also realises that if it had not been for her interaction with the working class of Bayern she would have been an ignorant ruler who would have been unaware of the needs of her subjects. In the third part of the book, she is identified as the Yellow Lady by the Bayerns because of her appearance and ethnicity. This identity can be seen as being born out of the positive features of her two old identities. She is now fit to be an efficient ruler as she has been trained in the royal etiquettes and also has an intimate knowledge of her kingdom. These 3 identities do not cause any internal conflict within Ani, but rather serve as milestones in the development of her character.

The establishment of the relationship between the Prince and Ani can also be viewed as breaking an anti-feminist stereotype. In the original, the Princess is betrothed to the Prince of a

neighboring kingdom. After the waiting maid successfully deceives the King and the Prince that she is the Princess, the Prince accepts her as his bride. But the moment he finds out the truth, "The young King rejoiced with all his heart when he saw her beauty and youth," of the true Princess. This portrays a very superficial way of looking at a woman; the Prince doesn't know anything about the Princess, but he is happy to marry her as she is prettier than the waiting maid. Hale, who wrote this book at a time when feminism had been established as a social movement, tries to show that a relationship needs to be based on love. In her retelling, Hale shows Ani's and the Prince of Bayern's relationship growing in an organic manner without the protocols that come with being royals, because neither of them reveal their true identities to each other. The prince agrees to marry Selia because he is bound by royal commitments and rejects Ani through a letter "I cannot love you as a man loves a woman." When the prince discovers that Ani is the real princess of Kildenree, he does not assume that she will marry him but instead asks for her consent. Ani has the liberty of making her own decision.

Ani's mother, the Queen, who wants her successor to have the gift of people-speaking, keeps Ani in isolation right from a very young age to reduce her attachment to her family and Kildenree, perhaps because she had decided that Ani would leave Kildenree one day and marry the Prince of Bayern. This is a very important difference between the original and the retelling, because in the original the Queen is portrayed as a very loving mother. In the retelling, however, the aunt is given this role as she has a more maternal relationship with Ani than the Queen herself. The aunt's character can be identified as a foil to the Queen's character because their contrasting qualities are very evident in the retelling. Hale lets her Queen character digress from the archetype of a mother and focuses on portraying her as a strong, efficient ruler. The Queen, prioritizing her responsibilities as a ruler to those of a mother, is not shown in a negative light but rather in a way her male counterparts are often represented.

Though the aunt is a minor character, she has a major impact on Ani. In fairy tales, there exists a norm of introducing a fairy godmother to fill the gap that is created by a cruel or absent mother. In this retelling, it is the aunt who helps Ani recognize her animal-speaking powers and fills the absence of her real mother.

Selia is the antagonist of the story. Right from the beginning there are hints that Selia is friends with Ani only with the intention of replacing her one day. She manipulates the guards using her people-speaking powers and brings them to her side. The fact that Selia is able to gain support by using her gifts is a reflection of our society where we have a long history of being ruled by people who are excellent orators. The truth that the power to work well with words helps people rule is what Shannon Hale has taken and woven into a fantastical element in her story.

In the second part, Shannon Hale introduces the character of Enna as a foil to Selia. Unlike Selia, Enna is a loyal friend who befriends Ani without any ulterior motive. The Forest-borns of Bayern, irrespective of gender are expected to work and support their families. The work is divided equally among the workers and Hale does not discriminate between men and women and portrays them as equals. Enna and the other workers of Bayern reflect this.

In this part, Hale also introduces 2 more maternal figures, Gilisa and Ideca, though Ideca is more of a guardian than a mother. Their reactions to learning that Ani is royalty are very different from each other. While Gilisa continues to treat Ani the same way, Ideca treats her better than before in small ways. Both women look after Ani better than her real mother even if they cannot offer the luxuries that the Queen can. They don't explicitly shower love on Ani, rather let it show through their actions.

It was not uncommon for fairy tales to depict women as weak and powerless. Therefore, it comes as no surprise that the Grimm Brothers portrayed their female characters as mere ornaments in the story. This practice was examined and challenged by feminists long before Shannon Hale. In the essay compilation, *Fairy Tales and Feminism: New Approaches*, Donald Haase says,

"In eighteenth - and - nineteenth century Germany, women writers such as Benedikte Naubert, Bettina von Arnim, and Gisela von Arnim recognized the predominantly male point of view that characterized influential fairy-tale publications, especially those by Johann Karl August Muusaus and the Brothers Grimm, and they consciously challenged these collections by creating a female perspective and by pointedly deconstructing the models of gender offered by their more widely read counterparts."

Keeping with the developments of the feminist movement, Shannon Hale gives voice and agency to all the female characters in her retelling of "The Goose Girl". She depicts her female characters as strong, capable women who don't need to depend on men. This retelling does not follow the notion of a damsel in distress needing to be rescued by a prince, rather it delivers the message that this princess saves herself.

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David and Goliath

Liz Maria Joys
II M.A.

Another peaceful dawn in the valley of Elah, without a hint of disturbance. But as dawn broke, I saw movement on the opposite side of our camp. Something tells me they'll rise up like never before.

Suddenly the trumpet blared like a roaring thunder and after forty whole days and nights, their flag is up! The war has taken an unexpected turn just when we thought victory was ours to claim. What has happened? Who has taken up the challenge? I kept watching from my tent.

Afar off, like a speck I see someone returning the armory that the king seemingly provided him with. And lo! Here he is... standing to face our hero! 'Finally some comic relief on the battlefield...' I thought and proceeded towards the entrance of my tent to get a better view. And Oh... It was a sight to behold! A boy is up against our giant! And he's screaming out something which I can't decipher. Here in our camp there's utter confusion seeing the opponents rise one by one, with all the zest and zeal that once seemed to evade them.

Should we buckle up? Should we charge against them? Without a clue of what was

transpiring, we waited expectantly for the eventual action that was imminent. Soldiers positioned closer to the two opponents ran to the camp to inform us of the events. A shepherd boy, the speck was! And he was threatening the giant with an impending defeat. We sighed with relief and slid back to our former state of repose.

But something caught my attention and beckoned me to be wary of that little boy. As I watched, he seemed to rummaged through his pouch and without delay began to swirl his sling in rapid circles. Much faster than I ever thought he could!

All of a sudden, there was a pause. Time stood still and everyone seemed oblivious of what was transpiring in the battlefield. But suddenly to our utter horror, shattering all hopes of victory, there lay our pillar of strength flat on his face!

Utter chaos spread over the camp. Totally dazed, the army began to flee in the hope of saving their lives. I watched the whole scene terrified and helplessly stumbled into my tent. Being the chief commander, I contemplated taking my own life as the only recourse against eminent surrender and death at the hands of the enemy.

But before my spirit leaves my mortal frame, here I proclaim, He is Jehovah! He is the Lord of Hosts! And it was He who helped David, the shepherd boy, to defeat with valour the army that slandered his God. And it was He that caused him to emerge a victor with the chopped head of Goliath.

I see a man approach with a spear in his hand!
I stop here and give up my life...

Cages

Diya Padmakumar

I B.A. (Shift II)

"One - It was a Thursday night when my mother found my scars. She looked startled until I told her what I was feeling. "You are just seventeen and how are you depressed already? You are too young to even feel things."

I wish I didn't come out. I wish I didn't tell her.

Two - Once, unfortunately, when I was in school and I had to wear a white skirt. I was unwell and I could barely move. In the very same evening, I noticed red patches behind my skirt and I immediately wanted to leave. I ran to my class teacher as I started shivering. She laughed, laughed and laughed.

Three - A night before my presentation, I was so prepared. I felt confident until I had to elaborate on my examples. My examples were clearly associated with my flashbacks. I had a bad breakdown in the middle of the class. It felt as though a part of me died."

Here is why people are afraid to come out. Here is the thing about people who are highly anxious. It isn't their panic attacks, it's how people react to it. Those who have high anxiety tend to be deep thinkers. They analyse well, but they can also have obsessive tendencies and are unnecessarily conscious about themselves and their surroundings. They are also empathetic. They know what it feels like to be afraid all the time and they wouldn't want anyone else going through the same. They need reassurance. Some think it's a temporary state of mind but let me tell you it necessarily doesn't have to be, every time. Some breathe in fear. Sometimes, they are afraid to get up from their bed. They feel scared almost every moment. Sometimes they tend to dissociate themselves, hence, they find it difficult to believe that they exist. When people leave or when something doesn't turn out the way they wanted it to, they wonder where they went wrong. They live in constant fear and are hard on themselves to make the ones around happy.

For those hands that tremble often, for those hearts that pound a lot, you are not the only one. You aren't fighting this alone. You should know that there are people who love you even if you don't feel like it. You make them happy. You are a good listener and the universe is in search of you. It's okay to have mental illnesses. You are more than your breakdowns. Sometimes, people can be brutal and call you things based on what you are going through. Disconnect those roots that make you feel unworthy. It isn't your fault when things don't work out well. Let me tell you, you are not your pain. We are all flawed beautifully and that evolves us into better individuals. It's okay to be hypervigilant. Sometimes your inner voices can be rude but they do not mean what they say. Remember that you have your own set of inner strengths. You are a brave soldier and you are fighting your battles well. You have fought a lot of it, you have crossed a lot of hurdles.

I See It

Ann Mary Jose
I B.A

Resentment, doubt, and pride
Stand Sentinel for this flesh,
Between you and I.
But, inside of me,
This "puff of warm vapour",
As the rationalists may call it;
"His living spirit",
As I like to believe it,
Truly cares;
Truly longs to sigh in peace
By the warmth
Of your presence---

And then I remember
In a rush of relief and gratitude
That you are less powerful
Than nothing,
Not even this flesh.
This flesh,
That drowns me in guilt

Everytime I succumb to its calls;
This flesh,
That succeeds somehow
In luring me back,
To revel again
In its realm.

That you are powerful.
Powerful enough
To break through its desires.

I remember,
The day is coming
When this flesh will be weak no longer
But as willing as this soul is
To bow down in adoration.

I see it.

vulnerable beyond repair

Madhuri V. Lalwani
II B.A.

as you tiptoe to this fragile castle of mine
applying for a togetherness i suppose
(indeed the only post available)
you are directed to the top floor
which is carefully assigned
to the emotional realm because

even logic in this building would cease
to do justice to its own
if the red didn't keep this place running
so back to you
interviews for
togetherness: room number 1089

i'm sorry we would like you to believe
 there is competition
 you sitting in a room
 full of our ideas of ideal aspirants
 (top secret you will never know:
 each and every one of them is
 overpaid to make an appearance here)
 you lay scared, nervous even
 you're unsure if you'll be rewarded
 in the ratio of conditional love
 as much as yours

you give eight rounds of interviews
 having manipulated
 your own experience in relationships
 we know your statements
 do not comply with reality
 these lies could've clearly kicked you out
 but thankfully, we live by the same

 so dear potential lover,
 and my only applicant
 by the time you're notified

 about being selected
 through subtle symbols you
 ought to understand,
 i know
 you're looking for them already
 i may have run over
 infinite alterations
 of our potential becoming
 and every step you take
 is thoroughly anticipated
 if you attempt
 any dissonance whatsoever
 these heartbreak patterns
 would cause you more harm
 because our oneness is run
 completely on my wheels
 and you're just a puppet

as you see the light flickering
 on one of the windows
 you know it indicates
 "you're selected,
 make yourself home

Baby Blueberry

Susanna Marian Correya
 III B. A.

At seven weeks, I read,
 The baby is the size
 Of a blueberry.

Baby Blueberry, I thought,
 Seems a decent-enough name
 For the murdered fetus
 That would have been
 My sibling.

At seven weeks, I read,
 Baby Blueberry,
 That the baby's heart
 Begins to beat.
 Were the pains of rejection,

Of dying,
 The first feelings
 Your new baby-heart
 Was supposed to feel?

Does it hurt you,
 Baby Blueberry,
 That our parents
 Let me have
 A birthday,
 A name
 And a face,
 But not you?
 That I was held in our mother's arms
 Whilst you were rejected to a bin?

That we pretend
I'm the first and only child?
But your blood,
Baby Blueberry,
Didn't cry out for revenge
Because you knew that
Our mother was a braveheart
Who was scared
By the man, a coward,

Who was ill-prepared.
I know,
Baby Blueberry,
That you made them realize
That I was their last chance,
A rarely-given mercy.
I must thank you, for,
Though the man decided to not keep you,
You convinced our mother to keep me.

In Company of Comfort

Revathi S.K.
I B.A. (Shift II)

She lets it all pile up,
pile up all around her,
until it takes up all space.
Catharsis waiting for sunlight
amidst the cloudy sky.
Words that are born and dead too soon,
filling up all of her,
taking up all space.
Suffocated and breathless
with no urge to clean up
wrapped up in the all too familiar.
Here comfort gives her company

and comfort restricts movement.
Not a path paved out of ignorance,
rather a patchwork of parts all aware,
but the whole refuses to take the journey.
Afraid of the new self that might take birth.
For now the mess is her haven,
change could be hell or heaven,
she'd rather not know.
As long as there is comfort.
Here comfort gives her company,
and comfort restricts movement,
she chooses it all over again.

His Voice

Surya Sureshkumar
II M.A

In the courtroom
You disrobed her
This is history.
You joined the crowd,
Questioning her chastity
And were justified.
But, there was a Kunti
Who disowned her son.

A Kaali
Who trampled Shiva to death
And this is history too.
But never was she right
And never will she be right
'Cause, it is His voice
That roared.

Vive La Shakespeare

Surya Sureshkumar
II M.A

He with his verse
Of thee, thou and thy
His sonnets did speak
Of love, lust and time

Death did he speak
Shall not fade
His Dark Lady's beauty
For a thing of beauty is a joy forever

Seasons did he speak
Of summer and winter

But his Young Man
Did stand high above them

And he who was read, the Bard of Avon
May not have made sense to him
For Shakespeare is a puzzle
Too hard to solve

But he is a great man
Who hasn't haunted anyone
For thy interpretation of him
Vive La Shakespeare

Oh My Beloved

Liya Saji
III B.A.

Oh my beloved,
you shall marry me.
For I know
no death awaits your love.
It's an exile, an eternal bliss
where there is losses, no more.

Oh my beloved,
you shall marry me.
But.....

There lies my child sleepless,
my husband in his armchair
without his wife to be caressed.
And my parents still, sit
beside the telephone
awaiting their daughter's call.

Yes, your love is ceaseless
yet it ceased all else.
You wretched envier!
What else shall I call you?
my beloved, my death.

Bonds

Mary Monika
II M.A.

We are all
Children
Stuck in Neverland
Never reaching for help
Hesitant
Never voicing our thoughts
Afraid
Never breaking free of this prison
Panicking

And yet.
We are also lost children
Making wingless flights
Across these lonely skies
All of us
Belonging to one another
With no world left behind for us
We find solace
Within each other's hopeless eyes.

Bone Frost

Mary Monika
II M.A.

It snows here
And I do not understand why
Because I know
That this place is deep within my mind
And never in my life
Had I felt the chill of a snowflake
Nor seen the world painted white.
Yet, there it was
Snow.
Every inch around me covered
Every spec is but another unique flake
And it's cold
So so cold
It's biting into me
It's seeping into my veins

Breaking my skin
Seeking my bones.
And I feel it
Ever so vividly
Tainting my lips Iris blue
Sealing my voice
Numbing my brain
Stopping my heart
Slithering down my throat
To mutilate my fragmented soul.
And as my blood begins to freeze purple
I realize that this was,
Exactly how I always did imagine
Loneliness would feel

Farewell to a Funeral Song

Krishna J. Nair
II B.A.

Hush. Shush. Silence.
Toll. Bell one. Settle in.
The last breath will be released soon.
Look closer, It's a tiny
Puff of smoke from a cigarette,
Hanging
Down
The lips.
Struck
With darkness, like an ink spill.
A body, unmoving and cold.
Like snow, on a lonely road.
Ladies and Gentlemen! Welcome
To this Funeral Song. Bell One.
Or as they call it, the passing bell.
You, sir! Show some respect! We
Are awaiting the death of this man.
Gasp. Clap. Silence.

Look at him drowning, so slowly
In misery, in glory.
Stained are his arms, his heart
Like a blotting paper in the dark.
Sucking life out of poetry, slowly.
Toll. Bell Two. All rise.
The soul departs on a new journey
To a land filled with spaces of
Blue, red and traces
Of a fading black ink,
Like a polaroid lost in time.
He'll lay here, listening to
The same song, over and over
Till it resonates with the silence
Inside the void where he breathes,
And a darkness so bright like
The night sky, spread with ashes
Like stars. Till the song silences

The voice in his head that sings
 A loud, loud voice, yelling
 Louder and louder, till the mind
 Shatters
 Like a glass
 Exposed to high frequency.
 Till they resonate and spill
 Like ink
 Running like
 A river
 Running
 To the sea.
 Join in. Welcome
 To this funeral song. Bell Two,
 Or as they call it, The Death Knell.

Tap. Thud. Silence.
 Toll. Bell three. Let's walk.
 Wear your finest shoe and
 The shiniest watch. Don't
 Forget your shades and sunscreen.
 Today, you speak for the dead

And the devil in disguise
 As we lower him to the belly
 Of a Jellyfish, six feet deep.
 Join in, Welcome
 To this funeral song. Bell three,
 Or as they call it, The Lynch Bell.

As his spirit walks away
 Leaving a bag of cells smeared
 With scars, marks and tattoos
 As it all withers down with time
 As he descends the stairway to hell
 The ink and blood, it'll remind the world
 Of innocence and grief, and the funeral
 song.

So farewell! Old soul. From skies to soil
 We'll leave this land bare for
 Your wandering soul and some
 Tunes for the road, until
 You spin and dance and find
 Your lonely way back home.

Death of the Poet / Poem

Madhuri Lalwani and Krishna J Nair
 II B.A.

this verse you intend to breathe right now
 is suffocating
 behind the bars language has become
 my master has been announced dead
 and i tremble in a world i don't recognize
 how i wish all you're reading now would help
 you understand all of me
 but every attempt i'm afraid
 is your way of looking at my wonder
 you probably awe at my breathlessness
 and i, devoid of the master
 have no place here

i, tied together by words
 have no freedom to leave

And I, the master
 Stay wide awake,
 Reeking the odour of the dead.
 For the author in me,
 Has announced the farewell.
 Here I stay, lost. Looking,
 At my creation,
 That murdered me
 When all I wanted was

Another verse and another song
But that just cannot be.
For my death fuels
Her sparkness.
For my death
Speaks her brightness.

how disappointing
of you to have
made me your entire universe
till i do you favours
of my completion
having stripped myself bare
over and over again
to let you make of me
what your petty language allows
and you just discard me
on paper
promising an eternity so insignificant
yet you gain a paycheck
and the pathway for your next prey
how many more traitors
till you stop
how much crime will
this land witness

till you really fall?

Now with my tragedy
I stand here without a centre.
My universe collapsing
Like drops of purple
Mixed in vain.
And with the purple,
Some meaningless cheques.
And I look at my red,
Tainted hands, reeking
Of ink and blood. Of
All the murders I committed
To find the perfect verse.
And the perfect verse
Took the nib to my neck
Stabbed me, till I
Sang a silent song.
I tie my hands to my chest
Forbidding myself to
Write a free verse.
The murders I have committed
And the guilt that I carry
Is enough to bury me
Like Antigone's brother.
