

Wilson College  
Department of English  
presents



The Literati

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# Teacher's Foreword

As an eerie silence filled the streets of our otherwise bustling and beloved city, the citizens retreated behind the four walls of their homes, forcing all human exchange into cyberspace. Teachers and students were forced to revamp their age-old teaching/learning methodologies and embrace the challenges of online classrooms. Overcoming technological barriers was the least of our difficulties. Cramped living spaces in the city posed greater socio-psychological challenges but with our usual resilience, students and teachers alike accepted these challenges and mastered new skills, to engage in meaningful exchange.

As online lectures settled into a routine, the Virtual Reading Group took birth at the behest of FY and TY students, Songam Swamy, Keith Correa, Janmejy Tiwari, Harsh Khade and Rubaiya Karim. Discord accounts enabled us to discuss about sixteen books, critical theory, essays, poetry and watch twenty-five films during the course of the two semesters.

The idea for The Literati came from final year students Yeesha Sharma and Harsh Khade and under the able guidance of Ms V. Mathew, along with a capable team of first and second year students, the magazine is ready for publication.

I congratulate the magazine team for enabling the first ever publication of the Department of English magazine, The Literati. We look forward to uninterrupted annual publications in the years to come.

**- Dr. Mrs. Michelle Philip**

Associate Professor,  
Head, Department of English

Publishing The Literati, is a first for the department of English – this is a magazine by the students for the students. The student edit team deserves a big round of applause for having made this possible. Their enthusiasm, from the start, was infectious, and in spite of the challenges of working from home, they were able to co-ordinate and work together to bring this magazine out. Hopefully, the juniors will take this forward and we will see the publication of the magazine as a regular feature of our department.

The idea of bringing out a literary magazine was to give students of English Literature an opportunity to combine research and creativity to express their views on various topics that come under the broad gambit of literary studies. A magazine like this can facilitate students to have the experience of seeing their scholarly endeavours published and shared. This is a small and modest step that could possibly lead to students developing an interest, in the future, toward careers in writing, journalism, research, and publishing.

Our students have much potential that needs to be channelized and nurtured. As a teacher, it is very exciting to see students applying themselves, and writing about things they are interested in. College can give them opportunities to better themselves as well as to benefit from mentoring they get from teachers and peers to develop their abilities.

**-Vinita Mathew**

“The aim of education is not just knowledge but action” – Herbert Spenser. I completely agree with this profound statement and express my deep appreciation and joy on the publication of Literati , the first ever magazine produced by the students of the Department of English, Wilson College.

The magazine is purely an initiative undertaken by the students of the department who have tirelessly and systematically toiled to bring this endeavour to fruition. It is amazing how students have conceptualized, and executed the plan for this magazine by combining their creative skills and technical knowledge, in times of online working mode, to create such a lovely publication which will always leave an indelible impression.

Creating this magazine has been a Herculean task for the students and the editorial team nonetheless it has been worth the effort. The magazine is an eloquent expression of the students’ understanding of the subject and their ability to fearlessly put forth their perception and opinions in a creative manner. This is just the beginning and we hope that with the passing of time the magazine will grow as well.

The enthusiastic write ups of our young writers will surely hold the interest and admiration of the readers. I congratulate every student who has contributed to this endeavour and hope that future generation of students will draw inspiration from this pioneering experience and continue on this journey with meaningful and novel contributions.

*-Veronica Bhonsle*



# Student Foreword

As someone with no experience working on a magazine, I was quite nervous going into this. Fortunately, the rest of the team was incredibly helpful and supportive which made this a comfortable and rewarding experience.

In a year where, due to the pandemic and online classes, interaction between students has been minimal, reading and editing the work sent in has been quite enlightening. It has given me insight into the values and creative abilities of my classmates and, to an extent, allowed me to see the world through their eyes.

**-Aashray Rao (FYBA)**

*"The beautiful thing about learning is that no one can take it away from you"- B.B King*

This quote perfectly sums up my experience as a student at Wilson College and a member of the editorial team. In these uncertain times when even the most optimistic of us had lost hope, coming together and working on the magazine has been a wonderful experience. Collaborating with creative minds like Yeesha, Aashray and Harsh has taught me a lot and it is something I will always cherish.

**-Anushka Tandon (SYBA)**

Taking an initiative had been a hurdle that I had struggled to cross ever since I was in school. Taking the first step had always been daunting and it was only in SYBA that I was able to overcome my fears and inhibitions and take part in extracurricular activities. Making the decision to take English Literature as my major in TY was also a part of my journey and I can honestly say that it makes me happy to know that through this magazine, I have successfully left my mark on my alma mater.

Finding the drive that I had just discovered within myself, was especially hard due to the pandemic. Through this magazine, I was able to reinstate the motivation and excitement that I thought I had lost. The time spent working on it has been insightful and enriching, all thanks to the students and teachers who took part in turning this vision into reality. I am overwhelmed by the response that we have had from the students who contributed to this. It was a big step for me to take up this challenge and I'm glad that during this pandemic this brought us close together through Literature and I hope it will continue to do so in the coming years.

**-Harsh Khade (TYBA)**

College was a time of self-discovery and acceptance. The encouragement that my friends gave me helped me get out of the shell I had put myself into and finally do things that I like. I stopped being afraid and started taking more initiative and hence became more confident in my strengths and weaknesses. The magazine was one of the things that I always had in mind and it was only able to materialize due to the hard work of the team.

Through this magazine, we aimed to provide a platform for our peers to showcase their talents and hone their skills. It makes me really proud to present to you, LITERATI 2020-2021 by Harsh, Yeesha, Aashray and Anushka.

**-Yeesha Sharma (TYBA)**



## Gender Equality: reality or fantasy?

-Rushda Shamsi (FYBA)

From "I'll have to ask my father" to "I'll have to ask my husband" these lines perfectly summarise almost every other Indian girl's life.

From 'Parent's paradise' to 'In-law's home'  
From "You have to go to an unknown house" to "she has come from an unknown house"  
we girls have almost nothing to call our own.  
Do we have our individuality?

The only thing people associate with women is beauty.  
It's not that we don't like being beautiful but it's just that there is more to us than mere looks.

We have dreams that unfortunately remain dreams  
We have thoughts and ideas that remain unexpressed  
We have a personality that remains suppressed  
Are we even allowed to express?

We are expected to study not because we need to but, only to keep up to the family's name or to attract a good spouse  
We are expected to cook in the kitchen, not to satisfy our hunger but to satisfy other's taste buds  
We are expected to dress up not because we want to but, because we need to get good proposals.  
We are expected to fulfil every expectation of the society without expecting to be treated equally.  
Because gender equality is nothing but a distant dream.

Adams want their Eves to earn but ouch!  
it hurts their ego when they earn more than them.  
The so-called progressive society likes women when they are different but then hates them for being different.  
Are we really treated more than just objects?

Success is judged on the basis of a person's earning but oh! No, I am a girl.  
My success will be judged on how much my man earns.  
And that is why I in spite of being educated, abled, intelligent, skilled, talented, proficient wistfully need to depend upon the menfolk to shop, eat, dress, party, study & even health care  
Do we really have individualism?

I want to be an athlete but You're a girl you can't  
May I know who decides that?  
You're a girl, you are born to talk, shop and gossip but  
May I know who stated that?  
You're a girl, you must love make up right?  
But may I know who conjectured that?  
You can't do this, you can't do that Why?  
because you're a girl  
but will someone please tell me who decides that?


So, let us let the bird fly  
The dreams breathe live and turn a reality  
and not just a 'what if'



**I was lying in my bed**

*-Riya Dua (FYBA)*

I was lying on my bed,  
In a room full of dark and light,  
Pounding and breathing  
Or breathing and pounding,  
My heart struggling with emotions,  
Drops of uncertainty shedding from my  
body,  
I could see the storm of dilemma circling at  
the centre of my mind and soul when  
suddenly my father came home.....  
And the winds around tamed  
For maybe he could see the winds  
Or maybe he couldn't  
But his warmth touched all of my skin,  
His affection embraced and got the better of  
my snags  
And my hitches...  
His intensely glaring eyes, smiling  
And painting a ray of sunshine all over my  
face,  
For I knew they were his words of persuade  
and wisdom,  
Quite sufficient for me to see the change in  
the gloomy sky,  
Which spurred me,  
To be the optimistic me,  
Illuminating me for the eternity of the  
moment....







## **Our Last Goodbye**

*-Anmol Bhateja (FYBA)*

When it gets dark  
We'll go for a walk,  
Hand-in-Hand looking at the stars,  
Smiling for no reason  
In this beautiful romantic season.

When it gets dark,  
We'll talk about life,  
About all the moments,  
either low or bright.  
If I cry, I want you give me an eskimo  
and say  
"It's alright".

When it gets dark,  
We'll go for a walk.  
I might stay quiet,  
but please, you'll have to talk.

When it gets dark,  
We'll go to that park.  
I'll ask to you to close your eyes  
and look at the sky,  
stop walking and say goodbye.





**Need I say more?**

-*Aashray Rao* (FYBA)  
(Trigger Warning: Suicide)

You walk into a room  
The warm afternoon sunlight piercing  
through a gap between thick blue  
curtains  
Dull yellow wallpaper covering the  
walls, peeling at the edges  
A gecko scurrying away from the door,  
disappearing behind a teak wood cabinet  
Need I say more?

You walk into a room  
A single bed neatly made with a flannel  
spread occupying half the room  
The smell of coffee and cigarettes  
emanating from a tiny, red table  
The sound of cars whizzing and honking  
away seeping in through the shut  
windows  
Need I say more?

You walk into a room  
A small chair lying overturned in the  
middle, painted baby blue legs stark  
against the beige carpet  
A pale threaded rope hanging from the  
base of the fan swaying gently from side  
to side  
Need I say more?



# Short Stories

## Reminiscence of a Friend I Left Behind

-*Rubaiya Karim (TYBA)*

The three-hour round trip to the Detention Centre was a regular for me between the years of 2009 and 2011. I often think back to the day when I got a call from his parents about the judge's ruling. He had been taken away to juvie less than six months after we had dropped our bags on our shared apartment floor in the city. I had agreed to move in with the hopes of fixing him somehow, anyhow. The last time I saw him was the day I picked him up at the facility. He had smiled at me and asked me if I wanted to 'try'. "Six months sober", he said, "about time I rewarded myself." I figured that he had been using inside the facility by bartering till the supply stopped after the dirty guard had been fired. I felt no rage. I had expected to, but it was disappointment that coursed through me like a dam that had been split open. I took him home, bought him some groceries and walked out.

I sit in my own apartment now, at 28. Sometimes my thoughts float back to the time I hadn't lost all hope in that friendship yet. Was it me who changed or was it he who never did? It often leaves me wondering why I never checked up on him after that night. I assumed he never wanted to see me now either. I still think of him though, out of curiosity more than anything else. I missed him dearly today, ten years after I had walked out of his shabby apartment for the last time.

I still treasure the first record he had ever gifted me on my sixteenth birthday. It was a cheap, thrifted one-best he could do after he had spent most of his allowance on pills and tablets for himself. We had dreams of building a collection together. I think that the only reason I buy vinyl anymore in the age of streaming is to remember a part of him that I do not resent.

I stare at that record player I bought with my first big pay check. It cost me 30 grand. I had ordered it while thinking of him. How he would've played his Billie Jean or Eric Clapton thrifts on them and talked about the old days- 16 and free of everything, just us with not much to lose since we had nothing to begin with.

I am often in awe of who I am today without him next to me. I had lost a confidant and best friend to circumstances but I left pieces of him in every song I wrote because I was too much of a coward to write an entire one about him.

But did I have the means to change our fate then? Do I have it now? Would I do it if I could?

I only see him in my dreams these days. A faceless body. He looks like nothing but I know it's him. I see him in the crooked walk and the scent of his favourite cheap perfume that he used to cover up the smell of cigarettes. I see his dirty rugged backpack of demos we taped together on my pirated FruityLoops. I often listen to those old demos we wrote together about teenage heartbreak and his love for the little white lines. Then I wonder if I was the only one who ever thought about us while he still chased that same high that had brought him to his knees and pushed him away from his best friend.

As I walk out of my apartment and drive to the studio, I know what the final song on this record will be. I only choose to erase the memory of him. All at once, instead of little by little like I've always done. It hurts less than to resent him. Still, as I often wonder, had we still remained friends, what would it have been like?

# Book Reviews

## The Lowland- Jhumpa Lahiri

-Akshita Sharma (SYBA)

A bleak, devastating yet stirring story, written eloquently by Jhumpa Lahiri. This story of two brothers living in Calcutta during the infamous Naxalite uprising, takes the reader on an emotional rollercoaster. Family, love and loss, brotherhood, independence, guilt and nostalgia are conscientiously described in this novel.

“The Lowland” title is appropriately chosen as the novel starts and ends in the lowland, completing full circle. The place serves as more than just a set for the novel, it in a way represents the roots that people can never run from or outgrow. Most significant things in the lives of the character take place in the lowland, and yet they’re trying desperately to get out, once their happy place at the end is just their past that they can’t erase. The latter half of the novel takes place in different cities of the US mostly Rhode Island and California. This change of scene represents a new life and new beginning for our characters. The new country provides them a getaway from their problems and traumas of their past. While reading Lahiri’s work one might notice how the scene and the set and surroundings are directly in regards to the plot. Readers might be able to tell the mood of the story just by reading about the set.

The main characters in the novel are the Mitra family - The father, mother and two brothers Udhayan and Subhash. As the novel proceeds more characters are introduced namely Gauri and Bela. There are many other characters that play small yet significant roles in the story, but the entire novel revolves around the lives of these few main characters. It is safe to say that Lahiri did a marvellous job with these characters, by giving a distinct voice to each of them. The way the characters are created really makes the book worth reading. Each person, with different and contrasting personalities, yet so similar in way, just trying to make the best of what they’ve gotten and constantly living in denial. A reader at certain points may notice some things in their personalities that according to society is inappropriate or taboo. One might question for example Gauri as a mother or Subhash as a brother, but it is important to keep an open mind and understand things that are not written, to go inside the characters and live life like them.

If the reader is familiar with Lahiri’s other works, “The Namesake” and more recently “Unaccustomed Earth”, they know that Lahiri has an amazing storytelling ability, she has the skill to hook the reader, so if you’re not a big bookworm it’ll still be easy for you to slog through this book. The writer weaves her story in a way that the reader might feel that they’re part of the novel. She, as always, focuses more on what’s going on inside the minds of her characters than outside, it’s almost like she’s writing from her own experience. It’s the minute details that helps the reader go so deep into the story, almost living it, that it gets hard to get back to reality. It’s these details that help some readers to really understand what is happening and yet some might find them unimportant or boring. Personally, it helps me dive into the story but opinions may differ.

In my understanding many readers are preoccupied with a happy ending, many avoid reading a book that may not end well. As for me, I like books with realistic endings and no unnecessary added glitter, Jhumpa Lahiri has never disappointed her readers in that regard. Not unlike her other books, Lowland has a very realistic, not necessarily devastating but a bit heart-breaking ending. I will not spoil the book over here but I’d just want to add that the story had my attention till the very end, till the very last word. The last chapter caught me off guard and was unexpectedly devastating, not the kind we usually see. It really shows how intelligent and extraordinary the writer is.

# Essays

## Amanda Gorman's "The Hill We Climb"

-Zehnab Ariwala (Alumnus)

This is the incredible story of a young black girl, raised by a single mother, and suffering from a speech and auditory disorder, who was invited to read her poem "The Hill We Climb" before the world, at the inauguration ceremony of the 46th President of the United States of America. Amanda Gorman holds the distinction of being the youngest female poet to have that privilege. She is also America's first National Youth Poet Laureate. She is an activist whose work focuses on issues of oppression, feminism, race, and marginalization, as well as the African diaspora. So, what makes this young poet so special? A short study reveals some interesting facts about her poem.

After the storming of the United States Capitol by the pro-Trump supporters in January 2021, Gorman amended her poem to address the various issues that emerged as an outcome of that incident. The symbolism of the "Hill" in the title of her poem is not only directed to the literal hill that the Capitol building is situated on, but also the metaphorical hill of challenges that the people of America will need to climb to build a fairer, freer, better America. In order to "climb this hill", the poet suggests, Americans have to accept the fact that it is steep. In other words, progress doesn't come easily, and the symbolic climb up this hill will likely involve as much defeat, weariness, and grief as a triumph. While climbing is difficult, it's not impossible, and the speaker imagines an eventual victory on the symbolic hilltop where all Americans can live together in solidarity and harmony.

"The Hill We Climb" has been widely praised for its message, phrasing, and delivery. Gorman pays tribute to the works of multiple literary figures and civil rights activists that have paved the way for the generations that followed, and who have inspired her to spread the message of hope, perseverance, racial justice, and Black strength.

One of the early references that Gorman makes in her poem is of Abraham Lincoln whose role in abolishing slavery was immense. Lincoln's iconic Gettysburg Address in 1863, was to inspire soldiers fighting the Civil War when he declares: "It is for us the living, rather, to be dedicated here to the unfinished work which they who fought here have thus far so nobly advanced." Gorman alludes to Lincoln's "unfinished work" in a line in her poem: "Somehow we do it; somehow we've weathered and witnessed a nation that isn't broken but simply unfinished."

She also touches on to William Faulkner's novel *Intruder in the Dust*, (1948) that explores the effect of the Jim Crow laws on the American South, which enforced racial segregation. In the novel Faulkner points out that Americans love nothing more than their automobiles, which they spend Sundays "polishing and waxing" and renew each year to "pristine virginity". Gorman seems to reference this work when she writes, "And yes, we are far from polished, far from pristine, but that doesn't mean we are striving to form a union that is perfect." Martin Luther King Jr. was one of the leading voices of the Civil Rights movement in the 1950s and 60s; and his leadership fueled Black Americans who were fighting to end institutionalized racial discrimination.

Gorman clearly references lines from his famous "I Have a Dream" speech made during the 1963 March in Washington, when she writes: "We are striving to forge our union with purpose, to compose a country committed to all cultures, colors, characters, and conditions of man." - clearly reminiscent of King's vision: "I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character." Her poem echoes the words of great thinkers, so that they are not forgotten; and to relate their thoughts and words to the current scenario.



Another lesser-known but noteworthy personality that Gorman seems to reference in her poem is Fredrick Douglass, an escaped slave who went on to become a writer, social reformer, and abolitionist, working to end slavery in the United States. When she says, “Being American is more than a pride we inherit, it’s the past we step into and how we repair it,” she may have been referring to a famous saying by Douglass: “It is easier to build strong children than to repair broken men.”

Gorman considers Maya Angelou a role model and almost seems to be following in her footsteps by becoming an inaugural poet like the latter as well as referencing Angelou’s poem Still I Rise, where the poet describes overcoming prejudice as a black woman, - “We will rise through the golden hills of the West. We will rise from the windswept Northeast, where our forefathers first realized revolution. We will rise from the lake-rimmed cities of the Midwestern states. We will rise from the sun-baked South.” At the inaugural ceremony, Gorman wore a ring with a caged bird honouring the late poet Maya Angelou, a piece of jewellery gifted by Oprah Winfrey. The young poet not only delivered a powerful poem but also made a statement with her ensemble.

At the end of her poem, Gorman says: “In every known nook of our nation, in every corner called our country, our people, diverse and beautiful, will emerge battered and beautiful.” The last three words pay homage to Langston Hughes’ two iconic works – I, Too and Still Here. Hughes, begins Still Here with: “I’ve been scared and battered. My hopes the wind done scattered.” The poet ends I, Too with, “They’ll see how beautiful I am and be ashamed – I, too, am America.”

In an interview with Michelle Obama for Time Magazine, when Gorman was asked how art fitted into these larger social movements, she responded, “If you analyze Martin Luther King’s “I Have a Dream” speech, it’s a great document of rhetoric that’s also a great document of poetry, of imagery, of a song. Never underestimate the power of art as the language of the people.”

Not only does she speak about the struggles of African Americans and other marginalized communities in the society but also about the obstacles she, as an individual, had to overcome to get where she is today and to be able to make a difference with her poetry. Similarly, young female activists like Malala Yousafzai and Greta Thunberg have proved that there’s no age limit required for women to come together to challenge societal and global issues. The recipe is grit and perseverance that bolster these young, strong voices to become a force to be reckoned with.





## **No Room for Rumi: Barks' Distortion of the Moulana**

-Fatima Arsiwala (Alumnus)

Search over the internet for quotes by Rumi, the 13th-century Sufi saint and poet, and you will inevitably find this quote come up:

“Out beyond ideas of wrongdoing and rightdoing there is a field. I'll meet you there.”

This so-called Rumi quote is not at all what Rumi has said. It is instead a quote by Coleman Barks marketed off as a Rumi quote. I use the word marketed very carefully because that is what has happened with most of Rumi's work that is popular today. Coleman Barks himself does not read or speak Persian, and yet he has 'translated' hundreds of Rumi's poems, packaged them into a 'food for the soul' genre of books (The Essential Rumi, Rumi's Little Book of Love, etc.) and sold millions of copies of them all across the world. In an interview where he was asked why his translations of Rumi are so popular, Barks answered saying that it is because his translations are closest to the “true essence” of what Rumi wanted to say. This statement is ironic when you consider the glaring fact that while boasting about capturing Rumi's essence, Barks has conveniently and purposely stripped his translations of Rumi from all cultural, social, and most importantly, religious aspects.

A Larger Scheme at Work:


Spirituality is often commercialized, be it yoga or literature, or Philosophy. But Barks has not only commercialized Rumi but has also invaded his lifelong work with intellectual and spiritual colonialism.

Furthermore, he has not only perverted Rumi's work but also his very identity. Let me elaborate. Moulana Jalal-ud-din Rumi was born and raised in what is present-day Afghanistan and later settled in Konya, present-day Turkey. His father, a religious preacher, and scholar initiated the Moulana into Sufism. Sufism led to the strengthening of an intuitive love for Allah in Rumi and his poetry is always full of religious context and praise attributed to Allah and the Prophet Mohammad. So, he was a devout Muslim through and through and his original work is proof of that. Later in life, Rumi also met an elder traveller named Shams-i-Tabriz with whom he developed a deep spiritual and intellectual friendship that is debated as sexual even today. Shams-i-Tabriz had a phenomenal influence on Rumi's life, his understanding of the Koran, his knowledge, beliefs; and Rumi was very vocal about his deep love for Shams and his role in enriching his faith and learning.

In the few sentences above, I have tried to provide a glimpse of the context and motivation that form Rumi's work. Now let us see an example of this context reflecting in his poetry. Here is a closer translation of the quote mentioned at the beginning of this article. It is by Persian Poetics, a team of native Persian scholars who are trying to shed light on the distorted commercialization and colonization of Persian literature.

“Beyond kufr and Islam, there is a desert plain,  
in that middle space, our passions reign  
When the gnostic arrives there  
he'll prostrate himself  
Not kufr, not Islam, nor is there  
any space in that domain”

This translation does not just retain the Islamic reference but also is in-tune with the poetic rendition of its original.







Barks, on the other hand, wrote all of his work in free verse. He took the Rumi translations made by Persian scholars and adapted them to suit an American audience and their receptive capacity for spirituality and poetry. It is worthwhile to view what Barks has done through the lens of Orientalism. The West, represented by Barks, sees any space in the East or Orient as either a land of savages and backwardness or someplace exotic filled with a culture of forbidden pleasures. It views the Orient as the other while it places itself on a pedestal of global supremacy.

So essentially, Barks is proudly ignorant of his lack of knowledge of the Persian language, Islam, and Sufism. He views Rumi's work only in isolation to what caters to him and his potential reader base. He takes, tweaks, adds to, and modifies Rumi's work to the point where it loses all that it is and becomes another flowery verse with an incoherent vagueness that masquerades as spirituality.

I use the word 'incoherent' because how can something that is meant to be a translation make sense without the retention of its native context? He makes Rumi enlightened, unreal, and ethereal.

He strips Rumi of his identity and makes a statue of his image that satisfies and conforms to the West's view of the Orient. He glorifies and romanticizes Rumi to an extent where the reader does not put any thought into who Rumi really was but is simply spellbound by the image painted by Barks.

#### The Aftermath of it All:

The criminality of this distortion is that some of the texts are so radically changed that Rumi transforms from a pious Muslim to a modern, secular, and sexually-liberated man. In the 13th century! They propagate a false and corrupt image of Sufism and Rumi to the world. And with a readership base as large and diverse as Barks', the damage done is boundless. It is tragic to see such an extensive and dynamic body of literature exist so slandered and devoid of any space in academic spaces.

It is, therefore, pertinent to critically revisit these popular and accessible translations of Rumi's work. Sources need to be traced, verified, and challenged in academic and social spaces. Unlike the past, brilliant translations of Rumi's work are available now. They must be favoured over corrupted interpretations. Translations must be viewed and read with an understanding of the social, cultural, personal, and religious influence of the Moulana.

Rumi's work was profound in more ways than one. It must be explored, cherished, and celebrated in its truest form.





## Reconceptualization Of Female Heroines in English Literature Since 20th Century


-Aazka Patel (TYBA)

Women's representation in English Literature, through female characters, has observed a boost since the Victorian era. Although a subtle manifestation of strong women characters can be recognized since the Shakespearean age, we see a high upswing of powerful women characters written by feminist authors since and after the Victorian era. Lesser-known characters like Fanny Hill from the *Memoirs of a Woman of Pleasure* (1749) by John Cleland to the infamous Portia of Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice* (1596) stimulated the authors gradually to involve women characters in their stories.

Mary Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* (1792) paved the way for various women (one of them was her daughter) to contribute to English literature in the upcoming decades. As the 19th century ended, many women authors such as Kate Chopin, George Eliot (Mary Ann Evans), Elizabeth Gaskell, Mary Jane Holmes successfully wrote and published what later was called "domestic fiction" or "women's literature". Their characters ranging from several sexualities, backgrounds narrated the life of the suppressed woman who was restless and searched for freedom (despite being a part of the high class). Women left homes for professions in the two world wars and although this reason might be shirked, the invention and cheap distribution of contraception in the 20th century provided women with the ultimate independence they desperately needed.

Edna Pontellier from Kate Chopin's *The Awakening* (1899) is an exhausted housewife who is in search of solitude and self-liberation. Toni Morrison's character Pecola from her debut novel *The Bluest Eye* (1970) finds herself a victim of incestuous sexual assault and the readers are left with tragedy with no hope for Pecola's fate. Both of these stories might be written decades apart but they firmly establish the fact that women's lives were brutally affected by the patriarchs. The former restricted it to white women in white-dominated America, the latter extended women's atrocities of black women in an enslaved America. Elizabeth Robin's novel *The Convert* (1907) depicts the protagonists as undergoing abortions and rejecting marriage proposals, at a time when both these acts were still largely considered contemptible. Charlotte Perkins Gilman's novel *Herland* (1915) presents an all-women utopian universe where women can reproduce on their own and men do not exist, besides retaining a proper society. Novels like these were written for a feminist cause but were decoded as texts for "man-hating". Authors of realism portrayed and criticised the lives of women, who were the proponents of patriarchy. Elizabeth Wharton's novels *The House of Mirth* (1905), *Custom of the Country* (1913) and *The Age of Innocence* (1920) imitates the women stuck in the upper-class life of tea parties, ball gowns, parlour's, etc. and denouncing them for their ornamental choices and informing the readers that such women are sabotaging the entire female population.

Women characters like Lily Briscoe of *To the Lighthouse* (1927) by Virginia Woolf, a *Künstlerroman* novel, presents the development of a woman artist indulging in feminine sympathy and "masculine" rationality in a single character. Her struggling and determined personality is a reflection of Virginia Woolf. We also have Scout Finch, written by Harper Lee for *To Kill a Mockingbird* (1960). Despite growing up in a conventional southern American setting, Scout is a tomboy, a trait which she carries herself around with pride despite the despises she receives from the neighbourhood she lives in. Her unflinching ability to believe in "goodness" in people and the confidence she exhibits as a child makes her a unique self-determined heroine at a young age having a mature characterisation.





We see characters like Lucy Pevensie of *The Chronicles of Narnia* series (1950-56) outside domestic fiction, whose bravery like Scout Finch wasn't restricted to her age. Although naive in the beginning, her discovery of Narnia and the battles, later on, evolved her character to the extent where she is wiser than most and has excellent combat skills and her struggle to maintain peace throughout the series has been noted, for it made her the most diplomatic character and the character with the best leadership skills. We also have Margaret "Meg" Murry from *The Wrinkle in Time* (1962) by Madeleine L'Engle. Meg Murry doesn't have many traits of a traditional protagonist. Her fatal flaw is her impatience but despite that her rationale and thirst to search for scientific answers drives her character throughout the story. On one hand, she is short-tempered, on the other hand, there are instances where we see that she wields love better than other characters. Her scientific temper is most significant, as it was peculiar for women in the 1960s to be interested in anything other than God and domesticity. This peculiarity and her perpetual effort to search for answers make her distinctive. Her establishment as a protagonist back then made an invisible statement that the conventional traits of the protagonist can be compromised to provide an extraordinary story with an unusual yet realistic character. Similarly, heroines like Luna Lovegood whom one might refer to as "weird" ascertain themselves to be better than traditional characters. But what makes such characters admired by readers is that she is relatable yet unique. Because both, Meg and Luna fulfil their deepest desires at the cost of societal acceptance. It is the LACK readers find in themselves, which they discover in these beloved female protagonists that receive all the admiration.

Sula, a character created by Toni Morrison for her novel *Sula* (1973) becomes a prostitute. If looking at it from the surface she entered prostitution due to poverty, but when we dwell deeper in the novel we realise that Sula is equally proud of her profession. This is because of her desperation since childhood to become independent and earn for herself. Since being a black woman in America in the 20th century wouldn't have granted her a profession of her choice, prostitution was the only option she had. Sula becomes the ultimate protest for a character against those who confer prostitutes to be illegitimate despite the consumption of their bodies by the same individuals. Most of Toni Morrison's protagonists are anti-heroines, but they deliver a morally ethical message like Sula.

What began with Shakespeare and Chaucer writing about subtle feminism eventually developed into an enormous type of literature and literary heroines. At the end of the 20th century, we saw characters like Arya Stark from *A Song of Ice and Fire* (1996) by George RR Martin who blurred the lines between right and wrong and went to extreme extents to establish her individuality which went against the patriarchal setting she lived in.

At the beginning of the 21st century, we saw several female protagonists, who led the books better than their male counterparts like Hermione Granger of the *Harry Potter* novel series (1997-2007) by JK Rowling, Annabeth Chase of the *Camp Half-Blood Chronicles* universe (2005-2020) by Rick Riordan. Female protagonists have established themselves as a central mechanism of English Literature today, to such a level that a book with no female character is deemed patriarchal. Graphic novels, films, popular culture have equally contributed to the development of a feminist woman character in Literature and Art. It is the influence of literature that has persisted over history that shapes societies and develops patriarchal mind-sets, and having more characters like Merida than Cinderella will give us feminist and provoking literature.





## Franz Kafka

-*Tryphene Fonseca* (Alumnus)


Franz Kafka was a 20th Century, Czech born, German writer who grew up to be a timid, sickly and anxious personality as a result of having a terrifying, psychologically abusive Father; Herman Kafka, who had high expectations from his son and discouraged Franz Kafka's dream occupation of becoming a writer. Herman was really ashamed of and disappointed at Franz Kafka's inability to be butch and therefore forced him to work at a law firm and then an insurance company so as to be deemed as 'successful' according to societal standards of the time. The continuous nagging, unsupported and traumatic childhood experiences inflicted by Herman led Franz Kafka to develop a low self-esteem due to which he had a series of unsuccessful relationships with women and a subsequently weakened sex drive.

Kafka's relationship with his Father really did influence his work majorly. He unpleasantly portrayed the human emotional spectrum in a dark, surrealistic and disoriented manner, really reflecting his solely experienced angst. He portrayed the relationship between authoritarian figures and the proletariat by showcasing the bureaucratic nature of capitalistic, judicial and governing systems. This whole existential, surrealist and diabolical portrayal of powerlessness in the face of adversity can be considered as Modern

Mythology as portrayed by Franz Kafka. It is termed as 'Kafkaesque', which is a literary genre and philosophy in itself. Franz Kafka once wrote "A book must be the axe for the frozen sea within us", which actually means that literature's task is to get us accustomed to unbearable feelings which we often ignore but experience very often. The fact that resolve is unresolvable, essence is absent, solace is impossible and that struggle doesn't always result into success is really reflected in Kafka's work.

Kafka wrote a series of short stories and novels depicting a variation in the point of view, which resulted in a wide spectrum of characters, which has led people from various walks of life to relate to his work. In his short story 'Poseidon', he showcases how Poseidon - the boss, is always busy handling all the paperwork of the ocean because of which he actually doesn't have the time to go out into the beautiful abyss of the ocean. The plot slowly reveals that Poseidon doesn't designate work due to the lack of trust he has in his employees. In his short story 'A Hunger Artist' which was the last story he wrote before his death; he portrays the depletion in value of the art of "starving" pursued by a circus artist since the artist hadn't found his favourite kind of food as yet. In his Novella 'Metamorphosis' he portrays the relentless struggle of Gregor Samsa who works countless hours to earn for his indebted family and turns into an insect, eventually realising his worth after having gone through a rather absurd series of events. In his novel 'The Trial' he portrays Joseph K who's allegedly blamed for an uncommitted crime which was unknown to anyone, but still gets stuck in a winding unsystematic system and eventually dies.

Franz Kafka was recognised as one of the greatest writers in German History after his death. He didn't publish his own work because he was dissatisfied with it and asked that it be destroyed. We have notably witnessed the wide spectrum and approach of Franz Kafka in his works which are fiction turned to fact in the present day.











**Ophelia in the 19th Century.**

*-Rachel Thever (TYBA)*



# Crossword

## Women in Literature

A	M	A	D	A	M	E	B	O	V	A	R	Y	I
U	L	N	E	N	O	S	N	I	K	C	I	D	H
S	U	H	T	E	B	A	Z	I	L	E	N	C	R
T	C	A	U	W	S	H	E	L	L	E	Y	K	W
I	Y	L	O	K	A	T	E	C	H	O	P	I	N
N	A	N	C	Y	D	R	E	W	A	C	R	O	M
J	A	N	E	E	Y	R	E	L	W	O	O	L	F
A	D	E	B	E	A	U	V	O	I	R	S	T	P
I	B	T	I	A	R	W	E	N	I	M	C	E	O
L	J	O	M	A	R	C	H	E	P	E	O	H	R
E	A	D	I	C	H	I	E	N	M	E	U	T	T
H	D	O	O	W	T	A	N	L	R	M	T	E	I
P	T	A	M	B	U	D	Z	A	I	F	A	S	A
O	C	E	D	U	R	T	R	E	G	E	Y	O	L

SHELLEY  
JANE EYRE  
ARWEN  
DE BEAUVOIR  
OPHELIA  
SCOUT  
ELIZABETH  
ADICHIE  
MADAME BOVARY  
WOOLF  
CELIE  
KATE CHOPIN  
NANCY DREW  
EMMA  
GERTRUDE  
SETHE  
DICKINSON  
TAMBUDZAI  
PORTIA  
ATWOOD  
LUCY  
AUSTIN  
JO MARCH





## Unscramble the Jumbled Words

MSAICHETSTIE (*an art movement*)

MOCEYD (*a genre in fiction*)

CAURQIESP (*a type of novel*)

ACMBII MTEPAENTER (*poetic meter*)

DBRYOAWA (*a type of theatrical performances*)

YLAD EAMCBTH (*an iconic Shakespearean character*)

IOTRPEDNSSMOM (*an art/literary movement*)

NMYEMOTY (*a figure of speech*)

QOGEUSTER (*visual art genre*)

EEFR ESRVE (*form of poetry*)

## Thank you note

Through this magazine, we have managed to connect with our contributors in a way that is seldom possible given the pandemic that continues to surround us. While curating the magazine, we were somehow able to connect with our classmates on a neutral ground that English Literature as a subject has provided for us. We grew not only as editors, but most importantly as empathetic readers in its maiden voyage. Thrilling as it was to edit this magazine, we felt honoured that the department decided to present us with the opportunity to create something from ground up. Through our entries, we could live vicariously and don different lives. Amidst this atmosphere of devastation, the magazine transformed into a space for expression that hopefully lasts for years to come. It has rightfully been said that starting something is indeed the most difficult step and in our experience something that we will carry with us for life. We are grateful for the support that our team and the Department of English (Dr. Mrs. Michelle Philip, Ms. Vinita Mathew, Mrs. Veronica Bhonsle) have shown us. Without their invaluable inputs, this magazine would not be what it is today. We would also like to thank Shristi Chatterjee (SYBA) and Deandra D'Cunha (@tranquilydee) who tirelessly worked with us to bring our idea of the cover to life. As readers, your contribution to our creative process was crucial and without you, we would be nowhere. I hope you have enjoyed reading this as much as we have enjoyed creating it. With this, we conclude the first edition of the first ever English Department magazine, THE LITERATI 2020-2021.

**YEESHA SHARMA**

**HARSH KHADE**

(Editors-in-chief)

