

WILSON COLLEGE  
DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH,  
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VOLUME 4  
2023-24

# The Literati





VOLUME 4  
2023-24

MEET

# The Editorial Team



L to R: Ms. Vinita Mathew, Nandini Gautam (SYBA), Khuslen Anthony David (SYBA), Avanti Karle (SYBA), Nigel George (SYBA), [top] Swabhiman Singh Rathore (FYBA), [bottom] Anika Tamhaney (FYBA), Emelda Kripalani (FYBA)

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# THE LITERATI

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# EDITORIAL NOTE

"Art is never without consequences." - Bertolt Brecht.

As Brecht eloquently stated, art is a powerful force whose echoes reverberate in our lives and society. Literature draws inspiration from classical works and everyday experiences, continually proving its profound impact on the world. This fourth edition of *Literati*, published by the English Department of Wilson College, exemplifies this influence, offering a moment of reflection and insight into our collective consciousness.

We are particularly proud of this issue, which includes an insightful interview with Mr. Griffin, a poet who delves into the Israel-Palestine conflict. Speaking with him offered profound insights and challenged our perceptions with his wit and powerful analogies. His perspective on the socio-political scenario was thought-provoking, enhancing our understanding of this significant issue.

This edition also explores the impact of pop culture, including a discussion on the film *Animal* and a review of *The Covenant of Water*. We examine monstrosity through *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, reflecting on morality, societal norms, and the unsettling notion that evil can hide behind a flawless exterior. We hope you find this piece as captivating and thought-provoking as we did. Additionally, we delve into Shakespearean plays through the lens of floral symbolism, study the history and literary significance of tattoos, and highlight the works of Norwegian Nobel Prize winner Jon Fosse.

Literature transcends time, capturing complex subjects and provoking thoughtful discourse. Each piece in this edition reflects these intricate themes, inviting readers to reflect on their broader implications.

We extend our deepest gratitude to the students from all years who have enriched this magazine with their invaluable contributions. Special thanks to Aashrey Rao, an alumnus and former editor of *Literati*, for his enduring support and inspiration. Our heartfelt appreciation also goes to our esteemed teachers, particularly Ms. Vinita Mathew, for her guidance throughout the publication of this magazine.

Lastly, thank you, our readers, for your time and interest in this literary journey. We hope you find inspiration and insight within these pages and sincerely appreciate your continued support.

Warm regards,  
*The Literati* Editorial Team 2023-24



# THE LITERATI

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# The Rotting Heart - Monstrosity in The Picture of Dorian Gray

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by Vijaya Jha  
FYBA

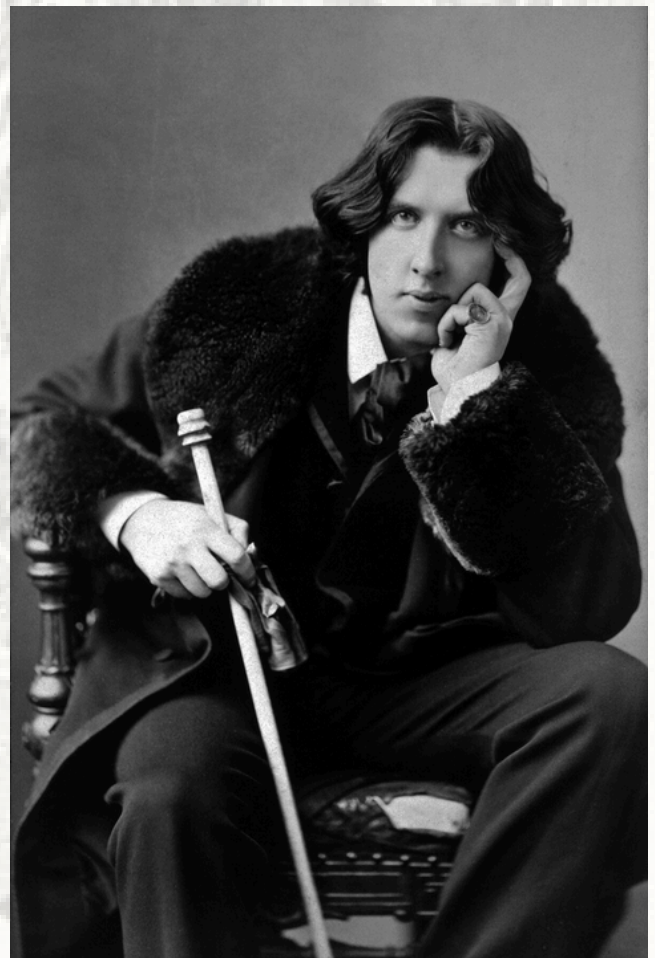
*The Picture of Dorian Gray*, a novel by famed author and playwright Oscar Wilde, explores the themes of beauty, morality, and social norms. It chronicles the story of Dorian Gray and his gradual and inevitable descent into immorality and monstrosity. The context in which the story is set plays a significant role in understanding the story's themes. The book was first published in 1890, during the late Victorian era when Britain flourished as the most powerful nation in the world and London was a melting pot for political and social influences. It was a time when sexual deviancy of any kind was condemned and sexual appetite was often linked directly to mental deficiencies. Therefore, an established gentleman with a moral character was expected not to need primal body sensations and temptations.

***“People say sometimes that beauty is only superficial. That may be so, but at least it is not so superficial as thought is. To me, beauty is the wonder of wonders. It is only shallow people who do not judge by appearances”.***

## The Picture of Dorian Gray Oscar Wilde



A TO Z CLASSICS





## *The concept of morality: Individual vs Society*

This concept of morality is analogous to Plato's monster. He argued that reason must rule over emotions and that animalistic appetites must submit to logic and reason. Defining morality is crucial, as its understanding is not always straightforward. Morality is fluid and has a different meaning for each individual. With this in mind, we must look at Dorian Gray's view on morality. Raised in Victorian England, he was likely heavily influenced by Christian religious morality and the common consensus of the society around him.

In the beginning, Dorian appears to embrace this moral code as his own and is therefore viewed by others as a pure individual. It is only after he meets with Lord Henry that his views on what is right seem to change dramatically. From this, it can be concluded that Dorian's moral character was influenced heavily by two major factors: his Victorian English upbringing and his relationship with Lord Henry, both of which struggle for superiority and control over Dorian's mind. The readers of the time, who shared Dorian's Victorian upbringing and morality, would have likely viewed Lord Henry's philosophies as cruel and immoral, interpreting them as a desperate attempt at rationalizing and excusing wrongdoing and sins.

The readers of the time, who shared Dorian's Victorian upbringing and morality, would have likely viewed Lord Henry's philosophies as cruel and immoral, interpreting them as a desperate attempt at rationalizing and excusing wrongdoing and sins. The novel takes a similar stance, as the portrait of Dorian Gray, meant as an objective reflection of good and bad, agrees more with traditional Victorian morals than Lord Henry's ideologies.

## *Monstrosity: Action vs Appearance*

The portrait plays a significant role in the novel's expression of morality. A reflection of Dorian's inner state, the portrait first becomes a source of pride for Dorian but later starts to haunt him. It also takes on the consequences of Dorian's actions, allowing him to remain eternally beautiful. Since no one other than Dorian can see the painting, it serves as a constant reminder to Dorian of his immoral doings and at the same time shields him from public disapproval and ostracism. This makes an interesting case for what makes Dorian Gray monstrous since the character notably exhibits none of the classical or external characteristics of a monster. He lacks the typical deformities found in classical monsters, such as Frankenstein's monster.

In fact, he lacks any physical flaws,



making him an example of beauty and perfection personified. Dorian Gray might be the first beautiful monster since Christianity's fallen angel Lucifer. He paved the way for a more modern and psychological view of monsters in literature, one that's probably more alarming since there isn't a way of identifying who they are. They appear like everyone else and live alongside society.

Oscar Wilde opens the eyes of the audience to a new understanding of monsters- one that tells us actions are more monstrous than appearances and perhaps more terrifying- everyone can be or become a monster.

## *The Real Monster: Teaching vs Implementing*

Lastly, it is necessary to talk about what created the monster and the role of Lord Henry in Dorian's eventual descent into immorality. It would seem that Lord Henry and Basil curiously resemble two commonly portrayed characters in popular media: the angel and the devil on one's shoulders. While Lord Henry often fills Dorian's mind with philosophies and concepts usually seen as immoral he also finds amusement in seeing how they affect the young man's mind and actions.

On the other hand, Basil acts as a distinct counterpart, often denying Lord Henry's words and pleading for



Image source: IMDb

Dorian not to listen or believe him. In the first chapter, before we are even introduced to the title character, we can observe Basil and Lord Henry's discussion where Basil admits he does not want Lord Henry to meet Dorian for fear of him "ruining" Dorian. This ill influence of Harry is stated by multiple other characters as well, who describe him as charming, interesting, and amusing yet horrible and disagreeable at the same time. Basil is often seen taking a stand against Lord Henry's opinions and philosophies, despite having been subject to them for far longer than Dorian.



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GREAT NEW HACK FOR YOUNG  
HEALTHY SKIN!!!

get an artist to make a portrait of you  
and pray that it will age for you so you  
can be a hottie forever

Possible side effects may include:  
becoming evil, murder, misogyny,  
anti-semitism, being an ass, unrelenting  
feelings of superiority, and being shallow  
af

Image source: Tumblr





In conclusion, *The Picture of Dorian Gray* is a profound contemplation on the nature of monstrosity and its manifestations in the human psyche. The novel was in many ways ahead of its time, both theoretically and conceptually. Dorian Gray as a monster challenged the conventional norms of that era regarding what a monster ought to be. Despite the opinions of his contemporaries, Wilde created a creature devoid of the common features associated with monstrosity, such as a deformed shape or the status of an outcast.

It, therefore, can be assumed that something in Dorian's predisposed nature was also prone to the behavior he later adopted. At several points in the novel, we get to see Dorian's reaction to great tragedy, such as Sibyl's suicide or the aftermath of Basil's murder. A moral and decent character would, in these extreme circumstances, usually revert to their natural personalities, and this is where it becomes most clear that Dorian's character and nature are as immoral as his actions. He displays clear signs of psychopathy, only considering the tragedy in terms of how it will affect him personally. Sibyl's suicide is not grieved, and her pain is never considered.



waiting for (gorey)  
@EdGoreyFanClub

If my friend painted a portrait of me, I wouldn't have sold my soul for eternal youth and later murdered him. No offense to Dorian Gray but I'm different

Image source: (up) Wikipedia  
(down) Pinterest



# FLOWERS IN SHAKESPEARE



Here's Rosemary, that's for remembrance, pray  
you love remember, and there is Pansies, that's for  
thoughts.

There's Fennel for you, and Columbines; there's  
Rue for you and here's some for me, we may  
call it herb of grace o' Sundays.

There's a Daisy, I would give you some  
Violets, but they wither'd all when my  
Father died.



Image source: Wikipedia (Cobbe portrait)



# FLOWERS IN SHAKESPEARE

by *Emelda Kripalani*  
FYBA

When we think of flowers, we often visualize their alluring beauty, fragrance, vivid colours and the emotions they evoke. For centuries, they have been a powerful medium for expressing subtle or the deepest of emotions non-verbally and have inspired to all kinds of fields. Literature is one of them. Flowers are considered special as they add depth and colour to the setting, scenes or characters and are used as symbols in literature representing certain thoughts and virtues. Each flower carries a different meaning and symbolism. The art of attributing specific meanings to flowers is known as 'Floriography' or the 'Language of Flowers'.



Image source: Pinterest

“  
**‘Flowers don’t tell,  
they show’  
- Stephanie Skeem**  
”



If someone gifts you a bouquet, your first course of action would probably be to thank them and find a vase to put them in, but if you lived in the 19th century, you may have just received a secret message. Today many people understand the meaning of a red rose offered to a lover as a symbol of a romantic and passionate relationship, but do you know that the Victorians had a special language of communication through flowers? Yes, the language of flowers was most prominent in the Victorian age. What makes it undeniably interesting is that it allowed an individual to convey their message in secret to one another, as open expression was constrained due to societal norms.



Although it was in the Victorian era that the art of floriography flourished, its roots go back to the ancient Greek, Roman and Egyptian cultures, who associated the flowers with their Gods and Goddesses. Later by 1810, French publishers began to make several floral dictionaries that had details of the different floral codes collected over the years. Flowers are a part of daily routine in Indian cultures as well. There is a flower for every season and every reason in India, as they denote purity, strength and divinity. For example, the Lotus also known as Padma is considered sacred due to its association with Indian Gods such as Brahma, Vishnu, Goddess Laxmi and Saraswati. From weddings to funerals, flowers are extensively used for every occasion with different meanings



"You got anything that says I put a lot of thought into this gift?"

Image(s) source:  
cartoonstock.com



Apart from daily usage, flowers are also embedded in the history of Literature. Many famous writers like Shakespeare, Robert Frost, Scott Fitzgerald, etc have used flowers as metaphors in their literary works to highlight certain traits or to add depth by flower symbolism. William Shakespeare, the most renowned playwright, has written plays which reflect his affection for flowers. It can be partly attributed to his country-dwelling upbringing as there were many fancy and elaborate gardens designed at that time such as the Knot Garden, where different types of flowers were found in full bloom. Shakespeare's plays include references to over fifty different types of flowers, plants and herbs. He mentions the flowers artistically which creates a sense of imagery and symbolism to the reader. Let us look at some examples from his plays.

## Romeo and Juliet

The tragedy of *Romeo and Juliet* is known to all of us. Shakespeare has portrayed the journey of a flower through this play metaphorically. It is said the Rose is his favourite flower because he mentions it seventy times, more than any other flower. The origins of the rose as a symbol go back to the times of Aphrodite, the Greek Goddess of Love, Passion and Fertility.

Shakespeare uses a bud to indicate youth, describing a young person

before they become an adult. The bud conveys the element of innocence in different characters, and it progresses as they grow. Fully bloomed flowers represent grown adults, and the wilting of flowers means the death of the character. The process of the buds transforming into flowers mirrors life through the growth and maturation of the characters with time.

***“This bud of love, by  
summer’s ripening breath,  
May prove a beauteous  
flower when next we meet.”***

-Act II Scene II Line 17

This quote is an example of the growing new love between Romeo and Juliet. Shakespeare uses a bud to indicate that their love will evolve/develop with time and as they meet it will become a flower demonstrating that their love has matured. Shakespeare uses the rose to convey painful emotions. In Juliet’s lament on love, the rose is a metaphor for the ‘darker aspect’ of love.



Image source: [artuk.org](http://artuk.org)



***“What’s in a name? that  
which we call a rose  
By any other name would  
smell as sweet;  
So Romeo would, were he  
not Romeo call’d”***

-Act II Scene II

Juliet compares Romeo to a rose indicating that even if he has a different name, she would still love him as he will always remain the same person. She correlates this to their situation, being part of rival families, their love should be impossible. Through this literary metaphor, Shakespeare conveys the ideal love that surpasses the problems of class and social boundaries.



Image source: arthive.com

## Midsummer Night's Dream

In Shakespeare's *Midsummer Night's Dream*, flowers play an important role, especially the Love-in-idleness (also known as pansy) is considered highly symbolic due to its ability to alter the course of 'love' in the plot and interweave the language of love, remedy and intoxication. Did you know the pansy that grew in Elizabethan England had many country names such as 'tickle my fancy,' 'pink of my gown,' 'three faces under the hood,' etc. 'Heart's ease' was the most common name.

***“Yet mark'd I where the  
bolt of Cupid fell.  
It fell upon a little  
western flower,  
Before milk-white, now  
purple with love's  
wound,  
And maidens call it  
love-in-idleness.”***

-Act II Scene I Line 165-8



In the play, Love-in-idleness is called the 'magic flower.' It is an accurate metaphor for the way love and infatuation work in real life it reflects the unreasonable acts and negative effects of disinclined love.

The word 'idleness' means not interested or not inclined to work so the flower's name means love that is disinclined to work. In the play, the unnatural love from the potion of magic flowers has negative effects on the main characters as they fall in love with the wrong people.

Shakespeare has also made other wildflower references, for example:

*“I know a bank where the  
wild thyme blows,  
Where oxlips and the  
nodding violet grows,  
Quite over-canopied  
with luscious woodbine,  
With sweet musk-roses  
and with eglantine:  
There sleeps Titania  
sometime of the night,  
Lull'd in these flowers  
with dances and delight.”*



Image source:  
[shakespearecomesalivesdsu2017.wordpress.com](https://shakespearecomesalivesdsu2017.wordpress.com)

These lines are spoken by the King of the Fairies, Oberon to Robin 'Puck.' He refers to the wildflowers such as the oxlips, violets, woodbine (old name for honeysuckle), eglantine (*Rosa rubiginosa*) and musk roses (*Rosa arvensis*) to explain to him where Queen Titania sleeps. Titania's bed as described by Oberon, was covered with a blanket of flowers which were considered important in fairy dealings. Violets were included as they made good cover on the ground and they represented 'humility and purity' which were important elements in Titania's character.



# The Tragedy of Hamlet

One of Shakespeare's most popular plays, *Hamlet*, is a tragedy of the 17th century. Flower imagery is an interesting aspect which provides symbolism within this play. There are many flowers mentioned one of which includes weeds, which Hamlet uses as a symbol of corruption and the rest are mentioned in Ophelia's speech. The character of Ophelia is the subject of a famous painting by the artist John E. Millais in which he depicts her floating amidst the flowers that she describes in her speech. After Ophelia's father, Polonius, passes away, she is heartbroken and depressed, which leads to her mental breakdown. After some time, she visits the royal court carrying an assortment of flowers for the King and Queen and the other members of the court and says:

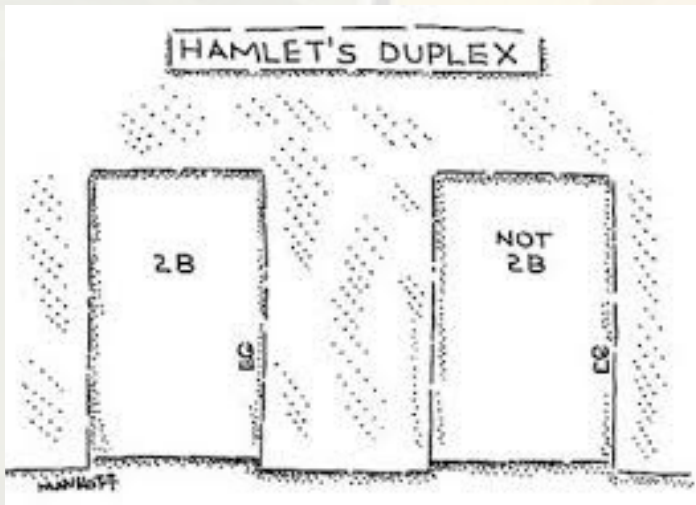
*“There’s rosemary, that’s  
for remembrance; pray  
you, love, remember. And  
there is pansies, that’s for  
thoughts... There’s fennel  
for you, and columbines.  
There’s rue for you; and  
here’s some for me. We may  
call it herb of grace  
o’ Sundays. Oh, you must  
wear your rue with a  
difference. There’s a daisy.  
I would give you some  
violets but they wither’d all  
when my father died. They  
say he made a good end.”*



Image source: [widowcranky.com](http://widowcranky.com)



The flowers and their symbolic meanings are as follows: Rosemary (remembrance), Pansies (thoughts and love in vain), Fennel (flattery), Columbines (foolishness), Rue (sorrow, regret), Daisies (innocence), Violets (fragility and faithfulness). Rosemary and Rue are two flowers which are also mentioned in *The Winter's Tale* (Act IV Scene IV)



Ophelia's speech is symbolic because all the flowers convey a hidden meaning. No specific direction is given as to whom she presents each flower, and there are different interpretations of it in various productions of *Hamlet*. Throughout the play, we can see different instances where Ophelia's character is explained with flower symbolism. Her appearance which consists of white garments and her disheveled hair adorned with flowers is the symbol of an unstable state of mind.

Beyond aesthetics, flowers are deeply rooted in our history. Although the symbolism and meaning of flowers have changed over time, they have

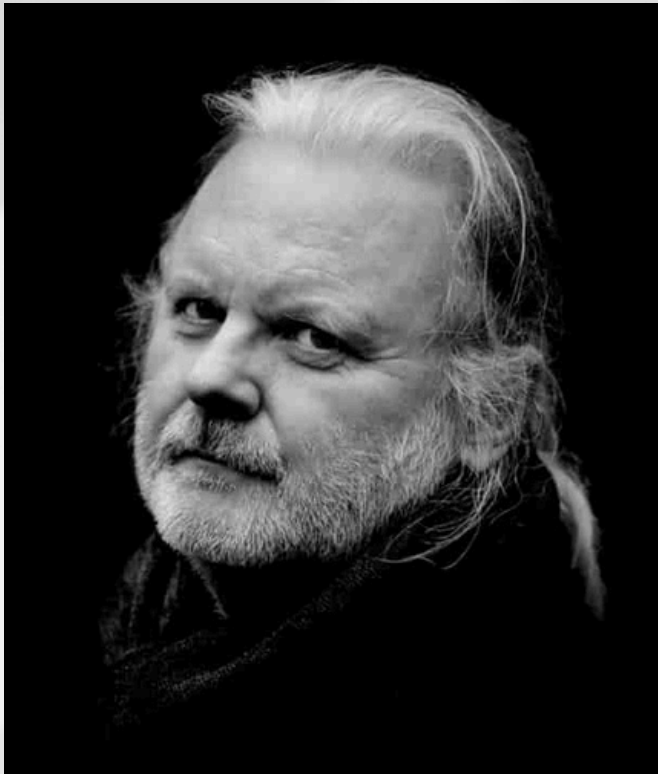
been a powerful medium of non-verbal expression. In the end, I can not help but mention some flowers with the symbol they carry which are truly amazing.

*Pink carnations: gratitude,*  
*Yellow carnations: rejection,*  
*Bluebell: humility/kindness,*  
*Daffodil: unequalled love,*  
*Gardenia: secret love,*  
*Hyacinth: game/sport,*  
*Yellow Hyacinth: jealousy,*  
*Lavender: distrust,*  
*Red tulip: passion,*  
*Oak: strength,*  
*Myrtle: good luck in marriage,*  
*White lily: virginity,*  
*Chrysanthemum: longevity, rebirth.*



Image source: Etsy





Image(s) source: Wikipedia

# Jon Fosse's Language of Silence

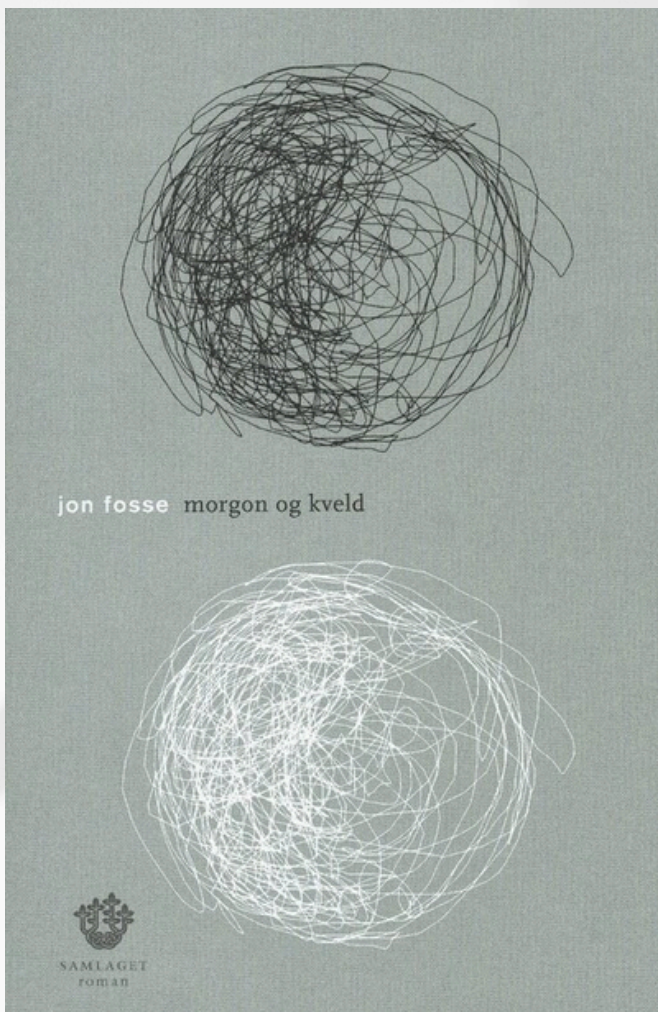
*Winner of the Nobel  
Prize in Literature 2024*

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by Anaya Karnik  
SYBA

Many times, we find ourselves in situations that words can barely describe. An internal debate rages within us, struggling to articulate our feelings about the ongoings of life. Often, we fail to understand these feelings, and hence they become “the unsayable”. They become a phenomenon familiar to humans yet remain alien to us. In times of hardship, when we turn to a friend their comforting words make us feel deeply understood, as if they are experiencing our emotions alongside us. Isn't that a truly comforting feeling?

That is precisely what Fosse's writing does to us. The Norwegian Nobel Prize laureate is popularly known for “saying the unsayable”. He received the Nobel Prize for Literature in 2023 and to describe it in the words of the Nobel Committee he received the prize “for his innovative plays and prose which give voice to the unsayable”.





He received the Nobel Prize for Literature in 2023 and to describe it in the words of the Nobel Committee he received the prize “for his innovative plays and prose which give voice to the unsayable”. When Fosse writes, it's an introspection into the deep thoughts that sometimes a person does not even realize.

Fosse often attributes his writing to an incident from his childhood. At the age of seven, on his family's farm in Strandebarm, a Norwegian village, he slipped on ice while carrying a bottle of fruit juice. The glass from the bottle slashed an artery on his wrist causing him to lose consciousness; he recalls not feeling any sadness but rather a sense that there is beauty in everything. He says that he “saw himself from outside” feeling like he was about to die but was also aware of “a kind of shimmering light”. Perhaps, the shimmering light he mentions is what the inexpressible is.

When we read Fosse's work it is difficult to express what we feel about his writing, and this difficulty of expression is exactly what Fosse excels at. The elements of a human being's time on earth are present in his work, but he aims to portray what lies between these elements. His writing is minimal and lucid, he makes use of repetition which plays a key role in emphasising the sentiments he seeks to convey.

Known as the minimal maestro of literature his writing isn't dramatic, it

Image source: Times of India

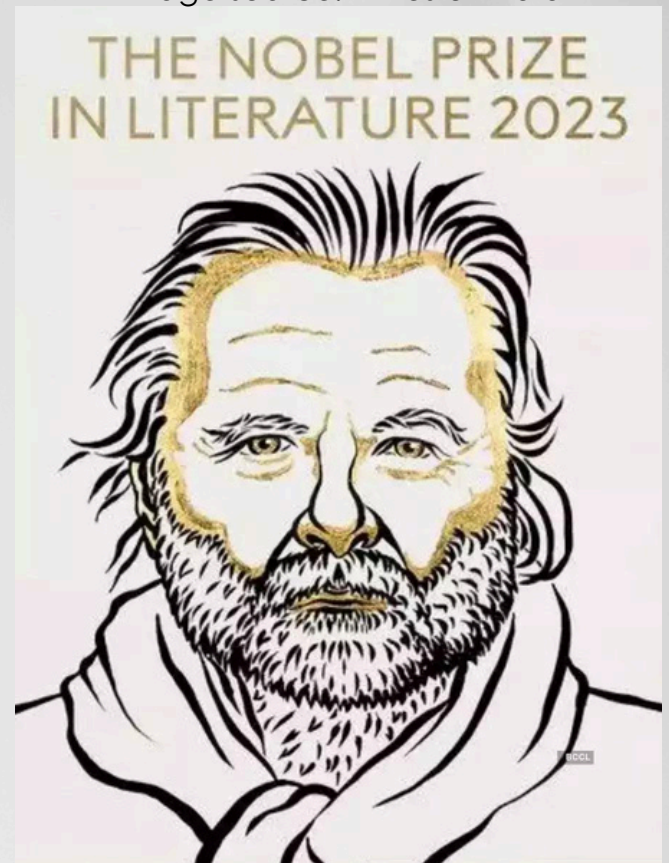


Image source: winjeagency.com



reflects the daily life of an individual. According to Fosse, the dramatization of literature means writing with political perspectives, hidden agendas, and other complex concepts. He states that literature should be simple, what hides behind the dramatization of writing is the ultimate human experience. For Fosse, literature is an unfiltered reflection of the essence of being human.

*“I have always known that writing can save lives, perhaps it has even saved my own life”*

He consistently writes vaguely and the readers are often left to interpret what he means to portray by themselves. In this process of interpretation, the readers find themselves realizing their unconscious thoughts, what they have suppressed, and what they are scared to express, making his work the expression of the inexpressible. Minimalism and vagueness in his writing are also what makes his writing so thought-provoking. While reading, even if the readers do not engage with their internal thoughts and fears, they surely begin to think about their own lives. It is hard to read anything by Fosse and not ponder over our lives, or at least the lives of the characters in his books, without questioning something philosophically.

Fosse has also mastered the art of writing in a stream of consciousness. The Nobel Literature Committee has called *Septology*, a series of seven novels, his magnum opus.



Image source: *The Washington Post*

It is an extraordinary collection that narrates the life of an aging painter and his experiences. In this stream-of-consciousness novel, he focuses on the idea of the divine. The story imbues the reality of the divine. Interestingly, before Fosse began writing, he was an atheist. He continued to remain one in his twenties but the process of writing made him question atheism. As mentioned earlier his childhood near-death experience strongly influenced his writing and he is now a Catholic who believes in transcending with the divine. He incorporated the idea of writing about God and mystic realism at a time when everybody around him thought that writing should be political.

Fosse's work is like a friend who guides you along the way, the friend whom you can rely on, the friend who makes us feel like we have space to reflect upon the person within us.



Fosse's work is awakening and enlightening. In his novel *A Shining*, he uses a hilarious tone but holds on to his style of minimalistic and vague writing. It is the story of a man driving into a forest as a result of boredom and then encountering a shining being that evokes in him something that changes his life, he thinks of the being as the divine. The novel being his latest work can be called the amalgamation of Fosse's ultimate writing essence. It has everything that makes Fosse the Nobel Prize laureate. This novel is the epitome of his language of silence, it is short and strange and manages to move minds deeply.

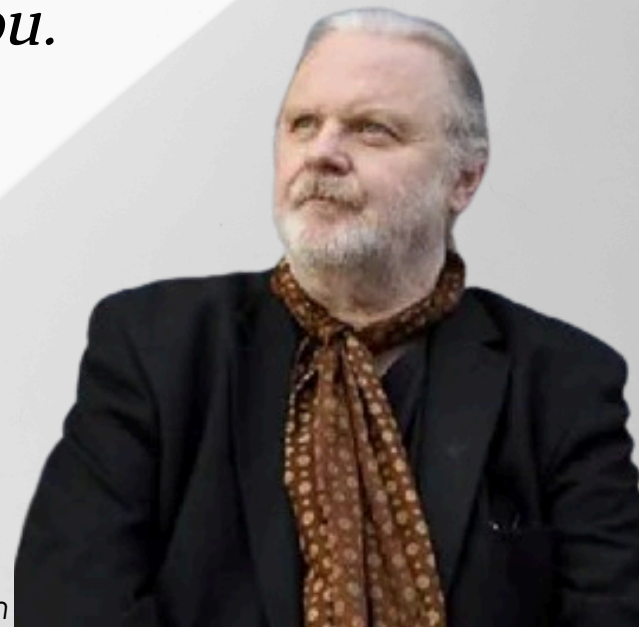
Another unique aspect of his books is the imagery created; all his novels have a bland color scheme, and they have descriptions of snowy days or gloomy weather. This is a symbol of how the human mind feels amidst anxiety, grief, and restlessness when it tries to seek happiness. Focusing on the details of his style, there is a consistent pause between his sentences. This pause is the language of silence exclusive to Fosse; he lets his readers sink into the content, leaving them mesmerized. He doesn't speak to the reading mind but embraces the reader's soul.

Through his vigilance, Fosse has entirely understood the essence of being a human, which is why his writings are existential rather than dystopic. Fosse is the most performed playwright, second to Henrik Ibsen, the 'Father of realism.'

He is also widely considered a worthy successor of Ibsen in theatre.

Jon Fosse was a contender for the Nobel Prize a decade before he won it. On receiving the prize he said: "I am overwhelmed and somewhat frightened. I see this as an award to the literature that first aims to be literature, without other considerations." Fosse understands the need for simplicity in literature and deserves more recognition among common people. He mainly writes in Nynorsk, in a world that reads in English, he gained recognition through his book *Septology* in 2022. Fosse says he does not write about characters in the traditional sense, he writes about humanity, and he sticks to his statement every time he writes. A reader's life remains incomplete without reading at least one of Fosse's works.

*The biggest gift of writing and being a writer is the experience of something coming to you.*





## FILM REVIEW

# How palatable is the film *Animal*?

by Huda Shaikh  
TYBA

*How far would you go to protect your family?*

This question lies at the heart of *Animal*, a film that immerses viewers in a world of brutal choices and relentless consequences. Released in 2023, *Animal* is an Indian action drama film directed by Sandeep Reddy Vanga featuring Ranbir Kapoor, Anil Kapoor, Bobby Deol, Rashmika Mandanna, and Tripti Dimri. *Animal* forces us to confront the depths of human nature. It portrays violence not only as a tool but as a complex force capable of both destruction and a warped sense of protection. The movie is rife with disturbing scenes and dynamic characters, creating a fascinating yet uncomfortable exploration of the human potential for darkness.

Palatable refers to how easily digestible or understandable the

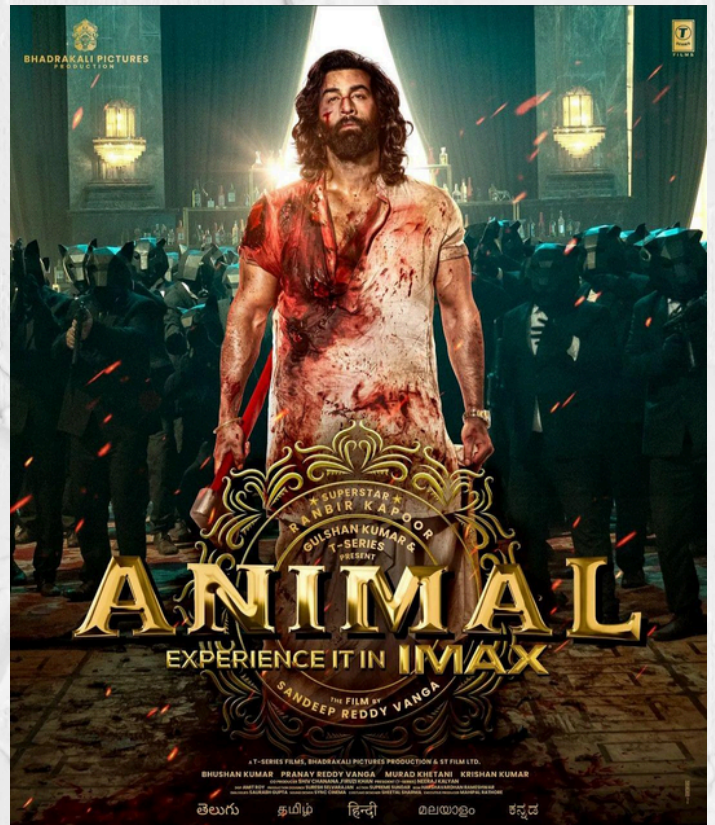


Image source: IMDb

movie is for the viewer. Factors that influence palatability include the complexity of the plot, the intensity of its themes, and the level of graphic content. *Animal* may not be highly palatable for everyone due to the presence of violence, making it difficult to watch for some viewers and reducing their palatability. The film also includes harsh language, adding to its unsettling nature and decreasing accessibility for certain audiences.





The movie is a fast-paced action drama that explores the themes of family, revenge, and violence. While the central conflict of the protagonist's pursuit of revenge provides a clear narrative, the film's complexity lies in its use of flashbacks and intricate relationships between characters. This can make it demanding for viewers who prefer straightforward plots. Additionally, the film has been critiqued for inconsistencies in plot logic and character motivations, which hinders its digestibility for some audiences.



Image source: mid-day.com

The characters in *Animal* are a source of contention, particularly regarding their relatability and credibility. Ranvijay Singh, played by Ranbir Kapoor, is a character who is difficult for viewers to connect with because of his extreme desire for revenge and the violent ways he goes about it. He acts so aggressively that it's hard for audiences to see themselves in him. Balbir Singh, played by Anil Kapoor, is shown as a father who is too busy with work to spend time with his son, Ranvijay.

This lack of connection and

communication between them is what some viewers find unrealistic and unconvincing. It's also seen as a possible reason for Ranvijay's problems. Geetanjali, played by Rashmika Mandanna, is a loving and supportive wife to Ranvijay. She is there for him through everything, good and bad, and is his source of strength. She remains by Ranvijay's side, showcasing unwavering loyalty even in challenging situations that test their relationship. Despite her strength, Geetanjali is portrayed as a vulnerable character who experiences emotional distress due to Ranvijay's actions.



Image source: MensXP

However, the film also portrays a complex and potentially problematic dynamic between Ranvijay and Geetanjali. While Geetanjali remains loyal to Ranvijay, the film suggests he engages in infidelity, causing emotional pain and betrayal. The film reportedly depicts instances where Ranvijay resorts to physical violence against Geetanjali, which has been met with criticism and raises questions about the film's portrayal of relationships.





Image source: Indian Express

Ranvijay, the film suggests he engages in infidelity, causing emotional pain and betrayal. The film reportedly depicts instances where Ranvijay resorts to physical violence against Geetanjali, which has been met with criticism and raises questions about the film's portrayal of relationships.

Varun, played by Siddhant Karnick, is a rich and ambitious businessman who wants nothing more than power. He is a key antagonist in the movie and clashes with Ranvijay often. Varun even goes as far as harming Ranvijay's father to get what he wants. Abrar Haque played by Bobby Deol is the main villain in the movie. He is depicted as a ruthless and vengeful person, due to a past business dispute he seeks revenge on Balbir Singh, Ranvijay's father. He operates in the shadows and manipulates events to achieve his goals

The concept of the “alpha male” is central to the character of Ranvijay Singh in *Animal*.

The film portrays him as embodying traditional ideas of masculinity associated with dominance, aggression, and a relentless pursuit of power. He is described as physically imposing, fiercely protective of his family, and willing to use violence to achieve his goals. This aligns with stereotypical alpha male characteristics.



Image source: India Today

However, the film also challenges the glorification of the alpha male. Ranvijay's actions have devastating consequences, raising questions about the toxicity of unchecked aggression and the emotional toll of perpetuating this archetype

The film can be seen as a commentary on the societal pressures that shape and reinforce the alpha male ideal. Ranvijay's upbringing and the environment he inhabits contribute to his adherence to this concept.



Image source: Bollywood Hungama



While the film does not offer a straightforward solution or positive portrayal of father-son relationships, it undoubtedly raises awareness about the complexities and potential pitfalls of these dynamics. The movie shows Balbir's lack of attention and emotional connection negatively affecting his son. Ranvijay's ideas about loyalty and love are unhealthy, this is due to the lack of good male role models in his life.



Image source: dtnext.in

Ranvijay's unwavering love for his father, despite the abuse, shows how hard it can be to leave a relationship with someone you love, even if they're hurting you. It teaches us to be aware of unhealthy patterns in our relationships and to stand up for ourselves, even if it's someone close to us like a family member. Its portrayal of a dysfunctional father-son bond, implicitly highlights the importance of talking openly and honestly with your family, especially your dad. It teaches us that dads and sons should be able to support each other emotionally and build strong, healthy relationships. Ultimately, the film aims to make people think about their relationships and encourage them to create healthier ones. This is illustrated through the importance of communication, emotional support, and healthy boundaries.



"Time for that awkward father and son talk. You know, the one about fluctuating interest rates and instability in the markets."

Image source: cartoonstock.com

This movie emphasizes the importance of fathers in raising their sons and helping them understand healthy relationships. There is evidence that Balbir's troubled past might explain why he wasn't a good father to Ranvijay. This cycle of bad treatment from one generation to the next is highlighted in the movie, showing the importance of breaking free from these unhealthy patterns. The film suggests that fathers should deal with their issues to prevent hurting their children



Image source:  
The New Indian Express



The movie has some brutal hand-to-hand combat scenes with punches, kicks, and weapons like knives and clubs. These scenes are filmed in great detail highlighting the violence. There are also scenes including guns, these scenes show the real-life consequences of gun violence, including blood and injuries. While not the sole focus of the film's violence, there are scenes depicting physical and emotional abuse against female characters. This portrayal has been particularly criticized for potentially normalizing or trivializing such violence.

The film's technical aspects have received mixed reviews, with some viewers praising certain elements for enhancing the film's experience, while others find certain aspects hindering its palatability. Special filming techniques are used, especially during fights and chase scenes, where viewers are transported to the middle of the action. Imagine a shaky camera following a character running through narrow streets - that's what it's like!



*Image source: m9.news*

Some people find this filming style too shaky and close-up, which makes them feel dizzy or disoriented. Additionally, the close-up shots of violence may be too graphic or disturbing for some viewers, so be aware of that before watching. The editing maintains a fast pace, keeping the film's energy high and aligning with its high-octane action sequences. The quick cuts between scenes, especially during action sequences, keep things moving fast and exciting.



*Image source: GQ India*

This can also build suspense, like when the movie cuts back and forth between different characters right before a big fight, making you feel like something big is about to happen. This can be exciting but makes it hard to follow the story, especially if the plot is complex. Some viewers may feel overwhelmed by the fast pace. The movie uses sound effects and music to create a realistic and exciting experience. For example, the sounds of fighting are loud and clear, and the music gets intense during emotional moments.



The film features strong performances from the lead cast, particularly Ranbir Kapoor, who portrays the complexities of Ranvijay with nuance. Kapoor effectively conveys Ranvijay's internal struggles and emotional turmoil, shifting seamlessly between moments of rage and vulnerability.

While some viewers praise the acting, especially the lead actor's performance, others criticize the portrayal of some characters, particularly the female characters. Some viewers believe they lack development and do not exhibit depth or complexity. They argue that these characters mainly play supporting roles or serve the plot rather than having their own stories or opportunities to show their acting abilities.

*Animal* is a complex film with no singular or universally agreed-upon message. Interpretations can vary greatly depending on the viewer's perspective and experiences. It gives the audience many messages such as the critique on toxic masculinity. The movie shows how Ranvijay's behavior, which fits the "alpha male" idea of being dominant, aggressive, and uncaring about feelings, can be harmful. It also looks at how family life can have its challenges, especially when past issues affect everyone. The film highlights the struggles families face and how tough it can be to resolve them.

However, the film's portrayal of

violence, gender dynamics, and Ranvijay's character has also been criticized for potentially sending misleading messages to the male audience. The movie's intense violence and Ranvijay's relentless quest for revenge, regardless of the outcomes, could be misunderstood as making these actions seem acceptable or justified. Its emphasis on Ranvijay's aggression and dominance could lead to a limited view of masculinity, leaving out important aspects like being open about emotions and showing empathy.



Image source: Koimoi

The way some female characters, like Geetanjali, are shown in the movie can also be seen as supporting harmful stereotypes. For example, even though Geetanjali is initially shown as independent and strong, her decision to stay with Ranvijay despite his betrayal and violent behavior might suggest the stereotype of women sacrificing their happiness for a relationship. The movie shows female characters facing physical and emotional abuse. Although the film may not directly support these actions, the lack of clear condemnation of such violent behavior could downplay their severity and contribute to a culture where such actions are normalized.



People on IMDb have said the following about the movie *Animal*:

*"If this is considered a movie, then what would you label as garbage?"*

*"Such a shame for even animals to name this movie."*

*"A film for the clinically insane made by a psycho."*

*"Probably the worst movie I've ever seen!"*

*"A movie praising misogyny."*

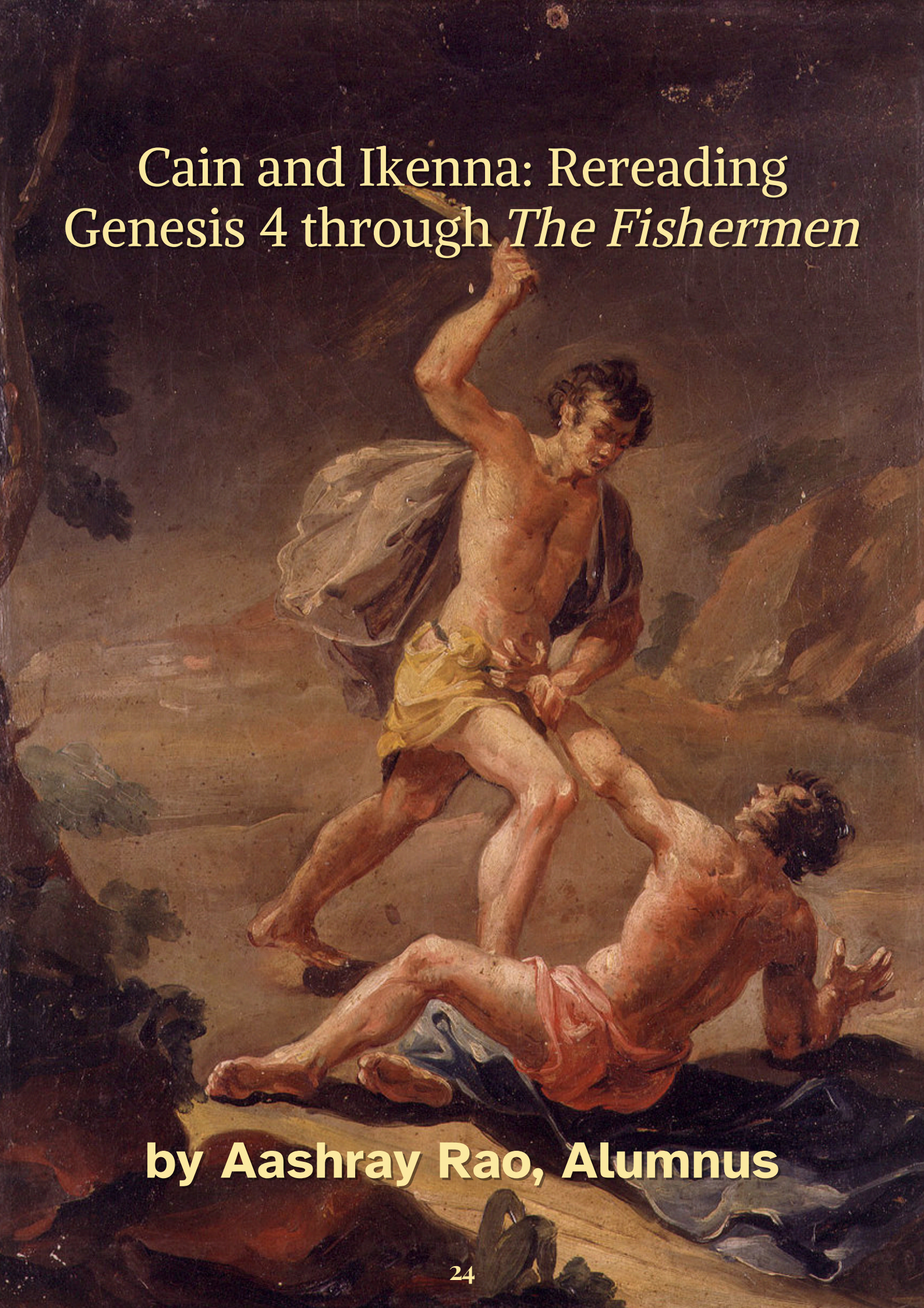


"I like bad movies. I don't watch them, but I love the scathing reviews."

Image source: cartoonstock.com

In conclusion, the movie *Animal* encourages viewers to participate in critical discussions regarding its content and the messages it communicates. It's crucial to remember that the film is open to interpretation, and a healthy approach involves questioning its portrayals, analyzing its messages, and engaging in thoughtful discussions about the issues it raises. Whether one finds the film *Animal* palatable or not, it undoubtedly prompts introspection and reflection, leaving the responsibility of critically evaluating the complex portrayal of human experience to the viewers.





Cain and Ikenna: Rereading  
Genesis 4 through *The Fishermen*

by Aashray Rao, Alumnus



In his paper *Brother Hate and Fratricide in Shakespeare*, McCullen notes those who engaged simply in fraternal hatred during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries were temporarily separated from God's grace. Acts of fratricide would leave the murderer forever separated from grace and therefore condemned to hell. Acts of fratricide feature heavily in medieval painting and Shakespeare's plays, most notably in *Hamlet*. The myth of Cain and Abel functioned as a template for many writers of Shakespeare's time and this continues to be the case in contemporary literature. Nigerian author Chigozie Obioma's *The Fishermen*, published in 2015, when read with the myth in mind provokes two questions: first, how do the elements of the myth manifest in the novel? And second, considering the ambiguity of the original tale, does it suggest a particular rereading of the biblical account?

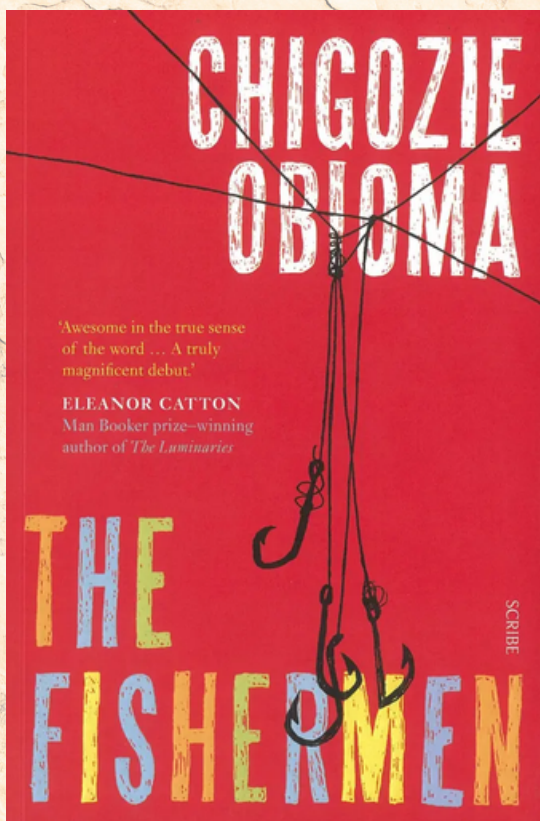


Image source: The Punch Magazine



Image source: Open Country Mag

Apart from the most obvious similarity of centering around fratricide, the novel hints at its connection to Christianity early on with Ikenna, the oldest brother, paraphrasing John 4:19 and promising to make his brothers “fishermen”. Byron points out that in certain traditions Cain is seen as the son of the Devil. The Greek word used to describe him in 1 John 3:15 is the same one used to describe Satan in John 8:44. If we look at Cain as the first murderer and the antithesis of Christ who laid down his life for the sins of others, we see how significant the changing of the offer of becoming righteous “fishers of men” to being base “fishermen” is. There is also a reference to the fifth commandment a few pages earlier, the importance of which we will return to later.



The brothers – Ikenna, Boja, Obembe, and Ben – fish in the river Omi-Ala which is rumored to be a place where ritual sacrifice is practiced, a key aspect of the Cain and Abel story. Furthermore, the brothers engage in the killing of a neighbor's chicken in a manner reminiscent of ceremonial killings.

There is also a parallel to Cain's question to God regarding being "his brother's keeper" when Ikenna questions his mother, saying "Mama, am I your only son?". The character of Abulu, though lacking a clear parallel in Genesis 4, reinforces the importance of kin-slaying in the novel and like Cain is compared to the Devil by Kayode, one of the brothers' friends. On killing Ikenna, just as Cain loses his place in Eden, Boja is denied a traditional Igbo funeral and what that means for his chi and afterlife.

Now that we've seen how the connection is established between the novel and the myth, we can look reflexively at how Obioma encourages us to look at the biblical account and fratricide in general. McCullen asserts that Shakespeare, among others, sees brother hate and fratricide as disrupting the natural and social order of the world. This happens plainly in the novel as Ikenna's hate for his brothers leads to a breakdown in the family hierarchy. Karolien Vermeulen in "*Mind The Gap: Ambiguity in the Story of Cain and Abel*" argues that the lack of meaning behind Abel's name and his limited

actions suggest the story is truly about Cain and God.

Likewise, *The Fishermen* revolves around Ikenna's disobedience, and the relationship most affected is between Ikenna and his mother. McCullen mentions a connection to the Fifth commandment which is brought out in the novel as we see a clear link between Ikenna's disrespect towards his parents and his untimely death, just as many see fratricide as a violation of the respect and honor we owe our parents.

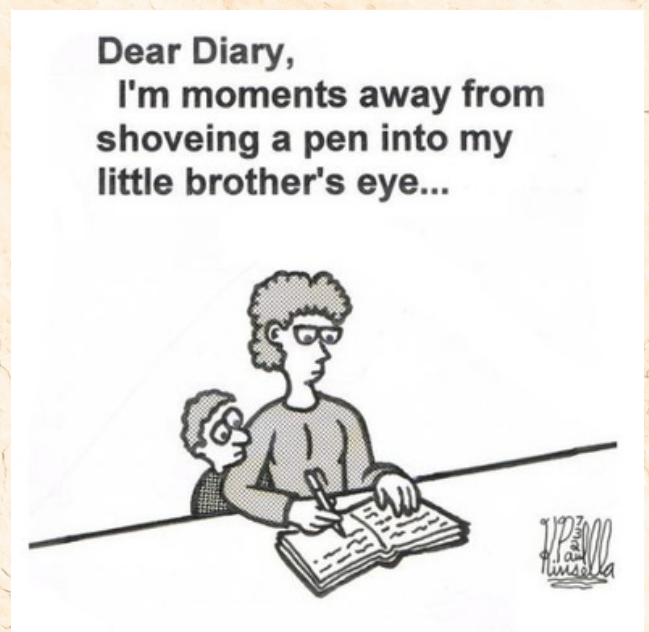


Image source: cartoonstock.com

A more interesting interpretation of *The Fishermen* involves the initial setup that leads to the killing in the first place. Unlike the Shakespearean model where fratricide is the cause of a disruption in the natural order, in *The Fisherman*, both the case of Ikenna and Boja, and that of Abulu and his brother, the disruption precedes and causes the circumstances that lead to the killings.



For Boja and Ikenna, the catalyst in the novel is the father's departure which Obioma depicts as a disturbance in the changing of seasons and the importance of the past. It is only due to their father's absence that they ever become fishermen and encounter Abulu. Looking at Abulu's case, it can be interpreted as both a disturbance in the social and natural state of the world, as his insanity leads him to rape his mother and turns him into an apparent speaker of prophecy.



Image source: cartoonstock.com

If we return to the myth and view it through the lens of Obioma's story, we can plug some of the holes in the narrative. Firstly, it suggests that the critical event might not be the acceptance of one sacrifice over another but rather the event that led to the need for a sacrifice in the first place, that is, the dismissal of Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden. Furthermore, doing so helps us fill in the motive for Cain's act which was previously sorely lacking. He can now be seen as bitter, frustrated by having to pay for a sin he was not involved in, and nostalgic for a past, before the Fall of Man, where he was not required to toil and work the land.

With these ideas in mind, it becomes far easier to make sense of Cain's actions and also why God does not punish him the way one would expect for a murderer, simply denying him a spot in Eden rather than taking his life (as stated in Leviticus 4:17 where the consequence of murder ought to be the death penalty) as he recognizes the part played both by Cain's parents and by his actions.



Image source: Arthive

To conclude, Obioma's work allows us to investigate not only his particular understanding of fratricide but also gives us a different viewpoint on the biblical story, it fills in details that are needed to make a meaningful interpretation of it. *The Fishermen* is thus, an example of how the ambiguity of a myth like that of Cain and Abel leaves room for authorial agency. A process that has been playing itself out for thousands of years whether it be in the hands of Homer, Shakespeare, or Atwood.



# **Inking the Body: A Narrative of Identity**



**by Swabhiman Singh Rathore, FYBA**



In today's contemporary world, tattooing, or "inking the body" has become an astonishingly prevalent form of art and "literature." Before, tattoos have been considered part of civilization since the Ancient Egyptian era, but that idea has been discarded as we now know that they predate prehistoric times. This was proven by the astonishing excavation made in 1991 of a 5,300-year-old man's corpse. That year he was named "Ötzi the Iceman," Ötzi was adorned with ink and had 61 tattoos across his whole body. They were located over his left wrist, lower legs, lower back, and torso. Their purpose is still being theorized, but, they were most likely for religious or healing ritualistic motives. People from all over the world have numerous stories and tales regarding their experiences with "inking."



*Image source: Smithsonian Institution*

Tattoos represent an individual's beliefs and what they commit themselves to, it also creates an immense sense of pride. Every aspect of a tattoo in different cultures is linked with the expression of identity, regardless of whether it is due to heritage or community-related. Tattoos can have significant meaning, they may represent actions of their own lives which they present to the world from their point of view. Inking of the body is more complex than it may first appear but it is not impossible to interpret. Each story behind the inking makes the whole tattooing process an even more intriguing part of human society. Tattoos are a growing part of art and a vital literature piece. It may seem odd to consider them part of literature, but they contain characteristics that provide tattooing a rank in the literary world. Tattooing is an intricate and somewhat painful procedure, but it also shows people's willingness to portray their identities and ideas, making the result worthwhile and, to some extent, boastful.



*Image source:  
The News International*





Conversing with other people can clarify the concept of “inking the bodies.” In today’s context, a tattoo is purely for ornamental purposes, otherwise for “looking cool.” However, this specific motivation for having a tattoo is a very loosely defined idea that does not reflect the extremeness or seriousness of tattoos; instead, it offers a unique perspective as the tattoo takes on a meaning of its own after being painted on the human body. It also shows the coexistent nature of the mind and body and how “body art” makes up for the crafting and structuring of cardinal views, thoughts, meanings, and opinions.



*Image source: News18*

A conflicting part of tattooing occurs when it is considered unethical or somewhat immoral. Various instances or corroborations point to the art of tattooing being a “sin” or a practice against societal norms. For example, Christianity considers tattoos as immoral, but some say that The Bible states nothing “definitive” about tattooing being a sin or not.

On the other hand, many people vehemently believe that the Bible, specifically Leviticus 19:28, prohibits tattoos, which states, "Ye shall not make any cuttings in your flesh for the dead, nor print any marks upon you." But whatever the viewpoints might be, the motion against tattooing is still significant in the world of modernity.



*Image source: Cosmopolitan*

At the same time, a significant drawback to being inked is the removal of a tattoo, as this process carries a heavy burden of regret and can even cause emotional distress. We advise everyone who wishes to get a tattoo that whatever idea, thought, or expression they might consider should carry the same weight of meaning and worth for the rest of their lives. This is why going through a significant or climacteric event in one's life is equally essential; the key is to hold off until something meaningful emerges and inspires a desire to share it with the world.



Image source: [moreechampion.com.au](http://moreechampion.com.au)



Tattoos have played a significant role in various cultures, tribes, and communities worldwide, each attributing unique meanings and purposes to this ancient art form. There is evidence and active usage of tattoos witnessed and observed in many cultures, such as the Polynesian communities, where tattoos were integral to the rites of passage for young men and women. In Japan, the Yakuza, or the Japanese mafia, get tattoos to showcase their fierce loyalty to their organization. The ancient Egyptians believed tattoos protected them from harm and helped them in the afterlife. The Native American tribes of North America used tattoos for spiritual and healing purposes. Tattoos were also used in traditional Chinese medicine to treat various ailments. Some Native American tribes continue to use tattoos for spiritual and healing purposes. In other cultures, tattoos are still a sign of courage, strength, and status.

The Maori people from New Zealand are also an exquisite example of self-expression through tattoos, and their art “Moko” has gained a surge in attention and has risen once again in the 21st century.

In the Maori community, both men and women wear Moko. Men typically apply it on their faces and buttocks, while women adorn their lips, chins, and shoulders. Moko is a dynamic and fierce symbol of their heritage and pride, where the tattoos represent the family heritage and the social hierarchy, also called “whakapapa.” Every line and arc symbolizes the clan they belong to, their social standing, and their life ranking, also known as “hapu.” In the book *Dedicated by Blood: Renaissance of Ta Moko* by Patricia Steur and Gordon Toi Hatfield, Tuhipo Maria Rapido Kereopa explains the magnitude of Moko: “The moko is my voice; it is my visible presence in this time and in this space. It is my rite of passage to the past and to the future. It is the revolving door to my tupuna [ancestors] and my descendants. My children and grandchildren will not suffer the oppression of intolerance because I have asserted my Tino rangatiratanga [sovereignty, autonomy].”



Image source: [flickr](https://www.flickr.com/photos/maoriart/10000000000/)



Another perspective of tattooing left unexplored is related to gangs and criminal activities. Whenever we try to process a picture of a “standard criminal in prison” in our minds, somewhere or the other, our thoughts create an image of a man with tattoos from head to toe. The question is, why are tattoos so ubiquitous in the criminal world? Referring to a YouTube video of Sadhguru, a spiritual and educational leader, about his experience with tattoos in prison, we briefly get to know this topic.



*Image source: BBC*

Sadhguru speaks about how he was present in the Kentucky Correctional Center, where he met some inmates, including one inmate who tattooed the others inside the facility. The inmate explained to Sadhguru the process of tattooing that he carried out, from making the needle from scrap pieces of garbage to sharpening it. Upon more conversation and observation, Sadhguru learned that each tattoo was representative of their ranks, gangs, and position of power inside the prison. This reference introduces what tattoos bring to the world of crime and gangs.

Another article in the LA Times titled “Tattoos Draw Picture of Life in L.A. Gangs” by Elena Gaona provides insight into tattoos and their relation with gangs in Los Angeles. It states that the officials and enforcers of law view gang tattoos as “modern-day hieroglyphics.” The gang detectives vigorously study these tattoos and “ink drawings” to identify and discern interpretations and understand the motives of these people. “Tattoos are more popular in general, so now you see them even more with gang members,” said Officer Richard Duran, a gang expert in the Los Angeles Police Department’s Central Division. “Now you see really young kids are more tattooed, like 10-year-olds. That’s the current trend.” There are voguish and popular tattoos that are very well-known by the authorities.

For example, the symbol of a black hand with a prominent letter “M” on the palm indicates affiliation with the Mexican Mafia. Three dots in the form of a triangle placed somewhere on the hand mean “Mi Vida Loca” or “My Crazy Life.” Prisoners often use towers with clocks or numbers to reflect the years they spent in incarceration or to symbolize “killing time.” According to Thomas Ward, an anthropology instructor at USC, gang members who typically have multiple tattoos are expressing and recognizing that they are now permanent members of their gang.





Image source: [nolandtattoo parlour.com](http://nolandtattoo parlour.com)

Ward states that being wholly committed to the gang and criminal lifestyle has evolved into a form of identity and expression even though gang members are well aware that cops are watching them. “They’re saying to the world, “This is who I am.” To the cops, they’re saying they’re down and deeply committed. They’re in it for life, and “There’s nothing you can do about it.” Ward said. “To the rest, they’re saying, ‘I’m a gang member, and I am to be feared. If you don’t respect me, at least you will fear me.’”

The citations mentioned above and references demonstrate how a need for self-expression drives the criminal world to the point that the tattoos on these individuals' bodies are an accurate representation of their lives

Every etched drawing serves as a chapter, telling a precise tale like a novel through a single piece of literature. While it may seem incorrect to think of tattoos as the expression of millions of criminals, the truth is that tattooing is an honest kind of writing that can be offensive or defensive to different people. The weight and gravity of the art of inscribing the body is very prone to fall on either side, whether it is the bold outlook towards one’s identity or the idea of it being rebellious and outrageous, which can cause people to assume it was part of several erroneous choices.



Image source: [Pinterest](https://www.pinterest.com)

It takes on the job of a medium through which people can convey their desired self to humanity and exhibit whatever they wish. Body art can make or break one’s personality; it depends on what stage of life they are in and what kind of intensity it carries. Getting inked is also linked with risk-taking and a fearless attitude, as it requires a certain level of drive, dedication, and commitment.

So far, we have comprehended that tattooing is a form of literature that has gained massive recognition globally.



It enables us to nurture our identities, narratives, beliefs, and whatever worthwhile life story we carry. Literature can make its way through any form of creativity; however, this demands that the creative field be inclusive, encompassing all the elements that constitute "literature" as a whole. In this regard, tattooing has prolifically knit itself into the literary fabric.

Now, there are stories and meanings associated with tattoos that are linked to all people who have them. The website [thegoodtrade.com](http://thegoodtrade.com) provides information about the various thoughts behind tattoos and the stories of individuals.

Evania is a woman who has a tattoo written in Kanji that translates to "1000 push-ups" in English. Here is what she has to say about her tattoo.



Image source: [thegoodtrade.com](http://thegoodtrade.com)

It's a long explanation, but this tattoo is something I strive to remember everyday—and anyone who knows me knows I have a seriously terrible memory, so it's almost as if I need to have it on my body.

“Think of *Momento*, sans dead wife and the inability to face oneself. All of my tattoos come from something I learned, or something I need to remember, because each painful lesson made me out to be who I may be.

While this is not my favorite tattoo, it is my most recent lesson and it stemmed from an unassuming place. It's written in Kanji, but in English translates to 1,000 push-ups. I live with a mental illness, and I have episodes that are followed by blackouts where I don't remember most of what happens. I used to sit through long lectures about my actions, actions that I still agonize over. For 28 long years, I could not trust myself, but that changed for me the day someone I loved shouted at me, '1,000 push-ups if I'm wrong!' It wasn't some profound book or a notorious someone—the line was from a dinky slapstick show on television, where the character looked at his wife asking her to trust him, and if he was wrong, he would do 1,000 push-ups.

Now this phrase was being used against me to use against myself. The world always feels like chaos to me, and my brain constantly buzzes—and I couldn't trust myself to make any good decisions. However, I can trust the people in my life: my best friends, the family that I built for myself, and the co-workers who want to see me do my best. That partner told me, if I trusted him, then I (by proxy) trust myself, because he trusts me.



That was a perspective I had never thought of before. If I honestly trust in the people around me, then I can believe I'm capable of the potential or qualities they see in me. I love my friends, I respect them, I admire them. I don't want to be wrong in believing in myself, because I can't do even one push-up—never mind 1,000.”

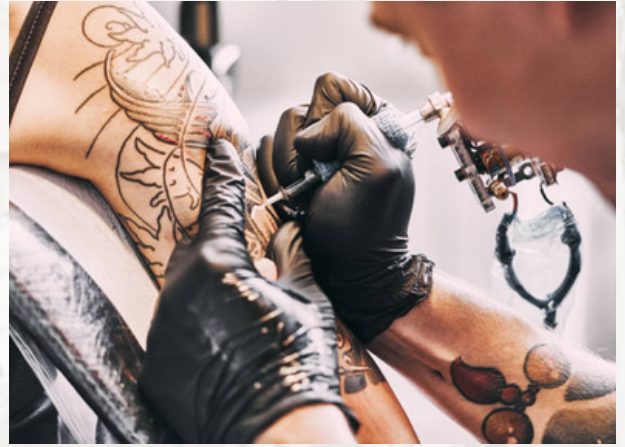


Image source: *The Economic Times*



Image source: *Pinterest*

In conclusion, humans have an immense capacity for creative thinking, showcasing, and portraying ideas, thoughts, emotions, meanings, and stories. Stories that need to be known, meanings that need to be understood, emotions that need to be felt, and ideas that need to be conveyed are what “inking our bodies” is all about. Literature is essential, and every society imaginable must express it in every possible way.



Image source: *Pinterest*



Image source: *shegoeswithpurpose.com*



## BOOK REVIEW

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# The Covenant of Water

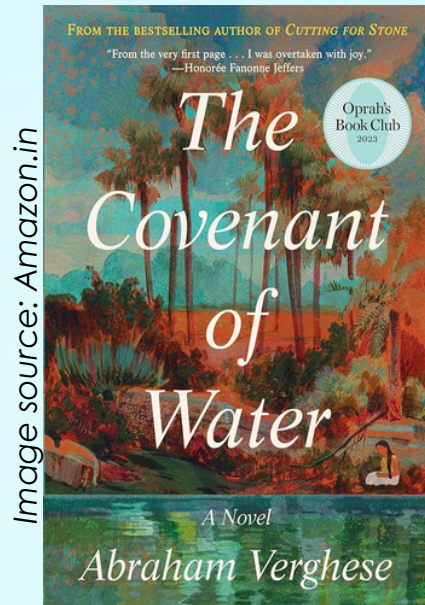
by Fiza Machiwala  
FYBA

The physician-writer Abraham Verghese occupies a curious place in the modern literary landscape. He is a professor of the theory and practice of medicine at Stanford Medical School and has also won the esteemed National Humanities Medal. He often speaks widely about the importance of the human element and has won awards for fiction and nonfiction. His last novel, *Cutting for Stone*, spent two years on the bestsellers list, which is admirable.

The book, *The Covenant of Water*, is set in the village Parambil, Travancore (in present-day Kerala), in the year 1900, with a 12-year-old girl (who later in the story is known as Big Ammachi, the matriarch of the family) getting ready to marry a 40-year-old widower after the tragic death of her father. After the wedding, the young bride realizes that her husband and the men of Parambil are in a constant state of war against the water. Attached by a deep care of his land, the new bride's husband chooses to go on long walks without stepping in the water or a boat, and likewise, it holds the same

significance for her stepson as he also decides to climb trees when crossing canals rather than swimming. In this book, water is both a passive observer and an active agent, capable of causing human destruction and enabling healing. With its substantial length, the enthralling novel demands commitment and engagement from its readers as it possesses an extensive cast of characters spanning multiple generations of the Parambil community.

The narrative transpires across locations from Travancore to Glasgow, Cochin, and Colonial Madras. It spans historical events like the nationalist movement, railway, flood, famines, and the rise of leftwing politics in Kerala. The story extends into the 1970s, exploring two contrasting aspects of Modern India. On one hand, the story deals with the violence and disillusionment of the Naxal movement (a Maoist insurgency). On the other hand, the narrative highlights the advancements in education and medical science in Modern India, which symbolizes progress and hope for the future.





The novel intertwines three narratives that eventually converge, much like the converging waterways. First, the Parambil family has a peculiar history of eccentricities and mysterious drownings. Secondly, Digby, a Scottish doctor who is heartbroken and involved in scandals, has his redemption by moving from Madras to Cochin. Lastly, there is Rune Orqvist, a Swedish doctor dedicated to finding the cure for leprosy and establishing a society for those detested and banished from society. The book discusses one of the most debated topics: the caste system, an invariable social structure that inexplicably dictates people's lives and relationships.

An epitome would be Shamuel's acceptance of his subordinate's position due to his "lower caste," which shows how the caste system shapes individuals' sense of sense and place in society. Shamuel's son, Joppan, sharply critiques caste, privilege, and false generosity. The story delves into the power dynamics between different caste groups, which emphasizes the privileges enjoyed by the higher castes, and in great chagrin, the book highlights the bigotry faced by the lower castes. It also explores how caste intersects with other forms of marginalization, such as race and ethnicity, illustrating the complex and interconnected nature of social hierarchies.

Patriarchal oppression is another aspect depicted in the book as it portrays widows' helplessness and the

challenges faced by women seeking careers and independence, highlighting the patriarchal oppression that infuses the society depicted in the novel. The relationship between Philipose and Elsie illustrates these themes; Philipose is in love with Elsie, an artist with tremendous talent, and displays his desire to marry for love and companionship. However, Elsie's conventional choice is one of a "safe" husband who she believes will support her ambitions rather than confine her to traditional roles, highlighting the constraints placed on women by societal expectations. This dynamic brings out a refreshingly feminist perspective in the story, showing that Elsie exercises to make a choice that prioritizes her aspirations and challenges various gender norms.

The truth bombs Abraham Verghese throws around on various pages are worth another read. Some are: "You can't walk across a lake just because you change its name to land. Labels matter." This statement underscores labels' vital role in shaping our perceptions of people and things. But, it is essential to note that labeling a product as "luxury" does not essentially make it more valuable than one without such a label. In the context of the novel, this concept is portrayed through the young girl Mariamma; she is outcasted and treated less than the community's male members due to her gender.

Classifying things rather than slapping a label on them and making



making assumptions, especially about people, is crucial. Just as changing the name of a lake to land does not make it walkable or labeling a person as uneducated does not mean they lack knowledge or potential. This quote, “Mariamma, sometimes when you are most afraid when you feel most helpless, that is when God is pointing out a path for you.” was quoted by Sister Alphonsa, a teacher and nun; she is an influential figure in Mariamma’s life and recognizes that Mariamma is a gifted student with a bright future. She helps Mariamma overcome the gender-based social barriers imposed on her. She is heard quoting this line, suggesting that Mariamma’s struggles are not necessarily a reflection of her failings but rather a sign that God is challenging her to overcome the obstacles. This quote can be assessed from a broader sense as there are moments when we face challenging situations; it is easy to be uncertain and crushed, which is true when we must step out of our comfort zones for a broader scope. It encourages us to push our fears and doubts and trust God that he has a plan that leads us to something more significant. It also emphasizes our strength in difficulties, reminding us to trust the unseen and unknown.

While the author’s efforts to address historical practices are commendable, the novel has yet to escape criticism. Several critics have criticized the narrative as it romanticizes complex issues such as child marriage and the relationship between Big Ammachi and her husband.

Through all the criticisms, Verghese enchants the readers with a fascinating storyline and characters, mostly with magnificent writing filled with empathy and curiosity. Even though lengthy, the book is a mesmerizing page-turner that keeps the readers’ attention, like bees are drawn to honey. Additionally, the author reads the novel in the audio version, adding a titillating charm. My book review fails to do justice to the genius of this splendidly crafted work.

***“We are merely renting these bodies of ours. You came into this world in an in-breath. You will exit on an out-breath.”***  
***-Abraham Verghese***

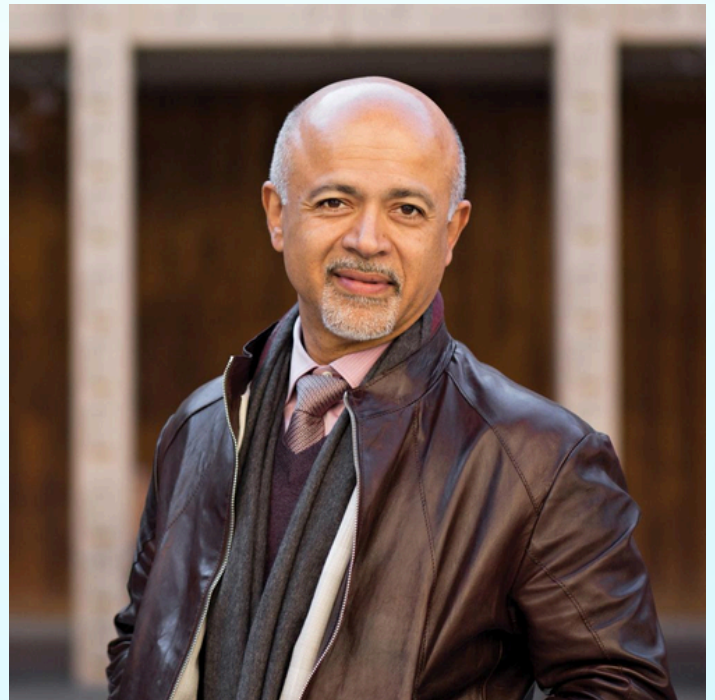


Image source: Femina



## Interview with Mr. Peter Griffin on his poems about Gaza



Mr. Peter Griffin has many talents, ranging from sketching to gardening to sculpting chalk, but his flair for writing is the most eye-catching one. Mr. Griffin has written articles for the Times of India's Mumbai Edition, 'Brunch,' the Sunday magazine of the Hindustan Times, and Outlook's City Limits, Mumbai. He also writes poetry, and his poems on the Israel-Palestine issue, which can be found on his Instagram page ([@peter.d.griffin](#)), caught our attention. He uses his social media platform to share his poems, which largely focus on shedding light upon political issues, using satire along with some hard-hitting facts that have a profound impact on anyone who reads them. We got in touch with Mr. Griffin and asked him the following questions to know more about his thoughts and the poetry process that led to the creation of these provocative pieces.

**Avanti:** *Do you think the audience for poetry has changed over time?*

Mr. Griffin: Poetry does have an audience, but whether that's changed over time and how it has changed I'm not in a position to say. It really depends, right? Who's writing the poem and how well-known they are, whether they're known for other things. Poetry is not something that on average makes anyone famous or makes them a living. Most people who write poetry have day jobs. They're doing other stuff.

You college students have grown up in a world where things like social media and the internet are things that you take for granted. You've probably had a phone from a young age, and I'm generalising, assuming that you've had a phone from a young age, because you're in college in Bombay, you very likely come from a middle class-income family. But that isn't true for all. Before the internet, if you wanted to read a poem, you'd subscribe to a library or to print journals, you'd buy a book of poetry or read the poems your friends shared -those were the ways you encountered poetry, as such



But social media which is a child of the internet has widened potential audiences. I'm not saying it's actually going to widen an audience, because there are so many other factors at play. . So you know that it's not just about quality, it's about a whole lot of other social media angles coming into play, like celebrity, and fame. But potentially, you have a wider audience, and the people who, say twenty years ago, and are older than you, had no other ways in which to encounter poetry. So, Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, has the potential of reaching a wider audience - you can reach ten people as easily as you can reach a hundred thousand people. You don't have to make a hundred thousand copies. It's not that you waste a lot of money to only reach ten people, because you know, what you're trading in, is what you pay for your phone or computer data or your internet, and you're paying also in terms of your attention, because you're now part of the algorithm, and social media algorithms will decide what you see and how you see it. So, yeah, potentially, there is a wider audience for poetry now because of the internet, because of social media. It is an easier way in which to communicate-one to many, many to many, to organise and to find who your kindred spirits are. Are you both ladies from Bombay?

**Avanti:** I'm from Navi Mumbai, sir. And she's from Ahmedabad.

**Mr. Griffin:** Okay, so you may know that day and night, in Ahmedabad or Navi Mumbai, the likelihood of finding kindred spirits is limited by geography. The moment you came to college in South Bombay, your circles widened and you met a lot of different people, you know, like you both being from Ahmedabad and Navi Mumbai met and now are working on something together because of the mobility that you have now, and Wilson College, if I remember correctly from my time there, had people from all over the country there. In those days before the internet, if you came from a smaller town and if you had an interest, common to twenty people, it was considered to be a big group, and now your community is a few hundred thousand.

So community and all of these things are easy ways, and with the internet now you can read, you can witness things that are happening in other parts of the world with far greater ease than I would have been able to do when I was your age. I would have relied on my newspapers and magazines and books, and people, perhaps, who are visiting from other parts of the world, to be able to find out about it because it is all mediated by the various media. I would watch whatever they fitted into the 9 o'clock news on TV, was all I would know. Now, I can dig deeper, I can find out more, I can hear from people on the ground and hear what they're saying. If I search hard enough, I can find it- those points of view.

So the internet is a useful place for things like that, for finding community, for finding kindred spirits, for finding allies, to hear and see things you otherwise



wouldn't, limited by geography, so all of those factors come in.

**Anika:** *So, are there any other poets or authors that inspire you and your work?*

**Mr. Griffin:** Um, nothing specific. I mean, if you write, you should be reading a lot, so I read a lot, and it depends. If you're sitting immersed in a person's thoughts, if you're reading a collection of poetry, you can get lost in there. It may strike chords in you that you may then decide to take off in your own direction. There's a... you know, I'm forgetting the exact words, but Wordsworth said something along the lines of poetry being that 'first flush of inspiration' or whatever. But he also said that it is recollected in tranquillity. Sometimes a poem can appear to you or sort of flow from your hand very quickly. You put it down and it works alright, then you leave it there, and you may want to come back to it later. Or sometimes, you put it down when the thought is fresh, and you bring the craft to it at another time.

There are times when a poem may suggest a form to you. Sometimes a form may start falling into place when you work and work and work on it and make it work within the form, but other times, it could be that it is, you know, free verse, that you find it's some words that are right you want to say, you may choose a certain form, you may choose a scheme, you may choose to rhyme. But sometimes you may not want any of those things. There is the element of craft that you put in after the first draft. Nothing like putting down your first draft, because it has a freshness to it, and it's a thought that's immediately trying to be expressed and you just put it down and later, you decide if you want to do anything with it.

My particular way of looking at poetry is that I try to be as concise as possible. Maybe it's a function of my attention span, but I tend to write fairly short poems. I was speaking to another young person earlier today. We were talking about audiences for literature. And I said, "Really, the first person you write for is always yourself." For many people, that is good enough. You need to put the words down, it could be in a diary, it could be in something you write as a story, it could be a poem, and that's it. That's where it stops. If you want to write for an audience, it also comes to mind that you've got to figure out whether people get what you're trying to say. Once you write something and you put it down, it is no longer yours when it's out there, because people will find their own ways of interpreting it, based on their lives and what they resonate with. You may want to edit it purely for yourself or you may want to edit it because you want people to read it. And as I was speaking about times before social media and the internet, if you wanted your poem to be read by other people, you could self-publish or get a publisher who would be interested in printing your poetry, in which case they might further edit it, and so on and so forth.



And at the end of it all, poetry doesn't make a celebrity out of people. There are very few people who can say they make a living out of poetry. Everybody has day jobs. I don't think I know anyone who makes a living writing poetry.

Oh, the Wordsworth quote that I mentioned was, "Poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings: it takes its origin from emotion recollected in tranquillity." The problem is that a lot of people only remember the first part, a "spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings," and that's your first draft. That's a huge part of it. If people stop reading at that point, it leads to a lot of bad poetry. It's powerful, it's emotion, but it's overflowed, and you had to put it on the page, but it may be something that everybody already knows, everybody already feels it. Friendship, anger, love, enmity, envy, jealousy -all of us feel these things, and poetry is valuable to other people when you can help them find the words for things that they haven't been able to find for themselves. And if you're doing this "spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings," it's very unlikely to wind up being something that other people want to read.

The second part of the quote which says "it takes its origin from emotion recollected in tranquility," is the quiet editing process. Hemingway was supposed to have said, uh, "write drunk, edit sober." What it means is that- you shouldn't necessarily start drinking right now, I'm not going to recommend that to you, but it means that you should write like a drunkard- without inhibition. What alcohol does to your brain is that it removes that first layer of social inhibition, which is why people who don't normally sing, sing; and others dance on tables and say stupid things when drunk, which is exactly what you need to do as a writer. You need to be able to be stupid, be silly. You don't need the alcohol to do that. When you're writing for yourself when you're writing your first draft, you're just putting it out there- act like a drunkard. But you come back to it, like a very, very sober edit. You look at it like your parents would look at you if you came home drunk one day, and they'd put you in line or whatever it is. I mean, the sober edit is the way of putting it all together, where it could be that it leads to getting an audience. It's the editing sober, the recollecting in tranquillity is all about that, you know?

**Anika:** *So, what motivated you to write about the Israel-Palestine issue?*

**Mr. Griffin:** It was in my face. Perhaps, it's a function of who I follow. It was a realisation for me as well. You see, I grew up in a certain kind of way. I grew up in a Christian family, but I walked away from religion maybe when I was your age. But the conditioning, when you grow up in a Christian house, is that you get a certain view of Israel. You hear of the promised land, you hear of God's people, and you hear their story of persecution, of being hounded in different countries, over and above all, the holocaust, and it's tragic. It was real suffering



that happened to the Jewish people because of their faith. Europe had treated them with great hostility, and thus the creation of the modern state of Israel is very much a European construct. The people who are in power in Israel right now are European Jews who've migrated there, and they've taken the land of people who were living there for thousands of years. Whatever be the reason why Europe and North America tend to support them, the Christian majority countries do so too. It's the same kind of conditioning of hearing only a certain view of Israel, a certain view of the Jewish faith, a certain hostility towards the Muslims. And this is largely a construct of the way that the West has framed this discourse, with no small help from Israel.

Now, this is a whole thing about terrorism. There are lunatics in every religion. You would know that in India. Just because there are Hindutva zealots who want to remove people for having other beliefs, that doesn't mean that the average Hindu is a lunatic, right? And no one goes around saying, "All Hindus are terrorists, we should be very careful of the Hindus." But that's what unfortunately happens when one mad idiot has bombed something in the name of Islam; Muslims all over the world seem feel the need to apologise, defend themselves and say, "No, he does not speak for me."

Gaza is a concentration camp where Israelites totally control what goes in and what comes out. You can't travel out of there, you can't control what food or water comes in. Palestine has a Muslim majority, but there are Christians and a small proportion of Jews who've lived there all their lives as well. They like millions of people worldwide, don't share the views of countries that defend Israel's aggression.

I guess what a lot of us who think this is wrong are trying to do is to say that these are human beings who have a right to self-determination and who have a right to their life. Those four or five poems I wrote about Gaza I was trying to humanise this whole situation. To say that they're very real people out there. Can you imagine the hospitals being so overloaded that there's no place in the morgue? Ice cream trucks were storing babies that had been killed. The entire population is being declared terrorists. It's particularly sad and ironic that this should happen- being perpetrated by people who are descendants of people who themselves have suffered exactly this kind of discrimination in the past. I'm not saying there have been no acts of violence from the Palestinians but this is a disproportionate response. October 7 was ghastly, but even what we've heard about the beheaded babies- all that has been proven to be lies. But you had the American President repeating those things. The alleged rapes, torture, etc. they're doing the same thing to civilians.

So a vast amount of people who are being held accountable for the deeds of a few which is classic - that is exactly what the Nazis did to the Jews of Europe. They



accused all of them and treated them as subhuman. That is the language that Israel now using for Palestinians. What does the average Israeli citizen hear about Palestine? - very little. They only hear about terror, whatever is done by a few militants. I mean half of Gaza's population is under eighteen years old. These are people who didn't vote for Hamas. The last election was held some twenty years ago. How could those people be responsible for Hamas? How do these people automatically become terrorists? In fact, instead of demolishing Hamas, but what Israel is doing is creating future militants, because these are the people who have been victims of some very barbaric acts- their entire families have been wiped out, children with no surviving family and a child who has been maimed - how are babies responsible? How are they paying the price?

I came to a realisation of where my own views on Palestine needed to be rethought, maybe some 15 years ago. I started thinking about this in other ways, and put that on Instagram- a little story about the Christian view on Israel, and what that precisely means. Terrorism around the world is not actually driven by faith and belief systems, it's driven by a lot of very cynical people and economic conditions. If you're happy, if you're content, if you're getting to eat good food and have a good life, you're not likely to go and pick up a gun. In fact, you'd be wanting to not rock the boat too much, because you have a good life. You're not likely to become a militant. Until you're discriminated against, unless you're constantly experiencing discrimination, and you're not being permitted to fulfil what you see as the flowering of yourself, if you're not being allowed to fulfil your potential, if you're very basics are being denied to you and the people around you whom you care about- that is when you're likely to want to revolt. This is what you're seeing.

**Anika:** *Is there a poem of yours that holds a particularly special meaning for you?*

**Mr. Griffin:** Not really. It's like that standard cliché, right? The thing about favorite children- No parent will say, "I have a favorite child." But yes, there'll be different equations at different times. The poems I wrote in my teens and twenties were about certain kinds of things. I've written very little political poetry. Most of the things I've written are reactions to the world around me about growing older or experiencing different things, you know, you lose a parent or a sibling or when a friend or mentor dies or someone you look up to, passes away. I mean something may mean something to you at a different time in your life and it may not hold that much there. You may look at something you've written a long time ago and sometimes you may be surprised. Like you mean, 20-year-old me *actually* had a brain? At other times you look at it and you cringe, that happens as you grow older you'll look at your own work in different ways. You may not see things the same way as you did before. I don't mean necessarily that you'll repudiate what you have written because what you wrote was true in its time, but



there may be something you'll remember for other reasons, like someone you care about said something nice about it, or you won a prize for something that you wrote, or the fact that you read it at a point where it got a really good reception. I would've been far more idealist about grief and loss and eternal love when I was younger. I know now that any love, not just romantic love, or any relationship, is something that you work on. Life continues. You meet people, maybe you meet someone who you connect with at a different time of your life than you wouldn't have known or found the same connection with earlier on, right? Certain things you couldn't appreciate when you were twenty years old, you appreciate when you're fifty or eighty years old or whatever. I just went on for a long time only to tell you "No, I don't have a favorite."

*Avanti: Ok, so about your poem "It's a Mood Fam,". You observe how everyone is living their lives and posting about it on social media when there are "missiles hitting hospitals,". Do you think that poetry can reach people who don't see what's going on, to understand the kind of violence that others are experiencing?*

**Mr. Griffin:** That's a hard one. There's something I wrote that was not exactly a poem. It was just three pages of text, but I had put this up on my Instagram, about why you might not be sharing about what is happening, and there could be a number of reasons why. If you lived through trauma, if you've lived through violence, being a witness to violence is going to trigger you and prevent your ongoing healing and your ability to live with yourself. I have friends who live with PTSD for instance. And I'm very careful when I'm sharing with them what's happening around Kashmir or Palestine.

There's also the question of people who face a backlash.. know people who've been asked to shut up or lose out on something. Ranjeet Hoskote, who was curating something that was happening in Berlin, resigned because he was accused of antisemitism and the entire committee also resigned in solidarity with him. I know that in the past, I've not said anything about some things because "hey, I might lose a job or I might lose a friend. I might lose something that matters to me." So you don't stand up. And there is also the thing of- I mean this was a hard lesson during this entire Palestinian thing, like showing the suffering of or resharing the plight of someone who has been dehumanized. Someone who is lost, someone who is crying, heartbroken, suffering, in pain. Would I want to be seen like that? I would not want to be seen at my worst, or in my weakest moments. But then we've heard people from Palestine saying "No, we're sharing this because we want you to listen, we want you to see what is happening."

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Even online sharing- you must be familiar with this entire influencer ecosystem. A brand will walk away from you, and if you make your living being an influencer, you lose a brand, you lose a big chunk of your income. So I don't know if I'd be as quick to judge. I mean, look, I wanna be shallow. I wanna make bad jokes, I wanna put puns up there, I wanna put pictures of my garden, the flowers that I grow in pots. I want to post macro pictures of spiders which fascinate me. There's so much more going on in my life. I wanna share the silly forwards that come up, I wanna make people laugh. But this is me. I understand that others may not want to do that, for all the reasons that I talked about right now: trauma, income loss, loss of other things or even people that matter to you. Maybe some can't even connect with what is happening in Palestine. You could say that there's so much violence and awful behaviour and many f\*cked up situations around the world. "Why are you only concentrating on Palestine?", "Why do you only want to care about this when there's so much to do?" But you know, you're at the right age for me to tell you this. You don't choose who you love, right? Say you fall in love with someone very unsuitable. You'd rather not be in love with them. But you do. It's what connects with you. And this is what connects with me. I see this and something in this speaks to me.

Coming back to what you were talking about, poetry and why it holds a special meaning or poetry that speaks to me. And I hope that when I write something it speaks to someone. I don't expect you to share it, I expect that you will find your own way of relating to it. I expect that you may not see in it the precise thing that I'm seeing in my head because you have your own life and your own lived experiences. But I'm hoping to give you a window into my thoughts and if I change your mind it's fine, if I don't that's also fine, if you stop and think for a few minutes and maybe re-examine your own position, that would be nice, that'd be a bonus. But all of those things, with that particular poem it was... about this conflict within myself. I want to be able to live- I don't want my everyday Instagram stories to be wall-to-wall about Palestine. There's so much else I want to be sharing and talking about and commenting on. There's- you live in India. There's enough crap happening here. In various ways. You don't even have to go far. Just look at Bombay, it's such a big city the entire Mumbai metropolitan



region on your way to college, when you're wandering around. How much poverty do you come across? Avanti, how do you go to college?

**Avanti:** By train sir.

**Mr. Griffin:** You take the Harbour line to VT?

**Avanti:** Yes, sir.

**Mr. Griffin:** So if you look out of the train between Mankhurd and Chembur, how much poverty do you see next to the railway tracks?

**Avanti:** A lot.

**Mr. Griffin:** That is the poorest part of Bombay. The M-ward. Right?

**Avanti:** Correct.

**Mr. Griffin:** It's better now than when I was in college. Trains had to run slow in certain areas because there were just so many people wandering across the tracks. You know they were coming there to defecate, to socialize and to eat because they had no lives, guys, right? It smelt and it was horrible. If you want to change the world, hey it's right there. That's a good place to start. I'm also questioning myself. I don't know. I don't know, right? I'd like to be able to do things. I have no idea why- maybe it was the fact that I'd changed my mind on Palestine, and guilt was happening with me about, uh, not having thought about it before. Not having done the basic reading that would have made me informed about the situation there, of hearing only one side and thinking it true. But hey listen, like I said you care about what you care about and it's okay. You grieve what you grieve in the same way you love what you love.

**Anika:** So, when you talked about how you have a day job and how more often than not, people don't usually make money out of just writing poetry. But despite that, a lot of people, like you, do. So what role does poetry play in the world today?

**Mr. Griffin:** It's like any art, right? Art is, from some people's perspectives, a luxury. Uh, I don't think it's a luxury. It's- if you've studied the hierarchy of needs by Maslow, and stuff like that, you know that self actualisation is at the top of the pyramid.

**Avanti:** Right.

**Mr. Griffin:** But really, it's rather basic as well. I talked about M-ward. If you go into those gullies and lanes, you'll still see children being children, being happy, playing, having no idea what the rest of the world is like. You'll have them



drawing on walls, you'll have people singing songs, right? If you're going by the hierarchy of needs, they have no business doing all of that stuff. They should just be bothered about making a living, right? But even in abject poverty, there is art. It is part of the human condition to find ways to express yourself, I think, and poetry is one way to do it. Art also does that for me, poetry does that for me, conversation does that for me. It's a way of finding out more about the world and finding out more about yourself.

Winston Churchill was supposed to have said this, but uh, Winston Churchill is an a\*\*hole of the first order in many many ways, racist b\*stard, but something that he said about the second world war was- you know, when there was that thing about wanting to cut funding for the arts, he is supposed to have said, and I think this is apocryphal, and I'm not gonna look it up rn and waste more of your time, but he is supposed to have said, "but then what are we fighting for?"

I don't have kids but I have young people who I'm very close to, the children of my friends and so on, and I know that every generation stands on the shoulders of those who came before them. I want to be able to give them, you know, people your age, younger than you, or people who are nearing adulthood or about to become adults, or making your way in the world and earning your own livings. What is the world way giving you? And if it's purely a transactional world where it's nothing more than making a living and making money and all of that, that's a full boring world. You wanna be able to- whether it's poetry, whether it's art, whatever it is, whatever your- it's finding joy, it's pursuing happiness, right? You find different ways to do that.

I don't have kids but I have young people who I'm very close to, the children of my friends and so on, and I know that every generation stands on the shoulders of those who came before them. I want to be able to give them, you know, people your age, younger than you, or people who are nearing adulthood or about to become adults, or making your way in the world and earning your own livings. What is the world way giving you? And if it's purely a transactional world where it's nothing more than making a living and making money and all of that, that's a full boring world. You wanna be able to- whether it's poetry, whether it's art, whatever it is, whatever your- it's finding joy, it's pursuing happiness, right? You find different ways to do that.

Poetry is not necessarily finding joy, but it's finding ways to express yourself. Whether it's a poem, whether it's a painting or a sculpture, a play, an essay, a story, these are ways that we as humans express ourselves. So you'll do it anyway. It doesn't have to make you money, it doesn't have to earn you a living. In fact it's sometimes easier when it doesn't have to, right? If I was depending on being published, I'd have to make sure I know that if I wrote about Palestine, or if I wrote about the fact that majoritarian Hindu views are ruining this country, I might not get a publisher. If I'm writing, even for myself and a few hundred



people might happen to see my posts across social media, I'm obligated to no one. I can make the art that I want to make. I can be stupid, I can be silly, I can make very whimsical kind of work that pleases no one. I have a weird little art form wherein I sculpt chalk. It has zero commercial value. I make them because I want to and might give them away to friends. There is no commercial pressure on me to produce a certain number of them at any point of time. I made something on New Year's Eve and I hadn't made anything for months before that. I make it when I want to or need to, if a sudden form or abstraction comes to mind and I want to see whether I can convert that within the constraints of this insanely ridiculous powdery small little piece of chalk and be very happy when I'm done and then it's finished and it's over. You do art because you want to. You know, you have to, in some ways there is a compulsion, there is a need to, to make that poem, to make that sculpture, to make that painting, or whatever it is.

**Avanti:** Right sir. Thank you so much for answering all of our questions. You really gave us a lot to think about and you also gave us a good number of quotes that we can use for our article. So again thank you so much for taking the time to talk to us.

#### It's a mood, fam

I'm sorry I'm posting about genocide.  
I would rather write love poems,  
I would rather see your stolen kitten videos  
That I have already seen seventeen times,  
And those jokes I first saw in 1998.  
I would rather be winding you up with wordplay.  
I would rather see your OOTD (you look nice, NGL).  
I would even rather see your life hacks.  
But there are missiles hitting hospitals  
And children's corpses in ice-cream trucks.  
I'm sorry I'm posting about genocide.

All the paintings used in the background are by  
Palestinian artist, Sliman Mansour.  
Images sourced from [wikiart.org](https://www.wikiart.org)



## More poetry on Gaza by Peter D. Griffin

### A cloud over Gaza

From a clear blue sky  
Thousands of death sentences fell,  
White leaves that are not from an olive tree.  
Leave, each one says.  
If you don't, you're an accomplice,  
And metal and fire will rain down on you.  
The world will forget  
That you and your ancestors once were.  
There is room for but one star in the sky,  
And it is David's

### The ice-cream trucks of Gaza

The ice-cream trucks of Gaza still run  
Which is to say, their engines turn over  
In parking lots.  
You see, there isn't room enough  
In the morgues.  
So parents line up  
To claim their children  
From the ice-cream trucks of Gaza

### My sky and yours

Dear G  
Around me,  
Chatter and greetings,  
Family and friends,  
Sparkly new clothes  
Doors and windows adorned  
With tiny dancing flames,  
Sweets, way too many sweets  
And then, fireworks in the sky, G  
And the crackers down the lane  
And the steady rumble  
Of a city celebrating.  
And then, G  
All I can think of is your sky  
Where fire and hate and death descend  
And you crumble into smoke and rubble  
I mourn, G  
For the loss of the sky



A photograph of a light-colored, woven basket with a handle, containing several white flowers with green stems. The basket and flowers are set against a white, slightly wrinkled fabric background. The text "Poetry Section" is overlaid in a large, bold, dark brown serif font.

# Poetry Section



## *When I was 14*

I thought you were so ugly  
So undeserving of love  
Everything you touched turned to ash

For all your flaws  
I resented you  
Why could you not be  
Enough?

For all your tears  
I despised you  
Why could you not be  
Happy?

I thought I'd rather die than live like you  
But I can see now  
There was nothing left of you

Your hollow eyes felt like two crescent  
moons on a moonless night  
As I breathed the cold evening air, I  
realised  
I was the one that wore you down

Please, I whispered  
I understand you now  
Come back to me  
Where we can learn to love



## *Happiness*

Sometimes I dream of a different life  
Where I am not me,  
Would I be happy then?

I hide behind small smiles and passing  
greetings  
Hoping and praying  
That I feel a little more like me

Sometimes I wish I was not born at all  
In this body of mine  
In my unfamiliar home

I wish for a rage in me  
A rage of fire and ash  
that will swallow me whole

But I am not, I am just me,  
Nothing more, nothing less.  
I wish it could be enough.

-Khuslen Anthony David  
SYBA





## I'm an art, I hung myself

Acrylic tears, I wipe them on canvas  
Pretty eyes heavy with petty lies  
You and I, never were us  
All the lilacs on my palette lost life

Painted my pain in pink  
Woke up to shades of grey and ink  
You stole my red, cheeks look dead  
Body on bed, used my blood instead

Eyes bright yet hues they lack  
Browns and blues all seem black  
Masterpiece, my mind, what a mess  
My art, an ugly stain on a wedding white  
dress

Painting so pathetic, still hang on the wall  
Like I hung myself, purple painted petals  
Waiting for fall.

## Love Letters

I lift up the stack of love letters  
I oh-so lovingly wrote for you,  
With ink and blood-rushed cheeks.  
Everything takes me back to you,  
Letters;  
The rose-scented and the coffee-  
stained,  
The pressed flowers and wax-sealed,  
The faded forever in my handwriting.  
Everything takes me back to you,  
Except for the realization that I never  
sent you these  
And you never learnt of my love.  
My letters and my unspoken love lay  
in this grave;  
Grave that smells like roses and  
coffee.

-Keerthana Arokia  
TYBA





## Watch My Demons Testify

Moral immoral my demons they quarrel,  
Costing my soul an inhuman torture,  
Light it up, breathe it in, loose my mind  
Through such sins,  
Bound to them down in hell lost my life  
With a grin.

Burn my lips, cut my skin,  
Bump a line, sip a drink,  
Lost this war at nineteen.

I watch it eat My soul alive,  
I watch it scorch as it looses life.  
A play set for my eyes to blind,  
I know the truth behind these blinds.  
Im yet so blind to be so kind,  
To these demons out here all my life .

Torment my mind with vicious deeds,  
Comforts my soul with lies indeed,  
Lead a blind without his stick,  
Leads him Falling in a ditch.

-Melrick Rao  
TYBA

## Broken Home

Dear,  
My home was wound by a wired fence.  
Through it, crept hot pink Bougainvillea vines.  
It's pretty thorny tiaras ornamented my hair.

I have fed my body on  
Piping hot lentil porridge  
Made by my mother;  
Sometimes with a wholesome dollop of ghee,  
Other times with rotten pickles.  
The aroma and the stench,  
Both continue to fill my breathing lungs.

I have seen earthen pots breaking in my home.  
But I have also seen life blooming in its shards.

In my home, I have walked on delicate eggshells  
And also on soft and bright velvet carpets.

My dad taught me to sing 'Ghanshyam Sundara'  
And also introduced me to melancholic ghazals.

The windows of my home had broken glass with  
sharp edges  
Which indiscriminately gave way to warm sunlight  
and chilling storms.

My home was built on the graves of broken  
people  
Who bloomed into trees in our yards,  
Whose roots held together the foundation of my  
home.

So dear,  
I'm the wired fence and the Bougainvillea vine,  
The ghee dollop and rotten pickle,  
The broken earthen pot and the life blooming in it.  
I dance on eggshells and velvet carpets.  
Soulful bhupalis and melancholic ghazals sing through  
me.  
I let both warm sunlight and chilling storms kiss my bare  
skin.  
I am a broken mortal  
Who thrived in a broken home and held it together.

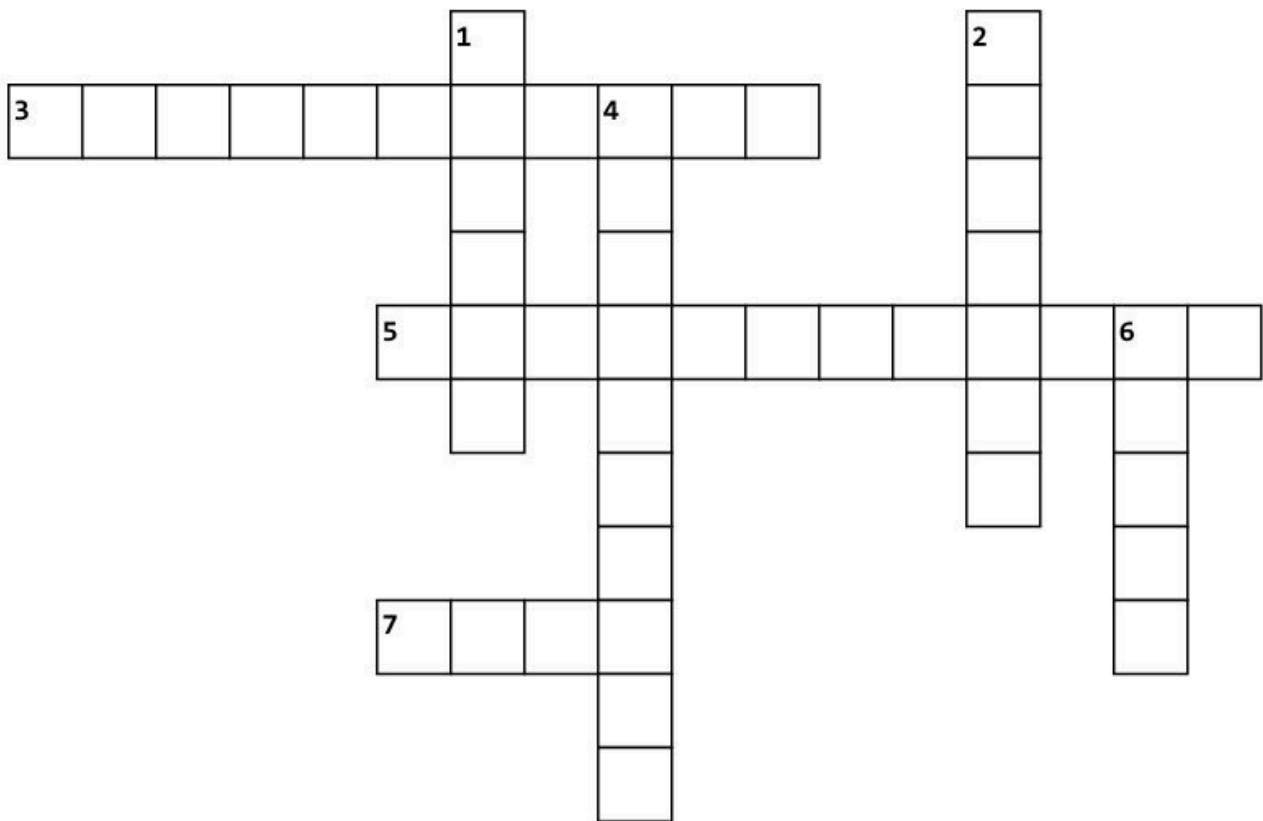
So, I promise you what I can give:  
A home - broken,  
Where we will grow life in broken shards."

-Priyanka V. Jagtap  
TYBA



# Lit-Really?

## CROSSWORD



### Across

3. In which Norwegian village did Jon Fosse have a childhood incident that deeply influenced his writing?(Jon Fosse's Language of Silence)

5. What is the Victorian-era practice of assigning symbolic meanings to flowers, as used extensively by Shakespeare in his plays? (Flowers in Shakespeare)

7. Which ancient discovery in 1991 provided evidence of early tattooing practices? (Inking the Body: A Narrative of Identity)

### Down

1. In which Indian state is the village Parambil in the book *The Covenant of Water* located?

2. What is the river's name where the brothers fish in *The Fishermen*?(Cain and Ikenna: Rereading Genesis 4 through *The Fisherman*)

4. What is a key characteristic of Ranvijay Singh's personality in *Animal*? (How palatable is the film *Animal*)

6. Who represents the immoral influence in Dorian's life?(The Rotting Heart - Monstrosity in *The Picture Of Dorian Grey*)



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MEET

# The Editorial Team



L to R: Ms. Vinita Mathew, Nandini Gautam (SYBA), Khuslen Anthony David (SYBA), Avanti Karle (SYBA), Nigel George (SYBA), [top] Swabhiman Singh Rathore (FYBA), [bottom] Anika Tamhaney (FYBA), Emelda Kripalani (FYBA)