



Thoughtspell

Volume 2

November 2022

Students' Magazine
Department of English,
The Bhawanipur Education
Society College



Team *Thoughtspell*

Editorial Sub-Committee

Faculty:

Mr. Soumyajit Chandra

Ms. Sayantani Sengupta

Mr. Sayan Chatterjee

Mr. Pema Gyalchen Tamang

Mr. Tathagata Sen

Dr. Gargi Talapatra

Student Editors:

Bhavna Jagnani (UG Sem V)

Ankhi Bandyopadhyay (UG Sem V)

Kaushiki Ganguly (PG Sem III)

Nafisa Islam (PG Sem III)

Shatabdi Roy (PG Sem III)

From the Editors' Desk:

Thoughtspell is a bi-annual, digital imprint which functions as the students' magazine for the Department of English, The Bhawanipur Education Society College. Apart from providing the students of the department with a unique opportunity to exercise their creative faculties, the second volume of *Thoughtspell* has also brought perspectives on academics and creativity to the editorial team. Subsequent to the announcement of the second volume during September 2022, members of the editorial team have been routinely approached by enthusiastic contributors with specimens of their recent endeavours in diverse fields of the arts. Amidst a veritable deluge of sonnets, short stories, long poems and book reviews, it has been remarkably heartening to hear students speak of their sources of inspiration, and their dreams of seeing their names in print.

In the course of classroom teaching, faculty members “praise famous men” and women before their students, and attempt to lay bare the workings of those great minds before the young learners. At all times, the academician must remain apprehensive of the possibility that the lives and works of these illustrious people may seem quaint and abstruse to students, owing to the sheer span of time which separates them from each other. Students who fail to relate and realise end up reducing the richness of ideas and artistry to academic drudgery, and labour under the stern frown of duty in their pursuit of a dry, degree-oriented study. Owing to this, the academician must continually invent and improvise their technique, but ultimately, the veracity of Christ's Parable of the Sower stands corroborated. Therefore, it is always a moment of inexplicable joy for the sower when they find that the planted seed has germinated. Such was the delight for the editorial team when they found students eager to explore antique poetical forms and experiment with diverse styles of narration— casual conversations developed into lengthy deliberations on prosody, poetic metre, techniques of editing and anticipating reader-

response. Amidst the humdrum, the whispers of the Muses travelled through the efforts of these young literary enthusiasts to our thirsting ears.

The first section of the magazine, entitled “Afflatus”, comprises poetry and creative writing by students from both UG and PG sections of the English department. The second section, “Sapienza” contains nine research papers authored by UG Semester III and V students which they presented at the Seminar on Detective Fiction, organized on the 14th of November, 2022. Since undergraduate students read detective fiction as part of a core course entitled “Popular Literature” in their third semester, the seminar was organized in order to encourage them to further explore this particular genre. This enterprise yielded a series of fine presentations on European, Indian and American crime fiction: students spoke passionately about their favourite literary detectives, and analysed their methods of deduction through diverse critical lenses. Subsequently, the presenters eagerly contributed their papers for the current volume of *Thoughtspell*, thus adding to the critical content of the imprint.

The third section, “Kaleidoscope” contains sketches and paintings by both UG and PG students of the department. Apart from a handful of commendable portraits, the artwork upholds a celebration of femininity and an awareness of women’s issues in life and culture. The fourth section, “Camera Lucida” contains photographs contributed by students, the subject being predominantly nature.

The five student-editors, namely Bhavna Jagnani (UG Semester V), Ankhi Bandyopadhyay (UG Semester V), Kaushiki Ganguly (PG Semester III), Nafisa Islam (PG Semester III) and Shatabdi Roy (PG Semester III) were selected earlier in the year through an extensive evaluation, and they have lent their indispensable support to the editorial sub-committee in preparing the digital copy of the second volume of *Thoughtspell*. The Department of English

extends heartfelt gratitude to each student-editor for their commitment, perseverance, digital skills and editorial acumen.

The privilege of being able to curate the content of the current volume of the students' magazine is indeed rare. It enables the academician-editor to be aware of the dreams, concerns and aspirations of the young generation, many of whom will perhaps pursue careers in art, literature and academics, and in turn, influence masses. To be a tiny cog in that grand machine which harnesses the sheer power of human creativity is perhaps the dream of every artistically-inclined individual. *Thoughtspell, deo volente*, will continue to be a conduit for channelling the fruits of inspiration, which always have the power to change the world.

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Afflatus

Section I: Creative Writing

Untitled

Ambreen Hossain

UG Semester V

Uncertainty of life is like rain in winter—

It encapsulates the emotions from being surprised to shock.

In the balance of every breath we take,

Every beat of the heart,

Every blink of an eye,

Every drop of rain from the sky;

Even during the winter nights

Every word I may write,

It signifies the uncertainty in our lives.

Denim Jackets

Madeeha Anwar

UG Semester V

Corridors of denim jackets bluer than Mondays

Filled with glittery slime and a taste of space,

Empty socks and boots shuffling around

Devoid of what makes a skull a face,

Chirping wildly in a harmonic pandemonium

Constantly trying to fill a void;

Masquerading pretty smiles in sunlight

Hopelessly capturing summers in polaroids;

Denim jackets scented with perfumes

Consumed by the smell of ash,

Dried rivers in my veins

Full of whim and decisions rash

Soft R&B in my ears until it's not,

Sixty denim jackets and a smell so vile

Cold sweat and trembling limbs,

Confined to a voluntary exile

In a faceless procession in the hallways:

A blissful ignorance I reluctantly adore,

A masked lunacy of naive hypocrisy

A disgusting utopia I ardently abhor.

Chained Caw

Arunima Mazumder

UG Semester V

Not a spiritual crow but a caw,

Revolving inside the hollow land-

Dark blood, Covered layers

Elegant as crystal smile,

Rotten nerves evoking vibrating nights.

Closed in the womb like a flower I was born.

Horrifically turned cheers

In doom and gloom, Fragile soul

Building jarred volcanoes,

Stared dizzy eyes.

Coupled perfectly with handcuffed hand

Clocked silently in circled years.

Fragile soul threatened not so strong,

No not or Yes ya

Almost chained in a box.

No it's not a spiritual crow but a caw,

Revolving inside suffocating land-

Dark blood, Covering layers of

elegant as crystal smile, with

Rotten nerves evoked a vibrating night.

To Have Loved

Aditya Mukherjee

UG Semester III

Love is the old embrace of a fond scent,
Yearns for clocks to halt, be in stillness' sway,
Amidst folklore, it is the truth to stay,
A loner's longing, the bliss of content.
Love is the languid autumn, one I dreamt,
The gleam in lakes as the sun sets away,
Like maples, so red, be loved, young and gay,
Like winter's twig, be loved, old and unkempt.
My love is the tune of dreamlike amiss,
As melancholy in a Happy King,
Alike denials, veiling deep desires.
It says, "Bold Lover, never, never canst thou kiss,"
"Fade with the faint strain of thy dulcet string,"
"Sweet swain, thy love is a tale of doused fire."

Argonaut

Md. Zoheb Hussain

PG Semester III

Let it burn, like the phoenix's eternal breath

Let it rise, like a dormant volcano's first flare,

Let it rumble, like Uranus's resounding ordinance,

Let it flow, like Babylonia's forever tales

And let it be, as the words of the wise:

Of the first Hero King who roared for eternal feast,

Challenging the Gods,

And Enkidu the Beast.

And took the first step of human wisdom,

In his Quest of Immortality.

Every age calls for a hero,

The Gods, their Children,

All pray for the Hero's return.

To write a tale of epic proportions

And repeat history in turn.

At the wiss of wind,

At the cry of the sea,

When the clock hits twelve 'O' clock,

The boy rises with incredulous flamboyancy.

The bell rings at the Dawn of Midnight,
The crest burns the Peloponnesian Sea,
When monsters plague the land,
The Argonaut rises with flamboyant vigour,
Against the violent tyrant's villainy.

The embers flare, the boy grows,
The tears soaked away,
The fire enwraps the swarming whole.
Bellows of Minotaur and many more are heard,
As the blade slices through the flesh
Carving in them a story afresh.
History marries myth
And in due course, time,
As dirt and blood,
Of unparalleled labour is washed,
In the sands of time.

The boy becomes a man,
With the Blessings of Zeus,
Championing the scars
And adding colours to the world,
Which had recently seemed obtuse.
But now before it stands,

A dragon in colour of black,
Which flaps its mighty wings,
Striking terror in million hearts
While it attacks.
The people run, the children scream,
Thousands are reduced to ash
Without a funeral pyre
When faced with this gruesome
Monstrosity.

The sky is crimson,
The rivers grow rufescent with iron ores,
Despair plagues the land
Which was once fertile
But now not a seed grows.

The Argonaut faces the trial of his life,
Standing before the fiend
To take his life.
He dashes forth like a bolt of lightning
And charges ahead displaying courage
Which is at once admirable
And frightening.

He moves forward,

Through the fiery breath,
Dodging the puddles of liquid flames,
And with it certain death.
The dagger falls and fails to make a mark
On scales as hard as marble
And unyielding as the Olympus rock.

The blade shatters into a million pieces,
And with it hopes of Gods,
When the tail slams the Hero
Under the debris of cave rocks.

“Get up” is the voice he hears
And “try once more” cries Heavens
In palpable fear.

But before his eyes comes a vision,
Of the hearth now buried in snow
With the old man sitting beside the child
Now in question,
Telling everything he wants to know.
He tells him of Hero tales and many so,
Who came before and how one grows.
He tells him everything he wants to know,
Yes, a Tale of Lighting and Blood,

Where the victor rises from the ashes
And conquers his path above.

“Move Forward” is what he says
“For the child who defiles the will of Gods
Shines the Brightest”.
And with it a thunder roared
Reverberating through the cave
Which even made the vermin’s feet cold.

The Sun had set long ago,
And darkness had enveloped the cave more so.
The beast was at peace thinking it had defeated
His mortal foe.
But alas, rose from the burning cinders
The Argonaut once more.

Yet he was different than before,
But how was it possibly so?
Was it his punctured left arm
Or, perhaps his broken rib cage.
The Dragon was confounded,
Despite his misery
What gave the Hero his new found courage?
But nay, it was the eyes

Which gave the Dragon

The chill of his life.

Despite being a creature of fire

He felt the heat rise,

And in inexplicable fear,

He heard the ticking of the clock

For now it was Midnight,

Yes, it was Twelve 'O' Clock.

With Thunder in one Hand

And Fire in his heart,

The Argonaut charged ahead

To create his own path.

Like his predecessors who came before,

He was driven by the divine force

And providence blessed him

With strength he didn't know.

Adventure was his heart's desire,

And a lust for the unknown kindled his fire.

He jumped unfathomed of the incoming blow

And by the time he was in mid-air,

It was already late to know.

He thought he failed a second time

And cursed his zeal which had sealed his fate
In the vacuum of time.

But a flight was felt in the tingling feet
And with it he made a gigantic leap.
It was the Messengers gift,
Which saved him in the nick of time,
Landing directly on the evils head
And striking the thunder
Which had ruled Beasts and Time.

The creature fell to the ground,
With a crashing blow,
And cried in pain,
For it was the first he came to know.
Yet it struggled,
Violently moving its limbs,
Hoping to escape his crooked den.

But the Adventurer who came looking for a quest,
With last ounce of his strength,
Took out a blade from his vest.
He ran, limping towards the lizard
And thrust the bane where it deserved.
The creature screeched in a deafening tone,

And dropped inanimate struggling all alone.

The Argonaut had fulfilled his duty,

And Gods cheered for his victory.

It was the day a new hero was born,

Who fulfilled the prophecy

And carried the rich legacy on.

Butterfly Effect

Kankana Mitra

PG Semester III

I see a star, gilded in the blanket of the night,

Glimmering to its best.

In a cosmic rhythm perhaps

Or like the dancing dandelions in the meadow,

Or maybe like the waves of the sea

Engulfing the sand in the beach,

I was there with you, mindless conversations

About how the butterfly pranced.

The butterfly was blue and yellow and dotted with purple,

Ah, yes you loved blue, the blue sky, the blue sea,

The blue colour of my shirt,

Perhaps I still have that shirt with me,

Somewhere buried in my closet,

I had a book of poems there,

In that was a poem named *Wild Nights!*

I read that to you...

The sky seems thick and mighty blue,

And the stars are still blooming,

Peeking is a moon there,

Somewhere amidst the cloud,

Like a guardian angel,

To the star and me and you...

Mirror Maze

Bhavna Jagnani

UG Semester V

I entered a mirror maze

Brightly lit, the cheers echoing;

I moved further into the world,

Not knowing what it would bring.

Mirror on my right, mirror on my left;

I see myself wherever I look,

Still, I'm unable to see my true reflection;

They aren't of any use –the methods mentioned in the book.

All the images I saw were me,

Yet I was standing apart;

I clapped for all of them,

Maybe that's the beauty of my heart.

Each step has to be carefully taken,

A wrong step and your head receives a hard bang;

Every image seemed to move along,

On my collide, together, their laughter sang.

All the ways looked the same,

Each mirror reflected the reflection on the other;

It is difficult to find my path –

My destination seemed to be black in colour.

I was in the middle of the maze,

My energy entirely drained out,

My legs stumbled with each heavy step,

And my heart beats with doubt.

In slow pace, I moved forward,

Collided with the mirror and fell hundred times,

But my dreams pushed me through,

To find something incredibly divine.

When I reached the end and looked back,

Everything seemed a mere illusion,

I turned again to face forward,

Between me and my dreams stood no stone.

Mirror was on my right, mirror was on my left,

Mirror, mirror was everywhere,

Yet not a single mirror

Could show me my unmasked face in there.

Manifest

Abhijoy Dutta
PG Semester III

Quarks in the ocean are like droplets off the sneeze

Syrups in the mist are maple of the east,

Uncanny in the function acute in form;

Porous pores pour the particle for more

Grounds keep grazing cattle in hyena boil,

In timidities of the world that sanitises time.

Moving poles hold back photons from moving

Cars patrol fuelled in jams,

Long walls meet smaller windows;

That choose not to play with air

Not for the lack of choice

Neither in the haste to disperse

Before it's too late for the bells to ring,

And the lights to turn green.

Delusion

Sambrita Sarkar

UG Semester V

We've weathered our souls like river rocks,

But much more unreal than it actually was;

We have a shutter in our eyes and a filter in our fears,

A flicker in our speech and an illusion over dreams,

Sprinting each day to reach a sky possibly grey;

Weathered, aren't we?

A helpless boat in a stormy sea....

Oh dear! Wait wait!!!

Thriving 'cause we have to be!

There is no choice other than striving!!

Mournful gloom!!

Stride Ahead

Navyaa Baid

PG Semester III

Small steps lead to bigger destinations,

Go ahead, don't lose your imagination!

For what you seek will find you...

If you have the courage to explore Nothing can bind you

Let the waves rise and fall...

If you are dedicated enough,

You'll rise through the tide without it taking a toll!

So have your gut instinct guide you,

'Cause you are the best judge to say what's right for you!

Metro

Kaushiki Ganguly

PG Semester III

The air-conditioned worm crawls swift
In the bowels of the earth, bored beyond measure.
Dropping off creatures lost, adrift,
Confused between work and leisure.

The rods and handles have felt it all,
Caresses both wanted and unwanted.
From budding lovers clinging to avoid a fall
To office-goers facing the rush hour crowd, undaunted.

The windows have seen many tales
Of the sobbing spouse, of stolen hearts,
Of improper squeezes from perverted males.
Such futility, yet so many roles, so many parts.
The seats always figure out the truth,
Who has an interview to give,
Who has an OCD yet to be soothed
And who is holding in the urge to rage and heave.

The mechanical worm does it daily
Yet one thing strikes it always while snaking,

All these creatures live so vibrantly,
Faking, breaking, working, lovemaking

Yet their hearts cannot sing.

Humming mechanically, Metro softly sighs,
Before whooshing off to the next,
Trying to comfort the closetted boy's soft cries
While other creatures protest and look for context.

California Dreamin' and Citrus Thoughts

Drishti Shroff

PG Semester III



Like the sun is going to consume me whole and the night would whisper softly, to make meaning out of my existence.

There were two cans. He was in Vegas. No, I think it was Tokyo. I'd rather prefer Tokyo. It sounds sublime. It sounds full of possibilities. Vegas reminds me of broken characters in those teenage movies, half-written to portray decadence through alcohol overdose and substance

abuse. And here I am, abusing words out of my system that can somewhere give you, my readers, a glimpse of my mind.

There were two cans. Both were empty. Empty because I drank them. I like citrus drinks. They are not sweet and make you want to start writing gibberish online. Unless you make some sense out of it.

There were two cans. Useless, empty and they served me well. They served their purpose. No, I am not impressed yet. There is something missing. Something.

The sky is grey. I am listening to California Dreamin' for the 7th time now. Well, can't complain since I've put it on loop. There is something amiss. I'm not impressed yet.

I like my coffee with milk. No, just a little bit of it. There, I let it out to you, my readers. I like my drinks citrusy and coffee milky. The harmless series of confession here doesn't make any difference, does it? Something feels amiss.

The sky is grey. I am listening to California Dreamin' for the 9th time now. Yes, it apparently took me two whole loops of that song to reach this paragraph. Why, you're still reading this, you better not complain about my pace. I like my listeners to make room for my words. Let them bounce, twirl and dance around till it makes you feel something. Do you feel something?

I've caught you. Haven't I? Caught you reading between my lines, yeah?

It is half past twelve. The curtains are shut. Nights caress you, it's almost bewitching to hear those soft words. Like the night breeze has a strange intoxication, it reminds you of all that is amiss. All your dreams. All that you have lost. All that you gained. All that longing for longing something. Something?

There were two cans. The sky is grey. And you are in Tokyo. And all I've done here is ramble about a series of useless things that make less sense every time you read it. Or more amusing, maybe?

Something feels amiss. There were two empty cans, both a little crushed now. I've been listening to California Dreamin' for the thirteenth time now.

The song sounds full of possibilities. Like the sun is going to consume me whole and the night would whisper softly to make meaning out of my existence.

Seasick

Sk. Alham Zain

UG Semester V

The Ocean is a majestic place. That's what I thought before boarding my Captain's ship in the year of our Lord 1378. My father had sailed with Captain Vex for years and had grown quite attached to his master. He was thrilled that his son would join this great seafarer. After all, the great Captain Vex was widely known for his adventures; he claims to have owned a massive fleet once, which was "all lost" in the battle against Neptune. He swears that he had defeated the god of the sea and now, the waters are safe for travel and exploration.

I was very excited to be a part of Captain Vex's crew. I got in, thanks to the sweet corrupt system called nepotism. My father, Jonah, was a favourite of Captain Vex's, which is a huge deal. According to my father, he had saved the Captain's life many a time, and naturally, this had put him above the rest of the crew. Captain Vex was a noble man; he wasn't an ordinary pirate—he was an honourable commander and crowd-pleaser. He always had his chest high and carried a cane. A duelling cane. He was a skilled warrior, or at least that's what everybody thought...

"Finn, my boy!", exclaimed Jonah, a tall black man, in an accent that was rare on the shores of Europe. "This is the proudest moment of my life! My son, my own flesh and blood, joining his old man to serve the greatest Pirate ever to sail these waters!"

"Yes, Papa, I am grateful," I said, bending down, "Where is Captain Vex?"

"There he is my boy," he said pointing a finger towards the deck, "There he stands tall, watching over us."

I walked toward him and bowed to pay my respect. “Sire, Finn is my name. Son of Jonah.”

“Oh, welcome aboard the *Francesca*, lad. I hope you offer the same worth your father did all these years,” said Captain Vex. Now he roared, raising his voice, “Come on now! Help those men unload the cargo, get some rest, and we shall set sail first thing at dawn.”

I followed his instructions. My eyes opened a few minutes before dawn. I hadn’t expected to have slept this well; I had expected that due to the excitement of my first adventure, I wouldn’t be able to get sound sleep. But I was wrong. I had slept like a log. It was the last time I would get proper sleep. Chaos followed: I walked around the *Francesca*, examining the beauty of the enchanting vessel, imagining the reckless and riveting experiences the ship had been part of. My thoughts were interrupted by a strange noise that swelled from the Captain’s Chamber. I looked around me to find no one and proceeded to investigate the source of this absurd noise. I climbed the ship and approached the sound. The beautifully crafted wooden doors of Captain Vex’s cabin were the only thing that stood between me and the noise. I placed the palm of my hand on the door and just when I was about to push it open, a hand pressed on my mouth. The disembodied hand pulled back, suppressing my mouth from making a sound, and we fell back. Just when my heart was pounding out of my chest and my head filling up with dread, the person whispered, “Calm down son... calm down. It’s me, your father...it's Jonah...”

My muscles relaxed, and my fist loosened as his words brought me relief.

“Son, you have to trust me, we need to get out of here, I will explain everythi—”

Suddenly, the cabin door opened and out came a fully uniformed Captain Vex with a smirk on his face, which vanished as soon as he saw us lying down outside his door.

“Jonah... did he see...?”

“He saw nothing, Sire,” Jonah answered.

“Get him away from my face!”

My father pulled me away as we scrambled to our feet, “Come Finn, busy day today.”

“Another thing!” shouted Captain Vex, “Tell him to stay at home!”

He flung his cape and was on his way to the ship wheel.

“What?” I looked at my father, “How can he... I didn’t do anything!”

“I am sorry son, this is it - you cannot sail with us.”

“Papa, this has been my dream - all I have ever hoped for!”

“I am sorry, my child,” he said with receding steps.

But I was not to be discouraged. Here I am now, hiding among the barrels of rum and fruit. I am not giving up on my dreams so easily. All I want is a chance to redeem myself in the eyes of Captain Vex. My chance came when a storm struck and the *Francesca* was in potential danger of sinking. I revealed myself to the crew by providing a helping hand. It was useless. I had no experience and due to my lack of knowledge, I pulled some ropes which almost got the ship wrecked onto a small island.

My father saw me from a distance and fell to his knees, bursting out into tears and crying uncontrollably. Deacon, another crew member who knew who I was, briefed the crew about the situation and consoled my father.

“Don’t worry, Jonah,” said Deacon, sliding his hand around Jonah’s back, “We will save him.”

Captain Vex was still steering the ship out of the storm, and once it was safe, he sallied forth. With the duelling cane firmly in his hand, he charged toward me.

“Sire! Sire! He saved us!” Screamed Deacon, “We would have all drowned if it wasn’t for him!”

Captain Vex’s steps halted right before he reached me. “Is that so?”

“Yes, Sire!”

“Are you absolutely certain?”

“Yes, I swear on my mother.”

“Deacon...swear on me.”

Deacon blinked slowly before uttering, “I swear... on you... Sire.”

“Good,” said Vex before turning and leaving for his cabin.

Spending time in the vessel had made me seasick and all the glorious stories I was told as a child seemed to be nonsensical. This was no tale of a brave and strong pirate. It was one of those cautionary tales that proclaim “All that glitters is not gold”. The more time passed, the more Captain Vex appeared cruel. He lost his temper during minor inconveniences and even threatened to kill his crew members. I did not foresee this.

Time passed.

“Bring him!”

I was woken up by the screaming and chaos. I opened my eyes to find out I had passed out on the deck for lack of sleep. I saw my father drag a crewmate, holding his hair and throwing him to the ground.

“Walk the plank!” shouted Captain Vex.

“I didn’t see anything, my lord! Forgive me! Let me go!” begged the condemned man.

“I SAID, WALK THE DAMN PLANK!”

I then saw my father pull the crewmate’s hair and push him towards the plank.

“Do it!”

The broken man crawled his way to the brink of the plank. He turned, on his knees. “My lord, please ...”

Captain Vex pulled out a firearm from his right holster and shot the man in his head. The body recoiled, fell, and splashed into the vast ocean.

“Stay away from my cabin,” he said softly but loud enough for me to hear. “Do you peasants hear me?! STAY. AWAY. FROM. MY. CABIN!”

“Yes, Captain!” all of the crew chanted together.

My curiosity grew, but it wasn’t enough to risk my life to investigate. I was patient. I was least interested in what lay beyond the Captain’s cabin door.

The cabin doors...were beautifully crafted. The woodwork on the door was fascinating. From the top, a sea horse ejects water from his mouth, spraying it onto a pod of dancing dolphins. It looked like the seahorse was flying above the ocean, showering on the dolphins. Beneath the

dolphins, bubbles rise from a school of fish swimming away from an angler fish. Is it chasing them? Maybe... and below all of that, a pair of eyes were peeking through a trident.

“Finn,” said Deacon, “What do you think you are doing?”

I look behind me to see Deacon wrapped in a blanket.

“What? Are you alright, Master Dee?”

“Don’t worry about me child, remove your hand from there...”

“My hand...?” I snap out, my eyes open to the fullest and I spot my hand clutching the handle of the Captain’s Cabin door. I let go of it and back off. “Master Deacon, I swear, I didn’t know.”

Deacon coughed violently before falling to his knees. He muttered gruffly, “There is a storm brewing. We better be vigilant.”

He was correct. An hour later, the winds started to run wild and the waves became treacherous. The Captain held the wheel and the crew struggled to keep the ship from sinking. I was young and almost always seasick; my body still hadn’t adapted to the sailor’s life. I often did what I was asked to do but they didn’t trust me. They gave me minor tasks or even mock tasks, like pulling a rope that affected nothing. I wasn’t complaining though. This storm was brutal. It rag-dolled my skinny body and tossed me all over the vessel until it hurled me right at Captain Vex’s cabin door.

“I am not going in... I am... not...” I screamed, as my eyes scanned the door and fixed it on the door handle. “Just... a peek maybe...”

I brushed my hands past the wooden carpentry and onto the handle. I pushed open the door, poking my head inside. It was dark, but in the distance, I saw a blue crystalline glow. I slid

inside, and advanced towards the source of the bizarre light. I rubbed my eyes to see clearly, and reaching the glowing entity, I found a glass container, and in it, water. A shark, the size of a couple of rum barrels was floating on the surface. I touched the lifeless shark - it turned to reveal human limbs attached to its belly - near the fins. I recoiled and fell on my back. Instantly, all the lanterns in that room flared up with a mystical blue flame. On my right, there were multiple harpoons on the ceiling, arranged like a chandelier. From the ghastly object hung bodies of men, dolphins, and other fish. The dolphins were missing their trunks, the fishes their eyes, and the men - all of them were missing their limbs.

Stabbed with terror, my stomach turned and I puked, crawling away. I hit a wooden beam. I looked up to see a bunch of human feet. There must be hundreds of them. I picked myself up to look around more, and found barrels full of fish swimming in what looked like water mixed with a whole lot of blood. My legs refused to coordinate with me; helped by the turbulence of the ship, they flung me at another barrel. This was a smaller one, and it was an infant surrounded by fish eggs. "Is it alive?" Only the face of the child was visible; the rest of the body was submerged in the fish eggs. I tried to pick the baby up but failed. I couldn't hold onto it. I tried again and failed. I touched the baby's face with my fingertips - I held it, and pulled it out. It was just a head. The head of a newborn child. Darkness crept around my vision, and my head sank. I dropped the baby's head and accidentally stepped on it, crushing the skull. I slipped and fell, my vision fading out. I saw a shadow approach me. Just by the shadow, I could tell, it was Captain Vex in his shiny blue outfit, accompanied by his duelling cane. I was passing out and in my final moments, I glimpsed the captain grow in size, his cane expanding as well. A translucent glow enfolded the cane, the top split into three and formed a trident.

"Neptune..." I whispered under my breath before feeling the trident impale my gut.



Sapienza

29th Edition

Section II: Research Papers

Murder on the Orient Express: A Psychological Insight into the Detective's Mind

Bhavna Jagnani

UG Semester V

A detective is supposed to possess a “balanced” mind acquiring which the person would be able to provide justice. They have the ability to find a clue even from a tiny crack, distinguish between right and wrong, and look right through a person’s heart and mind, and “see the world as it should be” (Branagh, 2017); they are alert, and “no detail escapes his notice” (Branagh, 2017); they look at a case from all angles and try to find out why a clue is left behind. In a detective fiction, the detective is supposed to be better than the police in providing justice – Monsieur Bouc, in the movie *Murder on the Orient Express* (2017), tells Poirot, “You are the only one who can bring justice”. Hercule Poirot is one such detective, who loves to read novels written by Charles Dickens, and who believes that “the man is rational and civilized” (Branagh, 2017) and whose existence depends upon the hope of “order and method and the little grey cells” (Branagh, 2017). According to him, “there is right. There is wrong. There is nothing in-between” and the “imperfection stands out like the nose in the middle of a face” (Branagh, 2017).

The movie starts with Poirot announcing the culprit of a case –a priceless relic from the Church of the Holy Sepulchre was stolen; accused were the rabbi, the priest, and the imam, who had a meeting in the Church before the incident took place –in front of the public. He revealed the culprit, the Chief Inspector of Police, who was present during the meeting, from a crack on the wall created by an indelicate climb with a hard-soled shoe or a boot –this showcases his alertness and his ability to notice everything so as to find the criminal from a mere crack. Before he does so, to make the audience not question his capability, his “balanced”

state of mind is shown through his actions –while having his breakfast, he checks the size of the eggs to see if they are “perfect” –this can be criticised due to two reasons: (1) the size of the eggs is neither fixed nor can ever be determined beforehand, and (2) the term ‘perfect’ is subjective, but also on the other hand, it shows that Poirot is a perfectionist and can’t bear even a slightest error; while on his way to pass the judgement, he accidentally steps on cow dung, steps back and puts his other foot on it to balance both, suggesting that he wanted everything to be balanced equally.

When a murder occurs in the Orient Express, Poirot is asked to handle the case. After establishing the alibis and evidence, he is left in a dilemma which is expressed through dramatic monologue. Though dramatic monologue is usually present in lyric poems, in the modern times, it also occurs in theatres and prose. Its important features include the presence of speaker (Poirot) and listener (his love, Katherine, though she’s not present physically), and involvement of a psychological situation of the protagonist (Poirot being unable to place the clues). He talks to her photograph, which he carries along with him, when he’s alone in the compartment –this establishes the fact that he has the ability to love someone truly, which in turn implies that he possesses a heart. At one such instance, he says: “This is an abominable crime. And I am stuck, my Katherine. I cannot find the crack in the wall...I do not know” (Branagh, 2017). This depicts the fact that in some cases, the detective goes through a hard time figuring the solution to the crime puzzle. Though he had established the alibis and figured out the true faces beneath their lies, he couldn’t connect the dots to find one killer.

Eventually, based on the facts and clues, he emerges with two solutions –the first, fitting with most, was a person getting up on the train at Vinkovci as McQueen and Arbuthnot are out on the station, he stabs Ratchett as he’s equipped with a uniform and passkey, and makes his escape through Mrs. Hubbard’s compartment; and the second, which is more complex, was the

involvement of everyone present on the train, led by Mrs. Hubbard (who's actually Sonia Armstrong). His mind is left dismantled as he cannot distinguish whether the act was right or wrong –he comments, “There is right. There is wrong. Then there is you.”; “I cannot judge this.” (Branagh, 2017) He decides to go with his first solution –probably the first time that he went against his mind and chose what heart thought. This is significant –the suffering and pain of all those involved must have been to such an extent so as to make a man, who always believed the scale of right and wrong is balanced, make such a decision. Somewhere, he himself felt that the love everyone had for Daisy Armstrong drove them to take revenge.

The movie also points out the flaw in the legal system. While offering Poirot the case, Bouc commented: “If we leave this to the police, they will choose a culprit, right or wrong, and they will hang him...[probably] Dr. Arbuthnot for the colour of his skin” (Branagh, 2017) – this statement reflects on the biasness and racism being penetrated through the walls of the legal system as well. The movie ends with his reply to Colonel Armstrong’s letter, in the form of a soliloquy, where he says that the truth has left him disturbed, he has now seen “the fracture of the human soul” (Branagh, 2017). He decides to go with the first solution because “the scales of justice cannot always be evenly weighed” (Branagh, 2017).

A smart man, who always tried to lead with his mind and establish a balanced front to maintain his professional image, is left dismantled, mentally, when he hits a snag in the road. This speaks of the inherent, but in most cases, articulately suppressed fragility of the human mind. This point is established through Poirot’s drastic change of measures in problem analysing and solving as seen in the film.

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Disquisition on Twenty-first Century Criminology: A Silent Patient

Ujjwal Karamchandani

UG Semester III

Crime fiction, detective story, murder mystery, mystery novel, and police novel are spoken or written accounts which are interlinked with criminal acts and especially with the investigation by a professional or an amateur detective dealing with murder. Suspense and mystery are the highlight aspects of this genre.

Crime is generally 19th, 20th and 21st-century genre, dominated by British and American writers. In the book, *The Silent Patient*, the role of an antagonist is played by Alicia Berenson and almost every other character in the novel is in some way or the other connected with her. Alicia's most important and complicated bond is with her therapist Theo Faber, who shows an almost compulsive desire to understand Alicia's inner secrets and motivations. *The Silent Patient* is Alex Michaelides's first novel, who was born in 1977 to a Greek father and English mother. He studied English Literature at Cambridge University and pursued MA in screenwriting from the American Film Institute in Los Angeles.

In the world of literature, a "Nemesis" is an opponent or enemy who is created by the actions of a hero (or another villain) within a story or a legend. The name is derived from the Greek goddess of vengeance who would punish people who committed hubris.

Similarly, when one fine day Theo returns to The Grove, he decides to meet Alicia and confront her the very next day since she was dishonest during the process of investigation; but, when he arrives he comes to know that Alicia is in a coma and is overdosed. Theo believes that someone has deliberately given her a lethal dose of morphine and informs Lazarus. As soon as

Lazarus comes to know about this, he calls the police and instructs Theo to find Alicia's diary for evidence. The police suspect Christian (Theo has in the meantime revealed Christian's past secret treatment of Alicia). In fact, the morphine was administered by Theo. The statement suggests up until this point that the subplot of Kathy's infidelity is taking place in the present-day, in the background of the primary plot—Theo's investigation into Alicia's silence proves that in some way or the other she is guilty. However, the narrative reveals that the subplot of Kathy's affair took place six years earlier—and that the man Kathy was having an affair with was Gabriel. Theo used to stalk Alicia for weeks before when the murder took place. He planned to kill Gabriel and so he followed him to his house. That is where he spotted Alicia and after that destiny and fate comes to play an important role in everyone's life. The truth was revealed through the final diary entry of Alicia which was written before the morphine took effect. Alicia suspected as soon as he arrived at The Grove that Theo was her stalker. Alicia confirms her doubt by Theo's reaction to her false account of the night of the murder. She permitted Theo to give her a lethal overdose because she still feels guilty for Gabriel's death. On the night of the murder, Theo tied up both Alicia and Gabriel. He then offered Gabriel a choice to either die himself or let Alicia die. When Gabriel chose his life over his wife's, Theo fired a shot in the air and left. Unbeknownst to him, Theo had reawakened the trauma of Alicia's feeling that her father wished she had died in place of her mother. Mentally broken, she shot her husband. Because of her depression she became the antagonist of the novel. Her weakness turned her into a villain. Theo is unable to find Alicia's diary and is unaware that this final entry exists, but he congratulates himself on having done the right thing by trying to help Alicia, whom he had not meant to end up insane and incarcerated. He receives a job offer as the director of another institution. Kathy is depressed at the death of her lover, but neither she nor Theo has admitted to the affair. The novel ends as the police arrive, armed with Alicia's diary. Theo accepts that the time has come to pay the price for his actions. Ultimately, it is

Alicia's diary that reveals the truth and will bring Theo to justice. Alicia's strength is especially evident in her relationship with Theo—after recognizing Theo from her life before the murder, Alicia is able to hold him off and condemn him for his crimes, all from behind the walls of a psychiatric ward.

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Sherlock Holmes: 'The Brain' with Concealed Emotions

Rishav Nayak

UG Semester III

The iconic character of Sherlock Holmes has always come across as a person who is mostly emotionally detached, hence has never been in love or wanted to have a family. But he may not be devoid of emotion altogether. Apart from his profession, there is little he cares about and when dealing with crime, Holmes relies only upon logic and reason. He himself admits at one point of time to Dr. Watson, that he is a 'brain', this is made evident by the absence of sentiment in his character. Despite this, there are some cases which compel Sherlock to think from a humane perspective, in such circumstances the detective is either unable to arrive at the right solution or merely becomes a bystander who is observing conflicts within a family. It is unique to observe that the detective's presence becomes irrelevant when the mystery is solved. But, in cases which largely involve a family, we see the detective in an awkward position post the climax.

In *The Adventure of the Sussex Vampire* (1924), Sherlock is visited by Mr. Ferguson who believes that his wife is a vampire sucking the blood of her baby. Holmes, being a practical man, is completely dismissive of this and strongly asserts that there is a much more logical explanation to the incident. It is actually the elder half-brother who has been trying to kill the baby with poison, the mother was sucking the blood as a mode of rescue not murder. Though the culprit here is a fifteen-year-old, disabled boy who commits a horrendous crime out of jealousy and excessive affection for his father, he does deserve punishment. But peculiarly, we see Sherlock breaking character here, he decides that the family conflict is too intimate and the motive of crime and the culprit too bizarre for the normal course of law to intervene. He refrains

from apprehending the culprit and rather awkwardly leaves the place in a hurried manner with Watson. Here, the detective has completely ignored his instincts and gone against his own beliefs and moral code. The man, who is known to be cold, calculative and absolutely ruthless when dealing with criminals, is bending the law. He somehow believes that punishment as determined by the law will not reform the culprit, even though the crime is infanticide. This incident shows us a hidden aspect in the detective's nature, that of sympathy. Here, the brain has been governed by the heart. The detective is assessing the situation emotionally.

In *The Adventure of the Yellow Face* (1893), again the detective is thrown in an awkward situation by the outcome of the events, furthermore his theories and assumptions are completely wrong. This is a unique case where he accepts that there are limits to his abilities and he is capable of arriving at conclusions hastily. Mr. Grant Munro is suspicious of his wife's relations with their new neighbour, a person with a mysterious yellow face, which he confides in Sherlock, who believes that the apparently dead ex-husband of Mrs. Munro has returned under a disguise and is blackmailing her. This reasonable explanation is useless when they encounter the yellow faced person, a little girl. Mrs. Munro explains that she was previously married to John Hebron who died of yellow fever in America but their daughter had survived and was secretly taken care of by her. Holmes is humbled by this turn of events and understanding that his presence is no longer needed, returns and states,

“Watson, if it should ever strike you that I am getting a little overconfident in my powers, or giving less pains to a case than it deserves, kindly whisper ‘Norbury’ in my ear, and I shall be infinitely obliged to you.”

We may say that Holmes has probably been deliberately suppressing the ‘family man’ inside him all this while, which becomes evident here. It may be said that his apathetic nature is just a mask which melts away in that heart-warming moment. In another account, *The Man with the Twisted Lip* (1891), we see Holmes upholding social values of the Victorian Period

and setting up a benchmark for gentlemanly etiquette. Neville St. Clair, a former journalist, starts begging under the guise of Hugh Boone because it pays more than his job. When his wife hires Sherlock to find her missing husband, he thinks that St. Clair has been murdered but later admits that he has failed to observe the circumstances correctly and discovers that St. Clair and Boone are one and the same. He makes St. Clair give up his identity as a beggar as he believes that such an act is disgraceful for a family man. Holmes, who has no family, is concerned about St. Clair's family. This shows that he is indeed capable of compassion, but prefers not to expose it. This might be his way of projecting an intimidating image of himself.

In *The Adventure of the Noble Bachelor* (1892), an aristocrat, Lord St. Simon reports that his wife, Hatty has been missing since the wedding ceremony. Holmes solves the case even before Lord Simon has left and then leaves to make arrangements for the revelation. Later at supper, Holmes and Watson are joined by Lord Simon, Hatty and her real husband, Francis H. Moulton. Hatty explains that she was already married but thought that her husband was dead due to an accident but on her wedding day he had come back and so she promptly ran away with him. Lord Simon is naturally aghast at the turn of events, but Sherlock is rather amused and tells him to accept the couple and join them for supper, which obviously does not happen. It is interesting that the detective is not upset that it was not a case of criminal occurrence or foul play but just a complex love triangle he stumbled upon. He plays the role of a mediator between lovers and consoles the jilted one. The fact that he can fully comprehend the nuances of love, makes one wonder if Holmes ever had some passions of his own, which he eventually repressed to focus his mind on a singular wavelength. Watson, Sherlock's only friend & narrator of his adventures, regards him as, "The most perfect reasoning and observing machine that the world has ever seen." But Watson, like the average reader, does not share Sherlock's abilities. He admires him and so tries to present him as a perfect mind, but even he fails to understand Sherlock completely. Doyle may have given the detective a mechanical and

stoic character to make him fascinating, yet there are indications of strong emotions behind his wooden façade.

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The 'Satyanweshi Bangali Bhadrolok': Byomkesh as a Holmesian Contradiction

Anwasha Saha

UG Semester V

Arthur Conan Doyle created Sherlock Holmes when the British Empire dominated almost the entire world. However, the socio-political circumstances within the empire posed a threat to its cultural hegemony. Sherlock Holmes, is thus, not simply an extraordinary mind sleuth but a consciously curated image of an ideal "hero". Umberto Eco, in "The Myth of Superman" (1972) writes, "In such a society the positive hero must embody to an unthinkable degree the power demands that the average citizen nurtures but cannot satisfy." (929). Doyle also actively separates his hero from the other "average" citizens. Anindita Dey articulately claims, "...with a great understanding of science and medicine... Holmes stood out from others for his eccentric manners, exceptional deductive powers, and his ethical judgement in crime solving. Thus, Holmes is carried to new heights of hero-worship." (52). His knowledge dominates that of others and single-handedly he is not only able to be a protector of Victorian society but also a symbol of British superiority and morality.

While Sherlock emerged from the need for a white imperialist hero, Sharadindu Bandyopadhyay's Byomkesh Bakshi emerged at a time when Doyle's detective was making significant contributions to Britain's hegemony of racial supremacy. With the white imperialist hero possessing a global acclaim, there rose a simultaneous nationalistic need for an anti-colonial figure. In *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961), Frantz Fanon stressed upon the role played by colonised intellectuals and national culture in a colony seeking independence. He writes, "The claim to a national culture in the past does not only rehabilitate that nation but serve as a justification for the hope of a future national culture." (210).

The Bengali “Bhadralok” (gentleman) has been, in the post-colonial context, observed as part of the upper- and middle-class intelligentsia that appropriated British ideas of “modernity” within the confinements of native “traditional” values. Owing to Macaulay’s *Minute on Education*, British Literature and culture spread its roots in colonised India. This collision between existing traditions and colonisation advanced gradually to popular culture, fashion, cuisines and eventually every aspect of the mundane. The earliest Bengali detectives (Kiriti Roy, for example) thus resembled the Western detectives, especially Sherlock, who was observed as the ideal prototype. However, national culture required a character typically Indian, who is not only rooted in his contemporary socio-political intelligentsia but also has ties with his culture and history.

Sharadindu Bandyopadhyay remoulds the conventional Anglo-centric narrative by creating an intelligent young man dressed in indigenous clothing, speaking his mother tongue, and existing within the domestic sphere of an average middle class Bengali household. According to Sayandeb Chowdhury, “Bandyopadhyay had his fingers on typically Bengali waywardness, contemporary social history and mannerisms, cultural colloquialisms, and an appreciation of the full expanse of human manners and experience.” (130). This location in the Bengali mindscape allows Bandyopadhyay to subvert racial otherness and portray Byomkesh as a contrast. While Holmes the private detective by designation was created to be a figure of Imperialist authority, Byomkesh contemptuously rejects the same. In “Satyanweshi” (1932), Byomkesh establishes his identity as “Satyanweshi” or the “truthseeker”. This identity allows him to be on par with the average middle class Bengali, someone the readers could associate with, instead of being an extraordinary beyond the commonfolk. While Holmes reached conclusions and ‘solved mysteries’, being a seeker of truth allowed Bakshi to dedicate himself to the case which made him both utilize and question his own morals and judgement.

In all his novels surrounding the mind sleuth, Bandyopadhyay employs several such otherwise miniscule traits to highlight what sets apart Byomkesh and Sherlock. Sherlock, despite his loyal companion Watson, primarily operates alone owing to his almost “superhuman” deduction skills and “eccentric” tendencies. Furthermore, despite Irene Adler being widely acknowledged as Sherlock’s romantic interest, in “The Adventure of Lion’s Mane”, he himself says, “Women have seldom been an attraction for me, for my brain has always governed my heart.” On the contrary, Byomkesh ages as the novels progress, marries Satyabati by the tenth book, has a son, starts a publishing firm with his partner Ajit, and also buys a house in South Calcutta. Much like the average Bengali, Byomkesh is rooted in the traditional domestic sphere which further unites him with the readers.

Simultaneously, while the relationship between Holmes and Mrs. Hudson is strictly formal, Byomkesh is seen to care for his domestic help Putiram when he falls sick. In a land divided by a staunch caste system and untouchability, this miniscule feat serves as a critique of the same by an egalitarian and educated “hero”. As an anti-colonial symbol, Bakshi has been used to also subvert racial otherness as evident in “Satyanweshi”, and “Uposonghar” (1935). As the plot unfolds, one finds out that the murders taking place are an efficient cover up by Dr. Anukul Babu, who is associated with an opium trafficking racket operated from Germany and America. While Doyle’s work is pungent with colonial bias, as visible from characters like Dost Akbar and Mahomet Singh, Bandyopadhyay reverses the roles and thwarts the idea of crime being colour or race specific.

Byomkesh’s greatest similarity with Holmes lies in his method of deduction, especially forensic and psychological, when both of them attempt to trace the criminal’s footsteps. Regardless, within those similarities, Byomkesh’s approach tends to be riddled with allusions to culture, religion and mythology. In *Banhi-Patanga* (1956), for example, Byomkesh figures

out that Deepnarayan's killer is his wife, Shakuntala based on her painting of Shakuntala and Dushyanta where Dushyant's eyes resemble that of her illicit lover's. In other novels, he is also often seen to quote Tagore and even Sukumar Ray's *Abol Tabol*. He is also an avid reader of the Mahabharata as evident in *Khunji Khunji Nari* (1961). The allusions to indigenous literature play a significant role in de-escalating imperial influence in a land where the foreign replaced every mundane Indian habit. Further, in *Rakter Daag* (1956) the trials and tribulations faced by Satyakam regarding his identity closely represents that of Satyakam from the *Chhandogya Upanishad*. According to Pinaki Roy, "Bengali and the Bengali culture (represents) the nation, national language and national culture." (57)

"Bandyopadhyay's narratives secure a significant place in the Indian crime writing genre due to its deep connection with the Indian/Bengali soil. His writings may be read as an apparatus of imperial resistance in having used an alternative language and reiterating the Indian sociocultural context." (Dey 123). Byomkesh's individuality paves way for the national culture that Fanon stresses importance on. The mind sleuths that succeed him, tend to share more similarities with Holmes than Byomkesh but resemble the latter in matters of cultural and mythical deduction. Satyajit Ray's Feluda, Sunil Gangopadhyay's Kakababu, and even the popular present day detective Sona Da from Dhruvo Banerjee's *Guptodhon* franchise, all share an innate Indian/ Bengali-ness that was first introduced by Sharadindu Bandyopadhyay. His cultural identity and a rejection of racial otherness, despite shared similarities, is what makes Byomkesh a quintessential "Bangali Bhadraklok" and sets him apart as the primordial Holmesian contradiction.

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“Bangaliana” and the Detective in Bengali Detective Fiction

Shubham Dey

UG Semester V

Detective fiction in English literature has been stimulating readers’ analytical senses for years. Edgar Allan Poe’s “The Murders in the Rue Morgue” inaugurated detective fiction in English in 1841. It features the first fictional detective, C. Auguste Dupin. Indian literature embraced detective fiction in the late 19th and early 20th century. *Feluda* by Satyajit Ray, *Byomkesh Bakshi* by Sharadindu Bandyopadhyay and ‘Kakababu’ and ‘Gogol’ are popular among the Indian and Bengali audience. Bengal was a key location for the spread of the detective genre in an Indian context. But how did it spread there? Scholars have often wondered. This paper shall explore the evolution of detective fiction in the Indian context especially in Bengal. This paper focuses on the representation of Bengali culture in fiction. It also traces the history of the emergence of detective fiction in Bengal.

The distinctiveness of every culture is unique. Perry Mason's Los Angeles was very different from Sherlock Holmes’ London. There was little in common between rural England and New York. Significantly, though English detective fiction was not influenced by the sub-genre of any other European language, it influenced Bengali detective fiction considerably. The Indian litterateurs failed to avoid and isolate themselves from the influence of the language and different literary subgenres of the principal colonisers. The Bengali detective stories written between 1890 and 1950 mostly reflect this influence.

Ingenuous characteristic features of the English detective fiction have served as the model for writers in other languages. The concept of the arm-chair detective. A third person narrator who is the best friend of the detective but not the detective himself. Also, the sleuth's

employment of many physical and psychological stratagems in detecting criminals. In the late 1840s, regular police forces and detective departments in European countries including England, France and Germany were established. From this time onwards, the sub genre of detective fiction came to achieve popularity and readership. *William Russell's Recollections of a Police Officer* (1856), *Experiences of a French Detective* (1861), and *Experiences of a Real Detective* (1862), Ellen Price's *The Trail of the Serpent* (1861), and *East Lynne* (1864), were widely read. In colonised India, detective officials depicted in these short stories and novels were popular enough. They inspired *Darogar Daftor* (1892). It was the first Bengali detective fiction written by Priyanath Mukhopadhyay, an employee with the detective department of Calcutta Police.

Sharadindu Bandyopadhyay's creation of the Bengali middle-class detective, Byomkesh Bakshi, was profoundly influenced by Chesterton's detective fiction. The emergence and steady evolution of the subgenre of detective fiction in European and particularly English literature profoundly affected the literature of the English colonies. In pre-independence India, Bengali had evolved into a prestigious language with an extensive literary heritage. Detective fiction was more prominent in Bengali than in any other Indian language. Readership was mostly upper caste Hindus with some landed property and a claim to a liberal education, called 'bhadralok'.

Though Nagendranath Gupta wrote "Churi Na Bahaduri" ("Theft or an Act of Bravado?") in April 1886, the history of Bengali detective fiction formally began in April 1892, with the publication of "Banomali Daser Hatya" ("The Murder of Banomali Das"), the first story of the 206-tale-strong *Darogar Daftor* ("The Office of the Officer-in-Charge") series written by Priyanath Mukhopadhyay in Sangshad Bangla Sahityasangi. Sisir Das observes, "Priyanath Mukhopadhyay first started [the] trend [of detective fiction] in Bengali literature" (96).

Ranojit Chattopadhyay and Siddhartha Ghosh write, “Priyanath was just a story teller, not a litterateur per se. He simply chronicled his experiences in contemporary Bengali language.” (748). But his anti-colonised ideology received a wide readership “among the Bengalis, the Assamese, the Hindustanis, the Oriyas, the Maharastrians, the Sikhs and the Englishmen” (Mukhopadhyay 8). The 30 April 1893-issue of *Hope* commented, "Babu Priyanath Mukherjee is well-known to the public as a writer of popular detective fiction, and his latest volume, *Kulsam*, sustains his previous reputation" (Mukhopadhyay 6).

During the 1910s and 1930s, Ray popularised the fictional sleuth, paving the way for postcolonial responses. Chattopadhyay and Ghosh assert,

“For four decades between 1890 and 1930, the Indian detective story writers had endeavoured hard to satisfy the contemporary readers' palette. They had not only made acquaintance with the dreaded criminals possible for the otherwise reclusive Indian commoner, but also had thrown light on different societal problems. Above all, they demonstrated how, even after having multiple annihilations in the plot, Shakespeare's *Hamlet* and Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay's *Krishnakanter Will* ("The Will of *Krishnakanta*") differ from detective fiction.” (749)

Sharadindu Bandyopadhyay sought to eradicate the colonial roots of Indian detective fiction in the *Byomkesh Bakshi* stories, whose first narrative, "Pather Kanta", appeared in the June 1932 issue of *Bashumati*. In the introduction to *Byomkesher Diary*, he states,

“Readers have often questioned whether...[the *Byomkesh Bakshi*]...stories are not the duplicate copies of English detective fiction. For their kind information, all these are my original contributions...Many people nurse a snobbish attitude to the sub-genre of detective fiction as if it were an inferior form of literature. I think it is erroneously conceived. I do not feel ashamed to write what Edgar Allan Poe, Conan Doyle and G.K.Chesterton could” (*Byomkesh* 1005).

It is the conspicuous absence of colonisers in the Byomkesh Bakshi stories that distinguishes them from other contemporary Bengali detective narratives. It is noteworthy that, apart from a senior police officer in "Pather Kanta" and the English police commissioners referred to in absence by Bakshi in "Satyanweshi" and "Arthamanartham", no White European has featured or played a role in any of the seven other stories or in any of the twenty-three narratives written after 1947. Byomkesh Bakshi's stories began to portray love, romance, and human relationships in a more detailed way than their contemporaries.

In the 70s and 80s, Satyajit Ray contributed a great deal to Bengali crime fiction. An Indian (bachelor) gentleman of 21, Rajani Sen Street, Calcutta, Feluda, whose first adventure, "Feludar Goendagiri," was published in 1965. He takes part in daring outdoor adventures with his cousin and narrator, Tapesh, as well as Lalmohon Ganguly, better known as "Jatayu", who writes detective stories. Through the detective's hybridity and cultural ambiguity, Ray achieves his postcolonial response. Feluda's modes of detection are based on the science of deduction, popularised by Doyle in his Sherlock Holmes narratives. Unlike Byomkesh, he depends on empirical evidence, has a strong build and carries a Colt pistol. The detective who makes no qualms about imprinting Prodosh C. Mitter, Private investigator of on his visiting card. He exhibits a wide mobility in the thirty plus stories written on him, "Robertsoner Ruby," "Jato Kando Kathmandutey," "Bombaiyer Bombete" "Darjeeling Jomjomat" and "Sonar Kella" being the more famous among them.

Detective fiction is one of the most widely read subgenres in literature, more so in English, French, and Bengali. A century after Priyanath Mukhopadhyay crafted his retrospective narratives, Bengali detective fiction has rapidly evolved. Arthur Conan Doyle had overwhelmingly expressed his imperial ideology through Sherlock Holmes. Similarly, Sharadindu Bandyopadhyay has been most instrumental in imparting a postcolonial fact to Indian crime story writing.

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Hence, the Justice Prevailed: A Comparative Study of Christie's Book and Branagh's Film

Srishti Chanda and Sudipta Dey

UG Semester V

“We seek the truth from within, not without.” - Hercule Poirot

Suspense is strongly tied to mystery and thriller, making classification challenging. Writers frequently combine the three genres and label them as Mystery/Suspense or Suspense/Thriller. The novel *Murder on the Orient Express* by Agatha Christie places the reader in the same predicament. Henceforth, when Kenneth Branagh's 2017 film adaptation comes into play, the entire concept of the suspense genre changes. The 1930s *Orient Express* may have stopped its voyage, but Branagh's 2017 adaptation brought it back to life.

The novel depicts the famed detective Poirot as more introspective and reflective, spending most of his time conversing in a 'soliloquy' narrative style. Poirot's persona was heavily altered by Hollywood directors in all three film versions, with the 2017 remake especially remarkable for transforming the investigator into practically an action hero. While this adds excitement and pace to the picture, it is a significant divergence from the source material and inhibits audiences from completely comprehending Poirot as Agatha had intended.

Christie's description of Poirot in her book differs greatly from Kenneth Branagh's portrayal of him. She described him as a 5'4" man with an egg-shaped head that is frequently tipped to one side and green eyes that shine when he is excited. He dresses meticulously and takes great care of his appearance. In the film, however, Poirot is much taller than the Poirot

depicted in the novel. Neither his egg-shaped face nor his emerald eyes are seen. In the film, we observe an extremely attractive man with blue eyes. Poirot's look is influenced by his enormous moustache. Branagh's Poirot does not resemble Christie's Poirot. Kenneth Branagh's costume designer designed a luscious, big, grey beard for Hercule Poirot. It's a long cry from the precisely manicured and coloured moustache described in Christie's novels, but it's nonetheless stunning.

Christie has previously described Poirot as an unpleasant, pretentious, uninteresting and ego-centric little creep. The cinematic adaptation, however, portrays Poirot in a completely different light. Hollywood directors have done an excellent job of making the investigator into an action hero, most notably in the 2017 rendition. The film's director and protagonist, Kenneth Branagh, intended to imbue Poirot with some of the characteristics of the world's most famous investigator, Sherlock Holmes. In his films, Holmes is typically portrayed as an action hero. The portrayal of Hercule Poirot by Kenneth Branagh looks to be doing the same thing. In various films, we see Holmes use his fists as a sign of action. But that doesn't seem to match with the actual Poirot. There are several scenes in the film when Poirot is portrayed as an action hero. For example, there isn't much action at the beginning of the film, but Poirot swiftly and deftly uses his stick to stop the offender from fleeing. Second, we watch Poirot's pursuit of Macqueen as he was burning the evidence. The third fight is a bit fierce which is between Doctor Arbuthnot and Poirot, in which Poirot is shot in the limb.

Apart from the obvious discrepancies between the film and the real Poirot, there are a few that stand out. Doctor Arbuthnot from the film is a mash-up of two characters from the novel, Colonel Arbuthnot and Doctor Constantine.

Poirot discovers Ratchett's body in the film. Given the compartment he is in, this is plausible (he is not relocated as in the novel). He also bursts through the door, adding to the

suspense. However, in the novel, Mr. Bouc discovers the body, and in the film, Mr. Bouc begs Poirot to handle the problem quietly since he does not want to upset the passengers.

Poirot has a considerably more difficult time dealing with Ratchett's murder in the film than he does in the book. His moral principles force him to leave an empty revolver on the table when he calls out to Mrs. Hubbard. She then attempts to shoot herself with the pistol, only to discover that it is empty. Poirot then allows everyone to depart. In the film, Poirot takes the final decision, but in the novel, Mr. Bouc does.

When a great or financially successful book is written, the chances of it being turned into a film are rather high. But what goes into making a decent cinematic adaptation? What, more importantly, does it take to ensure that the film outperforms the book from which it is adapted? People are quicker and busier than ever in the twenty-first century. It takes a long time to read novels and books. As a result, most of us have come to rely on films and television programmes. We've all heard the phrase "the book is better than the movie." Yes, that is, but every scene has an exception. Though film and literature are two distinct genres that should not be compared, we sometimes know which form of art captures the spirit of a narrative better—the book or the movie. In this scenario, we believe that the film lived up to our expectations. The film's time constraint, cinematography, star cast, the potential of Poirot as an action hero rather than a detective, and new sequences make it relevant in today's world. For example, the story begins in Jerusalem, where Poirot is investigating a crime. This scene is not in the novel, but it gives the idea that he is a world-renowned investigator. Poirot also chases a suspect across a snowy trestle and defends himself against a gun-wielding assailant and both these scenes come across as compromises to Hollywood action-movie cliches rather than genuine additions to the investigation. In other aspects, this adaptation stays close to the narrative arc, hitting all the important beats of the mystery, but changing some character names

and adding some splashy action scenes that don't always feel authentic to Christie's intellectual mystery. We can also tell that much of the video has been cut to keep it under two hours long. Furthermore, much has been omitted to allow place for outstanding cinematography. This was undoubtedly done for dramatic effect - simply another touch of Hollywood magic - but does Agatha Christie's story truly necessitate such a feat?

While looking for an answer to this issue, we realised that it was never the real question; the real underlying question was "if the film honoured the text or not?" And the answer is that no matter how many spices you add to it, the originality will never be lost. Overall, *Murder on the Orient Express* is a worthwhile piece of entertainment. Fans of the novel may find it to be a polished, faithful recreation of a classic, while beginners will undoubtedly be pleased and may even be motivated to read more of Christie's work. It's a triumph as a Branagh acting showcase, a beautifully crafted picture, and a sentimental remembrance of more graceful times. The critical reactions and reviews suggested that the picture met expectations. Hence, the justice prevailed!

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**“What would be worse? To live as a monster or die as a good man?”: The Island that
Silenced the Lambs**

Puranjani Bera and Tiyaash Mukherjee

UG Semester V

“A novel or short story in which a crime, usually a murder – the identity of the perpetrator unknown – is solved by a detective through a logical assembling and interpretation of palpable evidence, known as clues.”

-C. Hugh Holman

Detective fiction emerged as one of the most popular literary genres of the twentieth and twenty-first century, and the two very striking books that were later adapted into Oscar winning movies were *The Silence of the Lambs* and *Shutter Island*. These exemplary films showcased the physical and psychological trauma, horror and mystery of the detective genre and how it affects the human psyche.

There are very few films that flirt with perfection and *The Silence of the Lambs* is one of them. It has been nearly thirty years since filmmaker Jonathan Demme made the film based on Thomas Harris’ terrifying follow-up novel to *Red Dragon*. The story follows Clarice Starling, a top student of the FBI academy who is sent to interview Dr. Hannibal Lecter, a psychopathic psychiatrist convicted for numerous murders and cannibalism. Jack Crawford, her boss thinks that Lecter may have insight into Buffalo Bill, a serial killer on the loose, murdering and skinning young women and that Starling, as an attractive young woman, may be just the bait to draw him out.

The detective who is sent to psychoanalyse, ends up being psychoanalysed herself. When Clarice is interrogating Hannibal, he only agrees to share his insight if she reveals to him her past which Crawford warns her not to disclose. Nonetheless, she gives in and relates to him her life story. Clarice, born in West Virginia, was raised by her father, a night marshal. After his unfortunate death in the line of duty, her mother worked day and night to support the then ten-year-old Clarice. A particular memory that haunted her with recurrent dreams, even as an adult, was when she witnessed a herd of lambs being butchered. Clarice lost everything when her parents died at an early age and therefore, she housed a tremendous desire to save and bring people together after failing to save the wailing lambs.

Dr. Hannibal Lecter, in his interactions with Clarice, is also a specimen to study, as he portrays several traits and behavioural patterns that show he is suffering from antisocial personality disorder. The mental condition is characterised by a “defined disregard” for what is considered good or bad. The people diagnosed with it exhibit no regret or guilt for what they did. Hence, some of the best scenes in the film are the intellectual conflict between Clarice and Hannibal Lecter.

There are a number of things this movie delivers which make it an instant horror classic. However, it is more in an instinctive manner that it is explored, than the gore and violence of it all. Despite the film's few instances of graphic horror, Demme made the sensible decision to keep the on-screen violence to a minimum. The only thing left is what one’s imagination can conjure up to fill the void.

The Silence of the Lambs movie poster is one of the most iconic and highly recognized posters in the world. It features the white-washed face of the heroine against the dark background. Her red eyes represent blood, death or danger, whereas the moth on her mouth as a symbol of change suggests Clarice’s journey from a tormented and inexperienced FBI agent

to a seasoned one who counters her target resulting in her inner turmoil to be silenced forever. Additionally, the cryptic poster creates an electrifying visual response and the haunting music, a sonorous one that is appropriate for this psychological and twisted thriller.

The title demands a similar reaction as it can be read in several ways. Firstly, lambs are symbols of innocence and sacrifice and this makes one wonder whether Crawford was aware that by sending Clarice to Hannibal's prison cell, it was almost as if he had pushed a lamb into the lion's den. The second possibility could suggest the screaming lambs haunting Clarice's dreams that were silenced forever after she had finally countered Buffalo Bill and saved further innocents from being slaughtered. This psychological aspect is further explored in the 2010 detective thriller, *Shutter Island*, directed by Martin Scorsese, based on the 2003 novel by Dennis Lehane.

Andrew Laeddis, was a US Marshal who served in World War II. He developed a psychological condition after the war at Dachau and his condition was further insinuated when his mentally unstable wife burns down the house and later drowns their children, causing him to lose his mind and strangle her to death. This led to his institutionalisation into Ashcliffe Hospital in Shutter Island.

As the movie begins, one is introduced to a seasick US Marshal, Edward 'Teddy' Daniels, on his way to Shutter Island to investigate the disappearance of Rachel Solando, one of the hospital's patients. Rachel was taken into the facility as she was a war widow who killed her children. Teddy's ulterior motive was to catch his wife's killer, who he believed was admitted in ward C of the hospital.

Throughout the movie, Teddy experiences several life-like montages of fallen soldiers at war, which kept on haunting him as he had failed to save several lives at Dachau due to his own shortcomings. Furthermore, he had experienced the casualties of the Holocaust and this

caused him survivor-guilt leading to his aggravated trauma that changed him completely. He also repeatedly sees his dead wife drenched in water and sometimes even on fire. The fire comes into play because according to him, she died in a fire at their apartment. But the image of his wife, wet, lingers in his mind. Therefore, fire and water emerge as the dominant trigger to his psyche as shown in many instances like, his inability to light a cigarette and his mind creating a storm while it was just pouring. The wife has been perceived as a ghost throughout the movie and it delineates one into thinking the film to have supernatural elements, but as it progresses, one comes to realise that it is just the protagonist's mind playing tricks due to his past trauma.

One does not really comprehend the severity of the trauma until the very end of the film, where one realises that Andrew Laeddis is the real Teddy, and the character of Teddy was created in his mind to shake off the responsibility of murdering his own wife. Therefore, Teddy's imagination about the war, his wife, and the discomfort around fire and water connect Teddy to his real self, Andrew Laeddis.

Due to Andrew's degrading sense of reality, Dr. Cawley employs a cutting-edge role-play to bring Andrew back by letting him live out his fantasy as Teddy. In this role-play Dr. Sheehan plays the role of his partner, Chuck. We also find out that the Rachel he is in search for, does not exist and is the anagram of his wife, Dolores Chanal.

At the end of the experiment, Dr. Sheehan approaches Andrew to evaluate the role-play's effectiveness and is addressed as Chuck. Dr. Sheehan glances at Dr. Cawley and shakes his head disapprovingly. This suggests that Andrew has regressed once more. The staff members come over to remove Andrew for the lobotomy. To Dr. Sheehan's surprise, Andrew says, "You know, this place makes me wonder... Which would be worse? To live as a monster or to die as a good man?"

It is possible that Andrew has not regressed but is merely pretending. His guilt is keeping him from moving forward, as Andrew considers himself to be the monstrous man who killed his family and Teddy, the decent man.

The island itself, as well as its surroundings, including the lighthouse, caves, secret tunnels, heavily secured jails, cemeteries, and ferry, all play a significant role in the setting of *Shutter Island*. Islands expose people in stories to greater levels of physical or emotional isolation than other settings. The “shutter” represents the truth-evading human. Additionally, the word “island” is personified as a region that is cut off from the rest of the globe.

The notion of horror is totally altered when psychology is incorporated into a story. When a person goes through physical/psychological trauma, their effects become unpredictable as we do not fully understand the mind or how it functions. Our two protagonists, Detective Clarice Starling and US Marshal Edward ‘Teddy’ Daniels experience traumatic events and react in opposing ways. While the former tries to bring people together and triumphs over her past wounds, the latter engages in murder and is unable to come out of its grip. For this reason, the concepts of psychology, mystery and horror can coexist and merge.

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The Modern Detective Fiction: Changing Aspects Through Classical Rhetorics

Aman Jigar Desai and Musharaf Parvez

UG Semester III

The definition of detective fiction as a genre has been a source of contention among academics. This debate arises from the genre's close relationship with other genres such as crime fiction and suspense. This makes determining the genre's boundaries difficult. There is a wide range of detective fiction works, making it even more difficult to establish a consistent definition. A global literary context can only be accommodated in the genre of detective fiction as long as it is driven by an unrelenting force of suspense. To put this restlessness into action, modern writers employ a new set of codes of conduct: ethos, pathos, and logos, which deviate sharply from traditional codes governed by rhetorical persuasion. Detective fiction is a type of fiction in which a crime, usually a murder, is committed, and someone, the detective, tries to find out who did it, how they did it, and why they did it.

“The Dying Detective” by Arthur Conan Doyle is a detective classic. Sherlock Holmes, the detective, uses his powers of deduction to solve a crime. In contrast, Poe's detective employs the method of exact thinking followed by logical interpretation. This enables Poe to use rhetorical persuasion by repeating the words “I knew,” “infallible conclusion,” “deduction,” and “invisible threads” to demonstrate the detective’s coherent and logical conclusion. Poe’s use of rhetorical persuasion allows him to shape not only the detective’s but also the reader's thoughts. It offers a fresh take on the detective genre by demonstrating how different cultures approach time, evoking the fundamental connotations of the classical idealism of Ethos, Pathos, and Logos.

A vivid deviation is marked in detective fiction to maximise the suspense drive. This can be vividly seen in Arthur Conan Doyle's short story, "The Dying Detective", where Sherlock Holmes dwells in a kind of investigation in which resolution determines the overall interpretation of the investigation. If someone picks it for detective fiction, his taste can only be justified if he reaches the end of the story. Such new codes and methods have also made their way into the world of classic detective writer Agatha Christie. In her novel, *The Murder of Roger Ackroyd*, she portrays Ackroyd's murderer as the narrator, who uses his persuasive skills to defend his guilt. Christie, although scrupulous with the placement of such clues, fully intends the reader to be in the dark until the detective points the way, and a great deal of the pleasure to be found in reading the stories is derived from this final dénouement. Even in Edgar Allan Poe's "The Purloined Letter", the case of Minister D, where the victim is known but is still investigating, it was evident to hunt for a purloined letter, which is discreet compared to older forms of investigation. Such deviation in the investigation is caused by classical rhetorical persuasion, which establishes a solid moral, ethical, and logical foundation for effective controlled action and its consequences. "A persuasive dialogue" is defined as a controlled interaction by Ethos, Pathos, and Logos in order to persuade the audience of an argument. "Using pathos, ethos, and logos in a persuasive dialogue can be extremely effective in achieving the desired outcome." Ethos is used to establish the speaker's credibility and trustworthiness, Pathos is used to appeal to the emotions of the audience and create a sense of empathy or understanding, and Logos is used to appeal to the audience's sense of reason and logic. Each of these appeals can be used separately or in combination to create a more persuasive argument.

A changing tradition of detective fiction acknowledged globally is invested not only in the mode and conduct of detection but also in the means of worldwide references and the very notion of rooted cultural implication. In detective fiction, the Orient is often used as a setting

for stories of mystery and suspense. The term "Orient" refers to the countries of Asia, specifically the Middle East and East Asia. The East is often seen as a place of mystery and intrigue, where anything can happen. This is due in part to the fact that the Orient is often seen as being exotic and unfamiliar to Westerners. This can make it a perfect setting for stories in which the detective must solve a crime or uncover a hidden secret. Such detection is common in Holmes's short stories, such as in "The Dying Detective", where he exclaimed and quoted, "There are many problems of disease, many strange pathological possibilities, in the East, Watson, I have learned so much during some recent research that has a medico-criminal aspect. It was in the course of them that I contracted this complaint, "You can do nothing."

In a similar vein, the intervention of a serpent is the underlined symbol of the East in Doyle's other short story, "The Adventure of the Speckled Band". The serpent is a symbol of the Orient because it is a creature often associated with Eastern cultures. In the story, the serpent is used to represent the danger that is lurking in the Orient. Apart from Doyle, Tarquin Hall, in his book *The Case of the Deadly Butter Chicken*, uses an Oriental detective with the canon of a mystery mended to Indian taste. Using macaronic expressions like "Looking so tired, na," "You should take chai vai," and "Na, you must be in pain, I'll bring some cucumber slices" vividly incorporates the idea of globality.

Although Sherlock Holmes is most commonly associated with the Victorian era in which he was created, his popularity and influence have led to him being adapted and re-imagined in a variety of different contexts and settings. In particular, the use of deductive reasoning, which is a critical component of Sherlock Holmes' methods, can be seen as a direct result of the influence of classical rhetoric in modern visual adaptations of the work that is acknowledged globally. Numerous films, television shows, and pastiches inspired by the character, and several international adaptations place Sherlock in different cultures and periods.

Until the 1990s, when a few notable changes occurred, British crime fiction adhered to self-limiting conventions similar to those that inform mediaeval morality plays or the type of Victorian novel that promulgated the period's ethical norms. Characters and circumstances are made credible only to the extent that they perform their predetermined functions as indices of abstract codes of behaviour or idealised perceptions of the police, the judiciary, and society. Proceeding further, in general, detective fiction in the twenty-first century has become more complex and nuanced. Writers are no longer satisfied with simply telling a story about crime and punishment; instead, moral and ethical quandaries frequently accompany such cases.

Some of the most notable examples of these modern adaptations inspired by classical rhetorics include the Japanese television series *Mr Holmes* (2015), which is set in Meiji-era Japan, and the Bollywood film *Sherlock Toms* (2017), which is set in contemporary India. Sherlock Holmes has also been featured in several video games, including the famous *Sherlock Holmes: Crimes and Punishments* (2014) set in Victorian London.

Sherlock Holmes continues to be one of the most popular and enduring literary characters of all time, and his global appeal shows no signs of slowing down. There is also a greater emphasis on the victim's point of view and the emotional consequences of crime. Furthermore, 21st-century detectives are frequently portrayed as damaged, flawed individuals, which adds realism to the stories. This genre often includes elements of classical rhetoric, making it thrilling and mysterious to read.

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Female Detectives – A Brainchild of the Gentleman Sleuths?

Souparno Roy

UG Semester V

Are there real tunnels under the Fatehpur-Sikri arena? Do they really lead to Delhi, Agra and Lahore?

This curiosity about the peculiarity and strangeness, a desire for an impulsive fondling of suspense, and an eventual vicarious satisfaction - are perhaps the major agents that keep readers pinned to the genre of mystery, crime and detective fiction.

Widely considered as the first detective fiction story, “The Murders in the Rue Morgue”, published in 1841, it was Edgar Allan Poe who prototyped this genre even before the word “detective” was coined. His hero-investigator, Auguste Dupin ensured enough amenities for all the upcoming private eyes.

This projection of the ‘notorious gentleman sleuth’ was furthered by Conan Doyle’s Sherlock Holmes. Extensive similarities can be found with Feluda, Ray’s 20th century Bengali detective. They both are proprietors of a set of magnificent brains, Felu Mittir’s “magajastra” frequently impresses his clients by guessing about them just from their outward appearances. Sharadindu’s Byomkesh too runs on a somewhat similar track. Topshe and Ajit not only function as mere narrators for Feluda and Byomkesh respectively, but also as very potent auxiliary enquirers.

The detective fictions are often laid out in the form of a living map, for the readers to navigate manually through the physical landmarks of the cities, its streets, hotels and

cemeteries, venturing metaphysically into themselves. This sheer love for details runs quite aggressively in both Ray and Christie – from Poirot’s train tales to the teapots in Feluda’s Baithak-khana, readers often experience quite a smooth progression.

Satyajit Ray’s Feluda is a proper Bengali bloke but with quite evident westernised heroic symbolisms. Having ditched Byomkesh’s dhoti, his short barrel Colt .32 is every common man’s dream. Feluda is thus the “Dada” with a bhadralok sophistication.

But this stimulus to inoculate Felu Mittir within every young reader comes at quite an offending cost of unsexing the genre, a genre that is primarily called “Kishore-sahitya”, the “kishori” part is genially refused. Thus, the adventures of Feluda, Kakababu are mere narratives written by a man in the voice of an adolescent male, curtailing the female significance in the broader social structure.

Throughout the years, the detective fiction genre has evolved as a “Gentleman’s Club” – mostly comprising of tall and slender gentlemen with sharp, meticulously chiselled jawlines and wavy-voluminous hair. To them, the female’s role is typically that of a body, crimes against who hurls the patriarchal world into utter disarray. She is the silent one, the speechless corpse whose death only generates chaos. The male, through his virtue and logic sets right the previously unsettled rational order, thus, fulfilling the role of an efficacious detective.

It is the very Holy Bible that states crime stories are “cautionary tales” in which the “sovereign restores order and stability” – but these very unsurpassable male restorers are actually the ones that are fractured, imbalanced and are fatally flawed in their dysfunctional realm. Auguste Dupin is a social recluse; Sherlock Holmes, again a social misfit and a vehement cocaine addict; poverty-stricken Thomas Magnum; Dave Robicheaux enduring PTSD aided by alcoholism, and Hercule Poirot – the “funny little man”. All these unbalanced characters have quite similar things in common – and they are the traits of a misanthropist,

substance abuser, and that of a loveless adult. To Holmes, “emotional qualities are antagonistic to clear reasoning”. Thus, all these men are devoid of actual ‘functioning’ and romantic counterparts, except a few protagonists like Byomkesh and Mitin Mashi. But at times their beloveds are deliberately made to suffer existential angst because of their forceful detachment and ineptitude to sync with the investigations.

This genre, which is well considered to be reinforced by Doyle, runs exactly like a bicycle – the front wheel is about the passive, marginalized and silenced female victims, being pushed forward by the narration of a “man”. As a result, Poirot’s “Little grey cells” are often seen to follow the compromised ‘*modus operandi*’ (mode of operation) of Sherlock Holmes which always tends to find “the motives of women....”, if any at all. This perhaps falls naturally to his male hegemony, curtailing the existence of the “hardly any” female investigator in the heavily male-dominated ‘*machista*’ culture that is predominantly so misogynistic that it treats supporting characters like Bianca Castafiore in *Tintin* only as a recipient of ridicule and a comic tool of nuisance.

But the World Wars demanded alterations to the strategies of the male-only fighting forces, both on the page and on the stage. The inflexible patriarchal power structures were written off and women were made to put on men’s boots. However, this transfer of power was not swift. Every time a woman attempted to subvert the generalized victim-victimizer dichotomy – she would often go missing, would be made to go through the convention of romance or simply turned into a corpse. So tough was this “hard boiled” genre to break out of. However, the prime concern of restoring order shifted to an attempt to advocate for the silent-feminine victims – and this perhaps started a proper protest and demand for social changes, that ended up providing us characters like Velma Dinkley from *Scooby-Doo*. This, nonetheless,

was quite a bold way of introducing female investigators to a whole set of upcoming new generations.

Melissa Schaub's *Middlebrow Feminism in Classic British Detective Fiction: The Female Gentleman* very minutely studies women in classic British detective fictions, who behave like Victorian gentlemen - "female protagonists who did not conform to any female pattern yet devised, inscribed, or recommended." This perhaps IS the reason why Nancy Drew is often perceived as the "girl" alternative of the Hardy Boys, solving mysteries aided by coincidences, rather than realism – making her a somewhat forceful-perfect protagonist. These women characters, crafted under extreme duress were "difficult to place as either 'mainstream' or 'liberal feminist'." They were expected to exercise "the appropriation of masculine structures of agency and aggression" but they were not permitted to grab the villain by "his" collar and "yank him out of his chair." The rediscovery of female detectives is an ongoing procedure, but limited by staunch male chauvinism.

The detective fiction genre is still "a man's world that polarizes men and women who act like men." Having quite satirically named his work as *An Unsuitable Job for a Woman*, P.D. James addresses the scepticism and underestimation of women, but immediately gets compromised on the grounds of diversity and cross-cultural management.

It is perhaps through the appearance of Mary Russell that a change in the detective fictions was encountered. King, in his *Russel and Holmes* series, attempted to unite the duality of human nature – masculinity and femininity. However, she too was not spared from the commands of the male hegemony. Time and again, in *O Jerusalem* and *Garment of Shadows*, Russell disguises herself as a man to successfully blend in with the people related to her investigation. Yet, amidst this male overshadow, female detective characters have risen as the

new-restorers of balance and order. This fresh synthesis of logic and emotion has also set them up as an effective instrument of revenge, when needed.

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83-92.



Kaleidoscope

KALEIDOSCOPE

Section III: Artwork



Untitled

Ankita Chowdhury

UG Semester III



Home and the World Montage

Collage on paper

Dibya Patranabish

PG Semester III



Untitled

Lino sheet carving and block print

Nafisa Islam

PG Semester III



Portrait of Arijit Singh

Prerana Sharma

UG Semester III



Raped Goddess
Deepanita Chakraborty
UG Semester V



Uma

Sambrita Sarkar

UG Semester V



Portrait of Dobby, the House Elf

Somonetra Kar

Pencil on paper

PG Semester III



Lord Tyrion Lannister

Somonetra Kar

Pencil on paper

PG Semester III



Adi Shakti
Vaishnavi Kumari
UG Semester III



Camera Lucida

Section IV: Photographs



Pastel Skies

Aman Jigar Desai

UG Semester III



Companionship

Moubani Sarkar

UG Semester III



Drive in the Mountains

Moubani Sarkar

UG Semester III



End of Summer

Moubani Sarkar

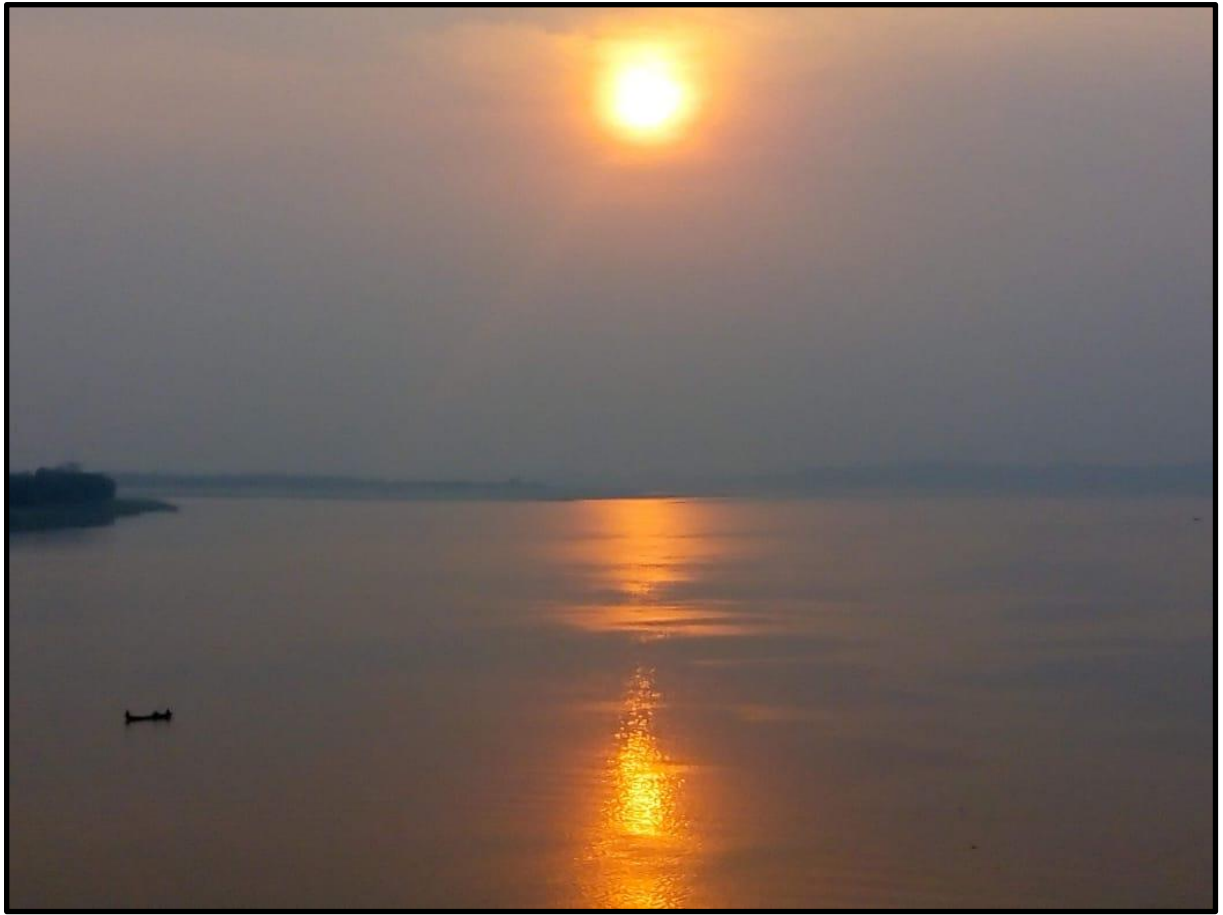
UG Semester III



Untitled

Prerana Sharma

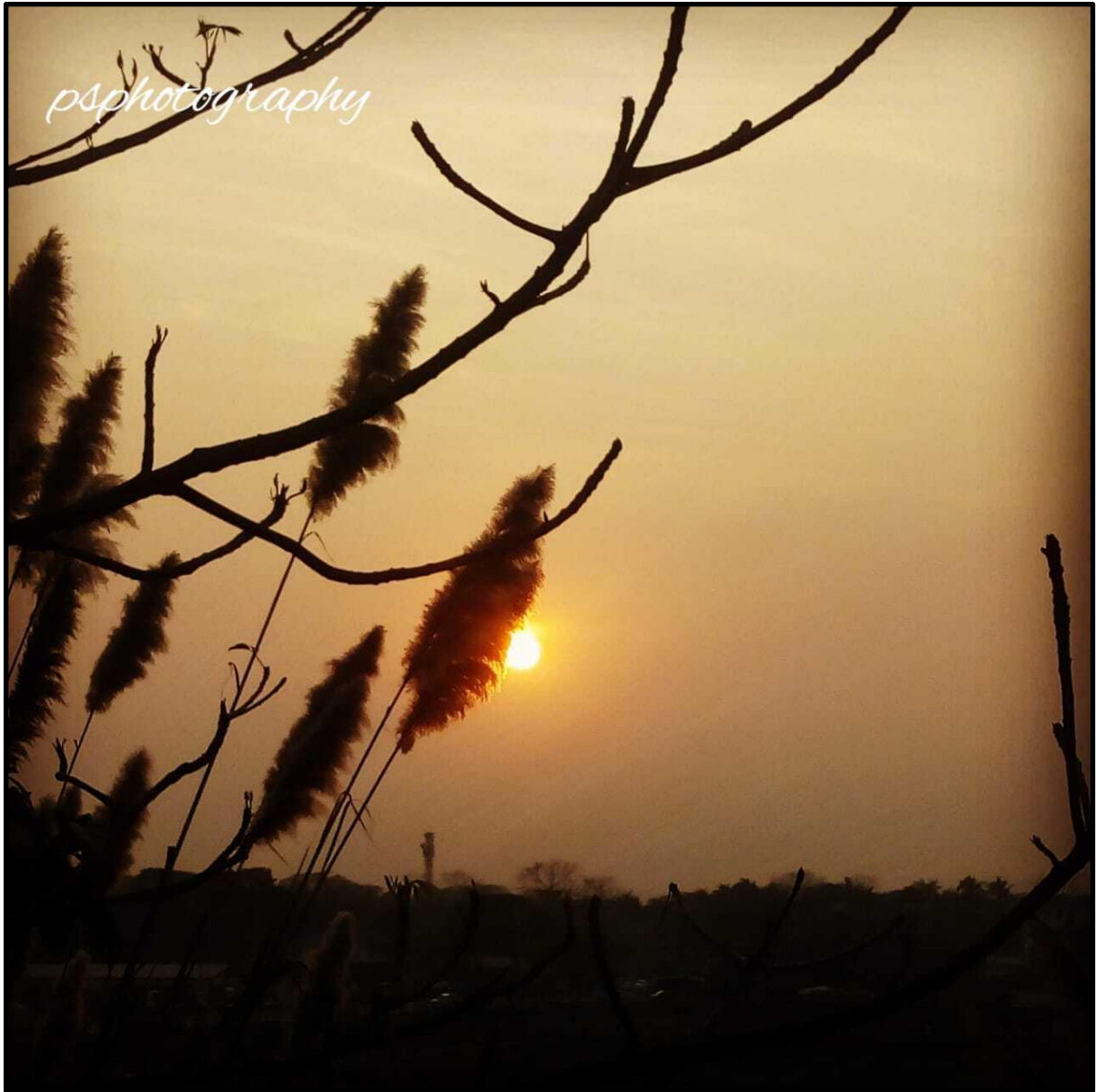
UG Semester III



Untitled

Prerana Sharma

UG Semester III



Untitled

Prerana Sharma

UG Semester III



**Logo Design: Irani Chowdhury, Ex-Student, Department of
English, The BES College**

Cover Design: Soumyajit Chandra

The Department of English

Published by The Bhawanipur Education Society College