

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH,  
KAMALA NEHRU COLLEGE

# WHITE NOISE

N E W S L E T T E R

Do our  
liminal  
identities  
belong  
everywhere?



A VIRTUAL ILLUSION OF  
TECHNOLOGY OR THE  
DOCILE DELUSION OF  
QUARANTINE?

ISSUE FOR 2020-21  
DIGITAL EDITION



# From the Editors' Desk



**Lakshi Phogat**

In a whirlwind of time a whole year has gone by and we find ourselves, still, amidst a pandemic which has consumed much. While time has moved, we can barely comprehend this movement much less provide evidence for it. Yet, we find ourselves having to face what is called the glaringly 'real', the fact that we are no longer at the same place in the sea of time, that we have floated a year ahead and are now in the final year of our college life. We believe that this edition of White Noise is borne out of the chaos of time as we have experienced it and time as it has been, and the chaos of motion in stasis.

The editorial core team for this year found itself making attempts at memorialising the absent presence of the year that has gone by and as a result, this edition of the newsletter is replete with sections on the changes in our college lives, our lives as they have been and us. In an attempt to accommodate more forms of creative expression, a separate section devoted to art and photography has been added.

We encourage the readers to look at this edition of the newsletter as a mural on which the students of the department have painted what they have felt, the experience of the mural itself is

surreal, the art on it is expressionistic but at the same time you are dimly aware that the mural is but a metaphor, it does not exist in the terms in which we have known things to exist.



**Prabhdeep Kaur**

It has been a year since the Covid-19 pandemic but in the experience of living and being in a temporal order of clock time, it is as if we're living on the edge of 23rd March'20, the first day of nationwide lockdown and yet not quite living the same day. It is as if we're in a place on the graph of time whose coordinates are not easily locatable. The experience of time in routine has lost its familiar tether to its Signified. The city, its familiar places, accustomed realities and quotidian existence has become peculiarly distant and unknown. Our newsletter for this academic year, hoped to explore the depths of this uncanny feeling of

of estrangement through written as well as visual narratives overarching a mosaic of diverse artistic hues. We leave our following batches with the legacy of knowledge to be critical thinkers, to familiarise yourselves with the Uncanny, to find the linguistic resources to express themselves, to use knowledge for good, to create a home and haven for all and to pursue the journey of learning forever.

In correspondence to our alienated existence in the times of covid, we live in times of political estrangement and we hope to continue the struggle for an egalitarian society, to safeguard all our fundamental rights. We oppose the move to privatise education. We condemn the changes made in the new curriculum that are diametrically opposite to critical thinking and rather support propaganda of the regime as education.

We hope that even if we don't live to see the day when knowledge of all and every kind is accessible to all and every person irrespective of any marker of identity that is used to oppress them, that our students and teachers alike continue the struggle to reach that future someday in material reality while in our hearts, we already inhabit that world.



The English Department's newsletter, Whitenoise is a testament to our desire for freedom of expression and knowledge for all in the hopes of our vision of a free and equal world. It is a hope that stands its ground especially in alienating and uncanny times.

See you on the other side of the pandemic!

P.S: I don't mean the covid-19 virus. ;)



**Namira Khan**

The English department of Kamala Nehru College, in general, has been a place that has empowered its students to not only voice their own perspectives, but also to listen to those of others - this exchange of worldviews, and the consequent discussions regarding them, has enriched our understanding of the world, and fostered an environment that encouraged self-expression through various modes, including all forms of art. White Noise sought to give this artistic expression a place where genre and theme were no bar, and we could all witness each other's

industrious creations. I've always cherished White Noise as a space for highlighting the incredible talent that lives within our department's student body and some of my favorite moments of working here have involved my fellow students responding to our 'Call for Entries' texts with pieces which contained never-before-mentioned talents and outlooks. These moments - of someone being brave enough to share hitherto private pieces of their artistry - have fuelled our work here at the newsletter. Moving forward, I hope that White Noise continues to be a space where the students of this department feel encouraged to share parts of themselves with the world, and that it bolsters their courage to speak up for themselves far beyond their journey with the department.

xxx

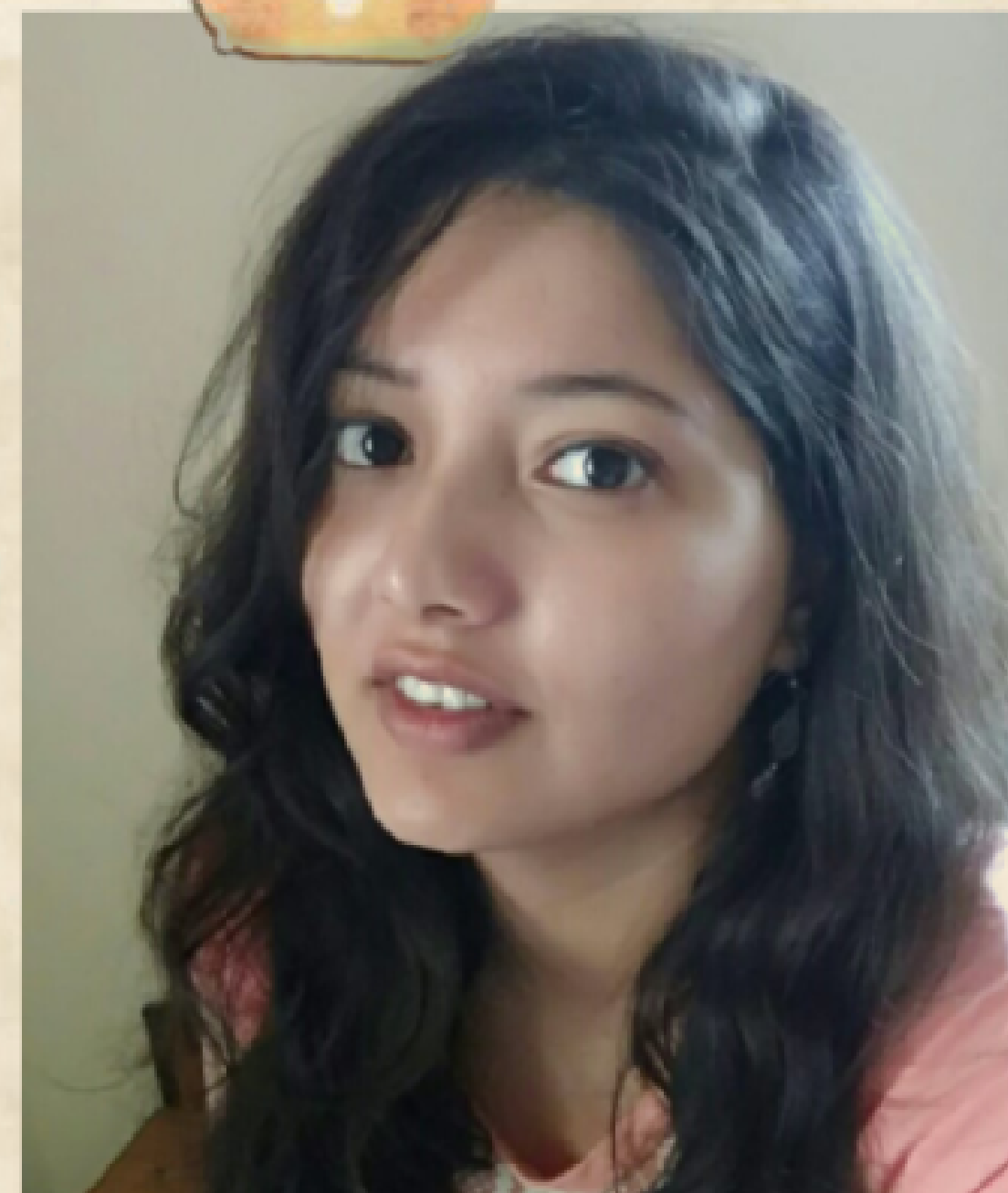


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By Manya Chandra

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# A Feather

Started off my mother's nest,  
Already fallen down her wings,  
Grew up with parts of her chest,  
From winters till the springs.

I fell off to the ground,  
Swinging the leaves and the bark,  
Merrily played with ants round,  
Till the sky went dark.

Winds blew and took me off,  
I bid my round friends goodbye,  
Reached this city where pipes cough,

And people I couldn't identify.

I travelled from blocks,  
To the nests of another,  
From different flocks,  
To families that stayed together.

Some thought I had grace,  
Some thought I was fragile,  
Some painted me with trace,  
Some blew me being agile.

Flying off from top to bottom,  
I've reached a place so quiet,

I see a girl looking at me,  
Like I were someone to pet.

I stayed awhile before I flew away,  
And watched her house re- make,  
Wondered what she had to say,  
Before I flew with the shake.

Days passed, I'm still alive,  
I'm a non-living,

I continue to fly,

Watch everyone try and revive,  
And live my journey till the day I die.

By Hiya Khanna





# Is Fear the Byproduct of Your Imagination?

You hold on, you let go,

It is not easy , because of the fear show,

Played by the imaginations unbreezy you

don't know, Imagine like it's tough when it's

not,

So you fear giving it a shot,

Allowing yourself to dwell..

In your past,

Your present ,

And therefore, your future.

What if you stop imagining?

That it's going to hurt you,

Like the insect you're most afraid of,

When it is just as afraid as you are,

Waiting for your escape just like you wait

for his,

So you make a move, and so does he,

Making both of yourselves free,

From the futuristic imagination,

The fear.

by Hiya Khanna





# To Phoenix

By Chandana Misra

The insides crushing and tumbling,  
Lingering feelings, you say;  
Then why does the resonance feel the same  
And only your voice leads the way?

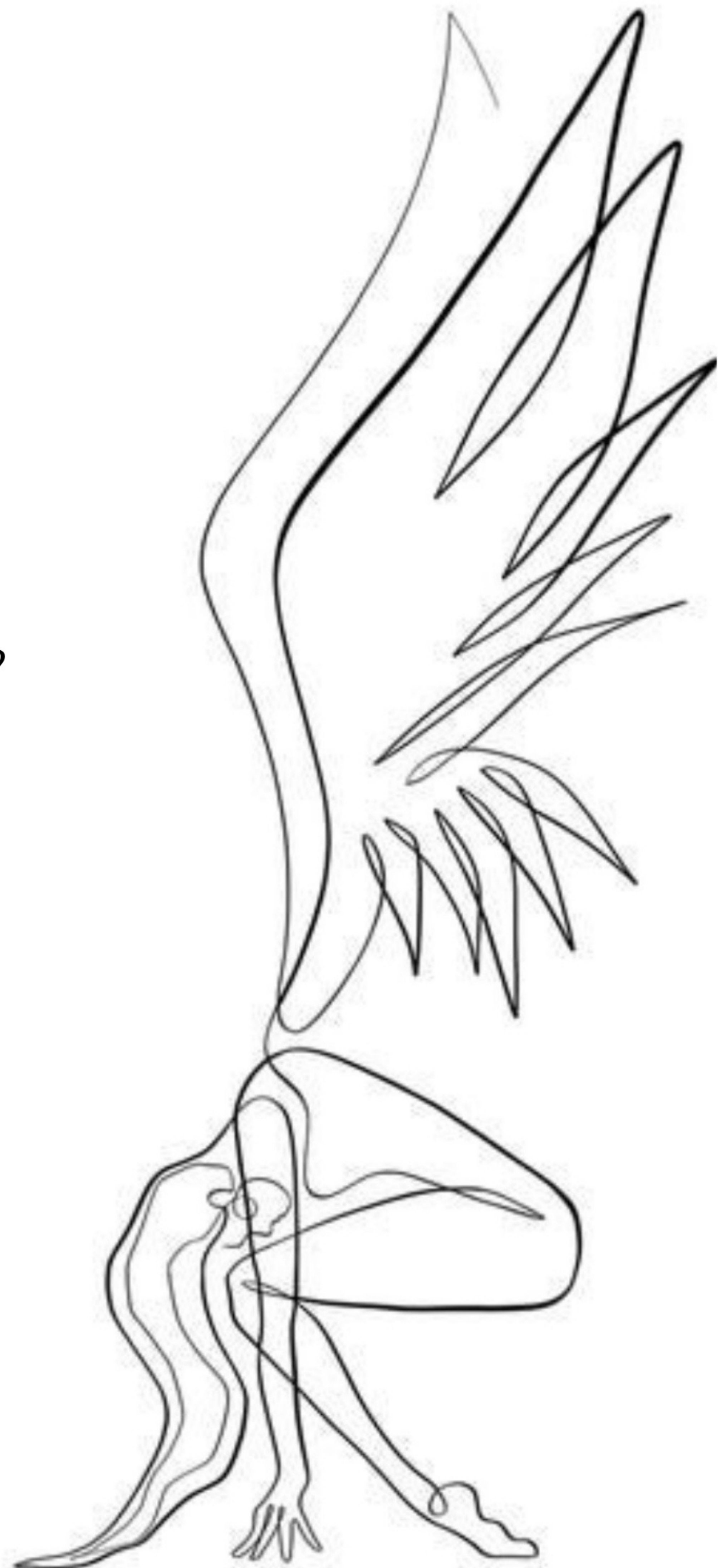
The pain is forebearing,  
Every moment pins deeper and wider;  
Ask me what is it; what's more wounding,  
Tell me there's a way to solve this,  
That predestined doom makes this  
heartbreak more bitter.

It did never make sense-  
A Phoenix with burning essence,  
A frost flower with freezing petals;  
How can their nature stop being rebels?  
How much can just their love pacify?

They swore parting would pave the way;  
that tranquility would engulf the pain,  
Then why does the world seem in disdain?  
Why does the heart ache and all I see is grey?

They say : to forget being in love,  
They say that it's for the best.  
But, can I forget that once  
Only that Phoenix's feather warmed these  
cold petals of my crest.

The Phoenix flower blooms twice-  
Once with the onset of fate  
And then with its end;  
Can we see the flowers again?  
Can I feel your warmth again?  
Can I ever say that I love you again?





# Life Begins the Next Day

Winter is in sway  
White night comes to a cease  
Life begins the next day.

Hot chocolate and chardonnay  
Afternoons in the matinees  
Winter is in sway.

Cigarette ash in the subway  
Returning from soirees  
Life begins the next day.

Living (barren) in a cliché  
Dreaming of Cadiz  
Winter is in sway.

Walking towards the archway  
Hugging with despair our idiosyncrasies  
Life begins the next day.

Waiting for doomsday  
Existence comes to a freeze  
Winter is in sway  
Life begins the next day.

By Swagata Das





# Unknown Addresses

by Prabhdeep Kaur

When I hear the strums of tumbi in pop Punjabi songs,  
I kiss nostalgia on its cheek.  
Sometimes it reminds me  
of the dilly- dallying summers of my childhood,  
when my grandfather would listen to old Pakistani folk tunes  
and sometimes, more often than not  
I yearn for a place to call my own  
amid estranged sojourns.  
I wonder if a part of me lives in my grandfather's home  
in the Punjab of the days gone by before Azadi,  
I wonder if I walk on that homely land,  
I'll no longer feel detached.  
I wonder if the soil would recognise me  
when I don't know its tongue perfectly,  
my dialect: a hybrid of rudimentary English  
and besmeared Hindi scraped over Punjabi,  
is as convoluted as the self I inhabit.  
I wonder if I know the answer to my questions but run amok  
to hide from it, because I don't want to knock on a door  
that feels like home  
only to find that  
I'm unwelcome.

Jivein hovan parai  
Azadi kedi? jinneh vand chadheya  
Nakshe teh eho ji lakeer payi  
Ki banda apne aap toh vi vichhad gaya.





# Headlines

*By Aamna Siddiqui*

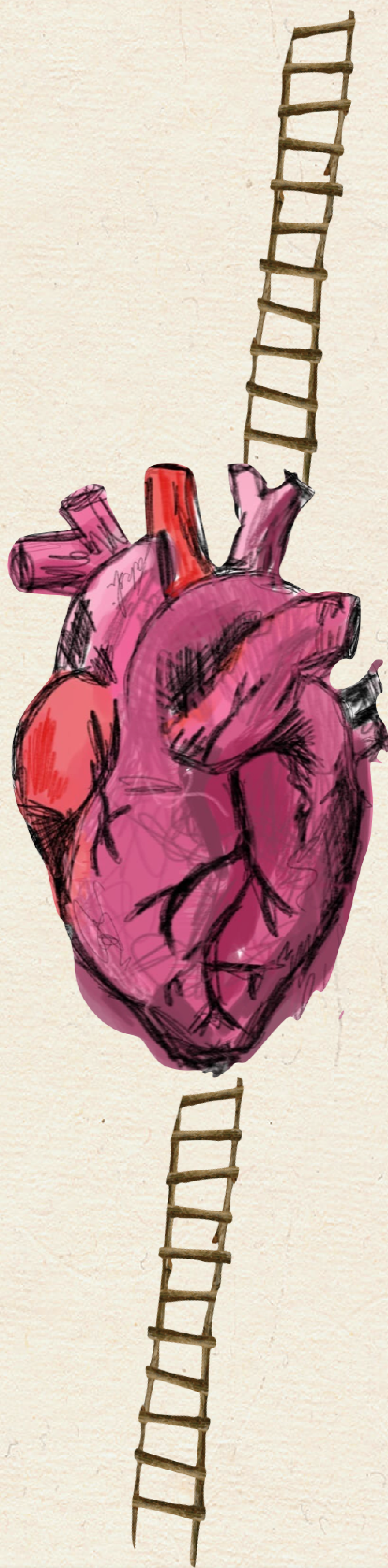
Most of poetry is volatile and much of it is flammable- gold cyanide milkshake dreams, olive oil stained recipes, lost grocery lists, crushed tulips, telescopes, quarks, quatrains, orient, occident, being pushed head first into waters, lyrically flooding, swimming, soaking, submerging, your breath fastening.

Compensating prosody with the limpid musicality of mornings dipped into marmalade jars, surrendering to a decade of hurt, housing an old loss, swallowing tapeworms, folding a tumor in an edifice of seven volumes in your amygdala but forgetting the word on the tip of your tongue.

A poem is about having a 7.9 richter quaking in your chest cavity,

being in love but never knowing what with,  
In a drunken city singing of gulmohars and lovers; A signboard at the highway exit that says His myrrh-filled eyes are yours for the taking.

XXX





# My Beloved Delhi

Dear Delhi,  
I was only 4 when I first saw you  
And it felt like love at first sight.  
Ask me how.  
Was it the solace you muffled me  
with  
Or the warm embrace of the streets of  
Cannought Place?  
Today you're burning,  
Burning in bourgeoning flame of  
hatred  
This wasn't the Dil Ki Dilli I fell in  
love with.  
So, today I'll fight for you with  
satirical humour  
Even if it means getting burnt in it.  
Only when you're ready, i'll perform  
this thread...

So, this one day I was touring my  
city. when I saw the students being  
thrashed,  
Pulled out of their libraries  
While the 'true patriots'  
Seemed to propagate this perspective  
That Nobel Laureates are illiterate,  
Seemed to tell the youth of the  
country  
That being an IAS or a Nobel laureate  
is less valuable than selling tea.  
But guess what?  
Sab Changa Si.

The other day I saw this big queue  
Of old women draped in sarees  
Standing under scorching heat to fetch  
what?  
The new rupee notes that seemed to  
show  
That the love for old mothers is less  
valuable than some colored papers.  
But guess what?  
Sab Changa Si.

Now I hear a man crying for help.  
I see him tied to a Banyan tree  
With his hands pleading,  
Being forced to shout a slogan  
Which unfortunately doesn't prove  
his Indian nationality.  
The only thing this act proves is  
That our Nation is getting filled  
With goons that humiliate the  
minorities.  
But guess what?  
Sab Changa Si.

Now the deadly virus strikes  
And I see all the poor migrants  
Walk barefoot with no destination  
Dying on roads and all the nation  
cares for  
Is banging some Thaalies in their  
balconies.  
But guess what?  
Sab Changa Si.

With the economy dripping  
The people have put up riots to  
survive,  
Fighting each other for  
livelihood.  
In this bleak situation,  
My beloved Delhi holds a candle  
in peace  
And sadly I see the wax slowly  
dying while the flame of love  
Hovers bleakly in wind.  
I hope you will survive, my  
Beloved,  
My Delhi.  
But wait there's more...

I see this crowd with their  
cameras on  
Recording something so ugly  
That I fear the words of my

poetry will be ripped apart  
Torn into pieces  
While the emotions of my poetry  
get raped.  
The cameras still snapping  
As if it was the best verse in my  
poetry..  
The camera.  
The people.  
The Indians.  
India.  
All dying.  
But don't worry because didn't I  
tell you?  
Sab Changa Si.

-Manaam





# Dreams are meant to last

The bell rang, Little Joe rushed  
to unlock the door  
Who are you, she asked  
I am 'Dream', Little Joe  
I am sorry, I didn't recognize  
you, have we ever met before?  
I am the hope to success  
The vision of every soul  
When I am achieved by  
someone, half the battle is  
already won  
But I feel sad to say that you  
have never wanted me

I actually don't know what I can  
wish for, for I have no idea what's  
written in my destiny  
You will yourself have to figure  
out what you want to be  
Will you please tell what all do  
others dream about to achieve?

What did George, the daily wager  
dreamt for, Little Joe asked  
He wishes that his children do not  
have to live the same life he had to  
pass  
Mr. Caesar dreams to be happy,  
you see  
Why would he dream to be happy,  
he himself is the richest man of the  
city  
Money can't buy happiness, for  
happiness is instinctive  
It comes to those who are grateful  
for all what they had, have and will  
have  
Mother, the most selfless person on  
the planet, dreams that all wishes  
of her children get fulfilled

What all do I need to do then,  
to turn my dreams into reality,  
a curious Joe asked

You will have to honestly and  
regularly work for something  
you wish to accomplish

Dreams demand sweat and  
blood for them to become true

It will take time but you will  
make a go of it if you are  
genuine and persistent to reach  
your objective

And once my dream gets  
fulfilled, what will happen to  
it?

Dreams are meant to last one  
day, my child, Mr. Dream  
announced

And suddenly the little girl  
opened her eyes

As she got up that night to  
the dream she was seeing  
She had to wake up  
As dreams are meant to  
last  
only one day, as Mr.  
Dream told her in the  
dream she was dreaming.

By Isha Sharma





# A Short Story

*By Cheshta Sagar*

1.

This is the story of the magical town of Zinata.

Shubha was a dog. That's what Ema had told him anyway. Shubha didn't want to be a dog, you know. He was sure he wasn't one, actually. Why would he feel so much like a cat if he were a dog?

But Ema told him he was a dog so often, he believed it.

But he felt like a cat, so often he believed that he was a cat instead.

But Ema told him he was a dog. So he believed it.

But he felt he was a cat. So he believed it.

Then Shema came. Guess what! Shema told Shubha that he was a cat! Ah! That is what he wanted to hear! And Shema must be right! Because Shema's name alliterates with Shubha's, no? Ah Shubha was so happy! What Ema had said didn't matter anymore. Shema said Shubha was a cat. He believed it.

One dark night, Shubha howled. Shema said Shubha was a dog. But.... But.... But....

"You told me I was a cat Shema!", Shubha said.

But Shema said that Shubha was a dog.

Next morning, Shema said that Shubha was a cat.

Next night, Shema said that Shubha was a dog.

Next day, Shema said that Shubha was a cat.

Next night, Shema said that Shubha was a dog.

Next night, Ema said that Shubha was a cat.

Wait what? Ema said? Shubha was a CAT? But didn't Ema use to say that Shubha was a dog?

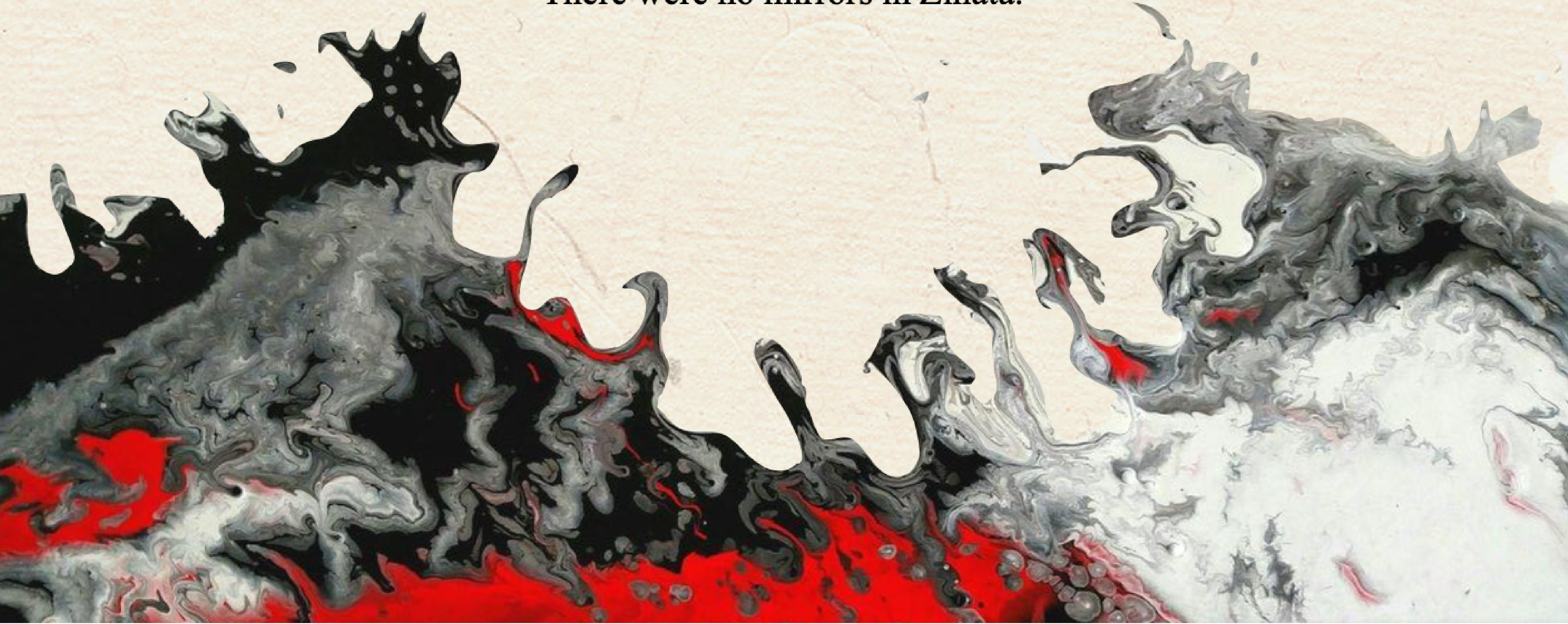
Next night, Shema said that Shubha was a cat.

Next day, Ema said that Shema was a cat.


Next night, Shubha said that Shema was a dat.

Next night, Shubha said that Shubha was a cog.

There were no mirrors in Zinata.







2.

I walked into the drawing room with heavy steps. Lying on the bed for 50 hours had almost made my lower body numb.

\*\*\*

The last conscious decision I had taken was changing my sanitary napkin amidst writhing pain, the pain that churned the unfairness of femininity and its humanity, the old burden in the uterus of one woman - me.

I had fallen on the bed with a thud, like the menads sucking from me the functional juices of life - for two whole days.

The images transitioned from walls of my room, to a lucid dream of belonging within them, to a subconscious vision of pushing them away, to an unconscious.... no, there was no image of the unconscious.

The doorbell rang and Dionysus laughed. A water bottle fell as I swam in a swimming pool on the terrace of a 78-storey building. A squirrel sat at my window and a dinosaur breathed fire on my wall. It gave it a yellow-blue-sincostan colour. Yes, this was it. The colour the shopkeeper refused to understand the other day. He asked me... the colour of what?

And I said to him.... "Imagine if I were a colour, imagine if each day of my life, each feeling of my existence, each shred of my being, could be reduced to a colour."

"You are being unreasonable ma'am."

"Why?"

"Because we have tried much more efficient systems to reduce human beings to, and each has failed."

"Then give me the colour of Chaos."

And with that the wall collapsed on my face and each colour stank with a peculiar rejection of its own. They pointed their fingers at me and threw lady fingers at each other.

One rapped at my door.

Knock knock

Knock knock

\*\*\*

I walked into the drawing room with heavy steps, opened a new packet, emptied the contents into the bowl and kept it beside her. She stared into oblivion, somewhere around the upper edge of the cuboid of walls. She saw it. She saw yellow-blue-sincostan.

I sat beside her with a bowl of my own. She looked at me with sincere eyes, willing for me to see it too.

"I love you"

"Meow".





# Portrait Of A Lady

STORY BY: SWAGATA DAS AND  
LAKSHI PHOGAT  
WRITTEN BY: SWAGATA DAS,  
LAKSHI PHOGAT

*Inspired by The Tragedy of Macbeth by William  
Shakespeare*

EXT. KNC PARKING LOT - DAY

BOTTOM SHOT. 'We'll Meet Again' by Vera Lynn plays in the background. Slowly PAN to a rich canopy with sunlight streaming through. Gradually drop down to the ground. Dry leaves are visible and a slight breeze blows.

DISSOLVE TO:

CLOSE UP. Bottom of a flowy white dress of LADY #2 is visible, the focus is on her feet, bare and slightly dirty. She walks slowly and gracefully on her toes, leaving wet, dark footprints on the path. In the middle of a twirl, the camera moves with her to the back of her head, a few trees are faintly visible in the background, the edges of her face appear from under the slightly disheveled hair...

CUT TO:



... focus on her feet, she's walking towards the camera.



As the camera gradually zooms out, her dress blows slightly in the wind, disheveled hair covers most of her face as she gazes at a ray of sunlight streaming through the canopy. She holds her hands behind her back. As she approaches, the dark wet footprints appear again. Wind gradually gets stronger. Her dress moves about furiously. The clink of metal is heard. She smiles at the camera and passes by. The back of the dress is seen. Slowly PAN up to the blue sky.



TITLE CARD. CREDITS ROLL.  
'We'll Meet Again' by Vera Lynn plays.

FADE IN: INT. KNC LIBRARY 3RD FLOOR - DAWN - MOVING

Rows of shelves. Eerie silence. Moves towards the second last row towards the back of the library, looking at the last row through an empty shelf...

CUT TO:

... DUTCH TILT. STATIC. Dark, dusty and dingy last row. Broken window in one corner. Sunlight streaming through the left window. Three women talking (inaudible in the beginning, slowly become audible as if whispering, then finally can be heard clearly).

LADY #1 (V.O.)

When shall we three meet again?  
In thunder, lightning, or in rain?

LADY #2 (V.O.)

(sitting on the windowsill, staring outside, turns towards)

When the hurlyburly's done,  
When the battle's lost and won.

LADY #3 (V.O.)

(sitting on a low stool with a book open on her lap)

That will be ere the set of sun.

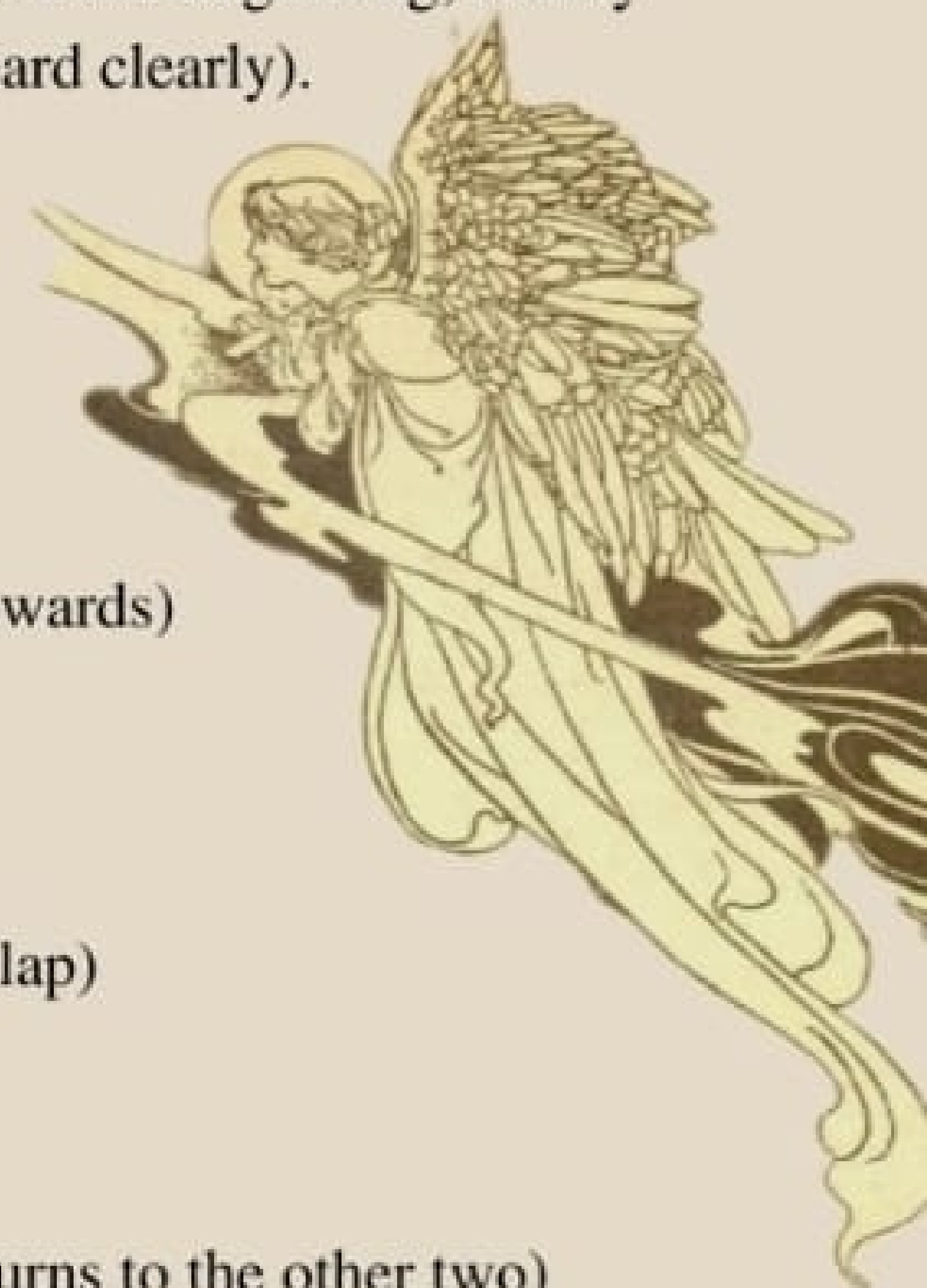
LADY #1

(sorting through a stack of books, finds the book she wants and turns to the other two)

Where the place?

LADY #2

Upon the heath.





Lady #3 rolls her eyes and says...  
LADY #3  
Upon the heath, upon the heath, up-on the  
heath

Lady #1 looks at Lady #3 crossly.

LADY #1

Fair is foul.

LADY #2

And foul is fair.

LADY #3

Hover through the fog and filthy air.

LADY #3 furiously shuts the book.



FADE OUT:

FADE IN:

INT. KNC FOYER INSIDE STAIRS - EVENING

LADY #1 lying back on the stairs in a black gown reading a letter, her back towards the camera. A wine glass half-filled with red wine, a letter opener and an empty envelope are on the stairs. Camera slowly zooms in and moves towards her face, gradually zooms out. Only source of light is a dim hurricane-lamp hung on the wall.

LADY #1

(her voice, low while reading the letter, gets louder when her monologue starts)

They met me in the day of success: and I  
have learned by the perfectest report,  
they have more in them than mortal  
knowledge. When I burned in desire to  
question them further, they made  
themselves air, into which they vanished.

Whiles I stood rapt in the wonder of it,  
Along came missives from the king, who  
all-hailed me 'Thane of Cawdor', by which  
title, before, these weird sisters

saluted me, and referred me to the coming  
on of time, with 'Hail, king that shalt

be.' This have I thought good to deliver thee, my dearest partner of greatness,

that thou mightst not lose the dues of  
rejoicing, by being ignorant of what  
greatness is promised thee. Lay it to thy  
heart, and farewell.

Glamis thou art, and Cawdor, and shalt be  
What thou art promised. Yet do I fear thy  
nature,

It is too full o' the milk of human  
kindness

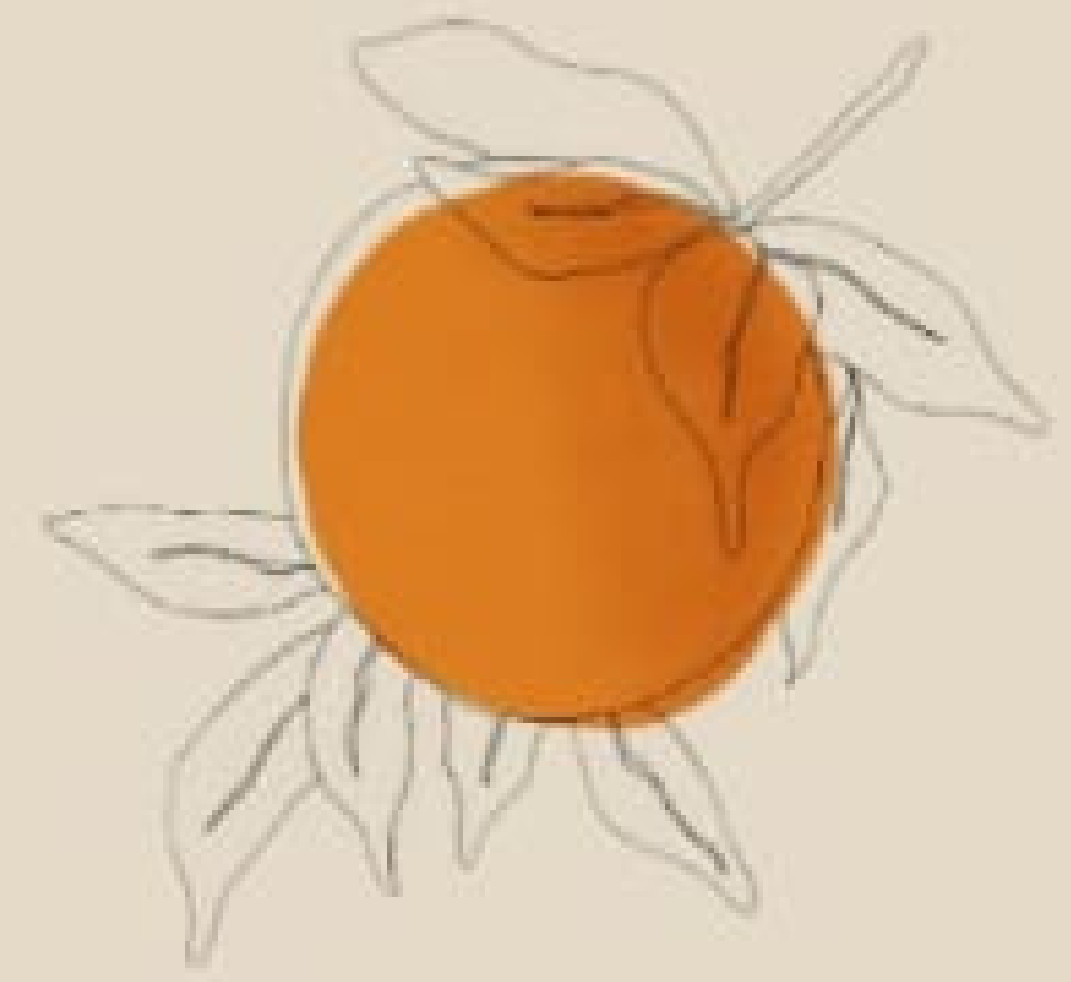
To catch the nearest way. Thou wouldst be  
great,

Art not without ambition, but without  
The illness should attend it. What thou





wouldst highly,  
That wouldst thou holily; wouldst not  
play false,  
And yet wouldst wrongly win. Thou'ldst  
have, great Glamis,  
That which cries, 'Thus thou must do', if  
thou have it;  
And that which rather thou dost fear to  
do,  
Than wishest should be undone. Hie thee  
hither,  
That I may pour my spirits in thine ear,  
And chastise with the valour of my tongue  
All that impedes thee from the golden round,  
Which fate and metaphysical aid doth seem  
To have thee crowned withal.



She smirks, gets up. The camera follows her up the dark staircase, the screen fades to black.

From the black screen slowly emerges, growing larger, a medieval window overlooking an unkempt garden with weeds and uneven wildflower patches and a gothic entrance gate. Four horsemen enter.

INT. ROOM - DUSK

LADY #1 is standing near the window with her hands folded across her chest, looking down outside. The moon shines in the sky. Unknown birds are heard cawing. A bat flies diagonally across the sky on the fringes. She turns and her eyes glimmer, she tilts her head slightly. A faint smile can barely be seen.

LADY #1

The raven himself is hoarse  
That croaks the fatal entrance of Duncan  
Under my battlements. Come, you spirits  
That tend on mortal thoughts, unsex me here,  
And fill me from the crown to the toe, top-full  
Of direst cruelty. Make thick my blood,  
Stop up th' access and passage to remorse,  
That no compunctious visitings of nature  
Shake my fell purpose, nor keep peace between  
The effect and it. Come to my woman's breasts,  
And take my milk for gall, you murdering ministers,  
Wherever in your sightless substances  
You wait on nature's mischief. Come, thick night,  
And pall thee in the dunnest smoke of hell,  
That my keen knife see not the wound it makes,  
Nor heaven peep through the blanket of the dark,  
To cry 'Hold, hold.'



The gothic wooden door with black iron furnishings creaks loudly, opens. A low thud is heard as it hits the wall.

Macbeth enters the room, dressed in travelling attire. A few scratches are visible, and he looks a little wild, excited and worried. Moves towards her expectantly with his arms open. She meets him midway and puts a hand on his chest, touches his face with the other, glides her finger from his forehead to a scratch on his cheek. She seems coldly calm. Tilts her head slightly to the right.



LADY #1

Great Glamis! worthy Cawdor,  
Greater than both, by the all-hail  
hereafter,

Thy letters have transported me beyond  
This ignorant present, and I feel now  
The future in the instant.

MACBETH

My dearest love, Duncan comes here  
tonight.

LADY #1

And when goes hence?

MACBETH

Tomorrow, as he purposes.

LADY #1

O, never

Shall sun that morrow see.

Your face, my thane, is as a book, where men  
May read strange matters; to beguile the time,  
Look like the time, bear welcome in your eye,  
Your hand, your tongue; look like the innocent flower,  
But be the serpent under't. He that's coming  
Must be provided for; and you shall put  
This night's great business into my Dispatch,  
Which shall to all our nights and days to come,  
Give solely sovereign sway and masterdom.

MACBETH

We will speak further.

LADY #1

Only look up clear; To alter favour ever  
is to fear. Leave all the rest to me.

FADE OUT





# The Role and Significance of Memory and the Unreliable Narrator in the Glass Menagerie

The Glass Menagerie is a memory play by American playwright Tennessee Williams, first performed in 1944. It is one of Williams' most famous plays, having been adapted for stage, film, and television multiple times across the globe. His works have been influenced by writers like Hart Crane, D. H. Lawrence, Anton Chekov, August Strindberg and William Faulkner. The Glass Menagerie tells the story of the Wingfield family living in St. Louis, Missouri - consisting of the matriarch Amanda, her son Tom and daughter Laura - from the memory and perspective of Tom. The story takes place over the course of a few days wherein Amanda forces Tom to bring in a gentleman suitor for the introverted Laura. The situation does not play out well, and Tom, frustrated with his lot in life, ends up following in the footsteps of his father in abandoning the family to deal with their conflicts themselves, as he searches for a life of adventure and writing. It touches upon the Modernist themes of loss, family, freedom and confinement. This essay will examine the role of the unreliable narrator in the memory play framework, and how the narrator's perspective shapes the other characters and is shaped by the social, historic and economic context of the play.

The Glass Menagerie premiered in 1944 but was set in 1939. This was right in the middle of the Modernist movement that was engulfing America and the world, and The Glass Menagerie (a memory play)

is a prime example of what that movement was about. The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms claims that "Modernist literature is characterized chiefly by a rejection of 19th-century traditions and of their consensus between author and reader" (159). Modernism rose from approximately the first four decades of the 19th and 20th centuries. Some prominent American Modernist writers apart from Williams are Ezra Pound, William Faulkner and the high priest of Modernism, T.S.Eliot. The main features of Modernist writing include a disillusioned and disappointed environment, hopelessness, movement away from objectivity, an unreliable narrator, the lack of universal truth, the loss of a family unit, fragmentation, ambiguous endings, and most importantly, lamentation about it. All of these ideas are prominent in The Glass Menagerie. "The narrator is an undisguised convention of the play", writes Williams. "He takes whatever licence with dramatic convention is convenient to his purpose" (Scene 1). These themes also form the main ideas behind the genre of the 'memory play'. This genre was properly developed within Modernism --- in fact, it can be called a direct product of it. The term 'memory play' was coined by Tennessee Williams to describe The Glass Menagerie and can be defined as "a play in which a lead character narrates the events of the play, which are drawn from the character's memory ". Since memory can be unreliable, the narrator, or the person through whose memory the events are being shown, is unreliable. Modernist writing is predominantly cosmopolitan, and often expresses a sense of urban cultural dislocation, along with an awareness

of new anthropological and psychological theories" (160) claims The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms. This statement is accordant with first few lines from the play: "The Wingfield apartment is in the rear of the building, one of those vast hive-like conglomerations of cellular living-units that flower as warty growths in overcrowded urban centres of lower-middle-class population and are symptomatic of the impulse of this largest and fundamentally enslaved section of American society to avoid fluidity and differentiation and to exist and function as one interfused mass of automatism." (Scene 1)

Since The Glass Menagerie is based on Tom's memory, all the events are depicted based on how Tom remembers them, and all the characters are coloured and shaped by his memory. Thus, Tom is an unreliable narrator. Amanda appears as the overbearing mother to the audience and Laura as an ethereal, frail and fragile figure instead of the handicapped shy girl --- but that is only because that is Tom's memory and perspective of them. As Williams writes, "The scene is memory and is therefore non-realistic. Memory takes a lot of poetic licence. It omits some details; others are exaggerated, according to the emotional value of the articles it touches, for memory is seated predominantly in the heart" (Scene 1).





It is quite possible that Amanda is not as overbearing as she appears, and that she, like Laura, is just a projection of Tom's own biases. This idea is further supported by the fact that Jim O'Connor, Tom's friend from the warehouse and the gentleman caller, is used by the playwright as a depiction of the world outside of the Wingfield family and Tom's romanticization. He is practical, stable and ambitious; he is studying public speaking and radio engineering at the night school, and acts as a foil to Tom. "He is the most realistic character in the play, being an emissary from a world of reality that we were somehow set apart from. But since I have a poet's weakness for symbols, I am using this character also as a symbol; he is the long-delayed but always expected something that we live for." (Scene 1) says Tom, the long expected something being an assured, stable future that Tom does not provide to his sister and mother.

Tom, however, does seem to have a positive memory of Laura. Even though he, like Amanda, barely notices her physical disability, he is aware that it is the first thing that strikes people outside the family about her. "In the eyes of others - strangers - she's terribly shy and lives in a world of her own and those things make her seem a little peculiar to people outside the house" (Scene 5), he says about her. The Glass Menagerie has prominent autobiographical elements: a lot of the character of Tom is based on Williams' himself, and Laura on his sister Rose. The nickname given to her by Jim O'Connor in the play --- 'Blue Roses'--- is a reference to the same. Laura is naïve and childlike in her innocence and her understanding

of the world, and Tom is fiercely protective of her. He feels guilt for leaving her behind on his search for adventure and remembers her fondly and is haunted by her memory, saying "Oh, Laura, Laura, I tried to leave you behind me, but I am more faithful than I intended to be!" (Scene 7). Here too, Tom's memory is colouring his perspective of her. It is possible that due to that guilt, he remembers her as more naïve and helpless than she really was. He may also consider himself responsible for breaking apart his sister's delicate world; foreshadowed in scene 3 when he breaks her glass menagerie, (symbolising her innocent, frail constitution) in a fight with Amanda. And though he wants to help her, he cannot: taking charge in her life comes at the cost of spending the rest of his life in that shoe factory, and Tom simply cannot tolerate that anymore.

The social context of the play is imperative in understating it; without it, one cannot appreciate the different layers that it has to offer. Tom's situation and instinct to run away in The Glass Menagerie is not unique to him. As he mentions in his opening monologue:

"I reverse [time] to that quaint period, the thirties, when the huge middle class of America was ... having their fingers pressed forcibly down on the fiery Braille alphabet of a dissolving economy.

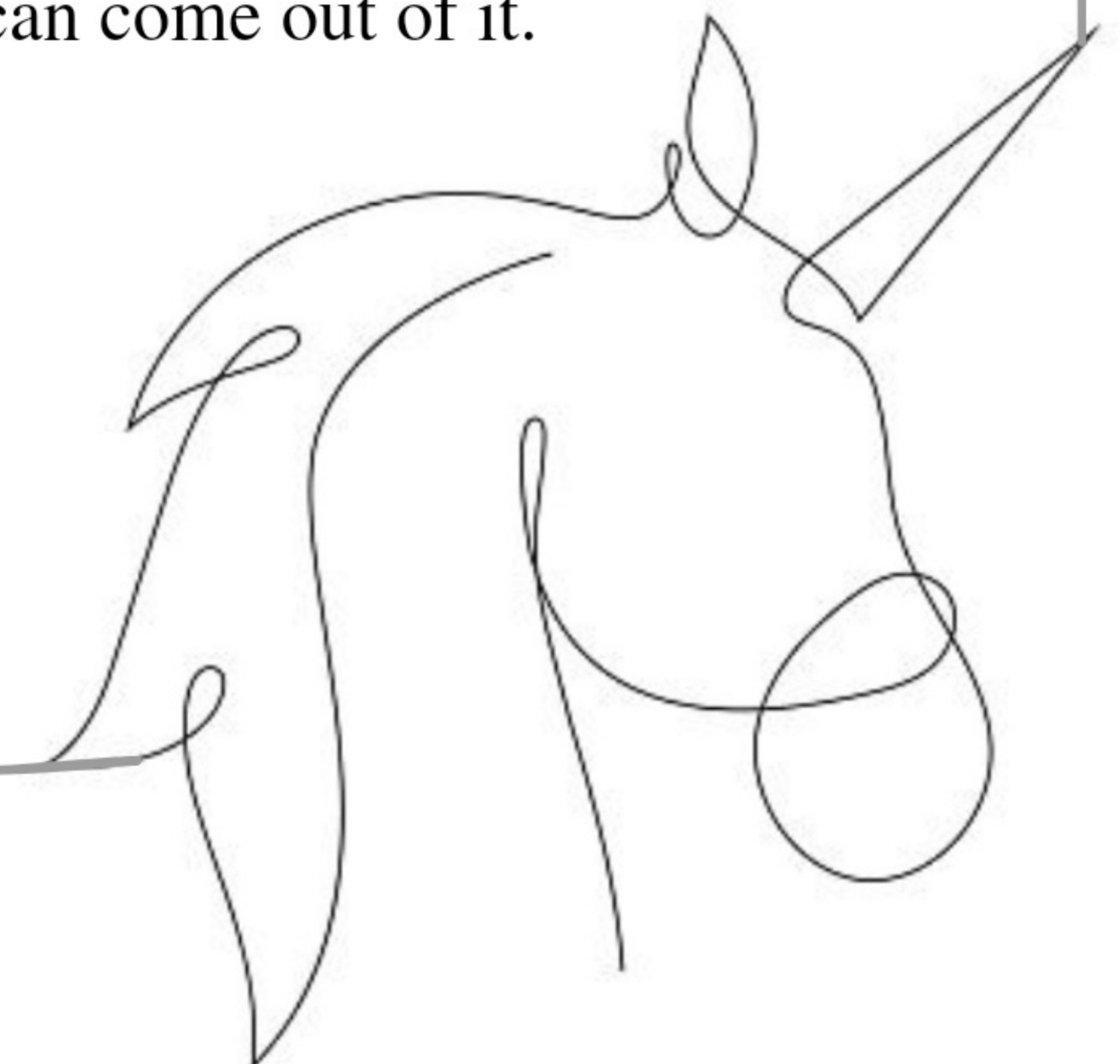
In Spain there was revolution. Here there was only shouting and confusion.

In Spain there was Guernica. Here there were disturbances of labour, sometimes pretty violent, in otherwise peaceful cities such as Chicago, Cleveland, Saint Louis. . . .

This is the social background of the play". (Scene 1)

The thirties in America were the time of the Great Depression, and when this play premiered in 1944, the audience understood and related to the memory of facing those difficult times, and the hope of the American Dream that carried them through it. Though critics usually associate the usage of the name 'Tom' to Williams basing the character on himself, it can be argued that it can also be used to depict the average common American man: every Tom, Dick and Harry had the urge to seek adventure during the time of the Great Depression, and the dream of a better life with success, prosperity and the opportunity of upward social mobility --- the American Dream . Tom's frustration with his place in life is that of the collective.

When Tom leaves, he goes somewhat hopeful, with the aspiration of achieving just that. He does find the freedom from the responsibility to provide for his family, but as Tom, the older narrator of the play wanders from city to city, he finds the truth of disillusion in that Dream. That also acts as a reminder for the audience to come out of the memory of the days of yore (as Amanda should have) and face the broken world that they have, though nothing can come out of it.





And that is the most Modernist any play could have gotten.

As this play has been performed over the many decades since its premiere, it has related to the memory of coming from better times (as Amanda did) and wanting the American Dream (as Tom does) in different ways with each audience it encounters. For instance, in the 1940's, it reminded people of the Great Depression, and as Delma E. Presley writes, "In the 1960s it was Tom of the Age of Aquarius whose travels might well carry him eastward. The decade that began with protests over the Vietnam War, the 1970s, brought forth a defiant Tom battling against hypocrisy. In the 1980s Tom seemed more in tune with himself and reminded audiences of conflicts within the American family."

Memory is one of the most important, if not the most important, elements in this play. As Harold Bloom said, "Williams's audience is given direct access to Tom's most private, psychological place—his memory. Not only is the audience subject to this internal realm, but they are also able to witness the original actions as if they had been there with Tom. And so, the memory becomes theirs as well." But the audience needs to remember that despite the memory of the narrator being unreliable, the themes are universal.

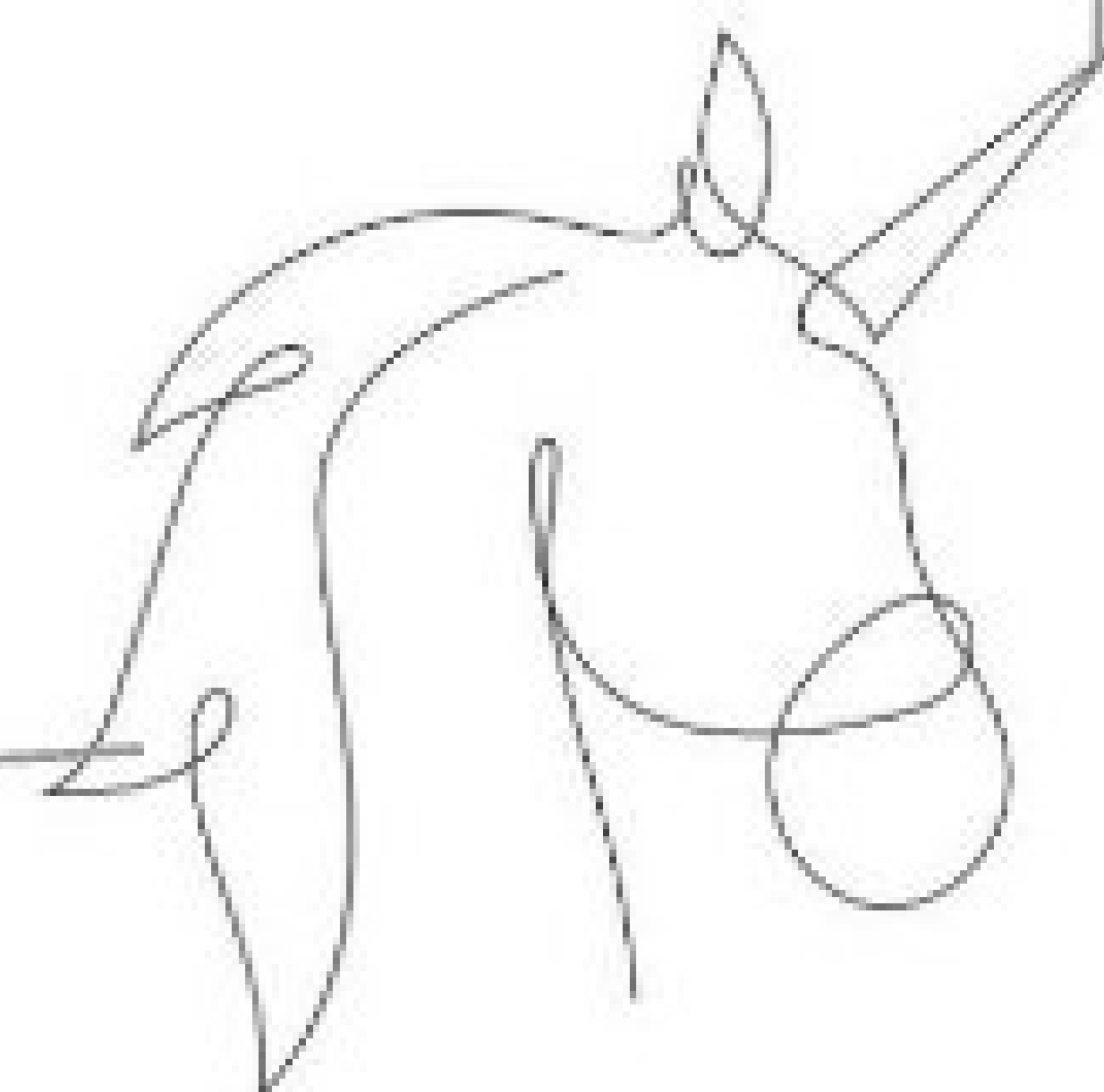
Even if they cannot relate to the situation of having a gentleman caller who turned out to be already engaged to another woman, they can relate to the feeling of being trapped in a monotonous life, and the urge to

escape to a better life --- and that is what the American dream is all about.

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-By Jaishree Malik





# 'IT IS JUST A DREAM': GENDERED VIOLENCE AND ITS RESISTANCE IN HAN KANG'S THE VEGETARIAN

The Vegetarian is a three-part text by South Korean author, Han Kang and deals with the protagonist, Yeong-hye's decision to give up meat and become a vegetarian. The text is firstly presented from the point of view of her husband, followed by her brother-in-law, and finally, by her elder sister, In-hye. In the text, Yeong-hye sparsely speaks but for the recollection of her recurring haunting dream which is replete with images of violence and death. Moved by this dream, she is propelled by a force to give up meat and, as the text progresses; her vegetarianism culminates in the desire to altogether relinquish her corporeal form to metamorphose into a tree. Translated by Deborah Smith into English, the text has a phantasmagorical quality and deals with questions of gendered violence and more importantly, Yeong-hye's posthumanist model of resistance to the same.

Since this conference is a meditation on the representation of violence in literary texts, I shall use the vector of violence to enter into some of the perennial deliberations in *The Vegetarian*. Through my paper, I wish to address the sexual and psychological violence that is perpetrated on a woman subject and her response to the same. My major motivation behind this study is to bring forth the response of Yeong-hye to the sustained slaughter on her subjectivity. This response is interesting because although the mode of retaliation takes the form of violence, it is different to the one that is meted out to her. This is not reactionary violence directed at her perpetrators but rather one that completely severs her association with them. It is violence on oneself and is done to the extent that it is aimed at absolving the body of its corporeal

form and rendering it incapable to continue to serve as a site of violence to her oppressors. During this process, Yeong-hye disrupts the binary between permissible/non-permissible and human/non-human. It is this rebellion and resistance of Yeong-hye that forms the core of my paper and which I shall explore in detail.

The violence in *The Vegetarian* is twofold and in order to arrive at the violence by Yeong-hye, we first need to delineate on the violence that is perpetuated on her. Owing to her position as a housewife in a South Korean ethos, she is subject to the vigilantism of her husband which is concentrated on her bodily autonomy. Simultaneously, she is also at the receiving end of her family's consistent efforts to maintain her as a submissive wife. The book starts with the first person narrative by her husband, who begins by saying,

"Before my wife turned vegetarian, I'd always thought of her as completely unremarkable in every way." (Kang 2015: 1)

Through his eyes, we come to picture Yeong-hye as an obedient housewife, who except for tending to her husband is only marked by being a brilliant cook. Their childless-marriage is largely uneventful but for the husband's concerns about her one eccentricity- the refusal to wear a bra. He says,

"The only respect in which my wife was at all unusual was that she didn't like wearing a bra... It wasn't as though she had shapely breasts which might suit the "no-bra" look. I would have preferred her to go around wearing one that was thickly padded, so that I could save face in front of my acquaintances." (Kang 2015: 11)

However, things get turbulent once Yeong-hye decides to give up meat, which includes not just consuming meat but also preparing it for her husband. This seemingly innocent dietary change has greater implications for her husband as she refuses to have sex with him as he "smells of meat". (Kang 2015: 17). This results in him raping her twice before filing for a divorce. Once Yeong-hye's family comes to know of her behaviour, they come over for dinner where Yeong-hye's father, who is a Vietnam War veteran, tries to forcefully shove meat into her mouth. Of course, the father's act and other's silent approval to it is garbed under the familial display of concern for her dropping health. In response, Yeong-hye not only spits out the meat but also slits open her wrist resulting in her hospitalization.

This suicide-attempt is the first of the many ways in Yeong-hye, troubled by her inner chaos, tries to do away with her body, which has by now, become a vehicle for violence. On being asked the reason for becoming a vegetarian, she only says, "I had a dream...I dreamt of a face."

Here is some of the description of her dream:

"Blood in my mouth, blood-soaked clothes sucked onto my skin....Chewing on something that felt so real, but couldn't have been, it couldn't. My face, the look in my eyes...my face, undoubtedly, but never seen before. Or no, not mine, but so familiar...nothing makes sense. Familiar and yet not...that vivid, strange, horribly uncanny feeling." (Kang 2015: 14)

The nameless face that Yeong-hye sees in her dreams, the one that to her feels both familiar and unfamiliar,



becomes a face that is associated with images of violence. It is this face that commits atrocities and kills in order to thrive. Troubled by this association and in order to suppress this bestial self, she inadvertently resorts to completely giving up on meat. Julia Kristeva in her seminal essay, "Powers of Horror" defines abject as the human response in the face of a threatened breakdown between the subject and the object or, between the self and the other. It is this abjection that Yeong-hye develops with respect to meat.

In her symbolic order, she recognizes how she is being consumed by patriarchy and in order to not become one with this Other, she resorts to giving up on the impulse of consuming food which is produced through violation. This is her retaliation to not completely lose her identity in that atrocious nameless face (which she identified as herself) and to break any "human" solidarity with her perpetrators. It is therefore that she gives up on any form of violence that is directed at nurturing her own self.

After Yeong-hye tries to kill herself, she is hospitalized where she escapes her room and is found on a hospital bench with a dead bird clutched between her hands. The husband describes the incident as:

*My wife was sitting on a bench by the fountain. She had removed her hospital gown and placed it on her knees, leaving her gaunt collarbones, emaciated breasts and brown nipples completely exposed. The bandage had been unwound from her left wrist, and the blood that was leaking out seemed to be slowly licking at the sutured area. Sunbeams bathed her face and naked body."*

This is one of the first instances in the novel, which hints at Yeong-hye's desexualisation of her body, where she doesn't mind baring her torso in order to bathe in the sunlight. It is thus that the very body which had long been a site for sexual violence now regains autonomy.

As the text progresses, Yeong-hye volunteers for her brother-in-law to paint flowers on her body for a video

project. The brother-in-law is aroused by the knowledge of her extant Mongolian mark, something that usually fades away during adolescence. Once she is painted in flowers, she feels more at ease and even believes that her dreams would stop. This painting of the flowers on her body makes her feel united with nature and it is only when her brother-in-law comes to her painted in similar flowers that she gives her consent to have sex with him. Even in that encounter, (which the brother-in-law does on the pretext of video-art), Yeong-hye manages to supersede her id as she is not making love to the man but to the flowers. Even the brother-in-law, couldn't help but realize that their coitus was more "vegetal than sexual".

Later, on being discovered by the sister, she is deemed to be mad and confined to a mental asylum while the brother-in-law goes into hiding. Forgiving her sister for her supposed transgressive act on the basis of her being mentally sick, In-hye continues to look after her. However, it is only now that she begins to understand her sister. It is in this hospital that she is diagnosed with anorexia nervosa and is fed intravenously. Yeong-hye rejects this medical diagnosis because her abstinence from eating is driven by other motivations....motivations that people do not desire to understand. It is by not eating, by consciously denying herself food that Yeong-hye commits violence on herself as when the body does not eat, it begins to eat on its own sinew. As In-hye notes, Yeong-hye had stopped menstruating and seemed to be devoid of any secondary sexual characters. Yeong-hye by now refuses to feed on anything and believes that she only needs water and sunshine in order to survive.

"I am not an animal anymore, sister. I don't need to eat, not now. I can live without it. All I need is sunlight." (Kang 2015: 43)

It is now that her desire to transcend the consumable corporeal body takes the turn of becoming one with nature...with trees. This desire is the posthumanist

solution that Yeong-hye seeks as her mode of rebellion. It is thus that she literally wants to transform into a tree as a mode of solidarity against her oppressors; her immediate family in particular, and the structures of oppression formulated by humanity in general. It is this rejection of body as a site of violence that frees her from the endless cycle of violence. Her desire to transform into a tree seems complete when she addresses her sister, "Look, sister, I am doing a headstand; leaves are growing out of my body, roots are sprouting out of my hands...they delve down into the earth. Endlessly, endlessly...yes, I spread my legs because I wanted flowers to bloom from my crotch; I spread them wide..." (Kang 2015: 37)

While In-hye sees such a dismissal to eat as a wish to die, Yeong-hye simply responds with "Why is it such a bad thing to die?" thus highlighting the probable resolution of violence that lies in the utopic land of posthumanism. Yeong-hye even refuses to stand up like "normal" humans and instead does a headstand for long hours. According to her, "I thought trees stood up straight...I only found out just now. They actually stand with both arms in the earth, all of them....they're standing on their heads."

With her frequent hospital visits, In-hye begins to understand her sister a bit more than others through which she also begins to understand herself. It is then that she can recall the violence done to Yeong-hye by her family as a child, the ill-treatment at the hands of husband. This growing understanding even pushes her on the brink of suicide but she still, somehow, manages to cling on.

She repeatedly tells Yeong-hye and through her, to her own self that it is just a dream. It is this narrative that fails to comprehend Young-hye's rebellion but relegating her decisions to just a dream. However, as readers, we know that for Yeong-hye, the dream has far reaching consequences. It is a dream of a



posthumanist existence where she is one with nature and away from violence. A sheltered space where she does not have to confront the barbarous nameless face. A dream where “all the trees of the world are like brothers and sisters.” (Kang 2015: 83) and there is no space for violence.

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**By Kritika Nautiyal,  
Ambedkar University, Delhi**

***This academic paper won the second prize at Litluminous 2021's Paper Presentation Competition.***



# LitLuminous'21, "Violence and Literature"

Litluminous'21, the Annual Literary Fest of Kamala Nehru College was conducted on 19th February 2021. The fest focused on the theme of 'Violence and Literature'. The day bustled with engaging events and competitions, and all the programmes saw active participation; even though the fest this time was conducted through online mode due to the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic; there was no lack of enthusiasm in any sphere whatsoever. All communication was done using Google forms, WhatsApp and Instagram handles.

The Panel Discussion was the first event of the day. The panelists for the discussion were Professor Kishalay Bhattacharjee, School of Journalism and Communication; Nidhi Kalra, Department of Humanities and Language, FLAME University and Subarno Chattarji, Department of English, University of Delhi. All the speakers explored the link between violence and literature and supported their arguments with stimulating narratives.

The Paper Presentation event was next, and the event saw ten participants from all India present papers pertaining to the theme of 'Violence and Literature' which made a deep dive into the unacknowledged horrors of society and the manifestation of violence as a tool of both oppression and rebellion. Topics of linguistic violence, caste violence, gender violence, state sanctioned violence, and digital propaganda as tools of violence were amongst the many topics of discussion for the day, leading to a tough competition. Shruty Yadav from IIMC and Mehnaz Hussain from Jamia Milia Islamia were awarded the first prize, and Kritika Nautiyal from Ambedkar University the second.


This was followed by a highly successful Slam Poetry event which saw enthusiastic participants from a variety of colleges. The online platform turned into flames as the participants performed their pieces with vigour one after the other. Even though the theme was one, meanings were sundry. From the idea of 'Virodth' to the media being mute at tyranny, the poems left the audience speechless at the rhetorical questions of the persistence of war. The use of allusions and beautiful metaphors, like coffee cups denoting the country's soil, left an imprint in the hearts of the listeners so much that they cheered for the contestants in the comment section throughout and constantly asked for encores. The first prize was bagged by Utkarsh Tripathi from PGDAV college, while the second and third by Alisha from SNU and Mani Agarwal from Gargi College shared with Brahmaneet Narula from Christ University respectively. Even though the open platform of physical encounter was sorely missed, the participants really used the virtual platform to express their point of view against the various scandalous violence suffered in society. The entire fest was a huge success that left everyone wanting for more.

Litluminous also played host to a Meme Making competition and a Creative Writing competition. The MemeWars added the required zing to the chain of events of LitLuminous'21. It not only pushed the participants to discover their new shades of creativity. The memes left the judges with great laughs and us in anticipation of what the upcoming editions of such competitions are

going to look like. The participants had created extremely amusing memes on the very eminent topic of 2020: the coronavirus, while some had taken up different layers of the pandemic and represented it in a fun way. In due course, the judges awarded the first position to Sneha Sharma of Daulat Ram college, and the second position to Bashundhara Jana of Indraprastha College of Women. Both the winners succeeded in incorporating the theme in their novel ways.

With the Creative Writing event, the participants have demonstrated that their words can still be so strong and have the same influence even if they are not there in person to say it. The event was organized virtually and responses were gathered by circulating a Google form. The form of writing was not bound and could be in any form, whether poems or prose, whose word limit was 300. Participants were asked to choose only one of the four prompts. The two participants, whose voice was stronger than any, came out victorious; Arpita Chowdhury of LSR obtained the 1st position and Prachi of SPMC obtained the second.





# COLLECTIVE RUBBISH: PASTICHE

It must all be considered as though spoken by a character in a novel.” -Roland Barthes

From the 21st to 23rd of October'2020, the English Literary Society worked in collaboration with White Noise, the English Department Newsletter to create a surreal virtual experience of the sixth edition of the Collective Rubbish: a Conceptual Art Exhibition with the theme 'Pastiche' as used in the works of Laurence Sterne, giving the platform a creative stride.

Sterne's "Tristram Shandy" is well known for its propensity to borrow from other texts and their notional route to form one's own work of literature. Its vivid intertextuality invites the reader into a conversational and dialogical relation with the narrator, making it a proto-model for this literary technique. Sterne's characters reinvent themselves by mythologizing the tales of their own lives; he employs Lockean psychology in his work and also plays with the limitations of the linguistic medium.

The theme of Pastiche offers the possibility to engage with such ideological apparatus through reinterpretation of various artistic works by imitating its stylistic and characteristic elements. Sterne's Tristram Shandy employs intertextuality which has birthed the mechanism of pastiche.

A lot of the students worked on Sterne's novel itself as the basis for their pastiche conceptual art project. They borrowed anecdotes and ideas from the novel and made use of them over a mesh of various art forms and medium, and quite literally made a collage which is the foundational idea of pastiche.

A third-year student, Muntaha Bhat used an Urdu newspaper as the foundation of her artistic piece, as she wanted to emphasise on the complexity of a human mind with the literal complexity of learning and understanding the Urdu language. Her piece is an effort to show how she relates to Tristram and his obsession with ideas.

Asmita Adhana's visual response to Sterne's novel is based on how time holds an arbitrary position in this novel and Sterne freely manipulates it exactly as it suits him. Her piece experiments with space, the columns represent order/ structure/ symmetry, but the arrangement, or chronology is disordered/unstructured.

Subhalakshi Gautam's piece paid homage to the marble page popularised by Sterne, her work focused on the theme of discord in the marital relationship between Mr. and Mrs. Shandy.

An anonymous artistic response was submitted for the exhibition that tried to renegotiate the representation of the painting, "Girl with a Pearl Earring" by Johannes Vermeer to depict how "I am more of me when I do not exist in front of you because I am just the replication of the idea that I imprinted upon you."

Aamna Siddiqui's art included a sketch of a fetus and mass of cells to represent the moment regarding the homunculus. A dialogue box was given to illustrate the lack of animal spirits which went away and disrupted Shandy's shot at a lucky future. She also submitted an art piece on Carrie Bradshaw from "Sex and the City" crafted on the philosophy of clichéd feminine innocence and going for what you want in a man's world.

A second-year student, Madhulika remade the famous paintings of Edvard Munch, Van Gogh and Michelangelo to fit her worldview while Sonali Samal returned to the cubist art of George Braque, specifically his painting: "Violin and Palette".

Sakhi Thirani's art was based on instances from the novel that highlight a transgression in the very ability of the text, being both "digressive" and "progressive" at the same time, bringing forth the peculiar obsessions the characters have with their hobby-horses which are constructed through their distinct "association of ideas", showcasing Sterne's direct engagement with Locke.

Manaam's art reinterpreted the response to the Tanishq Jewellers' advertisement of intermarriage to ebb islamophobia and bigotry and Amisha Nath's piece was based on our lives in the times of corona virus to depict the interconnected nature of our world and the fragility of human well-being.

The exhibition came to an end with a discussion on art of the Indian subcontinent and the contemporary artists worldwide working on pastiche art, delivered by Mr Argha Kamal Ganguly, the assistant curator of the National Gallery of Modern Art. A virtual tour of the Gallery left the students with a myriad of visually palpable dreams and more insights on art as a medium of expression, to depict our world, its cultures and ideas.



# ARTIST: MADHULIKA





# ARTIST: KKHUSHPREET



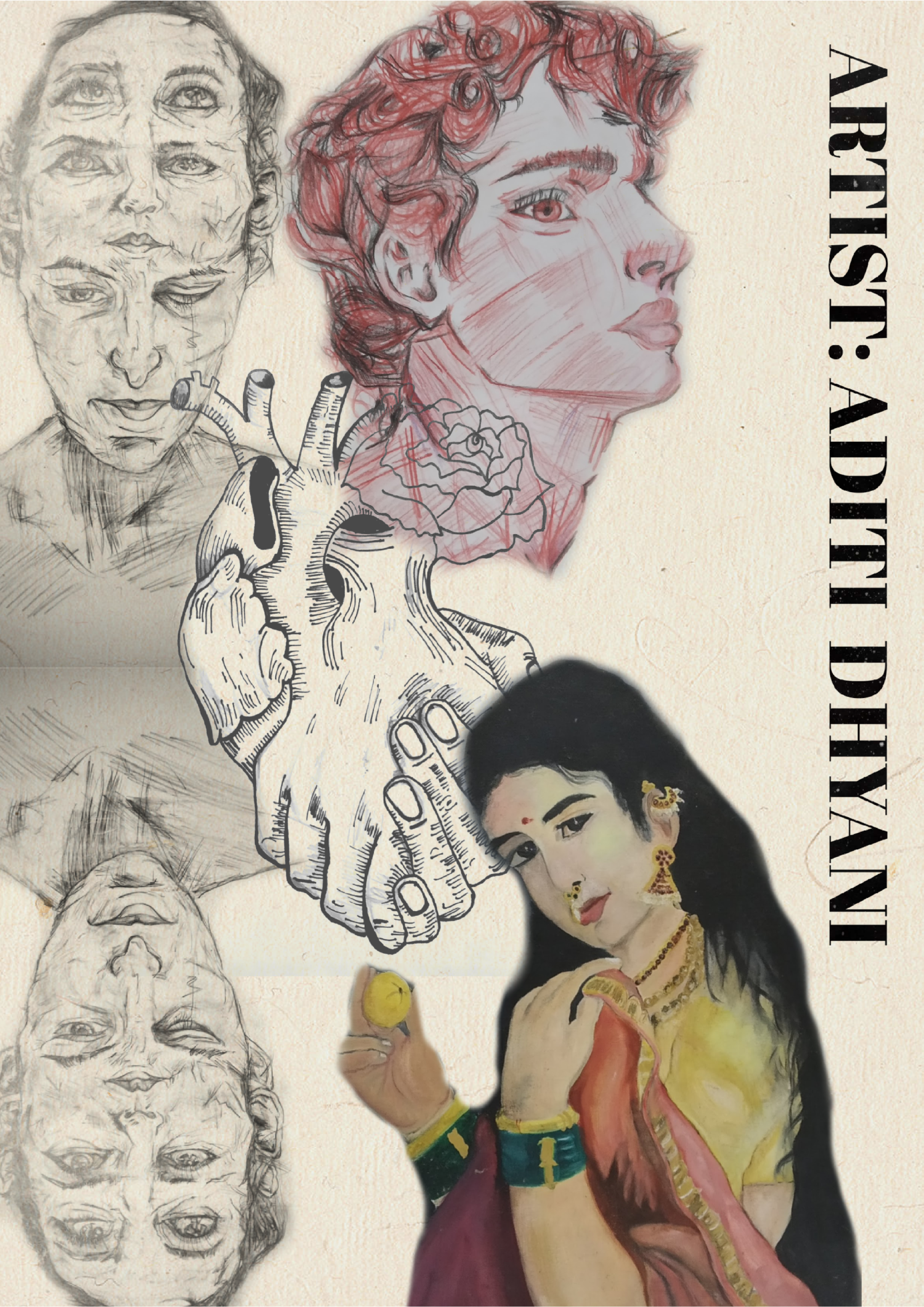


# ARTIST: AAMINA SIDDIQI





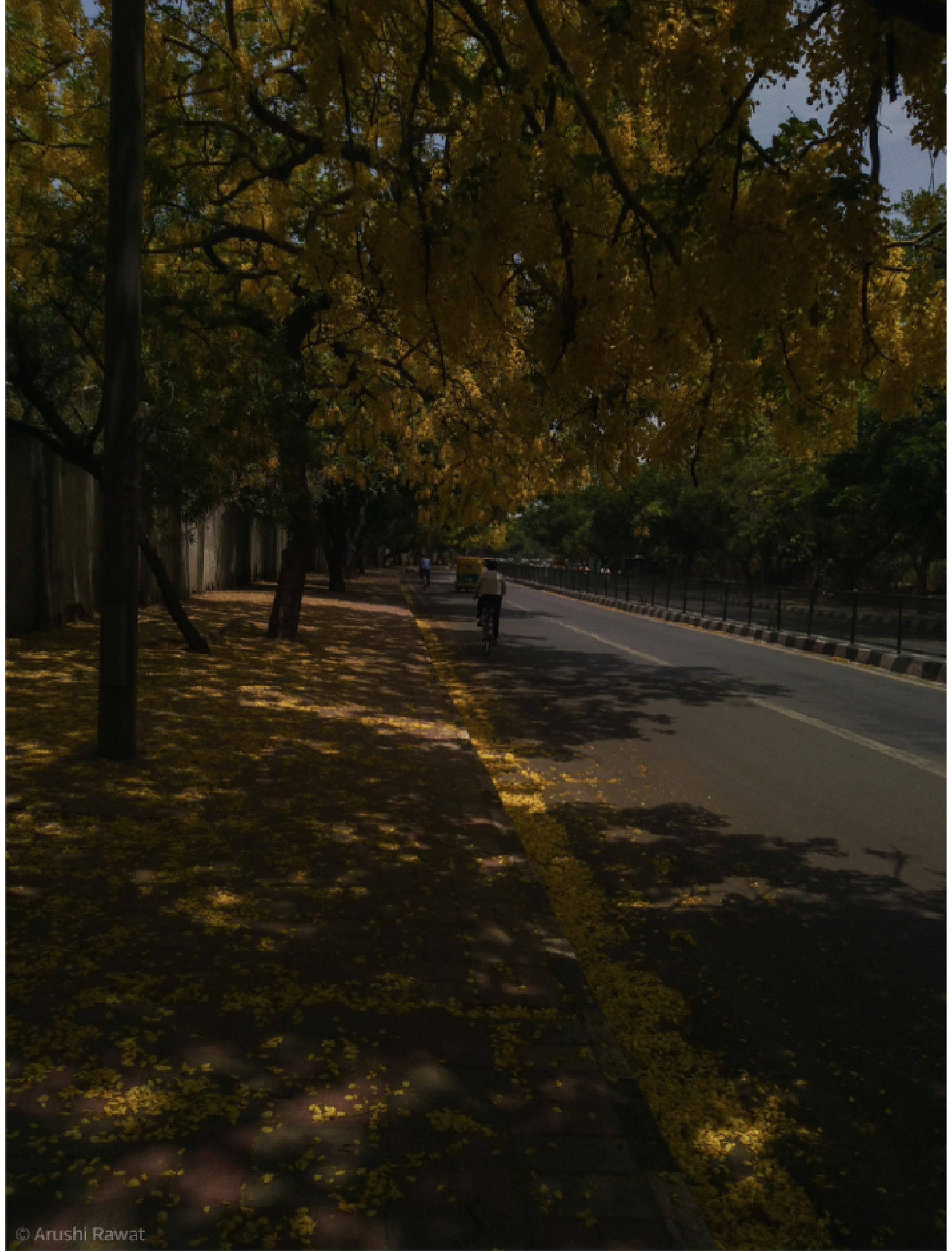
# ARTIST: ADITI DHYANI







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**'Paths'**  
*by Arushi Rawat*

Here's a song we  
recommend you  
listen to while you  
view this collection





**'Changes'**  
*By Apoorva Bansal*



Here's a  
song we  
recommend  
you listen to  
while you  
view this  
collection





*"To me, this picture depicts the journey of life— horrifying lows, and gratifying ups. The dominant dramatic element being its colour tone which evokes both dejection and hope."*  
-Manya Chandra



**An original photograph**  
*By Manya Chandra*

Here's a song we  
recommend you  
listen to while  
you peruse this  
photograph





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Poem, "Unknown Address": artwork from tomatoDust

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Poem, "Headlines": artwork by Lakshi Phogat

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Poem, "Dreams are meant to Last": artwork from Pinterest, Amazon

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Prose, "A Short Story" : marble art from Picmonkey

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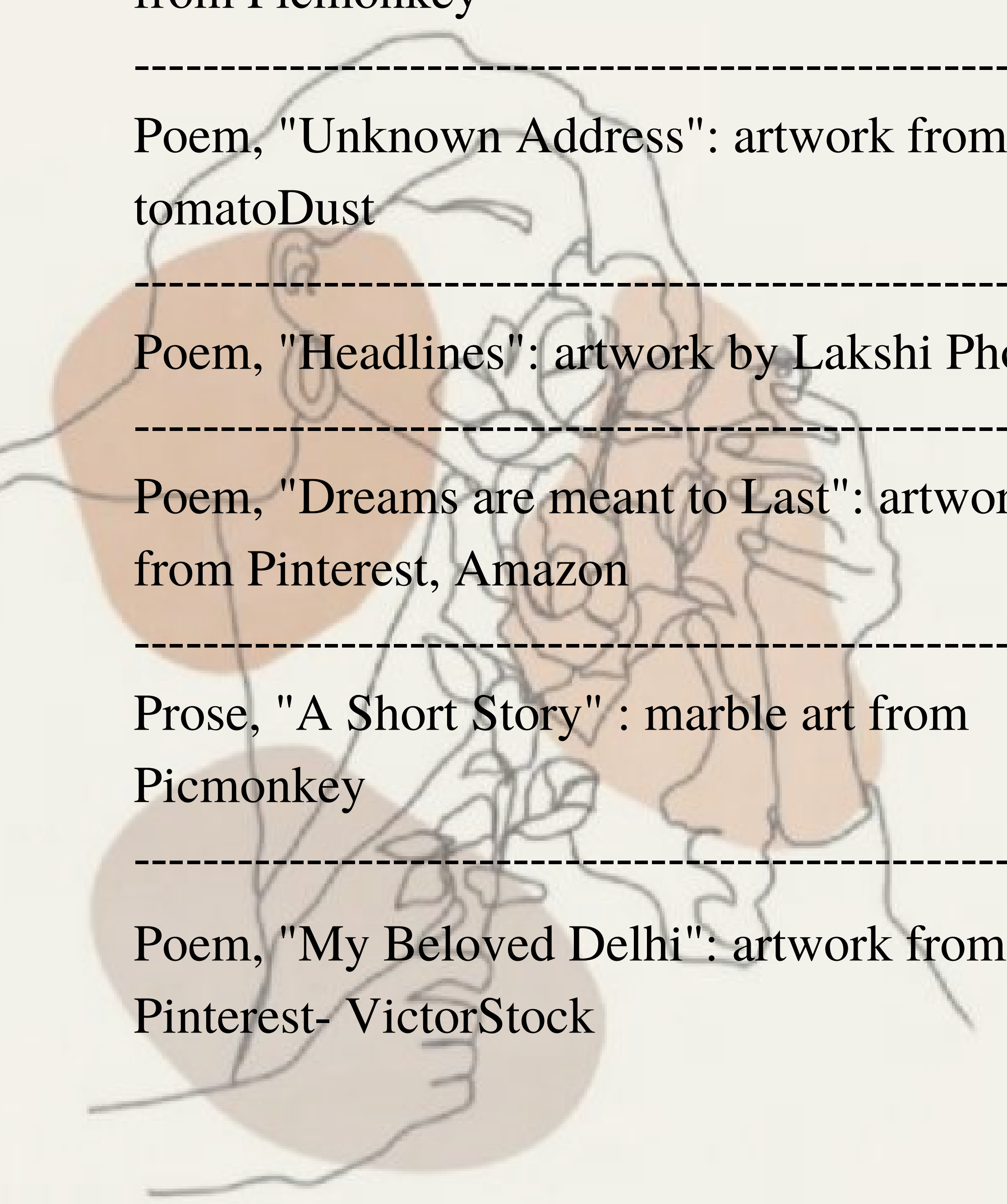
Poem, "My Beloved Delhi": artwork from Pinterest- VictorStock

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Academic Paper, "The Role and Significance of Memory and the Unreliable Narrator in the Glass Menagerie": background art from DeviantArt

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