

The Literati

2022-23

VOL.3

BY THE DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH, WILSON COLLEGE



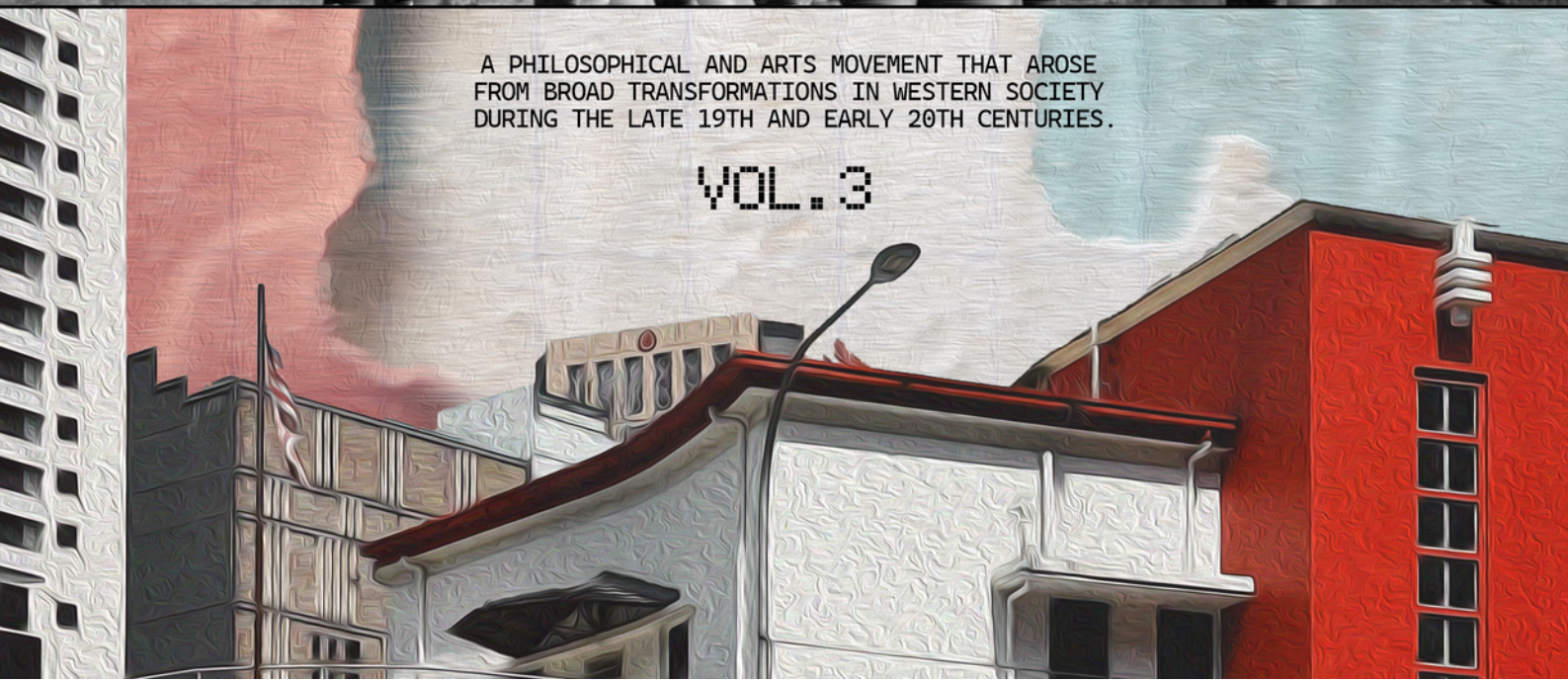
*A time will come to ride the wind and cleave the waves;
I'll set my cloud-like sail to cross the sea which raves.*

modernism

Spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak

A PHILOSOPHICAL AND ARTS MOVEMENT THAT AROSE FROM BROAD TRANSFORMATIONS IN WESTERN SOCIETY DURING THE LATE 19TH AND EARLY 20TH CENTURIES.

VOL. 3



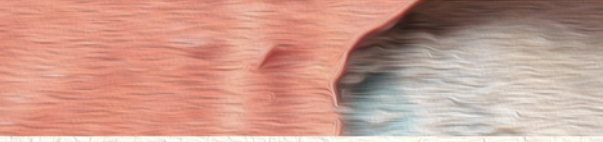
The Literati Volume III

2022-23

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the literati

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	<i>Page no.</i>
Editorial Note	1
The Unknown - Emailin Delsiya	3
The Biafran War and Poetry - Aashray Rao	4
Review of the novel <i>Tomb of Sand</i> - Tanishka Urade	15
Anorexia - A Tale of Religion and Guilt - Heenakshi	23
Ar-Ra'd - Zulekha Siddiqui	29
Torn - Alisha Khan	30
Victim with a Saviour's Complex - Anannya	31
<i>Ulysses</i> - Kaveri Devkate	34
Shakespeare in "The Waste Land" - Fiona Francis and Aashray Rao	39
The Waste Land and Kubla Khan - Dhvani Gohil	44
Her - Keerthana Arokia	45
Losing You - Keerthana Arokia	46
Red - Anannya	47
Mock epics	49
The State of Journalism in India - Runcil Rebello	52
Gothic Literature in the 18th Century - Neeti Kapoor	57
ChatGPT - The Shakespeare of Kalyug - Anil Mascarenhas	65
Crossword	71
Readers being Readers - Fiona Francis	72



Editorial Note

Writing is often depicted as a solitary act of creation done in isolation. This conception of the art neglects the collaborative nature of literature regardless of its form or genre, which working on the third volume of "The Literati" this year truly reinforced in our minds. Whether it be brainstorming with a potential writer to conceive of a topic that would effectively channel their imagination, talent, and ability; or working together as a team to edit pieces and polish them into the jewels we knew they could be, being the editorial team of this year's edition was a truly enriching experience.

The content of "The Literati Volume 3" covers a wide array of topics from the Gothic literature of the 19th century to the under-discussed and potentially uncomfortable topic of anorexia. Our writers looked both at the past discussing the war poetry of mid-twentieth century Nigeria to the future of writing in the age of technology such as ChatGPT. It also includes an eclectic blend of literary and artistic forms from research articles and free verse to pop art and mock epics. As 2022 marked a hundred years since the publications of T. S. Eliot's "The Waste Land" and James Joyce's Ulysses - both considered to be the highpoint of Modernist literature - this edition places a special emphasis on Modernism and these two texts.

We are truly grateful to the students who contributed to the magazine, were receptive to the suggestions we made, and prompt in incorporating them into their work.

In particular we would like to thank Runcil Rebello and Anil Mascarenhas, alumni from the Department of English for contributing to and showing interest in *The Literati*.

We are also indebted to our teachers, Ms. Vinita Mathew in particular, who supported and guided us through this project and had faith in us to see it through. Without them, this experience would not be nearly as fruitful as it turned out to be.

Finally, we hope you, the readers, find this edition of the magazine as enriching, enlightening and inspiring as we did. We hope it highlights the creative and analytical ability of the students who contributed as well as the general transformative power of art, and literature in particular. Having said all this, it gives us enormous pleasure to present to you “*The Literati Volume 3*”.

Regards

The *Literati* Editorial Team 2022-23

The Unknown

Emailin Delsiya, SYBA





The Biafran War and Poetry

Okigbo, Okara, Soyinka and Achebe

“The smell of blood already floats in the lavender-mist of the afternoon.
The death sentence lies in ambush along the corridors of power..”

The Biafran War and Poetry: Okigbo, Okara, Soyinka and Achebe

Aashray Rao, TYBA

“In a war situation or where violence or injustice are prevalent, poetry is called upon to be something more than a thing of beauty.”

– Seamus Heaney

Nigeria's emancipation from British rule did not lead to the idyllic state of peace, justice, and fraternity that many hoped it would. Independence was succeeded by a string of coups and military rebellions that culminated in the attempt by the mainly Igbo population of eastern Nigeria to secede in 1967. Their short-lived State, known as Biafra, was the site of great bloodshed (including death by starvation for reportedly over 1.5 million children), and its crushing defeat by the Nigerian federal government, supported by the United Kingdom and other superpowers of the time, has had long-lasting consequences.

Since the time of Homer's Iliad, war has always been a call to action for the poet. Unsurprisingly, this did not evade the minds of the literary community of Nigeria during the Biafran War. The four poets under scrutiny here - Christopher Okigbo, Gabriel Okara, Wole Soyinka, and Chinua Achebe - though unified in their support of Biafra and

Nigerian Civil War (1967-1970)

Source: Blackpast



condemnation of the Nigerian federal government, played vastly different roles in the war, which I will aim to show was reflected in their poetry.

Christopher Okigbo was one of the key figures of modernism in African poetry and one of the prototypical postcolonial poets. Once war broke out in May 1967, Okigbo made the decision to join the newly-founded state's military as a volunteer soldier which ultimately led to his death. From 1965-67, Okigbo wrote a collection of poems, published posthumously as *Path of Thunder*, that expressed the sense of impending doom that many in Nigeria felt at the time. Okigbo's ground-level engagement can be felt in the sensuous, immediate nature of his poetry. Looking at an example from the poem "Come Thunder":

*"The smell of blood already floats in the lavender-mist of the afternoon.
The death sentence lies in ambush along the corridors of power..."*

These almost prophetic lines illustrate the spectre hanging over the land of pre-war Nigeria, through a terrifying metaphor that brings to mind the image of a fragile fawn prancing proudly through the Sub-Saharan plains utterly unaware of the predator lying

Christopher
Okigbo
Source:
African Writer
Magazine



in wait, while further engaging the senses in a disconcerting way, asking the reader to reconcile the rancid smell of blood with the dreamy, calming scent of lavender in the afternoon. A second powerful example can be found in another entry from *Path of Thunder*:

*“...The eagles ride low,
Resplendent...resplendent
And small birds sing in shadows
Wobbling under the bones.”*

The comparison of bomber jets to “resplendent eagles” is punctuated by the beautifully haunting image of the final line. Once again, Okigbo engages multiple senses by calling on us to hear the sweet chirping of little birds in the aftermath of such death and destruction.

Okigbo’s death was one of the great tragedies of Nigerian literature, and it led to a deluge of poetic elegies and tributes from his contemporaries, most notably Achebe’s “A Wake for Okigbo” written in both Igbo and English, and recited by Achebe in the American Library of Congress. It



Gabriel Okara
Source:
OkayAfrica

also brought about a discussion on the role of the poet and their supposed duty to impartiality and detachment from “local conflict”, even inspiring a novel, *The Trial of Christopher Okigbo* by Ali Mazrui.

Born in Eastern Nigeria in 1921, Gabriel Okara, like Okigbo, devoted himself to the Biafran cause but was too old to be involved in direct combat and, instead, became a part of the administration of the new state. From his somewhat detached position, Okara provided a less immediate, yet still vivid and devastating, picture of the war. From “Suddenly the Air Cracks”:

“diving men women dragging children
seeking shelter not there breathless
hugging gutters walls houses
crumbling rumbling thunder”

Here, Okara in his description of a bombing raid captures not only the chaotic, frantic fear that such occasions bring about, but also the fragmentary nature of our experience and memory of these events. Further, it illustrates the inability of poets to reconstruct some moments in coherent language without losing something essential. Okara also made a crucial observation of the way war robs a person of their identity in his “I am Only a Name”:

*“I am only an expendable name
thrown back and forth
in ritual jokes in corridors
of sacrificial shrines
and not for your ears”*

The poem elicits that sort of disruption of identity that refugees of war feel. They are reduced to mere names that are recorded in bureaucratic and medical ledgers, to be later added to reports on numbers of casualties or displaced persons. In many ways, the expendability of the civilian is one of the greatest tragedies of war.

Moving on, unlike Okigbo, Okara and Achebe, Wole Soyinka is a Yoruba writer rather than an Igbo one, which would have ‘naturally’ placed him on the other side of the war. However, Soyinka, having had a long involvement in political activism, ranging from his involvement in the freedom struggle, to his widely broadcast condemnation of the 1965 Western Nigeria Regional Elections, attempted to function as non-government mediator during the Biafran War. This final act led to his imprisonment by the federal government for almost two years, though this did not do much to slow down his literary output.

Wole Soyinka

Source:

Africa Is a Country

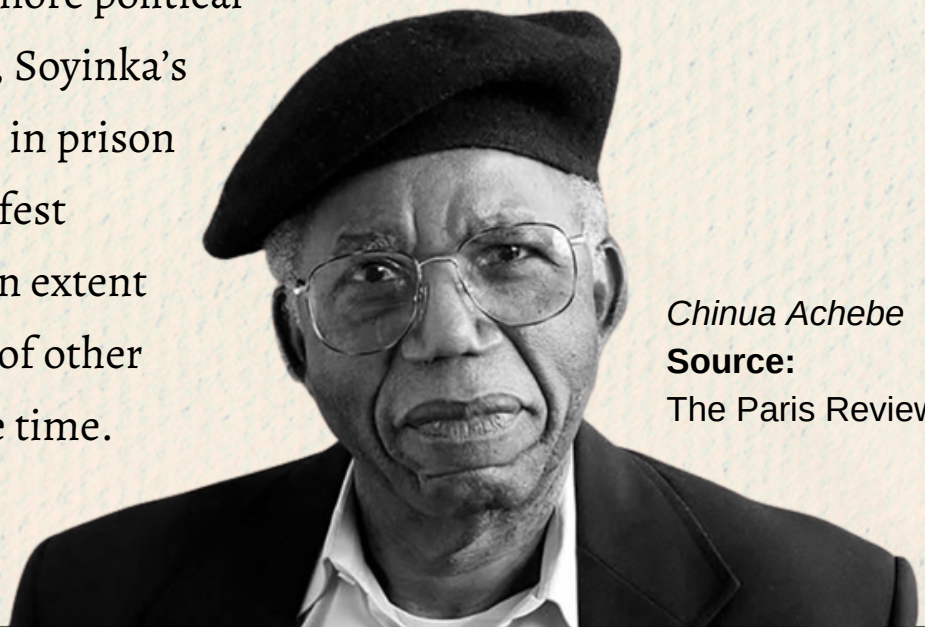


Some of Soyinka's work during this time has a strong propagandist nature, but before moving on to that, one feels compelled to marvel at his ability to subvert Western literary conventions. Looking at a section from his poem "Conversation at night with a cockroach":

"Come out. Oh have you found me even here
Cockroach? Grimed in gloss connivance
Carapaced in age, in cunning, oiled
As darkness, eyed in decay rasps."

Here, not only does Soyinka poke fun at the Western tradition of writing odes by choosing to dedicate one to a lowly cockroach rather than the delicate nightingale of Keats or the great mediaeval poets of Auden, but - partly through the frequent use of alliteration - injects wondrous musicality into his verse, in spite of his imprisoned state, which one might imagine was quite gloomy, to say the least.

Turning now to his more political lyrical contributions, Soyinka's poems from his time in prison have a bite and manifest purpose that are to an extent lacking in the works of other Nigerian poets of the time.



Chinua Achebe
Source:
The Paris Review

One observes this in “I Anoint My Flesh”:

“I anoint my voice
And let it sound hereafter
Or dissolve upon its lonely passage
In your void. Voices new
Shall rouse the echoes when
Evil shall again arise”



Biafra

Source:

Wikimedia Commons

Unlike “Conversation at night with a cockroach”, Soyinka moves from an introspective phase to a declarative, indignant protest against the silencing of dissidents. It is, at the same time, a call to action, begging the oppressed to rise up and reclaim their rights, all expressed in terse, meaning-packed, impactful lines.

Chinua Achebe is probably the most renowned African writer of all time, but analyses of his work have focused mostly on his novels and criticism rather than his poetry. From the time war broke out in 1967, till 1970 when the Nigerian federal government regained control of the region, Achebe acted as an ambassador of Biafra, representing the short-lived nation around the world. He attempted to gain support and aid from the West, for the most part unsuccessfully, as the major powers of the world had chosen to side with the federal government.

Achebe's work on war, done mostly in retrospect, is quite reliant on evoking images of the margins between nature and human society while simultaneously hinting at some of the fundamental questions of war. One sees this most obviously in "Biafra, 1969":

"Voracious white ants
Set upon it and ate
Through its huge emplaced feet
To the great heart abandoning
A furrowed, emptied scarecrow...
...
Must Africa have
To come a third time?"

Here, the poet depicts the fury and ferocity with which the rest of Nigeria converged upon the community that had attempted to withdraw from their union. The deaths through the war and famine left the region a husk ("a furrowed, emptied scarecrow" as he writes) of its former self.

Achebe laments, asking if a third war of Independence (the first against Britain, the second against Nigeria)



Source: BBC

will be necessary to achieve the representative state his people desire.

“It comes so quickly
the bird of death
from evil forests of Soviet technology
A man crossing the road
to greet a friend
is much too slow.
His friend cut in halves
has other worries now
than a friendly handshake
at noon”

Moving on to his poem “Air Raid”, Achebe again uses naturalist metaphors (“bird of death” and “forests of Soviet technology”) to illustrate the harsh, unforgiving, unstable reality of life during war, where even something as simple as crossing the road to greet a friend is a risk-ridden ordeal. Finally, examining the poem “The First Shot”:

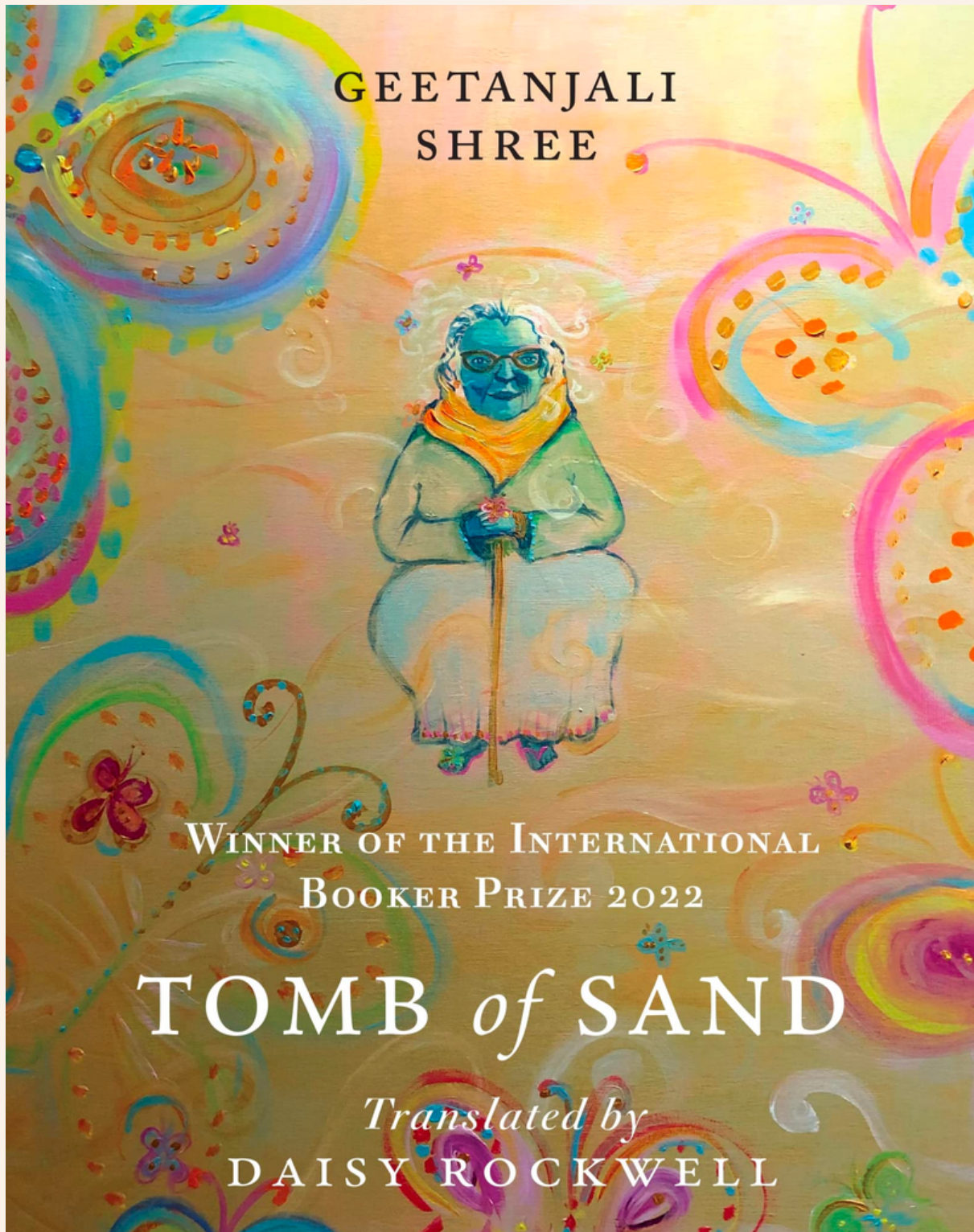
“That lone rifle-shot anonymous
in the dark striding chest-high
through a nervous suburb at the break
of our season of thunders will yet
steep its flight and lodge
more firmly than the greater noises
ahead in the forehead of memory.”

In this single sentence, Achebe personifies both the bullet and the suburb, juxtaposing the minuscule and the vast, while also creating an association with the traditional, agricultural calendar of the Nigerian peasant, and expressing the great diversity and force with which war affects history. The depth and clarity of Achebe's verse is aesthetically pleasing and thought-provoking, and a dimension of his talent as a writer that is unfortunately frequently overlooked.

Though it is unclear whether this is part of our nature or just the type of societies we have ended up constructing, it seems humans have a proclivity to engage in war. We can't help but be moved by the impact war has not only on the soldiers involved, but also on civilians and other innocent parties, so it is no surprise that there is such an abundance of poetry on the topic. This article aimed to briefly analyse the work of four poets, and show how the different ways they were involved in the Biafran war affected their poetry - whether it be in the immediacy of Okigbo's work, the detachment of Okara's, the propagandist nature of Soyinka's, or the dejection of Achebe's. In general, there is a lot more to say about both Nigerian poetry in English and war poetry, so one hopes that future writers will take it upon themselves to do so, maybe even using this as a launch pad.

TOMB OF SAND

A B O O K R E V I E W



"BUT THE SUM TOTAL OF THE THING IS THIS:
LIFE IS LIFE AND DEATH IS DEATH, AND WHAT
IS DEAD IS DEAD, AND GONE IS GONE, AND
BUSY IS BUSY"

***Tomb Of Sand* - Book Review**

Tanishka Urade, SYBA

Geetanjali Shree writes a book which is delightfully alive. An amorphous breathing, sweating, twisting, humming, weeping, screaming organism. It isn't just one linear narrative but rather a wide canvas of narratives. It is vibrant bustling confusing and deprives one the comfort of comas or quotations. An uninterrupted stream of thoughts, which some have described as a poet's novel. It spreads like a quilt made of fabrics of all kinds- cashmere, chenille, chiffon, cotton. it refuses to be limited to a particular shape or size. A borderless quilt. Just like a story. Shree keeps reminding us,

“a story can fly, stop, go, turn, be whatever it wants to be.”

Speaking of quilts, the novel begins with a quilt. A quilt wrapping a woman who is plotting to seep through the crack in the wall. The woman has turned her back to the world in seeming despair after her husband's death.



Geetanjali Shree

Source: Kalinga Literary Festival

When asked about the inspiration, or rather the trigger which inspired Shree to write this book, she said that the book isn't based on a single person's experience but is reflective of a larger social phenomenon. It's a common sight in Indian households.

The image of a woman nearing 80 retreating from life. As if her life derived meaning from what she could do for others, and when she could no longer do, she is no longer truly alive. Paradoxically, it is also true that many older women gain a new sense of confidence in the latter half of their lives when they are finally free from the burdens and obligations of their assigned roles as wives, mothers, daughters and so on. Shree wanted to explore this paradox.

"She had grown tired of breathing for them, feeling their feelings, bearing their desires, carrying their animosities"

Usually when one turns their back to the world or face to the wall, it is seen as an act of renunciation. A state of disenchantment and desolation. But in this story, when the old woman turns her back to the world, she is actually dreaming of different, more colourful worlds. Her disenchantment stems

from her immediate life, but the idea of a new life enthralled her all the more.

She wishes not to be buried in the wall, but rather to burrow into it and come out anew on the other side.

Daisy

Rockwell

Source:

The Booker Prizes



“Main nahi uthungi” she keeps on repeating like a prayer, “Mai nahi uthungi, ab toh mai nayi uthungi”.

“An expression of true desire or the result of aimless play?

No, no, I won't get up. Nooooooo, I won't rise nowwww. Nooo rising nyoooww. Nyoo riiise nyoooo. Now rise new. Now, I'll rise anew.”

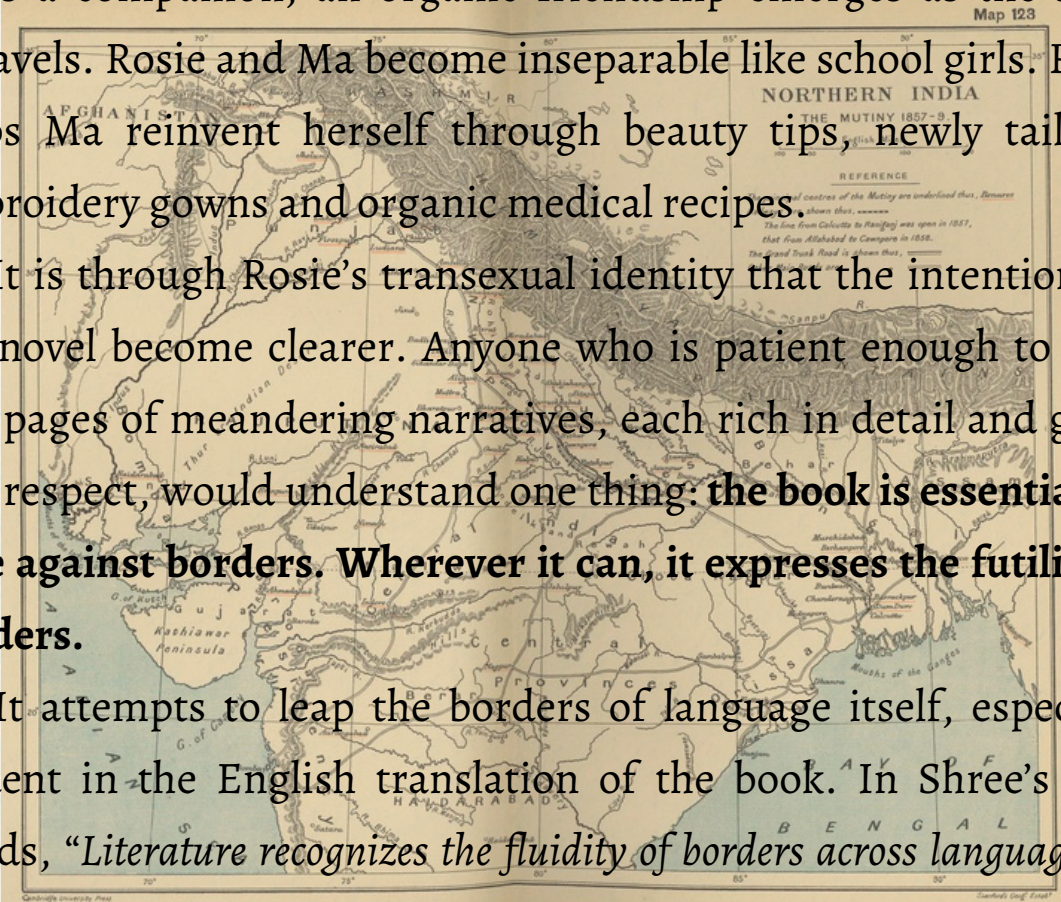
Readers are introduced to the main characters not by their names but by their roles in the family-Bade, Bahu, Beti and Ma. The narrator is an impartial observer, giving adequate attention to the inner lives of each of these characters. He describes himself as an insignificant bystander who happens to be one of Sid's friends (Bade's son). He comically tries to bring attention to himself in a story that does not concern him.

The family which initiates us into this discombobulating world of multitudes is an upper-caste, upper-class family residing in northern India. The elder son Bade is a well-respected government officer and his sister Beti is the family rogue who had left the house to become a writer long before we enter her life. There is a striking contrast between the siblings. Bade with his conventional wife, sons and job and Beti, a divorcee with her unconventional freelancing writing gigs. Bade's wife Bahu represents perhaps the most tired section of women in India: the daughters-in-law. The forever outsiders, the uncared for care-givers. Her palpable loneliness adds a certain heaviness to the pages in which she's mentioned.

A character who unapologetically takes up space in the book is identified by her first name -Rosie. Rosie belongs to the hijra community of South Asia. She doesn't fit into a binary. She's a shape-shifter, flowing here and there, like wind. In Rosie, Ma finds a companion, an organic friendship emerges as the story unravels. Rosie and Ma become inseparable like school girls. Rosie helps Ma reinvent herself through beauty tips, newly tailored embroidery gowns and organic medical recipes.

It is through Rosie's transexual identity that the intentions of the novel become clearer. Anyone who is patient enough to read 700 pages of meandering narratives, each rich in detail and given due respect, would understand one thing: **the book is essentially a case against borders. Wherever it can, it expresses the futility of borders.**

It attempts to leap the borders of language itself, especially evident in the English translation of the book. In Shree's own words, "*Literature recognizes the fluidity of borders across languages. A language shouldn't have rigid borders as any entity grows when borders are not tightly defined*" It discards the notion of borders even in storytelling as it deliberately gets distracted and shifts its focus from feminist crows to the Grand Trunk Road to saris to the Overseas Son who has forgotten how to laugh. "Enough", says the narrator "Let's get back. Though the tale has no need for a single stream."



The first border that Ma crosses happens to be of her house when she acquires a magical cane and mysteriously disappears and upon being found moves in with Beti. Ma traverse's the permissible boundaries of old age when she begins to develop a new kind of curiosity towards her own body. The boundaries of age are teased and transgressed again as there is an inversion of roles between the growing smaller ma and growing older Beti. In the chapter dedicated to Bahu and her Reeboks, Bahu crosses the threshold of her domestic boundary to go outside for long walks and practise yoga with her girlfriends. Beti had crossed a boundary when she decided to live an alternative "bohemian" life as a journalist. And eventually we see Ma blur the boundaries between the two archnemeses nations – India and Pakistan when she leaps the border to confront the unacknowledged horrors inflicted by partition during her youth. So, there are women and there are borders. The women recognize the borders and say "no". And the story progresses through defiance.

The picture which is painted is such: of twisting and twirling wind, ferocious rivers, heedless birds and such things that evoke a longing for freedom. Things which are oblivious to artifices of boundaries and cross them on a daily basis.

"A tale tells itself. It can be complete but also incomplete, the way all tales are. This particular tale has a border and women who come and go as they please. Once, you've got women and a border, a story can write itself."

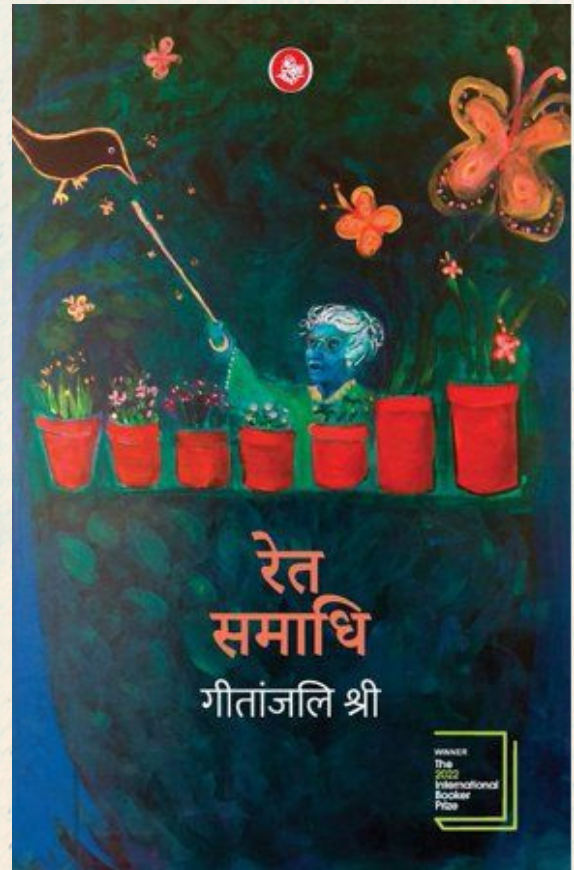
In an interview, Shree commented upon the moral role of a writer in society. While she agreed that a writer can facilitate social reform, she also noted that one should eschew simplistic reductionism, but rather embrace the complexity and convolutions of life. It is the sensitivity and sensibility of the writer which allows her to envelop socio-political rumination inside a story which needn't follow the traditional paradigm of an inspirational tale - a woman wants to study science, faces hardships, overcomes the hurdles, becomes a scientist!

Shree's work is effortlessly political without insisting upon making a bold political statement. It's a tale told like it is and whatever political or social reflections one gathers from it just happen to be a part of it.

Tomb of Sand values eccentricity, giggles at its own digressions and embraces its randomness. But, if one really thinks about it, nothing is unintentionally random about the book. Its chaos is deliberate. It is symbolic of the way life is, the way humans are inextricably entangled and enmeshed with each other and everything else around them. How they talk over each other, fight for the mic and turn away when it is shoved in their face. The act of refusing to speak becomes speech in itself. How every object, animate or inanimate, has a story to tell and would gladly tell it if given a blank canvas.

It treats confusion as an underlying philosophical theme and essentially turns itself into a commentary about confusion by being confusing. From confusion to Confucius.

“Confusion, really that’s all I can write about. That’s all I am, we’re at the moment. A moment so fraught, so overwhelming, that the distance between thought and feeling shrinks maybe vanishes. If literature is about subtlety, understatement, deflection and detached observations, then can there be literature at such a moment? When the outside turns so invasive that it is as if no ‘inside’ space remains for the writer”



Ret Samadhi

Source: Pinterest



ANOREXIA

A Tale of Religion and Guilt

“Only a little more, only a few more days sinless, foodless, I will slip back into him again as if I had never been away. Caged so I will grow angular and holy past pain,”

- Boland

Anorexia - A Tale of Religion and Guilt

Heenakshi, TYBA

Dissatisfaction with one's body and an increase in dieting are both a result of social pressures to be thin. The thin body is valued and an overweight body is shunned in society. Being slim invests one with sexual confidence, power and security, while being overweight makes one deceitful, terrible and frail. In this way friendly influences about the body envelop the meta-message that the people who have the 'ideal' body have more worth. To make ourselves fit in, to look more “pretty”, to feel accepted, we all think the answer to all our worries is being thin or to have “pretty privilege”. We as women, feel obliged to starve ourselves to be able to zip up the most uncomfortable dress because well, that is how we are going to be noticed.

'Anorexic,' by Boland, is a potent and harsh portrayal of self-hatred and self-destruction. It represents the mindset of a woman driven to destroy her body through hunger and filled with resentment for her sinful past, as depicted in the Biblical story of Adam and Eve.

The speaker describes her insatiable



Eavan Boland

Source:
Poetry Ireland

desire to burn her body until it is non-existent throughout the poem, which is written in short, punchy lines.

She's adamant about destroying it and burning it like a witch until she's completely removed any desire to eat. Once she has been "starved," she believes that her sinful body has learned the lesson. The poet introduces religious imagery as the poem progresses, implying that the speaker is motivated by the concept of original sin, and that the only way she can be secure and happy is if she has returned to her initial form, as a part of Adam's rib cage.

The speaker discusses the impact of her sexual identity on her self-image, both metaphorically and literally



Adam and Eve

Source: Engraving by Albrecht Dürer

depicting the effects of anorexia on the female body. Symbolism of Christian morality, sexuality, and sin can be identified parallel to the speaker's descriptions of hunger, starvation, and food. Characterizing her body as a vehicle for sin, desire, and greediness strengthens her discipline of denying her hunger as she places cryptic connotations between temptation, satisfaction, as well as "sweat and fat and greed." Throughout the poem, she denies herself the fortune of food, starving herself in an attempt to wash off the sin sewed together with her sexual identity. In keeping with the

first line, "**Flesh is heretic**," the speaker links her body to sin and says that feeding it would be sinful. Every time I revisit this poem, I am struck by how completely the speaker has internalized societal expectations for her body to look a certain way and for her identity to be completely associated with or in relation to men.

Indeed, Boland makes reference to the biblical story of Eve being made from Adam's rib in order to examine the anorexic woman's treatment of her own body, attempts at self-control, feelings about her sexuality, and relationship with men. Boland emphasizes that the anorexic speaker's crisis is not a recent one but has afflicted women for centuries (though not always in the same way) by bringing up both the Bible and the early modern witch trials. Witch burnings might be forced from an external perspective, yet as referenced, the speaker has incorporated the thought that the female body is wicked. She has already tied herself to the stake, so she doesn't need anyone else to.

"Only a little more, only a few more days sinless,
foodless, I will slip back into him again as if
I had never been away. Caged so I will grow
angular and holy past pain,"

In "Anorexic," being thin is equivalent to being holy, while flesh is associated with sin. The idea that flesh is sinful is not at all new in Christian imagery. Boland refers to sexual and physical needs as "pythons," implying



that physical needs are not only sinful but also the ultimate evil due to their serpentine nature and connection to Lucifer. In addition, the idea of thinness as holy is not necessarily a novel one associated with Christianity or many other traditions. Fasting is a profound practice in numerous religions, and the idea of denying yourself natural joys in quest for divine ones is a famous strict thought. Even though the speaker of Boland believes that she will be "angular and holy" if she becomes Adam's rib once more, this renunciation has serious repercussions. In her effort to lose weight, she forsakes "milk and honey and the taste of lunch".

Now I know why anorexia has become our religion. We manage our time, how we spend our days and nights, our goals, and what was right and wrong in accordance with its commandments. It gave me unquestionable guidelines for how to act and make decisions. All of our doubts about independence and dependence—about who we are and who we want to be—converged on a single scruple: being underweight and starving myself. Sin equals fat. Eating is wrong, starvation is right, and being thin is right. Fat people are harmful; Exercise is the only thing that is beneficial. Fat is a moral sin and a sign of losing control. Fat people committed sin. These moral and aesthetic principles were inseparable: roundness was unappealing to the eyes; sharpness is lovely. Such a philosophy's strength is its absoluteness: being unwavering; that is unrelated to one's own desires, necessities, and needs. Isn't it true

that truth comes from above? What sort of truth might come from the tissue? Only filth, spit, hunger, and other such things come from flesh.

The speaker's self-recognition that she has achieved perfection and is holy enough to exist once more without female subjectivity and the guilt and "fat" has caused is expressed in this reconciliation to return as a rib within "him." According to Frederickson and Roberts (1997), objectification theory provides a framework for comprehending how women and their experiences are influenced by living in a culture that objectifies women's bodies. The term "objectification" refers to the way society treats women's bodies as things.

Women begin to define themselves as objects to be observed and evaluated by others as a result of this societal objectification (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997).

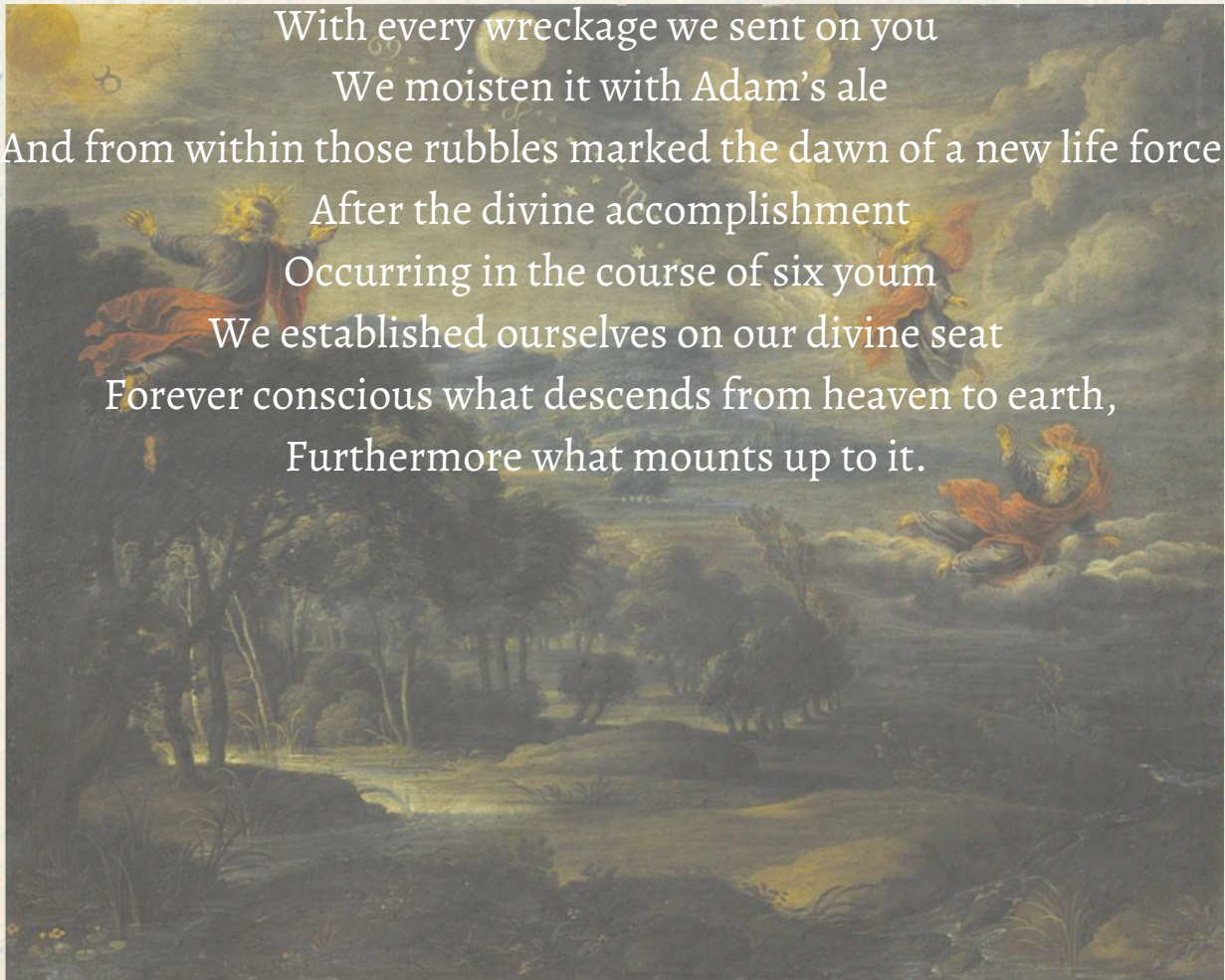
The female body anxiety is not new but an age old problem women struggle with. The split that occurs between the body you want and the body you have, between the pleasures of the mind over the body, and what it means to be womanly when femininity is always defined by the masculine gaze are all depicted in Boland's "Anorexic".

Ar-Ra"d

Zulekha Siddiqui, TYBA

The heavens and the earth were joined together
 Before we clove them asunder
 And in the duration of senary time scale
 Gaia was born, of all things combined.
 And verily we expanded the smoke
 Be it diffused with power as much as necessary

With every wreckage we sent on you
 We moisten it with Adam's ale
 And from within those rubbles marked the dawn of a new life force
 After the divine accomplishment
 Occurring in the course of six youm
 We established ourselves on our divine seat
 Forever conscious what descends from heaven to earth,
 Furthermore what mounts up to it.



Willem van Herp - The Creation of Heaven, Earth and Water

Source: Wikimedia Commons

Torn

Alisha Khan, SYBA



Victim with a Saviour's Complex

TW: Abuse

Annanya, FYBA

You take your last breath in my arms and i kiss you so hard in hopes that somehow ill trap that breath and breathe it back into you, that if i hold you tight enough you won't slip past my fingers like the million prayers i made in your wake when you lay beside me on tranquil nights, your lashes flutter in the soft breeze of the tired city and i feel your grip on my hand tighten and you smile, i sigh into your embrace

let him breathe lord, for all i have seen is war and i would fight a million more unarmored just so he could be at peace, he too is a warrior and he is wounded

You were a ticking time bomb, but i had far too many shrapnels in my veins to care about a dozen more, my friends saw it otherwise and thought that one more and i'd combust. How do i tell that i'm an arsonist and above all things, i'd love to see myself burn, love to see how much flame i could swallow before the skin finally melts off of my bones. So i sit quietly next to you, dousing your fire with what i thought was water but you morphed it into gasoline.

Father, i am losing him as i lost you,

father i am losing myself with him too,

father, he is my undoing

Some things scream to me in a language i can not say no in, i don't know denial in that language; hence i always run barefoot towards you whenever you call out my name, my name which is not mine anymore as much as it is yours. It leaves your lips like a godforsaken prayer only for me to answer and the others don't see it, they just see my name, my banal abhorrent name.

Mother its not like how it used to be,

mother i swear he will get better,

mother i swear he can't help it

You need me and i need to be needed and you only need me in secrecy and in dark alleyways where you lay your head on my shoulder, only after looking both ways, only after making sure that you are not seen, we are not seen. You break in my arms and sit there for hours putting you together pulling all the pieces that pierce my skin and i bleed there with you, it's not my blood anymore, i owe it to my father now but i do it anyways. You leave the dark for the light as i want you too and you don't look back and i sit there with my feet numb, waiting for the next time you need me. You do.

Sister, i am a lamb for slaughter,

Sister, he didn't intend to hold the knife so close,

Sister it's my blood, it's not his

Forgive him, sister, forgive me we tried

4 am you knock down my doors and they were barely on their hinges, you collapse into my arms and instinctively i kiss your tears away and feel the setting rage in me grow to its tipping point, in that moment i truly understood that i too would have burnt the library of Alexandria down if it even mentioned the name you don't answer to anymore. You look up at me and that somehow ended all the rage i had carried within myself for so many years that it had charred my bones.

You kiss my bloodied knuckles

Some knights are meant to fight wars alone, wars which aren't theirs to fight, for if they stood in their own battleground they would be reduced to dust, their bones one with the ground thus they pick up the blood-rusted swords of ones whose cry for help died in their throats alone and no one even flinched. Their doom so ominous that crossing their paths would bring misfortune your way. Some knights need that misfortune to feel just, to fuel another day on this earth and those knights come home with wounds no one tends to, the black rot spreading finally when there is nothing left they wait for knights alike to be saved.

Or just someone to watch me die



Ulysses

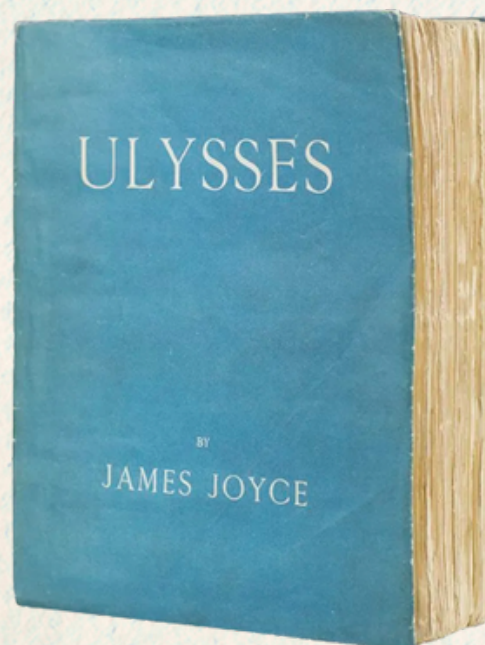
“Before Joyce, no writer of fiction had so foregrounded the process of thinking”.

- Declan Kiberd

Ulysses by James Joyce

Kaveri Devkate, TYBA

The overarching era of Modernism gave way to a kind of literature that was never seen before. Branching away from previous belief systems, it created a space in literature and art where thinking moved from the society as a group to the individual beings. This idea of Self-consciousness became the root of various experimental techniques and produced unique pieces of literature. James Joyce's *Ulysses* is one of the prime examples of Modernist literature.



Ulysses was a text that was not unknown to controversy. The lifestyles of the working class that it depicted was not accepted by the entire population. The trial “United States v. One Book called *Ulysses*” was a case that dealt with the concept of ‘Freedom of Expression’. Though the judge ruled in the favour of *Ulysses* and its publishing house, Random House became the first publishers of the book in the US, it became a book that not everyone seemed to agree with. But still, it has managed to persevere through a century as a novel and has been known as “a demonstration and summation of the entire movement”. Irish writer Declan Kiberd said “Before Joyce, no writer of fiction had so foregrounded the process of thinking”.

The careful structuring of the book, and its experimental prose which is loaded with puns, allusions, and parodies makes it an eccentric read. The name of the novel “Ulysses” is the Roman name of “Odysseus” who is the protagonist of Homer’s epic poem “Odyssey”. Other than the name, Joyce draws heavy parallels between his characters and that of the original Odyssey, alongside the events and themes of the raging modernism of the 20th century, and the relationship of Ireland with Britain. The setting of Dublin is what makes it possible for James Joyce to focus on the older and modern vision of Ireland. The clashing ideas and views of different generations creates the base for the novel.

It makes one wonder what James Joyce must have been thinking when he penned down this novel. But if you read the text it can be believed that Joyce allows us to take a peek into his mind through the technique of ‘Stream of Consciousness’. This method allows for the writer to capture the continuous flow of thoughts, ideas, or feelings that are experienced by an individual.

It eliminates the general writing style of description and conversation. Often while reading the text, an event is mentioned but then the train of thought in writing moves in such a way that you might forget the original event until you read the next reference to it from the author. It makes the reader reflect on their own thinking and how they



James Joyce

Source: Simple Wikipedia

might trail over random chains of ideas while doing some other task that is at hand. Ulysses is called the finest example of 'Stream of Consciousness' as James Joyce went deeper and further than any other novelist when it comes to interior monologues. It was praised for its faithful representation of feelings, mental reflections, flow of thoughts, and even changes in moods. Through this novel, Joyce puts forth an idea of 'self-expression' that was never explored before. It became a landmark in Modernist literature.

The protagonist of the novel - Leopold Bloom- is our very own flaneur i.e. an observer of society in passing. The novel moves about the time-space of a single day in Dublin and gives the rawest depiction of an Everyman.

The various metaphors, ambiguities, symbols and overtones that are used to describe each event connect to each other and form a network that binds the whole work together. The writer manages to present an integral interpretation of life and its intricacies to the audience. The novel holds a universal significance as Leopold becomes our Modern-day Hero or Ulysses in the microcosm of Dublin. T. S. Eliot described this as a 'Mythic-method' which is a way of controlling , ordering, giving a shape and significance to the colossal dimension of futility and anarchy that is found in contemporary history. Novelist Vladimir Nabokov held the opinion that Ulysses towered over the other works of James



James Joyce's drawing of Leopold Bloom

Joyce with its noble originality and unique style and thought.

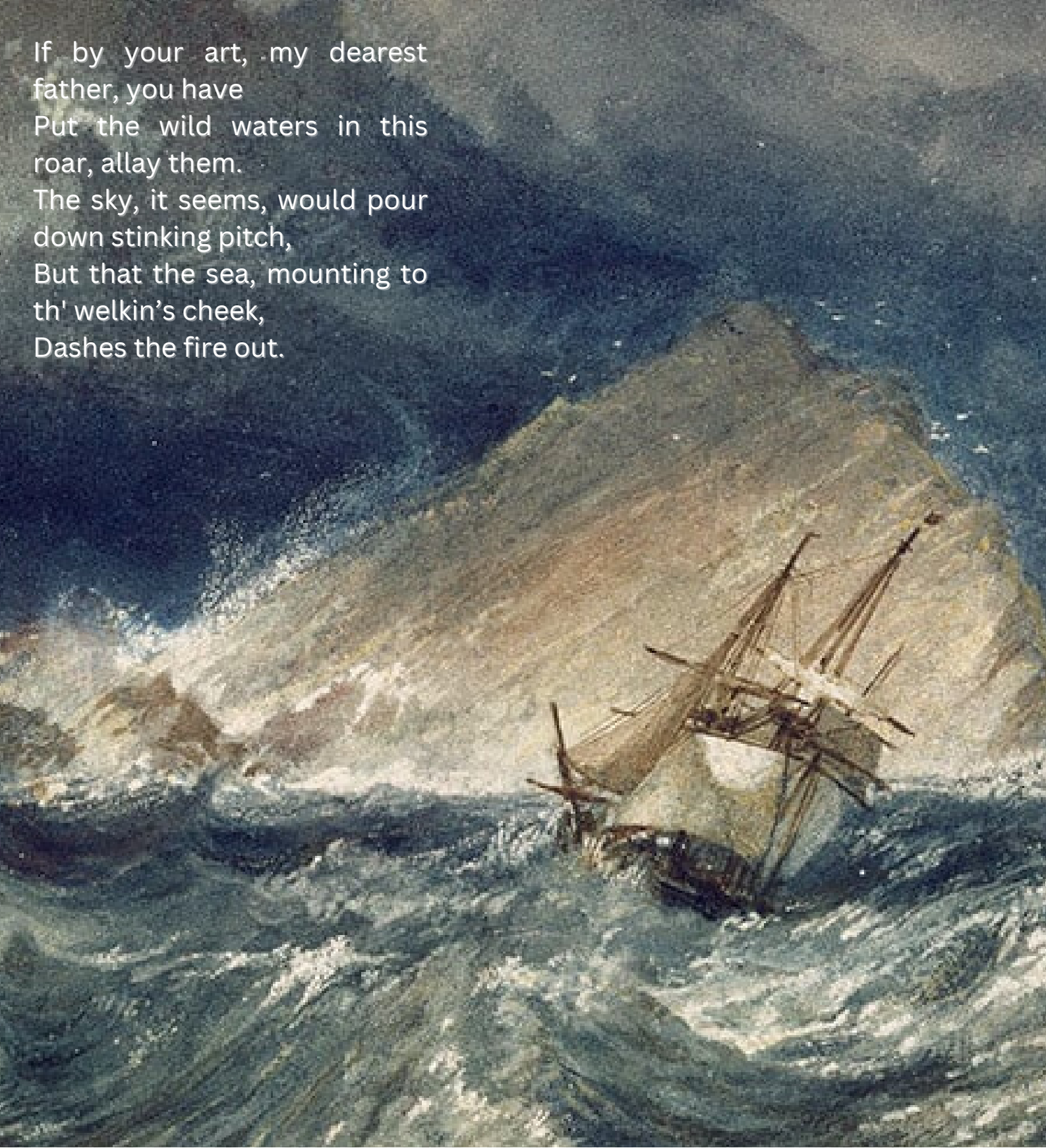
But the novel was not devoid of criticism. A lot of the masses felt that the novel was too obscene and pornographic for it to be considered a turning point in literature. In fact, this was the reason as to why there was a trial preceding its publication in the United States. Its anti-conventional and anti-Christian themes led to a lot of debate and were considered chaotic and immoral. The ending soliloquy by the character of Molly Bloom was considered especially salacious and was not appreciated by the opposing group. Throughout this, Eliot defended the

text with the reasoning that it was the fault of the people - the general masses - for not understanding the essence and most important expression of the book.

Ulysses was not the first but was definitely one of the most important novels in the history of literature to give importance to the individual and inner way of thinking. Many critics and researchers have looked at the text through the psychological approach. Carl Jung addressed the novel as something that is layered in a thousand veils and yet hides nothing, that doesn't turn towards the mind or to the world but instead stands at a distance and lets growth, being, and decay pursue its course. This idea of *Ulysses* being a distinct yet indifferent text to the concerns and struggles of humanity brands it as a milestone in the Modernist era.

Shakespeare in "The Waste Land"

If by your art, my dearest
father, you have
Put the wild waters in this
roar, allay them.
The sky, it seems, would pour
down stinking pitch,
But that the sea, mounting to
th' welkin's cheek,
Dashes the fire out.



Shakespeare in “The Waste Land”

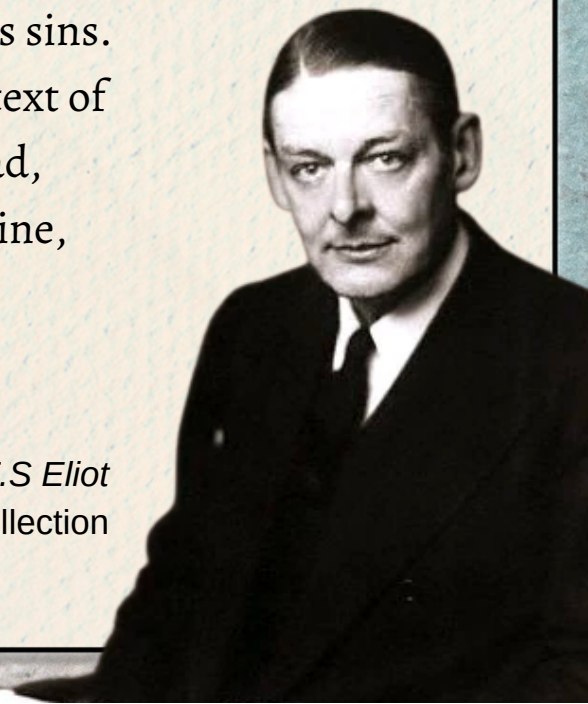
Fiona M Francis and Aashray Rao, TYBA

T. S. Eliot’s magnum opus “The Waste Land”, widely considered the height of Modernist poetry, pushes intertextuality to its limits. The poet proudly brandishes his knowledge of canonical literature drowning the reader in an ocean of references. Unsurprisingly, allusions to Shakespeare feature prominently throughout the five sections of the poem. Our article aims to elucidate the patterns in Eliot’s use of Shakespeare’s works.

For a work commonly associated with tragedy and barrenness, as Tim Gooderham notes in his 1991 article, the play that is alluded to most frequently is *The Tempest* which is not only a comedy but one deeply concerned with the sea. Ariel’s song is referenced in line 48 (“Those are pearls that were his eyes. Look!”) which is connected to the tarot card of the drowned Phoenician sailor that here represents Alonso, King of Naples. Eliot employs the technique of objective correlative evoking themes associated with water such as purification, baptism and the purging of one’s sins. He returns to this quote in line 125 in the context of drowning and the blank expression of the dead, emphasised by the question in the following line, “...Is there nothing in your head?”

T.S Eliot

Source: The Frick Collection



In lines 191-192, Eliot alters Ferdinand’s words, changing “Weeping again the king my father’s wreck,” to “Musing upon the king my brother’s wreck” and adding “And on the king my father’s death before him.”

However, these words fit better in the mouth of Antonio expressing remorse for the actions that led to his current situation.

Eliot has remarkably taken a literal shipwreck and transformed it into a metaphor representing Prospero’s misfortune. Furthermore, the association of water and the waste land continues through the mention of the shipwreck.

Ferdinand is once again led astray in line 257 by Ariel’s mystical tune as he claims “The music crept by me upon the water”. In this section, Eliot wields this allusion to prompt a striking image of the River Thames and the streets around it, further reinforcing the significance of water in the poem.

Of course Eliot does delve into Shakespeare’s tragedies by dipping his toes into Hamlet in line 172 where he quotes Ophelia’s last words, “Good night, ladies, good night, sweet ladies, good night, good night.” The theme of water reemerges with the connection to Ophelia’s death by drowning. Notably, this line also brings this section of the poem, named ‘A Game of Chess’, to an end.



William Shakespeare

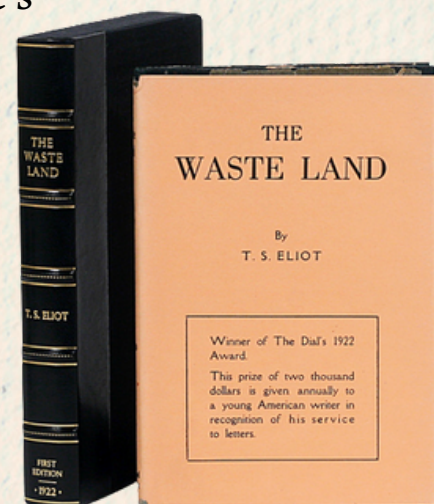
Source: Wikipedia

Had she married Hamlet, Ophelia would have one day been queen of Denmark and, like in a game of chess, the death of a queen is a colossal tragedy. One of the most peculiar lines of the poem reads, “O O O O that Shakespeherian rag-”, which could be interpreted in a multitude of ways. Eliot could be mockingly claiming that Shakespeare has written all that is worth writing, leaving poets such as him to give up and go out for a walk (“What shall I do now? What shall I do?/I shall rush out as I am and walk the street”). Alternatively, he is passive-aggressively telling people to move on from Shakespeare and to stop putting the bard on a pedestal. This would of course be ironic as he so frequently continues to reference him in this work.

There are smaller allusions to Shakespeare’s plays scattered throughout “The Waste Land”. Line 77 “The Chair she sat in, like a burnished throne,” references Enobarbus’s description of Cleopatra’s barge in the play ‘Antony and Cleopatra’. Another example shows up in line 416, “Revive for a moment a broken Coriolanus”, Coriolanus was a Roman soldier and the protagonist of the eponymous play by Shakespeare.

In conclusion, there is a surprising connection between “The Waste Land” and its allusions to Shakespeare’s work that have water as a central theme.

This contradicts the popular image of barrenness typically associated with Eliot’s masterpiece and shows a further layer of depth to the metaphors Eliot employs.



The reference to “that Shakespeherian rag” shows a level of self-awareness in the poet and runs contrary to superficial criticisms of the poem as simply a vehicle to display his familiarity with and affinity to the Western canon. With all this in mind, it is no surprise that even after a century, “The Waste Land” continues to be regarded as an integral contribution to modernism and is studied in universities all across the globe.



*‘April is the
cruellest month’.*

-- T. S. ELIOT,
The Wasteland

The Waste Land and Kubla Khan

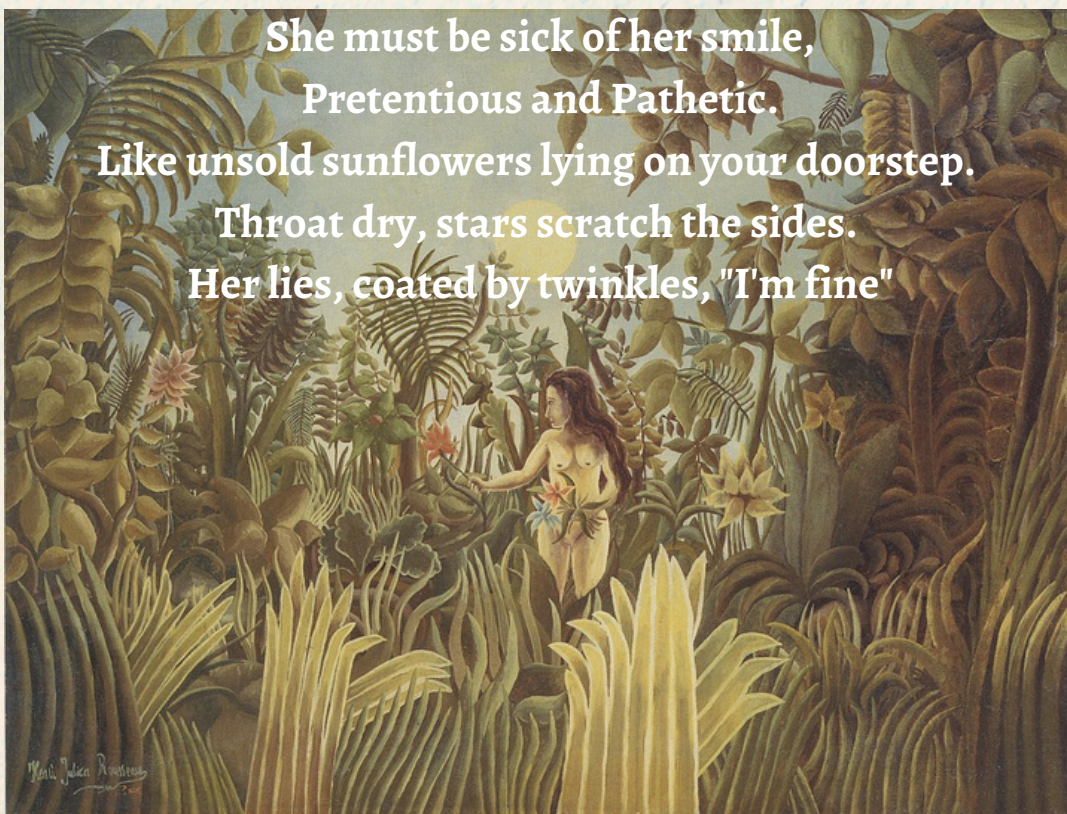
Dhwani Gohil, TYBA



Her

Keerthana Arokia , SYBA

Oh she twirls in the storm,
 Her feet like a festival
 The lights go dim as the curtains fall.
 The words she spews make no sense,
 But the thoughts she owns, she holds like Eve's Eden.
 Darkness, what place for a sun to shine.
 Darkness, oh it swallows her sparkle in no time.
 Rests her head, sleeps in peace.
 They don't know, she lies, she cries and she dies.
 The firecracker she is, explodes and expires.
 Beautiful it looks, perishes in the sky.



She must be sick of her smile,
 Pretentious and Pathetic.
 Like unsold sunflowers lying on your doorstep.
 Throat dry, stars scratch the sides.
 Her lies, coated by twinkles, "I'm fine"

Henri Rousseau - Eve in the Garden of Eden

Source: Wikimedia Commons

Losing you

Keerthana Arokia , SYBA

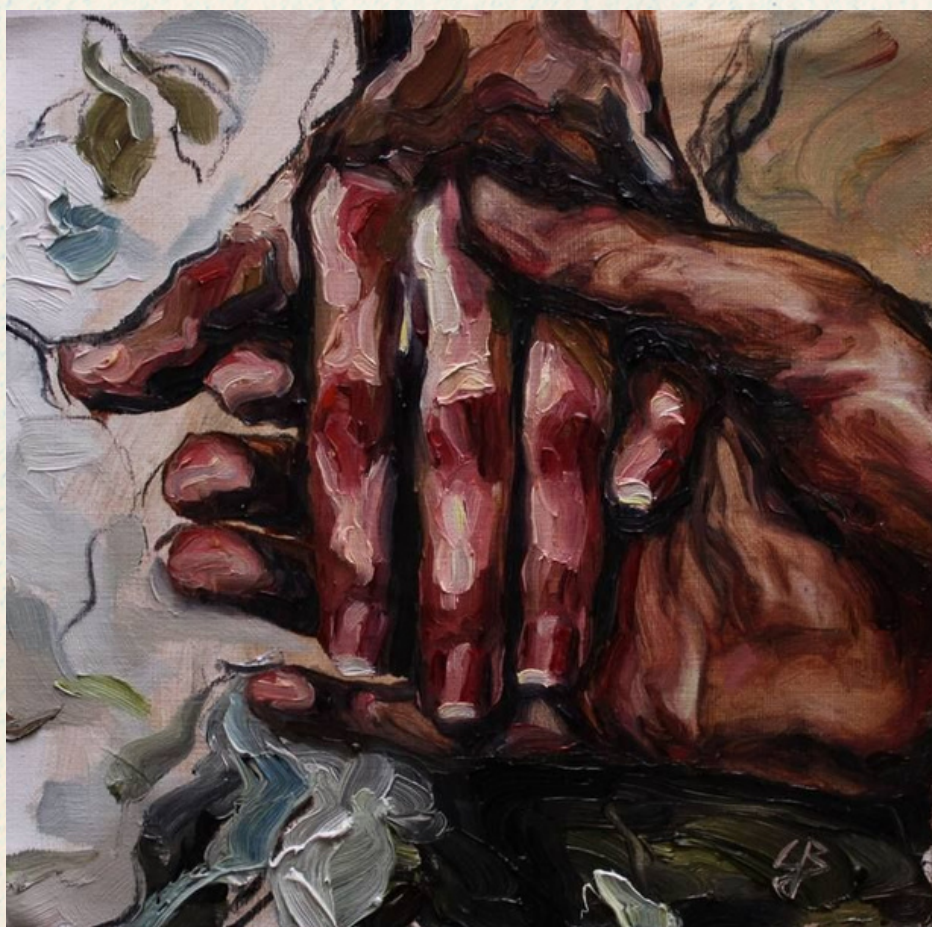
I search, under silk sheets and lonely streets,
On second-floor stairs with this December despair.

I search for my happiness, in church halls;
For my built-up insecurities on bathroom walls.

Fingers laced, my skin you trace, a place, where did I choose to lose?
That kiss on my neck, those eyes behind your specs?

I search, for I lost my soul, my all.

I lost myself, midst your lifeless love.



Saatchi Art

Source: Pinterest

Red

TW: Abuse

Anannya, FYBA

red, you loved the colour so much that everything you owned was red, from the case of your phone to the clothes you owned, i dyed my hair red so you love me too, but that was not the red you liked on me, you wanted it crimson red, from my busted lip and broken nose, you said i looked pretty with a bloodied mouth, you liked the taste of metal on my lips (hated the alcohol on yours).

You said love has many shapes and forms, i didn't know it would be in the shape of a broken beer bottle to my abdomen, i didn't know it would be the shape of the ungodly angle at which my ribs were bent, the shape of a constellation on my shattered collar bones. i didn't see it coming in the form of crooked smiles on my lips when my mom asked me how clumsy I'd become.

but i was okay, no really i was. all it took was some ointment and besides you would come the next morning when your breath didn't reek of an alcoholic tragedy and the anger lay latent in your veins. you kissed my bruises better and whispered soft love into me, you never apologised and i knew why would you? you never apologise for loving someone too much so id kissed your knuckles to tell you that i was brave, brave enough for your love.

i was always worried id never be loved enough, that no one could love the abhorring scar on my leg and loathing is what i deserve, what i was born to carry and i had come to terms with it that was until you caressed the scars that traced my spine and whispered "aren't you a brave girl to love"

im sorry but im not brave enough, i tried i really did. but i cant bear to see the disappointment on my fathers face any longer and the pity on my friend's eyes, they would never understand that the way you loved me was chaste, and chaste love like this comes with scars holy scars, e every shrine has engravings of the deities its sn abode and i was yours so i cary your engravings with me. so here is my parting gift, a meek apology and a final artwork you loved me in red so here i am in a puddle of crimson with your bMe on my ephemeral breath.

Ascent of Fate

Kaveri Devkate, TYBA

Traversing perilous paths, I finally reach my destiny,
But the sphinx at the door stops and riddles me,
"What are you and what could you be?"
"None other than myself, and here is the proof to see".

It lets me go and I move on ahead,
Yet another trail of thorns and everything of dread,
I reach the foot of the mountain and begin to climb,
I sent out a prayer hoping that I will be on time.

Step after step, it is an endless journey,
I lose my hope and I think it's not worthy,
But then it appears, an immortal man out of marble,
With a booming voice and a hearty chortle.

"You cannot stop here, you will be regretful,
When you reach your fate, it won't be so dreadful"
And so I clamber again, to reach the pinnacle of my track,
In the end, I am able to sit and eventually relax.

But as I contemplate some more, I realise,
A further terror inside me starts to arise,
A fool I was to accept a poison so vicious,
This is just the same myth of Sisyphus.

Our Sacred Tradition

Aashray Rao, TYBA

The ancestors demand my obeisance
To stay true to our sacred tradition
Trending verdant cover our commission
Lest we fall to their fairy omniscience

The great silver blades conjoin and depart
While the unsculpted founts dampen the fronds
On occasion we undertake new bonds
And allow the lowly to share our art

A Day's Work

Fiona M. Francis, TYBA

Whether it is harder to gather resolution
to make your way to the ancient slippery tunnels that our ancestors
foretold,
or to froth the flaxen thread
and beat it till it's parched.

While you are left lamenting over these thoughts,
A strange presence, *Kamala Mausī* offers some respite
Gathering the articles from your hand,
And letting you go on your merry way.

The Organic Stagnant

Dhwani Gohil, TYBA

When the clock struck seven,
She left towards progression.

Walking through the blooming route,
Helios drives with a pursuit.

Across the sky and sailed around the ocean,
A part of day light is set in motion.

Unknowingly, the darkness is wandering ahead,
She with courage, is not misled.

She is held back and looked down, someone utters,
- An earthly mixture of foul freshwater.

Stagnant and dirty, sticky and frothy,
Filled with the budding worms, not sorry.

Defended by Abeona and guided by Athena,
They saved her skin from an arena.

Stepping on a slant, companion way,
Taking note of the clock, it's a blue Monday.



“If liberty means anything at all, it means the right to tell people what they do not want to hear.”

- ERIC
ARTHUR
BLAIR



the right to write



THE STATE OF JOURNALISM IN INDIA



by Runcil Rebello



The State of Journalism in India

-Runcil Rebello, Alumna

At the beginning of 2020, a few months before COVID-19 took over everyone's lives, a pogrom was occurring in Delhi, with many minorities killed for protesting the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA). Only, one wouldn't know this was happening if you lived elsewhere in the country, because most news channels and newspapers were busy carrying "news" about the then-American President Donald Trump visiting India.

We knew about this violence in Delhi only because journalists from independent newsrooms, those not owned by multinational corporations (MNCs), whether Indian or foreign, bravely reported from the ground. These journalists did so at great risk to their lives and livelihoods.

Fast forward a few years till a couple of weeks ago. The BBC ran a news piece about the Hindenburg Report on Adani, an Indian industrialist. It seemed to be the only major news corporation running any news about it at all within the country. And so, predictably, the BBC's offices in India were raided by the income tax department.

What is the role of journalists? It has always been to speak truth to power. Unfortunately, that has always meant that at times the people in power can suffocate the truth-seekers. Many media corporations try to run on money brought in by advertising.

Take the premier English newspaper of India, the Times of India. Go buy today's newspaper, and count how many ads you can see on the first page itself. If you're lucky, you'll find that the entire first page is an ad, and the second, and the banner on top of the masthead on the third page, which is when the actual newspaper begins. That's not all, on that page, there will be many news items that look like news items but which are, in actuality, articles sent across by Public Relations (PR) agencies for newspapers to publish.

Journalism, advertising, and PR have always had an uneasy relationship but in modern-day India that relationship is as smooth as ever, more so because journalism in this country has shorn itself of any responsibility.

Over a decade ago, I graduated from Wilson College and then decided to do a one-year post-graduate diploma in journalism and mass communications. I didn't necessarily want to enter "hard journalism", that is, reporting crime, politics, finance, etc. I had an interest in films and music and thought I could do well in those niche fields or feature writing in general. I wouldn't have minded a desk job as a subeditor either.

Life has its own path though, and I hardly ended up working in any journalism jobs. I've done some freelance feature writing at the side from time to time, but for major parts of my career, I've written content and edited content while part of MNCs. Initially, I used to feel a twinge of regret about not having been able to partake in the (then) noble field of journalism.

But over the last decade, as I've seen the fourth pillar of society erode entirely, I am glad that I am far away from it. Where does the news go from here? At this point there's no difference between what is printed in a newspaper or espoused on a news channel to what's being received as forwards on WhatsApp. It feels like independent news organisations, like Scroll, The Wire, Alt News, Caravan, will have to continue doing what they do even with perpetual dangers present.

A lot of these sites depend on user subscriptions and donations to be able to sustain their work, which involves paying journalists and others on their payroll their salaries, general upkeep of their website, and fees for when you need a legal team to get you out of prison, like, for instance, what happened with Mohammed Zubair of Alt News. In May 2022, Zubair tweeted a thread calling out hate speeches made by extremist religious leaders, which were telecast on TV channels. In a major twist, a case was filed against Zubair for hatemongering against the religious leaders. This is just one instance of fearful tactics that journalists come across in this country. Then there are of course journalists like Gauri Lankesh, Shujaat Bhukari, and Sudip Dutta Bhaumik, who were assassinated in cold blood.

This all makes it seem that journalism in India is in a hopeless situation. And quite frankly, I agree with that assessment. Will we ever see improvement on that front? I don't expect it from the news channels and papers run by MNCs.

The fight against power continues within the smaller-run news outlets. Freedom of expression is still a right granted to the citizens of this country by the Constitution, and hopefully, till the Constitution is in place, these news outlets can continue carrying on the good and necessary work.

Till then, if you are planning a career in journalism, know what you're up against. I was once a wide-eyed student of journalism when the nexus between journalists, government, advertisers, and PR wasn't what it is today. It's tough to be a journalist in India today. But then, speaking truth to power always is.



Gauri Lankesh

Source: BBC



GOTHIC LITERATURE IN THE 18TH CENTURY

"There is something at work in my soul, which I do not understand."

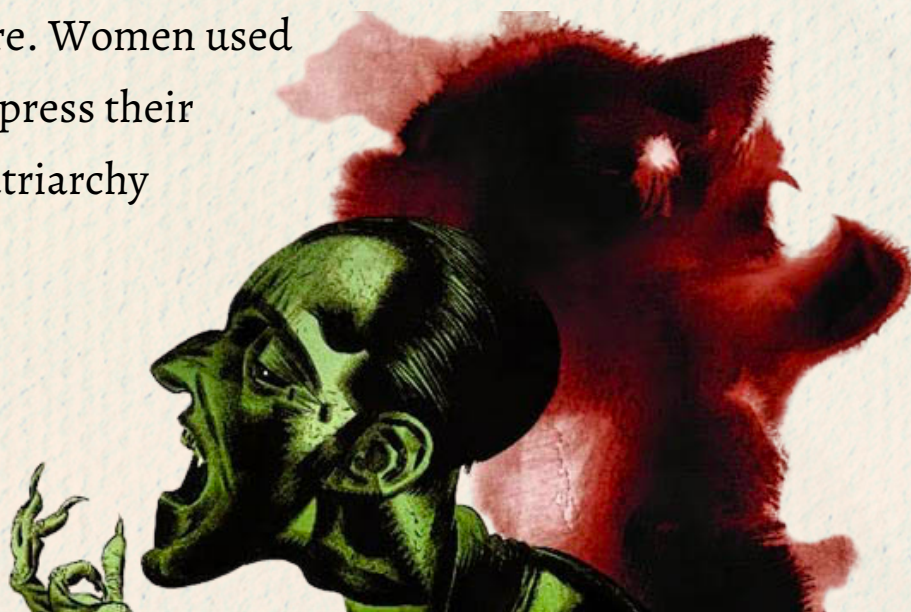
- Mary Shelley, Frankenstein

Gothic Literature in the 18th Century

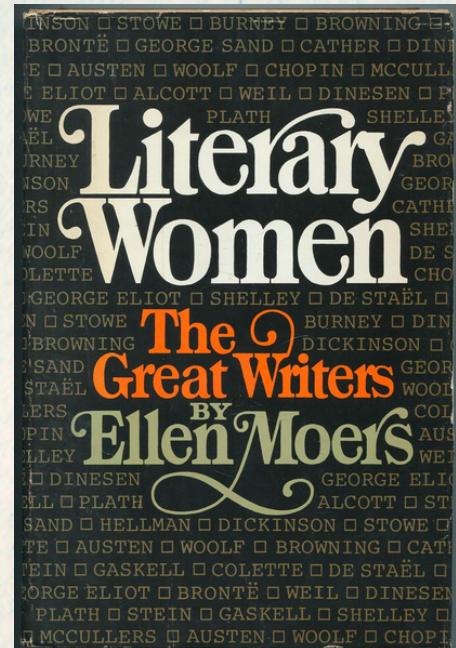
Neeti Kapoor, SYBA

Death, despair, darkness, and agony. These aren't themes that come to mind when we think of gentle 18th-century women. *Terror and Wonder: A Gothic Imagination*, a new exhibition at the British Library, reveals emphatically that these were the subjects that ladies wanted to read - and write - about. Indeed, we might never have had *Dracula*, *Frankenstein*, *Jane Eyre*, or, finally, *Twilight* if it hadn't been for early 18th-century women's infatuation with Gothic fiction.

In her book *Literary Women*, published in 1976, Ellen Moers coined the term Female Gothic, which she defines as Gothic fiction produced by women. According to this interpretation, the Female Gothic simply refers to the writer's (female) gender. However, the Female Gothic has more than one meaning. Ellen Moers sees it as "a coded statement of women's worries of confinement within the domestic and within the female body," which has become a very important point of view. Women felt imprisoned in their homes and bodies as a result, a sense they subtly attempted to depict through female Gothic literature. Women used Gothic literature to express their dissatisfaction with patriarchy and its suppression of "the maternal."



Various viewpoints have been established on whether or not the Female Gothic may be considered a separate genre from the Gothic genre. Many different titles have been employed, including "women's Gothic," "feminine Gothic," "lesbian Gothic," and even "Gothic feminism," that leads to the conclusion that the word "Female Gothic," as used by Moers, is overused.



Female Gothic is a literary genre that has its own set of conventions in addition to being authored by a female author. According to Moers, Radcliffe constructed a story with a female protagonist who is both a heroine and a victim, which would become one of the Female Gothic's defining qualities. According to feminist critics, the story is also about a mother-daughter relationship, in which the orphaned heroine searches for her missing mother, only to learn that she is not dead. The heroine lives a happy life at the start of the tale and is "depicted [as] enjoying an ideal and isolated life," but she is abruptly threatened with captivity in a castle under the control of a powerful male figure who gave her no chance to escape.

As a result, the underlying source of peril for female Gothic heroines is the eighteenth-century patriarchal society, in which men wield political, social, and economic authority.

All inexplicable happenings and the supernatural will be explained in rational ways in the end. A happy ending is also preferred, in which the protagonist is reintegrated into society and gains a new identity and a new life by marrying the man she loves.

The significance of the feminine imagination in writing novels, poetry,, and as a means of momentarily escaping a harsh environment was frequently explored by female writers in the eighteenth century. The potential of a woman to use her imagination to transcend the physical prison of an insane asylum, as well as the metaphorical prisons of a despotic marriage and an oppressive world, was a central theme in Mary Wollstonecraft's book *Maria, or The Wrongs of Woman*. Meanwhile, in Anna Letitia Barbauld's poem "Washing-Day," she emphasizes the art that the feminine mind may create, but she also alludes to the deadly



masculine scientific imagination that led to the invention of hot air balloons. Finally, Mary Shelley contrasts feminine applications of the imagination with the harsh goals of a male-dominated scientific imagination in *Frankenstein*.

Mary Shelley

Source: Wikipedia

Although Wollstonecraft champions feminine uses of imagination over male mind employments, Barbauld and Shelley expand on the uses of female imagination, displaying the artful creations of the feminine mind while simultaneously condemning male forms of imagination, particularly in the realms of science and technology.

Wollstonecraft seems to harbor some ambivalence concerning female uses of the imagination early on in her novel. She narrates: “The youths who are satisfied with the ordinary pleasures of life, and do not sigh after ideal phantoms of love and friendship, will never arrive at great maturity of understanding; but if these reveries are cherished, as is too frequently the case with women, when experience ought to have taught them in what human happiness consists, they become as useless as they are wretched. Besides, their pains and pleasures are so dependent on outward circumstances, on the objects of their affections, that they seldom act from the impulse of a nerved mind, able to choose its own pursuit.”

Wollstonecraft discusses the futility of imagination in this passage, claiming that the feminine mind can fool itself.



Mary Wollstonecraft

Source: Women's Rights National Historical Park

Maria, in fact, exacerbates her domestic predicament by putting too much faith in her husband. Maria's "fancy" enlarges his heart's boundary. "I made a fatal mistake!".

In this case, Maria's feminine imagination leads her to even more pain and suffering when her "imagining" her husband to be a better guy turns out to be completely false and unjustified.

Women, on the other hand, must rely on their imaginations, according to Wollstonecraft.

Otherwise, their husbands render them utterly defeated as Maria advises her daughter in her letter that males are drawn to "profligate women" because they are just concerned with their physical well-being. "The guys who do not allow them [women] to have minds, because thinking would be a barrier to raw delight," she writes in her letter. Men's willingness to reduce women to physical objects without a thought is depicted by Wollstonecraft. Even with modest "fancies," Maria combats such a thought by diverting her attention.

Mary Shelley, like Barbault, has no patience with scientific creativity, especially when science frequently employs unconventional methods to achieve its goals. Shelley emphasizes Frankenstein's imaginative fixation with the creation from the beginning of her tale. When Frankenstein first discovers that he is "capable of conferring animation upon inanimate substance," he yearns for even more power: the ability to create a whole being.

Such a goal clearly necessitates a lot of creativity; in fact, Frankenstein becomes an artist in his own right as he creates a creature out of lifeless body parts and gives it a human form. Frankenstein looks to be overwhelmed by his undertaking at first, but not because of any moral or ethical issues.

Rather, he worries about whether or not he can actually fashion dead body parts into a living human body: "I doubted at first whether I should attempt the creation of a being like myself, or one of simpler organization, but my imagination was too much exalted by my first success to permit me to doubt of my ability to give life to an animal as complex and wonderful as a man". Initially intimidated by the endeavor, Frankenstein finds solace in his imagination, which spurs him ahead. Shelley, on the other hand, stresses Frankenstein's total male hubris.

In fact, she frequently emphasizes Frankenstein's use of unnatural procedures in the production of his "monster." Frankenstein "picked bones from charnel houses and disturbed, with profane fingers, the enormous mysteries of the human body," according to Shelley. Through her diction, Shelley emphasizes the highly abnormal things that Frankenstein's imagination urges him to do. When Frankenstein realizes this, he warns Walton about the perils of arrogant knowledge, saying, "How much happier that man is who believes his native town to be the globe, than he who wants to become greater than his nature would allow."

Elizabeth, Frankenstein's "more than a sister," has a considerably more innocent imagination, which Shelley supports. Elizabeth occupied herself with the soaring imaginations of the poets; and the grand and wondrous sights surrounding their Swiss house while Frankenstein seeks knowledge of the "hidden laws of nature".

Elizabeth is preoccupied with poets' works, and Shelley encourages her to do so. She creates a stark contrast between Frankenstein's irrational desire for knowledge beyond his natural state and Elizabeth's contentment with staying at home and reading the poets' "bubbles." Elizabeth utilizes her imagination to enhance the natural beauty of her Swiss home. While her fantasies turn out to be harmless, Frankenstein has always harbored dark, unnatural aspirations of transcending natural human limitations.

Shelley underlines how masculine scientific thinking frequently leads to death and ruin, whereas female fantasies are generally innocuous. Shelley, in the end, punishes Frankenstein and the male ego by taking away his one opportunity for happiness with Elizabeth and ensuring his death at the conclusion of the story. Shelley, like Wollstonecraft, blames males who take away women's intelligence and any type of mentality.



Frankenstein

Source:

Michael Kontraros Collectibles



ChatGPT

The Shakespeare of Kalyug



ChatGPT

"ChatGPT is not just a machine, it's a marvel of human ingenuity, a testament to our ability to create something that can communicate and learn like we do."

- ChatGPT

ChatGPT – The Shakespeare of Kalyug

-Anil Mascarenhas, Alumna



As a part of her New Age Literatures course, Supriya was asked to submit a paper regarding the impact of non-traditional writing on literature and, during her research, she stumbled upon ChatGPT, an artificial intelligence tool which has quickly become the talk of the town. She was astonished by how seamlessly the tool could churn out tonnes of content which, for all purposes, could be considered as new age literature. For instance, Supriya asked the tool to rewrite Samuel Beckett's tragicomedy 'Waiting for Godot', with the fairytale princess Rapunzel as the main character and this is what the tool produced, in a matter of seconds –

Rapunzel's Waiting Game

Verse 1:

Trapped in a tower, she's all alone

Hair so long, it's her only known

She waits for a prince to come and save

But every day feels like a long delay

Waiting for Godot

Source:

The Conversation



Chorus:

Rapunzel's waiting, for her prince to arrive

Hoping and praying, she'll finally come alive

In this tower, her fate is unknown

Rapunzel's waiting, for her story to be shown

And this was just a snippet of the seven stanza draft shared by the tool. When asked to regenerate the response, this was the first part of the result –

Rapunzel's Tower

(Two friends, Estragon and Vladimir, wait by Rapunzel's tower for her to come down)

Estragon: Yo, Vladimir, why we waiting here again?

Vladimir: We wait for Rapunzel, she'll come down with her long hair.

Estragon: (sighs) She ain't come down for days, man.

Vladimir: (nodding) Yeah, but she will. She always does.

(They continue to wait in silence)

For Supriya, this was nothing short of unbelievable. If she were to actually sit down and compose such a text, she would have spent hours thinking of the idea and drafting the verses but, for ChatGPT, it was a matter of a few seconds. In all honestly, ChatGPT was fast transforming into the Shakespeare of Kalyug.

What is ChatGPT?

So what exactly is this AI tool which has taken the world of literature by storm? Released by Elon Musk's technology company OpenAI, the chat bot ChatGPT (Generative Pretrained Transformer) is a tool which enables users to produce everything from conversational material to even essays, poems and entire books, with minimal human input. The tool utilises a technique called Reinforcement Learning from Human Feedback and has the capability to write you entire papers, with the right nudges from your end. All you have to do is log in to the tool, which is free in its beta version, and ask your question in the chat box. Give it a few seconds and you have a well-drafted paper in front of you. To make your life easier, it even offers a variety of different responses to the question, thus taking away the fear of plagiarism.

ChatGPT's Ramifications on Literature

Literature has, so far, been considered elusive and enigmatic, thanks to the hours of toil writers put in to create magic with words. Enter ChatGPT, and all of it goes for a toss. Just a moment ago, ChatGPT created a poem in the style of William Wordsworth, with the first stanza saying –

The daffodils that dance with glee,

Along the banks of yonder stream,

Their golden petals bright and free,

A sight that makes my heart aglow with gleam.

Elizabeth Bennet

Source:

Pride and Prejudice (2005 film)

Now, that is a spontaneous overflow of emotion, by an AI tool – the dichotomy here is exceptionally clear. The tool, which is still learning, could give writers a run for their money, with its creativity and stunning speed. If you are wondering about how far ChatGPT can go, in the realm of literature, there are no limits that the tool cannot cross. Asked to rewrite Emily Bronte's masterpiece *Wuthering Heights*, with Jane Austen's Elizabeth Bennet as the



protagonist, ChatGPT delivered a narrative that started thus –

The Heights of Pemberley

It was a wild and tempestuous day,

When Elizabeth Bennet first arrived at Pemberley,

The winds howled and the rain beat down,

As she approached the grand estate's gates, frowning.

That is new age writing at a glance and its ramifications on literature helmed by human beings cannot be stressed enough. It would not be a stretch to wonder if, soon enough, most of the books we read, or the papers we write, would end up being drafted by AI, rather than actual human beings and that is a discomfiting thought indeed.

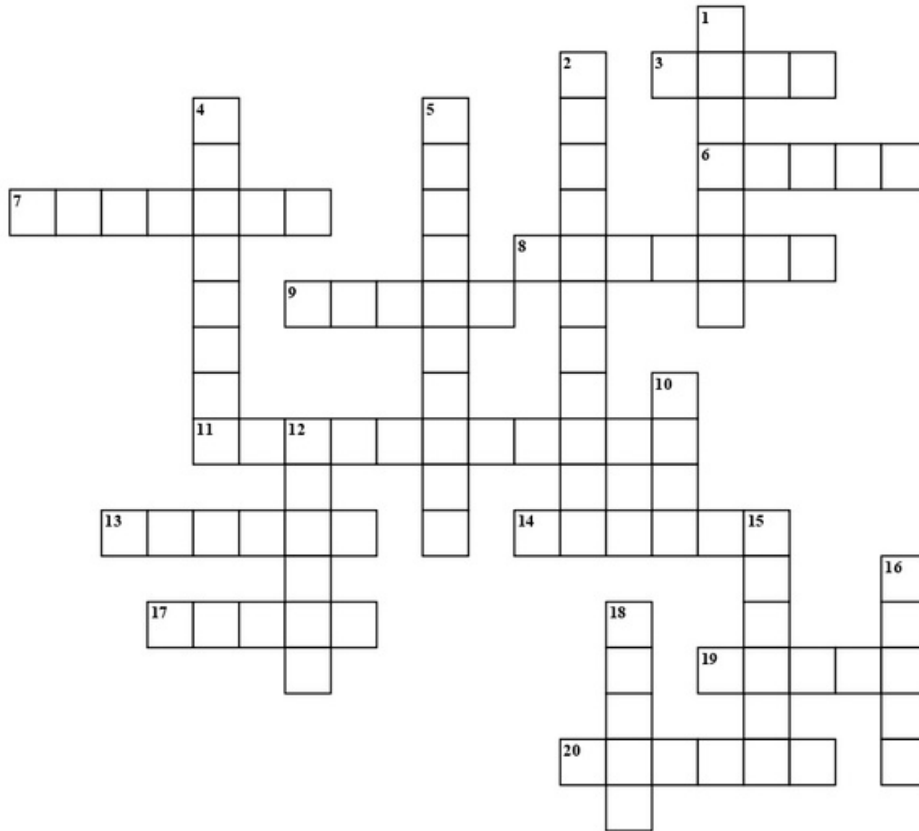
Artificial Intelligence

Source:

IAIDL



The Literati Crossword



Across

- [3] T S Eliot poem that inspired Broadway play "On the naming of ___"
- [6] Author of coolie- Mulk Raj ___
- [7] Tragic hero from Things Fall Apart
- [8] Movement headed by Ezra Pound
- [9] First Indian Graphic Novel _____ of Stories
- [11] John Keats poem: Ode to a _____
- [13] Alice Walker The Colour ___
- [14] Shakespeare's longest play
- [17] Bangladeshi national anthem "Amar ___ Bangla"
- [19] Symbol of power in Lord of the Flies
- [20] V S Naipaul ___ street

Down

- [1] Banned Salman Rushdie book _____ Verses
- [2] Girish Karnad play
- [4] Khushwant Singh novel Train to _____
- [5] Author of Les fleurs du mal
- [10] Confessional poet's only novel The ___ Jar
- [12] Poet from Punjab
- [15] Akira Kurasawa Macbeth adaptation, ___ of Blood
- [16] Story by Ismat Chughtai about sapphic love
- [18] Real name of George Orwell: Eric Arthur _____

"Readers being readers"

-Fiona Francis, TYBA

