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Editor-in-chief

Dr. Vinita Mathew

Editors

Khuslen Anthony David, TYBA
Emelda Kripalani, SYBA
Fiza Machiwala, SYBA
Aashita Singh, FYBA
Sara Hoshing, FYBA
Debojit Bhattacharjee, FYBA

Magazine design

Reven Mhadgut, SYMA

Cover designs

Twisha Sarit, SYJC

The EDITORIAL NOTE

"Literature does not merely reflect the world — it remakes it".

With this belief at heart, here we are with our annual literary kaleidoscope! This year's edition, crafted with passion and brainstorming sessions by the student edit team, dives into some truly fascinating corners of the literary, pop culture and artistic world. Literature, at its core, is not confined to our bookshelves or lecture halls. It is lived, felt, and experienced through compelling themes and art, in all its forms. Together, literature and art do not merely enhance life, they give it texture, colour, and voice and transcends cultures across time and space. Every issue of The Literati has featured the Nobel Prize Winner for Literature of the year, and so we delve into the captivating work of Han Kang, the Korean Nobel laureate, whose narratives resonate with profound human experiences. Speaking of resonance, colour has played an important part in our day-to- day culture for example, Operation Sindoor carried in itself the symbolic weight of a single colour. Our article on "The Colour Red in Literature" paints a vibrant picture, exploring its multifaceted meanings, from passion and rebellion to danger and sacrifice, across different literary landscapes.

Unearthing hidden histories, we journey to China to discover Nüshu, a secret language whispered and woven by Chinese women for centuries. This incredible testament to female solidarity and ingenuity offers a unique perspective on communication and cultural preservation, underscoring that women have always had parallel 'Herstory'.
We also acknowledge the complex interplay between madness and creativity through the lives of artists who exemplify that moments of psychological turmoil can catalyse profound artistic expression. Shifting gears, we amplify the vibrant voice of Rapper

The EDITORIAL NOTE

Hanumankind, a contemporary artist whose lyrics and rhythm pulse with the energy of our times. Discover the power of music as a form of storytelling and social commentary. From the skies of symbolism, our gaze also turns to "The Role of Black Birds in Films and Literature" which reflects the enduring presence of symbols in literature and how their meanings shift across contexts. These often enigmatic creatures soar through narratives, carrying omens, representing freedom, or embodying darker forces. Prepare to see them in a new light!

Finally, we shine a light on Lost Women Characters in Fairy Tales. Beyond the familiar heroines, we uncover the silenced voices and untold stories of the women who often fade into the background, prompting us to question the narratives we've inherited.
Each piece engaged with presents its distinct voice, rhythm and is a fragment of thought and expression offering insight into the evolving landscape of literature and culture. Through meticulous editing, these narratives have been refined to enhance the depth, ensuring that each piece resonates with you, our readers. Being a part of the edit team has been both an intimidating and rewarding experience which proved that editing is not merely a matter of polishing sentences, but of discerning what a piece seeks to convey and enabling it to do so with greater clarity and precision. We appreciate the initiative and teamwork that the student edit team has shown to make the fifth edition of The Literati possible.

We hope these pages spark conversations, challenge assumptions, ignite imaginations, and perhaps even lead you down new paths of discovery. Happy reading!

V

The Literati

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The Role of Black Birds in Literature



The role of Black Birds in Literature

Debojit Bhattacharjee
SYBA

The inclusion of crows in Danny Boyle's cult classic 28 Days Later reflects their traditional role as harbingers of doom. In one notable scene, a crow picking at a corpse becomes a vector for spreading the virus, underscoring the bird's association with death and foreboding. The upcoming release of 28 Years Later (a sequel), slated for June 2025, renews interest in this celebrated franchise. The official trailer, released in December 2024, showcases humanity's continued struggle with the undead, bringing this eerie imagery back into public consciousness. This renewed focus highlights how motifs like the crow and other black-coloured birds persist across all media as powerful carriers of thematic weight. The

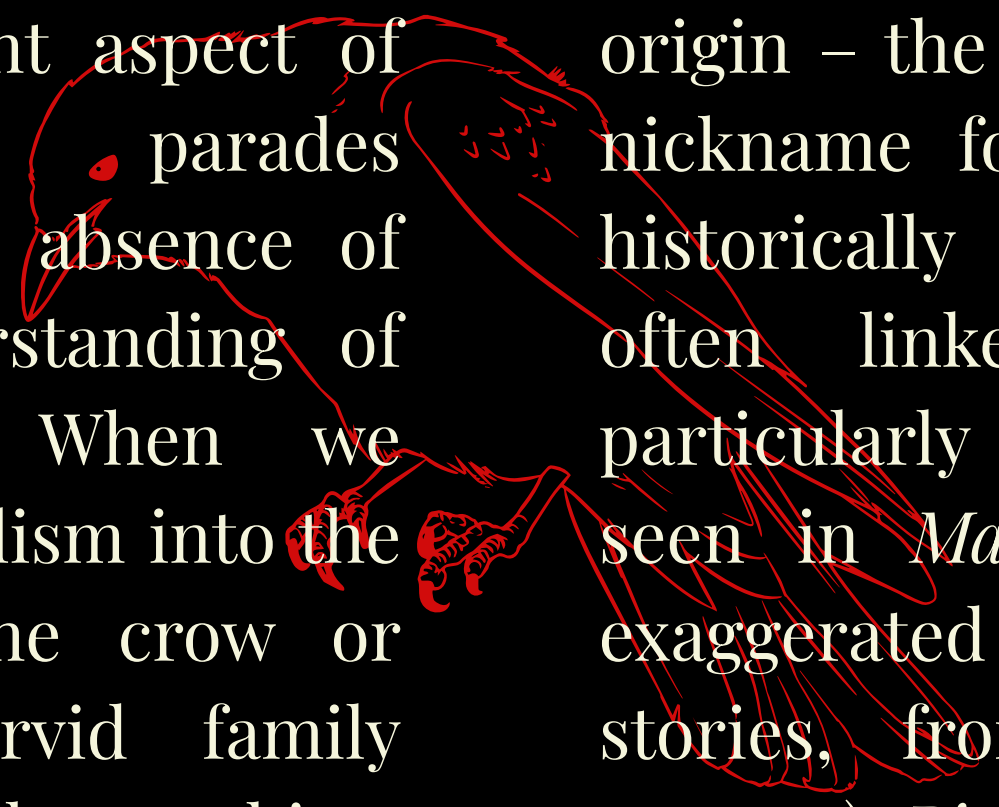


Source: Wikimedia

aforementioned example is evidence of the recurring depiction of black-coloured birds in literature as omens of misfortune or agents of transformative events. How and when it all began propagating in literature and spilling into cinema is a subject of interesting conjecture.

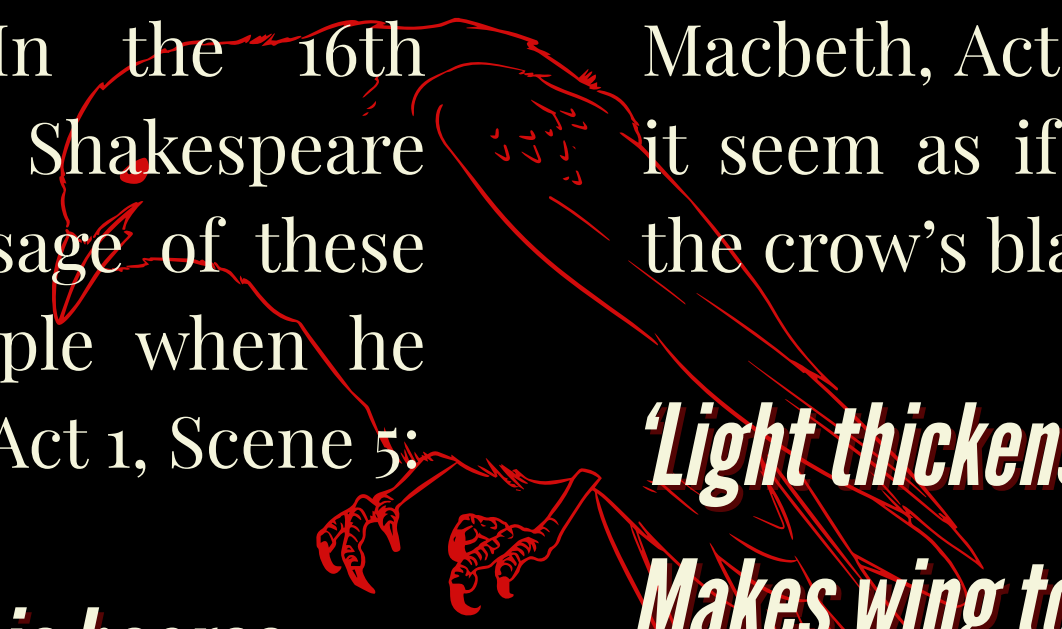
In occidental culture, where an intensely cold climate prevails, dark shades may connect to gloomy weather, aggravating negative moods. On similar lines, a connection may also be drawn to the night, where there is darkness and uncertainty, and humans have had it in their nature to fear things that they cannot perceive or understand due to the inherent aspect of insecurity that parades alongside with the absence of control and understanding of something dark. When we transfer this symbolism into the world of birds, the crow or raven of the corvid family becomes a popular subject mainly because of their colour and nature. The fact that these birds are natural scavengers further supports this idea, thus earning their status in popular culture, folklore, and literature.

The word *crow* originates from the Old English word *crawe*, which is held to be imitative of the bird's cry (onomatopoeia). In Old Saxon, the word for *crow* was *kraia*, Dutch *kraai*, Old High German *chraja*, and in German *Kräke*. In the same way, the word raven may have originated from late Old English *ræfen* or *refen*, undergoing a similar etymological journey. The word *magpie* has a more complex origin – the first part, *Mag*, is a nickname for Margaret, which historically referred to traits often linked with women, particularly 'idle chattering' (as seen in *Magge tales*, meaning exaggerated or nonsensical stories, from the early 15th century). *Pies* were also linked to chatter in Middle English, so the term *pie* came to describe a gossip or tattler and later, a 'sly person' or 'informer' by the late 14th century. Finally, the term *blackbird* emerged in the late 15th century and was used as a surname in the late 13th century, combining *black* and *bird*.



Initially, it referred to a large species of European thrush whose male is entirely black, and later came to describe similar birds in the New World.

In the 6th century BCE, Aesop's and Jataka fables, crows were shown as evolved, intelligent creatures. However, the first printed version of such stories came in 1484. In the 16th century Shakespeare popularised the usage of these symbols for example when he wrote in Macbeth, Act 1, Scene 5:



'The raven himself is hoarse
That croaks the fatal entrance of Duncan
Under my battlements'

Right before Duncan enters Macbeth's castle, what happens next is history but, the raven's hoarse call almost seems to foreshadow Duncan's brutal murder at the hands of one whom he respected and treated as his own.

This tendency to employ bird symbolism persists in Shakespeare's works. Another instance of the same is when Shakespeare uses the crow to signal the coming of the night and thus of darker times in Macbeth, Act 3, Scene 2, making it seem as if night is riding on the crow's black wings:

'Light thickens; and the crow
Makes wing to the rooky wood:
Good things of day begin to droop and drowse;
While night's black agents to their preys do rouse'

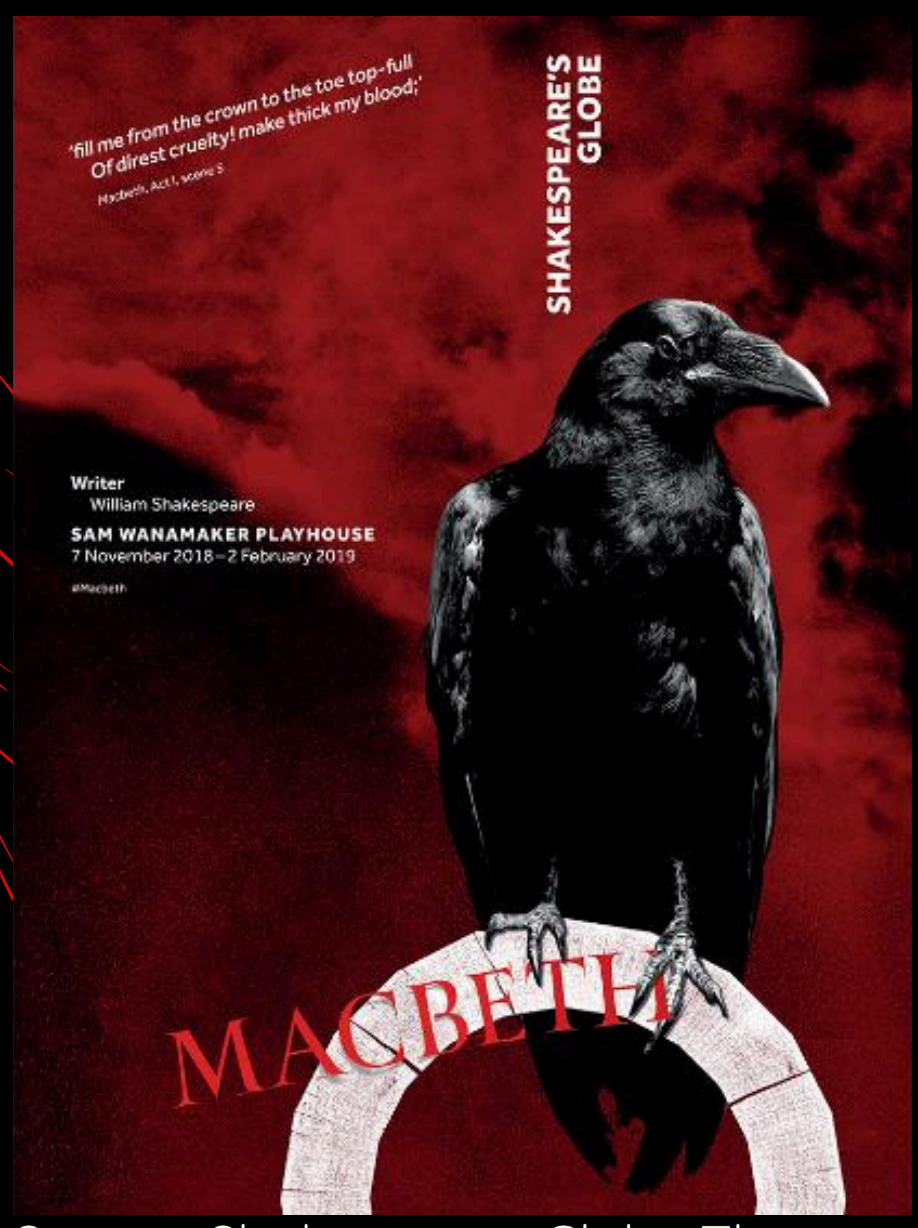
In the same play, there is another notable instance of such bird-related symbolism, Macbeth's monologue:

‘Augurs and understood relations have
By maggot pies and choughs and rooks brought forth
The secret'st man of blood.’

Here, Macbeth seems to be referring to ancient practices of divination or augury and interpreting omens. These signs, observed in birds such as magpies, jackdaws, and rooks, were believed to reveal hidden truths, including identifying murderers or wrongdoers. He fears that his crimes will be uncovered by some mysterious force as represented by the magpies, whom he calls maggot-pies.

Even then, Shakespeare's plays have myriad more references to birds, from *King Lear* to *Hamlet*. For instance, *Hamlet* rephrases a line from the revenge tragedy,

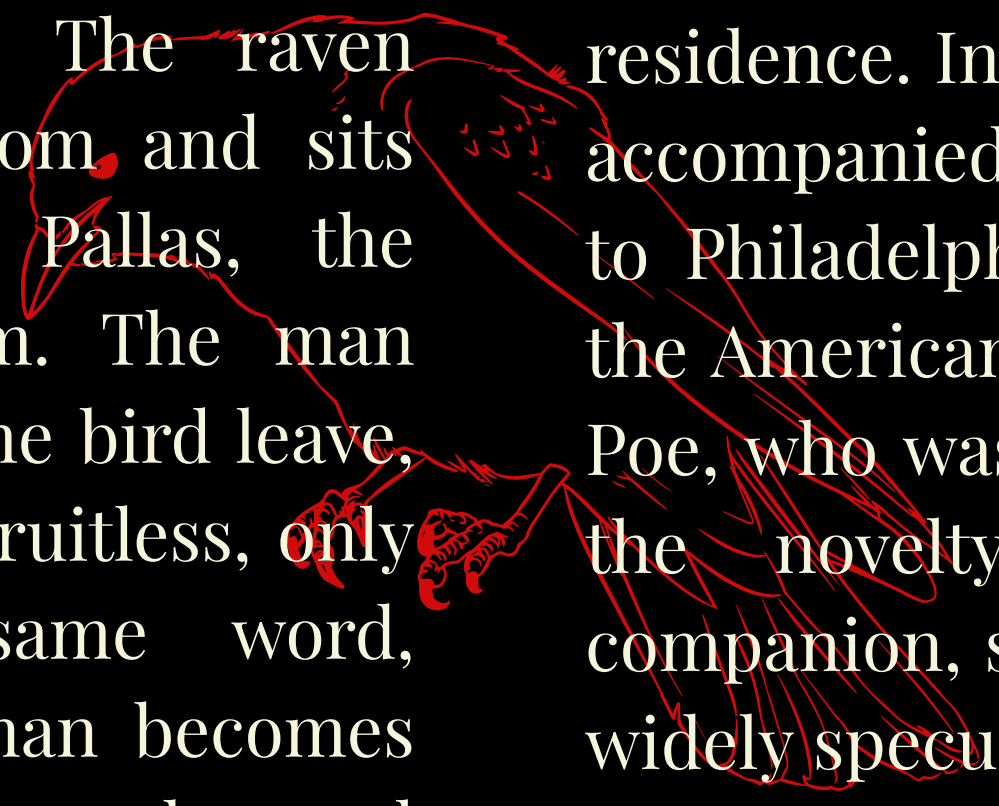
The True Tragedy of Richard III: **‘The screeching raven sits croaking for revenge’** into **‘the croaking raven doth bellow for revenge'** to retain the symbolic role of the raven as an ambassador for revenge and other dark deeds.



Source: Shakespeare Globe Theatre

Literature is replete with instances of poets and writers who have used such dark coloured birds to add dimensions to their writing. The master of suspense, Edgar Allan

Poe, in ‘The Raven,’ builds dread and unease from the first line. The speaker or poet is sitting in his chamber, trying to distract himself from the pain of losing a loved one, when he hears a tapping at the door. He opens it to find a raven standing on the threshold. The bird only says ‘Nevermore,’ but its voice and gaze are so mournful that the man is unnerved. The raven comes into the room and sits upon a bust of Pallas, the goddess of wisdom. The man attempts to make the bird leave, but his efforts are fruitless, only met with the same word, ‘Nevermore.’ The man becomes increasingly frustrated and fearful; here, the raven unfurls its true form as a more sinister symbol. It embodies death and grief that refuses to leave or dissipate. It seems to foreshadow the narrator’s descent into madness. It may be interesting to note that the very same raven from this famous poem may also have appeared earlier in Dickens’ fifth novel Barnaby Rudge: A Tale of the Riots of Eighty, as ‘Grip.’ Now, ‘Grip’ was quite literally a part of the Dickens household; in fact, ‘Grip’ was his favourite companion from an assortment of other pets. Over the years, three ravens (all of whom were named Grip) lived at Dickens’ residence. In 1842, the real ‘Grip’ accompanied Dickens on a trip to Philadelphia where they met the American writer Edgar Allan Poe, who was quite intrigued by the novelty of his unique companion, so much so that it is widely speculated that this raven was indeed the inspiration for Poe’s famous poem ‘The Raven.’



In Emily Dickinson’s ‘A Charm Invests a Face,’ the poetess masterfully intertwines the allure of beauty with the elusive charm of hidden depths. Dickinson writes:

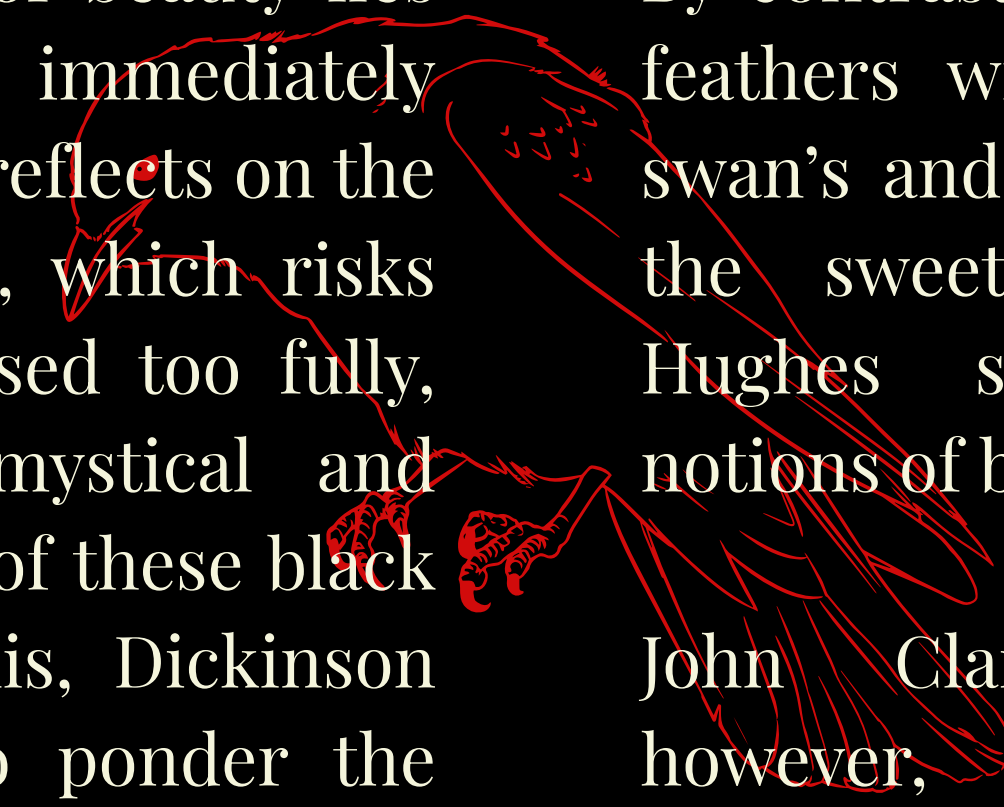
‘A Charm invests a face
Imperfectly beheld–
The Lady date not lift her Veil
For fear it be dispelled–’

By comparing a captivating face to the enigmatic nature of a crow, Dickinson suggests that the true essence of beauty lies beyond what is immediately visible. The poem reflects on the fragility of charm, which risks dissolving if exposed too fully, much like the mystical and mysterious allure of these black birds. Through this, Dickinson invites readers to ponder the unseen dimensions of beauty and the value of mystery.

Similarly, Ted Hughes, renowned for his visceral and elemental poetry, offers a darker and more intense portrayal of the crow in ‘Crow Blacker Than Ever.’ Hughes begins with striking imagery:

‘Crow blacker than ever
When the first bird appeared
His feathers were more beautiful
Than the breast of a swan.’

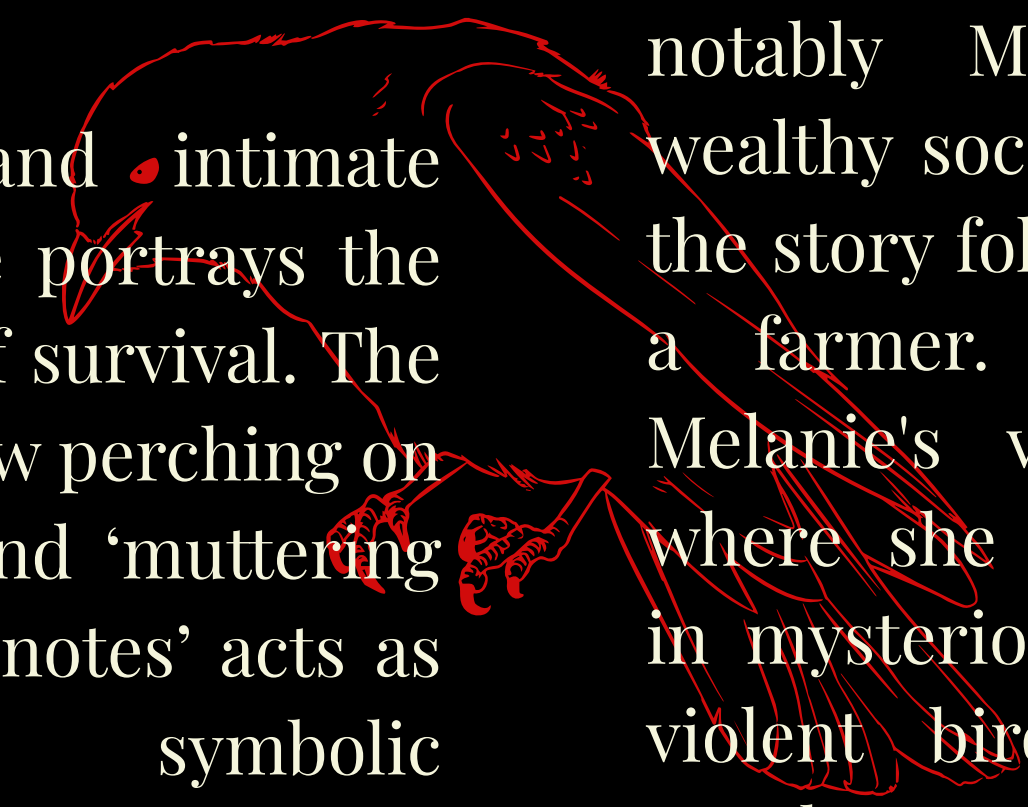
Here, Hughes presents the crow as a paradoxical figure—dark yet beautiful, primal yet graceful. By contrasting the crow’s black feathers with the purity of a swan’s and its harsh song with the sweetness of a lark’s, Hughes subverts traditional notions of beauty and purity.



John Clare’s ‘The Crow,’ however, takes a different approach; he emphasises the crow’s resilience amid the harshness of winter. Clare writes:

‘When winter nights return and from the north
Blows o'er the bleak hill-top the crowing wind,
With eager speed the crow to shelter hies
Unto his leafless haunt.’

Through vivid and intimate observation, Clare portrays the crow as a figure of survival. The imagery of the crow perching on the ‘dark pines’ and ‘muttering o’er his cheerless notes’ acts as a sort of symbolic representation of the bird’s quiet resilience and its ability to remain unfazed and unchanged in the face of winter, which again is symbolic.



This border between the worlds of literature and cinema is rather porous since many works that include such symbolism and motifs have been adapted into films and series. Some well-known examples would be Hitchcock's iconic film ‘***The Birds*** (1963)’, loosely inspired by du Maurier’s novella, it shifts the setting to Bodega Bay, California, from the novella’s proposed exposition of post-war rural England and introduces new characters, notably Melanie Daniels, a wealthy socialite, in the novella the story followed Nat Hocken—a farmer. The film follows Melanie's visit to the town, where she becomes entangled in mysterious and increasingly violent bird attacks. As the attacks escalate, the townspeople are left to face the terror and destruction without explanation or resolution. Hitchcock transforms these creatures into harbingers of chaos and terror (a recurring theme in popular media and literature), with the crows being the vanguard of nature's charge



Alfred Hitchcock: ***The Birds***

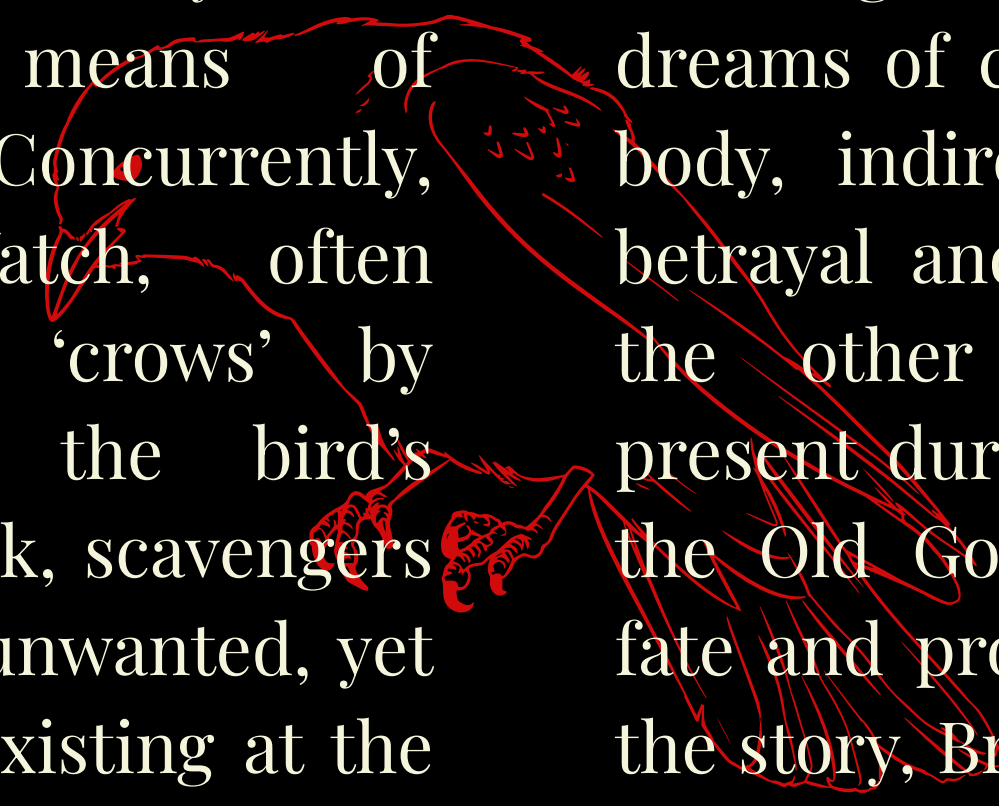
against humanity. In the Novella, ‘Crows’ are part of the larger bird population that becomes hostile, contributing to the overarching theme of nature turning on humanity. They symbolize collective danger and the unpredictability of the natural world. Though crows are not singled out in du Maurier’s story, their ominous presence aligns with the story’s tone of dread and suspense. In contrast, in Hitchcock’s movie, the crows play a more prominent visual and thematic role. They are depicted as menacing, organized attackers, embodying malice, and are virtually given the ability to scheme. One iconic scene shows crows silently gathering in a jungle gym as children sing innocently nearby. It leaves an indelible impression long after the film is over.

A more popular but similar instance would be in A Song of Ice and Fire by George R.R. Martin, which was later serialised and made into the popular HBO show Game of Thrones. In both the series and the novel, ‘crows’ and ‘ravens’ work to paint before us an exposition, adding thematic credibility and resonance. As literal entities, ravens are



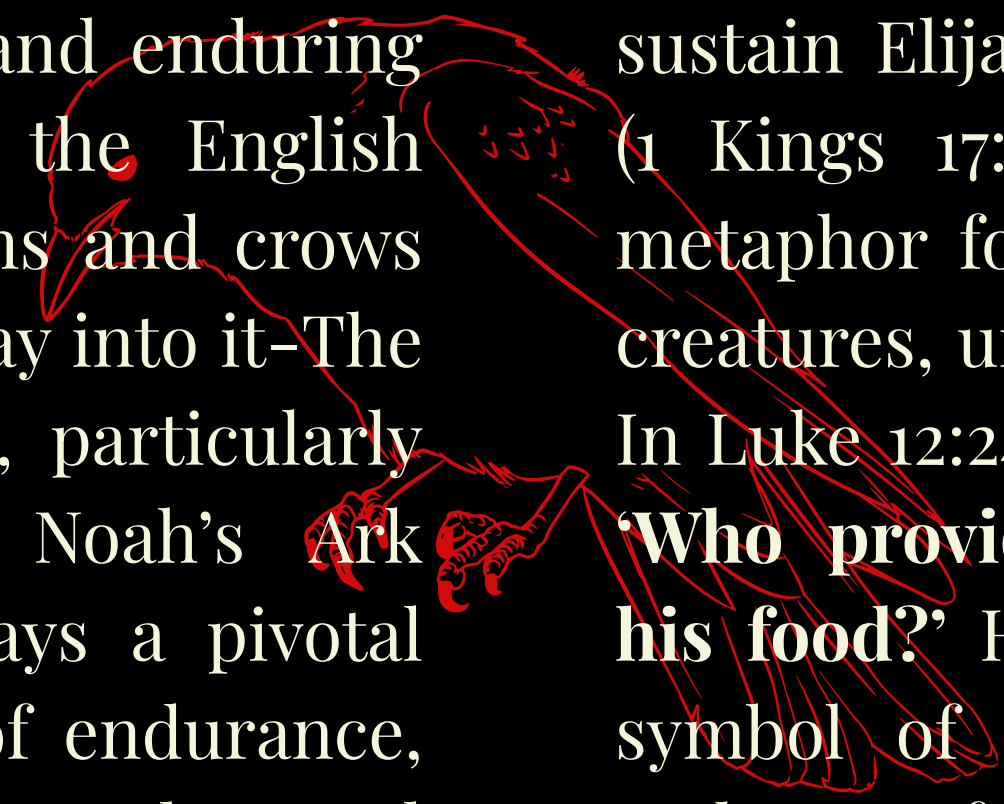
Source: Aves Noir

trained to carry messages across the Seven Kingdoms, they act as the primary means of communication. Concurrently, the Night's Watch, often derisively called 'crows' by outsiders, adopt the bird's image: clad in black, scavengers made of society's unwanted, yet vigilant sentinels existing at the edge of civilisation.



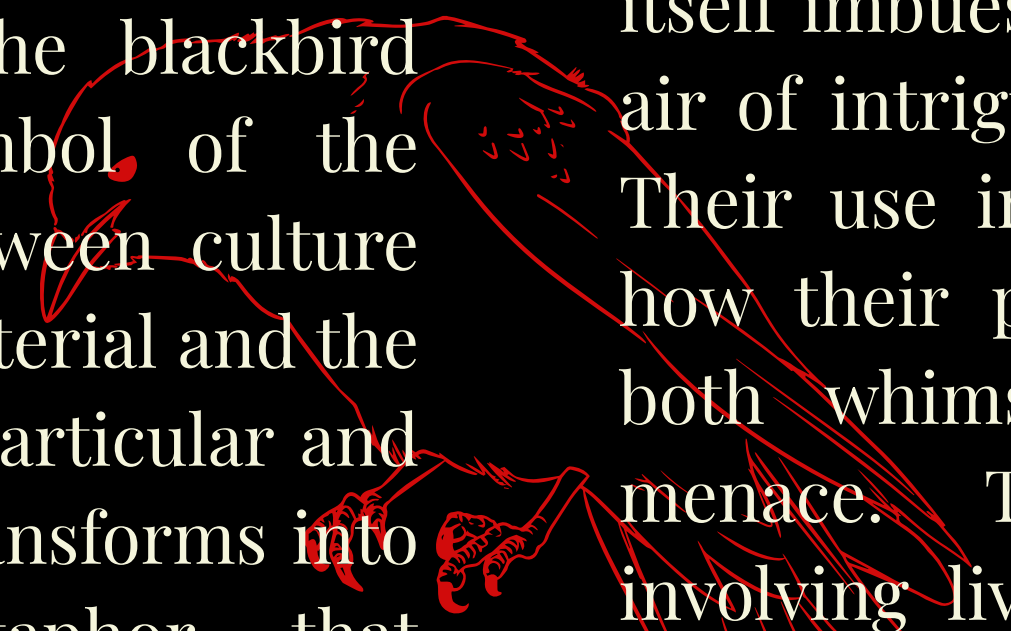
Symbolically, crows and ravens are often associated with death, foreboding, and the supernatural. They appear as omens, lingering on battlefields or visions, once again highlighting their connection to mortality and the mystical. In *A* **Storm of Swords** (the third book of George R.R Martin), Jon Snow dreams of crows pecking at his body, indirectly foreshadowing betrayal and death. Ravens, on the other hand, are often present during scenes involving the Old Gods, linking them to fate and prophecy. Further into the story, Bran Stark is given the ability to connect to crows and ravens; this becomes central to his transformation into an omniscient character, embodying the themes of knowledge, memory, and insight, and also allows the story to progress as he essentially guides the narrative with his newfound knowledge. Thus, it

could be said that these birds serve as more than mere extensions of his warging abilities—they are symbolic conduits for his evolving role as the all-seeing Three-Eyed Raven, who is the custodian of ancient knowledge and the collective memory of the world. The ***King James Bible***, first published in 1611, is one of the most widely read and enduring literary works in the English language yet, ravens and crows have found their way into it-The raven in the Bible, particularly in the story of Noah's Ark (Genesis 8:6-7), plays a pivotal role as a symbol of endurance, divine providence, and moral duality, with profound influence on literature and culture. After the flood waters subside, Noah sends a raven to scout for dry land. Unlike the dove that later returns with an olive branch, the raven went to and fro' and did not return, symbolising freedom, restlessness, perhaps even temptation. Considered unclean in Levitical law (Leviticus 11:15), the raven is often contrasted with the dove, representing purity and peace, yet its role in God's plan reinforces the idea that the pure and impure have divine purpose. Beyond Noah's story, the raven is tied to divine providence, as seen when ravens sustain Elijah in the wilderness (1 Kings 17:4-6). It becomes a metaphor for God's care for all creatures, unclean or otherwise. In Luke 12:24 and Job 38:41 asks, '**Who provideth for the raven his food?**' Here, the raven is a symbol of God's omnipotence and care for all living beings. These biblical associations influenced English literature, where the raven is frequently depicted as a harbinger of mystery, doom, or supernatural intervention. Continuing with the biblical themes, Milton in his epic *Paradise Lost*, describes Satan using dark and bird-like



imagery. Though not a black bird, the connection to darkness and flight draws symbolic parallels to ravens and crows, associated with unholy or unclean beings.

As for black birds, they commonly represent a mindset. For example, in Wallace Stevens' poem 'Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Blackbird,' the blackbird serves as a symbol of the commonalities between culture and nature, the material and the abstract, and the particular and the universal. It transforms into a dynamic metaphor that evolves as the poem unravels. In one fragment of the poem the poet gives us glimpses of winter landscapes (cantos I, VI, and XIII) and uses the blackbird's movement to define a boundary — the limit of what can be seen, known, or understood thus transforming a geometrical world into something metaphysical:



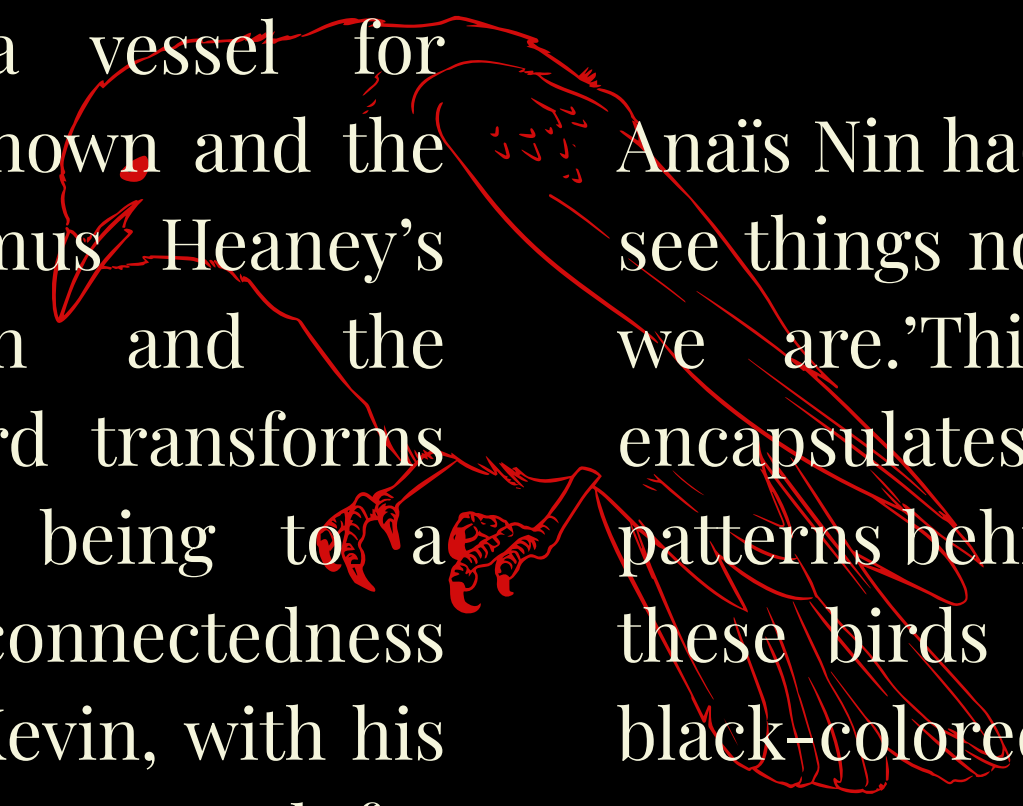
'It marked the edge
Of one of many circles.'

In the nursery rhyme **'Sing a Song of Sixpence,'** blackbirds symbolised numerous things: the passage of time (24 hours a day), a reference to religious choirs, or even a pirate's coded recruitment message. The work itself imbues blackbirds with an air of intrigue and adaptability. Their use in the rhyme shows how their presence can evoke both whimsy and a hint of menace. The interpretation involving live birds baked into pies for entertainment highlights their historical use as both a literal and symbolic spectacle.

In the autobiographical children's novel **'Little Town on the Prairie,'** blackbirds shift from symbolic to literal pests, threatening the survival of the Ingalls family by devouring

crops. This reflects their real-world impact as opportunistic feeders that can bring chaos to agricultural efforts. Yet, even here, the family finds a way to turn loss into gain, baking them into a pie—a practical, darkly humorous example of making the best out of a bad situation.

The blackbird in poetry and song often becomes a vessel for exploring the unknown and the spiritual. In Seamus Heaney's poem 'St Kevin and the Blackbird,' the bird transforms from a physical being to a symbol of interconnectedness and sacrifice. St. Kevin, with his hand outstretched as a perch for the nesting bird, embodies the ultimate act of devotion (a surrender of the self to sustain life). The blackbird here bridges human experience to the natural and eternal while simultaneously tinkering with themes of selflessness and endurance.



The Beatles' song '**Blackbird**,' with its sparse, melancholic melody, carries a different yet resonant weight. Written during the civil rights movement, the song portrays the blackbird as a symbol of freedom and resilience. Its call to 'take these broken wings and learn to fly' speaks to individuals for collective liberation.

Anaïs Nin had once said, 'that we see things not as they are but as we are.'This quote perfectly encapsulates and sums up the patterns behind our treatment of these birds in literature. These black-colored birds (blackbirds, crows, ravens, or other winged creatures of similar hue) act as powerful and universal symbols that evoke a wide range of human experiences and emotions by drawing parallels between abstract and physical elements in a narrative or story. Their physiology and ethology often associate them with

themes of mystery, death, and the unknown. Yet, their symbolism is not limited to these connotations. Thus, it becomes a commonly employed symbol by writers across timelines.



déjà vu

Has anyone else written this before?

Is this very piece of writing a copy? Is this too generic?

Is this too unnecessary?

The guilt drowns you, the guilt of being mediocre, words like special

never put on you

What an oddity it is

to write something

That may be of no worth

written uncountable times

to create something

your own

to own something

you sow

is originality a lie?

Or is commonality

a truth?

~Swabhiman Rathore, SYBA



"Hell is Other People: Literary Depictions of Damnation and Despair"

Hell is Other People

Anaya Karnik

TYBA

When the Irish musician Hozier said, *'Heaven and Hell are words to me,'* he spoke with conviction as the woman for whom he wrote the song was his ultimate choice between joy and despair. As a matter of fact, can Heaven and Hell be truly reduced to mere words? These terms often prompt questions such as: *What do Heaven and Hell look like? How are they described?* Heaven is typically imagined as a serene and idyllic realm, while depictions of Hell are often met with scepticism and trepidation. As popular belief suggests, is Hell a place with walls engulfed in flames? Or does it entirely transcend what humans can fathom? Over the years, artists, poets, and writers have explored the concept of Hell in their works. From Milton to Sartre, literature has offered diverse interpretations of this enigmatic notion. The evolving portrayal of Hell raises thought-provoking questions about its nature and what it symbolises. If these questions have piqued your interest, the following discussion seeks to explore them in greater depth.

It appears that the concept of Hell came into existence as early as the 2nd century, these depictions can be found in Greek and Jewish ideologies. Our modern idea of hell is influenced not only by religious and theological views but also by the cultural landscape. However, the concept of a place where the 'evil' or the 'wicked' are sent to deal with the consequences of their iniquitous actions has evolved. In the medieval era for example, some scholars believed

Gustave Doré:



Dante and Virgil beset by Demons on their passage through the eight circle of Hell

that hell was an intermediate state where some souls would be purified and some would be annihilated.

In the 14th century, Dante Alighieri composed his seminal work, *The Divine Comedy*. The first part of this epic, *Inferno*, presents one of the earliest and most vivid literary depictions of Hell. Guided by the Roman poet Virgil, Dante describes Hell as a vast, descending structure located at the core of the Earth. It is organized into nine concentric circles, each designated for specific categories of sin, with punishments that increase in severity according to the gravity and immorality of the transgression. This portrayal of Hell profoundly influenced the religious and cultural beliefs at the time. By providing a detailed and imaginative vision of divine justice, Dante's *Inferno* contributed significantly to shaping medieval notions of sin, punishment, and the afterlife.

Medieval literature commonly depicted hell as a grotesque space teeming with flames. Yet, towards the end of the 14th century, another significant vision of hell is seen in William Langland's *Piers Plowman*.

Here, he primarily talks about the consequences of sin rather than punishment. His vision of hell is an idea consisting of estrangement from God's love and divine justice. According to *Piers Plowman,* hell is a theological and intellectual dimension in which sin deprives people of God's grace. It is inextricably linked to moral failings, social decay, human choices and spiritual blindness.

Leaping to the 17th century, Milton's *Paradise Lost,* one of the most iconic texts of all time, profoundly impacted how the idea of hell was perceived. It is one of the first instances in literature where Hell is illustrated in an existential domain. He described hell as a 'dungeon horrible' with flames that provide no light but rather 'darkness visible'. The paradox of 'darkness visible' suggests a place where fire burns without illumination, symbolising hopelessness and confusion. Despite it being described as a place of misery, Hell becomes Satan's kingdom. The capital Pandemonium is built by the fallen angels as a perverse imitation of Heaven. Milton portrayed hell as both a place of torment and a state of mind:

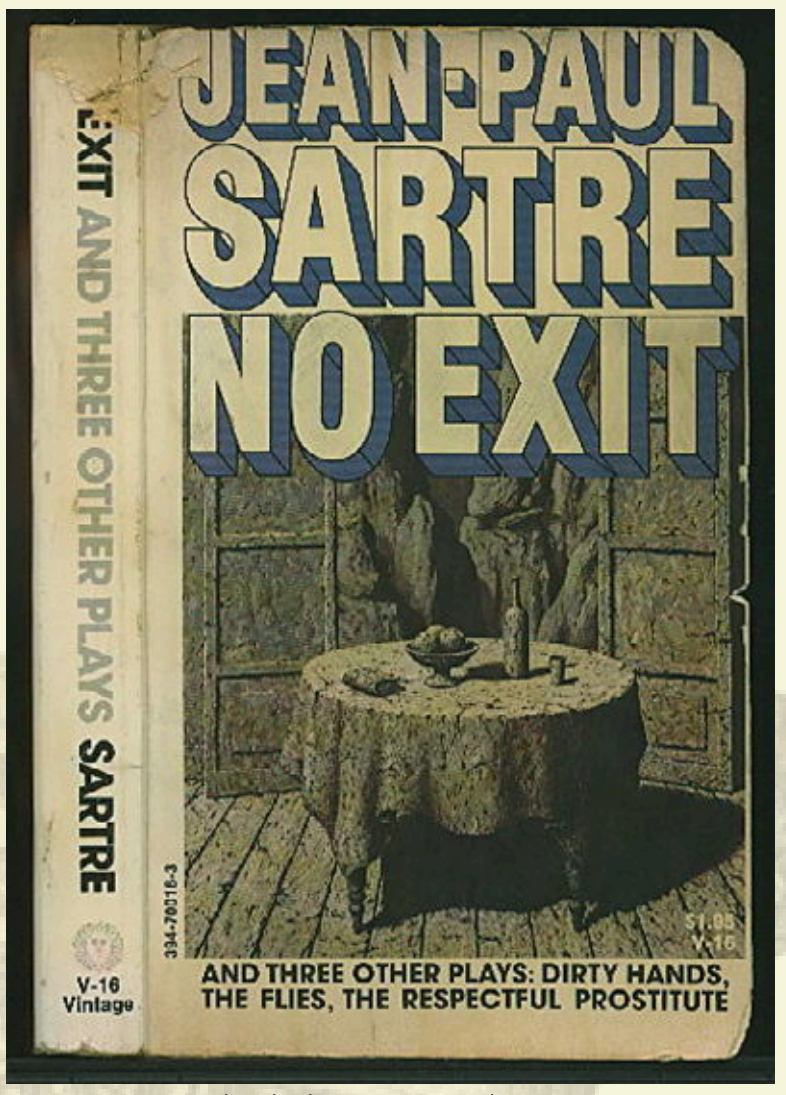
'*The mind is its own place, and in itself can make a Heaven of Hell, a Hell of Heaven.*'



Gustave Doré: ***Paradise Lost***

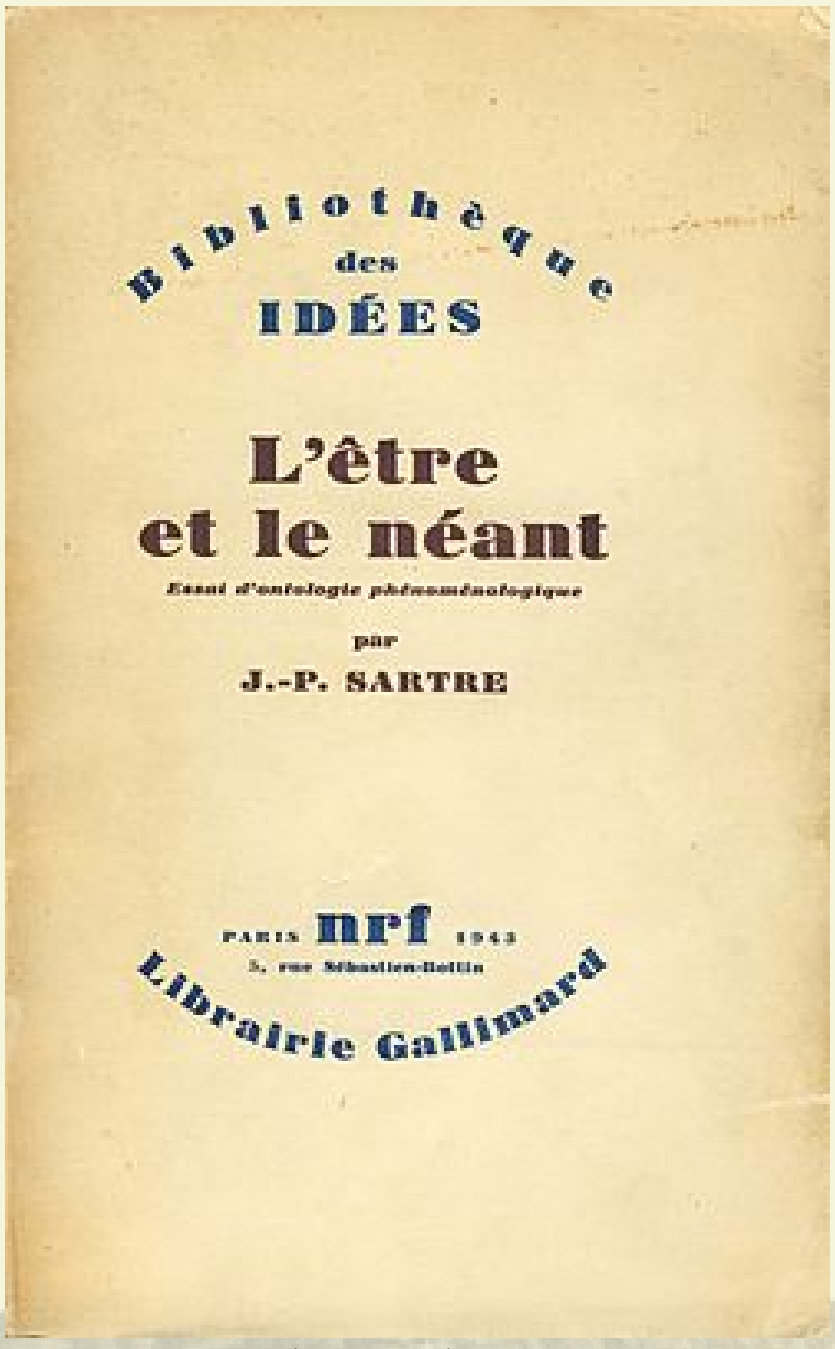
Gustave Doré:

This suggests that Hell is not just a physical location but also a psychological state of despair and defiance. That brings us to the 20th century, where one of the most significant mentions of Hell can be seen in Jean Paul Satre's play *No Exit*. It is a one-act existentialist play that follows three deceased characters, Garcin, Inez, and Estelle, who are trapped together in a single room in Hell. Through their interactions, Sartre explores themes of self-deception, bad faith, and the idea that we are defined by how others see us. The French play portrays an existentialist idea of hell, 'L'enfer, c'est les autres,' which translates to Hell is other people. It is often misinterpreted as people are awful, but Satre did not mean it in a misanthropic way. He implied that our self-perception is constantly shaped and sometimes tormented by how others see us. We become trapped in the gaze and judgment of others, making true freedom difficult. Sartre infers that our true suffering comes from being unable to escape the judgment of others.



Source: biblio.co.uk


Source: The Ethics Centre



Source: Wikimedia


Snowglobe Theatre: ***No Exit***

However, what is the ulterior rationale behind listing various instances of literature that describe Hell? The point is that through the study of these texts, we come closer to the actual understanding of 'Hell is other people.' As mentioned earlier, Sartre's line is perceived in an extremely pessimistic way. Jean Paul Sartre was not a misanthrope, which can be proved if one delves further into his philosophy. In his book *Being and Nothingness,* Sartre presents a dismal image of interpersonal relationships. According to him, the only thing that truly counts in relationships is freedom, which is constantly fought for. This tension results from either treating others like objects, which diminishes their freedom, or letting them treat us like objects, which diminishes ours. Meeting someone else inevitably leads to a struggle for control since, in either case, someone's freedom is in danger.

Now, if we look at one of the examples above, we are reminded of Satan when it comes to the fight for dominance. In *Paradise Lost*, Satan's rebellion against God is fueled by his desire for absolute autonomy. Like Sartre's characters, he refuses to be defined or controlled by another's authority. His famous declaration, *'Better to reign in Hell than serve in Heaven',* echoes Sartre's existentialist themes, freedom is the ultimate value even if it comes at the cost of suffering. Milton's Satan and Sartre both present freedom as a two-edged sword that is at the same time paramount and dangerous to pursue. It results in existential anguish for Sartre and self-destruction for Satan. At first, Satan frames his rebellion as a triumph of self-determination, he sees Hell as a place where he is at least his own master. He refuses to be an object under God's authority, much like Sartre's characters who reject being defined by others.

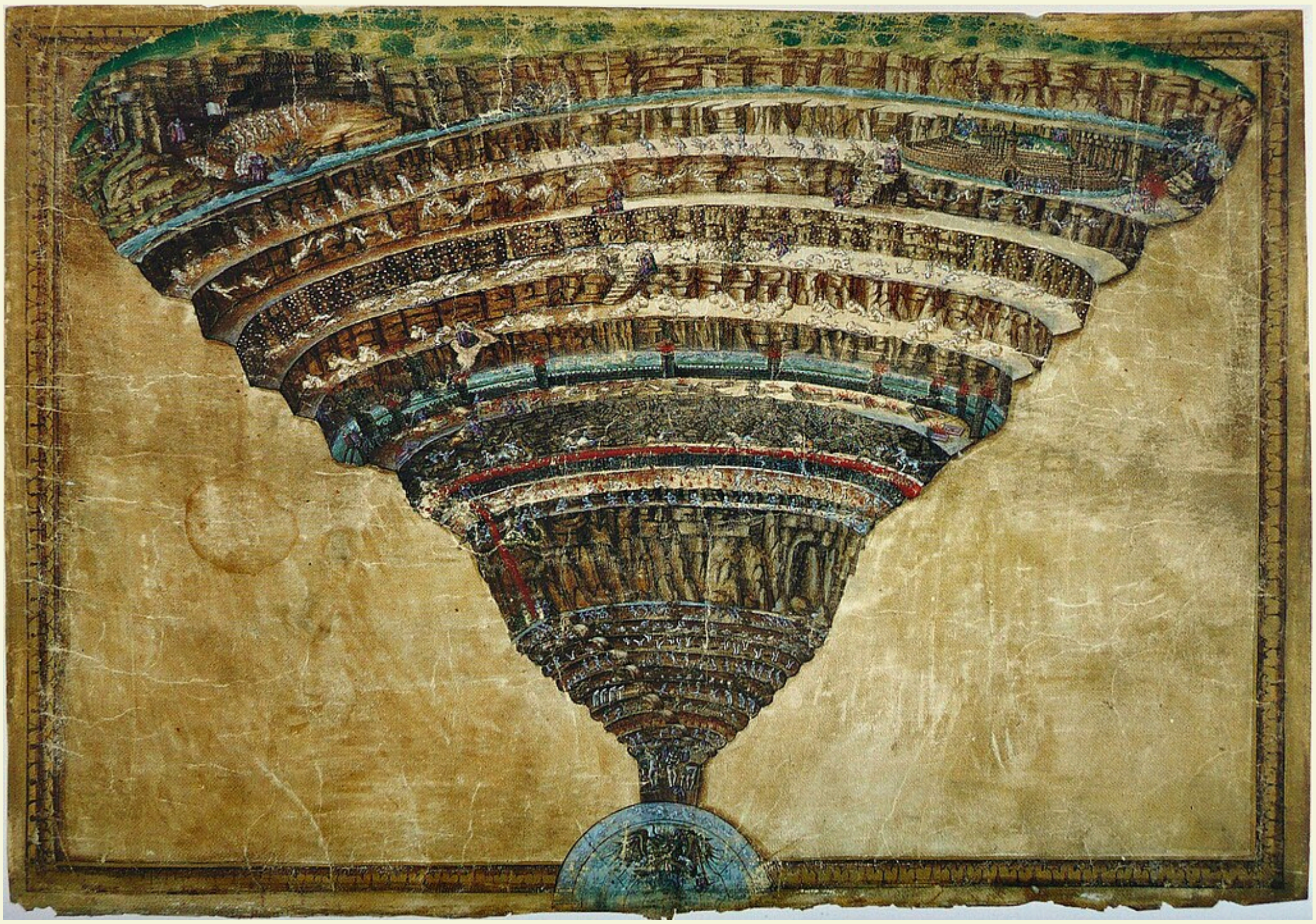
The idea of being defined by others is exactly what motivates the existential anguish in Sartre; for him, the concept of being able to perceive ourselves only through the lens of others is what Hell feels like. If we have to draw a further connection between human relationships and Hell, we can go back to Dante's *Inferno.* Dante's vision of hell is physically torturous, but its punishments often stem from the sinner's relationships with others. Betrayal, violence, and deception are sins that affect others and determine the depth of their suffering. While Sartre's hell is a metaphor for the existential torment of human relationships, Dante's is a theological structure of divine justice. Yet, both convey the idea that hell is not just a place; it is a condition shaped by human

interaction, perception, and moral consequence.

On the other hand, if we look at William Langland's Piers Plowman, it is
a text that approaches Hell through a completely different perspective, but if one looks at it in the broader picture, it boils down to people and their relationships with one another. In *Piers Plowman*, the protagonist, Will, navigates a dream-vision journey where he encounters various allegorical figures that represent the corruptions of society, false priests, greedy merchants, and hypocrites. These figures hinder his search for Truth and salvation. In *No Exit*, Sartre's characters are trapped in a room where they torment each other, unable to escape the judgments and expectations imposed by their interactions. In both works, other people are central to personal suffering. For Will, society's moral decay impedes his salvation, while Sartre's characters find that the presence of others defines their Hell. While Langland sees the struggle with others as a test leading toward possible redemption, Sartre views it as an existential trap with no escape. In both cases, however, other people serve as mirrors, whether for spiritual growth or endless torment.

This leads us to the conclusion that the exploration of Hell through literature reveals a profound and evolving understanding of its nature. From Dante's structured torment to Sartre's existential entrapment, the concept of Hell transcends mere physical suffering and delves into the complexities of human relationships, freedom, and self-perception. Whether seen as divine punishment, a psychological state, or an

existential condition, Hell serves as a reflection of human fears, struggles, and moral dilemmas. Each literary interpretation, be it Milton's rebellious Satan, Dante's sinners, or Sartre's tormented characters, ultimately points to the same core idea: Hell is not just a place but a condition shaped by our choices, our interactions, and the way we define ourselves to others. This enduring theme continues to resonate, reminding us that the true nature of Hell may not be found in fire and brimstone but in the tensions and conflicts that define human existence.



Sandro Botticelli: ***La Carte de l'Enfer***

Character Portrait

If you walk with your head bowed low, then, woman,
you're pure as snow.
But if you dare to raise your eyes,
you're branded loose, in whispered lies.
Speak in tones both soft and low,
You're the best a girl can ever show.
But if you fight for what is right,
You're labelled shameless overnight.

If you dress in a sari or a suit, calm and neat,
and they'll say your soul's complete. But wear what makes you feel alive, they'll question how you dare survive.

If you worship at your husband's feet, you're seen as sacred, calm, and sweet. But if you speak against his might, they'll say you've lost your woman's right.

If you bear taunts in silent pain,
You're praised, your honour will remain.
But cry or shout when it's unfair,
They'll say you're wild, too much to bear.



Clean the house and serve them tea, And you're the pride of family.
But if you rest, just breathe or take your space, You're shamed for falling from your place.

Hide behind a veil so tight,
They'll call you pure and right.
But speak with a boy a moment too long—
You're told your morals have gone all wrong.

What's the point of being so good,
When no one has truly understood?
What's the worth of being "pure"?
When all it brings is pain to endure.
This society still turns its face away,
no matter what you give or say.
This society still rejects and looks away,
offering no joy, no safety, no refuge today.



Even when you cry and plead—
They never see your silent need.
They gave you sorrow, not a choice, They never heard your pleading voice.

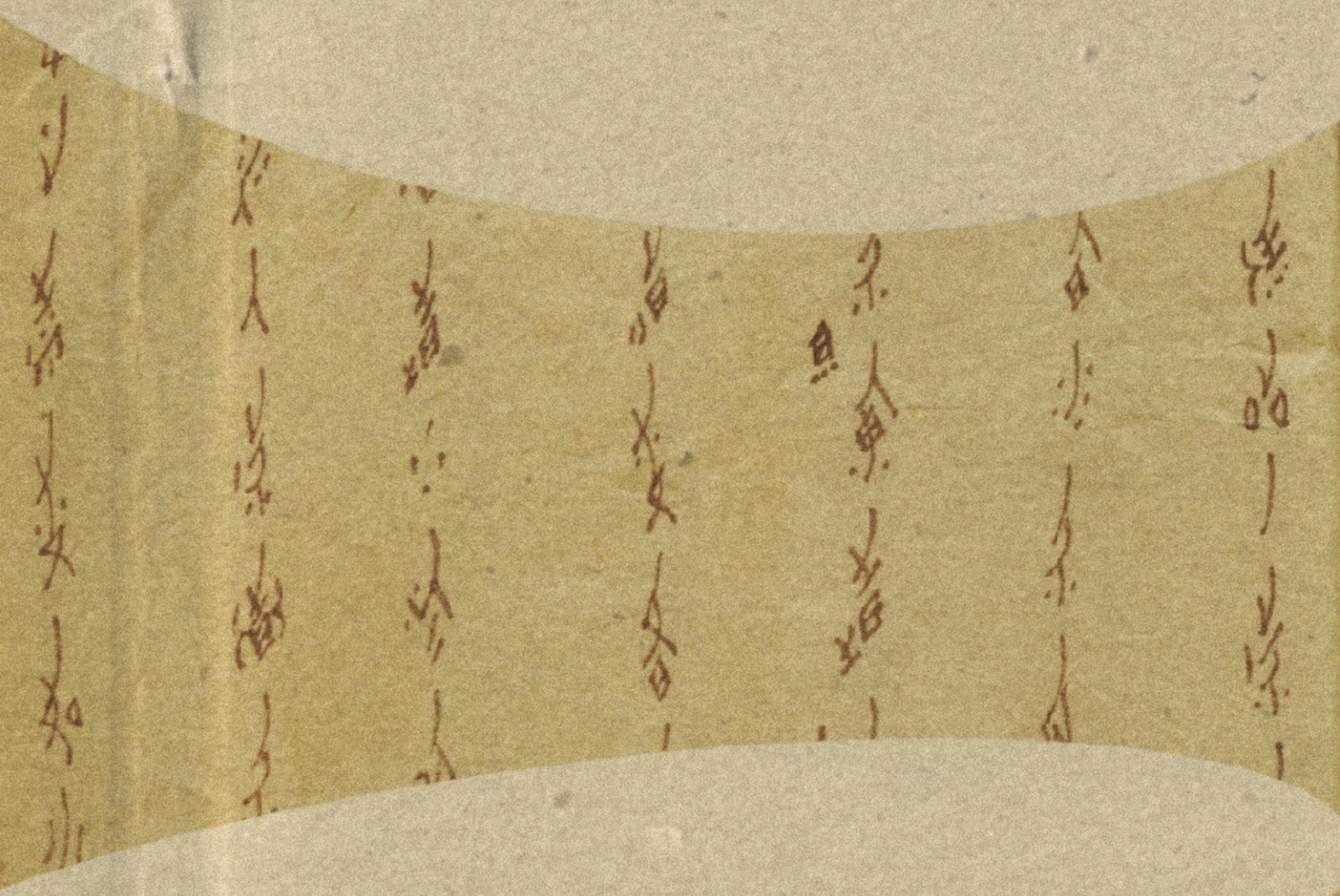
So why chase this “perfect” name? When being pure still
earns you shame. Why be “pure” and break apart,
When they won’t shield your aching heart?

If being pure brings only pain,
Then break the rules, step off the chain. Why strive to
be the “ideal one”?
Just live your truth—be “the shameless one.”

~Aditi Kumari, SYBA



The secret language



Kiishu

Nüshu -
The secret language

Fiza Machiwala
SYBA

There are moments in life when we seem to fall short of words, grappling with feelings, the quiet parts of our hearts that can't be shared. These feelings become 'the unsayable.' But what if you had a language that nobody else understood, except you? Yes, such a language existed, one that gave voice to these hidden emotions, a script created by women, for women. Nüshu was their way of speaking when the world refused to listen. When a woman felt isolated in her own home, she could write in this language and send it across to friends, sisters, and other close female companions, who understood her without needing to speak aloud. This secret language became a lifeline, offering comfort and connection where words alone couldn't.



Source: Deviant Art



Source: Alamy

Birth of a hidden tongue

While the origins of Nüshu may seem shrouded in mystery, its significance as a linguistic innovation born out of necessity is undeniable. Let us delve into its historical emergence in the remote Jiangyong County. In its secluded landscapes in the Hunan Province of China, a quiet yet revolutionary communication emerged centuries ago: Nüshu. This language can be traced to 400 years, to the end of the Ming Dynasty and the beginning of the Qing Dynasty. The script was delicate, lyrical, and designed exclusively for women.

"Nüshu rose from a patriarchal society where formal education was denied, this language became more than a writing system."



Jiangyoung map source: Wikimedia



Source: Wikimedia

Though the precise origins of nüshu are unclear, local legends attribute its creation to a young girl named Yuxiu, who supposedly invented the script while serving as a concubine in the Imperial Palace to record her dialect and express her loneliness. However, this story remains unverified, with the first historical record of nüshu appearing in 1931, describing it as a small, unrecognizable script that men could not read.

The Beauty and Significance of Nüshu

The aesthetic and functional uniqueness of Nüshu extended beyond its origins, reflected in its intricate characters and diverse applications. Nüshu characters, rhomboidal and slim in shape, are formed with just four strokes—dot, vertical, diagonal, and curved. Although this language is derived from Chinese Characters there is no correspondence between them. Though derived from Chinese characters, Nüshu is a syllabic script without direct Chinese correspondence. Each character represents a syllable or a group of similar-sounding syllables. Its curved shape allows for embroidery on clothes and flower belts in addition to being written.



Source: Alamy

The earliest evidence of Nüshu appears on a coin from the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom period, which bears the inscription, “Women all over the world are sisters in one family,” a phrase embodying the script's role in fostering unity and emotional expression among women.

Nüshu was primarily used to document the local Jiangyong dialect in written form, allowing women to preserve and share their cultural identity. Its applications extend beyond mere documentation. For instance, it featured prominently in “third-day missives” cotton-bound books gifted to brides as part of wedding customs. Nüshu was also artistically integrated into fans, handkerchiefs, and other objects, adding beauty to everyday life. Handkerchiefs adorned with Nüshu became cherished keepsakes symbolizing emotional bonds among women.



Source: nushuscript.org

In the local communities, women gathered to engage in shared needlework sessions, where they read, sang, and taught the script to one another. These gatherings formed the cornerstone of the Nüshu culture, where language and craft intertwined to create a supportive social network. The tradition transcended its linguistic roots, evolving into a cultural ritual reinforcing communal ties and celebrating feminine resilience.

"Nüshu characters, rhomboidal and slim in shape, are formed with just four strokes—dot, vertical, diagonal, and curved. Although this language is derived from Chinese Characters there is no correspondence between them."



Source: Atlas Obscura



The first page of a third-day missive book. Women commonly stored paper cuts, embroidery thread, and patterns between the pages.

Source: Atlas Obscura

The Voice of Resilience

Nüshu allowed women to preserve their emotions in delicate handwritten scripts. Meanwhile, another form of expression ran parallel: nüge, the tradition of singing women's stories aloud, enabled them to voice their pain through song. Passed from voice to voice, these songs became a living archive of pain, memory, and resilience. One woman who used this form was Bamboo, whose life and music reveal how deeply women in China relied on songs to cope with personal pain, survive hardship, and be remembered.



A woman seated with a guqin symbolising the spirit of Nüge.
Source: Art Blart

Born in the early 1900s, Bamboo represented the struggles of many rural Chinese women who faced living with bound feet, lacking formal education, and being married off at a young age through an arranged union. At just 15, she was married, only to face an unexpected turn of events on her wedding day rather than being greeted by her groom, Bamboo was taken to his home, where she learned he had already been conscripted into the army during the Sino-Japanese War (1937–45). She had no choice but to accept her situation and live as a quasi-widow in her in-laws' village.

Despite this, Bamboo found a way to express her grief through music, a powerful cultural tradition known as nüge. These songs passed down through generations, giving women a voice in a society that often silenced them. Bamboo's poignant song about the conscription of men during the war resonated deeply with the community, and even men began to sing it. The lyrics express a deep sense of loss, frustration, and the overwhelming impact of war on families:

"I sit alone in my room thinking of nothing

But how the world suffers.

In China, we have Chiang Kai-shek,

Who fights the Japanese without mercy..."

These lyrics capture the deep sadness and unease that plagued many families as men between the ages of 18 and 45 were drafted into the war, leaving behind a society without its men. After years of living without her husband and enduring hardship, Bamboo eventually tried to return to her natal village. But on her way there, she was intercepted by three brothers from a neighbouring community, who abducted her. Such abductions were not unusual for widows living away from their families in rural areas, as they were seen as vulnerable. Bamboo was taken as the wife of one of the brothers, and she spent the rest of her life in Zixitang.

Bamboo's songs lived on in her village, during the Cultural Revolution, elderly women would gather to sing these songs, which not only shared stories of hardship but also helped nurture a sense of community and solidarity. Bamboo's use of nüge was a powerful tool for communication—expressing pain while building empathy with others. As Bamboo's story shows, nüge was a powerful tool for women to carve out space in a world where their voices were often silenced. It allowed them to express their pain, build solidarity, and leave a legacy that would be remembered long after they were gone. Bamboo used her music to express her suffering and provide a voice for all women similarly limited by tradition and circumstance.

The Fall of Nüshu

Nüshu, once a cherished symbol of women's resilience, faced a daunting decline in the mid-20th century, thanks to a storm of societal and political changes. After the Chinese Communist Revolution of 1949, the winds of modernisation swept through the country, casting Nüshu aside as a relic of the past. The revolution, aiming to push China into the future, saw the script as an outdated tradition, and it was suppressed as part of the efforts to eradicate feudal customs. Women who once found solace in Nüshu were discouraged from using it, and its cultural practice was branded incompatible with the new socialist ideals. This sudden shift deeply disrupted the vibrant culture that had allowed Nüshu to thrive for generations.

But that wasn't the only challenge. As the 1950s and 60s rolled in, women gained access to formal education, learning to read and write in Mandarin.

The need for a private, hidden script like Nüshu began to fade, and with it, the tradition was left behind. Nüshu, once passed down from mothers to daughters or shared among close friends, was no longer the emotional bridge it had been for so long. As rural areas rapidly modernised, the practice of Nüshu slowly withered away.

By the late 20th century, wasn't it heartbreaking to think that only a handful of women still knew this precious script? However, the 1980s marked a turning point. Acknowledging the significance of preserving this cultural treasure, China began documenting Nüshu, reviving a nearly lost tradition. An extraordinary 95-year-old woman from Hunan Province was among the few remaining practitioners, still incorporating Nüshu into her daily routine.

Despite efforts to safeguard it, the rise of tourism introduced new challenges. It makes one wonder—how will something so deeply personal survive in a world where it is being marketed as a souvenir? Nüshu, now a symbol of women's unity, was increasingly commercialised and altered to appeal to tourists. The challenge was obvious: How do you keep its authenticity alive while making room for growth?



95-yeard old Yang Huanyi holds some nushu writings.

Source: kenyon.edu

The Revival of Nüshu

In light of these challenges, modern efforts to preserve and revitalise Nüshu have brought opportunities and complexities, blending tradition with innovation. Efforts to safeguard and revitalise Nüshu have gained momentum in recent years through cultural, educational, and technological initiatives. One effective strategy has been integrating the script into cultural tourism, with museums and cultural sites showcasing its historical and artistic significance to raise awareness and appreciation. Educational initiatives, including Nüshu in school curricula and organising workshops, aim to pass on the knowledge to younger generations and ensure the script's continued relevance.

Visitors at a bookstore in Chengdu, southwest China, specialising in Nüshu.



Source: South China Morning Post

Technological interventions also play a key role, with projects like Nüshu Rescue using artificial intelligence to document and train models on endangered languages, offering a modern solution to preservation challenges. In the digital age, preserving Nüshu involves blending traditional methods with modern innovations. Digital archiving, utilizing high-precision scanning and advanced technology, ensures the longevity of Nüshu documents and works.

Online databases and digital libraries further make these materials accessible to a global audience, while mobile applications, interactive websites, and social media platforms can foster broader engagement with the script. Educational software incorporating gamified elements can engage younger generations, making Nüshu learning more interactive and accessible across age groups.



Lu Sirui, a 24-year-old working as a marketer, talks about nüshu, a centuries-old secret script, that she has learned from online feminist groups, in Beijing

Source: The Seattle Times

Beyond digital methods, integrating Nüshu into art, design, fashion, and handicrafts can increase its visibility and contribute to the local economy. Moreover, as a unique form of women's expression, Nüshu has great potential to symbolise women's strength and independence. Through international exchange and collaboration, it can be woven into global feminist conversations, empowering women worldwide. Preserving Nüshu is not just about safeguarding a script; it's about honouring a cultural and historical legacy that embodies resilience, creativity, and empowerment. With sustained efforts, Nüshu can continue to inspire and remain a powerful symbol of cultural identity.

Deeply in Love

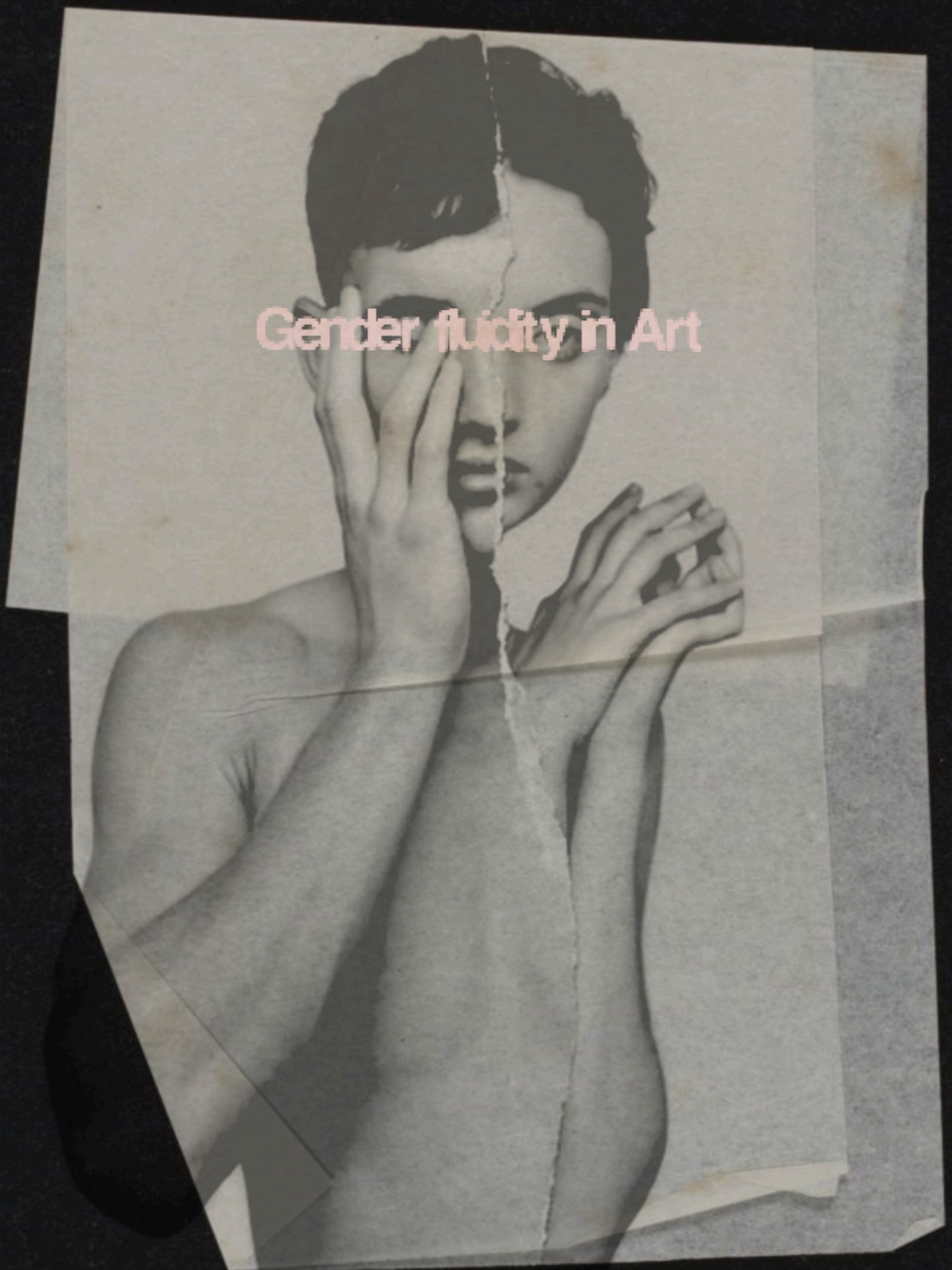
Your heartbeat calls me, a loving voice
In your eyes, I see my soul rejoice.
Waves hush low, the stars lean near,
In your arms, the world grows clear.
A kiss—slow fire, the night aglow,
The sky wraps us in a gentle flow.
Light cradles us in tender grace,
Two souls, one breath, one sacred place.

In the moonlight's hush, we softly lie,
Breath breaks the silence, drifting high.
How magical is this quiet night
As our shadows dance in silver light!

And so again, I say with pride,
I'm deeply in love with my bride.

~Francis Masih, SYBAMMC

Gender fluidity in Art



Gender Fluidity In Art

Richelle Sequeira
FYBA

'Gender is not something we are, it is something we do. Through art, we can explore this performance of gender and reveal its infinite variations, not as a binary, but as a fluid continuum of possibility.' – Judith Butler



Amber Wellman: ***Nosegaze***

Art, like gender, is fluid and ever-evolving, unconfined by boundaries or conventions. It encourages us to explore and express our identities. We can redefine ourselves and see the beauty in embracing all that we are, beyond any labels or limits.

The onset of feminist movements has created dialogue about gender roles and the performance of gender identity.

Most classical paintings upheld the gender binary. In contrast, contemporary art challenges traditional views. It resists conventions and shows the fluid nature of gender. The complexities of gender transcend time, linking us through art in our shared journey of traversing the gender spectrum.

Gender fluidity is a range of identities that aren't fixed. It can shift between male and female. This concept rejects the idea that gender is binary. Frida Kahlo's Self Portrait with Cropped Hair features an androgynous figure. This character could be Kahlo herself. The painting represents gender fluidity. A famous example of gender fluidity is Man Ray's portrait of Marcel Duchamp in drag as Rrose Selavy. The character's ambiguity in the photograph lingers in our minds still. Art uses visual forms to challenge gender norms and the idea of gender itself. This can have a powerful effect. While this task has been undertaken by various artists through the years, Art Fervour looks at a few contemporary favourites! The bodies in Ambera Wellmann's artworks seem to be melting on the canvas, creating genderless figures that could be all genders or none.



Frida Kahlo: ***Self-portrait with cropped hair***



Man Ray: ***Marcel Duchamp as Rrose Selavy***

In one of her works, she alludes to Henry Fuseli's The Nightmare. While the former is less figurative, the composition of both paintings is similar. In her painting process, she keeps the paint mobile. She layers the canvas with various interpretations while the paint is still wet. This helps her visuals stay malleable. Her paintings show figures with exaggerated elasticity. They look like three-dimensional sculptures on a digital screen. This alludes to the fluidity of the gender spectrum. Classical representations of bodies mainly reflect a patriarchal male gaze. This is especially true in how women appear in paintings.



Ambera Wellman: ***Sharpless***



Henry Fuseli: ***The Nightmare***

Margaret Atwood, the author, even goes so far as to say,

‘Even pretending you aren’t catering to male fantasies is a male fantasy: pretending you’re unseen, pretending you have a life of your own, that you can wash your feet and comb your hair unconscious of the ever-present watcher peering through the keyhole, peering through the keyhole in your own head, if nowhere else. You are a woman with a man inside watching a woman. You are your own voyeur.’

Ambera Wellman



Source: The New York Times

Wellmann’s artworks are devoid of both the male gaze and voyeurism, revelling in the existence of our bodies, no matter how flawed and depicting them before asserting any genders.

In a culture that prefers genders to be confined to rules and be static in nature, Faraj’s artwork is a refreshing subversion of the geometric, sharp representations that we see of bodies in the media.

Her work focuses on the essence of who we are, not just gender labels. She skillfully shows the fluidity of gender using watercolour. Her paintings show bodies that dance together in play and violence. This makes us wonder about the struggles and dialogue one engages in, not just with others, but also within oneself, while making revelations about one's identity.

The eroticism in her work cannot be ignored; one can almost imagine the intimate conversation the people in the paintings are having. In some paintings, the figures overlap one another, communicating the way that we imbibe our identities from those around us.

Classical art prioritised aesthetic appreciation over the content of art, and Susan Sontag once suggested that women are enslaved to the notion of beauty.



Nadine Faraj: ***Become River Head to Toe***



Nadine Faraj: ***Get Used to Us***

In extension, the representations of gender have primarily been engulfed by this idea of aesthetics. However, Faraj has overturned this mainstream heteronormative portrayal and fixation on ‘beauty’ to represent queer, unidentified, and soft sexual moments.

The pandemic (and the lockdowns) have had us all spending more time with ourselves than ever before. While we have had more time and limited space to end up gazing at our bodies in the mirrors for longer than we were used to, insecurities about the shape and form of ourselves may have crept up for some of us. Christina Quarles, through her artworks, depicts what it is like living inside one’s body. Gender identity and personal intimacy are closely related in that they nurture one another.



Nadine Faraj
Source: Joyce Yahouda Gallery



Christina Quarles: ***Bottoms Up***

The artist depicts bodies that could be male, female, non-binary, or other. While the limbs of these figures are more clearly painted, their body language makes one wonder, 'Why did I think this is a man/woman only by looking at their fingers?' This leads to important introspection, discoveries, and conversations. Gender roles and their connotations have been internalised over the years.

John Berger had once said,

'A large part of seeing depends upon habit and convention.'

The portrayal of non-binary and genderless bodies demands necessary attention to the dismantling of conventional gender identity, creating space for gender fluidity without alienating it. A performance artist and a filmmaker, Wu Tsang shares stories of marginalised communities. Her work depicts their queerness through movement. The artist, who identifies as 'transfeminine and transguy', uses her video art to blend stories of community organising, subcultures, and gender.



Wu Tsang

Source: Culturedmag.com

In her film Wildness, she presents a ‘whimsically fictional account’ of the people at a gay bar. She communicates the fluidity of gender by depicting queer people breaking stereotypes that are generally associated with them. By exploring the in-betweenness of people and their narratives, she successfully subverts the gender binary. The artist represents people who may be hyper-masculine or hyper-feminine while being androgynous. In doing so, she opens up new perspectives and dialogues that try to bring gender fluidity to the mainstream. Gender fluidity is an umbrella term for people with dynamic gender identities that may change over time. This constant state of flux shows in many ways. It can be fluid figures made with watercolours, elastic genderless bodies, or personal narratives about gender's complexities in art.

These portrayals not only create conversation but also highlight new narratives that we must address.



Wu Tsang: ***Wildness***

‘The bodies in my work are so many things at once, they’re not just male or female, and they’re kind of genderless, ambiguous. They’re not anything in particular because that’s what it feels like to exist in the world.’ -Kara Walker

Love is a garden where our dreams take root,
Petals so soft like whispers, in fragrant
pursuit.

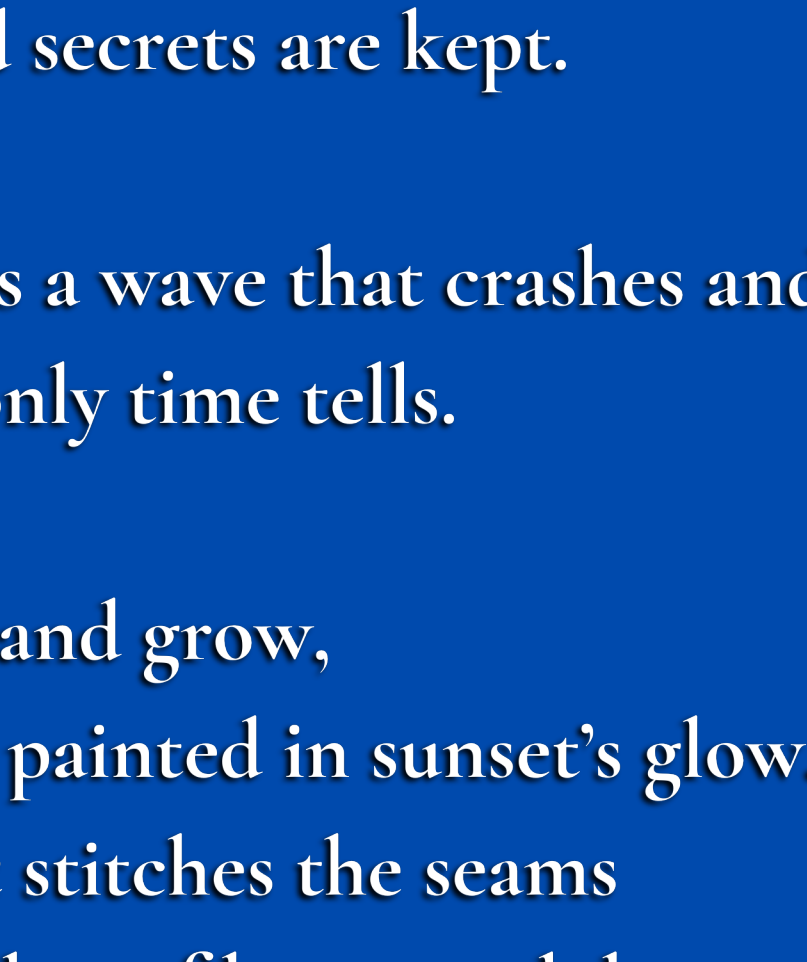


Like sunlight filtering through the leaves,
Your laughter rhymes, like a verse that a poet weaves.

In your eyes, I see the ocean's depth,
Where all our love and secrets are kept.

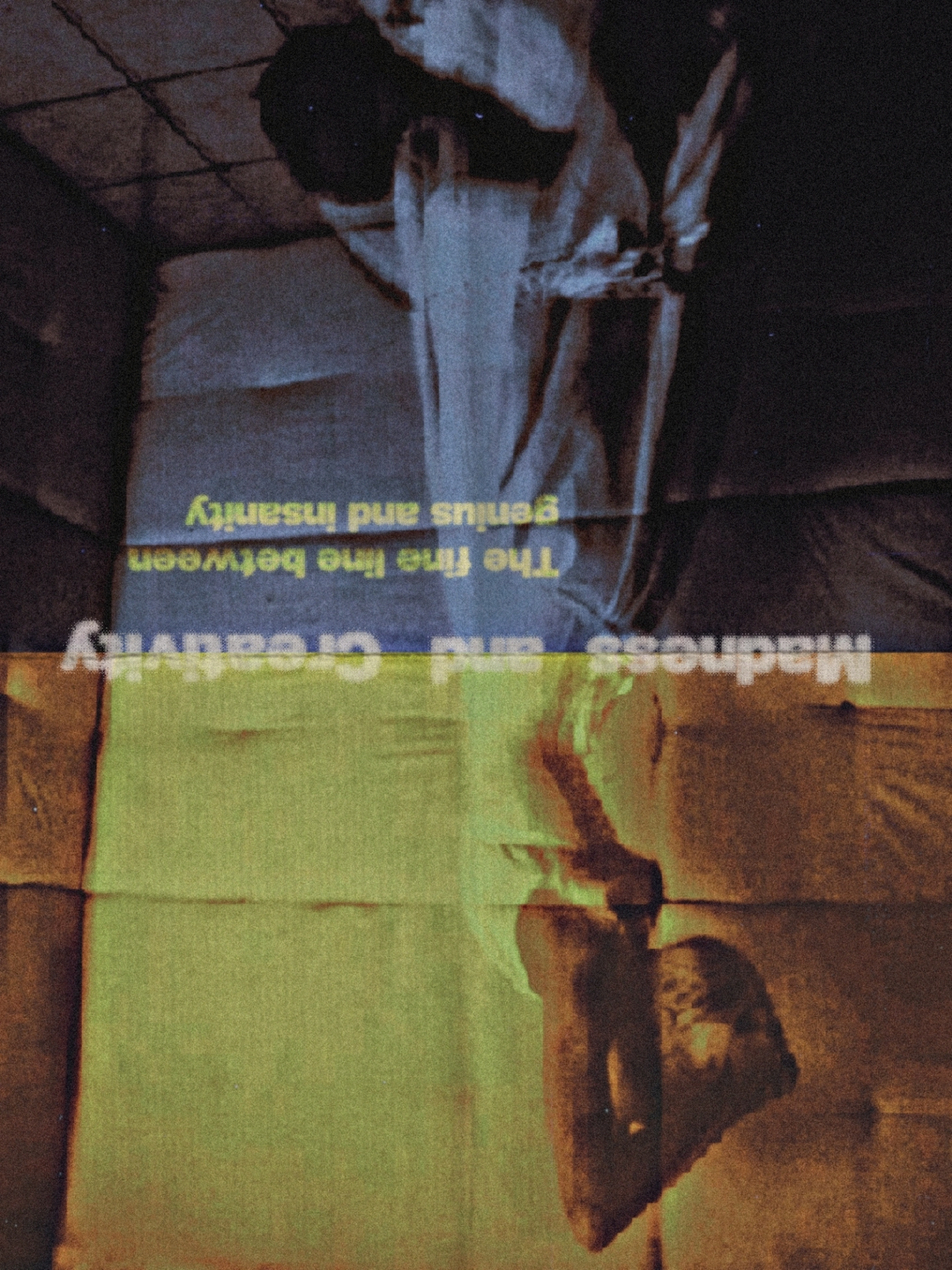
Each glance of yours is a wave that crashes and swells.
Carrying stories that only time tells.

Our hands intertwine and grow,
Reaching for the skies painted in sunset's glow.
Love is the thread that stitches the seams
Puts me into the slumber of hopes and dreams.



You're my shelter
In a world that confines.
When I am lost,
Your love is the compass that always aligns.

~Emelda Kripalani, SYBA


The fine line between
genius and insanity
Madness and Creativity

Madness and Creativity

Sara Hoshing
FYBA

Is there a fine line between genius and insanity, or are they two sides of the same coin? History is filled with artists, writers, and musicians once dismissed as mad, only to be celebrated as visionaries long after their time. From Vincent van Gogh, who died in obscurity, to Kanye West, whose eccentricities spark endless debate, creative minds often challenge societal norms. But what if madness isn't a flaw, but the secret ingredient of genius? This article explores how history has repeatedly mistaken brilliance for madness, until time proved otherwise.

The notion of the tortured artist dates back centuries. Aristotle claimed, 'No great mind has ever existed without a touch of madness.'

Throughout history, artists have exhibited eccentric behaviours that set them apart from societal norms. Their work often reflects internal struggles, transforming pain into profound artistic statements.

However, their madness was frequently pathologized in their own time, only to be celebrated posthumously. Let us look at some of these misunderstood geniuses.

Vincent Van Gogh:



Source: Literary Traveler

Vincent van Gogh epitomizes the ‘mad genius’ stereotype. Suffering from depression, psychosis, and what is now believed to be bipolar disorder, he famously severed his ear and spent time in an asylum. The same passion that fueled his art also brought him agony. Yet his art, bursting with emotion and colour, changed the course of modern painting. The Starry Night and Sunflowers are testaments to his unique vision. Rejected, ridiculed and dismissed during his lifetime, van Gogh sold only one painting, but today, his works are among the most celebrated in the world. Was he truly insane, or simply a visionary too ahead of his time? His self-mutilation and eventual suicide became symbols of his suffering, overshadowing the genius within. In time, his once-dismissed vision defined artistic brilliance. Van Gogh was never mad. He simply saw in colours too vivid for the world to accept.



At Eternity’s Gate (2019), dir. Julian Schnabel

Rick and Morty:



Rick and Morty (2013 - present), created by Justin Roiland & Dan Harmon

The show Rick and Morty masterfully blends genius with chaos. The central figure, Rick Sanchez is a quintessential ‘mad genius,’ a scientist of unparalleled intellect whose brilliance is matched only by his self-destructive tendencies. His limitless creativity allows him to bend space, time, and reality in itself, yet his recklessness and nihilism often leave destruction in his wake. Rick's madness isn't just a narrative device, but a reflection of the fine line between intellect and instability. His boundless scientific ingenuity mirrors real-world ‘mad geniuses’ like Nikola Tesla or even Kanye West, whose revolutionary ideas come hand-in-hand with erratic behaviour. His ability to create interdimensional portals and craft entire worlds illustrates how creative minds often function, constantly innovating but struggling with personal demons.

Morty, on the other hand, represents the counterbalance to Rick's chaos. While initially a naive sidekick, his exposure to Rick's brilliance and madness transforms him into a complex character who questions the cost of genius. The show itself thrives on absurd storytelling, proving that creativity often flourishes where traditional logic breaks down.

In one of the episodes (S6 E7 Spoiler Alert) Morty says 'Sir, you're only proud of your creation's success because you want to be creative. But creation doesn't happen through gimmicks, technology, and distribution. It doesn't even happen through work. Creativity is frankly adjacent to mental illness and overlaps with it substantially. A lot of talented people kill themselves, and all of them are miserable. The real gift is to be ungifted.'

Rick and Morty challenge viewers to consider whether madness fuels genius or merely isolates it. It presents a world where the most brilliant mind is also the most tormented, suggesting that, sometimes, the cost of seeing reality differently is losing touch with it entirely.



Rick and Morty (2013 - present), created by Justin Roiland & Dan Harmon

Sylvia Plath:



Source: YourTango

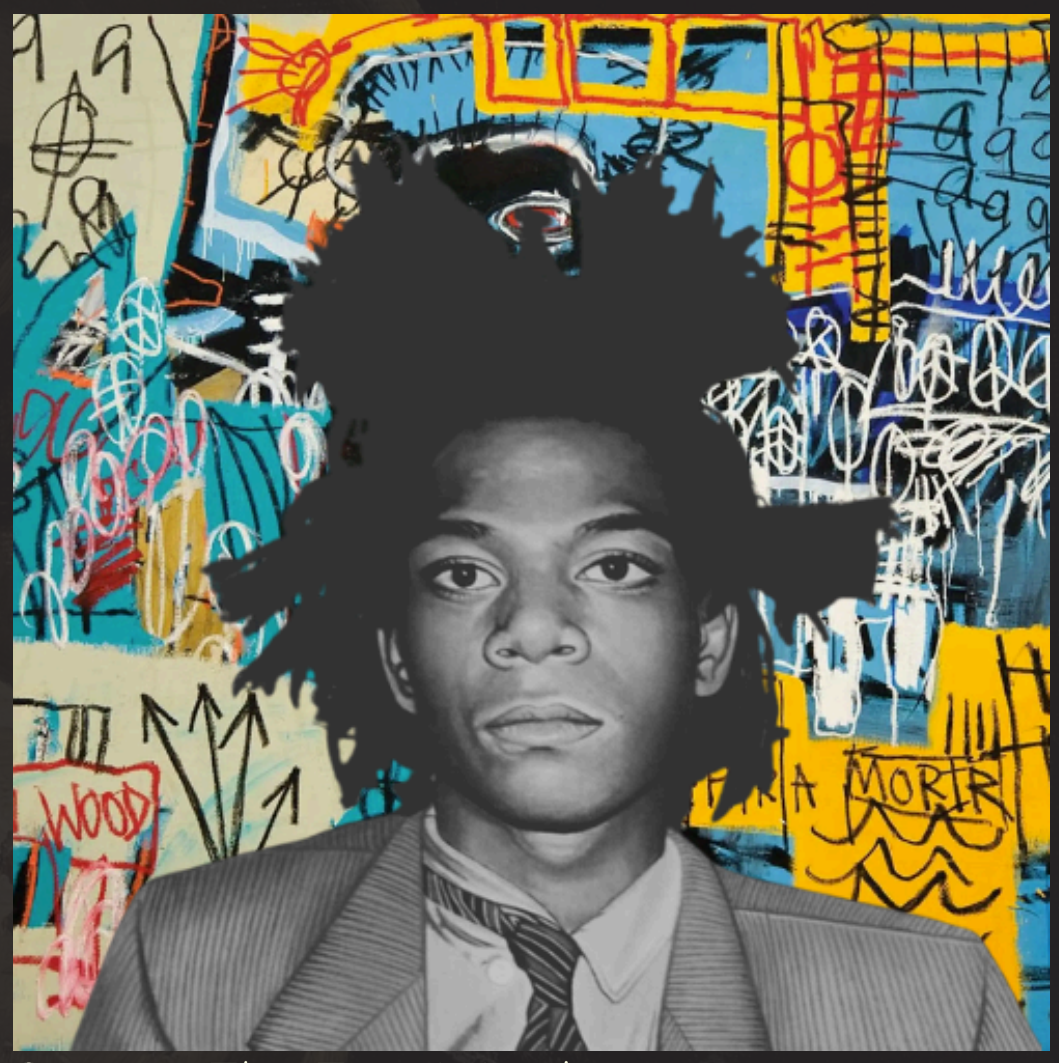
Known for her famous 'fig tree analogy,' Sylvia Plath's poetry was not simply written; it was excavated from the depths of her soul. Her creativity and madness were intertwined, each feeding the other in an endless cycle of brilliance and despair. She did not merely observe pain; she translated it into haunting and electrifying verses. Her mind was a restless storm, and her words reflected its turbulence. In Ariel, her poetry is raw, filled with stark, unflinching imagery, self-destruction, resurrection, and defiance. 'Lady Lazarus' reads like an artist daring death itself, while 'Daddy' unravels trauma with an unsettling precision.

Yet, during her lifetime, Plath was not celebrated as she is today. Her confessional style was seen as too personal. Only after her tragic death did the world finally recognise her genius. What was once dismissed as the ramblings of a troubled mind is now hailed as some of the most powerful poetry to be ever written. Plath's legacy is a testament to the uneasy relationship between madness and creativity. Her suffering

shaped her art, but she could mould that pain into something profound that made her a legend. Sylvia Plath did not just write; she poured herself onto the page, turning pain into poetry and madness into meaning.

Jean-Michel Basquiat:

Jean-Michel Basquiat never set out to become a symbol. He started with fragments, words, images, and symbols scrawled across buildings in lower Manhattan. Under the pseudonym SAMO©, he delivered sharp, cryptic messages to a world that rarely paused to listen: part graffiti, part poetry, part warning.



Source: The Tate Ward

By his early twenties, Basquiat was everywhere: magazine covers, galleries, lofts, studios. The art world saw in him something raw and original, an unfiltered brilliance. He painted not to impress, but to understand. His work carried layers: anatomical sketches, racial commentary, childhood memories, jazz influences, bits of Haitian and Puerto Rican heritage, and the language of survival. He was claiming value in a space that rarely gave it to young Black men.

But as the spotlight grew, so did the pressure. Fame brought exposure, but also scrutiny.

Critics questioned whether he was a real artist or just a trend. Basquiat felt increasingly out of place—praised for his genius, yet misunderstood in his expression. The weight of expectation, alienation, and commodification pressed in; he turned to heroin, first as a form of escape, then as a routine. He worked obsessively, often painting late into the night, filling canvas after canvas with the noise inside his head. It was as if he feared stopping would mean unravelling.



Basquiat: ***Riding with Death***

In 1988, Jean-Michel Basquiat died of a heroin overdose. He was just 27. Looking back, his death feels painfully predictable; not because he was destined to fall, but because brilliance left unguarded tends to burn out too soon. He moved through the world like a spark- bright, erratic, impossible to contain. What he left behind is more than a body of work; it's a pulse. His paintings still breathe, still push back, still ask hard questions. They weren't polished or neat. They were layered and chaotic, unfiltered, like the life he lived.

Today, Basquiat's name is everywhere. His art hangs in galleries, sells for millions, and appears on T-shirts and album covers. But behind the mythology, there's a quieter story we often forget: genius doesn't protect you. It doesn't insulate you from loneliness, from pressure, from pain. Jean-Michel didn't just die from

addiction. He died from being seen more as a symbol than a person. A world celebrated his work but didn't slow down long enough to hear what he was really saying.

Kurt Cobain:

Kurt Cobain was more than the frontman of 'Nirvana'. He was the reluctant voice of a generation, a poet in ripped jeans with a guitar that sounded like it was crying out with him. Songs like "Smells Like Teen Spirit," "Come As You Are," and "Heart-Shaped Box" weren't just punk/grunge hits; they were emotional revolutions, restless and beautiful in their honesty.



Source: BBC

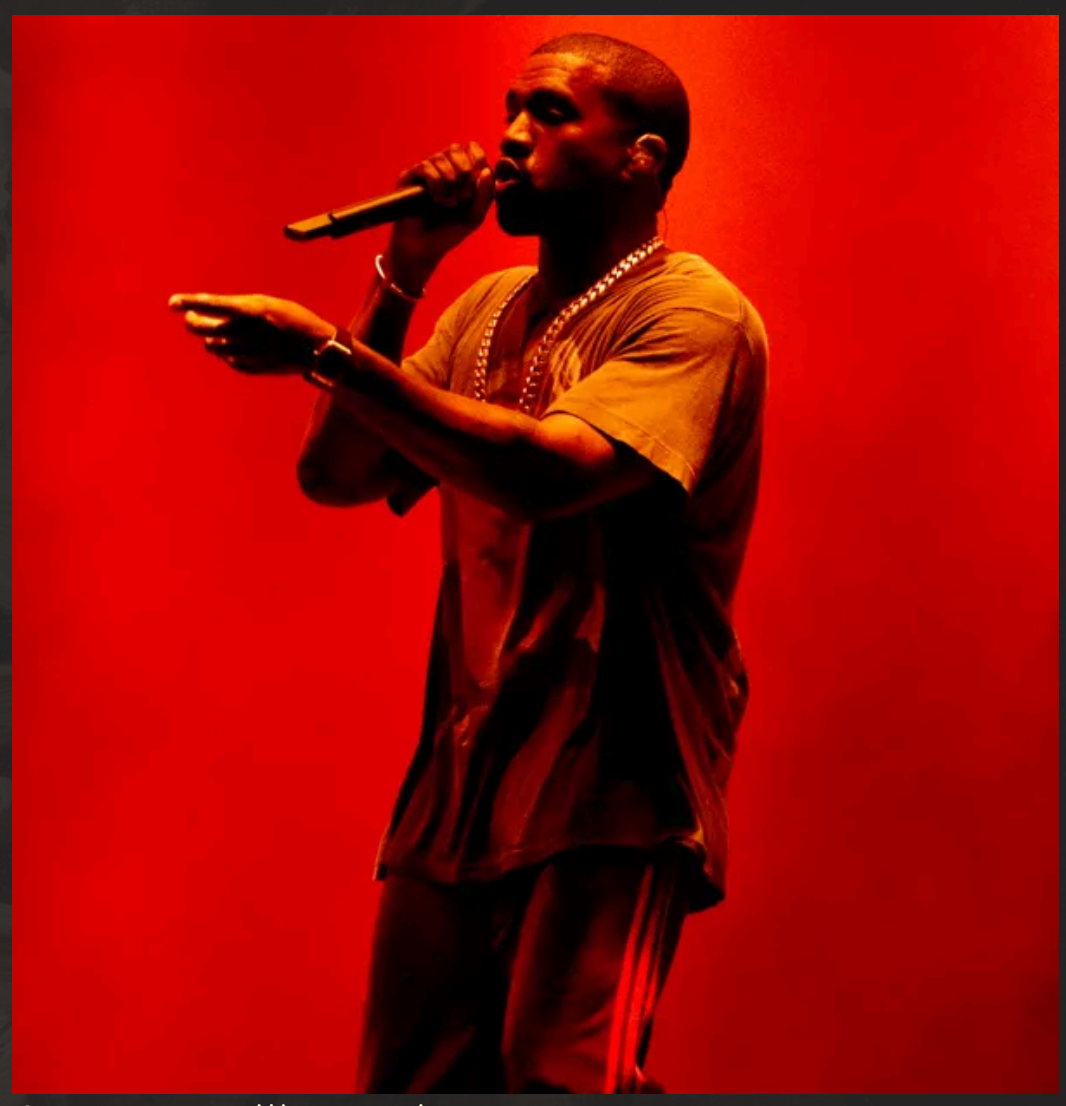
But for Cobain, creativity was never just a performance. It was a coping mechanism, a mirror, sometimes even a weapon. His lyrics didn't come from a place of comfort, they came from a mind at war with itself. Diagnosed with bipolar disorder, Cobain's mind was often a battlefield of extremes: soaring moments of vision followed by crushing waves of depression. He described feeling deeply alienated, even at the height of his fame. The louder the applause, the lonelier it felt. He seemed to exist between genius and breakdown, rage and vulnerability.

Like many before him, Cobain

turned to heroin not for escape, but for relief from chronic stomach pain that doctors failed to treat, from emotional anguish that therapy never reached, and from the unrelenting scrutiny of fame. The drug didn't create the void, it numbed it. Still, his music never lost its spark. It often felt more alive because of the pain it carried. Cobain didn't romanticise suffering, but he didn't hide it either. But brilliance without support is dangerous. In 1994, at the age of 27, Cobain died by suicide, joining the fabled "27 Club" of gifted artists gone too soon. His death wasn't just a personal tragedy, it was a collective reckoning. It forced us to confront how easily we celebrate genius while ignoring the human being behind it.

Kanye West:

Kanye West shares the same precarious space as Sylvia Plath and Van Gogh: a creative genius often ridiculed for eccentricity. Diagnosed with bipolar disorder, West himself commented on the link between madness and creativity, stating, 'Name one genius who ain't crazy.' He's broken the fourth wall and sort of predicted his downfall in 'Hurricane' (2021), quoting 'Genius gone clueless, it's a whole lot to risk' His albums transcend music, being cultural touchstones that reshaped hip-



Source: Billboard

hop.. His other work My Beautiful Dark Twisted Fantasy (2010), was a maximalist masterpiece, an album that took

the chaos of his public breakdown, turning it into something operatic, grand, and deeply human. Yet, his brilliance is often overshadowed by his unpredictable behaviour, polarising statements, and struggles with bipolar disorder. The very qualities that make him an innovator, his refusal to conform and a need to constantly redefine himself, are the same things that make society uncomfortable. We celebrate unfiltered genius in hindsight, but in the present, it often looks like madness.

To conclude, the link between madness and creativity is undeniable yet complex. From Van Gogh's tormented brushstrokes to Sylvia Plath's visceral poetry as well as the surreal humour of Rick and Morty, the most groundbreaking art often emerges from minds that defy convention. Kanye West continues to challenge the boundaries of music and culture, leaving a legacy that may only be appreciated with time. Perhaps, history will always repeat itself where a genius is mistaken for madness until the world finally catches up. The true challenge is recognising brilliance while it still burns, rather than after it has flickered out.









The City I Call Home



Coming back to the city I call home,
It's all overwhelming,
The chase the chaos,
The buzz and the bustle,
It's haze, and the hustle.



I sure did miss it,
But I'm equally lost.
The clutter is something I'd left behind,
And to the mess and the sheer confusion,
I had bid adieu.

Coming back to the city I call home,
Is nothing short of nostalgic,
But now my heart's elsewhere.
She's ever radiant, my first love,
And she'll always hold a significant place...

But it's been a while since I left the bay behind,
I've moved on; been long since I bid her farewell.

- Esther Pullanthara (Alumnus)

HAnuMAnkInd

And IndIAn HIP-HOP

Hanumankind and Indian Hiphop

Gautham Prasobh
TYBA

As a disclaimer before starting this article, this is more of an opinion piece than a factual retelling of pop culture and the history of hip-hop in India. This is an exercise in formulating my concerns and observations from half a decade of following this genre. India has recently witnessed a new wave of artistic temperament within its culture. While this phenomenon can be traced back to the 90s, it has only raised its head in the mainstream within the past decade. This 'wave' has travelled from the borough of Harlem to the gullies of Mumbai, and has been adapted into the multiplicities of Indian popular culture. Indian Hip Hop or DHH (Desi Hip Hop) as it's more dearly known, is now becoming more prevalent in our Spotify playlists and Instagram stories, and this is not a mere stroke of luck or a matter of coincidence. Hip-hop as a genre has taken over the mainstream worldwide, and the clash of two titans (or arguably a murder of one) has caught a lot of eyes towards the culture. All it took was a song that acted as a liaison to two different cultures to shed light on the embers of DHH.



Source: Rolling Stone India

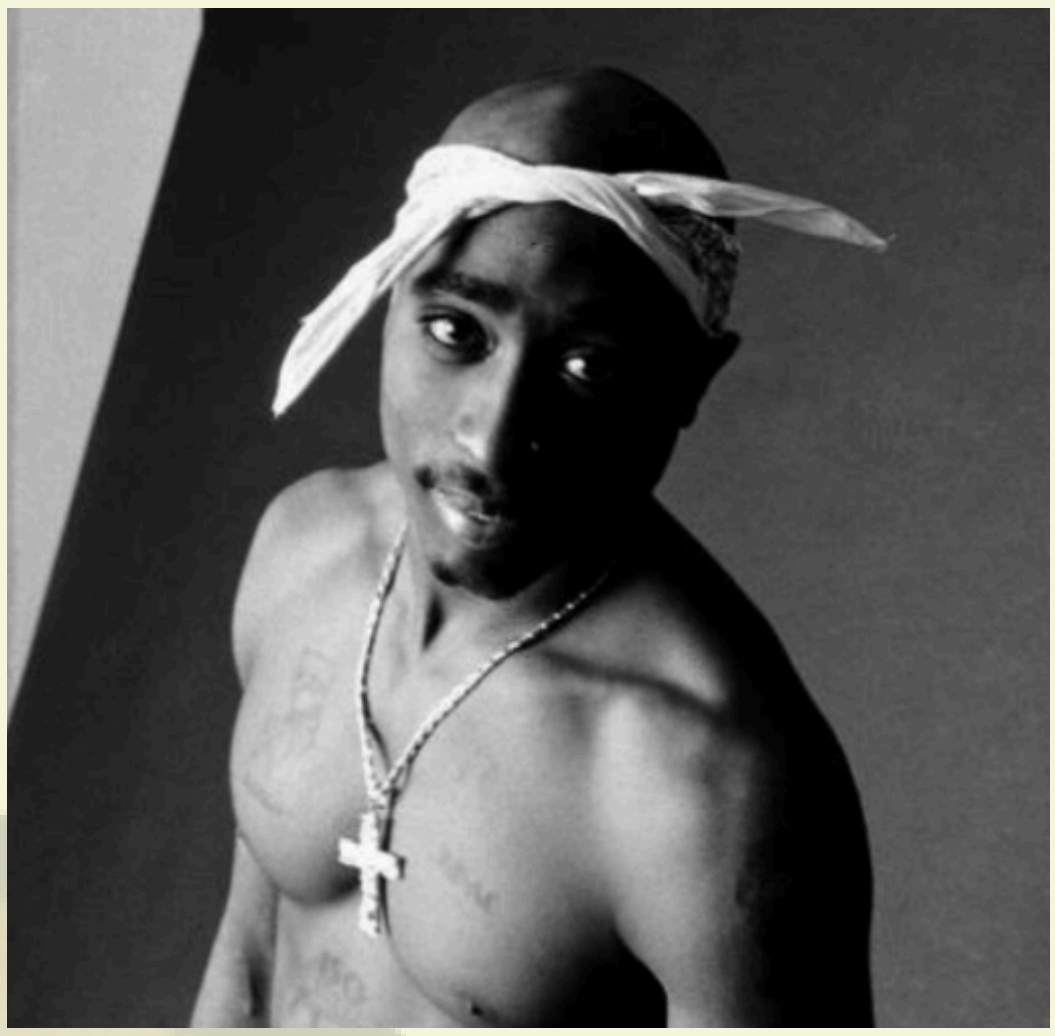
If it hasn't made itself apparent yet, the topic of discussion is the

viral hit, ‘Big Dawgs’ by Hanumankind, and how it lies within the context of Indian hip-hop. Before delving into that, we first need to familiarise ourselves with Indian hip-hop. The genre entered India through the diaspora, though its inaugural hip-hop track is widely credited to Baba Sehgal’s ‘Thanda Thanda Paani,’ a Hindi remake of ‘Ice Ice Baby’ artists like Yogi B, Panjabi MC, Bombay Rockers, and many more tried to fuse the hip-hop that was popular at the time with music that was endemic to Indian culture. Initially, it had a heavy Punjabi and even Bhangra influence, which led to the 2000s introducing this phenomenon into a more film-centric landscape. Simultaneously, the rise of ‘Mafia Mundeer’ in the late 2000s and early 2010s translated into the Bluetooth era of Indian hip-hop, which created the stars of today, such as Yo Yo Honey Singh, Badshah, Raftaar, and the like.

This international exposure, of course, came via ‘Big Dawgs,’ released on July 9, 2024. To refocus the discussion, Hanumankind as an artist exists as an enigma. To understand why, we need to understand who Hanumankind is. Sooraj Cherukkatu, born in Kondotty, Kerala, was quite the wayfarer as he lived in several countries before settling in Houston, USA. His musical inspiration began in Houston, as he was exposed to Southern hip-hop, including groups like Three 6 Mafia and other similar artists. By 2012, he returned to India to pursue further education and went on to work at Goldman Sachs. He released his debut EP, Kalari, in 2019, with the help of producers like Parimal Shais, with whom he later collaborated on hits like Ayyayyo and Go To Sleep.

Within 5 years, Hanumankind has a rapport most artists would die for, yet therein also lies the core issue I'd like to address. The roots of hip-hop lie in the liberation of the African American people against the white supremacist hegemony, and this characteristic draws from the art forms developed during the Harlem Renaissance. Modern hip-hop has transitioned from that to a global phenomenon, empowering the systematically disadvantaged. Ironically, hip-hop's global reach has made it vulnerable to appropriation by the same institutions it set out to oppose and DHH isn't strange to this predicament.

The cocktail of caste and class in our society has created enough social predicaments to provide a great environment for the people to relate to hip-hop. Yet that same cocktail also tends to remove the art from its context.



Tupac Shakur
Source: The Music Origins Project

Gangsta rap becomes glorification of violence, coke rap becomes glorification of drugs, and flex rap becomes glorification of material wealth. These symptoms can also be exemplified in Hanumankind's art. While he attempts to represent 'South Side,' he is also an NRI who worked at Goldman Sachs.

Reminds me of an author who also tries to advocate for the country's youth while being a former employee of the

aforementioned corporation. Sooraj isn't seen to have a beginner phase as he jumps in with established artists with a considerable platform. Initially, He toured around with NH7 Weekender, an opportunity only available to an elusive few. Hanumankind also seems to be a bit inauthentic in his art, as he shouts 'F the law' in one moment and collaborates with the country's Prime Minister in the next.

problematic nature of commercial hip-hop. As a song, 'Big Dawgs' got its viral appeal from the flow akin to that of Project Pat and the music video featuring the Death Well. Yet, this has become the gateway to Indian Hip-hop, i.e., something merely marketed by an Indian has become representative of Indian culture.

The overly commercial nature of his art, especially after 'Big



Source: NDTV

While these observations are not to blame Sooraj or his art completely, it is an attempt at pointing out a symptom of the

Dawgs,' makes me question the state of the genre we call DHH. This issue extends beyond Hanumankind, though he

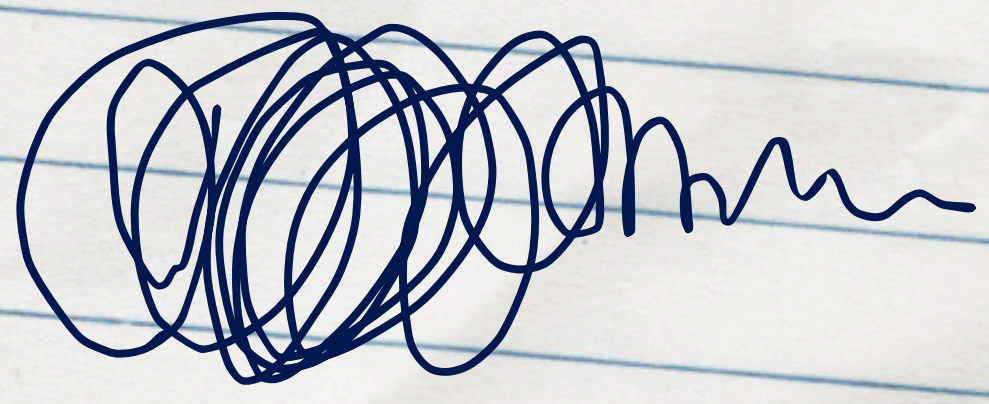
remains the most visible example at present. I struggle to find real substance in the so-called ‘representatives’ of the genre. Even the consumption is not based on giving it importance as a hip-hop product, but rather another song with good production value. It all seems so out of touch, yet the essence of hip-hop in DHH has never been as strong as it is now. Artists like Chaar Diwaari, Seedhe Maut, and Dhanji are all redefining boundaries and gaining prominence. Unapologetic social commentary is also rampant within DHH through artists like Vedan and Sambata. Hanumankind has its own space, but I do not find it representative of DHH. Even as a Malayali, it is hard to see him as anything but a vanity piece while Malabar rap is being carried forward by artists such as Dabzee.



Sambata
Source: Red Bull

India has always been a bastion of culture, yet as of late, we always seem to be infatuated with the performative rather than the genuine. Although not everyone has to be Kendrick Lamar, however, I find it difficult to accept low-quality music masquerading as hip-hop and labelling itself as culture. In my opinion if we look beneath the surface, we’ll discover a wellspring of greater things to create and even greater ones to consume.

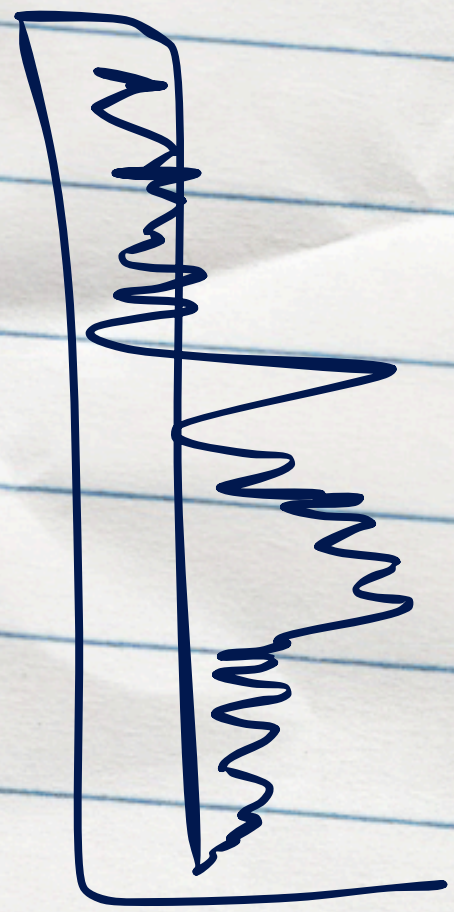
Let It Go



Should I let it go?
Maybe I should.
Though my hands seem bound
with the fear that's always found deep within me, engraved in my soul.
Why fear? I ask myself,
as I push into the water to engulf me whole.
Control the breath,
keep the emotions buried in the torn papers from the time I was twelve.

I should let it go—
I know, but I would be condemned to death.
Heaven forgive me if I let it go.
What would be left of me on this earth, that never fails to make young girls question their worth?
I should let it go,
but each step I climb makes the turmoil beneath seem like a hollow shadow stuck to my toe.

I say, "I'm over it."
But my voice wavers each time
I utter a word before I quit.
And I close my eyes.
Kneel at temples instead, just
in time to feel the prayers
of the child within me, die.



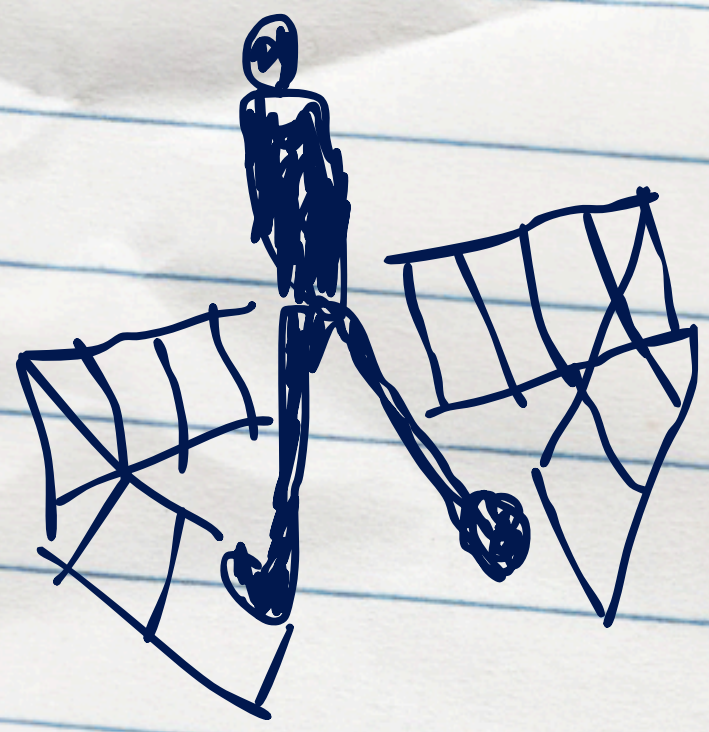
All these years pass by,
Still, the memories remain fastened, like sacred wounds nailed into flesh.
And my body hunts for its last cry, staining tears onto the words I write.
I could let it go—
But what if 'it' is what's left of me?
It's April again, and anxiety gives me flight.



I try to reveal,
with heartfelt reassurance that mirrors the barren pages.
That sign of life left to unveil.
And the sun sets over the sea,
casting off myriad hues of vibrance. I should let it go—exhale.
It cost me a torn spirit,
a war inside of me, like tides that pull relentlessly.
They drown the facets of me that once were free.

I should let it go—
But I'm scared to.
As the golden paint refuses to fill the cracks and hold together
Something I deemed an unrepairable endeavour.

~Shrushti Wani, SYBA



Exploring the Use of the Colour Red in 20th Century Literary Texts



The Colour Red in 20th c. Literature

Nabeeha Shaikh

TYBA

"A Lady red – amid the Hill
Her annual secret keeps!
A Lady white, within the Field
In placid Lily sleeps!"

-Emily Dickinson

'Everything except the wings around my face is red: the color of blood, which defines us.'

-The Handmaid's Tale: Margaret Atwood

Literature has long served as a space for creative freedom and expression, allowing writers to let the ink of their pens flow freely. The 20th century, in particular, witnessed a significant rise in the use of symbolism and the connotative meanings of objects to represent broader and more complex ideas. These include the symbolic use of colors such as red or yellow or objects such as stones and walls. In light of the aforementioned, this essay seeks to analyse the use of color red in context of 20th century literary texts such as Angela Carter's The Bloody Chamber, and Margaret Atwood's The Handmaid's Tale.

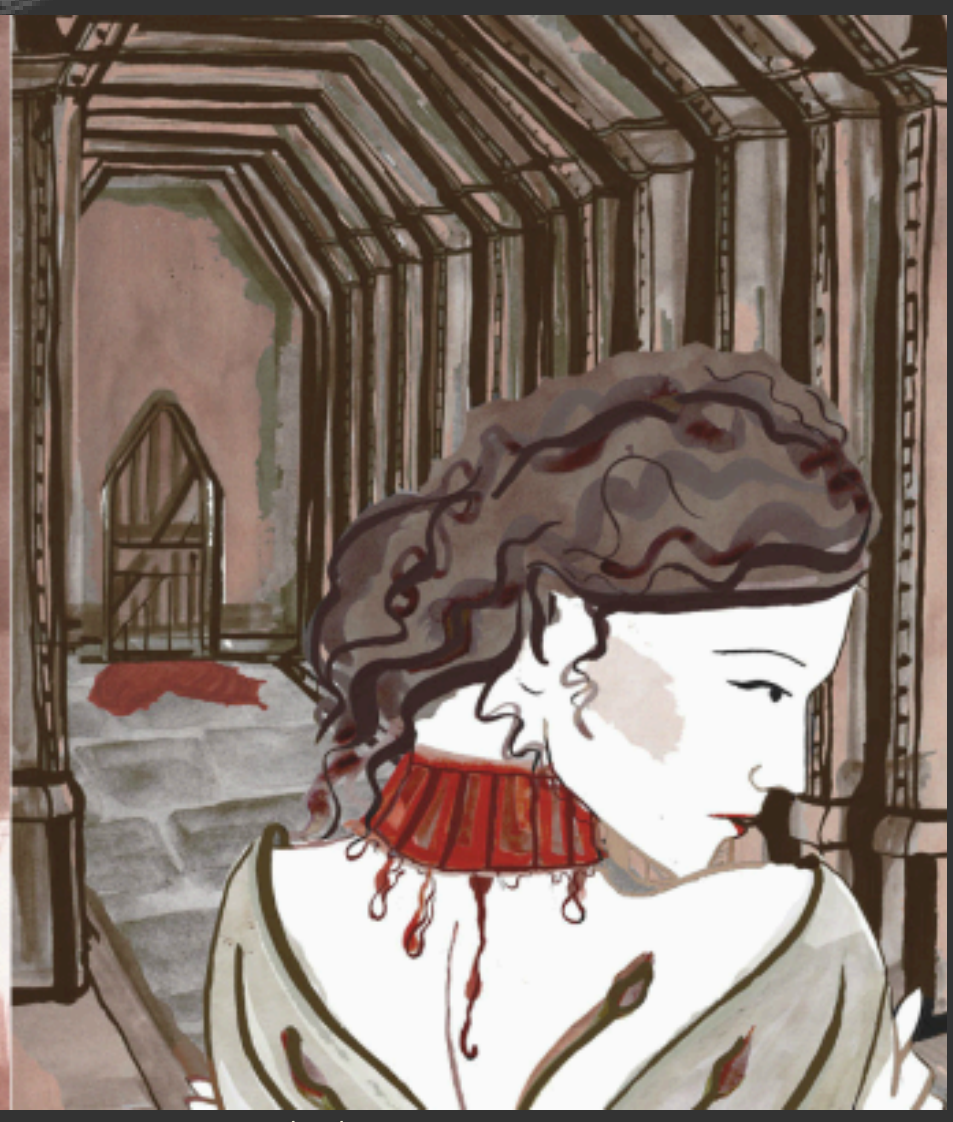
Red is a colour rich with layered meaning. It evokes a spectrum of emotions and ideas like violence, love, passion, anger, destruction, bloodshed, war, fertility and more. It has served both as a symbol of power and as an emblem of revolution.

Angela Carter, a renowned British writer and feminist, is best known for her stories of reimagining myths and fairy tales through a feminist perspective. Among her most notable works is The Bloody Chamber, a collection of short stories that seek to represent fairy tales from a feminist lens with empowered female characters. The collection includes the titular story of 'The Bloody Chamber,' inspired by Charles Perrault's French folktale Bluebeard. In it, Carter reimagines the tale by granting her female characters with greater power and agency.

As noted, the color red has been used to symbolize various themes. In 'The Bloody Chamber,' Carter employs the color red to symbolically evoke themes of power, sexuality, transformation and survival. The title of the story itself alludes to the impending danger and violence that will be uncovered by the tale. Additionally, as the narration



The Bloody Chamber



Source: Typelish

unfolds, the symbolism of red evolves from representing charm and
excitement to a color of violent desires. The tale features our protagonist, who in the beginning is a naive 17 year-old-girl, and later undergoes a transformation as the text progresses. The text initially makes mention of the color red through the ribbon wrapped around her wedding dress, followed by the crimson velvet lining of the leather ring box, both gifted by the Marquis, with which he proposes marriage

Here, in both instances, the color red suggests the protagonist's virginity, but also foreshadows the destruction and violence that will be accompanied. The color here attributes both to the charming allure of the Marquis, but also the threat he poses.

'His wedding gift, clasped round my throat. A choker of rubies, two inches wide, like an extraordinarily precious slit throat.'

A distinct and noticeable element however, comes with his wedding gift especially the choker of rubies. The protagonist remarks how it represents a slit throat, an heirloom connecting to the darker and bloodier aspects of the Marquis that will be uncovered. As the narrative unfolds, the color red makes multiple appearances such as the red lips of the Marquis or the red livery. This use of color red for Marquis and the gifts, add on to reflect his power, dominance, wealth and the bloody danger he represents.

The story reaches its climax when the protagonist enters the Bloody Chamber and uncovers

the horrifying secrets of the Marquis. The red, blood-soaked chamber reveals his violent and grotesque desires. Red too deep to be washed away, actions too bloody to be buried. The key is stained red, which acts as a symbol of her inescapable fate like the wives before her, until the timely rescue by her mother. It is in this final act of confrontation that the color red becomes a symbol of her survival and empowerment.

Let us look at our next piece of work, historically, the color red has been associated with women's virginity and fertility. In *The Handmaid's Tale*, Atwood's deliberate choice to make the uniforms of the handmaids red, reflects their roles as a mere mechanism used

for fertility. The color red 'defines' them and echoes with connotations of menstrual blood, a reminder of their sexuality, reducing them merely to be apparatuses of reproduction.

In the 20th century, Women's Rights Movements adopted the color red as a symbol of revolution, especially during the Suffrage movement. The Suffragettes used the color in their clothing and makeup, especially the iconic red lipstick as a visual symbol of defiance against the oppressive system while expressing their desires for equality and rights. In this context, the use of color red by feminist texts such as the ones mentioned above establishes red as a signifier of resistance and reclamation of female agency .

In conclusion, the color red in the 20th century emerged as a symbol of power, violence, fertility, empowerment, and transformation employed by various writers who utilized it not only for aesthetic purposes

but as a means to challenge and reframe traditional narratives especially in light of femininity and power. Through this lens, red becomes more than just a color, it is a marker of resistance, revolution, and the indomitable strength of women reclaiming their power.



Women's Suffrage badge, 1905.

Source: Museums Victoria Collection

My Mother's Number

I wish there was
A number,
On which I would call
My mother,
From that distant past
When she still held me to her bosom.

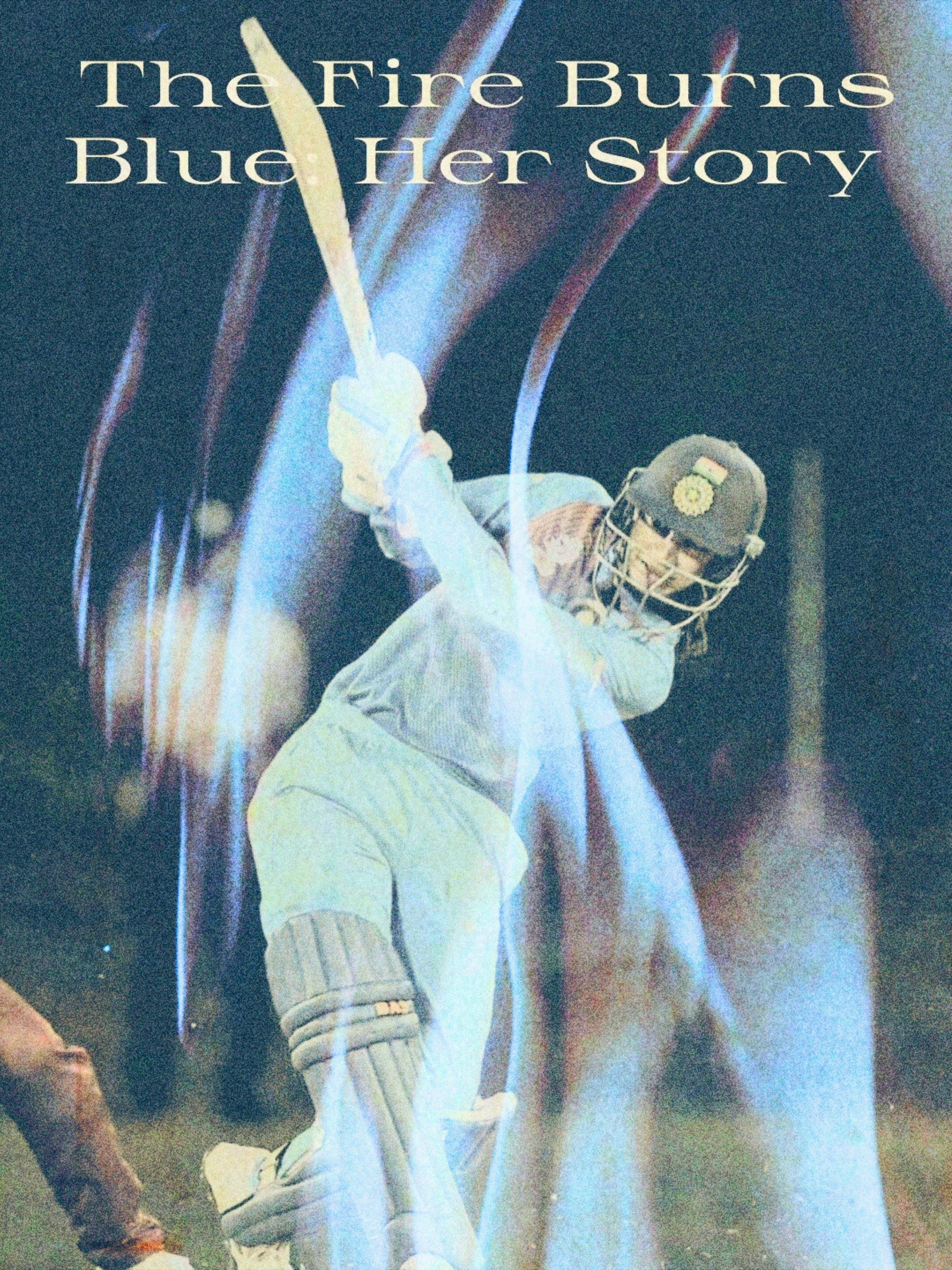
On the phone, I'd say
"It's me, your son."
In a trembling voice
The future I'd describe,
Gently, she'd tell me that:

I did not turn out that bad,
There's still hope for me to be had.
And her voice will carry no scorn
It will not make me forlorn
Alas, I can write letters to the future
But, to the past, there's no U-turn.

~Reven Mhadgut
SYMA (Eng)



The Fire Burns Blue: Her Story



The Fire Burns Blue: Her-Story

Pranali Chaubal

SYBA

We all are proud Indians and undoubtedly, cricket is our favorite game. Cricket not only gives us recognition, glory and grace but it also does play a vital role to intact the bonding of the nation. However, in our country women do not have the parity as compared to men. A times, women are being considered and treated as a weak entity, dependent and [might sound brutal but timid as well], meet the women who are redefining this statement through their dedication, skill, passion and hard work. Introducing **THE INDIAN WOMEN'S CRICKET TEAM.** In a world where women's have to face various challenges, the women's team are the champions of the pitch.

The Indian Women's started playing cricket in the early



Diane Edulji, captain of India's first WODI team. Source: The Sporting News

1970's. The first women's club was set up in 1971 in Mumbai, Pune and Chennai. First women's cricket nationals were held in Pune and Varanasi in 1973. In the same year, The Women's Cricket Association of India [WCAI] came into effect. In 1975, first Indian team was formed to play against Australia [Under-25]. Shanta Rangaswamy a 22-year old from Karnataka scored the first century for India in an unofficial test against New Zealand. India won their first

test match in 1976 against West Indies. In 1976-1977 Indian team travelled to New Zealand marking their first international tour and in the same tour Shanta Rangaswamy became the first women to score a century for India. Indian team played a few matches between 1977- 1983 including the first ODI win in the world cup in 1982.

The men's cricket team won their first world cup in 1983. After the 1983 world cup victory, it's not that women's cricket vanished, but the men's gained more prominence in news space and mind space. Between 1984-1995 Indian team played many matches including their first tour to England, playing a test against Australia in Mumbai and the test being broadcasted live for the very first time in the history of Indian women's cricket.

A young right handed batter, perhaps the most renowned female broadcasting cricketer named Anjum Chopra made her international debut in 1995, and with her arrival, a lot of challenges and victories were awaiting for the Indian team. The girls even won a tri nation centenary cup in New Zealand in 1995. The next edition of world cup was held in India in 1997 and the Indian team lost to Australia in the semi-finals.

In 1999, Mithali Raj, a young explosive batter made her debut against Ireland. She went on to play for the Indian Team for impressive 23 years, captained Indian women's for more than 13 years, played 200 ODI matches, became the only player to participate in 6 ICC championships and became the only international cricketer to score highest runs in International cricket. She announced her arrival into international cricket by scoring

a century on her debut and then started the era of **Mithali Raj.**



Source: Sportsmatik

In 2002, Mithali Raj at the age of 19, scored 214 in a test against England, then the highest individual score in the format. In 2005, under the captainship of Jhulan Goswami India's most renowned and celebrated place bowler and the highest wicket taker in women's ODI's played their first world cup finals against Australia, but unfortunately they fell to the World Champions.

In 2006, Board of Cricket Control in India [BCCI] took the complete control over women's cricket. Things started to change for women's cricket in India. In 2009, India finished third in the world cup in Australia, defeating the hosts twice along the way and making it to the semi- finals of the inaugural Women's World T20.

In 2014, India won the tests against South Africa and England at home. In 2015, BCCI awarded central contract to the female cricketers for the very first time.


Source: ESPNcricinfo

Then comes the 2017 world cup, which was played in England. No one knew that this world cup would change the perspective of women's cricket in India. Harmanpreet Kaur scoring 171*


Source: Cricket Country

against Australia, Mithali Raj becoming the leading run getter in ODI's and Jhulan becoming the leading wicket taker in ODI's were some exceptional moments from the world cup for India. The Indian team defeated Australia and reached to the finals but unluckily Indian women's fell short of 9 runs and India lost the match against England. Though the India team did not win the cup, they won a millions of hearts and gained many new fans. People in India now knew that women's also played cricket. Harmanpreet Kaur [now the captain of Indian team] in an interview said that getting recognized without winning the world cup was more admirable then getting recognized after winning the world cup.

In 2020 India played the T20 world cup finals against Australia but lost to the World champions again. In 2022 the MILJHUL era [Mithali Raj and Jhulan Goswami] came to an end. The two stalwarts have brought in so much grace and glory and now women's cricket was not going to be the same without the two legends.



Source: Female Cricket

In 2023 and 2024, Indian women's played two T20 world cups but unfortunately could not win their first title. India played many bilateral series

which has prepared them well for the 2025 world cup and India are the official hosts for the world cup.

Playing cricket for a girl in India has always been a challenge. Many families and society discourage girls from pursuing cricket as a career, citing gender roles and expectations. Society feels that domestic duties are the ultimate career for a woman. And if any girl desires to play the sport then society would judge her and some people consider it as a bad omen.

Inadequate infrastructural facilities have also affected women's cricket on a large scale. Women's often have to share facilities like clothes and kits with men's leading to inadequate sources. Another important factor that affects women's cricket is lack of coaching. Beginning from the basic club level, many clubs deny enrolling girls into their academy. At the higher level women's cricket is lacking experienced coaches which is leading to lack of guidance and opportunities.

Although BCCI's intervention brought in significant improvements in amenities and coaching for women's cricket, other challenges persisted. Opportunities for women's to play domestic matches were few and far between. Even to compete with international teams, women's had limited opportunities, making it difficult for them to develop their skills.

Another major problem that scares the girls or their families is safety. Before the 2000's women's cricketers often faced harassment and safety concerns while travelling to tournaments or training sessions. Personal hygiene is important for any girl and women's earlier did not

have excess to facilities like changing rooms and toilets, which can be a safety risk.

Women's cricket team often lack sponsorships and funding, making it difficult for them to participate in competitive tournaments and showcase their skills. This problem is restricted to domestic cricket after BCCI's intervention. Women's cricket often have limited resources which includes equipment's, coaching staff and even a good ground to practice. Even after BCCI's intervention in 2006, equal pay was a concern. Women cricketers often received low pay and benefits compared to their male counterpart.

Beyond the on-field challenges, there were numerous off-field challenges which also included administrative challenges. Women's often lacked representation in administrative bodies, making it difficult for their concerns to be heard. Also women's cricket lacks adequate governance structure which makes it difficult to develop and implement policies and programs.

To develop women's cricket and to give them a good platform to show case their skills, it is essential to prioritize few expectations. These exceptions including equal pay for women's cricket, improving infrastructure, coaching and player development.

BCCI has started a league same as IPL named WPL. WPL marks a significant milestone and it is extremely important to promote it extensively and give women's cricket the respect important and recognition it deserves. Domestic cricket boards can provide the girls with experienced coaches and trainers to enhance their skills.



Mumbai Indians wins WPL in 2023. Source: Crictoday

BCCI can promote women's cricket through media campaigns, sponsorship and fan engagement activities. Cricket for girls at school level should be promoted. Conducting sessions and workshops which can educate women about importance of sports and promote healthy lifestyle and empower them through sports.

Just as 1983 World Cup victory catapulted men's cricket to fame, the same way one win for the women's in any ICC championship which will lead them to gain widespread popularity and recognition.

Despite facing various challenges both on and off the field, Indian women are emerging strong through every challenge. Through their passion and love for the game they are ready to rule the cricketing world. It's high time that the universal statement which is 'Cricket is gentleman game' should be changed to 'Cricket is everyone's game'. The way people have supported men's to create HIS-STORY the same people should also support women's to create HER-STORY.

Some stalwarts of the Indians women's cricket team.

- Diana Fram Edulji- The first captain of the Indian women's cricket team for the one day international. It is correctly said that her fate was tied to the game right from very early age as she started playing cricket in the railway colony itself where she lived. In 1993 government of India honored her with the greatest achievement of sports award, i.e. Arjuna Award. In 2002 she was bestowed with Padma Shree. On 20 January 2017 Supreme Court of India appointed her in the BCCI administrative panel.

- Shantha Rangaswamy- Shantha Rangaswamy was the first women to make century in the Indian cricket team 1977. In year 1982 she was adjusting the best performer in the women's World Cup. In 1976 she was honored with the Arjuna Award. Currently she is working as a cricket features writer and for the development, glory and prosperity lihgof her community she is spreading the message of female cricket to all.

- Anjum Chopra: she made her debut in one-day international on 12 February 1995 against New Zealand at Christchurch New Zealand at the early age of 17 years and made her debut in test cricket against England at Eden Gardens Kolkata, a few month later on 17 November 1995. She is a left hander batswomen who bowls right arm medium fast. She has played in 12 Tests and 116 ODIs. She is also a well-known Indian sports broadcaster. She has provided commentary and analysis for many cricket leagues including IPC Indian Premium league, WPL women's premium league and ICC Championship.

- Mithali Raj: She has been the bedrock around which the Indian women's batting has evolved over many years now. Over a fifteen year period she has played 10 test matches and 153 one-day internationals. She made her ODI debut in 1999 and Test debut in 2002 "People looked at me differently I played cricket". Mithali raj is now the highest run-getter in women's ODIs. She went past Charlotte Edwards's record of 5992 runs against Australia women at Bristol on 12 July, 2017. In her career so far she has amassed 6190 runs from 186 ODIs. Mithali Raj has scored 10 fifty-plus runs women's ODIs in 2017 which is the highest in ODIs by a batswoman in a calendar year.

- Jhulan Goswami- A legendary pace bowler who always helped her team to fight against difficult situations. She is the highest wicket taker in One Day Internationals [ODI's]. She became the first woman to take 200 ODI wickets. She was awarded with The Arjuna Award in 2010 and The Padma Shri in 2021. Goswami announced her retirement in 2022 from international cricket, after an illustrious career spanning over two decades. Her legacy and her love for the game inspires young cricketers, especially women, in India and around the world.

- Harmanpreet Kaur- The captain of the Indian Cricket team and an aggressive batter with exceptional leadership qualities. She holds the record for the highest individual score by and Indian woman in ODI's. Her batting style makes her an outstanding player who is always ready to fight for her team. Her way of playing and understanding the game has positioned her as one of the world's top female cricketers.

- Smriti Mandhana- The future captain and the current vice-captain of the Indian team. She is known for her aggressive yet elegant batting style and exceptional fielding skills. She is the youngest woman to score a century in ODI's. She has also won many ICC awards for the best international cricketer. She continues to inspire young girls to take up the sport.



FREE FROM THE CLUTCHES OF MY PAST



I'm single now—
Free from the clutches of my past,
From shadows that haunted
Like whispers in the dark,
Lingering far too long.



I'm free from the clutches of those
Who pulled me down,
Criticised me,
Made fun of me,
Made me feel less than enough.
But today, I create boundaries.
Today, I protect my peace.

I feel like a woman
Breaking the chains of an unspoken war,
A soul unshackled
From the quiet bruises of love gone wrong.





The time has come to think of myself,
To hear my heart and nothing else.
To grow in places I once broke,
And breathe again without the choke.

I'll take long walks beneath the sky,
Eat what I want—no need to justify.
Buy myself the brightest flowers,



Get lost in time, not count the hours.
Talk to strangers without fear,
Let laughter echo, wild and clear.
Scream my name into the sea,
And set my restless spirit free.



Like oceans, I will rise,
Flow is where I please, crash if I
must, and always return whole.

The Past was a weight I carried too long,
the silence behind my broken song.

Now I breathe with nothing to prove— I've
cut the ties, I've made my move.

I don't need revenge or rage,
Just the strength to turn the page.

I'll wear that closeted dress,
Do my hair just how I like,
Step into the night and claim my place.

I'll go out,
Laugh out loud,
Dance till the music fades—
Not to impress, not to be seen,
But because I can.

And in that moment,
Between the beat and the breath, I'll fall in love—
Not with someone else,
But with that version of me
I fought so hard to become.

~ Racheal Vijay Kedari,
SYBA

Han Kang's Fiction of Resistance:Carving Silence into Literature



Han Kang's Fiction of Resistance

Faihzin Alware
SYBA

The Weight of Words and the Fragility of Being

There are writers who tell stories, and then there are those who etch themselves into the very fabric of existence, uncovering the delicate yet brutal truths of being human. Han Kang belongs to the latter. Her words do not merely convey meaning; they haunt, they unearth, and they demand to be felt. With the announcement of her 2024 Nobel Prize in Literature, Han Kang emerges not just as South Korea's first laureate in literature but as a voice that has consistently navigated the intersections of trauma, memory, and the fragile boundaries between body and soul.

Source: Amazon







For readers of Han Kang, literature becomes less a refuge and more an unraveling. In her books, suffering does not seek redemption, grief does not ask for closure, and violence lingers like an unspoken inheritance. Even so, nestled within these stark portrayals is something

tender.: a quiet contemplation of existence and an aching question-What does it mean to be human in a world that both nourishes and destroys?

This article delves into the literary essence of Han Kang- her distinct narrative style, the thematic weight of her work, and the significance of her Nobel win.

find poetry in pain.

Han Kang's Literary Landscape: A Voice That Listens to Silence

At the heart of Han Kang's literary world lies a persistent questioning. Her books do not attempt to answer these questions, but rather, they reside in them. The act of writing, for her, is an act of



Source: Chosun.com

It is more than a pursuit of her achievements, it is a reflection on the power of literature to confront wounds and the chaos in the silence, to voice the voiceless and unspoken, and to

dwelling, of living inside an inquiry until it transforms her. As she states in her Nobel Lecture: 'Each time I work on a novel, I endure the questions, I live inside them... By then, I am

no longer as I was when I began.' This transformation is palpable in every one of her works. From, 'The Vegetarian' (2007) to 'The White Book'(2016), She continuously explores themes of suffering, history, and the blurred line between human and non-human existence.

It is impossible to discuss Han Kang without mentioning The Vegetarian. The novel, which earned her the '2016 Man Booker International Prize' after being introduced to the international audience through translation in 2015, is often misunderstood as a story about eating habits. But at its core, it is a tale of defiance, desire, and the violence embedded in societal expectations.

The protagonist, Yeong-hye, stops eating meat after a disturbing dream, triggering a slow shift into silence and estrangement. Through her character, Han Kang explores the consequences of resisting societal norms, the fragility of human condition, and the weight of expectations of fitting into the 'human species'.

While The Vegetarian explores personal trauma, Human Acts (2014) turns its gaze outward to historical wounds that refuse departure, and are often passed down as the only inheritance to upcoming generations. Based on the 1980 Gwangju Uprising, the novel resurrects the dead and demands that the reader listen, while personally balancing a label of 'survivor's guilt,' having moved from Gwangju mere months before the uprising.

Han Kang writes about violence not as an event, but as an intimate, unbearable weight, one that remains in bodies and memories. Through multiple perspectives, she reflects on the

impossibility of justice, leaving us with the unsettling realization that history does not pass, but rather becomes an echoing, visceral room in our minds.

The White Book (2016) is personal, almost sacred in its mourning—perhaps the only work that directly confronts us with Kang and her raw emotions. Written in fragmented narrations, the book is Han Kang's quiet wish for her older sister, who died as an infant. White, for Han Kang, is not merely a color — it is an absence, a presence, a lingering breath of the past, a black canvas against which white memories are cast. From snow to white beach pebbles, handkerchiefs to blank pages, she composes a list where grief is not dramatic, but ubiquitous and infinite.

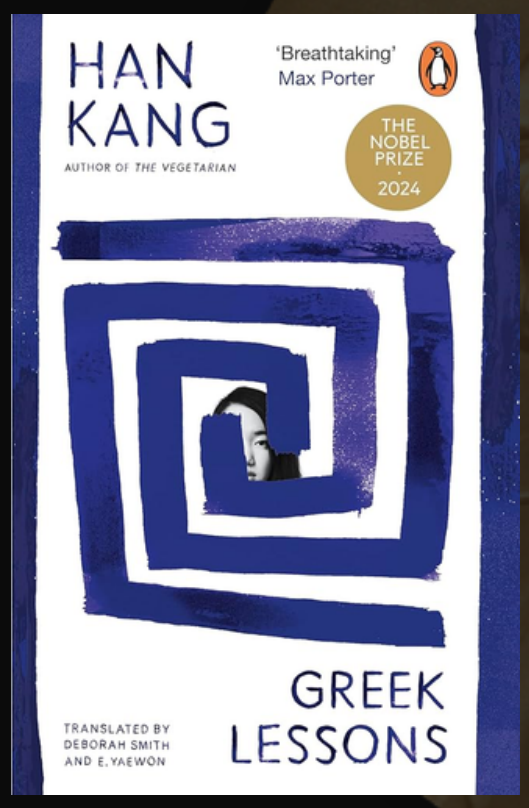
'Where her only comfort has been the impossibility of forever.'

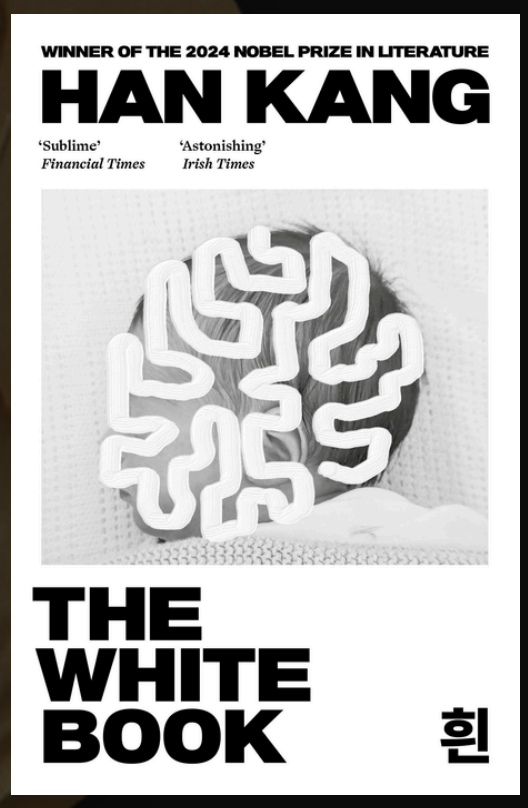
Reading The White Book gives a feeling akin to witnessing a serene landscape adorned with fresh white snow.

Han Kang's writing is distinct not only for its poetic prose but for the themes she relentlessly pursues. The Body as a Battlefield. The human body in Han Kang's fiction is never neutral; it is a site of struggle, relentless violence, and continuous transformation. Whether it is Yeong-hye's rebellion in The Vegetarian or the fragile presence in The White Book, the body often becomes a canvas upon which trauma is carved. Memory, for Han Kang, is not just about remembering—it is about witnessing and re-living. Her books are filled with memories of the past, personal or historical, and she asks: 'Can the present help the past? Can the living save the dead?'

Silence is not the absence of speech in Han Kang's work, it is a presence, a feeling. Her characters often exist within unspoken suffering, a crisis of today's world, where language and trauma fails to convey the pain but the body remembers. This silence is not passive; it is resistant, haunting, and deeply human.

Source: Amazon





Han Kang's Nobel Prize win is monumental and historical, indeed a recognition of a body of work that refuses to turn away from the uncomfortable truths of existence. Han Kang's Nobel is significant because it acknowledges literature that confronts pain rather than escapes or ignores it. It brings global attention to South Korean literature and its unique literary aesthetics. It honors a writer who listens to the silent and gives voice to the voiceless. In an era where literature often seeks entertainment, Han Kang's work demands reflection. It does not comfort. Instead, it unsettles, provokes, and transforms.

Han Kang's novels are not for passive reading. They require endurance. They demand that you sit with your discomfort, that you unlock a thread from

your memories, that you witness suffering without the promise of resolution.

Yet, in this act of witnessing, something profound happens, You become part of the conversation. You participate in the grief, the questioning, the beauty of a world that is both unbearable and beautiful.

Han Kang, through her writing, teaches us that literature is not about answers. It is about the courage to ask the most painful questions.
Perhaps that is why, years from now, long after the excitement of the Nobel Prize has faded, her books will remain not because they entertain, but because they insist on remembering.
And perhaps, in that remembering, we might find what it means to be human after all.



Source: Kyodo News

The Laapata Lasses in Children's Stories

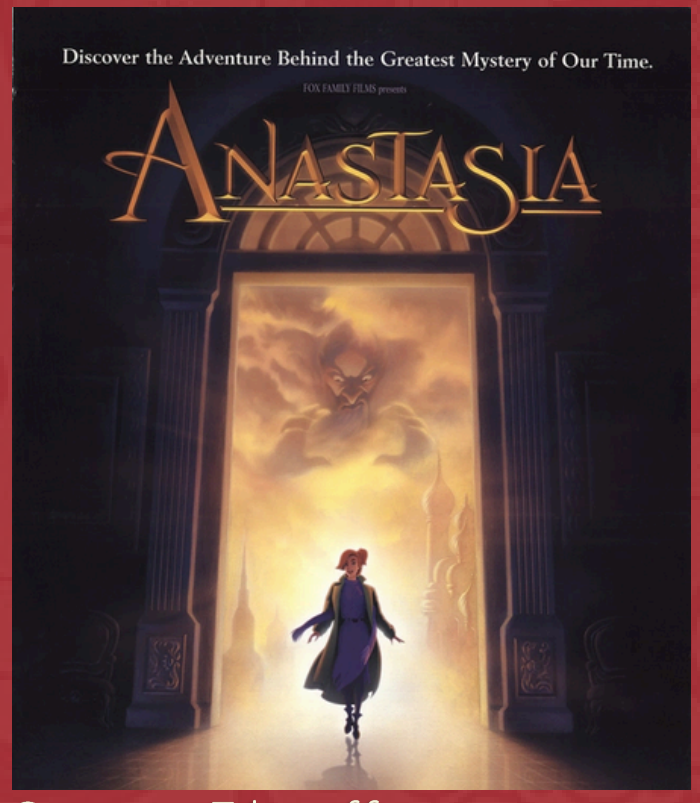
The Laapata Lasses of Children's stories

Tanishta C. Kotian
TYBAMMC

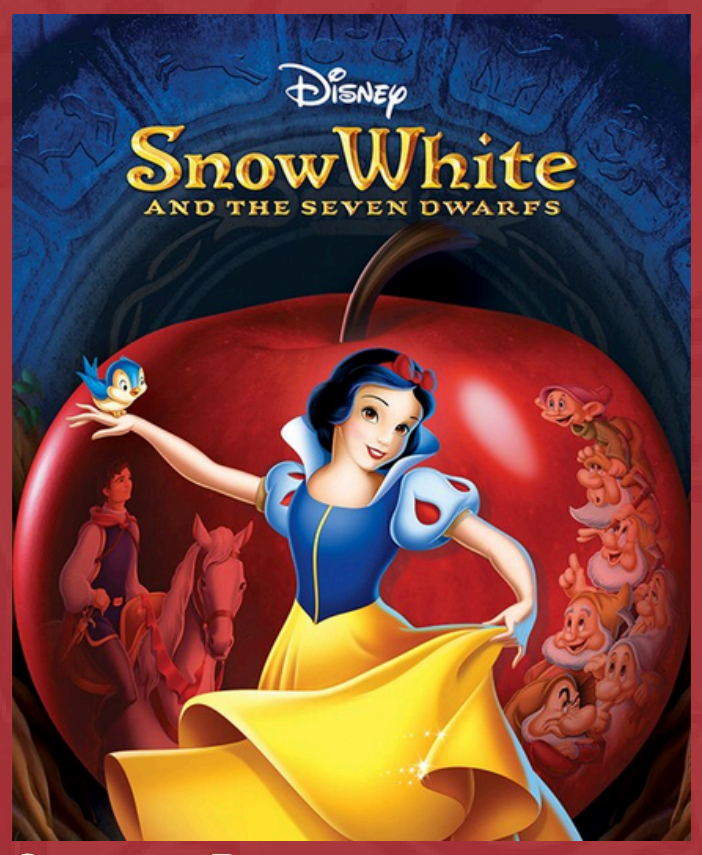
Anya, an orphan, pretends to be the lost princess Anastasia of Russia alongside some con artists. As she continues the pretence, her memories are triggered, and eventually, Anya discovers that she is indeed Anastasia.

Cinderella, a beautiful orphan, is mistreated by her stepmother. She falls in love with the prince at the ball, but while leaving, she loses her shoe. The prince uses it to find her, and upon doing so, marries her and revokes her 'lost' status.

Snow White, a beautiful orphaned princess, is abused by her stepmother, the Queen. After a murder attempt, she escapes to the forest and hides with the dwarves. There, she eats a poisoned apple and falls into a magical sleep. She is eventually rescued by the prince, who has been searching for the lost princess.



Source: Filmaffinity



Source: Disney

Sleeping Beauty, or Princess Aurora, is blessed and cursed by fairies to be a beautiful and talented princess. On her sixteenth birthday, she pricks her finger and falls into a deep sleep, only to be awakened by true love's kiss. Hidden from the kingdom and raised as a peasant girl by the good fairies, she falls in love with Philip. After pricking her finger and falling asleep, Philip battles Maleficent to rescue his lost princess.

What do these fairy tales have in common?

A prince arrives to rescue their lost or missing princesses and helps them rediscover who they are. We've all grown up reading the same old tale of the hero saving the day. As children, we adored watching the princesses in their gowns wandering around the forest, playing with the animals, and appearing to lead peaceful lives. However, as adults, there are indications that these stories of princesses getting lost might have a deeper significance.

Though subtle, it is present. After deciphering the meaning, I've concluded that these traditional fairy tales were attempting to convey to us women a message that went beyond a straightforward romance. Something that women like us must comprehend from an early age. And it's this:

Every female possesses an inner potential waiting to be realised.

All you have to do is tap into it.



The 'lost princess/lady' is a potent figure because she symbolises displacement, resilience, and the quest for self-discovery or rightful restoration.





Source: Disney

Themes like tenacity, inner strength, and the triumph of justice are frequently present in these tales.

To truly understand why this narrative is so powerful, we have to dissect the tales and the creation behind the princesses and where they get lost first.

In many of the tales, princesses often wander into the forests or grow up in the woods, a seminal setting for the concepts of self-discovery. The forests are mostly shrouded in mystery and a horror-like environment, but upon further analysis, it can also be seen as an area for self-growth and resilience. In folklore, forests are often depicted as enigmatic, transitional areas that separate the wild and uncontrollable natural world from the protection of civilisation (the castle or home).

They stand for the subconscious, which is where secrets, anxieties, and desires are kept latent. Entering or becoming lost in the forest might represent a princess' journey into her innermost thoughts, where she may face repressed parts of her identity or personal issues. The forest frequently acts as a setting for character development. A princess lost in a forest might represent the start of a transformative journey, a process of letting go of previous identities or social expectations and emerging with greater strength, wisdom, or self-awareness.



The lost lass is lost because she doesn't know herself. After all, we often do not acknowledge our talents and potential to be creatures of grace and beauty. In fairy tales, this realisation comes when the hero saves them. but reality tells a different story. We have to recognise how each princess's attempts to dig deep and reveal the realisation of their strengths.



The recurring motif of young women getting lost is often portrayed as a pivotal journey towards self-discovery and personal purpose. Traditionally, this journey culminates with the kiss of true love, catalysing the princess's realisation of her own identity and worth.



Source: Disney

For the most part, this is a reaffirming perspective that helps girls realise the value of being themselves, it simultaneously implies that the princess must be kissed by a prince to realise this moment. This notion inherently positions self-discovery and the attainment of one's true purpose as reliant on male involvement, a perspective that is both outdated and unnecessary.

Conversely, princes in these tales are seldom depicted as lost; instead, they embark on quests that are self-directed, allowing them to make autonomous choices and uncover their true meaning. This subtly reinforces the idea that males are inherently capable of independent self-actualisation, while females require external assistance to achieve the same. Such storytelling can subtly influence young minds, embedding the belief that girls need male support to fully realise their potential, whereas

boys are portrayed as self-sufficient in their journeys.

The idea of 'getting lost' in fairy tales often represents self-discovery and personal growth, but it is crucial to recognise that, within these narratives, the prince often assumes control of the journey's resolution. This dynamic suggests that societal norms ultimately define and validate the princess's identity and worth. Even when presented subtly, this framework can affect how girls perceive themselves, reinforcing a quiet expectation to seek approval rather than claim their power. Fairy tales have always sparked imagination and taught



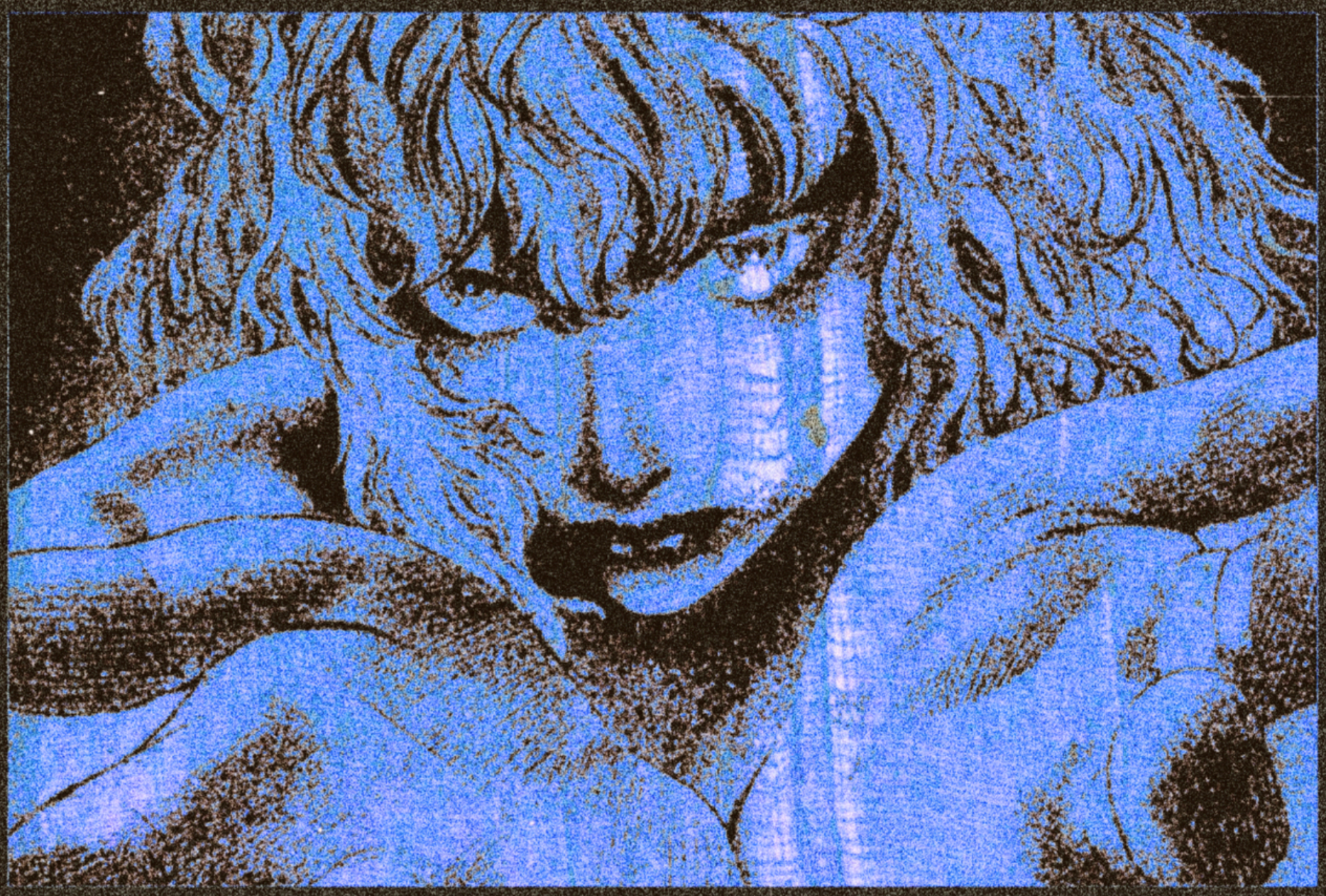
Source: Telegraph India

valuable lessons, and despite their outdated stereotypes, they continue to play a positive role in childhood development. However, it’s crucial to look beyond the surface and examine the deeper messages hidden within these familiar narratives, especially the 'lost princess' trope.

To inspire young girls and provide them with empowering role models, we need to rewrite the script. Fairy tales should evolve to feature heroines who forge their own paths, make bold choices, and discover who they are without waiting for permission. By doing so, we can move beyond traditional narratives and encourage girls to embrace their true selves, free from societal constraints.

Only then can the 'laapata lasses' truly become the heroes of their own stories.

Androgyny in Anime



Ambiguity , Aesthetics and Appeal

Androgyny in Anime

Vijaya Jha
SYBA

'Androgyny: the quality or state of being neither specifically feminine nor masculine.'

In recent times, anime has gained increasing popularity in the West and is gradually becoming a conventional medium of entertainment across the world. One of its major appeals is its complex story structure and its continued defiance of established norms for the achievement of a creative purpose. For the West, anime offers a fresh perspective on subjects, due to its uniquely different culture and history. While this difference is not always appreciated, as seen by the heavy censorship of anime on American television, it nevertheless, never fails to perk the interest of American audiences, sometimes enough to stream the original, uncensored versions online.

Anime has become a world where boundaries are bent and complex themes are explored. One of the most intriguing aspects to emerge from this has been the concept of androgyny. Androgyny in anime refers to the blending or blurring of gender lines, where characters possess qualities or aesthetics that are neither strictly male nor female. This allows for conversations on gender exploration and often reflects broader societal norms about gender and identity.

The idea of androgyny is an ancient one and has been expressed in various mythologies and literature over

the centuries. Broadly speaking, androgyny refers to any blurring of distinctions between the sexes. In this sense, it can include anything from physical sex characteristics and sexual preference to unisex dress styles. Although often practiced by many non-binary and gender-fluid individuals, people of any gender or sexual orientation can be androgynous. Often associated with fashion, art, and culture, androgyny challenges societal expectations of gender roles and appearance.

Anime provides an unrestrained space for androgyny and non-binary representations. With these characters, anime explores their relationships with others, the nuances of identity, and sometimes even uses them as a parody of social expectations around gender.

Bon Clay from One Piece is a good example. He is an



Source: One Piece

effeminate man from the Kamabakka Kingdom—an okama kingdom (okama is a Japanese slang term referring to an effeminate man). With the powers of the Clone-Clone Devil Fruit, which allows him to take on the physical appearance of anyone whose face he has touched with his right hand, he becomes one of the high-ranking officers of Baroque Works. Skilled in martial arts, ballet dancing, and deception, he is a formidable antagonist whose strong belief in friendship later makes him one of the most beloved characters on the show.

Smeddy from Record of Lodoss War is another such character. She is described as a large and muscular woman, capable of matching any man in combat. This powerful depiction, even as a female antagonist, makes her a memorable figure.

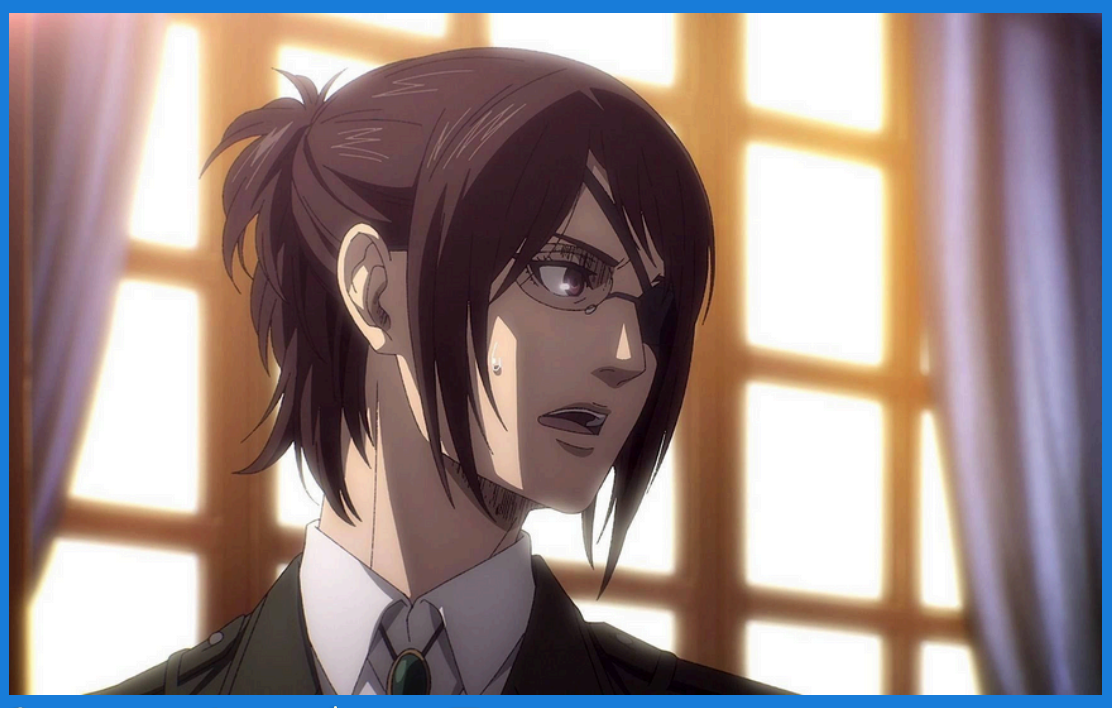


Source: YouTube

Grell Sutcliff from Black Butler is yet another example of androgyny in anime. Grell is a Grim Reaper who identifies as a woman. She is an outspoken, flamboyant individual who unreservedly expresses herself and her desires, making her an instantly memorable character among fans.

Ambiguity is another way to make audiences question the gender of a character and examine the effects of binary gender roles. Being used to the male/female distinction, when we are faced with characters whose gender is intentionally left ambiguous, it challenges our assumptions about their roles and expected behavior. The lack of information about a character's gender makes these assumptions difficult, ultimately allowing the character to portray their identity on their own terms, to be received by the audience free from bias.

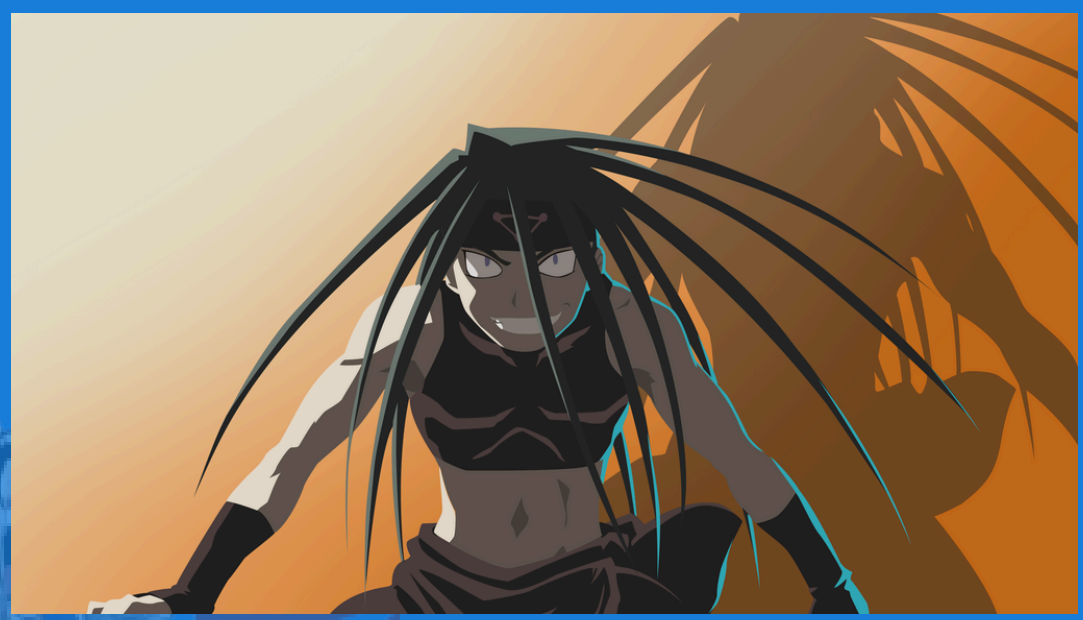
Ambiguity creates depth in characters. Not only are they free from bias, but this ambiguity allows for a deeper exploration of identity, enabling the narrative to address complex themes and showcase richer character development.



Source: Attack on Titan

An example of this is Hange Zoë from Attack on Titan. Hange's gender is left ambiguous throughout the series and remains open to interpretation. They appear as an energetic and quirky scientist with great compassion for the Titan test subjects. A genius with an outside-the-box approach to research, Hange excels as the 14th commander of the Survey Corps, often solving complex problems and devising strategies for the squad.

Another example is Envy from Fullmetal Alchemist. Envy is a homunculus with the ability to shapeshift, allowing them to assume the form and voice of any person. Because of this, Envy possesses no fixed gender or form, making them a truly ambiguous character.



Source: Wallpaper Abyss

Dogkeeper from No.6 is yet another example. They run a hotel in the West Block outside the city limits of No.6 and engage in dealings with smugglers who bring goods and information from the Correctional Facility. Their gender is never clarified, and they are portrayed as small and slender, with long brown hair, brown eyes, and brown skin—dressed in simple, androgynous clothing.

Androgyny in anime can also arise simply from character

design, featuring traits that blend traditionally masculine and feminine features, often resulting in characters who appear neither distinctly male nor female. A common example of this is the "bishōnen" aesthetic (bishōnen in Japanese literally means “beautiful boy”), where male characters have delicate features and youthful appearances, making them appear somewhat androgynous. While such appearances are common in many anime, especially those targeting a female demographic. They are sometimes emphasized deliberately to question traditional gender norms.

Aesthetics often add a detailed layer to a character, both in terms of storytelling and design. While this can sometimes relate to identity, it can also be purely about fashion and style. For example, the character Haruka from Sailor Moon is often shown wearing masculine or unisex clothing, with very few instances of her wearing dresses or skirts beyond the Sailor Uniform. As a result, she is often mistaken for a boy but she doesn’t try to correct people. She is simply a female who prefers dressing in a masculine style.



Source: Sailor Moon Crystal wiki

Inosuke Hashibira from Demon Slayer is an example of a pretty-looking boy. He usually wears a boar’s mask (a tribute to the wild boar who raised him as a child), and whenever he removes it, others are shocked by the contrast between his delicate appearance and his aggressive behavior and voice. A hilarious example is Hideyoshi Kinoshita from Baka to Test, whose

Source: Live Wallpapers



feminine looks make the boys around him so uncomfortable changing clothes or bathing with him that they ask him to change with the girls. Eventually, a separate bathing room is made just for him, leading his friends to jokingly refer to “Hideyoshi” as a separate gender altogether.

Androgyny in anime goes beyond mere visual appeal. It challenges identity, explores social norms, and fosters a deeper understanding of gender and self. By presenting characters who do not fit neatly into male or female categories, anime creates a space where diverse expressions of gender and identity are acknowledged and celebrated. This fluidity can be empowering for viewers, offering them the opportunity to see themselves reflected in characters who, like them, may not conform to societal expectations. It explores gender from a more nuanced perspective, serving as a reminder that gender is not something rigidly defined but a complex, ever-evolving experience; something particularly meaningful for viewers who may not feel represented by traditional gender roles, whether they are gender-nonconforming, questioning, or simply curious about gender dynamics.

In the world of anime, aesthetics and character design work together to create a visual language that conveys complexity and uncertainty, inviting the viewer to interpret a character's identity beyond surface appearance. Crona from Soul Eater is one character famously unable to deal with many things including gender. This makes them a particularly interesting and relatable character, especially for viewers who feel confused about their own identities, just like Crona.



Source: Soul Eater wiki

Another delight to the audience is Edward Wong Hau Pepelu Tivruski IV, colloquially known as 'Radical' Edward or simply Ed, from Cowboy Bebop. Having grown up as an orphan, she gave herself her own name, and she is as eccentric as it sounds. Ed is an odd, resourceful, happy-go-lucky child who is also extremely intelligent. Although a girl, she often wears androgynous clothing and is simply a free spirit with a love for nature and open spaces.



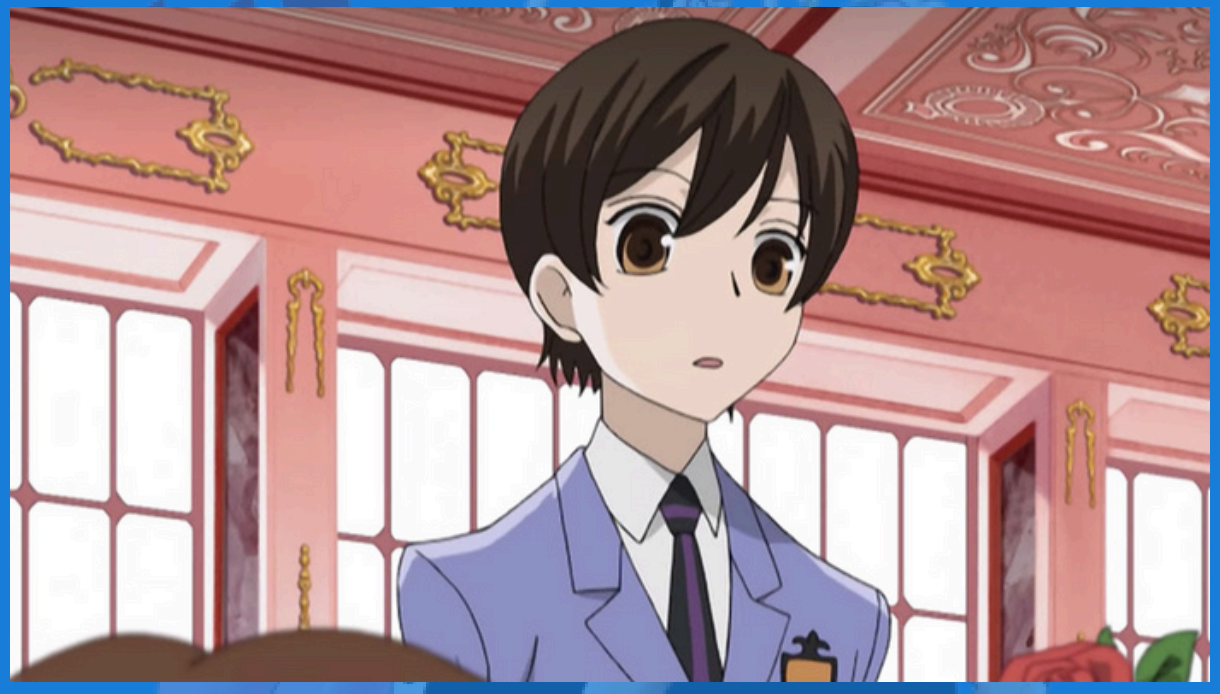
Source: TheGamer

Lastly, Haruhi Fujioka from Ouran High School Host Club is another girl who refuses to let her gender define her and does everything in her power to

survive. Coming from a less affluent background than her peers, she is more practical and down-to-earth, and not easily swayed by the Host Club's charms. Due to her appearance and demeanor, she is mistaken for a boy when she first joins the Host Club. Her gender

identities, androgyny introduces a rich layer to a character. It could be sheer ambiguity. A lack of any proper distinction, rendering one of the truest depictions of self: free from boundaries. One thing that all of these have in common is that they make for exceptionally

Source:
SlashFilm



fluidity and natural affinity toward people make her both relatable and extremely lovable.

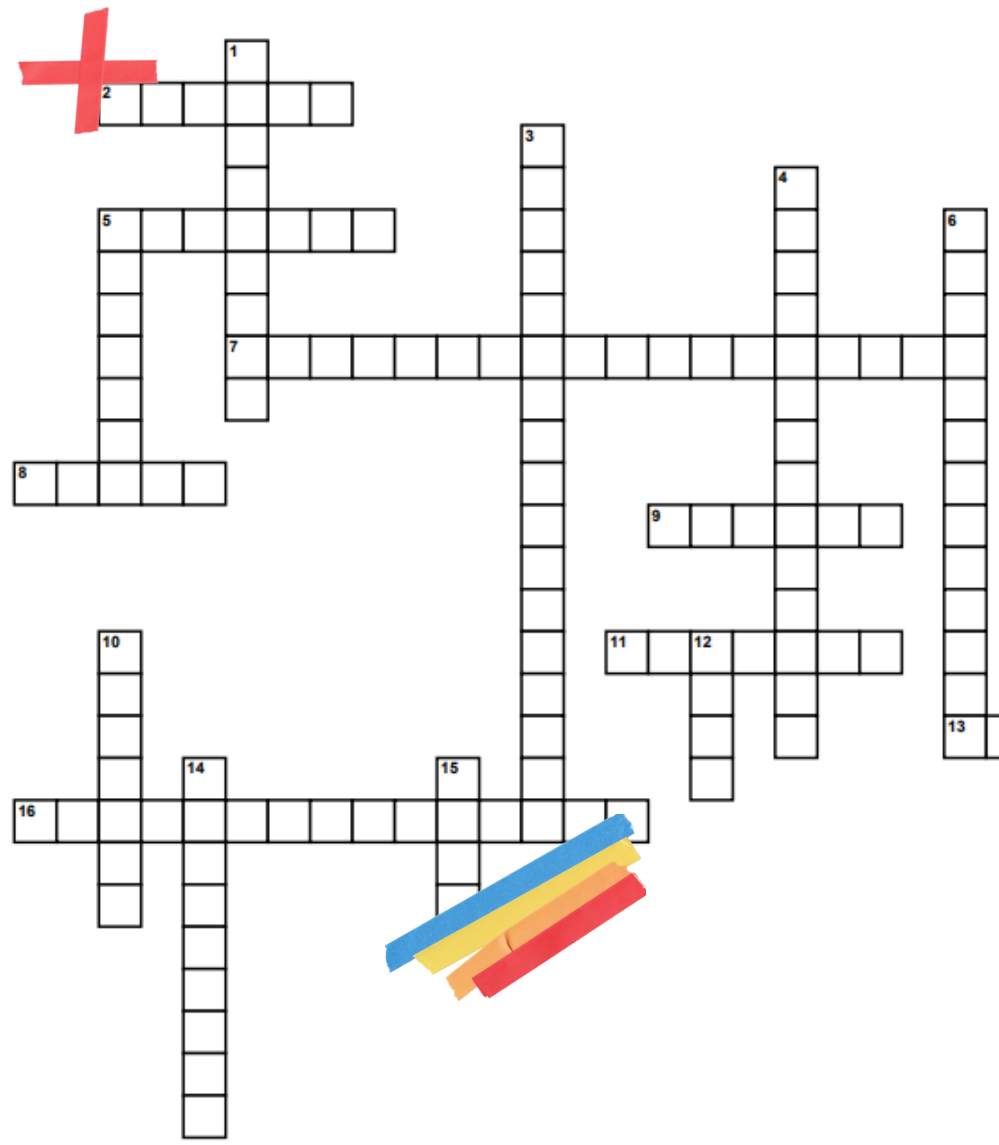
memorable characters. This goes to show how little is required for meaningful representation. It doesn't require wokeness or a constant demand for equal rights; it just requires an ounce of sincerity and a will to try.

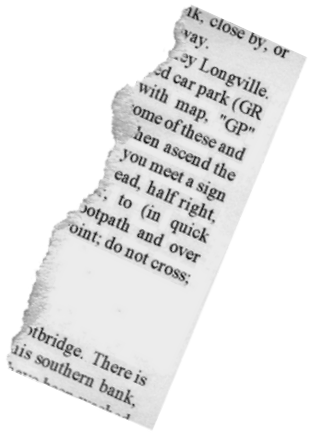
On the canvas of human experience, each voice provides a different shade. In its attempt to give them all a space, androgyny in anime plays a crucial role. Whether it appears as an aesthetic or as a genuine reflection of non-binary

The Crossword











Across: [2] Legendary Indian pacer and highest wicket-taker in Women's ODIs
[5] Shakespearean tragedy featuring 3 witches
[7] Nobel Prize-winning poet of Gitanjali
[8] Sylvia Plath's poem that features defiance, death, and resurrection
[9] Hanumankind's debut EP inspired by a traditional martial art
[11] Dutch painter who epitomizes the "mad genius" stereotype
[13] Secret script developed by women in China's Hunan Province
[16] Archer with a Mockingjay pin

Down: [1] Original fairy tale that inspired The Bloody Chamber
[3] Novel with the line "It is a truth universally acknowledged..."
[4] Author of The Handmaid's Tale
[5] She scored a century on debut and led India in six World Cups
[6] Da Vinci Code protagonist
[10] City where Hanumankind's career began
[12] Oral tradition parallel to Nüshu that expressed women's pain through song
[14] Master of suspense who directed The Birds
[15] Shakespeare's bird that "makes wing to the rooky wood"

Click to solve online:
https://interacty.me/projects/23f8ce3f9263c416

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The End

