PROCEEDINGS OF THE NATIONAL STUDENT SEMINAR ON ENGLISH FICTION SINCE 2000

Publication Wing &
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AL SHIFA COLLEGE OF ARTS & SCIENCE

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Editor's Note

Fiction as a literary genre entertains millions of readers across the globe. It has served as a great avenue for writers to express their creative prowess while for the readers, it opens doors to myriads of new worlds. Over the centuries, we have seen the creation of scores of different forms of fiction, all of which were fondly accepted by the readers. Experimentation has been a consistent trend in English fiction and twenty-first century fiction is not different from this. Books abound in themes such as Sci-fi, dystopia, coming-of-age experience, race, horror, detective adventures and more. It struggles to make sense when one argues that a genre breaks off fully from the past when the calendar marks a new century. But it still is human to attempt such a stock take. The rising presence of elements of instability, the interest in 'Self' in what is called auto-fiction, in which exploration of subjectivity has been taken to the extremes, the implosion of boundaries, the unpretentiousness- the artfully done artless feel- which is the hallmark of Millennials, the growing inclusiveness which brings in perspectives of the voice denied so far: all these and more features of the postmillennial fiction need to be analysed.

William Deresiewicz, the American author and literary critic, stated that novels 'compile the atlas of private experience'. The National Student Seminar on 'English Fiction Since 2000' was an attempt to mark the 'private atlas' of twenty first century fiction with the participants exploring what the novelists feel it is like, quoting the critic again, 'to be alive at our particular time and place'.

This book is a compilation of select articles presented at the National Student Seminar conducted on 8 & 9 December 2021 by the Department of English, Al Shifa College of Arts and Science, Perinthalmanna, in collaboration with Farook College (Autonomous), Calicut.

In the select articles published in this book, scholars deliberate on new literary trends in postmillennial English fiction. An article titled "Illustrated

and the Blending of Art Forms" explores the new genre in detail. Visual novels and trends in translation are examined critically in papers. 'The new sincerity ethos', comparatively recent a trend in writing, is subjected to scrutiny in an article. The young scholars also explored the 'dystopian elements' in contemporary fiction in the articles compiled in this book. The toppled construction of hero-villain binary is yet another topic discussed here. The ever significant psychoanalytic views on current fictional works is also subjected to analysis in one of the articles.

Ms. Renjitha. K. R
Assistant Professor of English

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Representing Plurality and Chaos in Magic Realism Texts: A Comparative Study of *Kafka on the Shore and Life of Pi*

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Abstract

There has been vast research conducted by literary scholars in the field of modern contemporary fiction and the elements of chaos and plurality are the most recurring ones. Different authors have employed different ways of representing these elements in their works in a quest to find some unified meaning and order in this plurality and chaos especially in magic realism texts, a rather contemporary movement. Even though it is chiefly Latin-American narrative strategy, fiction writers across the world have incorporated it in their works to include the element of fantastical or mythical in a matter-of-fact way. Haruki Murakami and Yann Martel, two contemporary writers who in their novels *Kafka on the Shore* and *Life of Pi* respectively have stitched together a world that seems unreal yet relatable at the same time. The journey of their respective protagonists and their attempt to probe deeper into the spiritual dimension using imagination has helped these authors to explore the various elements of a meaningless world. This paper aims to explore the concept of plurality and chaos in contemporary English fiction and how they have been blended with something as surreal as magic realism in these Novels of Murakami and Martel. Specifically, through close reading and referencing of the above-mentioned texts, I intend to delve deeper into the use of themes like intertextuality, pastiche among many other techniques to investigate whether the authors have been able to justify the above-mentioned concepts in tandem with the subject matter central to their texts.

Representing the Plurality and Chaos in Magic Realism Texts: A Comparative Study of Kafka on the Shore and *Life of Pi*

Contemporary fiction or fiction in the English language can be seen as an extension of Postmodern literature and is hard to define as it has a legion of narratives, beginnings, and endings attached to it. The authors of such fiction make it a motive to deliberately disavow the presence of any possible meaning and rather create a satire out of it. These fictions also advance the idea of the existence of the abstract, the vague—ideas that guise themselves as an entity having substance and then become effervescent the next moment—occurrence of multiple genres and subjects—a phenomenon that was considered dubious in the past. The strongest device probably in the quiver of these authors as contemporary fiction writers is 'Magic Realism'. It is a chiefly Latin-American strategy, characterized by a matter-of-fact inclusion of fantastical or mythical elements into a fiction that appears to be composed pragmatically, on the outside. Introduced by the German art critic, Franz Roh, it was first considered to be an art category that helped in representing reality along with the pictorial portrayal of the paradoxes of reality. Although known in works of literature across cultures and spread across ages, the term Magic Realism is a rather recent coinage by Alejo Carpentier, a Cuban novelist, who named it thus in the 1940s after observing it as a characteristic feature in Latin-American novels. An idea introduced in the Latin American Boom; it can be assured that magic realism is no more limited to the writings of these writers. It has been vastly explored in the works of writers outside the immediate geopolitical scenery like Haruki Murakami and Yann Martel, whose works are going to be analysed and considered here as case studies.

"The key defining quality of magic realism is that it represents both fantastic and real without allowing either greater claim to truth" (Warnes 3). *Kafka on the Shore and Life of Pi* —are replete with elements that are either too ethereal or too gross or terrible to be real nevertheless they still take place in the real world and although we cannot take away any bit of their characteristic exorbitant nature, we also cannot deny them the credit of being marvellous like Carpentier states in his *Kingdom of this World,* "[T]he

Marvellous… does not depend on the notion that the marvellous is admirable because of its beauty. Ugliness, deformity, all that is terrible can be marvellous…" (Carpentier 102). The sudden shifts in narratives, timelessness and the constant state of reverie that the protagonists find themselves in are proof enough of the theme of magic realism interwoven in the plot of these novels. There are enough shreds of evidence to prove that the lines between dream and reality, between rational and irrational, between logical and absurd are blurred—at times it becomes difficult for even the reader to determine the difference between the concrete and the abstract. Although they stem from a similar mode of writing, Murakami and Martel have distinct ways of presenting this technique into their respective texts—where Kafka on the Shore has a crude way of presenting facts that are mostly on your face—the presence of the entrance stone, the 15-year-old Miss Saeki coming to Kafka's room even though the real Miss Saeki is still alive, the strange appearances of Johnny Walker and Colonel Sanders and Cats talking to Nakata being some of them; Martel's is a subtler narrative that carefully weaves in these elements into the themes—the anthropomorphism of the zoo animals by Pi, the graphic description of the ship sinking, the hyena killing the Zebra or even Pi's description of him catching and killing the marine life, the carnivorous island and its description only adds to it; at the risk of going overboard, it can be said that probably the themes could not have been developed and depicted to their full potential had the authors not presented it the way they have. Magic realism helps these writers in advancing ideas like 'significance of magic and myth', 'critique of rationality and progress', 'doubting reality', 'exploring identity'.

The elements of magic realism thus in a way resonate with the central idea of contemporary fiction aiming at the journey of a character who comes into an understanding of himself and the world and society around him, facing personal and social conflicts, achieved by creating imaginary situations to portray the real world and society. Magic realism embodies liminality—the in-betweenness of beings, cultures, and discourses with writing that oscillates constantly between the real and the magical thus seeking to obliterate the boundaries between them. It undermines our certainties so that we eventually accept the fusion of a contradictory world because magical realism leads us to

question what we accept as reality. After so much talk on binaries and magic realism as the technique being an embodiment of the sub-temporal space, the element of plurality and chaos become pronounced and evident and are undoubtedly an intricate part of a contemporary narrative and are represented rather unconsciously in the themes laid down by these authors in their respective texts, whereby the journey of their protagonists namely Kafka Tamura and Pi Patel is inlaid within the chaos they experience inside or around them, in their ordeal of experiencing the world in its multitudinous aspect, and after a point, it even becomes impossible to separate them and their worlds from this chaos which ensues; moreover they start rationalizing over a world, elements and ideas which for any practical person would be irrational.

After establishing contemporary fiction as an extension of Postmodernism, pluralism automatically gets linked with this umbrella term wherein it can be safely assumed that most texts within the genre adhere to the recurrent tropes of temporality, offering rich intertextuality which is further enhanced by a range of perspectives and number of loose ends which the author has no urgency to resolve. It is a journey taken up by the protagonists to explore this open system and experience those perspectives first-hand. *Kafka on the Shore and Life of Pi* both are novels based on protagonists who are fifteen and sixteen years old, dealing with past trauma and recovery of these protagonists: both experience their respective worlds crumbling right in front of them though not in an exactly similar way but identical to an extent, both have their families taken away from them and are left to grapple with their lives steering through difficulties and dilemma to salvage their existence. Pi's journey is not one he takes up voluntarily, it's a battle with the nature and surroundings to survive, with his brawny will to live and a complete contrast of this is Kafka's journey, which he takes up voluntarily to battle the demons and a prophecy thrust upon him by his father, to find an answer to that one question that keeps ringing at the back of his mind: did his mother not love him enough to take him along with her? He runs away from his home in search of meaning and salvation with a trifling will to live—which keeps exponentially decreasing with every turn of his journey until the climax where he is made to live. The plurality of the narrative structure can be read along the lines of what Derrida called "rupture" in his structure sign and play theory—whereby the concept of

a locus along which the texts revolve is destroyed.

Chaos in *Life of Pi* transpires from the moment the ship sinks and Pi sees hell being let loose upon him, whereby he is orphaned and stranded on a lifeboat along with a 450-pound Bengal tiger and only his will to survive; he remains a castaway for 227 days in the pacific ocean where he tames Richard Parker (The tiger), gathers his food and water, running on limited supplies of everything, he runs low on the will to live too until he comes upon the floating island which replenishes life in him as well as Richard Parker, it is handling of this chaos around him that endures him. Richard Parker is also credited with playing a significant role in Pi's survival—it is his fear that makes Pi hunt and kill all sorts of animals, else Richard Parker would have been feasting on Pi. Martel uses a myriad of techniques to present this chaos to us and in doing this he probes into an investigation of the numerous universes and existences that make the readers question their lived reality. The reader is introduced to several elements that evoke the plurality of modern existence—the plurality of Pi's piety and the fact that he transcends the barriers placed upon a person to follow a single religion to love God—I believe having faith is important, faith instills hope in human beings; it may not necessarily be faith in God but faith keeps you going—which was the case with Pi; Pi's God, like Derrida's " transcendental signifier" is paradoxical where God is centre of life but he is not present in the lived reality to struggle along with Pi. Martel presents this binary between God and science as Pi's teacher of Islam and zoology sharing the same name; this foreshadows Pi narrating his story to the two interviewers who condemn the story with the animals and Pi has to come up with a new story—something that is rational minus the fantastical element, Martel here bring in the element of meta fictionality within his narrative whereby the narrator i.e., Pi subsumes his role as the inventor of the story. It can then be argued that considering the magic realism factor, Pi probably was in a state of trance to differentiate between humans and animals that the story with the humans is perhaps veracious. While we are still pondering upon this dilemma, we may as well consider the carnivorous island that is significant in refuting or accepting this statement—although the description of the island is surrealistic, we may consider the information Pi provides about it secreting a chemical that dissolves things in it like the net which was attached to the algae—which can

then be seen as a fact supporting the existence of a world beyond human knowledge like the ocean which Pi states as being busier than the streets of Pondicherry. The most obvious intertextuality presented by Martel in *Life of Pi* is a palimpsest of Robinson Crusoe where Martel strives to deconstruct the image of a lone castaway by bringing the tiger—a symbol of gruesome death constantly looming over Pi and Pi's religion not being a mode of passing time but a constant companion in his journey unlike Crusoe's.

This existence of a world beyond human knowledge is also subliminally portrayed in *Kafka on the Shore,* in the form of the forest where Ohshima has the cabin. Ohshima warns Kafka against venturing too deep into the forest describing it as a living 'breathing' entity that functions on its own set of rules, but Kafka still goes deep into the forest to explore and this is how he finds the two soldiers from WWII guarding the portal to the 'beyond'. Ohshima and Kafka here are an embodiment of the constant tussle between the rational and irrational, between logic and surreal, but the forest here stands for the plurality and the various narratives around it stand as the chaos—the incident where the boy named crow kills Johnny Walker in the same forest is an excellent example to support this existing element of chaos this is further made prominent in the dreams of Kafka where he probably kills his father in a dream or commits incest on Sakura in his dream or sleeps with a fifteen-year-old Miss Saeki who is probably a dream fragment of Kafka's. The primary reason for the chaos that ensues in Kafka's mind is his mother leaving him behind taking away his sister—this also explains the constant uneasiness on his part to find an answer to look for meaning in a world that has denied him of any. Living under the shadow of a father who considers Kafka as a creation of his, signed through his DNA and blood Kafka finds life extremely stifling— Murakami here introduces intertextuality by introducing the Oedipus complex into his novel but also makes a conscious effort of deconstructing the same by linking it to the dream fragment of magic realism, whereby Kafka murders his father only metaphorically or in a dream and also added here is the tangent of him raping his sister which too is achieved in a dream. We may go on to say that Murakami introduces the chaos theory into his novel because we see how Miss Saeki's opening of the entrance stone is the reason this chaos has transpired and Nakata is forced to murder Kafka's father; and for the same

reason Miss Saeki ends up sleeping with Kafka and to bring the order back to the world Nakata has to find the entrance stone and close it. Everything that transpires in between has a parallel touch to it because Nakata is somehow linked to Miss Saeki and Kafka and Kafka is linked to Miss Saeki's dead boyfriend who in turn is linked to the painting making the story come a full circle by the end. There is also an element of meta fictionality in Kafka saying that he will run away from his home on his fifteenth birthday or Nakata saying that it going to rain fish or there is going to be a thunderstorm. Everything that takes place in the novel happens with a purpose to provide Kafka a new will and meaning to live; we even see it being materialised by Miss Saeki giving him her blood to replenish his life and the boy named crow reiterating that in the train back to Tokyo: "When you wake up, you'll be part of a brand-new world." (Murakami 615)

Murakami and Martel both bring in the Carnivalesque factor in their novel as stated by Bakhtin in tandem with the element of intertextuality—they give the chaos a full run until it becomes so magnanimous that it is transformed into order and attain unity within the plurality by providing intertextual references that are pastiched together. Both the novels have terms, with one's experience with an empathetic, forgiving heart…" (Yeung 147). a trait of playing with temporality in the sense that time stands still or is even totally thrown out of consideration like in the 'beyond' where Kafka goes or instilled as a motif in the whole of Pi's journey on the boat which stretches over 227 days and which makes Pi lose the track of time. "Flow of time here works to foreground the force of fate" (Yeung 147). There is this concept of the "other world" that is made prominent through the carnivorous island or the marine life in *Life of Pi* or through the Painting of 'Kafka on the Shore' in the library or the 'beyond' where Kafka meets both the young and old Miss Saeki and this "other world" evidently has a therapeutic effect on the protagonists. The novels at any given time subvert the concept of linear time and cultivate foreshadowing through anecdotes that are subtle or directly on the face. This journey which the protagonists take up internally, is spiritual and "has a redemptive value in the pain and suffering caused to them—…even for the deeply hurt, salvation and growth are possible by coming to terms, with one's experience with an empathetic, forgiving heart..." (Yeung 147).

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Illustrated Novels and the Blending of Art Forms

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Abstract

Illustrations have always been a part of human narratives, cave paintings and varied art forms provide ample evidence of that. While tracing art illustrations, we find different responses to them through different periods. In literature, usage of illustrations was restricted and not considered a part of the academic domain till the advent of the 18th century. Art forms were not associated with mainstream literary works. Even in the 18th century, illustrations were only used by the already popular writers and were not commissioned for new novels by the publishers. With the beginning of the 19th century, the ubiquity of blending art forms with literature increased. Illustrations provided additional emphasis to the literary world and were widely accepted by the readers. Yet again, illustrated fiction declined with its amount of publications in the early 20th century due to the uprise of televisions, photojournalism, and films. In the middle of the 20th century, comic books came into great influence among children and young people but were soon banned in the 1950s due to moral tension flickering across the countries. The late 1990s and early 2000 saw the radical rebirth of illustrations in English Fiction. Art forms and literature was brought into harmony resulting in the re-invention of new generation novels to generate an impactful perspective. Art forms started to blend in with novels and literary sections via architecture, visual arts, performance arts, folk arts, handicrafts, story-telling, comics, and graphic novels. The blending did not just emphasize a particular work but also made a worldwide impression of positive acceptance. This paper attempts to explore how illustrated novels and blended art forms enhance the impact of literary works. Graphic narratives, articles, essays as well as various art forms as literary texts will be examined. The research will adopt the qualitative method with secondary data as the primary mode of reference.

Introduction

Although literature was not always associated with illustrations and art forms, the collaboration of both has boosted a remarkable change in the history of human narratives. By connecting a bridge between the author and the audience, artforms have contributed a lot of exposure to better clarity in the terms of literature. Artforms are a crucial part of human narratives since the ancient age. Various architectural structures, cave paintings, monumental decorations and even performing arts have contributed their gifts in the world of literature. Artforms like music, dance, theatre have provided human narrations through expressions and gestures. Graphic novels have been useful when texts were not enough to emphasize their transmission. The modern generation blends animation with literary texts to bring out meaningful contexts for children to understand them in a lucid pattern.

Illustrated novels include multiple images along with texts that emphasize the meaning of the words in them. It works as a hybrid medium in which images and texts work together in narrating a story. It can be found in various forms such as magazine fiction, children's fiction, comic strips, and picture books. While art forms are artistic compositions that can be regarded as a medium of imagination or creative self-expression. When blended with literature, art forms dive deeper into the thematic work and develop its influence further.

This paper will do an extensive study on the importance of illustrations and art forms in the field of literature and how it develops through the different eras. Further, it will go to a deeper understanding of the intertwining of the two forms.

• In which way do illustrations and art forms enhance the depth of literary works?
• Why were graphic comics banned?
• Can art forms mirror the originality of literary works?

Methodology

In this research, a qualitative approach is adopted and advances with a detailed method of analyzing and focusing on the information available. Therefore, this paper will stick only to secondary data such as books, articles, magazines, and online resources.

Findings

Literature, in the form of realistic novels, originated in the early eighteenth century. Before the commencement of novels into life, literature was mainly communicated in the form of books. Although illustrations made their entry in the eighteenth century, publishers never commissioned them for the new novels. Only successful books used to get illustrations projected until the end of the eighteenth century where mechanical techniques permitted authors to have pictures printed on a budget. The Romantic Era was the embodiment of introducing different art forms in literature. This era, from 1800-1850, was at its peak in highlighting varied art forms such as visual arts, music, performing arts, graphic novels, etc., and gave a major impact on the history of literature. Illustrated novels are extended narratives that give a deeper concept to the text produced by the author. Illustrations complement the content by the author and give more exposure to the meaning. In the late eighteenth century, illustrated novels gained high popularity as were demanded by the readers. That's when art forms started to blend in with literature with the beginning of romanticism. In the early nineteenth century, the admiration for illustrative content increased drastically. Charles Dickens' Illustrated Novels is a very recommended example where the intensity of graphic representation was at its peak. Due to economic expansion during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, authors could sustain the use of illustrations in their work. The presence of illustrations and art forms created greater emphasis in a literary project and could help the author connect more with the audience.

Illustrated novels fall into the category of multimodal texts, that is, they can be regarded as combined forms of ideas communicating through photographs, music, paintings, comic or visual arts. Illustrations and art forms increase the potential to interact while pouring meaning into the author's work. McCloud (1993, p. 8) calls comics as "juxtaposed pictorial and other images in deliberate sequence". These comics are separated from illustrated novels but blend in as an important form of art to render meaning in solidarity.In the middle of the twentieth century, comic books came into admiration among children and young readers. Historians refer to the period from 1938-1950 as comics' "Golden Age". People were reading comics more than expensive hard

covers. With the fad spreading widely among the mass, various contents began to unfurl their feathers. But due to the publishing of various horror comics and violent graphics, it became a matter of concern for a large number of adults which resulted in the ban of comics in the 1950s. Although in the twentieth century, with the rise in digital comics, the audience came back with the desire to read them again.

Meanwhile illustrated novels of Charles Dickens' in 1836 created a buzz among several writers and readers when the publisher 'Chapman and Hall' insisted Dickens to include sketches by illustrator, Robert Seymour, in order to make his novel more influential. Although Dickens clarified that he knew nothing about the category, he agreed with the commission by supplying the description necessary to explain the work and connect them with pictures that were fashionable at that time. Thus, it was a widespread influence for many, and publishers were frequent in publishing those rather than unillustrated three-volume sets.

Graphic Novels played a great role in narrating the 1982 Falkland Wars. Between 1984 and 2012, a corpus of Argentine comics was published. Several stylistic devices were to carry out the narratives precisely. Hans-Martin Rall and Wibke Weber mention that one of the most important aspects of graphic journalism through graphic narratives is the pursuit of authenticity. Three decades of publication went on about the Falkland Wars listing them as: first, a series of connected comics episodes published in 1984/1985 which was shortly after the war; second, a collection from 2012, published precisely after three decades of the war. The 2000s endorsed the heroism of the soldiers. A comic book with the title "La Armanda en Malvinas" (The Navy on the Falklands) was released in 2007 which contained eight graphic narratives relating to specific military episodes from the Falkland Wars in chronological order. Illustrated novels are not just limited to aesthetic fulfillments. They are excellent grounds for cultural studies and literary criticism. The relationship between image and text and the meaning conveyed were encouraged by rapid cultural changes. Texts might sometimes be misleading so can pictures be, but a collaboration of both could create narrative truth. Descriptions based on visual experience can attach better meaning to the text and convey meaning in a better sense. In the current era, many instances are seen where various texts

fail to convey meaning all by themselves but when pictures support them, the meaning gets clarity to the audience. Illustrations can liberate, suggest, or open up speculation to the reader through their originality or their relationship to other images, but they can also limit, impose, or fix certain interpretations (Logan, 2014). Some authors even illustrated their own works, while others got themselves artists. Different art forms enclose a wide diversity with multiple modes of thinking in a highly dynamic and intricate form. Art forms are vehicles transmitting values through social and cultural abilities. Art forms blended with literature can be called hybrid art, that serve as intuitive data through perspective revision with open ends. The combination of artistic strands renders clarity in any particular work of literature. Many kinds of art forms can be associated with literature such as performing arts, music, sound films, paintings, storytelling, visual arts, architecture, and an entire variety of mixed media activities that can be grouped as "theater".

Illustrations play a very fruitful role along with poems too. Poetry being a genre that adjusts itself inside a very small space and expresses in a compressed manner, poets of the new generation take the pillar of art forms to visually make their work impactful and lucid for the readers. Not to ignore the exquisite touch art forms render on poetry, they also make them interesting. Animation is another form of art that displays the innate impacts of delivering literature through them. Stories passed on through them in the medium of visual narrative provide an immense amount of information that reaches the audience in a very simple yet effective manner. Even important texts, that otherwise seem to be very monotonous, become attractive by draining attention to the creative value. Literature blended with animation is seen in various children-centric animated movies like mythological texts of the Ramayana, the Mahabharata, the Hanuman, and many more. Children seem to grab such literary texts better through the lens of animation, thus making literary culture grow.

Although art forms might not be able to completely mirror a literary work, they certainly can proliferate the essence of the same. Considering a visit to a museum, sculptures as an art form provide the viewers an in-depth visual analysis of the meaning conveyed, and so does a painting. Paintings speak without words, the strokes of a brush read between lines proving the

the sheer elegance it can bring when mixed with literature. Art form, independently, can provide an ocean of fascinating knowledge by keeping their aesthetic touch in place.

The romantic age was first defined as an era of aesthetics in literary criticism. It is in that period, in the early decades of the nineteenth century, the artistic movement gained momentum in France and Britain and flourished until the mid-century. Chasseriau visited Algeria in 1846 and documented his experience in notebooks filled with watercolors and drawings. His works later served as models for a painting done in his Paris studio. This in itself tells us how art forms are indeed salient features in literature. Art forms like dance and drama convey poetic interpretation in literature through expressions and gestures. While that becomes very pleasing to the audiences' eyes, it also puts effort in delivering and receiving point-of-views throughout. Dance has always been self-explanatory; the usage of facial expressions and figurative shadows makes it all a very alluring and aesthetic art form. Blending dance with literature and also comparing it, dance has its language, own metaphors, own style, and own rhythms. Yet dance expresses ideas and emotions through physical movements. Blending poetry and dance, and mixing them in a single art piece makes them complement each other and bring out the best result together. Maya Angelou is one such excellent example, a poet who combined dance with poetry to bring out the beauty of literary blending.

Drama or Theatrics are wonderful art forms that blend smoothly with literature. Dialogues and expressions give artistic consequence to the literary aspect and bring out the beauty confined in them. All art forms have their own perks in contributing their part to the literary aspect and magnifying its impact further. Thus it becomes evident how even if art forms blended with literature do not mirror the same meaning independently, they do amplify and complement each other.

Conclusion

This research has focused on how the collaboration of literature with illustrations and art forms can create an emphasis on work and build a better connection between an artist and their audience. The study pondered on various art forms and their contribution to the literature through themselves.

A detailed analysis is done by going through many art forms that blend well with literature and the outcomes are thoroughly studied. An analysis of the Falkland Wars is done in the paper where the usage of graphic novels can be seen. Many scholars have published papers on the history of illustrated novels and art forms, meanwhile, this paper concentrated on the blended art forms towards various ages of literary development. While brainstorming the cited works, the evolution of illustrations and art forms from previous centuries till the twenty- first century is evaluated closely. The paper answers all the relevant questions.

However, even with the in-depth scrutiny, this paper is limited to available data that could be accessed from the web. This paper contains fewer examples and more information on the topic as the study was limited by their reliance on information gathered from relatively limited resource access. It is likely that this paper can have different perspectives too that can reveal itself in different ways and can be taken up for further research to develop by adding more information to it.

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Playing the Novel: Visual Novels and Their Literary Relevance

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Abstract

The visual "novel" is a hybrid genre that proves difficult to define in the experience of its "players". While current internet terminology defines what would conventionally be "playing" a visual novel as "reading", this choice begs the question whether visual novels are to be "played" or "read", or whether games are, in fact, texts that can be read. Are visual novels games at all? Combining CG, text, sound, and specific in-game systems (HP, character stats, etc.), the visual novel is a hybrid form that draws attention to how these elements along with its click rhythm affects the experiencing of the form. Instead of attempting verisimilitude, visual novels -- and here we discuss English or English-translated visual novels -- are unflinchingly silly, emotional, or even grave, true to the constraints of their form, revelling in the idiosyncrasies of character or situation. Post-structuralist and modern ludic theory, contend with notions of "play" which are instructive to understanding how games are in fact significant cultural artifacts that aid us in understanding ourselves and others. Considering visual novels texts, this paper approaches this genre via the field of post-structuralist and modern ludic theories to legitimize the experiencing and literary value of the same. This paper attempts a look into how one reads the visual novel, and what might one take away from such a genre.

"Games are ancient. Like making music, telling stories, and creating images, playing games is part of what it means to be human. Games are perhaps the first designed interactive systems our species invented. Digital technology has given games a new relevance."

"Increasingly, the ways that people spend their leisure time and consume art, design, and entertainment will be games –or experiences very much like games

-- Manifesto for a Ludic Century, (Zimmerman and Chaplin, 2013)

That games often utilize stories that they rely on narrative fiction should be no surprise, dependent as we are as a species upon stories. However what can be surprising is that within the entire medium of games there exists a subset known as visual novels. This moniker is interesting due to the inclusion of "novel" which in traditional terms is a relatively long work of narrative fiction usually published in a "book". However, visual novels are not commercially accessible in a bookshop; rather, they are marketed and understood to be games. This is hardly a conundrum -- upon encountering a visual novel such as Ace Attorney one can immediately understand that this is a game. With options to change sound, progress dialogue, interact with objects within the game, etcetera, these novels are shaped to be interacted and played with. However, the sizable chunk of text within them that remains to be read and understood, along with the characters who are depicted visually, remains entities to be read. This presence of playability and readability sharpens our awareness of a new storytelling medium, and as such we need to approach the visual novel as one.

This paper is not interested in the strict definition or the history of the visual novel, but it is instructive to adopt this definition: A Visual Novel (VN) is a digital narrative focused game that requires interactions where the player must be able to impact the story world or the story's progression. The story and interactions are most commonly presented through a text box and often employ additional forms of interaction including menu choices -- which often contain sets of actions that the player character can perform -- or dialogue options representing the player character's speech or thoughts. Crucially, VNs have On-Click Progression, where the player clicks, taps or presses a button to see the next part of the story. The aesthetics of VNs are most often conveyed through static images of characters, background art, sound effects (SFX) feedback, and soundtracks. (Camingue et al. 11)

This definition, along with Camingue, Carstendottir and Melcer's deliberations on the genre, help in shaping what visual novels are. They trace a narrative heritage -- however vague -- with Choose-Your-Adventure books of the 1960s and 70s in America which were a publishing phenomenon owing to their interactivity. And yet, these were books, and not games. The fact of their

playability and interactivity remains, pointing towards the interactivity of text when it is molded a certain way while retaining an old form.

Interactivity in storytelling is not a 21st century phenomenon. Literary figures such as Jorge Luis Borges and Vladimir Nabokov have been involved in the notion of play with language, with Nabokov being concerned with how games aid literature, particularly how it is the game of cards called Speculation in Mansfield Park, which serves as a metaphor and a comment on the speculations upon marriage, life, another state of affairs occurring at the moment. (Nabokov and Nabokov) The ludic element is not only ancient to our understanding of life and of humans, it has prefigured in literature as we traditionally understand it. Even with Borges, who has, in his The Garden of Forking Paths, prefigured ludic storytelling in games -- especially certain visual novels -- wherein each branching narrative decision may or may not lead you to a completely new narrative route, winding up with a different story altogether. Both Nabokov and Borges are engaging with the plasticity of storytelling in varying manners.

Postmodern critics have, in the wake of post-World War 2 philosophy including the failure of structuralism to gauge a singular monolithic meaning, been increasingly grappling with the placement of the "text" to be a "game". This metaphor serves for our purposes -- although it cannot be overextended – to show how language is a game, and texts which are composed of language, are games into which innumerable variabilities can be factored in.

We find precedent for this line of thinking in Ludwig Wittgenstein. In his formulation of the language-game, there can be no static reflection of things in words, rather, there exists a dynamic pattern of words with actions. The utterance "balloon" for example, can be both a description and an appeal, the meaning shifts depending on factors such as context, the person uttering, the manner of utterance, etcetera. Wittgenstein put forward this language-as-game formulation in his later studies, and this draws our attention to the playability of language, how it can be structured for our own ends.

Souvik Mukherjee has written about the same, highlighting how books can be "played" as much as games can be "read". Here he is not being explicit and saying that hypertext fiction is how one might "interact" with books, but that books as "static cultural artifacts" are not in fact static, and that our ways

of interacting with the same reveal to us many different ways of engaging with the book that can fall under the purview of "play". He draws upon a vast array of critical thinking ranging from Brian Sutton-Smith's formulations of "play" to Jacques Derrida's deliberations upon the same. (Mukherjee)

According to Sutton-Smith, Derrida's work is the result of the "ludic turn" in modern thought. While Derrida is concerned with the play of signifiers in a text, Sutton-Smith expands this to encompass a broad sense of play that precludes speech, thinking, and writing. For Derrida play is the disruption of "presence", which would constitute a totalizing monolithic meaning. By being in this state of interactivity there is no stable meaning arrived at, and as such no centre to rely on. However, Derrida is vague about his formulation of what play constitutes, for which we can turn to Johan Huizinga.

Johan Huizinga, a Dutch cultural historian and theorist, wrote a book Homo Ludens wherein he extensively underlined the importance of the ludic in human culture and society. Huizinga, however, studied play in a general manner. He linked the notion of play to Western understanding of culture, and sums it up by calling it a "free activity standing quite consciously outside 'ordinary' life as being 'not serious', but at the same time absorbing the player intensely and utterly." (Huizinga 13)

This definition immediately holds in our general understanding of how video games, and the act of playing them, is seen as non-serious and not worth pondering within literary studies. Despite the similarity to current concepts of textuality, video games are still seen as difficult to describe within studies of narrative. Where films and graphic novels are now placed on university literature courses with relative ease, video games have not yet found their place within received notions of the narrative and the literary. It could be argued that it is their multiplicity that poses a problem for the commonly understood norms of literary studies. The point now is to find such a literary framework for texts characterised by such multiplicity, whether it is because of their multiple endings or because they plug into, as it were, many media and to many planes of storytelling at the same time. (Mukherjee, 115)

Mukherjee, throughout his book, never specifically mentions visual novels. He links the "play" aspect of games to the Derridean notion of what comprises a "text", one that we might analyze in our literature   classes, and he

talks at length about the narrativity of games. But his book, as recent as 2015, fails to mention a singular visual novel. This is partly because he is concerned with video games in general, not bothering with specific games. Mostly, I contend he is unaware of the visual novel. A peculiar bind exists wherein visual novels are recognized only as a genre emergent from Japan with Japanese motifs leading to the dismissal of the same genre as being capable of "serious" storytelling. This would be erroneous, as recent traditions and models of visual novels exist across cultures. As already stated, this paper is not interested in dwelling on the specificities of visual novels – definition included. Ludology is constantly evolving and players of games engage in debates about coinage of terms often on non-academic platforms, leading to a variety of definitions at play. However it would be pertinent to acknowledge that in acknowledging and delineating a wide array of games with storytelling capacities and interactivity as "visual novels" we bring into focus the keen ability of video games to be treated as a genuine, penetrating model for telling stories. In "What is a Visual Novel?", the authors have discussed how the visual novel has gained increasing currency in curriculums to be used as a mode of teaching students.

As their paper states, the "heavy use of text and emphasis on reading as a central activity has prompted repeated comparisons to books and seen VNs referred to as their interactive counterparts... Notably, some literary genres have made a successful transition between the two narrative mediums, with both straight and queer players recognizing romance VNs as "romance novels in interactive visual form."" (Camingue et al. 4)

The authors are drawing our attention to how the communities of players who like playing visual novels recognize these works as being synonymous to novels, and indeed, there exists a culture of calling the experience of playing visual novels "reading". However, they remain suspicious of these attempts, because visual novels are called thus for a reason. While their readability remains, they are still games – their interactivity cannot be divorced from their readability, and as post-structuralist thought has taught us, this need not necessarily be an opposing binary.

Going back to our adopted definition of the visual novel, we lay stress on its focus on narrative. While this essay is not a cohesive outlining of major

games/works in the visual novel genre, it is imperative to acknowledge that titles such as Life is Strange, What Remains of Edith Finch, To The Moon, are prime examples of what narratives games can weave and what they can achieve in their storytelling, which is primarily the eliciting of emotion, of rendering an experience onto an individual, of instructing as well as providing aesthetic pleasure.

While speaking of English fiction since the 2000s, it is not enough to say that contemporary fiction experiments with form and genre as it currently stands. That it does. We have to acknowledge that English as a language is utilized to weave fiction into new forms. The interactivity of visual novels stems from the choice of making a decision -- narratively, for your character(s). This player agency already factors in the Barthesian reader-as-constructor of text, what could possibly be more literary?

While a majority of visual novels have multiple endings, more often than not, the experiencing of a visual novel depends on coming to it uninformed and unprepared -- much like one might approach a book, for the untrammeled experience. This is because despite the notion of player agency, of being able to mould options, visual novels guides you to a "true" ending. This is not a rule, but it has been in effect for several games. This variability in endings again points towards the post-modern, post-structuralist ways in which games shape modern ways of story-telling.

Will Wright, the creator of The Sims, observes, "Games are not the right medium to tell stories... Video games are more about story possibilities." (Milian) As the creator of one of the most popular games of all time, and a game very different from visual novels in their narrative proclivity, he is merely talking about his game and its variants here. There are, of course, games whose narrative focus is not as well-defined as visual novels, which are primarily concerned with story. However, the existence of these types of games underlines the fact that games as a medium, as a form, are open to "story possibilities". Will Wright is wrong when he says they are not the medium to tell stories, visual novels are already involved in doing so. In highlighting the fact that video games create story possibilities, however, he is opening up the field of ludology as well as literary studies to create a new awareness and understanding of games as cultural artifacts that can breathe life

into human understanding of fiction, and how it is created. For fiction is not the realm of text only, it can also be created visually and aurally, both being things that games, and specifically the visual novel, utilize.

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Psychoanalysis of the Loved Ones of Victims in the Novel *Fractured*

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Abstract

This research paper attempts to analyze the psychology of the loved ones of the kidnapping victim in the novel *Fractured*. It can be noticed that the loved ones of the kidnapping victim exhibit ambivalence of feelings in this contemporary crime thriller detective novel, published in the year 2009. Various feelings are felt by humans according to the situation around them. Usually, one feeling is felt in a particular situation. Yet, in certain rare situations two or more different feelings are felt at the same time and there is a fluctuation between those different feelings. There is an ambivalence of feelings. There are three victims in the novel "Fractured". Two victims lose their lives within a small amount of time. The third victim in the novel is kidnapped. This novel takes us on a journey with the police officers as they try to crack the case they have at hand. Equal focus is given in the novel to the pathetic ordeal of the loved ones of the victims. In the case of the kidnapped victim, her parents have to go through the excruciating process of waiting for the police to find their daughter. They don't know if they will see their daughter again and they don't know whether she is alive or dead. In various instances throughout the novel, it can be observed that the feelings felt by the parents of the kidnapping victim are ambivalent in nature. This research paper, through the analysis of the various feelings felt by the loved ones of the kidnapping victim in this novel, seeks to establish that there is ambivalence in the feelings of humans in certain situations.

Introduction

The novel *Fractured*, written by Karin Slaughter revolves around murder, kidnapping, and emotions felt by the people affected by it. In the novel, the mother of Emma Campano, Abigail Campano returns home to find a girl surrounded by a pool of blood with a man crouching over her. She sees this from a distance, assumes the girl is her daughter, and runs. A struggle with the man whom she assumes to be the killer ensues, and she ends up killing him. Later it is discovered by Emma Campano's father, Paul Campano that the girl lying dead is not Emma Campano. It is Emma Campano's friend Kayla Alexander. The man assumed to be the killer is actually Adam who is Emma's boyfriend. Everyone then realizes that Emma Campano has been kidnapped. From this point onwards, it can be noticed that the feelings of Abigail Campano and Paul Campano are in a state of ambivalence till they are reunited with their daughter in the end.

Upon discovering that the girl lying dead on the floor is not his daughter, Paul Campano feels elated. In the novel *Fractured*, it is said that, upon discovering that the girl lying dead on the floor is not Emma Campano, *Paul was laughing, Elated* (41). This line suggests that Paul feels happy. As a little time goes by, and the realization that his daughter Emma Campano is kidnapped hits him, Paul Campano's feelings change. He feels angry. He shouts at people around him and Paul even takes out his anger on Will, the detective, whom he knows from his childhood. He beats him up. In the novel *Fractured*, it is said that Paul's temper was uncontrollable than ever (277). When the ransom call comes, and after he hears his daughter Emma Campano's voice, Paul Campano feels concerned. He tries calling out to her. In another instance, Paul is said to be feeling paranoid about everything. Also, the inevitable feeling that everyone would feel when their loved one is kidnapped, that is sadness is felt by Paul Campano. We see instances where he cries thinking about his daughter.

Abigail Campano, the mother of the kidnapping victim, experiences a vast array of emotions. There are many instances throughout the novel in which Abigail Campano cries thinking about her daughter. So, she feels sad. Abigail Campano, like her husband, feels angry too. We see Abigail Campano shouting at her husband due to anger after they receive the ransom call. We see

that Abigail Campano feels hopeful that her daughter would come back safely. Immediately after she feels this, she feels guilty that her daughter is suffering while she is safe at home. After some time, we see that Abigail Campano feels doubtful whether she will see her daughter again. In the novel *Fractured* Abigail is said to have "…lain here for the last eighteen hours" (144). This shows that she feels numb. When Abigail's mother Beatrice comforts her, Abigail is described in the novel *Fractured* as having felt "…something like peace" (282) for a moment after a long time.

Looking at the feelings of Paul Campano and Abigail Campano, we notice that there is ambivalence of feelings. The line from the novel Fractured, in which Abigail Campano says, "I can feel remorse, I can feel anger, and helplessness and fury" (279), clearly depicts the ambivalence of feelings felt by Abigail and Paul. They are not able to feel in one particular way throughout the duration of their daughter's kidnapping. The reason for this apparent ambivalence is the uncertain nature of the whole situation. When the conditions prevalent in a particular situation are certain, people know how to feel. They are certain about their feelings. Whereas, in the case of kidnapping, as seen in the novel *Fractured*, the parents Abigail Campano and Paul Campano are not certain about how the kidnapping would end. They don't know if they will see their daughter again. So, they do not know how to feel. Ambivalence of feelings exists where uncertainty exists.

Uncertain and Unexpected Situations and Their Effect on Human Psyche in Relevance to the Novel *Fractured*

The situation during an active kidnapping is uncertain. Nobody is aware of what the motive for kidnapping is, if and until a ransom call is received. Even if a motive is discovered, one cannot be absolutely certain that the child who is abducted will be returned safely. This leads the parents and loved ones of the victims to be uncertain about how to feel. In turn, a vast array of emotions will be felt by them. Abigail Campano and Paul Campano feel sad, angry, hopeful and are anxious throughout the duration of the kidnapping in the novel *Fractured*. There is ambivalence of feelings. For instance, in the novel, after the ransom call, discussion on the next step to be taken was being discussed by the detectives. Abigail Campano knew that something was being discussed but she was not involved in decision making, as that is the standard

procedure. The detectives were deciding what should be done next. In the novel *Fractured*, we see that Abigail "…was at turns furious and relieved that they weren't involving her" (276). Then it can be seen that, after sometime, Abigail starts crying. It is apparent that there is ambivalence in the feelings of Abigail Campano. According to the book, *The Crime of Family Abduction*

> The taking of a child is a traumatic event that can have physiological and psychological effects on the searching parent. The parent may experience a rollercoaster of emotions. She may be filled with fear, helplessness, and anxiety not knowing where her children are and what is happening to them (29).

These lines suggest that the uncertainty during an active kidnapping leads the parents and loved ones to feel a lot of emotions. This is why it can be noticed that the feelings of Abigail Campano and Paul Campano in the novel *Fractured* are ambivalent in nature.

The article "The Relationship between Uncertainty and Affect" throws light on the appraisal theory of emotion. Appraisal theory of emotion suggests a direct relationship between feelings and uncertainty. According to appraisal theories of emotion, emotions are adaptive processes. It reflects appraisals of features in the environment. The certainty and uncertainty about the out com of a particular situation is a dimension of appraisal theory. The perceived certainty or uncertainty of a situation fundamentally determines the feeling invoked in a person. So, the appraised uncertainty has a role to play when it comes to what we feel (3). The novel *Fractured* can be looked at with the understanding that emotions are adaptive processes, and that it reflects appraisals of the various features in the environment. That is, it can be looked at with the understanding that emotion changes and is shaped according to situations people are facing. In the novel, Emma Campano and Paul Campano are facing an uncertain situation. They are not able to appraise or judge the features in their environment properly because of the uncertain situation they are facing. The only perception they can make of the situation is that everything is very uncertain. Due to this, they are not able to feel one particular emotion. They do not know what to make out of the situation. So, they exhibit a vast range of feelings that constantly keep changing. Their feelings are ambivalent in nature because of the uncertainty. We see in the

novel *Fractured* that the appraised uncertainty of whether their daughter Emma Campano will return home safely, plays a major role in what Abigail Campano and Paul Campano are feeling. When Abigail Campano is alone, she thinks about the worst that could happen to her daughter and feels sad. She also gets angry that someone could think of putting her daughter Emma Campano through a horrific ordeal. When her mother Beatrice, the grandmother of Emma speaks to her telling her that everything will turn out well, Abigail feels hopeful and she even feels peaceful for a fraction of a second. The uncertainty of the outcome of the situation plays a major role in the way Abigail feels. When Paul Campano realizes that his daughter has been kidnapped, he feels angry. When the ransom call comes, he hears his daughter's voice and it is noticeable that he feels concerned. Then he becomes sad and starts crying. It is the uncertainty of the outcome that makes Paul Campano feel an array of emotions as he is not able to judge the situation properly.

The article "The Relationship between Uncertainty and Affect" highlights that the Behavioral Inhibition System guides behavior in unexpected situations. According to the Behavioral Inhibition System Theory, novel stimuli, unexpected events, or unexpected conflicts lead to the activation of the neurological Behavioral Inhibition System. The activation of BIS is related to anxiety. A notable factor proposed in this theory as mentioned is novel stimuli. The situation that Abigail Campano and Paul Campano are facing is not only uncertain but new too. They have never faced a situation where their daughter has been kidnapped before. The situation they are in is completely new. The feelings felt by Abigail Campano and Paul Campano are hopefulness, sadness, peacefulness, numbness, paranoia, fearfulness and anger. There is an ambivalence between these feelings and this makes the parents anxious. Anxiety takes over them in this new and uncertain situation leading them to behave in a way which is different from how they used to behave prior to this situation. We see that Paul Campano wanted to put an end to the kidnapping ordeal soon by offering double the ransom amount for the immediate release of his daughter. He failed to understand that a kidnapping cannot be put to an end that easily and he ends up hitting the detective Will out of frustration. Also, we see that Abigail Campano takes out her anger on her husband Paul Campano. She argued with him and she slapped him for the first time ever.

We see that the behavior that is exhibited by Paul Campano and Abigail Campano stems from anxiety that in turn stems from the ambivalent feelings felt by them both in an uncertain and unexpected situation.

Supporting Loved Ones of Victims during Uncertain Situations with Reference to the Novel *Fractured*

The book *The Crime of Family Abduction* suggests what can be done by friends and family for the loved ones of the kidnapped victim. It is important for friends and family to understand what the loved ones of victims are going through. It is important for loved ones of victims to stay healthy. Even though they won't feel like eating properly, family and friends should make sure they get enough food to stay healthy. Friends and family of loved ones of victims should advise them to seek professional help. It is of foremost importance to encourage the parents to hold onto hope (30). These are some ways to support loved ones of victims. In the novel *Fractured*, we see that Beatrice, the mother of Abigail Campano takes good care of Abigail. When Abigail Campano refuses to eat, her mother fondles her and tells Abigail that she needs to eat. Abigail's anxiety can be seen and she starts speaking about how worried she feels. Beatrice supports her and listens to her calmly. In the novel *Fractured*, we see that "Beatrice stroked Abigail's hand and said you need to be strong to Abigail" (282). When Abigail wonders who Emma would be after they get her back, Beatrice encourages Abigail to hold on to hope by saying:

> She will be your daughter, and you will be her mother, and you'll make everything fine for her, because that is what mothers do. The line in the novel *Fractured*, for just a moment, the certainty in her voice, the sureness of her words, brought something like peace to Abigail for the first time since this waking nightmare had started (282).

This shows that Abigail did indeed feel better. It is very important for family and friends to assure the loved ones of victims and give them some kind of certainty to hold onto when everything else is uncertain.

Conclusion

We understand that in the novel *Fractured* by Karin Slaughter, Abigail Campano and Paul Campano's feelings were ambivalent in nature. Their behavior was sometimes unusual and unlike how they used to behave prior to the kidnapping. The reason behind these is the uncertainty and the unexpected nature   rt from their extended friends and family helped them hold on to hope till their daughter was returned. From the novel *Fractured*, it can be understood that people experience ambivalence of feelings during uncertain and unexpected situations and that support from extended family and friends is of utmost importance.

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The Grayscale: Reassessing the Hero-Villain Binary in V.E. Schwab's *Vicious*

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Abstract

The human mind prefers to stick to binaries, it rarely bothers to look into the grey area between the black and the white. Perhaps that is why humans tend to pick sides while narrating. It is not easy to tell a story without personal opinions or political influences making an impression on our narration. But, occasionally, a narrative breaks free of the hold of the binary and spills a story that stands out. V. E. Schwab's *Vicious* is one such text. in Schwab does something spectacular by writing a story that takes no sides and convinces the reader to not take sides either, at the same time. While these things are not hard to accomplish individually, they are definitely not easy to manage together, because it is almost impossible to stop the reader from taking sides without explicitly telling them to not do so (in which case, the book will be taking a side of its own). And yet, Schwab manages to do exactly that. It is interesting to note that the methods the writer employs to manage this feat are simple and elegant. It is the perfect execution of these simple methods that holds the book together.

The third person omniscient narrative of *Vicious* skips between the present and the past in an interesting manner. The reader first meets one of the main characters, Victor as he is digging up a dead man with the help of a thirteen-year-old girl in order to serve his needs while fighting his old friend and academic rival, Eli. The image that scene creates in the reader's mind is that of a selfish, arrogant man who has utterly no regard for anyone's rights except his own – a man with no "morals", especially because digging a grave is taboo in almost all parts of the world and creates a strong impact on readers regardless of their cultural or religiou backgrounds. But as the story progress

and moves suddenly into the past, Victor becomes more than just a "type" and a real person full of complexities and reasons to be the way he is. This transition of one of the protagonists from type to character is crucial to the story's ability to be unbiased, because it produces someone who will not fit into the hero/villain categorization. By narrating the obviously biased present first and then skipping into the more liberal past later, Schwab deconstructs the initial image in the audience's mind steadily and by doing so, issues a silent warning against judging the characters and the story without deep consideration and contemplation. This is one of the very first techniques employed to attain the goals of both being unbiased, and encouraging the readers to do the same. The switch between the present and the past is made every one or two chapters and the characters are built into existence slowly and with meticulous attention to detail. The subtleness of these details makes the flesh of the characters' beings, highlights their humanness and makes them relatable to a certain degree, regardless of how different they might have seemed at the beginning of the story. It is not easy to deconstruct the very first impression a character makes, and hence, it can only be done if the author moves the story at a slow pace, which is what Schwab does with *Vicious* Readers often complain of the slow start of the book, but are also grateful for it by the time they reach the end because they connect to the characters on a deeper level because of it.

Changing points of view is one of the most common methods used to narrate a story through different perspectives and Schwab exploits the opportunities it offers in this book. The story is mostly filtered through Victor's eyes, but it also shifts to Eli's occasionally, and offers up a different version, which creates a broader picture where "good" and "evil" keep shifting positions as the points of view do. For instance, Eli Cardale realises that his friend Victor (who is also an ExtraOrdinary – someone with superhuman abilities – like Eli) has killed his girlfriend, and he decides to make it his mission to annihilate all ExtraOrdinary individuals himself. He is perfectly justifiable when looked at from his perspective, but when Victor narrates the story, Eli is not only wrong, but also a bit of a psychopath. Undoubtedly, Victor thinks himself just and righteous in seeking revenge, but as the story shifts to Eli's point of view, the reader is made to feel that that cannot be the

only version of truth. What makes the alteration in the points of view intriguing is that, more often than not, they point out certain similarities between characters rather than the differences between them. Small hints of connections between the characters are what convince the reader that they are both right in ways that cannot be questioned, even though their actions might not be justifiable to each other. This shows the reader that there can be no single truth or story, only multiple versions of truth that are influenced by the circumstances and beliefs of different people and that, at times, these truths may even contradict each other. This idea of plurality of truths aligns with Mikhail Bakhtin's notion of 'polyphony.' In his work *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, he elaborates on how Dostoevsky thought ' 'in points of view, consciousnesses, voices" (Bakhtin 93) rather than in terms of categorical and fixed ideas with quantifiable truth values. The same can be said of Schwab's ideas on morality. Hence, it is impossible for the reader to take sides without feeling guilty of being irrational or unfair. In order to achieve this, the story is shown (mimesis) rather than told. By showing the story without dictating the morals that govern it, Schwab leaves space for the audience to think for themselves and wonder if there should always be a clear division between right and wrong, and if those are the only two boxes one can place one's actions and thoughts in. This might shake the human psyche initially since it is not used to such liberty of thought being granted by most works of literature (since stories always tend to teach to follow rather than encourage to think) but to those who think beyond the binary, it will make perfect sense, surely. The shift in points of view also helps the author to conceal and reveal details (especially towards the end where twists pop up) only when necessary and weave the different pieces of the narrative together to create a style of prose that is engaging and entertaining for the reader, pulling the reader into the world of the book without any hesitation regardless of how slowly it begins. It is important to note that these shifts in perspectives and time neither affect the flow of the plot or the clarity of the narration. The concepts of morality and villainy are torn apart and examined from varying angles at different instances throughout the book. One such instance is when the author writes,

But these words people threw around – humans, monsters, heroes,

villains – to Victor it was all just a matter of semantics. Someone could call themselves a hero and still walk around killing dozens. Someone else could be labelled a villain for trying to stop them. Plenty of humans were monstrous, and plenty of monsters knew how to play at being human. (Schwab 270-271)

The very idea that everything that is not right is wrong (or that everything that is not conventionally "good" is "evil") is attacked through these words. Throughout the book, Schwab plays with such ideas and norms while deconstructing them critically through her story, characters and prose which enhances the reading experience and encourages the reader to think beyond the classic, boring binary of "hero" and "villain". It also points out that heroism/villainy are not exclusive to some, and that no matter how heroic one's deeds are, one might still be a villain in someone else's eyes and vice-versa. The characters' motives for their actions also say a lot about how usually praised habits or beliefs can be unhealthy. While Victor wishes to stop Eli (a literal murderer) to take his revenge, Eli is a believer who convinces himself that executing people with supernatural powers is God's work. This shows that ideas of God/ religion (accepted and appreciated beliefs of society) may prove more harmful than the usually condemned motives of revenge or jealousy, and that no one can be redeemed of their actions because of their beliefs alone. One of the main factors that play a huge role in putting people into boxes is language and therefore, Schwab allots an array of words for the characters to describe themselves and a slightly different set of words which others/the narrator use to describe them. By this method, varying images of characters are created, which increase the depth and layers each character holds within. For example, Eli thinks of himself as a saviour who is doing the right thing to save the world, so do most people who have heard of him because he has made sure to advertise himself as a hero with the help of the police in order to get away with killing ExtraOrdinaries, but Victor, having known Eli longer and closer, considers him both dangerous and brilliant at once. Likewise, Victor is condemned to be a threat by many after he breaks out of prison and threatens to stop Eli, but one of his friends considers him the one person who can keep her "safe." These multiple layers stop the reader from categorising the characters into fixed conventional roles, and as a result, the

story itself remains independent of motives.

Portraying a character as a hero or a villain is easy, but to write a story that refuses to do so is not a simple endeavour. *Vicious* is one among the rare stories where there is no clear divide between being the hero or the villain. It makes one think of what exactly heroism is, or what "good" and "evil" are, and if those are ideas that can be defined. Perhaps they are not, and even if they are, one has no method to measure how much of those ideas (or values) one embodies. As long as categories exist, narratives will continue to classify and compare, but there will still be stories like these that break through the surface of the strictly binary style of thinking, to offer something unique to the world. Such stories make one wonder what the world would look like if it was governed by a different set of rules and values.

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Translated Cultures in *Funny in Farsi*

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Abstract

In translation, as well as in cultural studies, hybridity is perceived as the point of contact between cultural spaces which transforms all the subjects involved in it. Keeping in mind that the conception of hybridity took place by denouncing the fact that any culture constitutes of homogenous components, it has been established that coming together of various cultures in one single space creates the dynamics of hybridization as Wolf and Fukari say, "All cultures are hybrid, none is… pure,… none is constituted by a homogenous tissue" (44). Hybridization, for Bakhtin, is the amalgamation of two social languages, as well as, two different linguistic consciousness, within the boundaries of an isolated utterance, but segregated from one another by relevant social factors. Bhabha, one of the Holy Trinity of Postcolonial studies, defines hybridity as the concept in which identities are seen as constructions created by the meeting of two cultures and nations. Hence, there is no existence of a pure Eastern or a Western culture but taking part in such division generates an "Other". This is a procedure through which experiences are termed invalid or negated. On the other hand, Schaffner and Adab look at hybridity as a predestined consequence of internationalization and globalization: "Hybridity has been shown to be a constituting characteristic of social interaction resulting mainly from the contemporary globalization of communication and from the effects of communication in spaces of fuzzy or merging borders, which in turn affect cultural and linguistic identities." Hence, we can see that due to the mixing of cultural borders, identities are transposed.

The idea of "Third Space" propounded by Bhabha is of utmost importance when conversing about hybridity since most critics believe that these "in-between" spaces are the authentic contact zones within which cultural encounters take place, resulting in hybridity. Wolf and Fukari give their own concept of "Third Space" as: "The "Third Space" results from the

overlapping of cultures understood as hybrid and can be understood as contact zone between cultures and as the encounter of spaces, which now, as the product of translation between cultures can generate borderline affects and identifications." In Translation Studies, hybridity within cultures and languages creates a "transnational and translational" cultural identity (Bhabha 1994, 247). Therefore, translation is no more considered as "an interchange between separate wholes, but as a course of merging and mutual contamination; it is not a transfer from source to target, but a process that takes place in the Third Space beyond both" (Zand 2015, 3). Third space opens a discussion not only about postcolonial studies but also in translation as Bhabha puts it: "It is that Third Space, though unrepresentable in itself, which constitutes the discursive conditions of enunciation that ensure that the meaning and symbols of culture have no primordial unity or fixity; that even the same signs can be appropriated, translated, rehistoricized and read anew."

Considering the above argument, translation evolves from the operative task of exchange between two texts originating from two different languages but it in turn becomes "the performative nature of cultural communication" (Bhabha 1994, 228). Through the interpretation of Bhabha's "Third Space", Wolf and Fukari consider translational activity as "an interactive process, a meeting place where conflicts are acted out and the margins of collaborations explored." According to them, this space is a "contact zone of controversial potentials, presaging powerful cultural changes." They conclude their understanding by stating that negotiation is mandatory "to translate between cultures" and "to debate the cultural differences".

Scholars of Translation Studies are also of the opinion that translators occupy the space in between two languages and cultures, making them a hybrid entity. This in-betweenness is clear in migrant or immigrant literatures. In the contemporary world, migrant literatures belong from non-western spaces but take up discourses from both western and the native cultures. Amongst the diverse field of Translation Studies, "interlinear translation" openly disregards the norms and conventions of the target language, the outcome resulting in a hybrid text, as confirmed by Shuttleworth and Cowie: "Interlinear translation is a type of extremely literal translation in which TL words are arranged line by line below or above the ST items to which they

correspond. As a result of using this type of translation, what frequently happens is that the linguistic norms of TL are violated." (81)

Hutnyk investigated the impact of migration and mobility on the development of cultural artifacts, classifying diasporic writings as immigrant literature. Migration and mobility, as said by Hutnyk (2005), generate a lot of cultural output, including literature, cinema, and art. Diasporic writings, so frequently sold under the banner of hybridity, were one of the most widely praised, as well as, disputed things in analysing our current social situation. Yazdani expresses on the similar lines: "The immigrant and exiled authors and/or actors of each realm have created a spacial literature with its own peculiarities in their artistic and literary activities at the host countries. This literature which differs from the domestic literature both in content and register is typically known as immigration/exile literature." (15)

Funny in Farsi provides its readers with a profound insight into the immigrant experience through the point of view of a hilarious Iranian family. Dumas' touching account of the feelings of a stranger associated with a strange land will resonate with those who has experienced isolation from the society at any given phase in life. Through her immigrant experience, she exposes the confusing aspects of America with its Disneyland to mixed marriages. The novel was a nominee for the PEN/USA Award in 2004 as well as the Thurber Prize for American Humor. It has been accepted across the country in junior high, high school, and college syllabi. Several colleges have chosen it for reading comprehension programmes such as California State University, Fairmont State University of West Virginia, University of Wisconsin, to name a few.

In various works of translation, especially one where an English text is translated to a regional one, we come across phrases which retain certain English terms. Such an example is demonstrated in the translated version of *Funny in Farsi* in Persian. An extract from the original text, such as:

> I always encouraged my mother to learn English, but her talents lay
> elsewhere. Since she had never learned English in school, she had no
> idea of its grammar. She would speak entire paragraphs without using
> any verbs. She referred to everyone and everything as "it,"
> leaving the listener wondering whether she was talking about her

husband or the kitchen table. Even if she did speak a sentence more or less correctly, her accent made it incomprehensible. "W" and "th" gave her the most difficulty. As if God were playing a linguistic joke on us, we lived in "Vee-tee-er" (Whittier), we shopped at "Veetvood" (Whitwood) Plaza, I attended "Leffingvell" School, and our neighbour was none other than "Valter Villiams" (8).

In the Persian translation of the above phrase, we do not encounter transliteration but a simple code-switching and will acquaint the Persian readers with the impression of the strangeness of an unknown land, especially that of a strange language. This also goes on to demonstrate the multi-cultural background of the writer.

Another important aspect of cultural identity is religion. Funny in Farsi exhibits the religious and ideological contradictions that exist in the in-between spaces of the home and the host country as evident through the extract from the novel:

The great American philosopher Dr. Seuss once wrote about a fellow named the Grinch, who for some mysterious reason did not enjoy Christmas. Dr Seuss tried to delve deep into the unfestive mind of this enigmatic creature in order to find a possible reason for his lack of Christmas spirit: It could be that his head wasn't screwed on just right. It could be, perhaps, that his shoes were too tight. (195)

These are fine explanations, but to me, the obvious answer was overlooked. Perhaps the Grinch was, like me, a Muslim, someone who was left out of all Christmas festivities. The problem with the religious explanation is obvious: nothing rhymes with "Muslim." At least if you're "Jewish", you can feel "blue-ish" during Christmas, but with "Muslim," you're just stuck" (104). Here, the writer constantly investigates the "Self" and compares it with the culture of the "Other", proceeding to display the hybridized space.

The writer expresses her political viewpoint on America and American politics in this example:

"My relatives and I are proud to be Iranian, but we also give tremendous thanks for our lives in America, a nation where freedom reigns. But although "land of the free" refers to the essential freedoms that make this country the greatest democracy on earth, it

> could also refer to the abundance of free samples available throughout this great land (39)."

This quotation from the original text can be sited as evidence of code switching, keeping in mind the literal and the contextual meanings accompanied by the word "free"; the meanings being directly transferred in the work of translation as well, providing an ideological toehold.

> In another extract from the novel:
>
> In preparing for the aqd, we needed a sofreh, which is traditionally a hand-sewn cloth, roughly the size of a queen-size bedspread, on which the family arranges foods and objects, all of which hold special meaning. At the head of the sofreh are the mirror and candleholders, symbolizing purity and love. Iranian families pass these objects from generation to generation… (220)

In addition to the sweets, there was also a basket of almonds and walnuts, representing fertility, and a bowl of honey, for a sweet life. A platter of feta cheese and herbs and flat bread represented happiness and prosperity. Finally, we had a small wooden tree with carved radishes placed on the tip of each branch, which didn't represent anything but looked cute (74)", we get a glimpse of Dumas' explanation of a traditional Iranian wedding. This extract possesses transliterated words such as "aqd" and "sofreh" which are akin to Iranian culture. Through the act of transliteration, rather than providing footnotes or translating the words to a resembling approximation, the writer is introducing certain aspects of her Iranian culture to her American readers, thus imbibing the text in a new cultural atmosphere. Going further in the text, we come across a unique example of multi-culturalism:

> "Dinner was followed by more dancing. The DJ played everything from Persian songs to top forty hits to salsa. The dance floor remained full until the time came to throw the bouquet. This is not an Iranian tradition, but any ritual that might lead to finding a husband is quickly and readily adopted into my culture. With all eligible females holding their breath, I threw my bouquet" (74).

Hybridization taking place in both the Iranian and American cultures through "throwing the bouquet" (75) is also an instance of how immigrants or diasporic individuals adapt to the cultures of their host country, giving rise to new

traditions and cultures.

Cultural shock is an inevitable consequence when two cultures become acquainted with each other. The text shows the Americans experiencing such a cultural shock who were unaware of certain Iranian traditions as exemplified in the given extract:

> "It's difficult to separate Iranians from their tradition of endlessly hugging and kissing on both cheeks. Women kiss women, men kiss women, and big hairy men kiss other burly men. Foreigners, especially men, tend to find this tradition a bit disconcerting. Since the French also kissed twice on the cheek, François was not completely frightened by the throng of relatives waiting to give him a peck… I've known Americans who, unaware of the kissing ritual, have wanted to run for the nearest exit at the sight of a puckering Iranian uncle approaching with open arms" (78).

The Iranians being unaware of the American's reaction to their culture tries to justify the resemblance with the French culture, highlighting the stark differences between both the American and the Iranian culture, but at the same time an effort to bridge the gap is visible.

The Persian emigrants in this narrative established a mixed culture and identity, according to this analysis. They preserved their own country's values, traditions, heritage, and language while also welcoming American customs and culture. Dumas, for example, describes how she grew up in the presence of family in the chapter titled "It's All Relatives." The significance of family in Iranian culture is mirrored in their dialect:

> "Only one word describes their [uncle's] children in English, 'cousin', whereas in Persian, we have eight words to describe the exact relationship of each cousin" (149).

> Dumas uses phrases like "a second set of parents," "warm," "affectionate," "compliments,"

"smart," "patient," and "feelings of being enveloped with love" (150) to describe her family, revealing how significant her Persian history and origins are to her. The complete family, additionally, assembled in traditional American form; every Thanksgiving, "we give thanks for our lives here in America and for the good fortune of living close to one another in the land of

free" (196). The complete family, additionally, assembled in traditional American form; every Thanksgiving, "we offer gratitude for our lives here in America and for the good fortune of living close to one another in the country of liberty" (196). This demonstrates that, although maintaining their ancestral beliefs, the author and her relatives have adopted the cultural conventions of the host nation, such as Thanksgiving Day celebrations, and have come to cherish their life in the new country. As a result, the author utilizes a hybrid persona, which influences her work and transforms it into a hybrid text example.

The sampling of the extracts is in tandem to Venuti's concept of foreignization strategies versus his domestication strategies, favouring clearly that the construction of the translated text should be as close to the original text as possible. Zand talks about the foreignization in the Persian translation of *Funny in Farsi* as:

> "By using foreignization strategies, the translator preserved foreign elements in the translated text. In fact, he proceeded to hybridizing but by adopting domestication strategies, the translator proceeded to dehybridizing." (81)

Certain critics such as Jan Nederveen Pieterse argue that the concentration of the "Other" through hybridization "is a one-way act of Westernization" (Fay and Haydon 2017, 60). Also, British scholar Bart Moore-Gilbert says that Bhabha's concept "risks itself becoming in between; in trying to bring together European thought and Asian (colonial) experience, it risks belonging to neither category" (Fay and Haydon, 48). Tackling such criticisms, Bhabha explained his expectations from his readers to transcend from passivity and actively take part to combine cultural ideas as he says, "The reader, for me, must feel engaged at all levels of witnessing, in the very midst of unfolding of a theoretical idea." (50) My conclusion states that hybridity is not a western concept since it is a result of westernization brought about by colonization.

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The New Sincerity Ethos

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Abstract

In the early twenty-first century, literary experts, writers, and journalists coined the term "New Sincerity" to describe a broad literary and cultural attitude. The movement, which is associated with the "millennial" generation, spans a wide range of media, including books, poetry, television, cinema, and music. Studying the relationship between sincerity and irony, writer and reader, and postmodernism is all part of analyzing New Sincerity as a movement or ethos. The purpose of this paper is to learn about the characteristics of New Sincerity, its philosophical background and its influence in contemporary literary fiction.

The New Ethos in Contemporary Fiction

New Sincerity is a trend in music, aesthetics, literary fiction, cinema criticism, poetry, literary criticism, and philosophy that is closely related to and sometimes defined as synonymous with post- postmodernism. It refers to works of art that build on and depart from postmodernist irony and cynicism, implying a return to modernism partly. Although it has been in use since the mid-1980s, American author David Foster Wallace popularised it in the 1990s. The word was coined by Soviet poet and artist, Dmitry Prigov and philosopher, Mikhail Epstein in the mid-1980s and early 1990s to describe the antithesis of late Soviet and post-Soviet culture's risking absurdity. In this example, absurdity was defined as a discrepancy between existential and official ideological understandings of things. In this case, absurdity was defined as a conflict between existential understanding of things and their official ideological interpretation.

"New Sincerity" is often described as an ethos in the media, indicating its cultural foothold. In a 2012 Atlantic article called, "Sincerity, Not Irony, Is Our Age's Ethos," Jonathan D. Fitzgerald argues that sincerity is the

overarching ethos of our age. He says, "A recent Knights of Columbus-Marist Poll survey found that among Millennials, six out of 10 prioritized being close to God and having a good family life above anything else." (96)

This indicates that New Sincerity is more than just a rejection of irony, but a shift in everyday values, including an acceptance of vulnerability and simplicity. Intellectual History of 'Sincerity' Perhaps the simplest place to begin a review of the intellectual history of "sincerity" is the dictionary. The first definition of "sincere" listed in the OED reads: "Not falsified or perverted in any way". Since its earliest usage, sincerity has been linked to purity and the absence of corruption or contamination. What is implied here is that whatever stands against sincerity is not just in opposition, but seen as constraining and restrictive—the idea of "freedom from" also continues the trend of defining sincerity negatively.

The role of sincerity in the Romantic tradition of English poetry —and how it evolved during the Victorian era—is a good place to start to show how "sincerity" avoids becoming a static notion, and how it may be repurposed when historical, social, and literary contexts change. Sincerity was a standard by which William Wordsworth and the poets associated with his thought judged poetry. M. H. Abrams writes in The Mirror and the Lamp that this had something to do with the Romantics' careful consideration of how poetry can express truth; in some ways, it was related to a parallel intellectual revolution in science, which looked outward at the natural world and came up with explanations for how it worked and how it is organized—these were undeniable facts that could be verified through careful study. Rather than looking outward, poetry looked inward at "such facts as connected with soul, or a specific personality in its preferences, its volition and power". Poetry gains its value from being a genuine, true expression of feeling—from being sincere—and not from being "artful or contrived". In some ways, Abrams notes, this version of sincerity retains the moral implications of its earliest prominent English usage—to describe the pure religious doctrine espoused by the Protestant Reformation—but this "test of character" is tied to aesthetics, not to any individually held belief: the "good" poet does not think a certain way or write in a certain style, but steadfastly strives to sincerely express himself or herself spontaneously and genuinely, reflecting how they truly feel.

Patricia M. Ball explains how these notions were "confused" during the Victorian era, when the concept of sincerity began to take on overtones of a moral purity test, even going so far as to term it a "adulterating" of the Romantics' ideas. Ball believes that this dilutes the term and pulls it away from the Romantics' conception as an aesthetic criterion and towards "the measure of worth" of a person. This shift—from focusing on the value of poetry to focusing on the stature of an individual—is significant, and the tension between the two continued to resonate through discussions of sincerity in the twentieth century.

Sincerity and Authenticity (1972) by Lionel Trilling is one of the more enduring critical dialogues on sincerity from the last century; originally a series of lectures, Trilling describes the work on its first page as an observation of "the moral life in the process of revising itself". The goal of his research is to look at how sincerity—as a moral imperative—is being replaced by authenticity. Being truthful, according to Trilling, implies having "a congruence between avowal and actual feeling," or being true to oneself in order to always present an honest sense of self to people around you.

Nowadays, literature that embraces "morality" are more acceptable. Perhaps being "detached" is something like what Lionel Trilling refers to in Sincerity and Authenticity as the "best self of Mankind", or the image of a person that society sees as acceptable. Sometimes, to be one's true self is to be an unacceptable version of a person, and it seems like the New Sincerity movement is an ethos that encourages people's true selves, no matter how vulnerable that self may be. "New Sincerity" is a genuine social phenomenon. To define "sincerity" in terms of a "new sincerity-ist," one might use "sentimental" and "sincere" interchangeably. A "new sincere" work might be described as tender, melodramatic, or even self-indulgent. The contemporary literature version of "sincere" abides by this concept of "trueness," particularly when it comes to staying true to one's inner feelings.

The New Sincerity's emphasis on coherence or wholeness—whether it's a unity of purpose or a directness of expression—has some roots in early-twentieth-century conceptions of authenticity and the self, which creates a problematic tension due to the shape critical theory took in the latter half of the century. Individuals do not have the ability to devote their attention and care in

shaping their sense of self, according to the dominant trend in post structuralism and other post-war ideologies. The major waves in critical theory throughout the last several generations, such as those of Althusser, Foucault, and Spivak, have seen the "subject" as something pre- determined by power structures. The self does not precede power's subjugation, but is formed by it.

The New Sincerity acknowledges the pervasiveness of these theories in its search for a sense of coherence and connection, but does not claim to have the key to deactivating the power structures inherent in them. Instead, The New Sincerity readers are constantly on the lookout for connections that can be made in spite of these theories— fragments that can be put together to form a discernible whole, messages and ideas of mind that can be pieced together to propose possibilities for autonomy. The New Sincerity is a manner of viewing texts rather than isolating aspects of a text in order to describe what makes it "sincere." It guides and conditions readers to read and respond to it in specific ways. It's the "new" sincerity because it's positioned to analyse all of these rich ideas—sincerity, authenticity, subjectivity, and autonomy—in a creative way that pays homage to the various philosophical traditions mentioned above without adhering to any of them too closely.

Present Era

Because of Adam Kelly's essay on David Foster Wallace, the New Sincerity has long been connected with and generally characterised as simply in opposition to postmodernism. Author David Foster Wallace is recognized as being the father of sincerity and sentimentality as a contemporary art value criterion. His work Infinite Jest, published in 1996, was named one of the 100 best English novels published between 1923 and 2005 by "Time" magazine, making him a significant figure in contemporary fiction. Based on the sentimental content of his fiction, as well as the ideology offered in his writings and other personal comments, he is considered as the founder of New Sincerity in literary discourse.

Wallace addresses the human need for connection in his work, building the basis for New Sincerity. In his 1993 essay, "E Unibus Pluram" (which may be treated as a manifesto for "New Sincerity"), Wallace acknowledges sincerity's bad reputation in comparison to the detachment of the 90's. Wallace raises concerns about postmodernism's embrace of irony, noting that

current culture may reject sincerity's "niceness" in favour of more cynical positions. Contemporary innovation, according to Wallace, necessitates "conviction" in human emotions. Wallace's interest in "conviction" is shared by the art associated with the New Sincerity movement, which rejects cynicism and values honesty. Looking at things without irony and being honest about one's thoughts have had negative connotations in the past, thus the next counterculture movement would potentially be honest. Although Wallace did not use the term "sincerity" in his essay, literary critics and readers believe that it encapsulates sincerity. Sincerity, according to Wallace, is essential because it gets to the essence of human matters.

Wallace asks his readers to put their faith in him, and if they do, they will be rewarded with a message that breaks through the ironic barrier that separates them. This conception of The New Sincerity—as a contract between author and reader to trust one other—promises a lot, but when examined closely, it falls apart. According to Kelly, a crucial feature of New Sincerity writing is that the author is conscious that they are being judged, which adds a new level of sincerity to the reading experience. Additionally, as the authors are aware that they are being judged and may choose to acknowledge this in their writing. Some say that complete sincerity is impossible in a work of fiction, hence the notion of "reality" in the context of fiction could be questioned.

However, the illusion of fiction, as well as film, can help us appreciate the author's reality more fully. The author may be able to express himself in ways that he cannot do face-to-face through the use of symbols and storytelling. New Sincerity retains certain postmodern elements in this way.

In Wallace's fiction, various fictional characters are designed to portray his internal struggles in a cathartic way for both the author and the reader. For example, the protagonist Hal in Infinite Jest deals with alienation and drug addiction, and while Wallace is not Hal, Hal may mirror concerns that Wallace has faced. Hudson claims that because the characters are not autobiographical, the audience will never genuinely get to know him, that his "sincerity" is an illusion, and that his work will revert to a postmodern perspective. Regardless of a "capital T"- truth in the author's expression, it's likely that the ethos of New Sincerity is to embrace the root of human sentimentality. In an interview

with Hugh Kennedy and Geoffrey Polk, compiled by Stephen Burn in Conversations with David Foster Wallace, Wallace addresses the way this need manifests in literature, saying, "We're all terribly, terribly lonely. And there's a way, at least in prose fiction, that can allow you to be intimate with the world and with a mind and with characters that you just can't be in the real world...a piece of fiction that's really true allows you to be intimate with...I don't want to say people, but it allows you to be intimate with a world that resembles our own".

He concedes that this is something that all good fiction writers do in some fashion. He calls this work "true," but adds that the world represented in it must "resemble" a true, authentic world, rather than being an accurate picture of one individual person's life. To communicate "sincerity," the setting represented in his writing does not have to be autobiographical. Sincerity is redefined in New Sincerity to include the commonplace and mundane parts of existence. Fiction allows people to connect with each other in a creative way, without any social barriers. We fall in love with characters, and they become real to us. It makes a person feel important, as though every man's life is being recognised. It serves as a reminder that they are not alone. Sincerity is no more a personal experience, but rather a shared one, and mass media is the ideal medium for this. The common thread of New Sincerity represents a form of truth, not necessarily the truth.

Millennial Literature

The Internet is an integral part of millennial art. Millennial literature, also known as "Alt-Lit," emerges as the result of the New Sincerity movement. Internet culture has influenced contemporary fiction, which is frequently published online through social media platforms. Many criticise the straightforward language and self-indulgent subject matter, dismissing it with the statement, "Oh, anyone can publish fiction these days." New Sincerity, often known as Alt-Lit, emphasises direct communication of personal suffering and encourages emotional vulnerability between the writer and the reader. The dark sincerity that these contemporary writers provide contributes to an understanding of the current world as an unkind, hostile place. For troubled people, honest literature is cathartic, and they can use it to cope with their unpleasant emotions; readers utilise poetry as a guidance and inspiration

in their own life. Although the exact borders of the original New Sincerity "movement" are unknown, sincerity as a virtue can be found in literature, poetry, music, film, and even ads today.

New Sincerity, a reaction to postmodern and digital age cynicism, is associated with the "millennial" era, yet the New Sincerity concept of a strong reader-writer, or corporation-consumer, relationship allows for the opportunity to harness human vulnerability for capital gain. It's debatable who belongs in the New Sincerity genre. Some "New Sincerity" authors do not consider themselves to be part of the genre. Though David Foster Wallace's intention for New Sincerity has changed, what remains are young people's attempts to find meaning in the chaotic, hyperreal world of social media. New Sincerity remains as an interpretive mode for the apparent sincere qualities of contemporary culture.

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Dystopian Elements of David Mitchell's
Cloud Atlas : Pertinence in
Contemporary Society

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Abstract

Human beings have tried to produce fiction depicting ideal societies since time immemorial. Even Plato talks about an ideal society which is filled with justice and righteousness in his work, The Republic. Sir Thomas Moore coined the term 'Utopia' for representing ideal societies in 1516, through his work *Utopia.* The writers created worlds where everything was safe and secure, and where people lived with happiness and content. However the beginning of the twentieth century brought about drastic changes in various fields and even in the outlook towards human beings and nature. The first three decades of the twentieth century was a time of radical innovations and scientific discoveries. Great developments were made in the fields of science and technology and simultaneously, there was a rise of capitalism. This was followed by the First World War which made many writers question the utopian dreams, which dominated the western thought for centuries. The First and Second World Wars destroyed the hopes and dreams of people about an ideal society. Thus dystopian literature emerged as a counterpart to Utopian dreams during the twentieth century.

Dystopian literature is specifically that literature which situates itself in direct opposition to utopian thought, warning against the potential negative consequences of arrant utopianism. At the same time, dystopian literature generally also constitutes a critique of existing social conditions or political system, either through the critical examination of the utopian premises upon which those conditions and systems are based or through the imaginative extension of those conditions and systems into different contexts that more clearly

reveal their flaws and contradictions. (Booker 3)

After industrialization, the swiftness with which changes occurred is unprecedented in the history of human life. The utopian projections of the Enlightenment period and its endless praise and hope for human integrity collided with the unforeseen consequences of industrialized society.

Dystopian novels, by acting as a social critique, attempt to provide fresh perspectives on several problematic social and political practices in the society. Dystopian fiction became a more defined genre with the publication of Yevgeny Zamyatin's *We* in 1921. The work sets some of the benchmarks for dystopian novels such as trouble, unresolved ends, and authoritarian governments harassing people. In a city ruled by the powerful Benefactor, the citizens of the totalitarian society live-out lives devoid of passion and creativity.

Other major works that belong to the genre of dystopian fiction include George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four,* Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* Ray Bradbury's *Fahrenheit 451,* Margaret Atwood's The Handmaid's Tale, H G Wells' *The Time Machine,* Anthony Burgess' *The Handmaid' s Tale* etc. Dystopian fictions have also inspired the productions of several films. Stanley Kubrick's version of *A Clockwork Orange* is perhaps the best example of this group, which also includes film versions of books like *Nineteen Eighty-Four,* Dystopian works possess certain common characteristics. Oppression and rebellion are the major themes of these works. "The fear of industrialization and its co-option of identity is evident everywhere in modern dystopias." (Demerjian 9) "The ultimate tragedy for the modern, dystopian protagonist is not the loss of life, but the loss of individual identity." (Demerjian 8) Disconnection from reality is another major theme in dystopian fiction. Though different dystopian novels highlight different issues such as misuse of technology, environment exploitation, and commercialisation that leads to various kinds of dystopian societies, there are certain common features of a typical dystopian novel These include: totalitarian system of government controlling the citizens of the society, a figurehead or concept often imbibed by the citizens, division of the citizens into privileged and unprivileged groups, dehumanizing situations, technological mismanagements, degradation and exploitation of the natural world and severe attempts to eliminate those who

stand against the controlling regimes. Often the situations described in these novels occur in futuristic world, where technological advancements have reached its highest level. However, what was considered future in the earlier dystopian works has become a reality in the contemporary society. Often these works reflect the fears in contemporary society.

Dystopian Elements in *Cloud Atlas* and its Pertinence in Contemporary Society

Cloud Atlas includes six narratives which are arranged chronologically. *Cloud Atlas* moves across spatial and temporal domains stretching from the islands of the South Pacific in the mid-nineteenth century to a Belgian chateau near Bruges in the early 1930s, Southern California in the mid- 1970s, contemporary London and a nursing home for the elderly in Hull, South Korea in the twenty-second century and a distant future that foresees a return to a primitive, survivalist past in post-apocalyptic Hawaii." (Ryan and Shoop 95)For the purpose of this analysis, only three out of the six narratives, titled "The Pacific Journal of Adam Ewing", "Half Lives-The First Luisa Rey Mystery" and "An Orison of Sonmi~451" are taken into consideration.

In "The Pacific Journal of Adam Ewing", a San Francisco lawyer named Adam Ewing voyages to the South Pacific and back in order to locate the Australian beneficiary of a will executed in California. His journal describes Adam being shipwrecked on Chatham Island. While he waits for his ship Prophetess to get repaired, Adam gets acquainted with several sights of the island. He gets to know about the indigenous Moriori tribes, who got replaced from the island by the powerful Maori tribes, who got support even from the British. He also got acquainted with Autua, a Moriori slave who was brutally whipped by his owners and whom he helped to escape from the island. The three main plotlines revolve around predacity: Autua being exploited at the hands of his predators, a young sailor Raphael being brutally sodomized by his fellow sailors until he commits suicide and Ewing himself being poisoned and robed by his friend, Doctor Henry Goose.

The third narrative, "Half Lives-The First Luisa Rey Mystery" is set in the fictional town of Buenas Yerbas, California in 1975. Luisa Rey, the protagonist, is a columnist for the Spyglass magazine. She reports against the Hydra Nuclear reactor made by the Seaboard Corporation. A senior physicist,

Sixsmith also helped her, but the company officials tried to kill her, from which she escaped with the help of a company official.

In "An Orison of Sonmi~451"section, Mitchell portrays the distant future Nea So Copros, a globalized hyper corporate society in Korea.Sonmi-451 narrates her experiences as a fabricant, or clone, in a society ruled by corporations called Nea So Copros. She describes her life at Papa Song's restaurant where she worked before she was freed by the Unionists. There are four types of fabricants working at Papa Song's, the Sonmis, the Yonnas, Ma-Leo Das and the Hwa-Soons. They differ in appearance and temperament. Each fabricant is named according to their stem type and given a number to distinguish themselves from their peers. Papa Song acts as both the face of the company and spiritual leader to the fabricants, appearing as a large head in the dome of the dinery in which they serve. After the death of her friend, Yoona-939, Sonmi started questioning the existence of fabricants who are mere slaves for the purebloods. This section serves as an exact example of a dystopian society.

Several dystopian elements can be identified in these three narratives.

"The temporal breadth of Cloud Atlas suggests the persistence of human beings' hunger and bad desire for the accrual of power throughout time, whether expressed in the realities and ramifications of colonisation, personal and familial relationships or cannibalism, slavery and varying levels of corruption." (Demerjian 10)

The first narrative depicts how human individuals become prey at the hands of superior humans. The young sailor boy is verbally, physically and sexually assaulted by the rest of the crew. Even David Mitchell clearly quotes this domination, which is quite evident in our contemporary society. Through colonization, the Morioris, who were the indigenous tribes, were pushed to the economic and political margins. They are deprived of their freedom and forced to live in an oppressed situation. The Europeans began to transform the island, along with the Maoris. European expansion into Chatham Island steers to the destruction of native of discrimination devastated the Native Chatham population. David Mitchell reinforces this idea with his statement, "Maoris prey on Moriori, Whites prey on darker-hued cousins, fleas prey on mice, cats prey on rats, Christians on infidels, first mates on cabin-boys, Death on the

Living. (523-24)

The second blow for them came in the form of commercial exploitation of seals. Seal hunting was a key subsistence activity from the time of first human settlement in New Zealand. The early European explorers also took seals for food, used their skins to repair ragging and rendered their fat for lamp oil. Later, they misused seals for commercial gain rather than subsistence needs. The high prices that could be obtained in the early years of the sealing industry led to intensive exploitation, and an equally rapid search for new sealing grounds. Within a few years, almost all of the places in which fur seals and elephant seals could be found were discovered and exploited. The sealers correspondingly turned to farming and cattle rearing. In the name of transforming the land, the Europeans have been responsible for extensive deforestation and forest degradation. The deforestation occurred mainly on the most fertile soils nearest to the coastal regions. The Europeans killed off a large portion of the island's population with disease. Most of the Moriori eventually left Chatham because of the brutalities. The native Moriori were taken as slaves and forbidden to have children within their own race.

Another important aspect associated with dystopian society is the kind of tyrannical systems that operate for their own benefits. In "Half-Lives", the government deceives the people of the Beunas Yerbas by making them believe that the Hydra-Zero Reactor is safe and environment friendly. It also tries to harm the life of freelance journalists like Luisa Rey, who tried to inform public about the hidden intentions of the state. These situations are replicated even in our contemporary society, where the public is misinformed and misguided by those in power, who function only for their benefits.

The hyper-capitalist colonialism of twenty-second-century Korea, explained in the fifth narrative, is a threateningly exploitative and severely striated society. An orison of Sonmi section of *Cloud Atlas* is an example of capitalism and biopower. Sonmi is an example of biopower. She believes in the freedom of people. She also realizes that as individuals, everyone reacts to situations in different ways. But in the world of biopower, the fabricants are under the control of power. Foucault calls this design as the Panopticon, an architectural design put forth by Jeremy Bentham in the mid-19th century for prisons, insane

asylums, schools, hospitals, and factories. Instead of using violent methods, such as torture, and placing prisoners in dungeons that were used for centuries in monarchial states around the world, the progressive modern democratic state needs a different sort of system to regulate its citizens. (Rickel 162)

The fabricants as individuals are suppressed by the social order. They are carefully fabricated in it.

Sonmi understands power becomes more effective through the mechanisms of observation. Following that, Sonmi is always in search of new objects of knowledge over all the surfaces on which power is exercised. Thus colonization, industrial revolution and globalization have transformed the territories with their power and politics. Supremacy and discriminations of power and wealth have brought in several changes in the territories and the inhabitants across ages. Subjugation is unnatural. Such conditions cannot last for long. In any condition of subjugation, there would be elements built in the structure of suppression itself that will introduce newer thoughts and ways for change. That will lead to further exploration of means of liberation. It is evident that the forces of liberation work intermittently in the novels of Mitchell. Mitchell attempts to fix the effects of globalization and liberation and help the characters to find ways out of this cultural and ethical quagmire.

David Mitchell thus portrays the fears and apprehensions of the society to the various scientific and technological developments through the portrayal of several dystopian elements in his novel, *Cloud Atlas*. Thus Cloud Atlas serves as a perfect example of a dystopian novel, which has implications in our contemporary society.

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