Sunny Pleasure Domes and Caves of Ice: Utopias and Dystopias in World Literature

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EDITORIAL NOTE

MEJO, or the MELOW Journal of World Literature, is a peer-refereed E-journal brought out biannually by **MELOW**, the **Society for the Study of the Multi-Ethnic Literatures of the World.** It is a reincarnation of the previous publications brought out in book or printed form by the Society right since its inception in 1998.

MELOW is an academic organization, one of the foremost of its kind in India. The members are college and university teachers, scholars and critics interested in literature, particularly in World Literatures. The Organization meets every year over an international conference. It seeks to maintain academic standards, encourages and grooms younger scholars, and provides a forum for senior scholars in literature.

The papers presented at MELOW conferences are screened, selected, edited and published by a Board of Editors especially appointed for the purpose. Whereas in the initial years the Society favoured a book publication, in subsequent years it was a journal that was published annually. With the changing times, MELOW decided to move on to online publication. The result is *MEJO*.

Dear readers, this is the fourth volume of *MEJO*, the MELOW Journal. While the third volume brought out the essays selected from the 2018 conference held at Dharamshala, this issue contains essays from the 2019 conference held at Jamia Milia Islamia, New Delhi. The papers have been selected by a panel of reviewers from the presented and revised submissions.

We would like to acknowledge the effort put in by Srishti Sharma, research scholar, in the final proofreading of the draft.

We, at MELOW, wish you happy reading!

EDITORS

About MELOW

MELOW (The Society for the Study of the Multi-Ethnic Literatures of the World) was first set up in 1998 as MELUS-India. It is an academic organization, among the foremost of its kind in India. The members are college and university teachers, scholars and critics interested in literature, particularly in world literatures, and literature across borders of time and space. The organization meets every year over an international conference. It seeks to maintain academic standards, encourages younger scholars and provides a forum for senior scholars in literature.

The MELOW journal existed in hard print for about a decade before it went online in a revamped form in 2016. The present issue comprises a selection of papers presented at the 2019 MELOW Conference held in Jamia Millia Islamia, New Delhi.

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ISAAC SEQUEIRA MEMORIAL FUND

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Professor Isaac Sequeira
(5 January 1930--7 September 2006)

Professor Isaac Sequeira from Hyderabad, who worked at the Osmania University and was closely associated with the ASRC, Hyderabad, was a mentor and patron to several generations of academics in India. His sad demise in 2006 created a void hard to fill. We, at MELOW, wish to keep alive the memory of our Patron and guiding light who played a key role in all the activities of our organization.

We have set up an Isaac Sequeira Memorial Fund out of which a cash prize of Rs.5,000 is awarded for the **best paper presented at our conferences** (see details below).*

With effect from the 2010 conference, there is a **Special Invited Lecture** by a person of eminence funded by the Isaac Sequeira Memorial Fund.

Several individuals have come forward to offer contributions towards the corpus and donated generously to the ISM fund. Donations of Rs.1,000 or more may be sent in cash/by draft **payable to MELOW at Chandigarh**. Contributions may be mailed by registered post/courier to Prof Anil Raina, Dept of English, Panjab University, Chandigarh-160014.

*THE ISM AWARD
- In the memory of Prof Isaac Sequeira, MELOW annually awards a prize for the best paper presented at its conference. The award comprises a certificate and a cash prize of Rs.5,000.
- The competition is open to Indian citizens who are members of MELOW. The participant/delegate should be less than forty years of age at the time of the conference. The abstract and complete paper should be submitted by the stipulated deadlines before it is presented at the conference.
- A panel of Judges is appointed by the Office Bearers of MELOW.
- If required, these rules may be amended by a simple majority of members present and voting at the Conference.

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Presidential Address

Space, Place, and Landscape in Literatures of the World

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Our last year's conference was on Space, Place, and Landscape, and in my address last year, I referred to Michel Foucault who, in 1967, had written an essay "Of Other Spaces: Utopias and Heterotopias." So this year, we thought let us move to the more familiar and the less theoretically taxing part of the 'other spaces' that the world literature abounds in, utopias and dystopias. 'Topos,' the Greek word for 'place' is not a common word in English, but 'topos' derivatives have been part of our vocabulary for centuries. Languages, including English, develop and grow by adding prefixes and suffixes to root words. Everyone here would know that in the Greek language, the prefix 'ou-' means no, 'eu-' means good and 'dys-' means 'not good,' and this conference is going to be about good places that do not exist except in imagination and literature, and bad places that we may have to encounter in real in the future. The theme sounds interesting as the romantic poet, S. T. Coleridge, has been roped in to invite, or may be tempt, scholars to write on sunny pleasure-domes and caves of ice, emblematic perhaps of the utopias and dystopias in world literature. But I may strike a note of caution here. In Coleridge the line that the theme is based on, uses the preposition 'with' and not the coordinating conjunction 'and.' The poem refers not to a sunny pleasure-dome and caves of ice, but just to "The **shadow** … of a sunny pleasure-dome **with** caves of ice." And that fits in with what I think of great literature: it is less concerned with presenting good or bad places before us, and more with making us re-think about what we consider to be good or bad. And literature being less about places and more about human beings, I would prefer to focus on the utopian and dystopian impulse or imagination in literature than on the nouns utopia and dystopia as literary genres.

With anti- and post-humanisms gaining popularity, and humanism being considered just an ideological construct, many of you may not agree with me, when I say what I firmly believe in, that Literature is human, this-worldly, and secular in nature. We have been persuaded to believe that we are social or familial or linguistic constructs, living in a world of *maya-jaal*, or appearances and false consciousness. But what about our lived experiences, and if someone has problems with the expression 'lived experiences,' then allow me a bit of philosophical abstraction: are appearances less valid than the essence, is not the experience of appearances more valid than the theoretical debate on essences. Human beings do not have a permanent identity or a self, because they have self-contradiction as their essence. The search for utopia, too, is an expression of this self-contradiction. Immanuel Kant convinced us long back that the use of our rational faculty beyond the domains it is meant for traps us in antinomies, and yet we continue to use reason in our conferences. Poststructuralists tell us that language rebounds on itself, and yet we continue to use it in our lives. In the same way the desire for perfection is

based on the desire to achieve the unachievable. If you achieve what you desire, it is no more desirable, but so long as you have not achieved it, you want to achieve it. That is the utopian impulse. To a layman, the sunny dome is the antonym of the caves of ice, but Coleridge's image merges the two without destroying either of them. Same way, dystopias and utopias have a dialectical connection. But let us move away from abstractions, and deal with some basic human experiences and issues.

Human beings till now have lived in a world of material scarcity, and religions of all varieties, the linear Judaic ones or the cyclical Indian ones have given them pictures of the golden Age that is lost, the Hindu *satya yuga* or the Judaic Garden of Eden. Religions also offer us the idea of Paradise, etc. as a utopian future, but not in this material world. All religions give man the hope that we may re-attain the lost utopia or find a new utopia, but only after physical death. The post-Renaissance modern Western civilization, of which we too are partly a part, on the other hand, is this worldly and man-centered, and hopes, irrespective of whether one is a liberal or a fascist or a Marxist, that with technological development, the world of scarcity will be transformed into a world of plenty and that utopia is a possibility in this world itself. By this world, I mean the world of human beings, even though unlike earlier utopias that focused on travellers to new places, in science fiction, one tends to go into extra-terrestrial worlds and into a far future.

Even before, we had been told of many types of places, Atlantis, El Dorado, Shangri La, etc., which seem like utopias. For illustration purposes, let me go to the idea of Cockaigne, the medieval European notion and not the drug cocaine, though the two may be linked. The French word is *pays de cocaigne* which means the land of plenty. In a feudal economy, the peasant or the serf had to struggle hard for food, and what would he dream of or aspire to, if not food. The blurb on Herman Pleij's *Dreaming of Cockaigne: Medieval Fantasies of the Perfect Life* (2001) describes it as a place where

> roasted pigs wander about with knives in their backs to make carving easy, where grilled geese fly directly into one's mouth, where cooked fish jump out of the water and land at one's feet. The weather is always mild, the wine flows freely, sex is readily available, and all people enjoy eternal youth.

I do not want to bring in Abraham Maslow on human needs here, but we know that human beings and therefore literature are not concerned only with biological needs. Literature is concerned with Man in this world, and this world itself is more than just biological and physical needs. As Ralf Dahrendorf says, "except that occasionally some things do happen in utopia (p. 117)," utopias are more like a cemetery. Perhaps that is why literary classics are more prone to dystopias. *We, Brave New World, 1984, Clockwork Orange, Fahrenheit 451* – are all classics and all dystopias. These are usually an extension of the desire for a utopian world, rebounding on itself. Writers know that human beings by nature are complexities, beyond good and evil. We want to change the world for the better knowing fully well that a better world will not be this world, and we have no desire to get out of this world.

Let me go to the Greeks. Those of us who have watched the 2004 movie *Troy* would remember the lines from Achilles played by Brad Pitt: **"**The gods envy us. They envy us because we're mortal, because any moment may be our last. Everything is more beautiful because we're doomed." And let me also mention the 1954 movie *Ulysses* in which Silvana Mangano plays the role of both Circe and Penelope. Circe is in love with Ulysses, and wants him to stay with her, and not return to his wife, Penelope. In Homer, Calypso offers a gift to Ulysses; in the movie it is Circe, but what is important is not who offers the gift, but how utopian the gift is. It is immortality and eternal youth, and you decide for yourself, if anything can be more utopian than that. In the movie, Circe says to Ulysses:

> Listen to me! I shall give you something that will make you forget all your petty dreams. Your miserable kingdom. Your wife who grows old. Remain, and this very night, Olympus shall welcome a new god: Ulysses! … This is my gift -- the greatest gift that has ever been offered to a man!

And Ulysses's answer after a short pause is: *"*No. There are greater gifts. To be born and to die, and in between to live like a man [i.e., like a human being]."

So you see, Ulysses is offered a utopian world but prefers to return home to Penelope.

Karl Mannheim, I think, believed that while ideological thinking seeks to preserve the status-quo, that is, the current social order, utopian thinking seeks to change it. When I look at literatures of the world, I agree with theoreticians who tend to look at all literature as simultaneously ideological and utopian. Fredric Jameson under the influence of Herbert Marcuse and the Frankfurt School says "The Utopian idea … keeps alive the possibility of a world qualitatively distinct from this one and takes the form of a stubborn negation of all that is (p. 111)." And yet we have to agree that though an absolute utopian world is not possible, certain writers try to visualize such worlds based on what the problems in their particular context are.

What can the paper presenters possibly discuss in the coming three days?

With ideas of equality and justice gaining ground, we found that our human world is under pressure from social issues of class, caste, gender, and race, etc. The Land of Cockaigne, for example, is the vision of utopia in a world of haves and have-nots. In the twentieth and twenty-first century, rather than the scarcity of goods, leading to haves and have-nots binary, what bothers people more are gender and racial binaries, the man-woman, the white-black, the coloniser-colonised hierarchic binaries, and that is why many of you would be looking at how feminists visualize a utopia or how a black man does so. Lately we are also troubled by ecological crises. And in the last thirty years, with ecological crisis becoming a major threat, we have people coming out with ecotopias, though we should not forget that we earlier, too, had idyllic versions of unspoiled wilderness in Arcadias.

Dystopias are often political and based on totalitarian practices, or economic ones, e.g., the issue of planned versus free market sees dystopias in terms of privatization or corporatism. Depending on one's socio-economic preferences, one can visualize the total market based on "private sector" and corporatization and globalization as a dream or a neo-liberal nightmare. We have also been fascinated by techno-dystopias, which focus on the negative effects of technology. Science/Speculative Fiction has a lot to offer us on this aspect of dystopia.

With artificial intelligence developing at a mind-boggling pace, techno-utopias and techno-dystopias would be a major concern. Right from Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* in 1818 down to 21st century science fiction, we are concerned with our very existence itself. It was in mid-20th century that the German-Jewish thinker Günther Anders spoke of negative utopias, the megamachine and the outdatedness of man. The world is transforming very fast, but I believe that human beings will continue to be involved in utopian hope and dystopian fear, so long as human beings are born and not constructed. As most of Anders's works are not available in English translations, I am tempted to use Wikipedia for what it claims to be a quote of Anders from his 1956 book *The Outdatedness of Human Beings*: "It does not suffice to change the world. We do that anyway. And to a large extent that happens even without our involvement. In addition, we have to interpret this change. Precisely because to change it. That therefore the world does not change without us. And ultimately into a world without us." So long as artificial intelligence remains within our control, we would continue to be interested in how the living body and bone beings visualize the future. I use the expression 'body and bone beings' deliberately, because as Anders had apprehended long back, some of us have already started feeling embarrassed about "being born and not manufactured." But those of us who are into world literatures, I know, will never be embarrassed about being human with utopian hopes and dystopian fears.

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"This is My Gift to You": Aesthetic Value and the Search for Utopia in Amitav Ghosh's *The Hungry Tide*

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Abstract: Amitav Ghosh's 2004 book *The Hungry Tide*, set in the Sundarban islands, explores the intersections of environment and humankind, man and woman, Indian and American, subaltern and cosmopolitan. In my article, I argue that the novel also demonstrates the search for utopia as a fruitful endeavor. Characters in the novel seek utopia through interaction with the dispossessed (utopia-as-person), attempts to create a utopian society (utopia-as-place), and subaltern death (utopia-as-sacrifice). Utopia-as-person is articulated mostly through Kinai's interactions with the displaced Piya. Attempts at achieving utopia-as-place fall short because of a harsh environmental and political climate, but these projects are not perceived as failures. Rather, the striving for a utopian ideal place is worthy for the aesthetic and cultural discourse it creates. Finally, utopian sacrifice and death allow the subaltern to achieve voice. Ghosh calls for a world in which this discourse is translated into material existence and there is a more socially conscionable way of life in which cultural heterogeneity is uncompromised.

Keywords: Postcolonial, Utopia, Subaltern, Sacrifice, Indian, Aesthetic

Introduction

The search for utopia has generally been implemented in an imperialist way that globalizes, homogenizes, and eradicates difference without allowing consideration for subaltern perceptions of a different utopian ideal. Amitav Ghosh's portrayal of the search for utopia in his 2004 novel *The Hungry Tide* subverts this implementation by using aesthetic value as a means of allowing the subaltern to become engaged in dialogic discourse. In the novel, characters seek utopia through the lens of aesthetics. Utopia is sought through interaction with the dispossessed (utopia-as-person), attempts to create a utopian society (utopia-as-place), and subaltern death (utopia-as-sacrifice). Utopia-as-person is articulated mostly through Kinai's interactions with the displaced Piya. Attempts at achieving utopia-as-place fall short because of a harsh environmental and political climate, but these projects are not perceived as failures. Rather, the striving for a utopian ideal is worthy for the aesthetic and cultural discourse it creates. Finally, utopian sacrifice and death allow the subaltern to achieve voice. Ghosh calls for a world in which this discourse is translated into material existence and there is a more socially conscionable way of life in which cultural heterogeneity is uncompromised. In this way of life, people would be open to expanding their horizons, reexamining prejudices, and recognizing their own place in the world and in relation to postcolonialism, globalization, and the subaltern.

While aesthetic theory has been most often applied to postmodern literature, it also provides a useful approach to the postcolonial novel. The postcolonial novel looks at identity and interactions in development of a postcolonial society to formulate a theory of identity politics. Different literary genres have different degrees of distantation for the reader, but the novel and in particular the postcolonial novel allows for internally persuasive dialogue and therefore altered value systems. Mikhail Bakhtin's theory of aesthetic emphasizing indicates that in novelistic writing, the writer witnesses the interrelationship of the observer and the observed and the moment in which that relationship occurs (78). The writer steps outside of the relationship to write about it, creating a necessary subjectivity. The immense diversity of subjectivities in the postcolonial novel means it has great ability to move audiences because audiences themselves are diverse. Bakhtinian dialogics focus on literature as part of a conversation rather than as an authoritative dictate. The novelization of genres is a movement toward more dialogical texts; persuasiveness comes from many voices or from a single questioning voice, presenting facts and experiences. Readers can aesthetically empathize through the novel by vicariously experiencing other perspectives. Further, postcolonial literature is "inherently translated," because it "has always needed to compare and translate among regions, languages, and literatures" (Walkowitz 169). This inherent translation means that the postcolonial novel provides multiple venues for questions of aesthetics.

Postcolonial novel writers like Ghosh became popular following widespread decolonization and the rise of postcolonial thought. Ghosh's textual corpus, including nine novels, deals with issues of postcolonialism, identity, nationality, ecology, India, and utopianism. *The Hungry Tide* is his sixth novel. Since its 2004 publication and Hutch Crossword Book Award for Fiction selection the same year, the novel has been approached by literary scholars through the lenses of postcolonial, diaspora, Indian English, and island/ecoconsciousness studies. Saswat Das explores Ghosh's metaphorical exploration of home and homelessness that encompasses the lived diasporic experience. Pramod Nayar argues that the specter of postcolonial dispossession haunts the novel, resulting in a politically foregrounded uncanny. Nandini Bhattacharya argues for a comparative politics reading of *The Hungry Tide*, since its exploration of dualism written in English by an Indian author represents the tradition of "contemporary Indian English writing (embodying its every singularity)" (59). While Ralph Pordzik, Jessica Namakkal, and others explore the trend of utopian literatures as they intersect with postcolonialism to argue for cross-cultural comparisons between these texts, nobody has yet explored the different types of utopian ideals as they take place in the novel. Reading aesthetic value and utopian processes into the text is especially useful today since our planet is more interconnected and cosmopolitan than ever. By returning our attentions to a fictionalized version of the problematic relations in the area, both personal and environmental, we can work towards awareness and growth.

Ghosh's novels portray the inherent connection between utopias in postcolonial literature and aestheticism. As John Su argues in "Amitav Ghosh and the Aesthetic Turn in Postcolonial Studies," the recent turn towards the aesthetic reverses the anti-colonial contention that aesthetic value is inherently Western, based on Enlightenment values (65). However,

utopianism in postcolonial literature ensures these values are "reclaimed and redeployed within postcolonial contexts" (66). Su explores these reclamations and redeployments by examining beauty and its functions in these texts, since its recurring appearance in Adorno, Marcuse, and Kant "suggests its enduring capacity to motivate anti-imperialist sentiment" (66). Aesthetic value is intrinsic to utopianism, a prevalent theme in postcolonial literature. Utopias and aesthetic function are closely related in Ghosh's works, and he has "consistently portrayed in positive terms his notion of a more egalitarian society" (67). The search for a perfect place in Ghosh's novels is often ravaged by environmental disaster or political mishaps; however, characters (and we as the reader) still experience the aesthetic value of beauty during this search. Su analyzes the relationship between aesthetics and utopianism in Ghosh's 2001 *The Glass Palace* to argue that the novel clashes with Adorno's correlation of positive utopian thinking with dangerous aestheticism (68). Instead, beauty in the novel creates a space wherein characters may appreciate aesthetic value while still retaining anti-imperial and postcolonial utopian thinking.

Similarly, in *The Hungry Tide* Ghosh depicts a beautiful topography marred only by the insidious dangers--human-killing tigers, inter-class tensions, and devastating cyclones. Despite these terrors, however, the beauty of the area is aesthetically enhanced by the characters' search for utopias. Through the depiction of this search, the novel "seeks a postcolonial ethics and aesthetics that transcends the ideologies of the past, even as it cautiously evaluates the extent to which such a utopian ideal is possible" (Giles 2). Ghosh seems to argue through his novel that the search for utopia has aesthetic value in itself; even if utopia itself is impossible to reach, the desire for a beautiful world is not. This desire defies imperialist oppression while producing a rhetoric of the postcolonial sublime, the desire for interconnectivity and understanding between man and nature (1). The postcolonial novel encourages a new approach that combines aesthetic theory with anti-imperialist ethics.

Utopia-as-Person

One means by which characters in *The Hungry Tide* seek utopia and aesthetic function is by finding utopia in other people. The novel opens with a hunt: Kinai spots Piya "the moment he stepped onto the crowded platform" (Ghosh 3), and characterizes her based on her performative identity. Piya's outward appearance is articulated in terms of subversion. She is dressed in androgynous clothing, similar to "those of a teenage boy," has a severely short haircut, stands "like a flyweight boxer" and is free of any culturally-dictated feminine adornment (3). Kinai is attracted to Piya's obvious displacement, and finds the "neatly composed androgyny of her appearance" to be "almost exotic" (3). Piya thus becomes a source of utopia for Kinai, as she belongs no-where and to no-place and so becomes the place where anything and all can occur.

Kinai finds beauty and utopia in Piya's diasporic body, the "ideological and symbolic battleground in which foreign-local distinction is played out" (Goh 342). Piya has a history of not belonging. Her home life was hostile and full of neglect, and Piya was regularly used as an intermediary between her first-generation Indian parents who had never fully assimilated into American society. When she was at school, she was also viewed as an anomaly, as her outward

appearance and physical form were different from those of her peers. She must travel constantly for her work and even her attempts at love have rendered her outcast. Kinai realizes his love for Piya when she asserts that she has decided to "get used to the idea of being on [her] own" (Ghosh 259). To Kinai, her "true extraordinariness" lies in her displacement (259); he is attracted to this island of a woman who needs no one and nothing and so to him embodies everything. Piya's displacement makes her a utopia for Kinai, whose move from superficial utopian attraction moves to a deeper longing for the dispossessed as he interacts with and is changed by the people and environment of the Sundarbans, and in particular by Fokir. Kinai faces his worst fear when he is alone with Fokir, that of a return to his ethnic roots. He learned multiple languages in an attempt to become the Western watching object instead of the subaltern subject, and the ethnic and racial slurs he yells at Fokir demonstrate instead how very interpellated in the "fraught trajectory of coercive mimeticism" he has become (Chow 124). Kinai overcomes this by continuing his aesthetic search for utopia in Piya and transcribing Nirmal's diary in an attempt to open up subaltern discourse.

Utopia-as-Place

While seeking utopia in another person is one means by which individuals respond to aesthetic representations and desire perfection; utopian ideology is also represented in the search for a perfect chronotype. In *The Hungry Tide*, a representative of the European West, Sir Daniel Hamilton, attempts to create a utopian settlement in West Bengal that would eliminate racial, ethnic, religious and class boundaries. This would be a place separate from societal dictates, where preconceptions of status and caste would be replaced by an egalitarian utopia. There would be no "petty little divisions and differences" and "everyone would have to live and work together" (Ghosh 44). Hamilton buys ten thousand acres of land despite warnings about the Sundarbans being home to a terrifying climate, dangerous animals, and political strife. There is "no prettiness" in the treacherous location, and yet it is known as "'the beautiful forest'" (8). Hamilton hopes to "build a new society, a new kind of country... run by cooperatives" that could be "a model for all of India" where people could live together without hegemonically-imposed social caste distinctions (45). Hamilton's dream of utopia is untranslatable in the harsh Sundarban environment, and after his death everything reverts once again to imposed regimes, marked social difference, poverty and subalternity. These political and biological realities dictate the means by which characters in *The Hungry Tide* interact and are involved with one another. Fokir protects Piya from animal attack and is ultimately killed in a giant storm; Kusum's father is killed by a tiger, altering the course of her existence; Kinai's experience with the land changes his very being and allows him to fall in love; and Nirmal becomes involved in refugee politics, which are then altered by the dire landscape. Indeed, the "landscape of the Sunderbans becomes a problematic warfield between forces of nature and that of the human world" (Rath 18, 19). Hamilton's conception of a utopian world is essentially lost in translation, as his imperialist discourse and Western implementations surrender to the biological dangers and political strife of a subaltern environment.

Like Hamilton, Nirmal also dreams of a utopian land, but as a man "possessed more by words than by politics" he is unable to reconstruct his words and desires as something tangible (Ghosh

282). His interest in Morichjhapi is provoked through his desire for Kusum. When Nirmal initially hears of the "tens of thousands of settlers" traveling to the island belonging to the Forest Department, he responds with apathy, as it is "no business" of his (132). His discussion with Kusum alters this attitude. In transcribing the story of how she came to Morichjhapi, he fancies her the representative of these dispossessed people and himself their historian. Nirmal emplots the tale of Morichjhapi and its refugees as that of a doomed romance and insinuates himself inside its history, though in actuality he has very little to do with the politics and cultural happenings of the land. By using Kusum as a prism through which to view Morichjhapi, he places her inside a utopian ideal which may never be achieved but through death. The Morichjhapi refugees themselves exist in a state of no-place or non-place, though their living places are oftentimes not ideal. The utopia for these refugees is instead something purely in the emotive terrain; it becomes something they strive for but may never achieve. Non-places are represented through refugees and their "memories, recollections, blurring of lines between narrative time and real historical time, and the idea of 'places' as a desire and a process for gratification of that desire, are the aspects of these 'non-places'" (Rath 30). The utopian ideal is omnipresent in the mind of the migrant refugee and exists as a point temporally distant from their spatial reality, ensuring it is a time-space construct that may never be attained. The place they reside may also be classified as a non-place, for it is a place of struggle, possible displacement, and apprehension of government and of mobility.

Nirmal becomes obsessed with the idea of Morichjhapi, which he views as an "egalitarian world disentangled from capitalist exploitation" (Su 39). In this intentional community of no-place, he finds "an astonishing spectacle--as though an entire civilization had sprouted suddenly in the mud" (Ghosh 159). This land would be a crowning achievement of diasporic humanity, a land whose significance would "extend far beyond the island itself" as "a safe haven, a place of true freedom for the country's most oppressed" (159). However, Nirmal's hope proves to be dangerously idealistic. The gap between discourse and material realities lead to a dangerous conclusion wherein the most hopeful, poetic ideas could not provide food and goods, and establishing a representative discourse could not alter the economic establishment of an oppressed minority. Discourse does not exist in a separate realm, as Said may gesture toward, but instead is engaged in constant conversation with material existence. This is why Nirmal's diary is especially problematic. It is written at a place spatially and temporally distant from the present, and he writes it as an outsider. Nirmal is an intellectual, a theorizer, and a poet, who attempts to transcribe the political happenings of a group of refugees of which he is not a part. He is dead at the time the diary is read, and so his words gain a profound importance of time and space separation and voice through death. The incorporation of the Bon Bibi legend, which is itself a sort of religious utopia, also grants the diary power through mysticism and mythology.

Nirmal's wife Nilima understands the limits of utopian idealism. Rather than yearning for revolution or searching fruitlessly for a utopian world that may never be translatable except through death like her husband Nirmal, Nilima shows that adapting outside technology and information may help subalterns. Globalization generally conveys Western, hegemonic

ideologies that may translate as encoded imperialism. However, these ideologies can be appropriated by those impacted in order to benefit the community. Nilima founds and runs the Badabon trust, which utilizes equipment and technology from both local and foreign sources in order to provide aid and services to locals. Similarly, Moyna seeks out education and trains to be a nurse in order to provide assistance to subalterns. However, her understanding of Western ideology causes her to look down on her husband and people like him, who try to remain unaffected by globalization efforts. Both Nilima and Moyna deny utopian idealism, but do integrate globalized cultural values, ideology and technology in order to better the place and time they exist in and still retain hope for a brighter, if not perfect, future.

Utopia-as-Sacrifice

Alternatively, Fokir tries to resist modernization and globalization and represents the impossibility of a subaltern voice except through the utopian state of silence and death. His physical appearance is described in terms of alteration and a potent relationship to the earth. He has "the grizzled look of an experienced hand," his clothes are sparse and have a utilitarian purpose, and his body shows his time spent "slowly yielding his flesh to the wind and the sun" (Ghosh 36). When Piya first sees Fokir from afar, she thinks he is an old man, which demonstrates his connection to an ancient earth and way of life; however, upon closer review she is startled by the aesthetic value of his youth and attractiveness. Fokir is "not wasted but very lean" with limbs "almost fleshless in their muscularity" (40), and his stance invokes both destitution and defiance (41). Fokir lives "in an organic fusion with the ecosystem of Sunderbans" (Rath 24). Fokir is also an aesthetic figure because he believes "people must safeguard spheres of existence outside of politics" (Su 70). Whatever other people do, Fokir "does just the opposite" (Ghosh 129); he has no interest in the world outside of his personal relationship with the land and water, which is "enough for" him (263). As an aesthetic figure, Fokir demonstrates a natural beauty untouched by modernity or capitalist appropriation, and thus "provides the basis for an allegory of the limits of bourgeois society's capacity to extinguish alternatives to itself" (Su 70). Fokir represents a utopian ideal because he shows that there remains part of existence untouched by the imposing of pseudo-universals.

Fokir's existence as separate from homogenic structure and discourse necessitates his death. He becomes Piya's organic connection to the Sunderbans after he sacrifices his life for her; it is through him that she establishes an ecological existence in the harsh terrain. "The subaltern who wholly resists incorporation by dominant state forms is 'an ideal figure,' a utopian concept designating the limits of hegemonic thought" (Li 1). Through death, the subaltern achieves voice as a demonstration of alterity. It is only after Fokir's death that the other characters are brought to action. His death "provides the occasion for a meditation on subalternity as a critical alternative to dominant regimes of power" (1), which grants the ability to view the world in another, utopian way. Fokir must die in order to "serve as an irreducible idea" (1). Since any true utopia may only be achieved in another realm, in another place, death provides the means to access this alternative existence.

The subaltern voice must be translated through Western academic discourse in order to be

heard. It is paradoxically this very translation that creates a misrepresentation of the subaltern, as "language necessarily involves an act of violence whereby the object of representation is defined exclusively in terms of the subject's categories of understanding" (Su 39). There may be no accurate representation of the subaltern, as it becomes lost in translation. However, through silence and through death, the subaltern achieves voice that needs no translation, thus answering Gayatri Spivak's question "Can the Subaltern Speak?" The subaltern may provide perspective through dialogic discussion and heteroglossic voice as represented through literature and conceptions of utopia. The impossibility of subaltern voice "results in the paradoxical condition in which utopia and death are linked, in which the subaltern's death or disappearance enables the subaltern to fulfill the ideal role of the resistant and inappropriable other" (Li 2). The subaltern voice is loudest in its silence, when it is "the unemphatic agent of withholding in the text" (Spivak 190). It is this power in withholding that creates the subaltern utopia, a no-place that is untouched by colonial discourse and power regimes. It is only through Fokir's death that "makes possible subaltern inaccessibility, unfigurability, and singularity" while also creating a "utopian alternative to the postcolonial present" (3). Through death, Fokir defies the attempts of others to translate and modernize the simplistic fisherman. It is defiance through death, agency through silence, and subversion of imposed ideology through sacrifice. Kusum's death foreshadows that of her son, and his death is a return to his mother and her silent subalternity. Both subalterns die so that their death and silence may create a more utopian world.

Conclusion

Ghosh implies that no matter the format or the result of the search for utopia, value is founded in the aesthetic function of the search itself. This aesthetic search for utopia is prevalent throughout the course of *The Hungry Tide*. Characters in the novel are constantly seeking a utopian ideal as a means of escape from the present or in hope for a better future. These utopias exist largely within the "terrains of the mind" and may be translated through material existence (Rath 14), found in representations of others, or exist as idealistic endeavors toward a better world. The interrelatedness of temporal and spatial realities deconstructs and subverts the material and cultural binary, and through aesthetic portrayals of man, nature and death, utopia is sought for and sometimes achieved (15). In *The Hungry Tide*, utopia is found in outside perception of the dispossessed, in the various ways individuals have attempted to construct it as a tangible place, and through subaltern sacrifice. These utopias are translated through hope, idealism, and the search for improvement. By applying these vectors to other forms of communication, we can encourage subaltern voice and an ecoconscious ideal. While *The Hungry Tide* was published nearly fifteen years ago, its exploration of postcolonial ethics and aesthetics is even more significant today. Recent ethnographic studies show that the Sundarbans are suffering from climate change, which would be worsened by a proposed coal-burning Rampal Power Station. Advancements in technology have increased the disparity between subaltern citizens and the local elite. It is vital that we turn the lens to focus on postcolonial literature and its aesthetic representations in order to strive for a more egalitarian approach to these crises.

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"The Castle" by Franz Kafka as a Prefiguration of Dystopia

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Abstract: The paper focuses on the work of the Austrian writer of Jewish origin in the context of space studies. A particularly interesting example is *The Castle*, the writer's last novel and one of the most difficult subjects for interpretation. The classic reading of *The Castle* is emphasising the hero's loneliness and mysterious laws that govern the entire reality of the novel (Max Brod). However, in postmodernist interpretations, the disintegration and nonsense of the world portrayed by Kafka (Maurice Blanchot) is much stronger. Reading *The Castle* from the perspective of dystopia allows us not only to notice the negative aspects of the novel, but also the positive ones: symbolism, mythologising, hyper-semantics of literary images. Kafka, as the author of the novel from 1922 about the lost man in a lost village in a lost time, thus becomes through his work one of the inspirers for the next generation of contemporary prose creators using the motives of dystopia.

Franz Kafka is certainly one of the most frequently interpreted authors of modern literature. This very fact is documented by all bibliographies concerning the reception of his works which simply overwhelm with the sheer number of studies published in different countries and languages (e.g. Järv 1961; Flores 1976; Binder 1979; *Franz Kafka* 1979; Born 1997; Caputo-Mayr, Herz 2000; Kalinowski 2006; Sommerfeld 2007; *Franz Kafka* 2008). The greatest number of studies, in the context which appears most obvious, are published in the discourse of German studies; however, the specific nature of his short stories and novels is such that--for a long time now--they have been interpreted beyond the sphere of the German language: inspiring, in a loose way, a whole variety of reinterpretations in diverse methodologies of the literary research. Therefore, it seems entirely possible today to publish studies focusing not only on a novel such as *The Trial* (Gräff 1990; Eschweiler 1990), *The Castle* (Shepphard 1973; Gottwald 1990), but also those delving into stories as short as *The Judgement (Kafkas "Urteil"* 2007) or *Before The Low (Neue Literaturtheorien* 1993).

When we analyse *The Castle*--which was created in 1922 and published only after Kafka's death in 1933--we are faced with a somewhat puzzling situation: his most extensive prose text is, in the research tradition, the one which is studied the least. One might even speculate that it is, in a way, ignored or simply met with an insignificant number of interpretative ideas. The oldest of them can be traced back to Max Brod who believed that it is an allegorical work, specifically, one concerning the man's search for God (Brod 1948; Brod 1951; Brod 1982). Albert Camus offered an extensive interpretation--seeing the work as a symbolic story about loneliness of people who fail to find fulfilment in their existence (Camus 1991). There are also

other interpretations: *The Castle* as a record of psychological complexes (Pawel 2003; Bloom 2003) or a work on nothingness (Foulkes 1967; Hilsbecher 1972; Göhler 1982; Grözinger 2006) and last not least metaphoric description discussing about assimilation Jews in west Europe (Neumann 2012).

In view of all those previous takes on Kafka's last novel, it may, however, be worthwhile to respectfully attempt to interpret the work from the perspective of the study of the category of space. In literary research, this discourse has been known for several decades, but although it was adopted successfully in English and French traditions (Anderson 1997; Said 2005, White 2011; Bourdieu 2001; Foucault 2005)--the Slavic literary studies perceive it with something resembling suspicion (Rybicka 2012; *Nowy regionalizm w badaniach literackich* 2012). In reference to the creative output of Franz Kafka, the study of the category of space can be applied in several dimensions. It is possible to interpret his works on the plane of realistically depicted reality--based on the prose from *Contemplation*--and attempt to locate on the map of the real Prague given components of Kafka's narration (Salfellner 1998). It is equally possible, while focusing on the metaphorical or mythical dimension, to describe figures of the symbolic space (the figure of a bridge, island or a maze) in later short stories or novels by Kafka (Slochower 1966; Robertson 1987; Fromm 1998). Finally, the third interpretational avenue which today is worth considering is the study of the category of space and, more specifically, the literary construct of "non-place." It was characterised by Marc Auge and is associated with the terms such as: atopy or dystopia (Augé 2012; Lem 1970; Szacki 2000; Bauman 2009; Willke 2002). Non-place is, therefore, a space which is repeatable in its typicality and functionality--and, it would seem, a safe and obvious one. However, due to the fact that it is so common and temporary it also inspires alienation. Non-places are locations like a bus or railway station, air-port, government office, shopping malls and retail stores (Vieira 2010; Gordin, Tilley, Prakash 2010). In a non-place certain people might feel happy; regardless of the fact where they currently are--they can recognise the same interior design or the same uniforms of people working there. Other people, however, can feel alienated or lost in a non-place as they do not recognise in this given space something characteristic or unique--something which would grant it an individual status (Walsh 1962; Aldridge 1984; Booker 1994; Sisk 1997; Moylan 2000; Kumar 2000; Kumar 2013).

The Castle and the Category of Place
The act of reading those several hundred pages of Franz Kafka's novel is an experience which can hardly be classified as easy. This difficulty is caused not so much by a very complicated plot or formal tricks obstructing its perception, but rather by a specific excess of "realistically" introduced details regarding the behaviour of characters, never-ending conversations, descriptions of attempts undertaken by the main character who strives to assume the position of a surveyor in a village belonging to the castle's owners. Of course, the realistic nature of the novel's prose is subject to a convention as--in view of the accumulation of the elements of the external reality surrounding the literary figure or providing numerous nuances of manner of thinking of K. and villagers--the purpose behind the existence of the presented world remains unrevealed. It is, therefore, not realism or psychologism which constitute the main artistic

motivation behind *The Castle,* but rather the value of--updated for the 20th century literature--ancient aesthetic categories such as irony or grotesque (Heller 1954; Kassel 1969; Morawiec 2000; Kasperski 2008).

In what way, then, given such an aesthetic context of this work by Kafka, can one apply the category of place--and especially--of dystopia? Let us refer to several fragments of the novel … Here, as early as in the very first chapter there is a problem of the presence of K., a surveyor, in a space which needs to be named, specified and put in order--and yet, this very space escapes unambiguous description:

> It was late evening when K. arrived. The village lay deep in snow. There was nothing to be seen of Castle Mount, for mist and darkness surrounded it, and not the faintest glimmer of light showed where the great castle lay. K. stood on the wooden bridge leading from the road to the village for a long time, looking up at what seemed to be a void. (Kafka 3)

The main character of the novel, then, is supposed to perform a task. It is, however, unclear who this task was given by and according to what principles…. Thus, before K. starts the work, he intends to sign the employment contract with his employers residing in the castle located in a distance from the village. And so he plans to get to the place of residence of the rulers--one which is barely visible in the distance within the winter country-side landscape. As we know from the novel, K. never manages to get there, and even if he approaches something, it is farming buildings or less important offices--and never the actual castle. K.'s life, then, unfolds in waiting for a sign from a burgrave or a high-ranking clerk. K. is on the constant look-out for the castle's clerks as he stays at a tavern, school building or a house of a family which is unpopular in the village.

Those researchers of Kafka's creative output who ground it in the historical and geographic context of the world believe that *The Castle* was created as a specific artistic reaction to the writer's visit at his father's born village Wossek, castle of Friedland or his sister's place in the village of Matliary and as a transformation of the actual look and location of a nearby castle or other places (Wagenbach 1984; Wagenbach 2006; Binder 2008). However, we need to refer to the novel itself which undercuts such interpretations--for we can read as follows:

> Altogether the castle, as seen in the distance, lived up to K.'s expectations. It was neither an old knightly castle from the days of chivalry, nor a showy new structure, but an extensive complex of buildings, a few of them with two storeys, but many of them lower and crowded close together. If you hadn't known it was a castle you might have taken it for a small town. K. saw only a single tower, and could not make out whether it was a dwelling or belonged to a church. Flocks of crows were circling around it. (Kafka 11)

Kafka's description, then, does not depict something which might be considered a historical building or some impressive example of architecture. What appears instead is an accumulation

of identical elements of poor, neglected houses which seem entirely the same and create the atmosphere of the ordinary, common and nondescript--and it all brings us closer to the category of dystopia.

Even the greatest achievement on the part of K.--when he manages to stay slightly longer on the area of the castle--fails to grant him any knowledge whatsoever regarding his location and who decides in matters of his fate. The reasons for the existence of such a building remain even less clear. Instead, one might argue that what occurs is merely a larger confusion as the castle seen from a closer distance seems rather trivial:

> after all, it was only a poor kind of collection of cottages assem-bled into a little town, and distinguished only by the fact that, while it might all be built of stone, the paint had flaked off long ago, and the stone itself seemed to be crumbling away. [...] In his mind, he com-pared the church tower of his childhood home with the tower up above. [...] The tower up here--the only visible one--now turned out to belong to a dwelling, perhaps the main part of the castle. It was a simple, round building, partly covered with ivy, and it had small windows, now shining in the sun--there was something crazed about the sight--and was built into the shape of a balcony at the top, with insecure, irregular battlements, crumbling as if drawn by an anxious or careless child as they stood out, zigzag fashion, against the blue sky. It was as if some melancholy inhabitant of the place, who should really have stayed locked up in the most remote room in the house, had broken through the roof and was standing erect to show himself to the world. (Kafka 11)

And so, the building of the castle from Kafka's novel seems to bring exclusively disappointments…There is chaos instead of order, poverty instead of dignity and a melancholic owner instead of a resourceful ruler. The very place which for K. was meant to be a destination point providing stability in his life turned out to be a mere illusion.

If Not the Castle Then, Perhaps: The Castle Boroughs…
The main character of the novel, unable to get to the coveted castle, needs to content himself with the life in the village entirely which belonged to the castle. K. takes advantage of every opportunity, through his connections or the promised professional position, to show off his self-perceived importance in the local community. He believes that the status of a surveyor, a man familiar with mathematics and logic, will grant him respect and esteem. However, it turns out that even the village lacks clearly codified rights, correlations and human relationships. K. promised himself that even if he would fail to penetrate the castle with his intellect, he would still conquer the space of the village with his work. Even here, however, he was met with disappointment and worse: mental confusion, which was symbolised in the novel by the fact that K. is unable to understand the most basic topography of the area:

> For he was in the main street of the village, and it did not lead to Castle Mount but merely passed close to it before turning aside, as if on purpose, and although it moved

no further away from the castle, it came no closer either. K. kept thinking that the road must finally bring him to the castle, and, if only because of that expectation, he went on. Because of his weariness he naturally shrank from leaving the road, and he was surprised by the extent of the village, which seemed as if it would never end, with more and more little houses, their window-panes covered by frost-flowers, and with the snow and the absence of any human beings—so at last he tore himself away from the road on which he had persisted and struck out down a narrow alley where the snow lay even deeper. (Kafka 14)

Just as K. keeps getting lost on village streets, he behaves in a virtually identical fashion in a much smaller space of one of the local houses. It turns out that even in those houses nothing seems clear. Although the rooms seemingly contain familiar elements of interior design--those elements exist in completely surprising configurations. They appear deceptively logical, but, in reality, they belong to a certain--unfamiliar to the main character--supra-logical order.

To illustrate this, let us focus on the following description of one room of a village house:

> It was a large, dimly lit room. Coming in from outside, he could see nothing at first. K. staggered and nearly fell over a washing-trough; a woman's hand caught him. He heard a number of children shouting in one corner. Steam billowed out of another, turning the twilight into darkness. K. might have been surrounded by clouds. […]
>
> At last some of the steam drifted away, and gradually K. was able to get his bearings. This seemed to be wash-day for everyone. Clothes were being washed near the door. But the vapour came from the left-hand corner, where two men were having a bath in steaming water in a wooden tub larger than any K. had ever seen before; it was about the size of two beds. But even more surprising, although it was hard to say just why, was the right-hand corner of the room. Through a large hatch, the only opening in the back wall of the parlour, pale snowy light came in, no doubt from the yard, and cast a sheen like silk on the dress of a woman almost lying, for she looked so tired, in a tall armchair far back in that corner. She had a baby at her breast. A few children were playing around her (Kafka 12-13)

The village room fulfils several functions in the house. One part serves as a laundry--an area to remove dirt. At the same time, what is washed here are not ordinary clothes but underwear: items which, by definition, are most intimate--not likely to be exposed for the sake of the general public. In a scene of Kafka's novel, however, washing bed linen, sheets, singlets, long johns or panties hardly surprises or shocks anyone living in this world. The second corner of the room is even weirder to the reader: there are two men bathing in big tubs. And likewise, nobody appears to be embarrassed by this very private activity of bathing. Despite the nakedness of the men and the formerly mentioned act of washing which is performed nearby by other people--the situation seems utterly normal to all the participants. However, the most atypical of them all is another part of the room in which K. discovers a woman breastfeeding a

child. The spatial arrangement of this character is significant: the woman is half-lying in an arm-chair which looks dignified, slightly resembling a throne. The character's exposition is enhanced by the children who surround her. On top of it all, there is a light reflection which falls on the woman's dress--lending her a supernatural appearance. As a result, the feeding woman resembles some goddess of maternity, an otherworldly phantom. And, just like in the previous cases, the very fact of her breastfeeding a baby does not seem to make anyone uncomfortable or bothered.

Those three actions in the above scene of *The Castle*: washing underwear, the bath and breast-feeding occur simultaneously--in the same fashion emerging from smoke or clouds of steam. As a result, it leads to specific consequences for the semantics of space. One can hardly interpret this scene in terms of realism or even symbolism in that house's description. It is much closer to the grotesque in which what seems to be an ordinary interior of a village house turns out to be a weird laundry or bathing place where the dignity of a woman breastfeeding a baby is contrasted by naked men who are bathing in a nearby tub. The space presented in this manner inspires contexts of the sphere of *the sacred* and, as a result, the categories of order or sense. At the same time, however, the scene is connected to the sphere of *the profane* and the categories of chaos and nonsense (Binder 1976; Arendt 1982; Alt 2005).

While studying other descriptions of space in the village belonging to the castle, it is also worthwhile to consider the existence of another, equally intriguing form of space. For example, the "Under the bridge" tavern--inside which, in a big dining room, takes place a typical village life--at the same time has very mysterious rooms:

> where everything was built on a small scale but delicately designed. The best possible use was made of the space. You could only just walk upright along the corridor; door after door opened off the sides of it, all the doors close to each other, and the walls did not go all the way up to the ceiling, presum-ably for ventilation, since there were probably no windows in the little rooms off this low-lying, cellar-like passage. The disadvantage of the gap at the top of the walls was that the corridor and inevitably the rooms too were noisy. Many of the rooms seemed to be occupied. (Kafka 213)

Thus, the tavern fulfils its service function exclusively on the ground floor. Its basement becomes a sort of a hotel for the castle clerks. Similarly, the attic of the tavern can be simultaneously a room for servants and an additional sleeping space for guests of the castle. On the other hand, the traditional residential part of the tavern is used for the private life of the owner but--unexpectedly --it can turn into an interrogation room. Therefore, the tavern has the appearance of a safe space--imitating a real home and authentic human relations.

The same can be said in reference to the school building into which K. moved with Frieda. At certain times before noon there are indeed lessons for children, but after lunch the class-rooms are turned into residential rooms in which the private and home life of K., the surveyor, takes place. In the school space the children have normal lessons and gymnastic exercises--and keep

their notebooks on school desks. In the evening, however, K. can put on those desks his private items and treat them as typical house furniture. When viewed as an overall dimension of space creation, what Kafka constructs here is a dystopian illusion of temporariness, conventionality and changeability of functions and meanings. K. cannot construct anything permanent in the school building. Even his sleeping place has to be arranged on the floor since he was forbidden to bring a bed inside the school. This "hostility" of the interior design is typical for non-places in which it is impossible to find space for privacy; chairs are uncomfortably hard and artificial flowers constitute the pinnacle of aesthetic taste.

Dystopia as a Cognitive Category
In the research tradition concerning the creative output of Franz Kafka, it has been noted on numerous occasions that he approached the categories of irony and grotesque (created in the Greco-Roman ancient culture) in an inventive and original fashion (Walser 1972; Blanchot 1996; Kasperski 2008a). The irony in Kafka's works, therefore, is not a pretension of the lack of knowledge used so that he can show the presence of knowledge in a stronger fashion--a convention taken from the ancient tradition--and it is not a way to distance himself from the existing poetics so that he can emphasise all the more his own style of expression (as was typical for romantic irony). The irony employed in Kafka's prose concerns, in fact, each and every element of human cognition, experience or existence (Weinberg 1963; Sokel 1976).

Grotesque is treated in a similar fashion. For Kafka, it is not merely a love for forms of contradictory values of beauty or ugliness or for chimerical constructions as was the case in the European tradition until 19th century. It is, in fact, anthropo-grotesque: enigmatic, fragmentary, illusory experiencing of the fragmented identity of the modern human being (Philippi 1966; Wimmer 2007). The true artistic achievement of Kafka is, therefore, the emphasis placed upon processuality, infinity and inexpressiveness inherent in learning about the world and oneself (Berger 2000; Lipszyc 2011).

What does dystopia bring along in such a situation then? Above all, the fact that it reveals before our eyes the disapproval on the part of Kafka--the writer of the possibility of a successful description of the external world. What all the authors representing realistic or naturalistic literature attempted to imitate from the world of politics or society was considered by Kafka to be a futile effort--one completely doomed to failure. The artist can only try to create a reality and not to imitate it. Whatever appears to be valid, logical and meaningful in the historical and psychological world--when perceived through the prism of Kafka's writings, it reveals entirely different, even agnostic dimensions.

Let us, for example, consider movement--something typical in everyday experience. In *The Castle* movement of various characters understood as a planned activity is virtually non-existent. Their efforts seem to resemble more the paradox of Zeno of Elea:

> He certainly goes into the offices, but are the offices really the castle? And even if the castle does have offices, are they the offices which Barnabas is allowed to enter? He

goes into offices, yes, but that's only a part of the whole, for there are barriers, and yet more offices beyond them. He is not exactly forbidden to go any further, but he can't go any further once he has found his superiors, and when they have dealt with him they send him away. (Kafka 154)

As a result, K. will not successfully complete his trip to the castle--nor will it be done by the envoy who specifically works for him. K. shall not make it to the castle even if he seduced more than one tavern-keeper or more than one mistress of some clerk.

The surveyor is also unable to put in order anything regarding his emotions. Even in matters as fundamental as sexuality, what dominates this sphere in Kafka's novel is a specific sort of confusion. Human needs and intimacy are equated with not what is most basic, but rather with things which are alien and removed from the self. K. and Frieda are not lovers who could be enriched by their sexuality. It is the other way around: they were virtually becoming travellers through a foreign land--unable to find happiness or satisfaction in each other:

> They embraced one another, her little body burned in K.'s hands, they rolled, in a semi-conscious state from which K. tried constantly but unsuccessfully to surface, a little way on, bumped into Klamm's door with a hollow thud, then lay there in the puddles of beer and the rubbish* covering the floor. Hours passed as they lay there, hours while they breathed together and their hearts beat in unison, hours in which K. kept feeling that he had lost himself, or was further away in a strange land than any one had ever been before, a distant country where even the air was unlike the air at home, where you were likely to stifle in the strange-ness of it, yet such were its senseless lures that you could only go on, losing your way even more. (Kafka 40)

The two quoted examples illustrate that in this novel by Kafka--both in the movement outside, towards the castle, and in the movement inside, towards one's own body--everything is dominated by strangeness, non-obviousness and secrecy. The true reality and the real world shall not be offered for the sake of a human being to notice and comprehend…

What remains, then, is the castle itself… Not as one impressive building. Not as a collection of village cottages--and not as an optical illusion. Is it, though--in its essence--one specific place…?

> The castle, its outline already beginning to blur, lay as still as always. K. had never seen the slightest sign of life there. Perhaps it wasn't possible to make anything out from this distance, yet his eyes kept trying and wouldn't accept that it could lie so still. When K. looked at the castle, he sometimes thought he saw someone sitting quietly there, looking into space, not lost in thought and thus cut off from everything else, but free and at ease, as if he were alone and no one was observing him. He must notice that he himself was under observation, but that didn't disturb him in the slightest. (Kafka 88)

What is the castle, then? Or perhaps: who is the castle? The most significant value of Kafka's novel seems to be that no questions can be answered here with anything resembling conviction…

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ISM Awarded Paper

Utopias and the Pursuit of Knowledge: Reading Jorge Luis Borges

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Abstract: The irrefutable primacy that desire and curiosity attain in the pursuit of knowledge often manifests itself in the Icarian endeavour towards exhausting all possible avenues of knowledge attainment. This utopian wish to reach a stage where all options to know would already be exercised finds a corollary in a parallel anxiety to not forget anything, which is itself another utopian wish. Both knowledge and memory are confined within the realm of language and signification, and just as meaning making is analogous to desire in that they are both never fully realised, a utopian world is a paradox as both knowledge and memory are offset by gaps and erasures. For John Locke, for instance, it would be futile to even attempt to know everything due to its impossibility and one must recognise and respect the limits of human knowledge.

The present paper aims to critically examine the manner in which Jorge Luis Borges's writing exposes and explores the futility of a utopian wish towards knowledge attainment by its sustained focus on depictions of utopian language-systems and their limits. His stories "Tlon, Uqbar, Orbius Tertius," "The Library of Babel", and "Funes the Memorious" satirize the desire for utopia. My attempt, through this paper, is to critically comment on how the nexus of desire, memory and signification constrains all attempts towards utopias in thought and practice and renders them imaginary.

Keywords: Epistemology, Utopia, Knowledge, Language, Limits, Desire, Paradox

The human condition characterized by the will to know is coterminous with the Cartesian subject's anthropocentrism that seeks to explain Being, through thinking sustained in the form of metaphysical binaries. This symptomatic condition of modernity firmly establishes man as the subject capable of reason who perceives and defines the object(s) in the phenomenal world. The critique of these binaries that constitute the epistemological endeavors of the subject of Cartesian modernity has been a feature of poststructuralist and postmodernist thought. This paper aims to critically examine the manner in which Jorge Luis Borges's writing exposes and explores the futility of a utopian wish towards knowledge attainment by its sustained focus on depictions of utopian language systems and their limits.

The irrefutable primacy that desire and curiosity possess in the Cartesian pursuit of knowledge manifests itself in the Icarus like endeavor aimed at exploring all possible avenues of

knowledge attainment. The shortcomings of such an unbridled aspiration to know have been demonstrated through various literary representations, notably *Doctor Faustus* and *Paradise Lost*. Such representations have critiqued a spirit of exploration and wonder. It is no coincidence that the Fall was linked specifically to the desire to eat the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil. Modernity leads to an exploration of the defining characteristics of subjectivity as well as the perception of the world from the eyes of the subject. This in turn produces contrasting ideas of what the world is, and should be. The (im)possibility of self-realization leads to a fragmented perception of the phenomenal world as one tries to understand the self as separated from the other. These binaries that define modernity in their extreme lead to a polarization of ideas that get manifested in diverse imaginations of utopias.

Among various fundamental debates between religion and science since the early modern period, arguably nothing has been more debated than the idea of utopia. Thomas More's coinage of the term in his eponymous book needs no introduction and it can be argued that most utopias are beset by idealism and are characterized by a perfect symmetry and order in thought and thus unachievable. More's conception is almost exactly contemporaneous with innovations that have characterized modernity, like the conquest of the New World, modern literature, politics and consciousness (Jameson, *Archaeologies* 1). Frederic Jameson suggests that two lines of descendance from More's text should be posited, one intent on the realization of the Utopian form, the other a covert yet omnipresent Utopian impulse that finds expression through a variety of actions and desires. The former shall be more systemic and will include revolutionary political practice aimed at founding new societies, alongside literary exercises in the written genre. These attempts would also entail systemic self-conscious Utopian secessions from the existing socio-political order in the form of intentional communities as well as attempts to project new spatial totalities in the aesthetic of the city itself (Jameson, *Archaeologies* 2-3).

While constructs like Paradise would be seen as ideal by the Church in them aiming to ensure a state of stability, the proponents of scientific temper would prefer to view an unquenchable quest for knowledge as utopian, as it is touted to be a place where all desires are fulfilled. These two opposite conceptions of utopia are united by their inherent shortcomings, the former due to the perennial flux of the society and the latter due to the imminent conflict of differing desire. In his story "Tlön, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius," Borges explores the various facets of political and philosophical idealism, including its fatalistic underside. Objects that supposedly aid man's epistemological quest towards being, like encyclopedias and mirrors are important in Borges's story. Encyclopedias and similar compendiums serve as a literary reflection of man's epistemological quest towards Being, located in and defined by space and time. Thus, they celebrate the modern condition of exploration and pursuit towards an understanding of the Self that is supposedly achievable through othering. Their attempts to provide accurate and painstaking details in order to give an accurate but *post-facto* representation of the contemporary world are only undercut by mirrors whose illusory nature only parodies representation, as they offer a warped representation of the present or the *now*. Mirrors exemplify a troubled form of self-knowledge wherein there is a realization that the perceived

Self has an exterior dimension that is visible to others (Merleau-Ponty 129,140). More importantly, they have the peculiar ability to reproduce the visible reflections of the world in their own figural reality. Both attempts to offer logical and symmetrical picture of the realities they represent. One could also claim that simultaneously, both these objects are telling of the shortcomings of such an attempt, as they reflect the gaps and problems in the reality of the world being reflected and intensify the desire for a utopia devoid of the flaws of the existing reality. However, the conception of a utopia achieved by utilizing the information-rich and symmetrical frameworks of encyclopedias and mirrors respectively can be dangerously totalitarian as it promotes an outlook of the world in the form of binaries. Borges challenges and attacks this outlook by conceiving a meta-fiction whose fluctuating narrative styles mirror the progress of the narrative, thus satirizing even the reader's propensity to fall prey to the polarizing tendencies of utopias.

 It is no surprise then that the narrator of Borges's short story owes the discovery of Uqbar to the "conjunction of a mirror and an encyclopedia" (Borges 27). The narrator is engaged in a polemic with the novelist Bioy Casares about the composition of a novel in the first person wherein contradictions and a disfiguration of facts would allow certain readers to perceive a banal and atrocious reality. This sets the stage for the conception of a utopia, as it is highly allegorical of the quotidian world beset by contradictions. At the same time, Borges also critiques modernity's obsession with causality by placing the characters in his fictional world(s) in situations which are contingent and accidental. Thus, the narrator of "Tlön, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius" claims that his discovery of the world of the hitherto-unheard region of Uqbar was purely accidental and coincidental arising out his sudden view through a mirror's reflection of a "fallaciously" titled encyclopedia which was actually supposed to be a laggardly reprint of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* of 1902. It is worth noting that descriptions of Uqbar in the encyclopedia entry exactly match the tautological cartographic projects of our world wherein descriptions and boundaries are always relative to other places on Earth.

The utopian form and impulse as identified by Fredric Jameson in his book *Archaeologies of the Future* finds its place in Uqbar whose literature never refers to reality but to the imaginary regions of Mlejnas and Tlön. By constructing these regions as being removed from reality, Borges alludes to the process of conceptualizing totalizing utopias completely different from the phenomenal reality. From an accidental discovery of information about Uqbar, the narrator is led on to a further discovery of *The First Encyclopedia of Tlön* through coincidence. This encyclopedia describes methodically the unknown planet's entire history.

As the narrator speculates about the possible inventor*s* of Tlön, he suggests that the "brave new world" (a disguised reference to Aldous Huxley's 1931 dystopian novel of the same name) was the product of the active imagination of a "secret society of astronomers, biologists, engineers, metaphysicians, poets, chemists, algebraists, moralists, painters, geometers directed by a man of genius" (Borges 32). Thus, Borges satirizes the vision of a literary utopia that aims to accommodate all conflicting ideas and desires in an organic unity. Yet again, encyclopedias are a useful weapon as this process of inventing a planet would proceed with a description to

the minutest detail using a 14-part encyclopedia that would be exhaustive and inclusive of the planet's zoology, terrains and landscapes, philosophies, history and poetry, in order to make it impossible to distinguish it from reality. Further, as Frank Palmeri suggests, the title of this tale that designates Tlön as "Orbis Tertius" or "of the third world" is a reflection of the wishful ambition of the creators of Tlön to ensure that this newly discovered world would constitute an alternative to both the first world of the West and its totalizing antagonists (Palmeri 128). The reference to Huxley's novel further indicates that there is a wide gap between Tlön's utopian promise and eventual dystopian failure. The grotesque progression of Borges's story as described by John R. Clark as "the first world, Uqbar, imagines the fictitious Tlön, or a second world, that eventually supplants Uqbar itself, and finally invades our world, the Third World and supersedes it" (Clark 78). It mirrors the totalitarian impulses of the early twentieth century in the form of both Hitler's Fascism and Stalin's Communism. Thus, instead of offering a third alternative to Western dominance and its fascist alternatives, it ends up epitomizing dystopia itself. This is shown in the story through the discovery of the astonishingly heavy sacred metal of Tlön that effectively depicts the dystopian consequences that totalizing systems of the political left and right, utopian in origin, have led to in the twentieth century. Borges further satirizes the "pardonable excess" with which the zoology and topography of Tlön has been hailed by popular magazines. The narrator attempts to reason that the various contradictions of that volume of the encyclopedia suggest that other volumes exist. Figures like the Argentine writer Bioy Casares who was a frequent collaborator with Borges often make an appearance in his stories in a fictionalized version of themselves. Borges systematically launches a layered attack on metaphysics by using frameworks of empiricism to speak about idealism. Empiricism hypothesizes that there is an objective reality independent of humans and this can be understood through inductive logic. It does not assume *a priori* knowledge.

 Idealism refers to attempts that account for all objects and experiences as representations of the human mind. It ascribes an independent reality to certain principles like imagination and creativity. The languages invented by the inventors of Tlön have an underlying desire to overcome linguistic aporias. The narrator ironically evokes Hume's critique of Berkeley only to reject the suitability of this critique for Tlön. "Hume declared for all time that while Berkeley's arguments admit not the slightest refutation, they inspire not the slightest conviction" (Borges 13).

> The nations of this planet are congenitally idealist. Their language and the derivations of their language- religion, letters, metaphysics- all presuppose idealism. The world for them is not a concourse of objects in space; it is a series of independent acts. It is successive and temporal, not spatial. There are no nouns in Tlön's conjectural *Ursprache*, from which the 'present' languages and dialects are derived: these are impersonal verbs, modified by monosyllabic suffixes (or prefixes) with an adverbial value. For example: there is no word corresponding to the word 'moon', but there is a verb which in English would be 'to moon' or 'to moonate'. 'The moon rose above the river' is *hlör u fang axaxaxas mlö*, or literally: 'upward behind the onstreaming it mooned.' (Borges 32-33)

At the outset, it seems like a coherent fictional world has been created. However, this assumption is undermined by the glaring inconsistencies in the narrative which lead to the suggestion that all utopias ultimately lead to a chaotic world riddled with paradoxes. The seemingly idealist language systems have contradictory linguistic structures. The languages in the southern hemisphere do not have nouns, while those of the northern hemisphere have nouns formed by an accumulation of adjectives. In both these cases, the absence of direct nomenclature leads to the breakdown of the subject-object binary that constitutes modernity. As the literature of the Northern hemisphere abounds in ideal objects, it is possible to evoke and dissolve these objects according to poetic needs. The refusal to believe in the reality of nouns paradoxically causes their number to be endless. Thus, the narrator claims that the languages of Tlön contain all the nouns of the Indo-European languages- and many others as well. Even in Tlön's literature, the idea of the single subject gains precedence and all works of fiction contain a single plot with its imaginable permutations. A book without its counter-argument is considered incomplete. This paradox that seeks to uphold idealism by attempting to accommodate dualism is evident in disciplines too, since psychology remains the superlative discipline in Tlön. As the people of Tlön reject spatiality and conceive the universe as a series of mental processes that develop successively in time, idealism reaches its extreme end and leads to a complete invalidation of all science. One school even negates time by reasoning that the present is indefinite and the future and past are extensions of the present. This again evokes the imagery of mirrors that the story opens with as it is only mirrors that cannot capture temporal or spatial particulars but only aid in a representation of the present moment, the now. As pointed out by the narrator (who has by now transformed into a critic or an academic writer), Borges critiques the idealism of Bertrand Russell (*The Analysis of Mind*, 1921, p. 159) here which held that the planet has been created a few minutes ago, furnished with a humanity that "remembers an illusory past" (Borges 34).

The peculiar characteristics of the languages of Tlön and the inherent idealism in literary practices also affect the event of reading. According to Derek Attridge, the act of reading demands an ethical response on the part of the reader to uphold its own specificity as well as the specificity of the text being read. It demands an engagement with literature as a constantly occurring event "as a verb rather than as a noun: not something carried away when we have finished reading it, but something that happens as we read or recall it," (Attridge 9). The responsibility entails an understanding of the contexts in which the literary text is located as well as the (consequent) awareness of their exceeding by the latter. This would not be possible if all books had one author who is a-temporal and often invented, as happens in Tlön. In his parable "Kafka and his Precursors," Borges had described a conundrum of reading and writing wherein the author creates his precursors and invents his own canon which would not have been possible had he not written a single line. Then the striking similarities of the writing of his precursors would not be perceived (Borges 236). Even the act of reading allows the reader to join the dots between two or more texts by different authors which can be traced in a chronological manner. However, the act of reading undergoes a transformation at Tlön: by attributing all texts to a single atemporal author, no reading is singular as all other books were

being written by the same author simultaneously, thereby eliminating any attempts at chronology. In such a case, the critics invent authors and attribute two dissimilar texts to the same authors to "determine scrupulously the psychology of this interesting *home de lettres*" (Borges 37). Thus, they have made it convenient to circumvent concerns of intentionality, temporality, signification, form and structure that characterise language systems and their literature. Yet another paradox presents itself when centuries of idealism at Tlön results in lost objects being duplicated at will. These secondary objects called *hrönir* are methodologically produced (fabricated) to make possible "the interrogation and even the modification of the past." Even though there is a rejection of objects and materialism, the production of *hrönir* is commonplace. Even as Tlön had been conceptualised to displace the world, it ends up being a *hrönir,* a new reality produced by wish fulfilment (Clark 78).

The shifting narratorial style(s) and inconsistencies in form also mirror the content. Through the flitting narratorial styles, Borges parodies even his narrator and literary criticism. The narration that commences with the narrator's voyeuristic urge to read every possible text written on Tlön (that gets completed with the discovery of the volume *Orbis Tertius*) is akin to the spirit of exploration and adventure that underlies the pursuit of knowledge to its extreme. As the narrative progresses, the narrator forgets about the fictionality of Tlön and dutifully begins to describe every possible detail much like an encyclopaedia which alludes to the ontological endeavours of knowledge or of religion. The post-script reads like apocalyptic fiction, contradicting the meticulous description of Tlön. However, towards the end, the narrator leaves aside his excitement and voluntarily withdraws into indifference as he translates Thomas Browne's *Urn Burial* into Spanish, which he does not wish to get published. The reference is ironic as Browne's text described the discovery of a burial urn in Norfolk. By publishing a translation, the narrator indicates that he shall spur yet another cycle of the process that he faced in his discovery of Tlön, especially the conflation of reality and fiction towards the end, when fictional objects from Tlön were discovered in the real world on Earth. These disruptions are intentional and aimed at subverting the expectations of the reader. Borges's critique of utopias is echoed by Jameson who states, "Literary utopia shouldn't be seen as the representation of an ideal society, but as a reflection of our own incapacity to conceive [utopia] in the first place" (Jameson, "World-Reduction in Le Guin" 230). Borges's experiments with form and narrative thus underline his scepticism towards binaries. His approach is ironic as he cannot either accept or reject binaries. However, through his story, he presents the literary utopia as a "determinate type of praxis, whose first operation is the "neutralization" of the real" (Jameson, "Islands and Trenches" 6) Borges urges the reader to think about the indeterminate nature of reality and how utopias are aimed at homogenizing reality.

The utopian wish to reach a stage where all options to know would already be exercised finds a corollary in a parallel anxiety to not forget anything, which is itself another utopian wish. Both knowledge and memory are confined within the realm of language and signification, and just as meaning making is analogous to desire in that they are both never fully realised, a utopian world is a paradox as both knowledge and memory are offset by gaps and erasures.

In the story "Funes the Memorious," the protagonist Ireneo Funes has an infallible perception and memory. After gaining consciousness post an accident that left him paralyzed, he realized that the present "was almost intolerable in its richness and sharpness" (Borges 91). His perception of himself changes as he thinks that before the accident, he was "blind, deaf, addle-brained, absent minded." This ability of being able to remember everything leads to his attempts to transcend known borders of thought, representation and signification. He proceeded to invent an original system of numbering which he never wrote down, and as his memories were an inter-connection of visual images, muscular sensations, thermal sensations, he associated numbers with signifiers that were aimed at very different chains of signification. He even projects an analogous language but discards it due to its ambiguity. Ambiguity here is seen by him as a trait of ordinary humans. However, contradicting himself, he tried to reduce his past days to seventy thousand memories, this ontological project is analogous to the generalisations and classifications by the ordinary human. Just like Locke who had to reject the postulation of a language in which each individual thing would have its own name, Funes was dissuaded by the interminable nature of his project as he realised that even till the time of his death, he would not have finished classifying the memories of his childhood. Thus, this seemingly advantageous and utopian position that Funes was in, that would ensure no slips in memory and language turned into a curse for him. His perennial awareness of the changes around him, even the changes in his own face when seen in the mirror surprised him every time. Though he learnt all languages without an effort, he became incapable of thought. As the narrator tells us, this was so because to think meant *forgetting* differences, generalizing and making abstractions. Thus, memory that is seen as a tool enabling thought is equally helped by the slips in it, as they enable thought. The world of immediate details that Funes was surrounded by crippled his ability to think. Instead of taking humanity to hitherto unexplored heights of thought and perceptions, Funes cannot bear the weight of his memory and collapses in the web of his mind. Eventually, Borges shows that Funes was also a mortal despite his seemingly superhuman ability as he passed away at the age of twenty-one just like other mortals commonly do, afflicted by the congestion of lungs. Even though his gift was bestowed upon him by accident and he did not possess an inherent desire to explore the boundaries of knowledge, his fleeting ambition to change structures of language and signification prove to be utopian in the end in that they are never realised.

Thus, Borges seeks to undo the Cartesian project of modernity and the associated processes of perceiving identity and othering by rendering being in flux. Through this exercise, he contributes to the philosophical debates on the nature of existence and the various epistemological and ontological questions that have been pondered upon since antiquity. He critiques modernity through a critique of the various dualities like the subject and object, utopias and dystopias, empiricism and idealism, predestination and free-will, the linear and circular, conceptions of time and finally, whether meaning is contained within the text or is inferred by other contexts. His stories satirize the desire for utopia. He utilizes the nexus of desire, memory and signification to demonstrate that all attempts towards utopias in thought and practice are rendered imaginary.

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The People Never Have the Power, Only the Illusion of It: Opposing Utopias in
Assassin's Creed

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Abstract: Utopia has been described as a world of desired perfection as conceived by the human imagination. However, perfection is a subjective concept, and one person's vision of Utopia could easily become a dystopia for many others. Nazis, religious extremists, and several others have all erroneously considered their actions to be for the greater cause of bringing about a perfect world while placing ethical connotations of their actions under erasure.
The Assassin's Creed video game franchise also deals with this dichotomy of Utopia/Dystopia. Set in actual historical periods (Renaissance Italy, the French Revolution, etc.) and featuring prominent historical figures, such as Niccolò Machiavelli and Napoleon Bonaparte, the game describes the struggles between the fictional factions of Assassins and Templars. The Templars wish to build a utopia of order, where a select few make decisions for the rest by abolishing personal choice, while the Assassins want to bring about a world of freedom where everyone is free to live their life as they please, despite the disorder and chaos that might entail.
This paper seeks to juxtapose these opposing utopic ideals, to examine how they are two sides of the same coin and how a true utopia remains only a hypothetical probability.

Keywords: Assassin's Creed, Utopia, Dystopia, History

Introduction

Ever since the dawn of civilisation, even before Thomas More coined the term "utopia," humankind has been striving to create a society modelled after its own ideas of perfection. Various forms of governance, innumerable laws and regulations and an equally staggering number of social and religious structures have been implemented in order to find this elusive holy grail of immaculateness. The curious facet of More's work, which is often overlooked however, is that it not only gave a word for this ethereal society, but that also pointed out the impossibility of attaining such a structure. While various interpretations of *Utopia* have been derived, it is undeniable that one of More's primary motives behind *Utopia* was to state the improbability of creating a perfect world where everyone is happy and content. Human beings are creatures of want and desire. The second that these wants are met, new ones take their place. Not only would a utopian society have to have an unprecedented number of like-minded residents, but also near-unlimited resources to meet all of their demands. With the unlikelihood of a utopian society becoming increasingly evident, one adopts the next point of thought: is, then, a dystopia a more likely outcome? Since utopia and dystopia are two sides of the same coin, the possibility seems highly unlikely. The fact remains however that the models of utopia and dystopia remain both elusive and cognate since, one person or group's definition of utopia will always be the definition of another person or group's dystopia. There is no doubt that Nazi Germany was a dystopian society, but for the Nazis themselves, it was a step forward towards

an ideal world. History is filled with such interesting points of ideological contrast, which gives the *Assassin's Creed* franchise a unique vantage point for our present inquiries.

Ubisoft, the video game studio that created *Assassin's Creed*, have for a long time used the motto, "History is our playground." The video games, of which there are currently over a dozen iterations, are situated in historical periods, such as Renaissance Italy and ancient Greece, and the players have the opportunity to interact with historical figures like Niccolo Machiavelli and Socrates. Hence, *Assassin's Creed* can be considered to be historiographic metafiction. Through these narratives, the players can look at iconic moments in history and realise how the concepts and precepts of a perfect world are flawed, have always been flawed and are likely to remain that way.

The Utopia/Dystopia of *Assassin's Creed*
In *Assassin's Creed* two clandestine groups have been waging a secret war over the fate of humanity for centuries. These two factions are the Brotherhood of Assassins and the Templar Order. While the groups are fundamentally opposed to one another, their end goal is quite similar. Both wish to create a "utopia" for the people of the world to inhabit. The assassins' utopia is based upon their creed, "Nothing is true, everything is permitted" (*Assassin's Creed*). Ezio Auditore Da Firenze, the protagonist of *Assassin's Creed Revelations* elaborates further by saying:

> To say that nothing is true, is to realize that the foundations of society are fragile, and that we must be the shepherds of our own civilization. To say that everything is permitted, is to understand that we are the architects of our actions, and that we must live with their consequences, whether glorious or tragic.

 Thus, the assassins wish for a world where the common people give shape to their society and are free to make their own choices, with the success/consequences of said choices being theirs to enjoy/suffer. This, however, could possibly lead to a chaotic world. For example, the French Assassin Arno Dorian, in *Assassin's Creed Unity*, was instrumental in bringing about the French Revolution, which was a brutal and bloody (albeit necessary) chapter in France's history. Thus, the very steps taken to create a "utopia" are often intrinsically "dystopic" in nature. Such instances further underline the essential entanglement between the two supposedly contradictory ideals.

On the other hand, The Templars, seek to design a world governed by a select few. In such a world, people would have no free will, but there would also be (in theory) no suffering or want, since society shall follow strict rules with little to no deviance. Such a world of order will doubtless be peaceful, but it will be one without individuality and freedom. Within the narrative of the game, this feat is accomplished by using mythical artefacts known as the Pieces of Eden, which can strip a person of their free will. Countless instances in human history records an effort to circumscribe freedom and enforce a regimented living upon the masses. These

movements in history have always elucidated the blurring boundary between the "utopian" idea and "dystopian" reality.

Freedom Vs. Order

The Assassin's Creed poses an interesting question before its players. Although the answer is redundant in the larger scheme of things, the game asks the player, which world would one prefer? A free, but chaotic one, or one of enforced peace and order. These clashes are seen in the historical settings of the games as well. From the vicarious and lawless lives of the pirates in *Assassin's Creed III: Black Flag* to the tyrannical rule of the British in pre-independence America in *Assassin's Creed III*, we are given plentiful examples of how either of the options are nothing close to being perfect. Interestingly, the conception of More's *Utopia* was the culmination of similar contending ideas of societal structure in the time of the renaissance. Quentin Skinner noted that European thinkers were deeply enmeshed in the pursuit of locating the best form of a state. While they agreed that a state would be at its prime only when its laws were just and its citizens happy, a consensus was not reached as to how such as state was to be established.

Skinner identifies two trains of thought with regard to this problem which, interestingly, align quite nicely with the philosophy of the assassins and the Templars. One of the popular responses to this problem was the idea of assigning all decisions of a state to one single person (*Pater Patriae*), as opposed to the court. Reading through John Tiptoft's translation of Buonaccorso, Skinner discovered one of the methods that was proposed for the selection of the *Pater Patriae*. He writes,

> According to the commonly accepted view, the answer is that those citizens who are noblest and worthiest to occupy such honourable positions will be those who are possessed of high lineage and ancient wealth. As Tiptoft more succinctly expresses it, the suggestion is that 'noblesse resteth in blood and riches'. (Skinner 136)

As can be expected, this observation was met with a significant amount of derision. Most notably, Niccolo Machiavelli and Erasmus expressed their amazement and disbelief at such an observation. Machiavelli, in a straightforward manner, stated, "What can conceivably be thought noble about a man who merely has numerous ancestors and a long account of his family history?" (139). Erasmus conceded that linage was important, but only if a person perfectly emulated the nature of their distinguished ancestor, and wasn't simply resting on the laurels of their forefathers. Instead Erasmus suggested that if a single leader were to be chosen, it should be based on their virtues, merits and/or good deeds. Machiavelli echoes a similar sentiment, when he states, "It is virtue that constitutes the one and only nobility" (140). It is, therefore, not a matter of surprise that Machiavelli was portrayed as a member of the Brotherhood of Assassins in *Assassin's Creed II* and *Assassin's Creed: Brotherhood*. His presence is a reminded that the philosophers of the past have treated nature of a unified infallible utopia with considerable ambiguity.

The Brotherhood of Assassins in *Assassin's Creed*, much like Erasmus and Machiavelli, believe in the importance of merit and virtue. It was this belief that led them to oppose the tyranny of Rodrigo and Cesare Borgia in Renaissance Italy, to help George Washington oust the British from America and to help the downtrodden citizens of Victorian era London. The Brotherhood's own system of leadership is based on merit, as each 'Master Assassin' or 'Mentor' is the greatest of his/her era. The Templar's, however, preferred the idea of a *Pater Patriae* who was chosen due to their lineage and/or wealth. Known as the 'Father of Understanding' or 'Grand Master', this title was bestowed on historical figures such as Julius Caesar, Rodrigo Borgia and Charles Lee. Such figures either came from renowned families, coveted wealth and fortune, or had aspirations of fame and conquest. Each of these characters, in one manner or the other, chose to use the 'Pieces of Eden' to bring about a world of absolute order.

The Templar, Haytham Kenway, defended the actions of order by stating, "The people never have the power, only the illusion of it. And here is the real secret: they don't want it. The responsibility is too great to bear" (*Assassin's Creed III*). This idea seems to be reminiscent of Althusser's concept of state apparatuses, as well as Gramsci's notion of hegemony. People are made to feel as if they have a choice, when in reality their choices are being made for them by the established power structures and cultural politics. The Templars, therefore, believe that since free will is an illusion, there is no harm in taking it away, if it will result in widespread peace and harmony. The flaw with such a society is that the person who is assigned the power to govern people unconditionally, might themselves be corrupted by the power. As Juvenal eloquently put it, "*Quis custodiet ipsos custodies?* (Who guards the guardian?)" (Juvenal 347-348).

However, the Brotherhood of Assassin's is in no manner a perfect organisation. Ezio Auditore Da Firenze, in his role as 'Mentor' in *Assassin's Creed: Revelations*, comments upon the contradictory nature of the Brotherhood, "It is strange what we do. We seek peace through violence." Their penchant for violence and their desire to upturn autocratic institutions, usually without a replacement in mind, oftentimes leads to chaos. When native American assassin Ratonhnhaké:ton (also known as Connor Kenway) sought to avenge his tribe's forced displacement from their ancestral land, his teacher, Achilles Davenport, cautioned him by saying, "In your haste to save the world, boy, take care that you don't destroy it" (*Assassin's Creed III*). Templars have also pointed out the flaws in the philosophy of the Assassins. Chiding Ezio Auditore Da Firenze for his continuous efforts to thwart the utopic plans of the Templars, in favour of liberty, Prince Ahmet of the Ottoman Empire said, "And when things fall apart, and the lights of civilization dim, Ezio Auditore can stand above the darkness and say proudly, "I stayed true to my Creed"" (*Assassin's Creed Revelations*). Such observations lead us to the consideration that, similar to More's Utopia, the desired society of both the Templars and Assassins is an impossibility.

No Such Thing as Paradise

Stephen Greenblatt, in his book *The Swerve: How the World Became Modern*, brings into focus the probable reasons behind the creation of More's magnum opus. Prior to the book's publication, Europe was gripped in an ideological tussle between the devout followers of Catholicism and the rising popularity of Epicureanism following the reprinting of Lucretius' iconic work, *On the Nature of Things*. Several thinkers and philosophers sought to find a middle ground between these two polarities, and More was one of them. His Utopians were Epicureans at heart, since they believed that human happiness was essential for the creation of an ideal society. According to Greenblatt:

> More clearly grasped that the pleasure principle—the principle given its most powerful expression in Lucretius' spectacular hymn to Venus—is not a decorative enhancement of routine existence; it is a radical idea that, if taken seriously, would change everything. (Greenblatt 229)

However, the Utopians weren't strictly Epicureans, as they were firm believers of religion, the afterlife and feared divine punishment. More considered fear, whether inspired by divine or human agencies, necessary to keep a community on their best behaviour. As Greenblatt puts it:

> Fear might be eliminated in the philosopher's garden, among a tiny, enlightened elite, but it cannot be eliminated from an entire society, if that society is to be imagined as inhabited by the range of people who actually exist in the world as it has always been known. Even with the full force of Utopian social conditioning, human nature, More believed, would inevitably lead men to resort to force or fraud in order to get whatever they desire. (Greenblatt 232)

The very same idea is supported by characters in Assassin's Creed, such as Dr. Warren Vidic who, in the first *Assassin's Creed* game, is heard saying:

> The human race calls out for direction. They want to know why they're here, what they are meant to do. And once they understand how to live their lives, everything will be better.

> While the idea of oversight and a set of guiding principles is generally a welcome thought,

> Vivian Greene has observed that any utopian setting can quickly devolve into a dystopia, depending on how its features are implemented. She gives the example of utopian architectural concepts, and how they came to inspire Jeremy Bentham.

> Architecture also plays a leading role in the narrative of utopian efforts. From the Italian Renaissance Ideal City and the architectural innovations developed by, for example, Filarete, to the late-eighteenth-century French visionary architecture of Étienne-Louis Boullée and Claude-Nicolas Ledoux, implicit in the thoughtful construction of space is the urge to change and better society. Ironically, both Ledoux's Ideal City for the Saline

de Chaux (the royal saltworks) and Boullée's *Cenotaph to Newton* were never built. Instead, penitentiaries based on the Panopticon of English reformer Jeremy Bentham were later realized and again raise the terrifying possibility of too much control and demonstrate how an optimistic vision can become chillingly dystopic. (Greene 5-6)

Later games in the series would come to prove Greene's point, as numerous Templars attempted to help society by attempting to deprive it of its free will. On the other hand, the Assassins' have no wish to provide any sort of direction. Their very creed is not a doctrine or a set of commands, but an 'observation of reality'. Mary Read, in *Assassin's Creed IV: Black Flag*, sums it up eloquently, "We're assassins and we have a creed, aye. But it does not command us to act or submit. Only to be wise." While this sounds ideal on paper, it follows that the idea of the creed can differ from person to person, with seemingly disastrous results. This was proved to be the case when the French assassin Pierre Bellec, thanks to his misinterpretation of the creed, nearly wiped out the entire French Brotherhood, in an attempt to make them stronger than before. Much like V's "Land of Take-What-You-Want" in Alan Moore's *V for Vendetta*, which is a chaotic landscape that needs to be traversed before reaching the promised "Land of Do-As-You-Please", the assassins aim to pull down tyrannical institutions which result, more often than not, in pandemonium. It is, then, left to the people to find their way back to stability.

Conclusion

A common criticism of Thomas More's *Utopia* starts with the name of the book itself. Derived from the prefix "ou-", meaning "not", and "topos," meaning place, utopia literally means "not-place" or a place that does not exist. While More later clarified that the word was supposed to be spelled "eutopia," where the prefix "eu-" meant good (thereby changing the meaning to "good place"), the general consensus remains that the very word "utopia" symbolises its apparent impossibility. While the historiographic metafictional nature of the Assassin's Creed games do illustrate this notion, it is the act of playing them that is most educational. By being immersed within these events, and witnessing first-hand the failures of such utopian endeavours, the player comes to fully understand the dual nature of utopia/dystopia, and how utopia is a fictional notion at best. However, that does not mean that ideas of utopia cannot inspire to seek a better world. One can take inspiration from the assassins' and hold ourselves responsible for the society one lives in, while taking a leaf out of the Templars' book by adhering to a fixed set of rules that will help us improve said society. Set amidst the deluge of multiple historic upheavals, games like *Assassin's Creed* provide the audience/reader/gamer with a palimpsest of past mistakes of mankind in the hope of inspiring a more cautious approach to future progress.

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Habitable Utopias and their Preservation: The Case Study of Daniel Boone

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Abstract: With the repeated exploratory forays into Kentucky in the 1760s the utopic understanding of New Eden (as utopia) becomes associated with the name of a single individual. The legend of Daniel Boone becomes central to the efforts of settlement past the Cumberland Mountains. Kentucky becomes the new utopia, the new El Dorado, a "hunter's paradise." But it also quickly becomes the new dystopia, the "dark and bloody ground" with repeated "Indian" attacks on the first Kentucky settlements.

This paper focuses on the changes in the image of Daniel Boone from the earliest narratives about him in John Filson's 18th century boosterist text to late 19th century biographies and fictional adventure narratives about him. Boone's transformation from New Adam in a utopic "hunter's paradise" (18th century) to national hero in an industrial utopia (late 19th century) is the result of a change in the idea of utopia itself. The concept of "utopia" here changes from the 18th century notion of a site awaiting habitation to the 19th century view of fast-vanishing wilderness requiring preservation. This article focuses on the texts that promote the heroic image of Daniel Boone: land boosterist text of Filson, the heroic storytelling of Trumbull, and the later encrustations of writers that include writers of histories, a dime novel storywriter, and a comic book illustrator.

Keywords: Utopia, Daniel Boone, Kentucky, George Caleb Bingham, Frontier.

Introduction

George Caleb Bingham's large painting "Daniel Boone Escorting Settlers through the Cumberland Gap," measuring 36 [1/2] inches by 50 [1/4] inches, uses some of the major icons of American frontier expansion. The painting executed between 1851-52 recounts an incident in (around) 1775 when Daniel Boone used the Cumberland Gap to move to Kentucky. The painting itself is designed as a theatrical stage scene set amidst the wilderness landscape in the distance. Light falls on the head of the procession; Daniel Boone leads a group of settlers and is seen holding the reins of a milk white horse on which a woman sits side-saddle. Commenting on the role of visual codes in American frontier-themed paintings, Patricia Hills convincingly argues that Bingham's picture represents Daniel Boone as a latter-day Moses leading God's Chosen People to the Promised Land. She reads symbolic functions operating in the picture by

pointing out how the rocks and the trees give way like the Red Sea on the approach of God's chosen people fleeing from persecution (110-115).

In a detailed analysis of Bingham's artwork, Angela Miller has argued how Bingham's artwork from 1845-1857 shows his connection to the boosterism rhetoric of the time, while remaining rooted to the idea that any chaotic elements in public life (such as the social processes and their fallout in westward expansion) were subsumed under broader national aspirations and expressive formats (8-10). As such, it makes sense to think about the Bingham painting as partaking of a complex process of preservation of a historical moment in a broader panorama of history. Bingham found that the transformation of Daniel Boone into a Moses type figure suited the conventional expectations of a "national" audience and at the same time connected to the logic of western expansion: from the "vantage point of [his] generation," Boone's presence and agency in the Cumberland Gap could be understood as part of a new order, a view proposed by influential cultural critic Henry Tuckerman who proposed that artists should preserve the notion of the frontier (Miller 15-16). So, how did Daniel Boone become so important to American frontier expansion? How did he inhabit the American popular imagination of utopia as the quintessential pioneer?

In securing a vantage point for historical speculations on the nature and function of the frontier, Daniel Boone's pedigree was admirably suited for the job. I wish to survey the biographies of Boone because it is important to see first the range of cultural responses to frontier cultural dynamics. John Filson, a schoolmaster with a chequered career in land speculation, made Daniel Boone famous with his 1784 text titled *The Discovery, Settlement, and Present State of Kentucke.* However, it was the book's appendix about Daniel Boone that made a hero out of a hunter-turned settler and founder of Boonesborough. The book was reprinted in French and German (Taylor 514, Lofaro "Eighteenth" 92). John Trumbull offered a pirated version of Filson's edition about a dozen times between 1787 and 1824 (Lofaro "Eighteenth" 93). After Boone's death in 1820 there was a veritable flood of interpretations with C. Wilder's version of Boone's story that saw the hero being presented as a white renegade. In 1823 Byron wrote a poem about Boone and John A. McClung and presented Boone in broader panoply of western characters in *Sketches of Western Adventure* (1832). Timothy Flint's 1833 biography of Boone called *Biographical Memoir of Daniel Boone, the First Settler of Kentucky* gave Boone the ideological contours that permeate his image today and made him stand out from other important contributors to western expansion (Lofaro "Many Lives" 497-501). Various books celebrating the frontiersman appeared up till the Civil War such as John Peck's *Daniel Boone* (1847), W. H. Bogart's *Daniel Boone and the Hunters of Kentucky* (1854), and George Canning Hill's *Daniel Boone: The Pioneer of Kentucky* (1860). Works on Boone in the years from the Civil War period till the First World War include Cecil B. Hartley's *The Life of Daniel Boone* (1865), John S. C. Abbott's *Daniel Boone: Pioneer of Kentucky* (1872), Edward S. Ellis's *Life and Times of Col. Daniel Boone* (1884), Reuben G. Thwaites's *Daniel Boone* (1902), C.H. Forbes-Linday's *Daniel Boone, Backwoodsman* (1910), H. Addington Bruce's *Daniel Boone and the Wilderness Road* (1910). In the years from the 1920s till recent times works include John Bakeless's *Daniel Boone: Master of the Wilderness* (1939), Michael A. Lofaro's *The Life*

and Adventures of Daniel Boone (1978, revised 1986) and *Daniel Boone: An American Life* (2003) (Taylor 517).

I: Daniel Boone: Heroic renditions by John Filson and John Trumbull
John Filson first made Daniel Boone famous in his 1784 boosterist text on Kentucky and with the appendix on Boone's life introduced a philosophical hero through an autobiographical method. Allegedly in Boone's own words, Filson characterized Boone in the Appendix as a pioneer who evidenced a clear conflict between civilization and the wilderness (Lofaro "Eighteenth" 85-86). As a man of thought rather than a man of action, Filson's Boone is a composite of three parts: the nature lover who retreats from civilization to the simplicity of forest life, a hunter-adventurer and "Indian-fighter," and a pioneer who acted as herald for progress (88). Lofaro claims (quite correctly) that Filson's Boone is given a philosophical role that is at odds with his active hunter-fighter image and capabilities; in Filson's text, there is a clash between the philosophic, learned Boone and the hunter and Indian-fighter Boones while he attempts to use the philosophic Boone as a unifying factor that ties in the various parts (88-90). The frontier is visualized as the opposite of civilization, a non-urban utopia that shelters the hero and teaches him valuable lessons about life and leadership.

Filson informs the reader that Kentucky was discovered in 1754 by one James McBride whose name etched on a tree proves the claim. Rediscovered by John Finley in 1767, Kentucky was known locally as the "Dark and Bloody Ground" because it was a no-man's land for contending tribes (Filson8). Finley encouraged Boone to visit the area and saw Kentucky from an eminence, a stage-set piece that is often mentioned in later biographies. Filson describes the geographical location (latitude and longitude) and the various physical features (towns, rivers), soil composition, climate, quality of the forests, fauna, touristic curiosities, salt springs, fossil deposits, river navigation, and the ease of river-based commerce (11-48). The Boone "auto" narrative begins with his 1769 visit to Kentucky with Filson and ends with the Painkashaw Council in 1784 where peace was considered between the warring factions (82-86). The last section is an extended meditation on the nature and character of Indians seen as a whole.

Richard Slotkin has argued that Filson's discourse on Kentucke and the addition of the Boone text is representative of a "utopian vision of western agrarian democracy" that connects "agronomy with utopia" even as it connects nation-building with Indian wars and shrouds Kentucky with romance and mystery (Slotkin 273). He argues that the Kentucky narrative was more popular during its time than the Boone narrative; in all likelihood, the incorporation of a captivity narrative in recounting the life of Boone would have tipped the scales in the hero's favor, thus linking the hero to the location in a more sentimental way (278, 286). Slotkin finds in the descriptions of Kentucky "a peculiarly neoclassical flavor" "with nature appearing as an artful landscape designer and master gardener" (280-281). As a historian, Slotkin's new critical approach to the contradictions in the text are not necessarily problematic because he sees in Filson's text the integration of the pioneer to his environment in a way that contributes to the myth of the frontier (292). This is however, a sore point with later scholars like Michael

Lofaroand Richard Taylor who have seen significant differences between the various aspects of the Boone legend.

While Filson's text popularized Kentucky and made Boone a philosopher-hero, John Trumbull's pirated edition of Filson in 1786 made Boone an action hero. Having edited out much of the flowery language from Filson's edition, Trumbull set out to make Daniel Boone an "active frontier hero" (Lofaro "Eighteenth" 87). The Trumbull edition received far greater attention in America most likely because Americans involved in settling their country had little time for romantic speculation; Trumbull's edition was reprinted a dozen times (92-93). Most biographers found Trumbull's trimmer version of an active hunter figure more acceptable and it became the baseline for most American versions from 1786-1824 (91). Lofaro argues that it was Trumbull's editorial work that might be thought of as contributing to the present-day biographical image of Daniel Boone" as an active frontier hero. Interestingly, Trumbull did not actually create the image of a hunter; rather, he collapses the sequence of events in the life of the pioneer and makes them appear like short diary-style entries. It provided the impression of a "realistic personal chronicle" of a pioneer who remained always a man of action rather than a natural philosopher (93-94). Reading incorporations of outside material just like Lofaro, Slotkin shows that, in essence, Trumbull presents an Edenic image of Kentucke with an adventurous Boone by incorporating two distinct stories. Trumbull added the captivity narrative of one Mrs. Frances Scott to the story of Boone's adventures. If Boone is the active hero, Frances Scott is the helpless heroine. This suggestiveness was to make Daniel Boone a potent heroic figure who rescued damsels from savage capture in the wilderness (Slotkin 324). In an outrageous tall tale, J.B. Jones's *Wild Western Scenes: A Narrative of Adventures in the Western Wilderness* (1856, rep. 1863), Daniel Boone shows up at critical moments in a developing narrative of characters who act and behave like Shakespeare's courtiers in the Forest of Arden). Boone saves Mary who was captured by the Osage tribes (Jones 133-162) and her escape is aided in part by the Indian chief who had captured her, possibly because he was her long-lost brother who had been taken captive many years before. This sort of complex storytelling that intermingles multiple captivity narratives and the Boone legend contributed a lot to an image of heroism in Arcadia.

In making a hero out of a backwoodsman, Daniel Bryan of Virginia wrote *The Mountain Muse,* an epic that represented Boone as an "aristocrat in bucksins, a sentimental Romantic in his regard for picturesque scenery" (Slotkin 348). The epic supports Filson's philosophical Boone and manages to fit Boone's frontier experiences into a neo-classical image with the unintended consequence of turning the wilderness of Kentucky into the background of an opera (Slotkin 351-352). Allegedly, Daniel Boone, Bryan's uncle by marriage, is said to have become rather uneasy at the news of this transformation.

II: The Changing Ideology of Utopia in the 19th and Early 20th Centuries
Timothy Flint treated the Daniel Boone myth from 1823 to 1833 in three separate publications. Adding various fictional incidents to the life, Flint makes the hero look more "Indian," who takes to Indian ways of life in the forest more readily than other versions of the story.

Differentiating between Eastern and Western heroes, Flint makes Boone look like a poet whose life vocation is skill in hunting; Flint generalizes the hunting image to include all Americans, for all Americans, he claims, are hunters at heart. Boone becomes an American everyman (Slotkin 424-426). Flint's Kentucky is a "hunter's paradise", "a new El Dorado" located in an "unbroken forest," a "region of wonders," a "wilderness-paradise" that "blossoms as the rose," the "garden of God," "the garden of the earth," that had to be claimed "from the dominion of the savage tribes" and "opened as an asylum for the oppressed, the enterprising, and the free of every land" (Flint 24, 56, 36, 52, 226-227). Boone is compared favorably to Robinson Crusoe and history, Flint claims, cannot find a parallel to another like Boone, who "voluntarily consent[ed] to be left alone among savages and wild beasts seven hundred miles from the nearest white inhabitant" (62). The pioneer is posited as necessary in the grand scheme of expansion and whose work prepared "the way for the multitudes that would soon follow" (37-38).

Flint idealizes the settlers, creates a generic (and genetic) profile of the frontiersmen, and he corrects the popular impression that such men who lived, loved, and died in the backdrop of violence were not "demi-savages" with "long beard, and a costume of skins, rude, fierce, and repulsive" (107). Instead, they are "generally men of noble, square, erect forms, broad chests, clear, bright, truth-telling eyes, and of vigorous intellects" (107). Flint sees such times as lost, glorious moments of American history; nineteenth-century American life is but a falling off from the hardihood and honesty of life in Arcadia (110). Flint highlights Boone's exploits in dealing with various tribes as a master strategist who chooses to adopt Indian ways (during his captivity with the Shawnese) in order to understand the ways of the enemy (148). Flint's work romanticizes Indians and settlers: the oppositions are direct, the consequences dire. Flint's illustrations in the book are set pieces of action from those of his childhood years to his feats of strength. The motions are exaggerated, the lithographed figures melodramatically statuesque. Flint takes care to remind his readers that Boone's fights with Indians are celebrated with "sculpture over the southern door of the Rotunda in the Capitol at Washington" (123). Flint closes his book after reproducing Byron's romantic encomium at length (250-252).

With the onset of industrialization, the introduction of the trans-Appalachian railroads in the 1820s, and the later introduction of transcontinental railways across the American West in the 1860s, the focus on Daniel Boone became more overtly political because the "West" was understood as a getaway from the pressures of the east coast city. The Ohio Valley that Cooper's Natty ranges in, is the West just as the Oregon Trail of Francis Parkman is the West. The West as utopia is now a state of mind. As G. Edward White argues: "The sense that this region drifted and floated, limitless in scope and devoid of the confining social aspects of the East–devoid, in fact, of society in any form–gave the West its special flavor" (White 31). In the first of the Leatherstocking Series, *The Pioneers* (1823), Cooper has Leatherstocking question the laws of an urban order; Natty is able to posit the wilderness as an escape from the "oppressive aspects of social organization" (32). Gifted individuals from the east coast, who find life stifling in the cities, find relief and succor in the West: the painter Frederic Remington, the aspiring politician Theodore Roosevelt, and an aspiring writer Owen Wister change the

cultural landscape of American arts and letters after succumbing to the lure to light out west. In this regard, G. Edward White's *The Eastern Establishment and the Western Experience: The West of Frederic Remington, Theodore Roosevelt, and Owen Wister* (1989) presents a powerful case for the dramatic shift of values in the generation that came of age in the post-bellum Eastern industrial culture and which began to see the West as a decisive stage in American history. White's work is pertinent to this project because I found that he astutely analyzed Roosevelt's interest in the conservation of the West as a likely utopia and also in light of the fact that he expended a fair amount of space in his treatment of Daniel Boone in his *The Winning of the West*. Using his cue, I focus here on Roosevelt if only as an interesting example (and because he was more focused than the others on Daniel Boone and the concept of utopia) to highlight the cultural processes at work in positing Daniel Boone as an icon by paradoxically showing him as a fast diminishing (if not already vanished) type of frontiersman in an equally precariously vanishing wilderness.

In Roosevelt's multi-volume work, *The Winning of the West* (1889-1896), we find a good example of the new west as utopia in that the political historian (and former "dude" rancher in the Dakota Badlands) projected Boone as "a symbol of the rugged individual" who could foster self-reliance and hardihood in the face of a rapidly declining set of values in the era of American industrialization (Taylor 519). Roosevelt treats the Kentucky frontier as a "dark and bloody ground"–the term by which Shawnee tribesmen used to refer to it–because he approaches frontier settlement as an act of countering meaningless violence (on the part of the Natives) through brute strength and a "ruthless and undying abhorrence of the Indians" (Roosevelt Vol.2. 76). Kentucky is a settler's utopia that is won by blood, lead shot, hand-axes, and gunpowder. Seeing the frontiersmen as backwoodsmen, Roosevelt portrays them in almost as savage a manner as the racial "Other". Despite making distinctions by nomenclature (for various tribes) Roosevelt sees Native Americans *en masse*: the latter are "natural foes of the American people" (Vol. 2. 74). In the same manner, all frontiersmen are alike. The frontiersmen "greatly resembled one another," writes Roosevelt, adding that "their leaders were but types of the rank and file." Such men, implies Roosevelt, were bound by a natural democracy of spirit for "They stood shoulder to shoulder in the wilderness, far from all help, surrounded by an overwhelming number of foes" (Vol. 2. 65). Utopia was conquered; the conquest could be re-lived by a deliberate act of narration:

> . . . many other men whose names became famous in frontier story , and whose sufferings and long wanderings, whose strength, hardihood, and fierce daring, whose prowess as Indian fighters and killers of big game, were told by the firesides of Kentucky to generations born when the elk and the buffalo had vanished from her borders as completely as the red Indian himself. (Roosevelt Vol. 2. 62-63)

Utopia is recoverable through nostalgia for a lost epoch. The promise of plenty that characterized initial settlement–if one considers the narratives of Daniel Boone's promises to his fellow pioneers–is now replaced by a desire for preservation. Utopia is preserved in the

fireside tale and now, in an industrial age, the late 19th century, through the scripting of the wresting of the west.

Roosevelt argues that the major cause of Kentucky's settlement was Boone's own efforts at founding Boonesborough (Vol. 2. 36, 48). Incidentally, Roosevelt's chooses to spell Boone as "Boon." and I have retained his spelling in my text when I refer to Roosevelt's study of frontier history in order to preserve the flavor of the idiosyncratic original. Since Roosevelt treats Boon's narrative history as merely one among a fairly large ensemble of personal trajectories, Boon remains an important yet a generic frontier backwoodsman. In Volume 1, Roosevelt argues that Boon's fame rests not on his "wide wanderings in unknown lands" but on the fact that "he was able to turn his daring woodcraft to the advantage of his fellows" (Roosevelt Vol. 1. 163). So, even though Roosevelt pays a lot of attention to the details of the pioneer's adult life–and this comes as a sharp distinction from later authors who use Boon as a model for American youth–he is clear that Boon didn't discover an Eden or a new Paradise. Kentucky was well-known by the time Boon came to visit the "vast solitudes," "land of running waters, of groves and glades, of prairies, canebrakes, and stretches of lofty forest" (164). Roosevelt is also insistent in his notes that "Boon stands merely as the backwoods type, not as an exception" when mentioning how he managed to live "absolutely alone in the wilderness, without salt, sugar, or flour, and without the companionship of so much as a horse or a dog" (167). In writing of Boon's relationship to the wilderness, Roosevelt writes that:

> Other hunters, of whom we know even the names of only a few, had been through many parts of the wilderness before Boon [sic] . . . and the head tributaries of the Kentucky. Boon [sic] is interesting as a leader and explorer; but he is still more interesting as a type. The West was neither discovered, won, nor settled by any single man. No keen-eyed statesman planned the movement, nor was it the work of a whole people, of whom each man was impelled mainly by sheer love of adventure; it was the outcome of the ceaseless strivings of all the dauntless, restless backwoods folk to win homes for their descendants and to each penetrate deeper than his neighbors into the remote forest hunting-grounds where the perilous pleasures of the chase and of war could be best enjoyed. We owe the conquest of the West to all the backwoodsmen, not to any solitary individual among them; where all alike were strong and daring and there was no chance for any single man to rise to unquestioned preeminence. (Roosevelt Vol 1. 171)

Of remark here are three distinct positions. First, the Western utopic space of the frontier (i.e., Kentucky) is understood as a vast arena of "adventure" in the "remote forest hunting grounds" that offered "pleasures" such as the hunting "chase" and "perilous" "war." Second, this assumption was clearly understood as an exclusively male domain where "each man" in the collective ("whole people") conquered by consistent effort ("ceaseless strivings") a home for his descendant. Finally, this utopia (now perilously close to a dystopia) is populated by a particular type ("leader and explorer"), "all backwoodsmen" so that no single individual (such as Boon) can be given "unquestioned eminence" or especial credit.

In this background of attempts to preserve the notion of an exclusively male domain of the wilderness frontier, one must understand the later encrustations of the Boone legend. Dan Beard's outdoor movement used Daniel Boone as a "model for American youth." Beard, who went on to found the Sons of Daniel Boone in 1905–a precursor to the Boy Scouts of America– was part of a revival of American nationalism with Daniel Boone as a sort of poster boy (Taylor 518-519). Thus, many Boone biographies posited themselves as assisting youth to emulate a model of a frontiersman who saw the American landscape as a preserved utopia for the regeneration of American manhood; each youthful male citizen became a new Adam. Popular adventure books for boys such as Everett Tomlinson's *Scouting With Daniel Boone* (1914) and Stewart Edward White's *Daniel Boone: Wilderness Scout* (1922) made clear the connection between scouting, the outdoors, and Daniel Boone by claiming that a man who lived among perpetual danger and fought the Indians like an animal had all the virtues of an honest citizen and lived to a ripe old age (Taylor 519). In such cases, while the idea of American frontier as an Eden is reinstated through the notion of the great outdoors, the religious ideology is made palatable through a secularization of the utopic space of adventure. Utopia is not just the Kentucky frontier; rather, it is the great outdoors where the life outside the city becomes utopia. This new reorganized utopia's preservation offers the implicit promise of a happy life.

John Bakeless's 1939 work is a comic book rendition meant for children and it posits Daniel Boone as a hero to be emulated by youthful audiences. The cover page depicts a buckskin-clad Boone with his hunting rifle poised and ready to fight; the opening panel jumps *in medias res* to the battle of the Blue Licks River where the Shawnees routed the settlers and the British regulars. Boone's childhood is projected as a warrior-in-training; all the episodes focus on the immensity of the race war (Indians and whites), captivity at the hands of Indians, rescues of women, deaths of loved ones at the hands of Indian braves, alliances and broken treaties; in one of the panels Boone is shown performing a judo maneuver, common combat training for American soldiers by the time of the Second World War. Bakeless' book is in the tradition of reinstating the importance of the great American outdoors that started with Theodore Roosevelt's policy of celebrating American masculinity through the propagation of frontier virtues.

Conclusion
In conclusion, one may see in the rise of Daniel Boone, the ideologies of American expansion, the peculiar changes within popular literary discourse in connection with the changes of the notion of utopia. In the eighteenth century, understandings of utopia were colored by the idea of America as a fledgling republic (post 1776) that was still dependent on the mother country for its cultural ideologies. As such, a boosterist text like Filson's *Kentucke* posited Boone and Kentucke as functions of the political imagination that retained traces of the first settlers' impressions of the wilderness. However, one notices also a gradual shift in sensibility in terms of the American predilection for action-heroes rather than philosophic ones. With the rise of industrialization, the shift is keyed towards the preservation of a distinctly American representation of the West, a nostalgic return to an allegedly simpler time when clear

distinctions could be drawn, or were allegedly drawn, between the white man and the "redskin." While ground realities of American civil society prevented such easy distinctions even in the early days of the Republic, the nineteenth century saw a gradual racial polarization in the representations of the two races. By the early twentieth century Daniel Boone becomes the childhood hero of the American youth as he stands poised, sharp on the lookout anywhere and nowhere (utopia), in the so-called dark and bloody ground of the United States.

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The Reworking of Arabic Myth and Folklore in Patrick Graham's *Ghoul*

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Abstract: This paper attempts to decipher how age-old folk culture travels across time and space and is transferred from word of mouth to screen/web in the contemporary times of digitization. The text I have chosen is a Netflix original miniseries by Patrick Graham, entitled *Ghoul*, that essentially reworks the Arabic folklore in a dystopian setting of a dungeon, known by the name of Meghdoot 31. It is a detention center for terrorists where each one of them is brutally interrogated, tortured and invariably murdered, and even their family members are not spared, in case they don't sputter out the truth. The web-series draws heavily from the pre-Islamic Arabic folk cult of ghoul, an undead monster that belonged to a diabolic class of djinn and was said to be the offspring of Iblis, the prince of darkness in the ancient Arab universe. It is believed that the ghoul survives on human flesh and eventually morphs into one as soon as it has finished hogging on it. The miniseries is a dystopic tale set in the future and incorporates the folk figure of ghoul to showcase a mirror to the world. It does so fundamentally to shed light on the paradox of the demon that resides within humans, that incongruously de-humanizes them. The story is deeply entrenched in India and is a smart blend of the old folk and the new media, an incredibly significant juxtaposition/intersection that I would also attempt to explore in this paper.

Keywords: Arab folklore, Dystopia, Ghoul, Djinns, Orality, Digitization, Web-series, Technology

Patrick Graham's *Ghoul* (2018), caters to the digital paraphernalia of the contemporary epoch and is set in a dystopian future which seems precariously familiar, and in an India that has been shattered and separated by sectarianism. In one of the first scenes, our protagonist, Nida Rahim's (Radhika Apte) car is stopped for inspection, and the policeman is embarrassed when she informs him that she works for the National Protection Squad, a paramilitary organization aimed to combat terrorism. One witnesses during the course of the Netflix miniseries, that throughout its run, it is fueled by characters and spaces that project their inherent jingoism and Islamophobia, and consequently the monsters or as the title of the series suggests, the 'ghouls' that reside within each one of them. Fundamentally a neo-noir with horror and surreal elements firmly interlaced together, *Ghoul* becomes a metaphor of the expanding dissection in India and other parts of the world. In the miniseries, a futuristic India has turned into a 'pan-Hindu' nation*, for* almost all of Nida's colleagues at the detention center are upper-caste Hindus and she's constantly treated with suspicion for her religious identity. This paper attempts to locate the origins of the ghoul legend, an offshoot of the Arabic myth and folklore, and argue how it is reworked in Graham's work to comment on the horrors of totalitarianism.

Originally shot as a feature length film, Graham's *Ghoul* had run into trouble with the censor board for its apparently politically volatile content and portrayal of the army, which is why it was picked up by Netflix and trifurcated into an episodic miniseries of about forty-five minutes each. Graham, who has lived in India for almost a decade, came up with the idea after reading CIA documents about torture practices used after 9/11, and later, reports of military centers in Kashmir. He had a dream about being in a torture center in Iraq and then he thought, it would be refreshing to build a character who was an inmate, and even scarier than the place, guards, or the other prisoners and there's something unusual about him. This is how the series/feature was creatively developed. And it was a conscious decision on the British director's part to rework Arab folklore, set it in a futuristic India, and market as well as showcase the show digitally, fundamentally to reach a global audience.

 The miniseries begins with an unsettling quote, 'Strike the deal with your blood … And out of the smokeless fire…The ghoul will come.' The scene then shifts to an inmate, later revealed to be Nida's father, Shahnawas Rahim (SM Zaheer)–cutting his hand and using the blood to draw an eccentric symbol on the ground. He murmurs an Arabic verse to summon a ghoul mentioned in Arabic folklore as the offspring of Iblis, the devil. In this post-sectarian era, the drama unfolds at Meghdoot 31 (figuratively precise, since *'megha,'* which means rain in Sanskrit/Hindi and several other Indian languages, is deliciously used in the narrative as a recurring motif), a labyrinth like detention center, where in a typical totalitarian regime, anyone who questions the state is brought to, for reconditioning, a euphemism for third-degree torture. Nida is a recruit in this militant, government-aided force, and she is brought to the facility around the same time as Ali Saeed (Mahesh Balraj), a notorious terrorist. Nida's religion makes her a traitor in the eyes of her people, and an outsider in the eyes of the soldiers at the detention center, even when she is extremely loyal for her country and informs her seniors about the possibility of her father being a terror suspect. Subsequently, her father is brought to the center, brutally interrogated and murdered, just like his fellow inmates.

Nida realizes eventually that she was brought two weeks prior to the completion of her training because Saeed had taken her name, and she consequently had become a terror suspect as well. Saeed is particularly a legendary man, believed to be a terrorist like the rest of the inmates, but with a shady past. The head of this facility is a decorated war hero, Colonel Sunil Dacunha (Manav Kaul), an alcoholic, and a self-proclaimed patriot, who is in an estranged relationship with his wife, and is mostly ignored by the officers. The most intriguing facet during the course of the web-series is however, the figure of the ghoul, that we first encounter in the form of Saeed, who is actually not a terrorist, but a ghoul summoned by Nida's father in exchange of his soul, what I believe is a rechanneling of the Faustian motif. The twist here is that the ghoul has killed the real Saeed and taken over his body. He knows the deepest, darkest secrets of the prison guards – secrets that they have planned on taking to the grave with them; and he eventually uses the same secrets to turn them against each other. After a massacre at Meghdoot 31, and Dacunha being shot by Nida, the latter is officially declared a traitor and detained. She summons the ghoul in exchange of her soul, right before the rolling of final credits.

Ghoul, primarily is a phantom like figure, present as an integral fragment of the Arabian folklore since the pre-Islamic times. Illustrated among myths as a cross between a spirit and a demon, the ghoul is counted among the evil d*jinns* in Arabic tales, fathered by Iblis, the equivalent of Satan in Qur'an who refused to bow to God, much like Lucifer in the Bible. It's a fable creature that's been described especially as someone who robs graves and eats human flesh. Folktales in Arabic culture that encompass the motif of a fight occurring between a human being and a ghoul usually represent the ghoul as a hideous looking female creature seeking to harm others. Typically, the fight involves striking the monster with a sword and ends with victory. The female creature is sometimes called "Mother Ghoul" or like another relational term such as "Aunt Ghoul". She can change her form and appear to humans as anything she wishes, and she does so to scam wretched and helpless characters, usually men, into her power or abode, primarily to eat them.

Graham however transforms the ghoul figure into a male, possibly to turn away from the female monster figure overused in popular cinema across countries repeatedly as a retort to invert the idea of witnessing the woman, very much like a child as a traditionally repressed character. It is refreshing to not witness the same old tropes of women with long black hair often called *chudhails* and *daayans* (female spirits) with their feet upturned, or a vengeful *naagin* (snake-woman), the current fad(s) on Indian popular television. *Ghoul* instead uses the ghoul figure primarily in the form of a man, who is typically the victim in horror genre, especially in India, and I believe we should specifically laud Graham for bringing out this change in the Indian mass culture. The ghoul figure has travelled globally and eventually modified itself, just like any other folk subject. Found in early Mesopotamia folklore, besides the Moroccan *ghoul*, this demonic spirit travelled to Europe when Antoine Galland translated and penned the *Arabian Nights* (1704-1717). As mentioned, most of the origin folk culture(s) and early Western stories have construed the ghoul as female. She-ghoul, Amina has found many a mention among English writers. Charles Dickens describes Amina as "the awful lady, who was a ghoule" in his story, *'Story of Sidi Nouman,'* besides other mentions *(Sabika Razvi)*. The Bronte sisters were fascinated by Galland's evil ghoul cult as well. Ahmed K. Al-Rawi observes that most English language writers who portray ghouls as those who dig graves and hog on human flesh, have taken it from Galland's interpretation. This, he notes, is in contrast with what originally a ghoul was supposed to be. Al-Rawi argues that Islam could not get rid of these beliefs since they were inherently a part of ancient Arab folklore, their active imaginations, and are still very well-liked by the masses, which is why we come across them time and again in popular culture, including the works like Sui Ishida's *Tokyo Ghoul* (2017), JK Rowling's *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*, Prosit Roy's *Pari* (2018) and portions of it in Anurag Kashyap's *No Smoking* (2007) and Rahi Anil Barve's *Tumbadd* (2018).

In Graham's miniseries, the ghoul becomes an interesting Faust figure, for each of its principal characters signs a deal with the notorious devil, with their own blood, and summon it in exchange of their soul. The use of its figure is a step forward towards global entertainment, where the director is British, the setting is Indian, and the lore incorporated on an American digital platform is Arabic. It is a cross-cultural venture for sure and is something that is the

need of the hour. It also feels as if the miniseries is a part of a post-feminist age, for it is set in a world where women are equally strong as men, and the same is represented as absolutely normal, minus the celebration of any kind of newly acquired right/freedom, a facet of the show, that I found explicitly intriguing and fresh. Gender therefore consciously enough, doesn't play a role in the narrative. The series in fact reminds of a film like *Starship Troopers* (1997), where men and women are so equal that is quite normal for them to take showers together.

It is fascinating to witness this change, thanks to the advent of the digital mode, that spreads information within seconds, does not have a censor to curtail its voice, and hence, does not end up compromising on its premise and delivery. Oral and digital media, are two extremely different platforms used for expression in the present times and they share an intertextual relationship in the post-postmodern epoch, where often popular folk culture seeps into the web, and reaches out to the masses at a pace witnessed like never before, unlike the traditional way where it was passed on literally by word of mouth. This phenomenon becomes symbolic in the case of Graham's *Ghoul* as well, since just like the traditional process in which folk culture is typically exchanged, characters in this web-series are put into situations where they have to summon a ghoul, and just like the oral texture of the folk culture, this concocts a pattern that is recurring and would go on for generations to come. The ghoul figure becomes the only, and the final resort, that can save the day. The paranormal dissent is the only way out precisely, to get out of experiences and situations, that are ironically enough fed by the horror that humans are made of, and not ghouls or monsters. The tussle and wrestle are thus with the ghoul within, and the process is even more daunting than fighting the ghoul that is outside, the ostensibly actual monster. It is however the claustrophobic, encrusted spaces of the dungeon, that are spine-chilling and complement the mood of the miniseries. It almost feels like the audiences are under surveillance as well, just as the inmates and the officers, and this keeps them on the edge of their seats. All of them are trapped and have precisely nowhere to go.

The figure of the ghoul creates the foundation of the narrative, by thriving on people's guilt, working on the principle of reveal their guilt, eat their flesh. This is also how the lore marries the digital, and we are presented with an amalgamation of the two mediums. Shahnawaz had invoked the ghoul to deal with the injustice meted out to him, and to make his daughter understand her mistake. This ghoul takes the form of Saeed who is to reveal and expose its wrath, and in the process, the vices of the state's foot soldiers are coloured out. The eleven officers of the centre live in a cell with no natural light, originally built as a bunker, an underground shelter in case of a nuclear attack. Each of them displays bizarre, grey physiognomies and live by the rule that there is no room for empathy or sympathy. Despite being on the same side, they do not trust each other, and when struck by crisis, they turn on each other. Their worldview is hollow, and their demons often come out and pit them against each other. The monster within, is mirrored in the figure of ghoul, that ironically makes it easier to decide who the actual monster is. Two of the officers for instance, murder an innocent prisoner's wife and child right in front of him to get him to confess. As a consequence, they are both wrestling with remorse. At one point, even before the ghoul figure could channelize and take anybody else's form other than Saeed's, they get into a brawl, and one officer ends up

murdering the other. As Dacunha tries to boost the morale of the dying officer by reminding him that he is a brave soldier, the latter makes a disturbing statement hinting that they all have blood on their hands. Through these actions, the ghoul reveals the violence of the state and those that blindly follow its beliefs. This helps Nida realize the error of her faith in the state, and thankfully thereby inverting the 'nationalist Muslim' (Aakshi Magazine) narrative that the show was premised upon right in the beginning. The series is therefore a voice against the stereotypes that put anybody in a box and delimits their actions or curtails their freedom. It figuratively uses the cult of ghoul and invariably shows mirror to the audience, taking them completely in and making each spectator one of the monsters amongst the many.

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Pushing the Boundaries of Real: Dystopian World of *The Queue*

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Abstract: The debut novel by Egyptian writer Basma Abdel Aziz has been translated from Arabic by Elisabeth Jaquette. It explores the troubled relationship between the individual and the totalitarian state in an unspecified place that implies the world in general or the post-Arab Spring Egypt in particular. Most of the power rests with the state, resulting in a lopsided system. It has been placed alongside the dystopian writings of George Orwell and Franz Kafka because of its doublespeak and surreal atmosphere. The menacing presence of an overbearing authority and its extremely efficient mechanism to control people's lives through surveillance lurk throughout the novel. The ambience of fear under oppressive regimes, reminiscent of the twentieth century classics *1984* and *The Trial,* has been recreated but with a difference in setting that is the Middle East. The paper is significant as there has been a dearth of scholarship on utopian writings from the region. Secondly, it is important to take note of the increased output of dystopian writing from this region in the 21st century.

Utopianism has been defined by Lyman Tower Sargent as "social dreaming—the dreams and nightmares that concern the ways in which groups of people arrange their lives and which usually envision a radically different society than the one in which the dreamers live (3)." He is of the view that utopianism has various manifestations and that there are one or more utopian traditions. He contests the common assumption that the Christian West is the fountainhead of the genre. But utopia as a genre of literature has certain formal characteristics that are most common in the Christian West, especially because the genre is identified with Thomas More who belongs to the Christian West. He admits though, that the scholarship on non-western utopianism has been virtually non-existent. However, body utopias and intentional societies, part of the pre-contact utopian tradition, have been found in Arabic. Most scholars agree on this point that the twentieth century is the age of dystopia. As compared to other periods, the twentieth century seemed to reject hope, says Sargent. He held:

> The catalogue of the twentieth century has been read as nothing but failure—World Wars I and II, Korea, Vietnam, the Middle East, Northern Ireland, the Gulag Archipelago, the rising rate of violent crime, the Cold War, the apparent failure of the welfare state, ecological disaster, corruption and now the upsurge of ethnic and tribal slaughter in Eastern Europe and Africa. Not surprisingly this has led to pessimism about the ability of the human race to achieve a better society, and the dystopia—warning that things could get even worse—became the dominant utopian form. (Sargent 26)

Consequently, content of many dystopias has been driven by war, fascism, totalitarianism, supremacy of science and technology, patriarchy, environmental degradation and so on. The 21st century has not fared better, and the similar mood of dejection and hopelessness continues which is clearly reflected in the contemporary fiction. Several utopian scholars have explored the role of dystopian fiction as social and political criticism. Sargent defines dystopia as a "non-existent society described in considerable detail and normally located in time and space that the author intended a contemporaneous reader to view as a criticism of that contemporary society" (9). Accordingly, *The Queue* bears close resemblance to a Middle East country though the writer has not directly referred to the real happenings in the history of Egypt anywhere in the text. Her work rides the wave of dystopian writing that has overtaken Middle East post Arab Spring. Alexander Alter in his article in *New York Times* observes that the current wave of dystopian and surrealist fiction from Middle Eastern writers stems from the frustration and chaos following the Arab Spring. He says a bleak; apocalyptic strain of post-revolutionary literature has emerged in the region. A shift away from realism is clearly discernible. Dystopian themes are not entirely new in Arabic fiction, but they have become much more prominent in recent years, publishers and translators say. The genre has proliferated in part because it captures the sense of despair that many writers say they feel in the face of cyclical violence and repression. At the same time, futuristic settings may give writers some measure of cover to explore charged political ideas without being labeled dissidents (Alter). Arab Spring refers to a series of uprisings in Egypt, Tunisia, Libya and Syria in 2011 which revived hopes among Arabs for better governance, freedom and human rights. The revolutions had held promise of democracy and greater social freedom which has remained elusive in these countries except for Tunisia. Since the revolution, the optimism has largely waned. The euphoric writings of the Arab Spring have given way to the dark, grim tales of future. The omnipotent authority has come down heavily on art and creative writing. In the case of Egypt, President Hosni Mubarak was forced to step down after thirty years of rule. However, the government that replaced the former proved to be even worse, says Layla al-Zubaidi, co-editor of a collection of post-Arab Spring writing titled *Diaries of an Unfinished Revolution*. In Egypt, under the strict rule of the former General and current President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi, the government has shut art galleries, raided publishing houses and seized copies of books it considered controversial. More than five hundred Muslim Brotherhood officials were sentenced to death in March 2014. In Michael J. Totten's words his regime reeks of Stalinism. The currency of dystopian writing in such an atmosphere is understandable for the genre gives voice to a collective sentiment of frustration.

Dystopian World of *The Queue*

The paper examines the way Aziz's novel goes beyond the limits of realistic presentation. It focuses on formal strategies employed by Aziz which have to be explained with reference to the content. However, both are yoked to the fundamental purpose of dystopian writing: "to prompt readers to change the world by elaborating on its evils in terms of other worlds" (Murphy 36). To approach any dystopian work, it is beneficial to investigate the authorial intention. In an interview Aziz talks about the genesis of her novel. She began writing *The Queue* in September 2012 after her return from France. A psychiatrist by profession, she is

based in Cairo. While visiting Downtown Cairo, she came across a long queue of people waiting in front of a closed government office. Two hours later when she walked past the place, the queue was still there. She was amazed to see that the same people were standing there; the queue had grown longer with no sign of the gate opening up. This gave Aziz the idea of a short story that eventually assumed the proportions of a novel. She wondered why they stood there endlessly without protesting. They could have left the place in frustration. She started writing in a frenzy chalking out the lives of people who had learnt to be patient with the authority. Her characters rescheduled their lives in order to stand in the queue and wait for the gate to open. "It reached the point that I felt I was on the verge of becoming someone like many of the characters, a dutiful and submissive citizen whose life is dictated by the totalitarian authority. The closed gate slowly came to symbolize a regime that represses people, determines their behavior, turns them into identical copies of one another, and strips them of their will," (Aziz). Aziz admits that the fictional form gave her the freedom to comment on the totalitarian authority.

The story is set in an unnamed Middle Eastern city where an unknown authority called the Gate has assumed power. Unlike other notable dystopias, *The Queue* is not the story of a utopia gone wrong. The author refrains from naming the country, the authorities or the events and deliberately uses the euphemistic substitutes like Disgraceful Events or the Gate. The 2011 uprising against Mr. Mubarak is called "the first storm" whereas a later civilian revolt that ended in bloodshed is referred to as "the disgraceful events." The author intentionally drops many details and leaves a number of things vague, unexplained and hence less than real. This creates the distance between the contemporary world of readers and the imagined world of the dystopia. It is a brilliant device that enables the author to evade censorship. At the same time, it exposes the government tendency to rewrite official history by naming. "The Gate had appeared rather suddenly as the First Storm died down, long before the Disgraceful Events occurred," (Aziz 31). The explanation is rather cryptic. Initially people were ignorant of the role the Gate played in their lives.

> Then one day the Gate issued an official statement detailing its jurisdiction, which extended over just about everything anyone could think of. This was the last document to bear the ruler's seal and signature. As time passed, the gate began to introduce a few new policies, and soon it was the singular source of all regulations and decree. Before long, it controlled absolutely everything, and made all procedures, paperwork, authorizations, and permits—even those for eating and drinking—subject to its control. (Aziz 31, 32)

A long queue outside a closed government building acted as a trigger for Aziz to write this bleak story. But she does not stick to the rules of verisimilitude and her queue extends through the novel, crossing into other cities and her imagination extends further and further with it, confesses Aziz. All dystopian worlds are distanced from the real world spatially and temporally. Patrick D. Murphy is of the view "While authors who want their work to touch immediately the life of the reader benefit greatly from the utilization of spatial and historical

distance to fabulate a utopia or dystopia, they also face the danger of having that same distance sever the didactic signals of their chosen genre" (25). Aziz does place her story in an anonymous city but she uses the pseudo-documentary framing to reduce the dystopian distance between tenor and vehicle. This formal device, says Murphy, is more verisimilitudinous because of its appeal to journalistic and academic writing conventions.

The medical file of its protagonist which is being read by Dr Tarek sets off the narrative. Once the narrative starts rolling, Aziz creates a microcosm around the queue, taking advantage of the fictional form. People begin to eat, drink, sleep, run business, hold religious discourse while waiting for their turn to petition the powerful authority. The queue is the metaphor for conforming citizens. Gradually everybody starts falling in line. The protagonist, 38-year-old Yehya Gad el-Rab Saeed has been accidentally shot during the Disgraceful Events. A bullet is lodged in his pelvis but he cannot get it removed without the permission of the government. So, he has to join the queue to get the permit. Other people have their own reasons to wait in the queue. Um Mabrouk wants a permit for treatment of her ailing daughter. She has already lost her elder daughter owing to delay in the completion of formalities. Shalabi has come from the village as he wants his deceased cousin to be declared a martyr. Ines is facing a reevaluation of her recruitment as a teacher because she happens to appreciate a student's assignment that is critical of the government. "The dystopian rulers live in a mysterious realm of absolute completeness where they decide everything while their subjects are plainly gaps," (Mihailescu 217). There are many more instances of government overreach which keep on increasing until they reach a climactic point. Yehya's condition deteriorates with the passage of time and even the slightest movement causes him a lot of pain. Aziz transgresses the boundaries of verisimilitude while describing the condition of Yehya. Yehya's partner Amani, friend Nagy and a journalist Ehab try to help him out of this crisis but to no avail. The impenetrable and opaque authority, the Gate, has an ever-watchful system in place to control its people's lives. "It is the higher, abstract, and inscrutable things that engulf and dismiss the lower diversity of details and plurisignifications, the 'the richness of life,'" (Mihailescu 217). Mihailescu insists that dystopias offer shrinking worlds which can't consider all imaginable details.

To the shock of Dr Tarek, who is handling Yehya's case, the latter's file is periodically and secretly updated. The Gate has been controlling the fate of its people meticulously through paperwork. If the application of Yehya for surgical removal of bullet is rejected, the file will be closed permanently with a "red tape." The metaphor of red tape comes alive in Aziz's hands. There is such an absolute control over all activities obvious and natural that virtually nothing happens. This condition has been articulated as ideal by the main character of *We*, written by Zamyatin. The character named D-503 says, "The ideal (clearly) is the condition where nothing happens anymore," (23). The text works against the normalization of the government excesses. The author tries to make strange what has become all too conventional "the dystopian features of the present and the possible horrors of the future" (Murphy 25). The characters are doomed to give in to the absurd demands of the system with a banal inevitability. People have to procure the ominous Certificate of True Citizenship if they want to apply for a job. The queue hardly inches ahead, applications of ordinary citizens remain pending, people keep waiting for their

turn to receive medical treatment. The priorities of the state or the Gate are quite different. The government is very particular about its announcements and decrees, keen to clean the square and its image, to remove the last trace of violence inflicted by the government and to conspire against its citizens by spying on them.

Basma Abdel Aziz handles the plot brilliantly. The novel is divided into six sections, each section corresponding to a new entry in Yehya's file as it is read by Dr Tarek. The plot reinforces the theme of authoritarianism and government overreach in a city where the life of an individual is measured by additions to his or her record. Records are maintained religiously in the state. The dystopian world becomes comprehensive after a massive process of reduction. It does not have room for realistic detailing. The document no. 4 of Yehya's file, which also includes inputs from his childhood, adolescence and university life, states, "In addition to anxiety and irritability, other symptoms include an irrational belief that he (Yehya) can alter reality" (Aziz 102).An individual's capacity to change things is a threat to the state. Ehab's report which was rejected by his editor in chief was rubbished by Yehya as well. He believed that it made no sense. The use of the term rumours for the real happenings is an example of the subversion of language famously called Orwellian doublespeak. The state manipulates facts and promptly issues an official version of the events:

> The story simply made no sense—it contradicted all the other accounts in all the other papers, as well as every statement released by the Gate, and it went against the committee's latest fatwas, too. Ehab's report was just based on rumours that there were citizens injured by government bullets who hadn't come forward, that others were blind to their injuries. Rumours that they had disposed of the bullets removed from people's bodies, and then denied that the bullets had ever existed …" (Aziz 182)

Calin Andrei Mihailescu believes, "Twentieth century dystopian novels bring to life such cases of fall from the state of knowledge (where there exists a difference between understanding of arbitrariness and necessity) to a state of lack of knowledge (where whatever is the case is happening because of necessity and is, therefore, good). Dystopias are the strongest case to date for the inverse fall from the paradise: the fall into nothingness" (218). The queue is the central trope around which the life of the novel's characters revolves. However, the Gate, the Northern Building are the important pillars of this authoritarian rule aided by the newspaper "The Truth," and a dubious phone company Violet Telecom, through which the government controls the masses. Standing in the queue is the national pastime and people move away from it only occasionally. Yehya and his friends stray from the queue only to retrieve his X-ray from the Zephyr hospital which clearly shows the bullet in his body. All the X-ray reports have mysteriously disappeared from the hospitals. After the Disgraceful Events, all X-ray machines have been removed from the hospitals. Meanwhile Yehya is gradually dying a slow death. He has traces of blood in his urine. Carmen Maria Machado remarks, "The Queue is the newest in the genre of totalitarian absurdity: helpless citizens—some hopeful some hopeless—struggling against an opaque, sinister government, whose decrees, laws, propaganda, and red tape would

be comical if they weren't so deadly serious." She compares the fiction to Vladimir Sorokin's novel of the same name, Kafka's *The Trial*, Orwell's *1984* and Huxley's *Brave New World*. All of them create a surreal and nightmarish world of dystopian bureaucracy where simple jobs are obfuscated by long winding procedures akin to Dickens' offices of circumlocution.

Kafkaesque atmosphere of the dystopia adds to its chilling terror. Drawing from her experience of counselling torture victims, Aziz creates a nightmarish world. Amin Malak claims that while dystopias may be fear-laden horror fiction … the emphasis of the work is not on the horror for its own sake, but on forewarning… [T]he aim is neither to distort reality beyond recognition, nor to provide an escapist world for the reader, but "to allow certain tendencies in modern society to spin forward without the brake of sentiment and humaneness (10)." When Amani transgresses the line drawn by authorities, she is subjected to inexplicable torture. "First the color drained from her imagination, then so did the light, so that her mind too became black. Gradually she began to forget faces…were it possible that her memory was being stolen from her" (152). The torture, Amani is subjected to, seems unreal. Aziz keeps the methods of torture vague but the effect is devastating. Amani wondered whether "they" had taken her off the face of the earth, out into space, and had left her naked on a dark uninhabited planet. The regime has an uncanny ability to bend the will of the individuals. It becomes difficult for the reader to pin point the real cause of citizens' predicament. While the system silently encroaches on civil liberties, the inability to know what's ailing the system is disconcerting. However, the novel is not that far removed from reality so as to be relegated to the class of dream literature. Murphy elaborates if a work simply enables escapism it will only encourage social inaction and facilitate the continuation of the status quo. On the contrary it leads to a feeling of discomfort urging social action by implicitly or explicitly commenting on the contemporary reader's situation.

The man in the galabeya, representative of religion, colludes with the government. The High Sheikh, the source of all fatwas, quotes the Greater Book and urges the believers not to be swept away by rumours:

> Assertions that people had been injured in the Events were clearly no more than lies and fabrications, spread by an anti-religious minority who had suffered injuries themselves. Most people in the nation were believers (thank God) and so he had no reason to fear for them, not even in the face of bullets … if a believer were to be struck by a bullet (despite his prayers and supplication), his faith would guide him to the understanding that it was *God himself* who'd struck him down. (Aziz 181)

One trait that is common to all totalitarian states is the control over media. There is a continuous attempt to rewrite history. Aziz uses exaggeration to emphasize her point. The only paper that has circulation is state controlled and is ironically named the Truth. In an opinion poll conducted by the Centre for Freedom and Righteousness on the performance of the government, the results were the same as that of the previous year. "Citizens had unanimously endorsed its governance, laws, and court rulings—wholeheartedly and dutifully supporting the

just decrees that had recently been issued. Those conducting the poll had therefore decided not to conduct one again. To simplify matters, they would announce the previous poll's results on a set yearly date" (68).

Amani is haunted by nightmares since she confronted the representatives of the regime on disappearance of Yehya's X-ray. But she caves in at the end. She starts believing with the regime that it was all a simple fiction. A weight had finally lifted from her chest. "Then she tried to convince Yehya that the bullet that had pierced his side and lodged itself in his pelvis was a fake bullet, that it wasn't important to remove it, and that he no longer needed to trouble himself with the matter of who shot him. But Yehya was not convinced, and he did not stop bleeding" (213). This naiveté of the narrator is an effective formal strategy of dystopia. Ultimately the two female characters with rebellious streak, Amani and Ines, are forced to conform while Yehya resigns to his fate. The defeat of the different was obvious in this kind of world. "Dystopias acknowledge the demise of individual differences as a way of keeping order in power and power in order. Dystopias are stories that contrast the failure of the main character with the unstoppable advance of society towards totalitarianism. The loss of the self is the character's final acknowledgement of, and ultimate contribution to, society's being definitely victorious" (Mihailescu 215). The readers have a sense of closure as Yehya's file traces the 140 days of his life after the bullet injury. The indeterminate ending adds to the horror and intrigue of the novel.

Conclusion
The Queue treads carefully between reality and dream. Aziz magnifies the horrors of a totalitarian state through exaggeration and ambiguity. She achieves the cognitive function and didactic purpose of her fiction by making her dystopian world similar to contemporary life in Egypt. Foregrounding through exaggeration a few of its elements, she achieves the fine balance that prevents the escape of the readers into the fantasy world. In the process, the novel pushes the boundaries of real and assumes transcendental dimensions. In fact, *The Queue* rises above the critique of the fallout of the Arab Spring and becomes universally applicable to any place, any period of history with only minor variations.

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"Sacred Games" - A Modern Indian Dystopia

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Abstract: Some of the primary characteristics of a dystopia are a pessimistic outlook and destructive way of living. *The Sacred Games*, a series by Anurag Kashyap and Vikramaditya Motwane portrays Mumbai in the grip of gangster raj: a disturbed universe of high treason, violence and destruction. A boy bludgeons his mother and her lover with a stone while his father goes silently to jail. The series portrays the thriving underbelly of Mumbai life, especially the kingdom of Urban Waste. The role played by the authorities in pursuing clues to the "Game" played by the hidden "messenger" overlord, is what adds grit and suspense to the plot, as disaster threatens all.

Does this kind of dystopia continue the tradition of western dystopias or are there enough Indian models? Perhaps more than the writer, Vikram Chandra, the filmmakers have found correspondences that are more potent to unleash the evil, in a story that mockingly points to its Other, the "Sacred", its obverse, in not something rational and profound, but quite arbitrary and casual, a mere "Game." These are some of the questions this paper asks, while interrogating the relevance of the genre in literature and film today.

"To win is to lose everything, and the game always wins" (Chandra, *Sacred Games* 42). Some of the primary characteristics of a dystopia are a pessimistic outlook and destructive way of living. *The Sacred Games*, (2018) a series by Anurag Kashyap and Vikramaditya Motwane portrays Mumbai in the grip of gangster raj: a disturbed universe of high treason, violence and destruction. A boy, possibly, bludgeons his mother and her lover with a stone while his father goes silently to jail. The series portrays the thriving underbelly of Mumbai life, especially the kingdom of Urban Waste. The role played by the authorities in pursuing clues to the "Game" played by the hidden "messenger" overlord, is what adds grit and suspense to the plot, as disaster threatens all.

The 901-page text *Sacred Games* (2007) by the author Vikram Chandra trajectories the fortunes of Sartaj Singh, the man whom readers of *Love and Longing in Bombay* (1997) recollect instantly as the romantic, handsome, male lead of a stormy, extended, sex scene in the short story "Kama." Sartaj, as we see him in *Sacred Games*, is a tough detective, but one who is used to impress old people, and women criminals and sources to wheedle out information or seek confessions. It is because of his past, his father having been the most honest policeman, and also because he is something of an "Other" because of his genteel manners, and dressing sense. Maybe it is also because of his religion, he is a turbaned Sikh, or perhaps not as given to

bribery and corruption as his guru, his senior, Parulkar, who himself had been tutored by Sartaj's father, who was a legend on the Bombay police force. Mumbai, as such, was becoming quite a favourite as a location for such novels, what with Suketu Mehta's *Maximum City* (2004) and *Shantaram* (2003) a novel by Gregory David Roberts.

Why did Chandra select him as the hero of not a sequel but a tome of a modern-day detective novel set in the criminal underworld of Mumbai? The reviewer in *Publishers Weekly* describes him as follows:

> Sartaj, still handsome and impeccably turned out, is now divorced, weary and resigned to his post, complicit in the bribes and police brutality that oil the workings of his city. (30)

In *Kirkus Reviews*, an Autumn and Winter preview by his publishers, Chandra was quoted to explain the selection. "He forced himself into the book, right from the start," says Chandra, and "He's an interesting guy--tough, a bit wistful, something of a cynical romantic, if you can imagine such a thing" (Kirkus reviews). He also suggests that there will be no Sartaj sequel, as he had had ten years with him and "that's a lot of time" (Kirkus reviews). Pitted against the semi-tragic Mafia Don Ganesh Gaitonde, Sartaj is a loner, in search for fulfilment though the company he keeps daily, cops and criminals, are very similar to Gaitonde himself.

The crime thriller novel genre itself has this essential loneliness about it: the detective being the *döppelganger* of the reader in quest for fulfilment of some kind. Here Sartaj seems to have met the most unequal match who he finds at the last hour of his life, and thus starts the problem of the novel: it brings together the sacred and the profane, crime and mythology, murder and exaltation to weave a long story of what must have happened, told in the voice of the dead Ganesh Gaitonde. Sartaj is not the first-person narrator, never: it is Ganesh who tells the story as if he were alive. What better beginning of a dystopian tale than a dead narrator speaking to a lost listener?

The Detective as Hero
According to Shoshana Felman, the detective " works to exhort the *secret* of the text" (176) and in this case it must be said that the reader finds an analogue of himself/herself in the detective, the good-looking, well-dressed, middle-class, somewhat urbane, and English-speaking youngish man, whom it is easy to identify with. However, it is Sartaj who sets the tone for the dystopic tone of the novel and the series. Apart from his personal anguish and loneliness, there is no way he is ever to be rewarded, he knows that the success of his boss is going to be his undoing, and that he himself will never be rewarded for finding Gaitonde in the first place! It seems that his pessimistic outlook has become so ingrained in him that it seems to be his only reality. This forms the dystopic basis for both the novel and the series. The long shots, the close-ups and the fade outs show how the taciturn Sartaj is resigned to his fate right from the beginning but like clockwork springs onto action when summoned. Is he the robotic species of the New Age? The series and the novel show him to have the spark of humanity still,

and core values. But does that affect the general sense of bleakness at the heart of the story, or rather, its narration?

Tzvetan Todorov postulates that there are two stories in the detective fiction: the story of the crime and the tale of its detection (44, cited in Martin 166). Between the story of the crime and the overlaid narrative of its detection lies a long wait during which the reader lives his readerly existence: an existence full of waiting. The thrill of reading a classic detective novel is largely the thrill of a foreseeable future, as much as the unravelling of a past, which is usually the longest, of future expectation, a constant looking forward to an almost perfect, "a Utopian moment of absolute knowledge" (44, cited in Martin 176) , a reconciliation of good and evil. This promise is not lived up to in the novel under study, nor the series, which is why the dystopic elements predominate. The long nine-hundred-page wait, and the eight-part series defy the audience expectation is what this paper assert. There is still talk of a sequel therefore. Both of the texts assert the ways in which the new kind of detective novel focuses on the breakdown of expectation by putting together new binaries: high and popular culture, expectation and its failure, fulfilment versus unsatisfied hunger for a solution.

The highly teleological western genre of detective fiction comes across the boulder of spirituality, religion and its manifestations in the non-west, in this novel, and series. Thus, it seems to crumble at the possibility of failure to reach the suitably climactic end. Despite the averting of a nuclear threat, the unearthing of the conspiracy and the criminals being apprehended, the end is a deferral: Sartaj waits. It seems to start the beginning of another story. This is possibly the influence of the open-ended Indian mythical narratives, in the case of the series, taken from the Mahabharata, and the references to Hindu mythology, and the cyclical tales of crime and passion lacing the Bollywood charts from the 1970s, if not earlier.

At the heart the novel/series is the story of Ganesh Gaitonde, a very attractive personality as his friends and lovers aver, whose first-person narration distracts the reader who is used to the first-person voice of the detective. As opposed to Sartaj, the gangster appears to be more sympathetic, intuitive, and a very hard worker who has risen from the ranks. One cannot but admire his phenomenal unsupported rise to power over city, district, country and the international crime scene. The sheer trajectory of his rise compares much more favourably as opposed to the unassuming Sartaj and his even more low-key father, a retired policeman, now expired. The way he patronises, creates and falls in love with Zoya Mistry, the movie star; and through her and her supplier Jojo, how he infiltrates Bollywood is really admirable. He learns English by himself; later works for Indian intelligence; survives the constant threats from his Muslim rival, Suleiman Isa; and finally seeks, from the jail and after, religious guidance through life from Guru Shridhar Shukla. This speaks of a far higher intelligence than any of the other characters, except perhaps Anjali Mathur, whom he does not meet. Sartaj's search for Gaitonde's movements and motivations are never fulfilled, till he reaches out to the higher authorities who observe irregularities in Gaitonde's case. Till then, Sartaj is able to only understand and guide the reader through partial truths. This constant running after evidence and the dense narrative bolstering the historicity of the criminal world, is something the reader expects to happen in a more logical and causative manner. Through the piles of murder,

blackmail, gang rivalry and neighborhood quarrels, Sartaj and the readers with him, are tired and defeated. Anjali Mathur saves the scenario in both the texts, though even what she offers does not reach the public, and there is never any clear disclosure about where the Guruji disappeared. A large part of the text is rumination: like most postmodern novels, memory supplies the missing action right up to the end, and memory is how the action even begins. Even at the point of death, the gangster-police duo ruminates on the meaning of life and death, like the best of friends. The police-officer/detective is no longer shown as the one with agency, in his limited aspiration, he is the one searching till the end, and failing each time. So much of the story is revealed to the reader, unbeknownst to him!

The tale of the mysterious deaths of the two characters is laid aside for deeper mysteries: money crossing borders, false terrorist organisations, a guru, new handlers, new location and a deeper, labyrinthine past which creates far greater dangers to the nation. These weigh far more than what a very average, almost puny detective officer, with whom the reader actually identifies with, started off solving. This deferral of interest, this throwing the detective officer aside for a smarter, more tech savvy, female, officer of the RAW is the new aspect of dystopic fiction that one needs to look out for. It tells us that crime is no longer the linear, psychosocial case-focused matter anymore: it encompasses contemporary geopolitics through cartels motivated by religious fundamentalism, traverses' international locations as easily as Bollywood, and overrules one's expectations of causality. There is practically no logical explanation for Guruji's plan of creating a nuclear arsenal and blowing up Mumbai. And, the fact that Sartaj never really knows why Gaitonde died along with his favourite "friend" Jojo, is like a debasement of the detective hero in this genre. Things are by far more complicated to know: Sartaj the detective, is too ahistorical to be attuned to more than the immediate present in offering a satisfactory solution to the murder mystery than all the rest taken together.

Slick New Style
Each of the serialised episodes take names familiar from the world of Hindu mythology. The first episode is titled "Aswatthama," a character whose story is intimately linked with betrayal. from the Sanskrit epic Mahabharata. "Halahala," another episode, is synonymous with a deadly poison. "Atapi-Vatapi" were a pair of tricksters among demons. "Brahmahatya" means killing of a Brahmin, one of the highest crimes according to the Hindu shastras. The episode "Yayati" was named after a king cursed with premature old age. Somehow the nomenclature, the sexual fantasies played out by mythological dressing of one of the molls, point out to deeper, darker, self-reflexive critique of the dominant ideology in India today.

While reading the novel, the chapters after the opening double death, lead us on to the journeys of many lives, many histories and many "slices of life." Poised on the brink of nuclear escalation, and an actual bomb being assembled, details of which are not discussed and revealed till the penultimate chapter, the novel rambles on through history and religion, government policies and rise of political parties, subcontinental arms-drug mafia and a wealth of other details. Many questions arise in the mind: Are we poised for good days to come or are we only witness to a darker, bleaker, gloomier countdown to an Apocalyptical future? What is

the State's role in the playing out of the secretiveness of the theme? Whose deep dark secrets are being so carefully hidden by the powers that be? Disappointment inheres in the very structure of the solution, the inevitable. According to Martin, postponement of the end disappoints the reader and the wait becomes an endless one with deferrals, historical fact-checking and endless mysteries seemingly unrelated to the first death. The most interesting part of the novel is probably the use of *Bambaiya* Hindi "the anglophone writer's new engagement with the street life of Bombay" (Beliappa 350). This is one feature that becomes irrelevant in the series which is in fact in Hindi, largely *Bambaiya*.

The series however, much more cohesive and determined to unravel an essentially dystopic plot, explores mainly the subplot entitled in the chapter "The Game," a psychological exploration of Anjali Mathur's careful unravelling of the facts. In the novel it comes towards the middle, when she tries to unravel K.D. Yadav's memory, he who was the initial handler of Ganesh Gaitonde, to extract further information from him. Anjali Mathur brilliantly explores this trail of linkages between counterfeit money and the international nuclear terrorism racket sponsored by the religio-political ideology and funding of the Guru-ji, who does not become such a powerful figure in the series. The character of Anjali Mathur, quite well-delineated in both, is eliminated half-way through, by the film maker in the series.

Writing and Adapting: Possible Lineages
It seems that while working on the book, Chandra met with many of the Mumbai Mafia bosses. "The bosses of the bigger 'companies'--as the gangs are called in Mumbai--actually do function like corporate executives, in that they are keenly aware of their public profiles, and are as eager to spin you as you are to interview them," says Chandra. "Usually the dons tried to come off as misjudged realists, people who were trying to make their way in a harsh world as best as they could, and help the poor and suffering along the way" (Kirkus Reviews).

It is not surprising the book has several intertextual echoes and multiple references to the world of Bollywood, its music, its actors, its films, its working, and its linkages with the mafia. The series also exploits the same by virtue of the lineages of the director and producer who are known for their gangster and mafia-related oeuvre.

Gaitonde, forever the ambitious and power hungry, ruthless criminal, is modelled on so many before him, but he is a Hindu gangster, exploited for his being a Hindu by the corrupt ideologue, Guruji, though he himself was initially unbiased and secular. The typical lineage of Mumbai films like *Deewaar* and *Parinda* on the psyche of the Mumbai gangster is even mentioned in the novel. Gaitonde is also the gangster with the Robin Hood heart, looking after people who have sought his protection, and his boys and their families, another Bollywood and gangster stereotype. Both the novel and the series open with a face-off between Sartaj, the good policeman, with whom the reader identifies, and the evil gangster, Gaitonde, who continues to talk to Sartaj from his self-created bunker. "Chandra connects them as he connects all the big themes of the subcontinent: the animosity of caste and religion, the poverty, the prostitution

and mainly, the criminal elite, who organize themselves on the model of corporations and control their fiefdoms from outside the country" (Ermelino).

Neither easy to read nor to forget, Chandra's blockbuster resembles--and was perhaps influenced by--Mark Smith's NBA-nominated The Death of the Detective (1974). Both books have a curious blend of the world of the rich and famous implicated with a thriving underworld and a detective in search of a criminal mastermind. Moreover, both novels "remind us again that we're all connected, all both innocent and guilty, all both authors of our own stories and characters enmeshed in their convoluted, compelling, echoing patterns" (Allen). "There is a curious symbiosis between the underworld and the movies…Hindi film- makers are fascinated by the lives of the gangsters and draw upon them for material. The gangsters, from the shooters on the ground to the don-in-exile at the top, watch Hindi movies keenly and model themselves, their dialogue, the way they carry themselves, on their screen equivalents" (Mehta 954).

The Endings
The novel ends therefore on a traffic jam, and with possibilities of "another day", just as it had continued with Gaitonde's narration about "what happened next and what happened next" (Chandra *Sacred Games* 49). It does not end as a detective story merely, and Chandra takes us beyond the tale to the city. "Solving the crime is important, but he also hands us the keys to the city and reveals its sordid mysteries" (Bromley 28).

As this paper is going to print, the television series is now revived. *The Sacred Games,* Series Two, will probably satisfy many viewers, as the first series had left out a wealth of details from both the lives, of Sartaj and Gaitonde. The presence of Guruji definitely complicates matters. So, now it weaves a more compact though dystopic tale of intrigue, criminality, sexual fantasy and loneliness at the heart of the city, both in its citizens and their protectors' lives.

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Of Monsters and Men: Revisiting Frankenstein as an Anti-Utopia

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Abstract: Frankenstein has long held the repute of being the world's first science fiction novel and that too by a female author. First published in 1818, it was soon lauded for its gothic setting, its bold vision as well as its clever use of language. The story in itself was a caution against the new and invasive scientific experiments challenging the natural world order as well as served as a warning against the prevalent male hegemony over life, literature, and art. And although it was revised extensively in 1831, in its tenor and vision, the novel has remained as a staunch critique of the utopic ideals of male scientific enterprises, overzealousness for unknown adventures, and the undermining of the feminine power of creation and creativity. My paper is therefore an attempt to revisit the text as an anti-utopia and argue that in its final moments, the feeling of hope or an alternative is purposefully missing from it. To achieve this, I will briefly discuss the history of the word "anti-utopia" and its difference from its more famous counterpart "dystopia." Further, I will cite instances from the text which build up to its annihilative ending and argue that under the given the circumstances it was the most logical solution to the problem at hand and was indicative of Shelley's own shifting beliefs.

First published in 1818, then republished in 1823, and finally being extensively revised in 1831, the text of the novel *Frankenstein* has had an equally interesting afterlife as the story of its creation. Presented as a cautionary tale of a man's transgression and the resulting punishment that ensues, the creator of the novel Mary Shelly in collaboration[1] with her husband Percy Shelley has composed a saga of a scientist-creator's humiliating defeat at the hands of his own creation. But in doing so, she has overturned the conventions of gothic satire on its head and in turn given us an enduring cultural icon as evidenced in numerous Disney movies and cartoons. Initially as collaboration and later as an individual effort of Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein* is however, not an easy text to deal with. In its form and intended message its deceptively simple plotline has resulted in diametric opposite appropriations of the terms "Frankenstenian monster" or "Frankenstein." Generations after generations, numerous people have consumed and further propagated the overtly simplistic cautionary message as a sort of a broader warning against invasive scientific experiments, new enterprises, popular revolutions, protests, emancipation of slaves, freedom movements, etc. Clearly the text's afterlife has gone beyond the original intention of its author and has become a tool in the hands of both powerful and the privileged to oppress by giving its example, as well as, the oppressed and the vulnerable to topple the status quo by giving the counter-example. Here, both the understandings have emanated from the same text.

Thus, long after its initial popularity, *Frankenstein* continues to force its readers to grapple with their thoughts and feelings in relation to the story as well as their own histories and timelines. The Faustian trajectory following the fall of the eponymous character Victor Frankenstein and the hinted destruction of his created being (who manages to endear himself to the readers despite his destructive actions) result in feelings of inexplicable grief and sadness which makes the very reading of the novel an unforgettable experience. Not to forget that at the mere age of 19 and after suffering the loss of her first child, the heavily pregnant Mary Shelley managed to finally put together her novel which bore unmistakable impressions from her personal life and tragedies. And as the circumstances changed further after its first publication in 1818, the 1831 version became an altogether new text, bearing newer influences from her life but "without compromising on her critique of the prevalent social conventions" (Rourke 379).

The kernel of the original story which was famously conceived as a result of a ghost-story competition between a small group of friends in the gloomy weather of Geneva of 1816 underwent drastic revisions in the 1831 version and signaled the growth of Mary Shelley as a mature author in her own right. While in the 1818 version Mary Shelley chose anonymity along with a generous preface by her husband, by 1831 (after his death) she wrote her own "Introduction" where she (falsely) assured the readers that the text has largely remained unchanged, much to the chagrin of modern readers and scholars. As a result, two centuries after her most famous novel, people still debate about her creative process and intentions.

In my article, the first half of my title "Of Monsters and Men" includes a titillating reference to the anonymous sentient creation of Mary Shelley in relation to the man who created him. Owing to the understanding that there is no easy binary between the two words "Monsters" and "Men," by the end of the novel, our own understanding of "human," "humanity," and "monstrosity" is complicated. For instance, who is the monster in *Frankenstein*—the man who created and abandoned his creation or the being who was created and was abandoned by his creator? And who is more human—the scientist who repented his mistake or the abhorred being who empathised with distressed and invalid humans?

Although referred to in bestial and non-human terms by his creator (Victor Frankenstein) the "creation" has erroneously come to represent his creator in an ironic reversal of things. Editor and scholar, Charles E. Robinson in the Introduction to *The Original Frankenstein* argues that "Mary Shelley purposefully gave him no name, forcing her readers to reveal their biases by denominating him 'monster', 'creature', 'creation', 'wretch', or 'dæmon.'" Out of all these terms, I would use still use the term "creature" for the unnamed sentient being to avoid the confusion between the creations of Mary Shelley as the author of the novel and Victor Frankenstein as the scientist-creator character of the novel. Also, by terming him as "creature," I am trying to draw attention to his (physical) differences from other human characters which lead to his othering and subsequent marginalisation. This is almost in stark contrast to Mary Shelley's own preference where she rather liked—as a substitute for the character's name in

the first dramatic adaptation of the play, which she attended with her father William Godwin (Marshall 95).

Regardless of the intricacies involved in the preferred nomenclature for Victor's created being, one thing is certain, that both the birth as well as the intended death of the creature along with Victor's own death from terrible exhaustion is a damning critique of the enlightenment ideals of the previous century. Scientific advancements by definition were in opposition to Nature, with capital N. The purpose was to tame the latter and "to penetrate the secrets of nature," as Victor himself articulates, for the ultimate progress of mankind (Shelley Ch. II). The inherent violence in the idea was conveniently hidden by layers of utopian visions of development and god-like control. But post-enlightenment, and with the gradual decline of romantic figures and ideals, such ideas were harder to sustain in the long term.

Thus, the purpose of my paper is to address three key areas: (a) how does Mary Shelley introduces the idea of utopia in *Frankenstein* and subsequently undercuts it in the course of the novel; (b) can *Frankenstein* be actually seen as an anti-utopia?; and (c) in what ways can the text be seen as thus? To answer these questions, the following paper is subdivided into two parts. The first part will be a discussion of the terms "utopia," "dystopia," and "anti-utopia" and how their meanings have evolved over time. And the second section will be a discussion of Frankenstein as an anti-utopia by analysing the final scene of the novel. For the purpose of clarity, for citing particular instances, I will use 1831 edition as a primary source with roman chapter numbers in brackets, unless stated otherwise.

Utopia, Anti-Utopia, Dystopia: A General Overview
The concept of "utopia" has been derived from Thomas More's 1516 work of the same name which has given us the understanding of utopia as an imaginary place that is better than the present society. Such a place gradually became associated with the land of bliss, equality, and communal-living, where the inhabitants do not have a cause to be jealous. They are neither competitive nor have exclusive rights over private property (Davis 40). It is not surprising then that in the 18th century England (which was in the throes of enlightenment period) there was both a yearning for this kind of an idealistic space as well as a healthy skepticism about the same. According to Fátima Vieira, in her article "The Concept of Utopia," the so-called "trust in man's capacities" was offset by the fear that perhaps "man was aspiring too high, which would inevitably lead to his fall" (15). As a result, this skepticism gave birth to the opposite of utopia during the 18th century itself and came to be known as "anti-utopia" with the sense of utopia gone awry, in "opposite direction" almost (16). To quote at length from Vieira:

> If utopia is about hope, and satirical utopia is about distrust, anti-utopia is clearly about total disbelief. In fact, in the anti-utopias of the eighteenth century, it was the utopian spirit itself which was ridiculed; their only aim was to denounce the irrelevance and inconsistency of utopian dreaming and the ruin of society it might entail. (16)

This sense of anti-utopia at this point still had elements of hope in it, in the sense of offering an alternative. This was also the time when popular revolutions like the French and the American revolutions were taking place, and in spite of the reign-of-terror following the French revolution, there was still a belief in the revolutionary potential, owing to its exposition by popular figures like Godwin, notwithstanding equally important naysayers like Edmund Burke. But by the 19th century, there was a slight shift in perceptions owing to the debates about the emancipation of slavery in England along with the expansion of British colonial might overseas. As a result, the aforementioned element of the "alternative" started waning, probably due to the opposite pull of emancipation and colonisation. And with the emergence of a new genre of science-fiction, beginning with *Frankenstein*, anti-utopia further branched into what is now known as "dystopia" or the "bad place." However, the term "dystopia" itself was not coined yet and in its place the word "satirical utopia" as well as "anti-utopia" was still being used. With the advent of the 20th century "dystopia" took on a life of its own and there was a clear demarcation between the "anti-utopia" and "dystopia" as far as theoretical positions was concerned. This was also the era when the genre of "utopia" became a real suspect with the experiences of the totalitarian Soviet regime, Nazism, World Wars, Cold War, technological advancements etc.

As for "anti-utopia," according to Gregory Claeys's book *Dystopia: A Natural History*, there was a gradual development in its separation from the term "dystopia" or "negative utopia." This shift can be traced back to Arthur O. Lewis who formally defined the term "anti-utopia" in 1961 as a depiction of a flawed society which is totally unacceptable to the author and the readers (275). Two years later in 1963 George Kateb described its three major premises, which were "the inevitability of violence in attaining utopian ends; the maintenance of such ends through oppressive regimes; and the destruction of many worthy values in the pursuit of others deemed more valuable" (277). And following Lyman Tower Sargent's arguments Claeys himself attempts to articulate the difference between the two terms wherein "the former [anti-utopia] reject utopianism as such, whereas the latter [dystopia] do not, or do so more obliquely" (290). Further, in the same book, Claeys argues that:

> By the early twentieth century, 'anti-utopia' had emerged to connote 'all fictions that turn utopian dreams into nightmares'. [David W.] Sisk contends that 'dystopia' is preferable to 'anti-utopia' since it actually portrays the 'bad place' rather than merely satirizing the failed pursuit of the good one. Thus, 'all dystopias are anti-utopias, but not all anti-utopias are dystopias.' (283)

So, we can see how even though "dystopia" evokes a negative image and creates a world which is far worse than the (present) times in which it is set it, it still does not let the readers lose hope. On the one hand, while it will warn the readers of the grim future; on the other hand, it will make them realize that to prevent such a future they only need to take the corrective steps in the present. But the same is not case with "anti-utopia." According to Thomas Moylan, in the Preface to his book *Scraps of the Untainted Sky*, dystopian texts that do not offer any

"alternative" run the risk of turning "into a full-fledged anti-utopia" (iv). Therefore, the element of final hope is crucial to the discussion of anti-utopia. This brings us to our next section.

Frankenstein as an Anti-Utopia
Victor Frankenstein is the epitome of the enterprising and manly scientific mind and is set out to transcend the limits of nature and probability. His ultimate aim is to create a life anew by artificial methods which place him in direct conflict with the seat of God and religion. A scientific project that is his answer to creating his own progeny, rather slave, is a doomed project and critiqued in no uncertain terms in the Introduction to the 1831 version. However, at the outset of the novel, he is representative of the rational and confident man of the enlightenment era who has a firm belief in the tenets of physical sciences.

The overarching narrative device of Walton's frame story too posit Victor as a deeply tormented and yet admirable figure. While recounting his story to Walton, Victor identifies with his younger listener, and draws parallel with his own youth when he was equally driven for scientific and imperialistic adventures (Shelley Letter IV). This is symptomatic of the utopic scientific ideals of the 18th century which posited reason and rationality as the supreme virtues which were to be lauded and emulated. The possibility of a utopia is also glimpsed in the description of Victor's childhood including his perfect and benevolent set of parents; a comfortable and luxurious upbringing; access to all kinds of expensive books which he can order himself; and Rousseau-istic model of education (Shelley Ch. II).

Gradually this utopia is extended to Victor's act of creating an ideal race with his experiments on the dead and decaying bodies from morgues and charnel-houses (Shelley Chap. IV). Accompanied by the desire to seek the deepest secrets of nature; an interest in electricity and galvanism (Shelley Chap. II); and a blatant disregard of his emotional needs and family in pursuance of his imperialistic projects (Shelley Ch. IV); Victor becomes successful in animating or giving birth to the creature (Shelley Ch. V). Up until the point the creature actually shows the signs of life and scares him, Victor's unhealthy self-absorption in erasing the boundaries of life and death is part and parcel of the utopic vision that he has as a rational scientist. Therefore, the 1818 subtitle of the novel "A Modern Prometheus" elevates his level to the mythic proportion and simultaneously undercut his achievements as something that will bring him and his family a great deal of pain. In the Introduction to the 1831 version, the Mary Shelley further undermines Victor's utopia in these lines:

> I [Mary Shelley] saw—with shut eyes, but acute mental vision,—I saw the pale student [Victor Frankenstein] of unhallowed arts kneeling beside the thing [creature] he had put together…Frightful must it be; for supremely frightful would be the effect of any human endeavor to mock the stupendous mechanism of the Creator of the world. His success would terrify the artist; he would rush away from his odious handywork, horror-stricken.

And gradually as the story progresses, all the efforts of the creature to integrate into a human society ends in dejection and humiliation, leading him to feeling wrathful against his maker, in

this case, Victor. This is the point where the creature's utopia begins to crumble and gradually Victor's own life and that of his family members are caught in the disintegrating whirlpool, with the murder of William (Victor's brother) and the framing of Justine (William's caretaker) for the crime (Shelley Chap. VII). As for Victor, his utopic visions are thwarted at the very moment when he views the abhorrent and ugly fruits of his labours (Shelley Ch V).

Incidentally, the first death in the novel, in Victor's immediate family, is that of Caroline Beaufort Frankenstein (his mother) while tending to the sick Elizabeth Lavenza, the adopted daughter[2] of the family and his fiancée (Shelley Chap. III). But at this point, the death of his mother does not affect Victor in any major way as compared to the death of William. The latter's death at the hands of the creature sets into motion the irrevocable decline of both Victor and his "Adam."

On taking these factors into account and applying the understanding of anti-utopia derived from the above section, I argue that *Frankenstein* is not a dystopia but an anti-utopia. That is to say that the text offers no alternatives and no hope in the face of the ethical and moral conundrum that it raises. Given that the story represents man's triumphal failure in the face of growing admissibility of his limitations as a human being and the lack of empathy and mistreatment that creates criminals in the society, there are still no remedial actions that are suggested or hinted at. In opposition to this Anne K. Mellor, in her article "Making a 'Monster': An Introduction to Frankenstein," opines that neither the final hope nor the creature is lost in the 1818 version (21). By comparing the end scenes of the two versions, she argues that Mary Shelley's revision of the 1831 text has made it more fatalistic in overall tone, and thereby, making Victor less responsible for his deeds (Mellor 17). Mellor sees it as the move away from the originality of 1818 version, where Victor exercises his free will and through his active choices abandons the creature at its birth. Hence, she sees the difference between these two sentences as a marker of final hope: "he was carried away by the waves, and I soon lost sight of him in the darkness and distance" (1818) and "He was soon borne away by the waves and lost in darkness and distance" (1831, Mellor 16). Mellor says: "Walton loses sight of him "in the darkness & distance," as Mary Shelley originally wrote, suggesting not only that the creature is still alive but also that his nature, his meaning, remains unfixed, ever available to new interpretations" (Mellor 21).

However, in my view, I feel that the choice of words differs because, in 1818, young Mary was still under the influence of her poet-husband Percy Shelley and father William Godwin, and had hopes in the future of revolutions. But that does not mean that she necessarily held out the possibility of the final hope. When I compare the two endings, I find that the creature's description of suicide by immolation or even the possibility of it accompanied by the desire to be forgotten in death is a deeply pessimistic view of the future and a staunch critique of the entire utopian project of creating him in the first place:

> "But soon," he cried, clasping his hands, "I shall die, and what I now feel will no longer be felt; soon these thoughts—these burning miseries—will be extinct. I shall ascend my

pile triumphantly, and the flame that consumes my body will give enjoyment or tranquillity to my mind." (1818)

"But soon," he cried, with sad and solemn enthusiasm, "I shall die, and what I now feel be no longer felt. Soon these burning miseries will be extinct. I shall ascend my funeral pile triumphantly, and exult in the agony of the torturing flames. The light of that conflagration will fade away; my ashes will be swept into the sea by the winds. My spirit will sleep in place; or if it thinks, it will not surely think thus. Farewell." (1831)

The creature's speech is uncannily similar to Fanny Godwin's suicide note where she notes that perhaps her death will alleviate the suffering of others and be forgotten over time. Interestingly, this desire of being forgotten after death which is only limited to creature's own memories in the previous version: "He is dead who created me; and when I die, the remembrance of *me* will be lost forever" includes Victor too in the latter edition "He is dead who called me into being; and when I shall be no more, the very remembrance of *us both* will speedily vanish" (emphasis added). It is yet another debate whether the creature truly commits suicide or not? But as he himself articulates (like Manfred, the Byronic hero) death is the only way to find peace for him because his once noble life is irrevocably tainted by his crimes— "Polluted by crimes, and torn by the bitterest remorse, where can I find rest but in death?" (Shelley Chap. XXIV). His ends do not justify the means, even though it was the society itself which turned this "noble savage" capable of honor and love, into a criminal.

And the politics of the times that influenced the writing of the text were such that post-revolution while there was a genuine fear of the populace, there was also an on-going debate about the emancipation of slaves in England where the racial other was still seen as a threat by the upper-class white bourgeoisie. So, the creature has to die and so must the creator who gave birth to such an abomination in the first place because the racial other cannot be integrated into the English society. It was only in 1833, two years later than the 1831 edition, that abolition of slavery could be achieved in England. But by this time ambivalence can be discerned in Mary's own position. After suffering three more deaths of her children including one life-threatening miscarriage, the death of Percy Shelley in1822 and William Godwin in 1826, growing distance with former friends and family, Mary's personal sufferings coloured her revisions and additions of the text of 1831 (Mellor 16).

Thus, in spite of the subtitle called as "Modern Prometheus" and various allusions to Milton's paradise lost, there is no final hope in *Frankenstein*. Unlike Adam who is cherished in Biblical stories by his creator, the creature is abandoned and loathed for his repulsive physical attributes. In his Promethean urge to parallel the status of the creator, Victor must pay the price for his transgression by being haunted by his own creation. Thus, at every step, while Victor is seen as a tormented scientist whose utopic visions of giving birth to a child is turned into an abomination, the painstaking but futile efforts of the creature to learn the language and find companionship amongst humans, partly re-affirms and then dismantles the universal ideals of brotherhood. While Victor aspires to be a god through his creation and the creature wants to be

his "Adam," in reality, the former is reduced to being a pathetic fugitive, and the latter is turned into a "fallen angel" or more specifically, a "monster." Both of these instances deal yet another blow to the utopia of technologically assisted birth and the potential father-son relationship in the novel. Seen in this light the creature that Victor Frankenstein gives birth to and later on wants to annihilate by denying him a companion says more about his own self, rather than his enterprising fiend. Even in the De Lacy's household, when the creature hopes to assimilate into the human society on the basis of his empathy, intellect, and compassion, he is driven out by Felix de Lacy (Shelley Ch XVI).

Further, when Victor tears up the female compatriot that the creature so ardently desires, for fear of domination by the ensuing race and miscegenation, it shatters all the hopes of his "Adam" about achieving a utopic acceptance in the human society (Shelley Chap. XX). From its outset to the end the text critiques the over-reaching ambition of men and their treatment of the other race and class. Perhaps it is the because of the failure of the enlightenment project due to which the trust in human and scientific rationality is subdued by the all-encompassing and vengeful nature as Anne Mellor suggests in her essay *Revisiting Frankenstein*. Or, maybe Mary Shelley is satirising her own illustrious father William Godwin by showing the negative potentials of an uncontrolled French mob, as James O'Rourke suggests in his article "The 1831 Introduction and Revisions to "Frankenstein": Mary Shelley Dictates Her Legacy." The reasons can be speculated endlessly about her authorial motives.

However, in the true Coleridgean fashion, where the Ancient Mariner has to suffer a life-in-death, Victor and his creature too must suffer the horrors of upsetting the natural order and the status-quo of the society. Thus, the utopia simply cannot exist and is inverted for both Victor and the creature from very early on in the novel. Nor it is dystopia because the text makes it clear that death is the only logical solution left for either (1818) or both (1831). In conclusion, Mary Shelley's positing of the human frailty at the heart of all Promethean endeavors and making the readers face their own inner psychological "monsters" still does not let the text of Frankenstein become anything else than the deeply disconcerting anti-dystopia that it is.

Notes
1. Charles E. Robinson has done a meticulous research in reconstructing the original 1818 version of *Frankenstein* from the manuscripts housed in the Bodleian Library at the University of Oxford. The book shows both the collaborative version of Mary Shelley and Percy Shelley, with the latter's additions and deletions, as well as the original unedited version of young Mary herself.
2. In 1818 text, Elizabeth Lavenza is Victor's cousin but in the 1831 edition she is an orphan who is adopted by Victor's parents. Mellor succinctly argues the repercussions of both the scenarios in her article "Making a 'Monster': An Introduction to *Frankenstein*." While Mellor prefers the 1818 text over the l831 text citing authenticity of the former, for a more nuanced understanding of the 1831 edition, please refer to James O'Rourke article "The 1831 Introduction and Revisions to 'Frankenstein': Mary Shelley Dictates Her Legacy."

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Uncovering the (Dys-)Utopian Reality of *The Good Place*

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Abstract: The American television series, *The Good Place* is a fresh take on life after death. The utopian neighborhood depicted in the series is built according to the needs and desires of its inhabitants. In addition, each inhabitant is introduced to a soulmate to pass eternity in a more comfortable way. They are further assisted by Janet, an artificial intelligence in human-form. Trouble begins to brew in this paradise when the protagonist, Eleanor reveals to Chidi (her soulmate) that she is not the real Eleanor Shellstrop but her namesake. In order to become more deserving of her place in the neighborhood, Eleanor begins to take lessons in ethics from Chidi—as he was an Ethics and Moral Philosophy Professor on earth. Yet she feels guilty every time something disastrous happens around her or to anyone. Eventually she realizes the dystopian nature of the so called "The Good Place" which is in fact not an after-life utopia but a novel attempt at torture devised by one of the demons of Hell; and with this begins her attempt to escape the dystopian reality. This paper will attempt to show how many-a-times, utopian existence turns out to be a dystopian reality.

Keywords: Utopia, Dystopia, *The Good Place*

The burning question that needs to be answered at the very outset is what is meant by Utopia. For a student of literature, it would mean a direct reference to the fictional village in Thomas More's eponymous work of the same name. In general terms, utopia represents an ideal futuristic situation which is very subjective in nature. It is subjective because everyone has a different idea of a perfectly crafted ideal world which would not be burdened with the frailty of their present. For a child, utopia would mean a place with unlimited candy without the fear of cavities. For a gamer, it would be unlimited access to top-notch video games free of cost (obviously!) without parents nagging them. For a woman, it would be a place where she is treated at par with the other sex without being referred to as the weaker sex, among other things. However, it should be noted that what is one woman's paradise might be another man's hell. What is utopia for one can certainly be a dystopia for another one. This means that dystopia always follows utopia as it is impossible to have an ideal objective utopia. At least this is what can be gathered from J.S. Mill's usage of the term 'dystopia' in his 1868 speech on the state of Ireland where he uses it in contrast with the idea of utopia conferring to the term 'utopia' a highly positive connotation while the term 'dystopia' inherits a negative air (Pospíšil 9). This is the basic reason why this paper has the word, '(Dys-)Utopian,' in its title. This hyphenated word highlights the importance of an individual in devising the subjective concept of utopia as well as dystopia. In order to achieve this, an American sitcom, *The Good Place*, will be utilized where 'sitcom' is an abbreviation for 'situation comedy', that is, it involves comedy which arises as a result of seeing a character act and react in different situations. Another thing to note

is that the show has completed three seasons, but this paper will limit itself only to the first season.

The Good Place is a fresh take on life after death and represents a utopic existence awaiting those who have accrued positive points by doing good deeds during their stay on earth. The series opens with the character of Eleanor opening her eyes and finding herself looking at a wall and smiling on reading the message in front of her: 'Welcome! Everything is fine.' ("Everything is Fine" 00:01-00:06). The sound of a door opening diverts her attention to a man who calls her by her name and invites her into his office. He introduces himself as Michael and answers Eleanor's question about her current location by telling her that she is indeed dead and is "in the next phase of her existence in the universe" ("Everything is Fine" 00:40-00:45). Michael informs her that she is neither in heaven nor hell but in what is regarded as "The Good Place"—as opposed to "The Bad Place". He then takes her on a tour of the neighborhood and explains that it is one of the many neighborhoods which are a part of "The Good Place". According to Michael, all the neighborhoods are designed so as to cater to three hundred and twenty-two residents only, "perfectly selected to blend into a blissful harmonic balance" ("Everything is Fine" 03:30-03:35). The important thing here is that each of the neighborhoods is unique and is built to suit its residents. But the one thing common to all of them is the presence of frozen yoghurt places. Their conversation is followed by the orientation day clip in which Eleanor and the other residents of the neighborhood are informed about the basis of their selection for "The Good Place." According to the clip, each of the actions committed by all the humans in their lifetime on earth accrue for them a positive or negative point depending on the amount of good or bad it attributes to the universe. At the end of their stay on earth, these points are added and the best of the best, "the cream of the crop" ("Everything is Fine" 05:17-05:23) is selected to become a resident of one of the neighborhoods in "The Good Place." This means that only those people who have lived the best lives which can be lived get a chance to be selected for "The Good Place". In addition, each of the residents is paired with their actual and true soulmate with whom they will get to spend eternity together. In essence, "The Good Place" is equated with eternal happiness, a true objective utopic existence.

Michael explains that since Eleanor Shellstrop was a humanitarian lawyer "who got innocent people off death row" ("Everything is Fine" 06:33-06:38), she was given the opportunity to spend the rest of eternity in "The Good Place". After the orientation clip, Eleanor is led to her perfect home which, according to Michael, has been built to perfectly match the true essence of its owner. In case of Eleanor, it is a tiny little cottage in the vicinity of a giant mansion and includes Icelandic primitive style interiors with a wall full of frames dedicated to clowns. It is here that Eleanor meets her soulmate, Chidi Anagonye, who is delighted to find someone to accompany him in the "pursuit of the fundamental truths of the universe" ("Everything is Fine" 08:40-08:50). However, Eleanor bursts Chidi's happy bubble, by getting him to promise that he will never betray her secret. She then tells him that she is just the namesake of the real humanitarian lawyer, Eleanor Shellstrop. She tells him that there has been a mistake as she is the Eleanor who worked in sales and basically "defrauded the sick and the elderly" ("Everything is Fine" 10:40-10:44). Chidi tries to convince Eleanor to confess to Michael but

to no avail. He tells her that she does not belong in "The Good Place" and she should go to "The Bad Place" as it might not be that bad. Chidi then takes the help of Janet, the information assistant of the neighborhood, to get an idea about life after death in "The Bad Place." Janet expresses her inability to help him and only plays a short audio clip of "The Bad Place." The deafening shrieks and screams further solidify Eleanor's resolve of never coming clean about her identity to anyone. Eleanor decides to never leave this perfect utopia if she can stay clear of trouble. But this is something which is impossible for Eleanor.

During a party hosted by her neighbor Tahani and her soulmate, Jianyu, Eleanor gets drunk after finding out that she is the only bad person in the neighborhood. She ends up hogging all the shrimp, calls Tahani a giraffe and tries to steal from the mansion. The next day Eleanor wakes up to utter chaos and confusion. She awakens to scenes of flying shrimps and giraffes and other animals running around the neighborhood. Chidi attributes this chaos to Eleanor's attire. While everyone else is in yellow and blue striped clothes, Eleanor is the only one in pyjamas—the odd man out. Guilty of ruining Chidi's utopia, Eleanor requests his assistance in becoming a good person because besides being her soulmate Chidi was also an Ethics and Moral philosophy professor during his time on earth. Thus, begins Eleanor's journey from being an unethical, immoral person to someone who deserves to be in "The Good Place."

It is pertinent now to list the reasons why the "The Good Place" is considered to be an ideal utopia. The very first reason is that it is a place of safety in contrast to its antithesis "The Bad Place," which is quite scary. Second, it is equated with eternal happiness. Third it is built to perfectly match one's true essence. Fourth, no one can curse in "The Good Place." Finally, one can access anything at any time with the help of Janet, the information assistant. For Eleanor, it is only the first factor that motivates her to further lie about her real identity and stay clear of "The Bad Place." Eleanor believes that she is neither a very good person nor a very bad one and so deserves a place which is neither too good nor too bad. Even though Chidi wants to help her he is not convinced that she deserves to be saved. He dares her to prove to him that she is not selfish by giving up on a flying lesson and volunteering to clean the neighborhood of the garbage. Eleanor, however, ends up causing a garbage storm. Over the next few episodes, it is revealed that just like Eleanor, Jianyu, too, does not belong in the neighborhood. He is in fact not a Buddhist monk, but a DJ named Jason Mendoza. Slowly and steadily, Tahani is also able to uncover the fact that both Eleanor and Jason do not belong in "The Good Place" but she still does not reveal their secret. Over time, the difficulties in the neighborhood begin to increase, almost forcing Michael, the architect of the neighborhood, towards retirement. Every resident is sympathetic to Michael's condition, who sees his vision of utopia crumbling before his eyes. Eleanor is also affected by Michael's agony at witnessing his perfect utopia transform into a dystopia without any logical explanation. He ends up thinking that all of it is his fault and decides that retirement is his only option. However, the conditions of his retirement are so unbelievably horrendous that Eleanor begins to question her motives and finally decides to speak the truth about the mistaken identity. This leads to the arrival of the real Eleanor from "The Bad Place" and to Eleanor making distinctive efforts to accrue positive points by doing good deeds. But even after a lot of effort Eleanor is unable to make much progress with her

points tally in order to qualify and stay in the neighborhood. Eleanor ultimately realizes that the point system is directly connected to the motivation behind her actions. As she is performing all the good actions based on selfish motives, they do not hold the same value as the selfless actions ("What's My Motivation"). She then decides to leave the neighborhood willingly and board the train to "The Bad Place" without informing anyone about her decision. This simple action of hers, done for the betterment of all the residents of the neighborhood help her accrue the points needed to stay in "The Good Place." But the catch is that the last call on who stays and who leaves the neighborhood is to be taken by Shawn, the Judge who is supposed to come to the neighborhood at any time. Eleanor panics and runs away with Janet and Jason to Mindy St. Claire's in what is described as the medium place ("Mindy St. Claire"). While still at Mindy's, Eleanor realizes that what she has done is selfish and decides to return for her hearing, once again accompanied by Jason and Janet. Shawn, the judge leaves it to the four friends—Eleanor, Chidi, Tahani and Jason—to decide which two of them should take their rightful place in "The Bad Place" as Chidi and Tahani knew the truth and yet helped the other two. A verbal fight ensues between the four friends which is interrupted by the real Eleanor who willingly sacrifices herself and offers to take one of the positions. In the meantime, Eleanor has an epiphany and decides that she and Chidi will go to "The Bad Place" and asks Michael to call the train. When Michael does not follow through, Eleanor explains to everyone present that he cannot call a train to "The Bad Place" as they already are in "The Bad Place" ("Michael's Gambit"). On hearing this, Michael begins to laugh and confirms that Eleanor is indeed correct; that they are in fact in "The Bad Place." In the end, the utopian existence all the four friends—who are coincidentally the only humans in the neighborhood—turn into a dys-utopian experience. It had all the ingredients of being the perfect utopia that they could have imagined going to after their death, but it was not "The Good Place" utopia. Eleanor had her doubts from the beginning about the true nature of the neighborhood. She was never convinced about the importance of frozen yoghurt in the utopic after-life from the beginning. The above-mentioned incidents help Eleanor to uncover the dystopic nature of their after-life utopia as it always had a feeling of subtle torture to it.

The flashbacks confirm that Michael was indeed an apprentice for a long time and received his first solo assignment to design a perfect neighborhood but not for the residents of "The Good Place." He is an architect of "The Bad Place" who builds his utopic version of a neighborhood, to torture humans without them realizing it, as a new type of experiment. While it ended to be a dys-utopia for Eleanor and the others, it was always a utopia for Michael even after Eleanor uncovers its dystopian nature. Going back to all his panicked reactions and constant worries about having made a mistake in the design, it is shown that they were all an act to further torture the humans with guilt. Michael was rather always enjoying the anguish of the four humans as a result of his phenomenal acting. He deliberately puts each of the characters in such a spot that they end up torturing not only themselves but each other as well. In order to continue his dream, Michael convinces Shawn, the judge—who is actually his senior and a demon as well—to allow him to reboot the neighborhood one more time and mend the clinks that were visible in his otherwise utopic experiment. He promises that this time he will not let the humans find out the truth about the neighborhood and will keep the dys-utopian reality of his utopic design a

closely guarded secret while continuing to torture the humans. What he does not know is that Eleanor has already planned and is determined to uncover the true nature of his after-life utopia with the help of Janet, the information assistant.

As can be gathered from the above discussion, the neighborhood of "The Good Place," acts as a utopia as well as a dystopia for two sets of characters at the same time. Hence, the usage of the term (dys-)utopia. On one hand, are the four humans—Eleanor, Chidi, Tahani and Jason—who think that their actions directly or indirectly are hampering their utopia. They can see the after-life utopia turning into a dystopia and so work to maintain the status quo. However, in the end, it turns out that the place they had believed to be a utopia was in fact a dystopia from the very beginning, something like like a 'wolf in sheep's-skin' kind of thing. On the other hand, there is Michael and the rest of the residents, who enjoy watching the pain and fear of the four humans as they desperately long to stay on in "The Good Place." In the end, what is a utopia for Michael turns out to be a dystopia for the four humans.

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The Men Died, Long Live the Women: A Comparative Analysis of Begum Rokeya Sakhwat Hossain's *Sultana's Dream* and Virginia Bergin's *Who Runs The World*

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Abstract: Rokeya Sakhwat Hossain's *Sultana's Dream* (1905) imagines a utopian society where the men have withdrawn behind the zenana, following a humiliating defeat in a war and the women have successfully replaced them in all walks of life creating a peaceful and happy world. A little more than a hundred years later, Virginia Bergin re-imagines a similarly happy world in her novel *Who Runs the World?* (2017), but it shatters when a boy, named Mason finds his way into this world. Mason reveals the dark underside of this utopia. The men here have not willfully withdrawn into the zenana, but are being held captive in various secret facilities, and are reared for their semen. Surprisingly, the entire world of women instead of turning a sympathetic ear to Mason's words, bares its claws and teeth and pounces upon the little boy to keep his existence a secret and have him sent back from the hell hole from where he has escaped. This paper wishes to compare both these two texts, and using the critical tools of Feminism and Deconstruction; bring out the very tenets that had enabled Bergin to turn a utopian dream on its head and paint a picture of a dystopian society.

I

Published in 1516, Thomas More's *Utopia* had marked the formal introduction of the term "utopia" that was used to describe a fictional island society and it's near perfect social, political, economic and religious organization. Ever since then, the term "utopia" has gained such wide acceptance and coinage that every author, political leader or religious guru has gone on to claim that utopias are achievable dreams if one only dares to follow their particular ideology or principles. Take for instance, Leibniz believed that the world that we live in is the best possible alternative which God has chosen to create in reality, and "therefore we live in the best possible world, originally provided with a lifetime warranty" (Mihailescu 241). In tandem with the Leibniz world, utopian worlds have been envisioned time and again by the great literary masters, such as William Shakespeare's portrayal of The Forest of Arden or the Island of Prospero; the epic delineation of Eden in Milton's *Paradise Lost* and the Blakean world of Beluah or Innocence.

In stark contrast to this blissful, happy and ordered existence of the utopia is the fallen world of dystopia. In this world, the Leibnizian world vision is replaced by a Nietzschean vision, where God is either dead or he is replaced by an old "Inquisitor" who has not only thwarted the second coming of Christ or the Godly father and but has also usurped his position by declaring himself as a secular God and has "chosen this world for the thousands of millions of people, finally happy for not being supposed to choose in their turn" (Mihailescu 241). Mihailescu has chosen to define dystopia as:

Stories that contrast the failure of the main character with the unstoppable advance of society towards totalitarianism. The loss of the self is the character's final acknowledgement of, and ultimate contribution to, society's being definitively victorious. This story of hope, deception and decay strongly opposes dystopia to its utopian predecessors almost as strongly as narrative is opposed to description. (Mihailescu 215)

Thus, dystopia is a subgenre of the utopian fiction and connotes a negatively imagined world, one that is dark, desolate and corrupted by the passion and desires of the human mind. It is nevertheless interesting to note that although proto-dystopian worlds have been imagined by authors before, such as the condition of Scotland during the reign of Macbeth as depicted by William Shakespeare, or the fallen world of Ulro in Blakean imagination; the norm of imagining a dystopian future has gradually picked up since the fag end of the twentieth century with the publication of such foundational works as Yevgeny Zamyatin's *We* (1924), Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* (1932), George Orwell's *1984* (1949), Ray Bradbury's *Fahrenheit 451* (1953), until in the modern century, there has been a boom in writing dystopian fiction, with almost very author penning something that has contributed to the richness of this subgenre. This popularity of the dystopian subgenre does not stem from "a satirical critique of 'cynical reason'" (Mihailescu 215) alone, but also from the realistic degradation of life and society owing to environmental pollution, gendered oppression and inequality, wars and famines, the mad progress of science with the aim of replacing the "human" factor from all walks of life; and most importantly, the general apathy of the government and administration to commit themselves to the general good of all. Thus, contemporary dystopian fiction like *Never Let Me Go* (2005) by Kazuo Ichiguro, The *MaddAddam* trilogy (2003-13) by Margaret Atwood has truly established this subgenre as the only one that closely mimics the reality of today's modern life.

However, perhaps the most significant contribution to this subgenre of fiction is being made by the movie industry that turns out each year a new horror that seems sure to plague humanity in the coming years. The most popular among them is of course, the outbreak of the mad cannibalistic horde of the undead, popularly called zombies; while others include the invasion of the earth by giant sized alien organisms called the Kaiju or an alternate reality where the human beings have been enslaved by an army of super-intelligent robots and machines. Be as it may, one cannot also escape the fact, that much of the popularity of this genre of fiction and movies is also owing to the fact that all readers/viewers carry within their unconscious a fear of the future, one that has been indoctrinated in them by their religious upbringing—the Judgement Day for the Christians, Qu'amat for the Muslims and the coming of the Kalki Avatar for the Hindus. In other words, people love to be told in different ways and through varied narratives that one day the world is surely going to end by such and such way or by such and such agent; but until that happens one can enjoy the cake while it lasts.

The following paper is built up on this pretext, as it tries to trace the cause that had led Begum Rokeya Sakhawat Hossain's dream of Ladyland turn into the dystopian land run by women as

delineated by Virginia Bergin in her latest novel *Who Runs the World?* with the passage of time.

II

Born in 1880, Roekya Sakhawat Hossain is regarded as one of the forerunners of the Indian feminists, and had made significant contributions towards the propagation of women's education and making them self-reliant.

Her novel *Sultana's Dream* published in 1905 in the Indian Ladies Magazine was first written as a trial exercise in English that had been secretly taught to her by her brother. Her husband, Khan Bahadur Syed Sakhawat Hossain greatly encouraged her to publish the novel, and it is said to be largely his encouragement that helped the novel to see the light of the day.

The novel *Sultana's Dream* envisions a utopian feminist society which is primarily based on a role reversal between men and women; where men live a secluded life inside the zenana, while the women are tasked with job of performing an array of duties ranging from public administration and scientific inventions to cultivating crops. The novel begins with the titular protagonist Sultana dozing off one evening, but is soon woken up by the arrival of a visitor, who she mistakes as Sister Sara. The visitor invites Sultana to take a walk with her outside, and Sultana accords; believing that a brief walk in the garden under the cover of darkness, accompanied by a woman would not call forth the disapproving eyes of the neighbors. However, to her surprise, Sultana discovers that, it is broad daylight outside and instead of men; the streets are filled with women engaged with a variety of different jobs. In her surprise, Sultana enquires of her companion that what is this place called, and in return she receives the reply that this is Ladyland, a realm that is ruled by Virtue itself. With the turn of the pages Sultana comes to know of the social, political and economic organisation of Ladyland.

Before the beginning of the reign of the Queen, Ladyland was ruled by a patriarchal Prime Minister who enforced strict "purdah" for the women, and thereby confining them to the zenana or the household; leaving the men in charge of all walks of life. Nevertheless, soon enough the tables turned, as the men were badly beaten back in a war that had erupted with the king of a neighboring kingdom, leaving no other option but the women to take stock of the situation. The Queen quickly understood that muscle power could not defeat the foes at the border and therefore she needed to defeat them with brain power. Likewise, the Queen appealed to her fellow womenfolk for help, and the Lady Principal of a Women's university came up with the ingenious idea of using concentrated solar energy upon the foes for vanquishing them. Soon enough the women won the war both at home and at the border: for not only did they successfully repel the attack of the king of the neighboring kingdom; they also effectively reversed the confinement of the women by asking the men to withdraw into the zenana (which now came to be known as the *mardana*) leaving behind the women the job of running the world. Although Sultana is clearly delighted at this role reversal, she feigns surprise only to question her guide that did the men never protest? The guide is equally witty enough to reply that they did plea and protest a lot, but the Queen was firm in her decision because: "It is not

safe so long as there are men about the streets, nor is it so when a wild animal enters a marketplace" (Hossain 7).

Variously, the guide is heard to remark that men are no better than lunatics and wild animals, who if let free are only good enough to pounce on hapless and innocent women and cause them much harm and woe, that is further complicated by the extreme corruption and high levels of crime that plague the society. The guide genuinely gloats over the fact, that in the absence of the men, there has been no need of police or armed forces, as the rates of criminal activities has fallen to a negligible low. According to the guide, the only punishment that is meted out to the criminal/errant is that she is exiled and forbidden ever to return to Ladyland; while the truly penitent is forgiven by the Queen.

Hereafter, the guide points out onto Sultana a number of key features of the state of Ladyland, ranging from the most trivial to the most extraordinary—features that are specifically imagined to voice a vituperative criticism at the sorry state of general affairs in an administration run by men. For instance, the guide states, in the reign of the virtuous Queen, great emphasis is laid on the cause of women's education which had always been neglected during the reign of the men. The emphasis on women's education is said to have greatly benefitted the nation of Ladyland as the nation is said to have progressed in leaps and bounds in scientific innovations: the nation of Ladyland faces no drought as rainwater necessary for irrigation of the fields is directly drawn from the clouds, the fields are accordingly tilled with the help of electricity and cooking is carried out in the homes using solar energy leading to zero pollution from burning wood and coal. Furthermore, road accidents have been brought down to nil, as women in Ladyland travel by flying cars, and this has further helped in ensuring a road that is never muddy again. Sultana's guide, the presumed Sister Sara also informs her naive listener, that despite such great achievements and great workload, the women of Ladyland are effectively able to finish off their daily assignments within two hours as unlike the men at work, the women do not waste "six hours every day in sheer smoking" twelve "cheroots daily" (Hossain 10). Thereafter learning much about the nation of Ladyland and after a brief interaction with the Queen, Sultana while touring on the flying car with Sister Sara, falls asleep and wakes up only to find that she had been all the while "lounging in the easy-chair" (Hossain 19) dreaming this wonderful dream of women's liberation.

III

Published in 2017, Virginia Bergin's novel *Who Runs the World* is a graphic realisation of Sultana's dream about the conditions of women in Ladyland. Here Virginia Bergin has achieved to paint a world that has brought to absolute reality the socio-political, cultural, scientific and economic conditions that Begum Rokeya Sakhwat Hossain had imagined in her novel, as the men here have been secluded for purposes of conservation in sanctuaries, while the women are left in charge of carrying out all the necessary functions for the upkeep of the world.

The novel begins with the young girl, River making her way down a wood accompanied by her pony, Milpy dragging a cartload of cider apples. At once, River notes that a person is lying prostrate on the ground, in the middle of the path through which River is to pass. Upon closely observing, River is startled to find that the person lying across is a boy; and upon further enquiry learns that his name is Mason. River is clearly startled at her discovery, because this is the first time, she has seen a boy ever in her life. Although Mason is at first hostile towards River, but the deep gnash in his arm along with his poor health conditions, makes him pass out, leaving River no other option to haul him on to the cart and carry him off to her home in the village, populated by three generations of women—the Granummas, the Mummas and the Little Ones, made up of girls of all ages from teens to infants.

At her home, River finds Granumma Kate perceptibly worried about her return, but when she finds that the cause of River's delay has been her sudden encounter with the opposite gender, Granumma Kate becomes suddenly very conscious about the wellbeing of Mason and does everything in her power to help the boy tide over the present crisis of life.

With the progress of the story much is revealed about the present society of Granumma Kate and River. The social, political and economic structure of the society that had prevailed when the men were alive is completely overturned in this modern era where the political administration run by the womenfolk is solely based on a mutual acknowledgement and understanding of each other's arguments; that is in short referred to as "accord". Furthermore, the administration of the entire world is based upon a hierarchical structure, where the world council comprised of representatives drawn from the entire world meet and "accord" upon how to conduct the business of global administration. Just below the world council is the national council—River's mother is a part of one such national council of representatives, and thus having the capacity to wield enormous administrative and political influence—which is followed by the "group of 150"—River would later on remark, that the very purpose of calling this group by the numerical "150" is not because of its strength, but because of the fact that this is largest number of persons with whom a human being can maintain a social relation—which is mainly tasked with the job of administering to the local issues; and also serves as a quasi-court for settling petty disputes. In addition to this, similar to Ladyland, the women here are tasked with the job of mending to every profession—starting from peasantry and deep sea fishing to running the armed security service; and much like Ladyland, in this world run by women alone, there is a great emphasis on living a life that is in harmony with nature.

However, what is strikingly dissimilar in this world run by women is that, unlike in the Ladyland, where men have willingly withdrawn into the *mardana,* the men in this world run by women had not willingly withdrawn into isolation but was forced to do so, as owing to the pandemic outbreak of a virus that only selectively targeted the XY chromosome. Young male babies across the globe were willingly given up by their mothers so that they maybe "preserved" in these "sanctuaries, and return when the threat of the virus was no more. However, in reality the threat of the virus was willingly over-emphasised by a few in power, so that the men may never escape and turn the world order tospy-turvy again. The escape of

Mason and his successful survival in the larger world outside clearly helped prove the shrewd politics and the mad hunger of power that was going on in the world outside.

Furthermore, Mason's escape from this prison like "sanctuary" also clearly helped to reveal the kind of life they were forced to live inside. According to Mason's testimony, the life in these sanctuaries was nasty and brutish, as the young boys repeatedly ran the risk of being gang-raped by older men (men who were old enough to be their uncles or fathers) or being severely beaten up if they refused to serve as salves under them. Moreover, according to Mason, the male population within these sanctuaries are treated little better than cattle as they are raised for the sole purpose of their semen. One is likely to find a close similarity here with the role of the Handmaids in Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale*, where the Handmaids, dressed in their red habits are no better than a womb walking on two legs. This inhuman treatment of either the male or the female body and its evaluation/appreciation only on the basis of what it contributes to the purpose of reproduction/procreation is a sin against humanity itself.

Virginia Bergin's novel *Who Runs The World* thus helps to bring to light the aporia of the dream dreamt by Sultana, that had contributed in turning her utopian vision into a dystopian nightmare. It is perhaps owing to this reason, that Bergin ends her novel on a note of hope, where we find River successfully breaking up a meeting of the national council and arguing in favour of releasing the XYs from their captive life. The novel ends, a few months later after this disruption, River travelling back to her village using the same cart track as the one she had been using the beginning of the novel, only to find that a free Mason standing in the middle of the road, waving towards her.

Thus, to conclude, it can be ideally remarked that the cause behind a dystopian worldly existence should never be squarely placed on the shoulders of one particular gender, but should rather be ascertained to the unequal treatment of genders and the mutual disrespect shown to each other. In other words, if man and woman would only treat each other as fellow human beings, and nothing more, the world would truly be a better place to live in.

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Kafka Beyond the Kafkaesque: Reading Laughter in the 'Dystopia' of *The Castle*

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Abstract: Franz Kafka's fiction has been read as presenting instances of especially deprived subjectivities. Kafka's protagonists are seen as being alienated from others around them. They are uncritical servants of tyrannical bureaucratic organizations and offer no resistance to the frightening impact of the forces of power, technological surveillance, and domination that constitute the episteme that they inhabit. Their situation, to put it succinctly, is Kafkaesque- defined by the Merriam Webster dictionary as "of, relating to, or suggestive of Franz Kafka or his writings; especially having a nightmarishly complex, bizarre, or illogical quality." The present paper argues that Kafka adopts an *ironical* attitude towards his protagonists as they seek to control the accidents and surprises, they encounter in their lives and render them manageable. It reads K.'s meeting with the official Burgel from the Castle in Kafka's *The Castle* (1926) as being an instance of an accidental and humorous situation that critiques the *metaphysical dualities* characterizing human existence - such as freedom and determination- by reflecting ironically on them. This humor is of course humor at the expense of the protagonist, but it is also humoring that points to the (futile) human endeavor of seeking to achieve *absolute freedom* in the world. The paper, thus, attempts to establish an association between Kafka's ironical attitude towards K. in *The Castle* and the critique of the nightmarish, terrifying, and ultimately *dystopian* aspects of Cartesian modernity that such an attitude leads to.

Keywords: Subjectivity, Laughter, Irony, Metaphysics, Freedom, Dystopia, Modernity

> …Wouldn't you say that in such circumstances the complaints of the secretaries are highly justifiable?' K. had already spent some time half asleep, and now his slumbers were disturbed again. Why all this, he asked himself, why all this? From beneath his lower eyelids, he observed Burgel not as an official who was discussing difficult questions with him, but simply as something that kept him from sleeping, and he couldn't see any other point to him.
> …K. was asleep. It was not real sleep; he could hear what Burgel was saying perhaps better than during his early period of wakeful exhaustion, word after word came to his ear, but his troublesome consciousness was gone; he felt free, Burgel no longer had a hold on him… He felt as if he had won a great victory, as if a company had gathered to celebrate it, and he or someone else was raising a glass of champagne in honor of that victory. And so that everyone would know what it was about, the struggle and the victory were repeated all over again, or perhaps not repeated, perhaps they were now only taking place but had been celebrated earlier, and because, luckily, the outcome was certain there was constant

celebration. K. was fighting a naked secretary who greatly resembled the statue of a Greek god, and who was getting the worst of it. It was very comical, and K. smiled slightly in his sleep to see the secretary's proud bearing upset again and again by K.'s advance…Was it combat at all? There was no serious obstacle, only a squeal from the secretary now and then. That Greek god squealed like a girl being tickled. And finally, he was gone; K. was alone in a large space…Only the champagne glass lay on the ground, broken, and K. trod it to pieces. But the broken glass stung, and he woke again with a start… (Kafka, *The Castle*, 229-231)

Passages such as the above abound in Kafka's fiction. They detail the experience of the protagonist that seems to be located at a juncture lying between dichotomies such as half asleep and full sleep, real and 'unreal' sleep, troublesome consciousness and freedom, comedy and combat, struggle and victory, and sleep and wakefulness.

How does one account for the representation of such an experience in fiction? What allows for such a situation to be realized in writing? I would argue that it is precisely the manner in which Kafka's text undercuts and subverts the traditional binary between 'plausibility' and 'accident' in a (novel's) narrative that makes it possible for such situations to appear in them. This subversion works simultaneously at two levels. One, it underlines the limitations of the manner in which plausibility and accident have shaped narratives (of novels) and two, that it deliberately colludes and corrupts these two categories by presenting situations that can perhaps be best described as accidentally plausible and plausibly accidental.

In the given scenario from *The Castle*, for instance, Kafka undercuts the value of plausibility in the narrative by rendering the plausible vulnerable to interception by the accidental. If K. were to not fall asleep, he would have to endure Burgel's long-drawn discourse on the problems of being the secretary of an official in the Castle. Moreover, he would still have not come to know the reason as to why he was summoned by Erlanger, apart from being asked to 'return' Freida to Klamm. In other words, it seems that the choices that K. apparently enjoys are no real choices as such because they cannot be graded in terms of their value or importance. They are virtually indistinguishable from each other. In other words, every option that K. exercises including say, of leaving the quarters of the Castle-officers immediately or speaking to Burgel about his own appointment, will be as *accidental* and *implausible* a choice as any other.

How does the reader of Kafka's fiction react to the kind of scenarios described thus far? These situations actually simultaneously invite and reject the reader's attempts to identify with the protagonist. This becomes possible as they entail a dual movement where the reader is invited to imagine as to how the said situation would play out if he/she would have faced it and, simultaneously, the narrative continuously alerts him/her of the fact that the particular scenario might be specific to the protagonist in question and it would not be possible for it to be shared (not just with the reader but also with the other characters in the novel).

In other words, the scenarios such as those detailed above confound the readers of Kafka's fiction because they are situations that serve as the sites of the *contingent*. Through their carefully organized structure, they render metaphysical dualities say, of freedom and determination, contingent and do not let the reader identify with the protagonist who experiences them. This begs the question as to what, then, Kafka's writings involve if they can thus be regarded as sites where contingency is iterated without entailing the sacrifice of any of its potency on account of its 'situation.'

The contingent, I would like to argue, thoroughly encompasses the protagonist and reader's perspective and does not allow him or her the critical distance necessary to make any judgements on its nature. This precisely is what the Kafkaesque entails, a 'dystopian' sense of bleakness about the nature of human existence caught in a situation which makes it impossible for the character and quality of the situation to be estimated or comprehended.

Yet, the world of Kafka's novels and short stories is also marked by comedy and laughter. Kafka is himself supposed to have laughed aloud while reading out some of the otherwise bleak and disconcerting incidents from the manuscripts of his novels such as the arrest of Josef K. for no apparent reason at the beginning of *The Trial* (1925). Recent criticism has attempted to account for the laughter evoked by Kafka's writings by explicating its relation with the question of freedom and determination. Dimitris Vardoulakis in *Freedom from the Free Will: On Kafka's Laughter*, for instance, has argued that Kafka laughs at the commonplace assumption (in Western thinking) that there is absolute freedom that might be available to human subjects (Vardoulakis, vi-vii). He further suggests that it would be a mistake for Kafka's readers and critics to construe such laughter as being merely critical of the nature of human existence that pines for absolute freedom when the latter is so absolutely unavailable (and, therefore, non-existent). Rather, they must understand that Kafka's laughter is also constructive as it mediates the binary between freedom and the lack of it in an alternate manner.

Political thinking in Kafka's writings, argues Vardoulakis, is thus linked to situations of laughter as Kafka laughs not just at the individual's conception of his or her free-will but also at its underlying presupposition, i.e. the assumed rigid and irreparable separation between the domain of freedom of the will and the (post-Lapsarian) domain of submission, imprisonment, and confinement within governmentality and bureaucratic institutions in the phenomenal world. In other words, Vardoulakis suggests that mediated or ethical freedom in Kafka is freedom from the various forms of entrapping cages found in his fiction through the recognition that freedom is not freedom of the individual-will but rather a freedom from necessary entailments of understanding freedom in terms of individual-will and agency.

Freedom and hope in Kafka's writings are therefore, according to Vardoulakis, available in the 'here' and the 'now' as the latter do not assume the priority of their availability in the past i.e. in the pre-Lapsarian scenario. This critique of the pre-Lapsarian scenario also makes Kafka in his novels move beyond a nostalgic and retrospective understanding of freedom as he is able

to lend ontological priority to mediated freedom over the freedom of the will. In other words, for Kafka, the Fall is determined by freedom and not vice-versa (Vardoulakis 2-25).

Here, I would like to submit my reservations against the second part of Vardoulakis's argument. He correctly highlights Kafka's critique of the conception of a transcendental and absolute freedom but errs, I contend, in reading Kafka's mediation of the freedom and determination or un-freedom binary as being necessarily productive and as preceding the schism between the pre and post-Lapsarian worlds. For Kafka's laughter to entail a programme of (systematic) construction and to precede the Fall, it would have to have a temporal and spatial perspective that allows it to scrutinise freedom and determination from the outside of both of them. Such a perspective is not available in Kafka's fictional universe which is, as underlined earlier, thoroughly marked by the contingent.

If, for Vardoulakis, the contingent must entail something, then it merely entails the *acknowledgement*, as suggested by Philip Weinstein in his magisterial study of Modernist writing titled *Unknowing: The Work of Modernist Fiction*, that a perspective outside freedom and un-freedom is unavailable to the protagonists of modernist texts such as Kafka's and they must, therefore, acknowledge and gracefully accept contingency as being the constitutive *event* of their existence and experience (Weinstein 253). In other words, it seems to me that Kafka laughs not as much on the misplaced human belief in absolute freedom as he does on the *ironical* condition of human existence that must acknowledge the incapability of fulfilling its own limitations and yet simultaneously strive to do exactly the same.

In light of the above description of the manner in which the contingent entails the question of freedom and the lack of it in Kafka's novels and its relationship with the laughter evoked therein, I would like to contend that Kafka's fiction functions in an *ironical* manner. The reader of Kafka's novels is presented with the irony of the contingent situations in which the protagonists find themselves but he or she cannot be provided with an alternative that would shed any light on the contingency of their condition. My contention is based on the manner in which the philosopher Richard Rorty in his well-known account *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity* has read the later writings of Jacques Derrida vis-à-vis the questions of irony and contingency (Rorty 122-140).

In the essay titled "From Ironist Theory to Private Allusions: Derrida," Rorty argues that Derrida in his early writings was strained by the question as to what might be the most appropriate method to critique the history of Western metaphysics in that it is a continuous search for ontological presence. Rorty suggests that Derrida felt thus constrained because he was yielding to the demand of presenting a *philosophical argument* of his critique of Heideggerian metaphysics even as he realized that doing so would in itself entail a metaphysical maneuver or gesture. Such a gesture would be the result of the sacrifice that Derrida would have to make of the aspect of *contingency* that is so central to his critique.

Consequently, according to Rorty, Derrida was able to get around such a constraint as he refused to acknowledge any method and/or clearly ascertainable principle or proposition to Deconstruction. Crucially, in his later writings such as *Glas* (1974) and *The Postcard: From Socrates to Freud and Beyond* (1980), Rorty further argues, he adopted a deliberately *ironic*, *playful*, and *literary* style of writing (the latter book, for instance, in its very form, satirises epistolary prose and literary conventions such as the envoi) that simply gave up on allowing a philosophical conclusion or insight to be drawn from them. In other words, Derrida successfully resisted the pressures of metaphysical thinking by not only ironizing the style of his own work but also the conventional expectations of his readers and colleagues from such writing. Such resistance, Rorty suggests, makes Derrida an ironist in the tradition of thinkers and writers such as Georg Hegel, Marcel Proust, Friedrich Nietzsche, and Martin Heidegger.

The struggle to come up with a rigorous vocabulary from among that which others have used is what is common among Derrida and the thinkers and writers named in the previous paragraph. Rorty argues that an ironist philosopher like Derrida sees the vocabulary and language that he or she uses as neither neutral or as a mere feature of some universal metalanguage nor as a device to get closer to some mythical real. Rather, the ironist philosopher plays off old vocabulary picked up from existing writing with some new vocabulary picked up from somewhere else to further explicate the irony of his or her own location within a metaphysical discourse. The ironist's vocabulary, in this sense, always reflects the strain that it is subjected to by the contingent and remains fragile and liable to change. Rorty writes:

> I shall define an "ironist" as someone who fulfils three conditions: (1) She has radical and continuing doubts about the final vocabulary she currently uses, because she has been impressed by other vocabularies, vocabularies taken as final by people or books she has encountered; (2) she realizes that argument phrased in her present vocabulary can neither underwrite nor dissolve these doubts; (3) insofar as she philosophizes about her situation, she does not think that her vocabulary is closer to reality than others, that it is in touch with a power not herself. (Rorty 73)

This is precisely the aspect of Rorty's argument about Derrida's ironical resolution of the question of the appropriate method to express the contingency in his own thinking that is relevant for our ongoing discussion of the 'siting' of contingency in Kafka's fiction. Derridean strategy about irony is valuable in our attempt to understand Kafka for it entails within itself an alternative manner of 'doing' philosophy that does not see philosophy as a discipline constrained by requirements of a strict distinction from literature and literary conventions. Moreover, Derridean philosophical practice asks of its readers and critics to imagine futures in which irony, playfulness, and a deliberate confusion of genres (both *Glas* and *The Postcard* are books that deliberately defy constraints that would otherwise limit them as belonging to a particular genre of writing) would be re-cognised as 'legitimate' ways of doing philosophy.

Given Kafka's attempts to re-present contingent situations in his fiction and his relentless, simultaneous ironical attempts to not yield to the metaphysical pressure that would entail him

sacrificing the force of this contingency in favour of a constructive programme to address the lack of absolute freedom in the world, it would not be out of place here to suggest that Kafka needs to be recognised as an *ironist* as his novels push their readers towards attempting to discover and, consequently, move past newer vocabulary to address the irony of the metaphysical condition in which humanity finds itself.

Derrida himself would certainly have approved of such a suggestion given that his own writing on Kafka deals with the famous parable about seeking entry into the gates of Law (included in the chapter "In the Cathedral" in *The Trial*) wherein he suggests that the reader's attempts to make the parable (in the novel) subscribe to a law of genre are as futile as the attempts by the man from the village to enter into the gates of the Law by engaging with the doorkeeper[i] (Derrida, "Before the Law" and "The Law of Genre"). The parable, according to Derrida, in its very structure and form resists the assignation of a particular meaning and interpretation to it even as it tempts its pursuer to attempt precisely the same. Unlike the allegorical and the symbolic, the parable retains an element of folk or pre-structural narrativity that makes it difficult to ascertain the nature of reality which it is supposed to correspond to and address. Consequently, like the parable about the gates of Law in *The Trial*, the reader's attempts to 'solve' and see through any parable in Kafka's writing only leads him or her onto a labyrinthine path from which there is no clear and distinct exit. The man from the village and the reader of Kafka's prose works, in this sense, are left to wonder about the precise nature of parables like the two men in Kafka's short story fragment titled "On Parables." Kafka writes:

> Many complain that the words of the wise are always merely parables and of no use in daily life, which is the only life we have. When the sage says: "Go over", he does not mean that we should cross to some actual place, which we could do anyhow if the labour were worth it; he means some fabulous yonder, something unknown to us, something that he cannot designate more precisely either, and therefore cannot help us here in the very least. All these parables really set out to say merely that the incomprehensible is incomprehensible, and we know that already. But the cares we have to struggle with every day: that is a different matter.
>
> Concerning this a man once said: Why such reluctance? If you only followed the parables you yourselves would become parables and with that rid of all your daily cares.
>
>> Another said: I bet that is also a parable.
>> The first said: You have won.
>> The second said: But unfortunately, only in parable.
>> The first said: No, in reality: in parable you have lost. (Kafka, *The Complete Short Stories* 457)

As Judith Butler has suggested in her reading of the parable cited above, Kafka's narratives move away from a Christian and didactic conception of parables which supposes them to be tools that can educate and train their listeners and readers into leading a 'good life.'[ii] She rightly

argues that the "truncated form" of the parable constitutes and interrogates into an irresolvable duality between daily (and real) life and a domain that remains unknown and incomprehensible. The latter persists in its unattainableness as the parable constitutes a specific temporal and spatial configuration that cannot cover the gap that appears to exist between thinking about what lays in the beyond and acting in a way that could lead to its attainment. (Butler, "Kafka's Parables and Paradoxes") Hence, even as the first man says "If you only followed the parables you yourselves would become parables and with that rid of all your daily cares," he is immediately interrupted by the second who argues, "I bet that is also a parable."

With regard to the specific temporal and spatial arrangement made by the parable, Butler insightfully suggests that the latter therefore emerges as the *provisional* and *local* limit text-space that exists at the margins of the cares of daily life and does not or has not yet attained the beyond. In this sense, the linguistic and narratorial configurations of Kafka's parables force their readers and listeners to come face to face with the limits of the spatial and temporal configurations of human knowing and comprehension. Further, Butler underlines that such potent *liminality* can provide invaluable insights into relationships constituting our lives that depend on a strict code of departure and arrival as it reflects a situation where one departs without necessarily arriving and thus breaks the promise that hopeful and optimistic investment in futurity usually entails.

Butler specifically highlights two arrangements with regard to the question of departing but not arriving as related above- one, of the relationship between law(s) and reality and if law(s) ever arrive in our lives and two, of the relationship between hoping for or desiring a future which might be redemptive in different ways and the prevalent circumstances that constitute and determine our lives. Butler, in other words, sees Kafka's parables not as statements that attest to the dystopia of our lives, to the nightmarish and terrifying qualities of human existence, or to our subjection to networks and chains of power and governmentality. Rather, she indicates that Kafka needs to be read and understood as one of the most potent critics of Cartesian modernity, the condition that, in a way, gives rises to dystopia and paranoia in the first place. Thus, this paper has attempted a reading of Kafka's *The Castle* that suggests that Kafka does not merely elucidate the 'dystopia' of the various chains and cages in which humanity is confined, he also points towards a space where the conventional understanding of the relationship between freedom and determination itself is disturbed and re-imagined.

Notes:
i. Both these essays engage with the question of genre and the literary. The latter essay is an engagement with Maurice Blanchot's short fiction titled *The Madness of the Day*. In this piece, Derrida suggests that the encounter between the narrative I in Blanchot's fiction with the genre (assigned by law) that it is supposed to belong to and get appropriated by actually creates a tension that overruns and displaces the purity of the latter by resisting its linearity and refusing to recognise its closure.
ii. Christian understanding of good life entails a believer in the Trinity who, instead of seeking material and physical comfort, invests in human relationships based on trust, sympathy, love, kindness, and forgiveness.

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Utopia and Indian Imagination: Revisiting the *Ramayana* of Valmiki

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Abstract: Utopia, as defined by lexicographers, refers to a perfect system or society freed from corruption, oppression and stagnation which sounds to be an idealistic and imaginary construct; the equivalent of 'utopia' is *Ram Raj* as pictured by Valmiki in the *Ramayana,* the Indian classic. Gandhiji whose imagination is strikingly Indian, conceives of *Ram Raj* not as Hindu Raj but Divine Raj where watchwords are liberty, equality, dignity and fraternity.
Ram the hero of this epic, steels his heart against any kind of temptation: pelf, power, position or woman, annihilates the miscreants and reestablishes the order over-thrown by rakshyasas (terrorists). Sita, the heroine, is the embodiment of chastity and establishes mental union and spiritual communion with Ramchandra, her husband which is exemplary. Helen the most beautiful seductress of Greek myth stands comparison with her because both of them were the cause of devastating wars but Sita outshines Helen in the practice of womanly virtues: a devoted wife, a caring mother and a beloved Queen. Both the hero and the heroine prefer self-sacrifice to self-enjoyment-here glows the beauty of Indian imagination. This voluminous epic, divided into seven books, excites imagination and affords aesthetic pleasure derived from the experience, at once, the mundane and the supra-mundane. This paper aims at shedding light on the uniqueness of Indian imagination that dwells upon self-sacrifice, compassion and endurance-the virtues that elevate the humans to be the fit inhabitants of a utopia.

Keywords: Utopia, Indian, Imagination, Compassion, Endurance.

Utopia as an idea has stirred the imagination of the Indians since time immemorial because the Indians have always longed for perfection; Rabindranath Tagore, the Nobel Laureate dreams of an ideal India 'where tireless striving stretches its arms towards perfection.' Tagore's vision is utopic. Long ago Valmiki, the epic poet of *The Ramayana* was gifted with such a vision and this immemorial myth has excited the Indian poets, philosophers and politicians to realize it. In all standard Dictionaries utopia is defined as a perfect society or system freed from corruption and stagnation. Corruption is as old as man himself; hence to conceive of a system or structure freed from corruption appears to be an imaginary proposition. However, imagination has the inherent potentiality to be transformed into reality. In this context utopia as a concept acquires significance. The end of this paper is to highlight the nature of Indian imagination specially of the seer poets who philosophize and visualize a better humanity-a utopian society and the forces that shape it. The forces may be visible or invisible but the history of the world can't be made without them. *The Ramayana* originally written in Sanskrit is a classic–an immortal work of art because it is the product of creative imagination of a high order; it has been translated and trans-created into different languages. The word 'revisiting' in the title of the paper is not without a meaning. Since the composition of *The* Ramayana this literary work has drawn the attention of a circle of cultured readers and critics. Hence this

magnificent and popular work by Valmiki needs to be assessed and interpreted through many a critic or researcher through diverse approaches in order to enhance the aesthetic enjoyment. This paper is concerned with Indian imagination and utopian ideals. It has been designed after *The Ramayana* written originally by Valmiki. References have been made to R. K. Narayan's *The Ramayana*, and *The Ramayana* of Valmiki trans-created by P. Lal. It has been divided into four sections: the opening section is the introduction that spells out the objectives of paper; the second section focuses on surroundings which stirred the imagination of the seer poet Valmiki to write it. The third section sheds light upon the ideas and ideals that constitute utopia, as meant by Valmiki and interpreted by R. K. Narayan, P. Lal and Gandhi. The fourth section is the conclusion which highlights the splendour and creativity of Indian imagination, high readability of the text *The Ramayana* and above all the conditions that determine the formation of utopia which the humans in general and the Indians in particular long for.

II

The French critic Taine makes a pertinent point that every work of art is created under the impact of 'race', 'moment' and 'milieu'. Valmiki represents Aryan culture; the whole epic *The Ramayana* gets originally written in Sanskrit. The surroundings in which the classic epic struck the imagination of Valmiki, the sensitive soul provoke literary research. The great sage was wandering in a forest near the river *Tamasa* and meditating on the beauty and bounty of nature. Suddenly he caught glimpse of a pathetic sight that stirred his imagination which is primarily Indian because *The Ramayana* that was the outcome represents Indian thought or culture to be distinguished from the occidental. P.Lal in *The Ramayana* of Valmiki narrates the episode in heart-touching language. The episode has four phases: the scene of mating between two Krauncha birds, the killing of male Krauncha by the hunter of Nishada tribe, the female Kraunch sobbing and weeping, and finally the awakening of the poet in Valmiki. Valmiki pictures the first phase of the incident:

> Two sweet-voiced Krauncha birds were mating,
> Savouring the delights of spontaneous love. (Lal 1)

Valmiki captures the intimate moments between the Krauncha couple. The moments are intimate and the love relation between the male and the female Krauncha is profound because both the birds use the language of natural love- here the language consists of gestures that manifest closeness. Valmiki the master poet highlights the source of intimacy between two creatures which is based upon effective communication or nice gestures. Then he describes how the male Krauncha gets killed by the hunter:

> An ill-minded fowler of the Nishada tribe,
> With deliberate malice,
> In Valmiki's presence,
> Killed the male bird. (ibid.)

The poet attributes ill motives of the hunter to the act of killing the birds in mating because nothing can be crueler than killing the birds engaged or absorbed in the act of love-making. The description of the piteous cry of the female Krauncha merits attention. Valmiki feels, in the core of his heart, the screaming of the female bird which arouses but pity. The sensitive poet grows compassionate. The poetic out-burst is worth mentioning:

> ...the female, seeing blood gush out,
> Screamed.
> She screamed piteously.
> Compassion stirred in Valmiki's heart
> When he saw the bird die.
> More compassion stirred in him
> When he heard the screams of the female. (ibid.)

The arousal of the dormant poet in Valmiki in a pathetic situation is an issue worth contemplating. The female bird trembles and cries when her mate unexpectedly meets the end. The blood gushing out of the body makes the female bird experience horror. The basic function of tragic poetry: the evocation of pity and fear is accomplished in a dexterous way. Valmiki turns reflective; his eyes get fixed upon this pathetic event:

> For some time
> Wise Valmiki brooded;
> Then, turning to his discipline Bharadvaja,
> He said:
> ...
> From shoka comes shloka:
> There is no poetry without compassion." (Lal 2)

Valmiki realizes that poetry is born out of intense grief: such poetry is sure to arouse the feeling of compassion in the sensitive humans. Here there is echo of the romantic poet Shelley that our 'sweetest songs are those that tell of saddest thought.'

Thus, the source of composition of *The Ramayana*, the classic epic, as delineated by Valmiki is different from that of ordinary lyrics. William Wordsworth, the great romantic poet cum critic, holds the that poetry is the spontaneous over-flow of powerful feelings recollected in tranquility. But in the creation of the epic poem *The Ramayana* the source is poignant feeling-the heart-rending experience: the poet identifies with the creature of observation-the natural pity wells up in his heart and poetry comes as naturally as leaves to a tree. Thus, the key to the understanding of the master poem *The Ramayana* is understanding the value of compassion-the virtue of virtues. *The Ramayana* is a master piece of world literature because the striking episodes are woven around the feeling of mercy–the cultivation of which can transform the present structure of society or system into a utopia. The basic characteristic of utopian land is perfection and without the nurturing of love and compassion utopia is a mirage. The episode

narrated above drops hints about the arousal of two sublime human instincts: love and kindness. Thus, the source of composition of the epic signals the vision of a better world order--an order that corresponds to the formation of a utopia, at least, in master poetry.

R.K.Narayan sheds light upon the origin of the epic in a different way. He begins the epic in a dialogic situation-the dialogue between the sage Narad and Valmiki. He writes:

> One day Sage Narada visited me. I asked him, 'Who is a
> Perfect man-possessing strength, aware of obligations,
> truthful in an absolute way, firm in the execution of vow
> compassionate, learned, attractive, self-possessed, powerful,
> free from anger and envy but terror-striking when roused?'
> Narada answered, 'Such a combination of qualities in a single
> Person is generally rare, but one such is the very person whose
> name you have mastered, that is, Rama. He was born in the
> race of Ikshvahus, son of King Dasaratha...''' (5)

Rama, the protagonist of the epic *The Ramayana,* is a perfect man. He is so called by Valmiki because on the one hand, he is the embodiment of truthfulness, dutifulness, learning, compassion and power; on the other he is freed from the basic human vices like jealousy, anger, lust, infatuation, pride and greed. He is the paragon of virtues and keeps himself far above the vices of the ordinary humans. Perfection is the key word in the creation of utopia. Thus like P. Lal Narayan discovers utopian elements in the form and design of The *Ramayana*.

To sum up, both P. Lal and R.K. Narayan, deeply interested in Indian myths, like *The Ramayana* are haunted by the idea of utopia-an imaginary land of abundance, liberation and perfection. They highlight that Valmiki professes the awakening of sublime feelings like love and compassion and treats them in a masterly manner in his magnificent epic *The Ramayana*. The source and the subject of *The Ramayana* is a perfect world order which is another name for utopia.

III

Mahatma Gandhi who dreamt of utopia and longed to materialize his dream used to pray Lord Rama. To him Ram, Rahim and God are convertible terms (Tikekar130). In other words, Gandhiji didn't believe in the religious fanaticism but the oneness of humanity which is the secret to undiluted peace and happiness. By Ram Raj he advocates 'not Hindu Raj but Divine Raj, the kingdom of God' (ibid.). Thus, Gandhiji expounds that the experience of spirituality is the way to perfection and, therefore, towards utopia. To build utopia what is needed is absolute sincerity and devotion for the ideal, of which Hanuman of The *Ramayana* is the incarnation. Gandhiji holds that Hinduism would not have been much of a religion if Ram had not steeled his heart against every temptation (ibid.). Rama had the inner confidence to battle against greed which is the ordinary human weakness-a vice that begets sin which leads to death. Thus, *Ramayana* as Gandhiji remarks 'purifies while it cures, and therefore, it elevates.'

The concept of utopia is an ideal one because perfection is the watchword in a utopia. In this sense Rama, the king of Ayodhya is an ideal ruler who banished his beloved wife Sita only to respect the sentiment of an ordinary woman married to a washerman. He didn't hesitate to be an exile for fourteen years in order to fulfil the vows of his father. Laxman and Bharata are ideal brothers who were prepared to sacrifice their royal comforts for the sake of the elder brother. Sita renouncing the comfortable life in the palace preferred to accompany her husband in the dense forest inhabited by demons. Thus, the characters in *The Ramayana* profess and practice idealism which opens out new vistas for the establishment of a new world order which can be branded as utopia. Valmiki, the artist tries to idealise the real and realize the ideal-here he creates a space for the utopian imagination. Doubtless, the demons like Ravana, Indrajit live but they startle others through their penance, austerity, meditation and above all the art of warfare. Thus, in the imagination of Valmiki the devils are not without virtues if strength or valour is the mother of virtues. The utopia is the creation of the strong not of the weak. The denizens of utopia are not hollow men. Valmiki, the sage poet, has visualized the strong ones who have tremendous willpower to embark upon the career of adventure- be he Rama or Ravana, Sita or Mandodari, Laxman or Bibhishana. Thus, Valmiki supernaturalizes the natural. He is also adept in naturalizing the supernatural. For example, when he depicts that Indra, the king of Gods got attracted by the mortal beauty like Ahalya he dexterously points out the seductive power of mortal woman. Thus, the great epic poet tries to juxtapose the natural with the supernatural in such a fashion that he becomes the messenger of a new era which is remarkable for wonder, heroism and startling revelations that constitute the rudiments of utopianism.

The Ramayana is divided into seven chapters: *Balakanda (*the birth, youth and marriage of Lord Rama), *Ayodhyakanda* (Ram's exile), Aranyakanda (the kidnapping of Sita in the forest, Kiskindhya Kanda (search for Sita), Sundarakanda (the finding of Sita), Yuddhakanda (the battle). Utterkanda (the coronation, banishment and departure). Thus, the epic is replete with incidents and accidents which are multidimensional. Doubtless, Valmiki is endowed with a kind of artistic imagination which is lovely, creative and powerful. In the ancient times India was considered to be 'the guru of the world' because Indian rishis were enlightened people. Enlightenment happens; it can't be attained through stress or strain, struggle or suffering. Utopian imagination is linked with enlightenment because it is only through enlightenment perfection can be realized and imperfections conquered. Inaugurating a utopia is ushering in a golden age. Rama Rajya is the golden age and Rama; the mighty warrior is the harbinger. Doubtless, the world pictured by Valmiki is different from the world the humans experience in the present times. In the 20th century T.S. Eliot visualized the war-torn world as the 'wasteland' but war-torn land in Valmiki's imagination is not the wasteland. In the battle between Rama and Ravana vices are wasted but not the virtues. Eliot bewails the deterioration of human values but Valmiki celebrates the restoration of human values. Hence Valmiki's imagination is utopic rather than horrifying.

The exact equivalent of utopia in Indian languages is *Rama Rajya*; it means it is a land in which Rama is the ruler. Rama the man and the administrator is a non-attached individual- here lies the soundness and sagacity of his judgment. He is a model administrator in the sense he could refrain himself from the practice of nepotism, favouritism and indulgence in sensual pleasure which characterise the life styles of modern rulers. As a king he loved his subjects so dearly and so well that just to resolve the conflict between a washerman and her husband he sent his beloved wife to the ashram of Valmiki, the seer poet. Doubtless, such an act hurt the refined sentiments of Sita and her well-wishers but Valmiki, the *rishi* proved to be a father-like figure under whose care grew up to two warrior sons: Lava and Kusha, born to Sita. Valmiki makes a point here: for an ideal ruler blood is not thicker than water. It is the wellbeing of the subjects that matters most. In fact, such an attitude is expected in a utopia not in our world where the politicians are slaves to pelf, power and position and tend to forget the people once the election is over. Thus, Valmiki is dwelling upon an ideal world inhabited by the subjects who attach importance to human values the cultivation of which is a must for the utopia. Empathy is the key word to describe the relation between the inhabitants of the utopia. Sita was so much devoted to Rama that her union with Ram was much more than the physical; her love was platonic. This is-also the case with Laxman and his wife Urmila. The brotherly love between Bharat and Ramachandra is exemplary; so is also between Ravana and Kumbhakarna. Both the demons loved each other so well that they died for the same cause. The cause may be wrong and it resulted in their untimely death but the way they identified with each other is unique.

 Mahatma Gandhi the politician and the statesmen, after Valmiki, imagined utopia. His attitude corresponds to that of Ramachandra. In the book *India of My Dreams*, R.K. Prabhu the compiler quotes Gandhiji's views that an Indian Governor should be 'a teetotaler'; 'he must dwell in a cottage accessible to all' (279). Thus, Gandhiji's idea of Governor is that of Ramachandra who spent fourteen years in forest and could afford to live in a humble cottage at Panchabati where Ravana the demon could easily come and kidnap Sita with him. This is the price Rama could pay in his preference for humble dwelling and high thinking. Gandhiji wrote in his diary; 'let India be and remain the hope of all the exploited races of the Earth whether in Asia, Africa or in any other part of the world' (Prabhu 302). Again Gandhiji says if you want to give a message to the west it must be the message of love and the message of truth...in this age of democracy, in this age of awakening of the poorest of the poor you can redeliver the message with the greatest emphasis (302-03). Gandhiji's views echo those of Rama. When Ramachandra listens to the conflict between the washerman and his wife and banishes his chaste wife, he emerges as the champion of democracy because he honours the sentiment of an ordinary subject of the kingdom. P. Lal in his *The Ramayana* of Valmiki writes:

> It was essential
> That Sita be tested
> By the Fire Ordeal
> To convince my subjects. (158)

Fire stands for intense spirituality and purity. In a utopia the citizens must have concentrated energy to achieve something, that is, sublime and pure. In this context the message of Vivekananda as quoted by Sabina Thorne be cited:

> Live for an ideal, and leave no place
> In the mind for anything else. Let us
> Put forth all our energies to acquire
> That which never fails:
> Our spiritual Perfection (cover page)

Both Ramachandra and Sita strove for spiritual perfection; they could achieve it because despite adverse circumstances they could retain serenity, composure and peace that passeth beyond understanding. They are the model citizens of utopia-an imaginary construct.

IV

To sum up, Valmiki's *The Ramayana* is the product of Indian imagination-an imagination that dwells upon self-sacrifice, compassion, unflinching devotion for the master and organized efforts to destroy the evil and restore the good. Rama the protagonist of this epic is not an ordinary ruler because he had the extraordinary capacity to identify himself with the ordinary masses like the quarrelsome washer woman or a prejudiced step-mother like Kaikei or the army of monkeys. He is an exemplary leader because he is not slave to power but uses power for the good of the subjects. Ravana, his antagonist, can be looked upon as the leader of the mob because he could command loyalty from a large number of demons-adept in archery even if the cause was unjust. In a contest between the two virtue triumphs. Utopia is land where truth wins over falsehood; peace prevails and happiness is experienced by the citizens. Thus, Valmiki's R*amayana* is based upon a better world order which is rooted in utopianism-here lies the perennial appeal of the epic-an epic of compassion.

Valmiki is dwelling upon an ideal world but he has not lost contact with the real. He focuses on the step motherly attitude, the fear of public opinion, attachment between the kith and kin. The utopian imagination of Valmiki can be well–compared with that of John Keats. The world of nightingale represented by Keats the English romantic appears to be a utopia but Keats does not like to prolong his sojourn there through esemplastic powers of imagination. But Valmiki the epic poet returns to utopia time and again. Thus, The *Ramayana* proves to be idealistic in its conception and tone. Utopia as presented by Thomas More deals with perfection in socio-economic and political sphere but Valmiki goes ahead of it. He deals with spiritual perfection which mothers progress, prosperity and peace in every arena of human Endeavour. Thus, Valmiki's imagination is strikingly Indian. Self-sacrifice rather than self-enjoyment is the motto of the hero and the heroine who practice a way of life that can be distinguished as Indian. Sita the heroine of this classic can be compared with Helen of Greek myth who was the cause of devastating war of Troy. But Sita outshines her in the practice of womanly virtues: fidelity to single husband, nourishing of profound love rather than possessing sensual attraction. The

epic glorifies monogamy, champions the cause of love over lust, celebrates the triumph of the good over evil-the trends and tendencies that herald a utopia.

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"Common Utopia" Transcending Across Racism: A Select Study of Amiri Baraka's Poetry

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Abstract: According to Oscar Wilde, "Art not merely reproduces life, but also shapes it.'' The poetry of Amiri Baraka expresses not only the true perspectives of Black community, but also reasonably developed humane concerns related to the American Common Utopia. Racial segregation and discrimination on the basis of color have thrashed the American social structure since ages with such strength that a large amount of Afro-American population has become victim of apartheid on the land which the Blacks have nurtured and nourished for centuries to build an outstanding super power America in the twenty first century. The black writers have invented their own cultural verses, styles and tones from blues, jazz and Spirituals to explore the Afro-American experience causing rebirth to the nation from Dystopia to utopia with an outpouring of confidence, expression, creativity and talent to fight the social inequalities and political corruption prevalent in the American utopia/dystopia.

The present study is an attempt to focus on the glimpses of black dystopia into the poetry of Amiri Baraka drawing illustrations in terms of the Black Culture, Black people and Black imagery pouncing back upon the white society for a true American Utopia providing a positive message of humanity and hope of harmony and accord. The methodology adopted would be the formalist approach for entering into the selected text *Transbluesency: The Selected Poems of Amiri Baraka/LeRoi Jones.* The most influential, revolutionary poet, playwright, essayist, activist, editor and critic, Amiri Baraka (formerly LeRoi Jones) was one of the most dominant and prolific African American writer of the twentieth century to rouse the Black consciousness with "*Self Determination"* to give voice to "*Revolution"* to build a true American/Black Utopia leading to a harmonious Common Utopia.

Keywords: Amiri Baraka, Poetry, Common Utopia

Introduction

Racial segregation and discrimination on the basis of colour and the race prejudice has caused enormous suffering to the African Americans, yet it became a literary blessing to the black writers who invented their own cultural verses, styles and tones from blues, jazz and spirituals bringing in utopia within their dystopia. This paper is an attempt to see the Glimpses of dystopia in Black Life amidst American Utopia in the Poetry of Amiri Baraka. African American literature originated at the time when African slaves were brought to the New World in 1639. In this dystopia they forged a language and literature of their own with vernacular tradition of African Americans. Their Literature can be summarized into five periods: Slavery (1746-

1865), Reconstruction and after (1865-1919), Harlem Renaissance (1919-1960), The Black Arts Movements (1960-1970), and writing after 1970. During the period of Slavery, the chief literary expression of Afro-American Literature was known as slave narrative: a distinct African American genre made up of dystopia narrative accounts written by fugitive slaves like Phillis Wheatley's and Frederick Douglass. President Abraham Lincoln declared Emancipation Proclamation in 1862 which brought the abolition of slavery and involuntary servitude. In 1920s, The New Negro Renaissance or Harlem Renaissance became the first major movement of African American literature bringing in utopia within dystopia. During 1919 at the birth of Harlem Renaissance to 1940, the diversity of African American talent reached a high point along the trial of causing rebirth to their common utopia. There was an outpouring of confidence, expression, creativity and talent amidst their dystopia leading towards aesthetic utopia. This outpouring established a path for cultural expression of black community leading to various social reforms. Harlem became the capital of the African American world no less than the utopia. The well-established and celebrated poets of the period, who paved the way for future generations, were Claude McKay, Langston Hughes, James Weldon Johnson, Countee Cullen and the others. The civil rights movement of the 1960s brought on yet another phase of African American literature. This phase, the Black Arts Movement, had as its mission to create politically charged expression challenging the then status quo of Blacks. Poets of the black arts movement used their craft as weapons in the campaign to construct a black utopia on the dystopia of Ghettos to liberate Afro- Americans The methodology adopted in the paper would be the formalistic approach for entering into the selected text namely Transbluesency: The Selected Poems of Amiri Baraka/LeRoi Jones who was born on October 7, 1934, in Newark, New Jersey, USA to Coyette LeRoi Jones, a postal supervisor and a lift operator and Anna Lois Jones, 17 a social worker.

Common Utopia

The aim of Black poetry has always been to transform the consciousness of Blacks from discomfited and humiliated dystopia into a proud and brave utopia by the Black combating people. Baraka's poetry echoes not only the struggle, but also the splendour, hope and determination of African American experience during Black Arts Movement. America's largest racial minority has been nominated by the terms African, Colored, Negro and black. The nomenclature has always been in flux since 1619, when first African captivated servants landed at Jamestown. The term black became popular during the Civil Rights Movement to express racial pride, militancy and power. Slogans like "black is beautiful" and "black pride" provided unity within the black community leading to the combination of utopia within dystopia resulting into a common utopia ethically. But in December 1988, Blacks launched a movement to replace "black" with a new term, African American. According to Britannica Encyclopedia, racism is ". . . the theory of idea that there is a casual link between inherited physical traits and certain traits of personality, intellect or culture. Skin colour difference was used by whites as justification for the different illegal treatment of blacks and became a permanent basis to account for the perceived differences in physical, intellectual and artistic temperaments. As a result, African Americans were in dilemma whether to consider themselves as Americans or Africans. They developed a double consciousness leading to `common utopia'

which means the self-estrangement resulting from competing allegiance in racial or ethnic terms. A Revolution is the fundamental change in political Black Poetry inspired by blues and jazz rhythms spiritually. Jazz is a genre of music originated in African American communities expressing common bond of all African Americans with sounds and rhythms expressing feelings of dance despite living in dystopia or Ghetto's. That is "an area of a city where many people of the same race or background live, separately from the rest of population. Ghettos are often crowded, with bad living conditions" (OALD 242).

Amiri Baraka/Le Roi Jones

Baraka's autobiography brings out the truth that his life had been a story of endless controversies and daring confrontations for speaking out against oppression and fostering hatred among Blacks against the whites. For him, a poem is poet's own breath and intensity of feeling rather than fulfilling traditional expectations. A vast list of Baraka's works includes his volumes of poetry, fiction, drama and essays etc. Preface to a Twenty Volume Suicide Note in 1961; The Dead Lecturer: Poems in 1964; Black Magic in 1969; It's Nation Time 1970; Hard Facts 1975; New Music New Poetry 1980, and Transbluesency: The Selected Poems of Amiri Baraka/Le Roi Jones 1995. His famous plays are Dutchman, The Slave, A Black Mass, Slave Ship and The Motion of History and Other Plays including fiction, The System of Dante's Hell.

"What Baraka anticipates is nothing less than a jihad or holy war of believers against unbelievers, black against white" (Gray 310). Transbluesency: The Selected Poems of Amiri Baraka/LeRoi Jones incorporates works from the poet's different periods of exceptional literary production. The volume begins with his Preface to a Twenty Volume Suicide Note and includes The Dead Lecturer, Black Magic, Hard Facts, Poetry for the Advanced, Reggae or Not, Am/Trak, Heathens, In the Tradition and Wise, Why's Y's Several Afro-American writers endeavored to denigrate the biased political system of the country, but Baraka was perhaps the first among men of letters whose strident political poetics aimed to question the deep seeded, self-loathing and insecure dystopia of the African American community that endured centuries of slavery, suppression, and segregation. His cultural politics prepared them to defy and attack the evil with a change in black perception. Baraka's dystopia has been an amalgamation of diverse experiences of "… adventure: brutal beatings, literary successes, jail sentences, theatre founding's, bohemian debaucheries, revolutionary activities," (Harris 2). Transbluescency is a wide-ranging selection of Amiri Baraka's poetry over the almost forty years of its writing, and one can find not only the much-emphasized antagonism he has long felt toward the white majority but also the shifts of strategy and relationship in his own life that are his constant preoccupations. Baraka is always ironic, often scornful, with his characteristic quick wit and displacing humour, but what he valued is the collective, the "we" which comes again and again into his poems. His trip to Cuba inspired and instigated him against the Whites. The assassination of Malcolm X was a turning point in his life His autobiography also provides a retrospective explanation for this anti-white hostility: We hated white people so publicly, for one reason, because we had been so publicly tied up with them before…I guess, during this period, I got the reputation for being a snarling, white-hating madman. There was some truth to it, because I was struggling to be born, to break out from the shell I could instinctively sense

enveloping my own dash for freedom (Harris xxv). He consciously started transforming white forms into black ones consciously selecting a method (jazz aesthetic), and "he felt obliged to turn the ideas and forms of avant-garde art into black art, taking the avant-garde didactic and turning it into black didactic, white dada into black dada, avant-garde critiques of the West into black critiques, and avant-garde stereotypes of the blacks into revolutionary black images for blacks," (Harris 17).

Black Dystopia

In the poem, *Audubon Drafted*, Baraka associates the hard facts of his existence in dystopia: "The world is the/one thing that will not move. It is/made of stone, round and very ugly" (BSP 94). The American utopia is full of evil, and the poet is disappointed with the malice that people have for another race. The poem, *Symphony Sid*, presents a colossus of mountain:

> . . . The mountain,
> largest of our
> landscape. From
> a dark hall at
> the bottom, the shapes
> a shadow, without
> hardness, or that
> ugly smell
> of blackening flesh. (BSP 36)

The poet observes the mountain and its shadow and wonders that the shadow is not hard like the mountains. He must be comparing the new generation of whites who would not be cruel and prejudiced like their ancestors. These new white folks, like mountain shadow, would interact and behave harmoniously with the Blacks which would definitely yield to common utopia. But he is also apprehensive about them to be more callous like the "ugly smell of blackening flesh. Baraka is not always a hard-hearted man. He has feelings of love and care for all—men, trees, birds and other creatures. He is sad when he sees the lovely trees suffering without rain in the poem, *Return of the Native:*

> The trees blink naked, being
> so few…
> The sky sits awake
> over us. Screaming
> at us. No rain.
> Sun, hot cleaning sun
> drives us under it. (BSP 140)

The hot sun has caused the suffering to all—the poet, the women and the trees as they suffer in American illuminating utopia which is no less than the sun to the blacks. In The poem, *A Guerrilla Handbook,* trees are presented as "socialists". In their rightness/the tree trunks are

socialists (BSP 101). The trees trunks hide the leaves and protect them from dangers of storms and blizzards similar to the common utopia in America. In the poem, *Hymn for Lanie Poo,* Baraka warns his men from the "evil sun": "Beware the evil sun… /turn your back/turn your hair/crawl your eyeballs/rot your teeth" (BSP 6-7). He alleges the sun to be harsh and cruel to his poor blacks. In the same poem, the sun is compared with the prejudiced white society:

> the huge &loveless
> white-anglo sun
> of
> benevolent step
> mother America (BSP 14)

The poet is disappointed with the sun for being friend with whites. "inventing this traditional life-giving symbol (the sun), Jones practices a strategy common to the black perspective: reversing the destructive meanings and values projected by the white world in order to buffer the besieged black psyche" (Harris 19). The poet is also fascinated by the beauty of stars in the poem, A Poem Welcoming Jonas Mekas to America:

> This night's first star, hung
> high up over a factory. From any window,
> a smile held my poetry in. A tower, where I work
> and drink, vomit, and spoil myself for casual life. (BSP 119)

The star pacifies Baraka' anger and inspires him to be benevolent. Factories are suggestive of the exploitation of the Afro-American workers who do not have fixed working hours. The African Americans escaped the widespread racism of the South and sought the employment opportunities in the urban environments and live in the dystopia of ghettos as visible in the *poem Das Kapital:*

> These old houses
> Crumble, the unemployed stumble by us straining, ashy fingered,
> harassed. The air is cold
> winter heaps above us consolidation in degrees. We need a aspirin
> or something, and
> pull our jackets close.
> . . .
> The streets too
> will soon be empty, after the church goers go on home having been saved
> again, from the
> Maniac …
> shivers through you, looking for traces of the maniac's life. (BSP 153-154)

In such dystopia of insecurity, the poet finds that white terrorists can kill the Black women's son for fun. Their sons are unemployed, exhausted and tortured. Living in roofless houses, they are tormented again by the heaps of cold air. Their masters exploit them by giving fewer wages than that they owe. In the evening, the ghetto streets are found empty due to the fear of white maniacs. The poem, *Wise 4,* presents Baraka's personal experience of racial violence in a ghetto dystopia:

> I has never got nothing
> but a head full of blood
> my scar, my missing teeth.
> I has never got nothing but
> killer frustration/yes dark
> was the night
> cold was the ground. (BSP 225)

The poet is reminded of a tragic incident of violence against Blacks through "scar" and "missing teeth." His head was broken in the incident. The poet finds that such incidents gave him only "frustration" which kills him every time and reminds him the cruelty of white dystopia. He says in his Autobiography: "When I started working down that area, I used to carry a lead pipe in a manila envelope, the envelope under my arm is like a good messenger, not intimidate but nevertheless ready" (Autobiography 133). The poet is also reminded of the race riots when he remembers once his "big house" was set on fire by the white maniac. Another poem, History –*Wise # 22* brings another image of race riot in mind:

> Whooooooeeee Whooooooeeee
> Whooooooooooeoooo Whooooooooooeoooo Whooooooooooeoooo
> is its real
> sound
> from way up under
> the ground
> Way
> Down
> Whooooooweeeee Whoooeeooooeeooo
> Whoooooeeeooooeeeooo
> …
> that night
> that whistle cries
> & is moans Whyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyy' ssssssss. (BSP 236-237)

The sounds "Whooooooeeee Whooooooeeee" create an image of police vehicles and ambulances making sirens at the site of tragic incidents. For whites, death of a black is justified as in the *poem Y's 18:*

Only reality
say
Where we will
go
It's tethers
It's chains
It's sick pricks
inventing
crushing
for our lives
a decoration
of horror
they cd define
& understand
they cd justify
our deaths
& torture. (BSP 229)

The "tethers," "chains" and "sick pricks" are the torturing agents of whites that crush and crash them. In *A Poem for Democrats*, the death is caused when he crosses a colour line:

City, is wicked. Not
this one, where I am, where they
still move, go to, out of
(transporting your loved one
across the line is death (BSP 77)
Death by lynching is another example of white callousness as depicted in the *poem Das Kapital:*
Strangling women in the suburban bush
they bodies laid around rotting while martins are drunk
... Two of them strangled by
the maniac. (BSP 153)

The white terrorists like Ku Klux Klan strangle the women and girls and their dead bodies are lying down in the streets without cremation. The poem, *A Poem for Willie Best,* reveals such an incident:

where
ever,
he has gone, who ever
mourns
or sits silent
. . .

'The house burned. The
old man killed.' (BSP 65)

An old man is found missing in the Black ghetto and it is quite evident that he must have been killed by the white racists in Ghettos in cities like New York, Chicago, Detroit and Philadelphia. The poem, *Three Modes of History and Culture, reveals* the dystopia in the plantations of the South:

> From heavy beginnings. Plantations,
> learning
> America, as speech, and a common emptiness. Songs knocking
> inside old women's faces. Knocking through cardboard trunks.
> Trains
> learning north, catching hellfire in windows, passing through
> the first ignoble cities of Missouri, to Illinois, and the panting
> Chicago. (BSP 117)

The women working in the fields are no more singing songs during harvest. The community has been paralyzed politically, socially and economically. The poem, *There was Something I wanted to Tell/You (33) Why?* preaches the racism as a collective traditional enemy of humanity resulting into dystopia within utopia:

> The world is complex
> its reality materially
> simple
> It is dying of the life
> . . .
> The rot, the lie, the opposite
> Will always, if there is ever
> That, exist. As if means death
> And hot cold. Darkness lights'
> Closest companions. (BSP 249-250)

In the racially segregated America, which for them is dystopia rather than a utopia, Baraka fears that Black history and culture would be thrown as "toxic waste" in the "toilet bowl," and the whites will claim that Afro-Americans do not have any past, and then black community will perish. In the poem, Y's *18, the* poet calls whites as "heathens":

> That one day the heathens
> wd actually come on the real
> Side—that they wd take our
> Hearts as funny valentines
> That they wd stick our lives and history

In the toilet bowl
(toxic waste)
& claim our
Past
& future. (BSP 233)

The segregation, discrimination and exploitation still exist in most of the states in America. The poet is quite conscious and critical of the evil of discrimination and calls white rulers as witches, devils and hobgoblins. Ironically, for Baraka, Heathen Civilization is represented as Fascism: "Heathens Think Fascism is Civilization/And that they are superior to humans & that/ Humanity is metaphysical" (BSP 216). In the *poem Y' 18,* Baraka calls Racist whites as "American Nazis":

Their smiles even
chill us
mad poseur
posing as
the mad doctor
who is the original
American
Nazi
The southern Himmlers
& Goebbels, baked
in our dying. (BSP 230)

In *Ostriches and Grandmothers*, the poet describes America as a "den of inconstant moralities": "All meet here with us, finally: the/uptown way-west, den of inconstant moralities" (BSP 25S), being a Black Nationalist, Baraka finds it difficult to accept the whites as his friends or well-wishers and condemns the past and present of racial discrimination.

Black Assimilation
The Blacks found an opportunity for social mobility with their assimilation into mainstream white utopia. A staunch believer of Black Nationalism, Amiri Baraka is critical of Black assimilation into white culture. Arnold Rose, in his Sociology book: The Study of Human Relations, defines assimilation as "the adoption by a person or a group of the culture of another social group to such complete extent that the person or group no longer has any characteristics identifying him with his former culture" (Rose 557). In the poem, Hymn for Lanie Poo, the poet denigrates his own sister for her assumed white personality:

my sister doesn't like to teach in Newark
because there are too many colored
in her classes
my sister hates loud shades

my sister's boyfriend is a faggot music teacher. (BSP 13)

The sister is presented as a self-hating Black who is entrapped in the worship of whiteness as she keeps a distance from her "colored" students and "loud shades. Baraka finds it painful that the Blacks of middle-class social groups allow themselves to be led by the white image and ultimately, they respect white power. Another picture of black bourgeoisie is presented with sheer critical comments in the poem, *History on Wheels*:

> Civil Rights
> included Nathan
> and the rest
> of them, who got in America
> big shooting off the agony
> a class of blue Bloods, …
> ... a class of exploiters,
> in black face. (BSP 151)

The poet condemns Afro-Americans adopting the ways of whites and call this a hypocrisy of the blacks and asks them to renounce or give up the habit and join him in his mission of freedom as presented in the poem, *Reggae or Not!*
niggers riding alligators ...

> ...
> Revolution Self Determination
> We no be fool
> for alligator. (BSP 183)

The poet wishes to awaken his men to see the value in their culture and ultimately come and join him with "Self Determination" to give voice to Revolution. The poems find Baraka living in the white utopia which he despises for inequality and exploitation. He cannot live in such dystopia where he senses the killing and lynching of his ancestors and other fellow blacks. He wants to avenge for the wrongs done to his community. The poem*, In the Tradition*, explores Baraka's heart that needs to "fight" to bring honour and dignity to his race:

> "Not a White Shadow
> But Black People Will is Victorious…."
> ...
> The tradition says plainly to us fight plainly to us
> fight, that's in it, clearly, we are not meant to be slaves
> it is a detour we have gone through and about to come out
> in the tradition of gorgeous Africa blackness
> says to us fight. (BSP 209-210)

The poems trace the evolution of Baraka's poetry which is an ardent reaction upon the cultural, political, and aesthetic establishments of his time.

Black Power

"Black Power" is associated with separation of Blacks from racist American domination. Larry Neal explains black power as "a synthesis of all of nationalistic ideas embedded within the double consciousness of black America. But it has no one specific meaning. It is rather a kind of feeling—a kind of emotional response to one's history" (Robinson 73). According to Julius Lester, black power is "the ideology for confrontation. Baraka himself started following the path paved by Malcolm—the path of self-determination, self-respect and self-defense. The poem Reggae *or Not!* Reflects Malcolm's teachings to the black community:

> Our terror … AHEEESSSSHHHHHHHHHHEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEE
> . . .
> (This was before they complained about
> OPEC for they complained about baraka being rude
> Before Malcolm set Kenneth Clark on fire. (BSP 176)

According to Baraka, America, the country of minstrels has become a "plague ridden mansion" for the black community. The poem Three *Modes of History and Culture* presents the African Americans as baffled people living with insane hope on the American utopia:

> The party of insane
> Hope. I've come from there too. Where the dead told lies
> about clever social justice. Burning coffins voted
> and staggered through cold white streets listening
> to Willkie or Wallace or Dewey through the dead face
> of Lincoln. Come from there, and belched it out. (BSP 118)

Blacks need to be audacious for their credit as human beings as explained in the poem To a Publisher … Cut Out:

> Grandeur in boldness. Big & stupid as the wind.
> ...
> "what do you want to be when you grow up??" &
> Day in, day out, you just kept belching. (BSP 23-24)

This splendour of courage may be big and foolish, yet has to be understood by all Americans to construct a true common utopia the poem, *When We'll Worship Jesus,* the poet appeals to restore their cultural identity:

> we worship the strength in us
> we worship our selves

we worship the light in us
we worship the warmth in us
. . .
sing about life, not jesus
sing about revolution, not no jesus
stop singing about jesus,
sing about, creation, our creation.
. . .
unless that's the name of the army we building to force the land
finally, to
change hands. (BSP 160-161)

The poet advises his people to remember the great emancipators like Dred Scott, born in slavery but never accepted his conditions and launched a legal battle to free him. Another Negro, Henry Bibb, being a slave fought and became an abolitionist. Baraka appeals his men not to be ashamed of their color but feel blessed for being strong. With such strength, Blacks have created a big impression all over the world as he
reminds in the poem, *In the Tradition*:

> What is this tradition Based on, we Blue Black Wards struggling
> against a Big White Fog, Africa people, our fingerprints are
> everywhere
> on you america, our fingerprints our everywhere,
> ...
> a wide pan african
> world. (BSP 203)

Here, the poet recollects the past of the Afro-American when they fought against a "Big White Fog", the cruel slave masters and Ku Klux Klan who disrupted black life in America. Further in the poem, black culture is presented positively:

> in the african american
> tradition
> open us
> ...
> let all that is positive
> . . .
> ours is one particular
> one tradition
> of love and suffering truth over lies
> and now we find ourselves in chains. (BSP 208-209)

Black Nationalism

Black Nationalism is the advocacy of the national civil rights of black people in America. The hostility and Black Nationalism became a collective effort of Blacks to protect their social, economic and political rights. It becomes their search for identity in the nation that had degraded and insulted their ancestral and cultural legacies and devoid them of complete membership in the politics of the country. So, nationalism is an "ideological movement for the attainment and maintenance of autonomy and individuality for a social group, some of whose members conceive it to constitute an actual or potential nation" (Woodard 9). Amiri Baraka has been a staunch advocate of Black Nationalism in America and in the poem Are Their Blues Singers in Russia, demands a new space for Blacks:

> We stand for tragic emblems when we return to the pro and cons
> of the world. The shielding, for nothing. God's contradictions we
> speak about as if we knew something, or could feel pas what we
> describe, and enter the new forms of being.
> ...
> So much, so much, to prepare a proper
> place, to not exist in. (BSP 146)

The poet needs his people to move to cities of the newer nation as he says: "While white Americans created the conditions of struggle, black Americans, responding to the challenges of manhood and citizenship, ranged the gamut from integration to separation in quest of an identity that offered more than merely technical physical freedom" (Robinson 74). so that the Blacks could march. However, the white people did not want to create a separate nation for the African Americans. The white leaders planned a national unity without bifurcation of the country. They promised equality and fraternity in all respects, yet were sure of further exploitation of them as ascertained in the poem, *Real Life:*

> ford says the plan, was national
> unity, the new money
> ...
> southern friends.... (BSP 155-156)

The poem presents a conversation Gerald Ford (the thirty-eighth President of America) with his predecessor, Richard Nixon and his wife, Pat Nixon in front of the vice-president, Nelson Rockefeller. The conversation is about the stopping of the making of Black Nation. Their discussion reveals their secret plan of continuing of making wealth out of Negro exploitation. The idea of making of Black nation is clear to the poet, but he is still unable to understand its map. He warns them against going "Back to Africa" where they will be thrown away for their cowardice. If they want to make their presence felt in America, they must rise above their inferiority complex and battle bravely against adverse forces. In the poem *Short Speech to My Friends*, Baraka could see a better life for black children: "There would be someone/who would understand, for whatever/fancy reason. Dead, lying, Roi, as your children/came up, would also rise. As George Armstrong Custer/these hundred years, has never made/a mistake" (BSP 73).

For Baraka, a place should be meant exclusively for Blacks. He could see this place like ancient "Egypt" with lasting legacy. He imagines the new world with all love and harmony, a true utopia. The poem, *The Success,* depicts the beauty of new America which the poet wants to create:

> The proportion of Magic
> has seeped so low.
> For the Ist person plural
> America, then, Atlantis,
> in blind overdose." (BSP 126)

For American Nazis, whom the poet calls "Ist person plural", see America as Atlantis (a beautiful island full of wealth). For African Americans, their new nation is like Atlantis which is lost but they can travel into it and inhabit it with their collective effort. His ferocious stand and support to his community in literature paved the ways for millions of subjugated Blacks to raise their voice for the emancipation and provide them the status they deserved.

Revolution through Violence

Violence and aggression are vital aspects in the phenomenon of revolution. Stuart R. Schram, in The Political Thought of Mao Tse-tung, defines the revolution: "A revolution … cannot be anything so refined, so calm and gentle, or so mild, kind, courteous, restrained and magnanimous. A revolution is … an act of violence whereby one class overthrows the authority of another" (Schram 54). Baraka further supports violence to bring about a big transformation in the life of Negroes as in the poem, *The Burning General*:

> Is sense to be lost, all of it, so that
> ...
> Violence and repression. Silly Nigger hatred for the
> silk band of misery. They are right, those farty doctors. Perhaps
> it is best to ease into kill-heaven than have no heaven at all. (BSP 129)

In the poem, *When We'll Worship Jesus*, Baraka tells the Negroes to live in the world of their reality:

> . . . let's call that people's army, or
> wapenduzi or
> simba
> wachanga, but we not gon call it jesus, and not gon worship
> jesus, throw
> jesus our yr mind. Build the new world out of reality, and new
> vision
> we come to find out what there is of the world

to understand what there is here in the world!
to visualize change, and force it.
we worship revolution. (BSP 161-162)

Baraka is adamant to throw everything away that he feels dangerous and threatening to his mission. They need to create a new cult of their own by escaping from the worship of Jesus. To bring about the change, they have to gather an army of people—"wapenduzi'' to put an end to the prevailing religion. The angry poet devises "concentration camps" for white genocide in the poem, *1929: Y you ask (26):*

The living dying wind
adhesive against wet w/blood top hats
souls w/bullet holes. ...
Finally, we know, half superiorly,
All these guests
will die of the Plague. The Black Death!
The Red Death! The Plague!
Horror movie statistical murders.
Dead in old houses
& under cars. In chain gang Gulags& under cars. In chain gang Gulags
& share cropper concentration camps. (BSP 238-239)

Baraka adds to this point in his Autobiography: "I guess, during this period, I got the reputation of being a snarling, white-hating madman. There was some truth to it, because I was struggling to be born, to break out from the shell I could instictively sense surrounded my own dash for freedom. I was in a frenzy, trying to get my feet solidly on the ground, of reality" (Autobiography 194). The determined and furious poet feels the need of sacrifice for the noble cause of freedom as presented in the poem, *There was something I wanted to Tell You. (33) Why?*

Marx, Engels, Lenin, Stalin, Mao, Ho
Fidel, Nkrumah
Martin, Sandino
& Malcolm X
Have all been
betrayed
All revolutions bear their own
Betrayal, & betrayers. (BSP 249)

The poet knows it well that all revolutions in the past had their traitors and betrayals, and is apprehensive about his mission. But he is optimistic about his unwavering niggers who would follow their revolutionary prophets like Marx, Engels, Lenin, Stalin, Mao, Fidel, Nkrumah, and Malcolm X. The poet has never got much fruitful from his aggressive writing, but his talk about

rebellion and revenge always kept him warm as explained in the poem *Wise 4:* "I has never got nothing, and talk/of rebellion/warmed me" (BSP 225). His resistance to the hegemony of white culture by the use of African literary allusions and verbal patterns of black speech has created a distinct literary form in the Afro-American literature.

Conclusion

In a sense, Baraka writes his poems for poor, illiterate Negroes who want to change things in their life to see a better world. His poems are for workers and peasants who remained ignorant and uncultured due to biased system of whites and black bourgeoisie class. Like Toni Morrison and Maya Angelou, Baraka not only underlines injustice but also suggests the way to fight it. More than any other black poet, Baraka taught younger black poets of the generation past how to respond poetically to their lived experience, rather than to depend as artists on preserved reputations and old-fashioned rhetorical strategies derived from a culture often substantially different from their own. His poetic subjects range from the common pleasures of people in the lap of nature to the highly revolutionized concerns of Black Pride, Black Nationalism and Black Revolution to thwart the prevalent hostile white culture. His condemnation and rejection of Black assimilation into white ways of living states his firmness to create a Black Nationalistic nation in America. Various aspects of his poetry such as economic, social, political, ideological and psychological. For him, poetry is not an art form only, separate from the violent struggles of the people; it is and must be a weapon in that struggle:

> . . . We want live
> Words of the hip world live flesh &
> Coursing blood. Hearts Brains
> Souls splintering fire.
> . . .
> Poems that wrestle cops into alleys
> and take their weapons leaving them dead. (BSP 142)

Baraka's poetry has been a battle between the "colored" and "colorless" aesthetics. Baraka's writing in Black language found genuine expression of ideas and needs of black community. Baraka served as the second Poet Laureate of New Jersey as a contemporary of John Coltrane, Toni Morrison, Ralf Ellison and Norman Mailer. "Like Ezra Pound, Baraka has dared to bring radical politics into the world of literature and to deliver his explosive ideas in an inflammatory style" (William xviii). Baraka published his books only with black press. He shifted his residence from New York's Greenwich Village to predominantly black Harlem, his utopia, which indicates that he was resolute to write for the black readers and audience. He had always been disappointed with the social and political standards of the great nation, America which acted as his dystopia in spite of the utopia for world.

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Self-fulfilling Prophecies–Locating Our World Amongst the Dystopias in Selected Works

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Abstract: The contemporary world as we know it today can be characterised by certain anxieties. Surveillance, privacy, refugee crises, xenophobia, skepticism towards notions of authentic 'free will' due to the denial of civil liberties are among issues which have surfaced as not only influential towards government policy formation but have become ideas which permeate the minutiae of everyday life. The atmosphere of distrust surrounding institutions of authority are indicative of a palpable sentiment of suspicion that hidden forces and agendas are key mobilizing agents in the functioning of society–humanity seems closer than ever to inhabiting a Lyotardian "incredulity towards metanarratives." Works which have a dystopian setting as a central theme have seemingly shaped the contemporary world as we know it. By studying the characteristics of these creations, it may be ascertained exactly how key concepts which we are continuing to grapple with today have been cited and expanded upon–portraying and giving expression to attitudes and ideas prevalent in years past as well as in current times. This paper proposes to study selected works in this context chosen from disparate disciplines, such as Antony Burgess' novel *A Clockwork Orange* and Ridley Scott's science-fiction noir film *Blade Runner*–influential works which have gone far to inform the world we live in and the reflections of it in the shape of contemporary media such as the television series *Mr. Robot*.

Keywords: Dystopia, Postmodernism, Popular Culture, Antony Burgess, Inter-disciplinary

      There is perhaps a degree of consensus that the typical postmodernist artefact is playful, self-ironizing and even schizoid; and that it reacts to the austere autonomy of high modernism by impudently embracing the language of commerce and the commodity.

> Its stance towards cultural tradition is one of irreverent pastiche, and its contrived depthlessness undermines all metaphysical solemnities, sometimes by a brutal aesthetics of squalor and shock. (Eagleton 1987)

In his book The Condition of Postmodernity, David Harvey opens his analysis of the nature of postmodernism with an illuminating introductory rumination on how one might define the term and all that it encompasses. He cites the definition given above from Terry Eagleton's "Awakening from modernity" and it is significant that Harvey next cites the idea that postmodernism has risen as a reaction to the monotonous monopoly of universal modernism's vision of the world in the first half of the Twentieth Century (Harvey 9). Indeed, this vision bears a marked character of sterility with its standardization of knowledge and production, belief in linear progress and absolute truths-contrasting sharply with postmodernisms privileging of "heterogeneity and difference as liberative forces in the redefinition of cultural discourse". It is quite apparent that those who would identify themselves as being on the side of postmodernism would bear an intense distrust of all universal or 'totalizing' discourses, completely rejecting large-scale theoretical interpretations purportedly of universal application (ibid). In fact, Eagleton completely dismisses these erstwhile visions of homogeneity by declaring the "death of such 'metanarratives' whose secretly terroristic function was to ground and legitimate the illusion of a 'universal' human history… with its manipulative reason and fetish for totality" (1987). The new world would not be one predicated on a shared history which necessitated the idea of the need to strive towards a common goal in harmony–fragmented, disjointed and pluralistic discourses would come to be its defining characteristic. This embrace of the 'chaos' as such engendered a spirit to question and critique the current standards and practices in all forms of art and culture. Wide-ranging changes were brought about in Literature and Art which confounded the established schools of thought and etiquette. Indeed, it was not simply these field which would undergo metamorphoses–even Science and Philosophy were warned to "jettison their grandiose metaphysical claims and view themselves more modestly as just another set of narratives" (ibid).

It is significant that Eagleton was to include science in his profound statement for it was the advancement of technology which shaped the preceding century and in turn the contemporary world as we know it. While the Atom Bomb had produced a hush across the globe as the shadow of mushroom cloud gave humanity a glimpse of what utter devastation could occur, scientific development even more substantially became a part of everyday life. Ursula K. Heise contends that the second half of the twentieth century saw certain scientific innovations which were particularly crucial towards the shaping a new era. Amongst nuclear technology, sojourns into space which included landings on the Moon and Mars, television and other landmark breakthroughs, she contends that "computer technology and biotechnology are two of the most salient areas that have given rise to utopian hopes as well as to apocalyptic fears, and that have most strikingly created the sense of an epochal break" (Heise 137). It is important here to note the distinct tendencies of the 'postmodern moment' towards technology and science:

> On the one hand, scientific insights and technological applications are advancing at a more rapid pace than ever, and some of their more spectacular developments have

changed the material environment and a vast range of values, beliefs and expectations, along with the very meaning of the words "science" and "technology" for average citizens. On the other hand, science and technology are met with ambivalence, skepticism, or resistance not only because of some undesirable "side effects" their rapid evolution has generated, but in terms of some of their most basic assumptions about nature, progress, human observation, appropriate methodologies for creating knowledge, and the role this knowledge should play in shaping public policies. (137-138)

Chaos and Purpose inside *Blade Runner*'s Dystopic Vision

David Harvey finds cinema to be the art form with "the most robust capacity to handle the intertwining of space and time" through its use of serial images and ability to cut back and forth, freed from the usual constraints of chronological narrative (Harvey 308). He explores the themes of postmodernism through an analysis of Ridley Scott's *Blade Runner*. The filmic world is set in a future where genetically produced human beings or 'replicants' seek redressal upon their owners and the narrative follows the protagonist Deckard whose job it is to track down these replicants and neutralize the threat they pose. The replicants are endowed with strengths which surpass ordinary human abilities and are tasked with occupations which require the sharpest of skill sets. They are also capable of emotions which allows them to make judgements on par with human requirements. However, their enhanced nature constitutes a threat to the established order, as a result of which they are forcibly disposed of after a four-year term.

The replicants are not merely imitations but authentic reproductions of humans–they are simulacra rather than robots (309). They have been designed as the ultimate form of short-term, highly skilled and flexible labour power, yet they take up arms against the idea of their shortened lifespans and attempt to force their makers into reprogramming their genetic make-up. Tyrell, who is their designer and the face of a vast corporation under his name, argues that the replicants have adequate compensation for this condition as they live their rivals with an unmatched intensity. As Harvey observes,

> 'Revel in it', says Tyrell, 'a flame that burns twice as intensely burns half as long.' The replicants exist, in short, in that schizophrenic rush of time that Jameson, Deleuze and Guttari and others see as so central to postmodern living. They also move across a breadth of space with a fluidity hat gains them an immense fund of experience. Their persona matches in many respects the time and space of instantaneous global communication. (ibid.)

Further, the world that director Ridley Scott creates speaks of a microcosm of the postmodern dystopia–it is a Los Angeles that is a "decrepit landscape of deindustrialization and post-

industrial decay. Empty warehouses and abandoned industrial plant drip with leaking rain… Punks and scavengers roam among the garbage, stealing whatever they can" (310). The sense of the city at street-level is a postmodern pastiche dominated by Asian ethnicities and peppered with a hybrid of Japanese, German, Spanish and English to form a 'city-speak' language. The enormous Tyrell Corporation building, which looms massively over the city and dominates the skyline, is a chaotic mix of clashing architectural styles as it displays features of Egyptian pyramids, Greek and Roman columns, Victorian, Oriental and Mayan elements and even hints of the contemporary shopping mall. The anarchy of competing significations and messages suggests fragmentation and uncertainty in the streets–the overall aesthetic of the film is a result "of recycling, fusion of levels, discontinuous signifiers, explosion of boundaries and erosion" (311). There is however, the sense of an overwhelming, overarching organizing power which is hidden in plain sight–the Tyrell Corporation, the authorities who coerce Deckard into pursuing replicants without leaving him a choice and the swift action of law and order when necessary to establish control over the street.

Defining the Individual: The Philosophy of Anthony Burgess' Fiction
The Tyrell Corporation is a company that specializes in genetic engineering ("…more human than human, that's our business")–this is quite significant since it was perhaps only advancements in the fields of biology which could rival the proliferation of information technology in terms of influence on the Twentieth century. While the discovery of DNA by Watson and Crick in 1953 was much discussed, it was the success of in vitro fertilization which led to the birth of the first test tube baby in 1978–this in turn opened up limitless possibilities for research on embryos which could enable genetic screening of hereditary diseases or shed greater light on the complications during human reproduction. However, this was also met with outrage as the thought of human embryos forming subjects for experimentation was regarded as abhorrent by certain sections of society. It was feared that there would be an indulgence into radical interventions of human genetic make-up, an idea that conjured visions of mass-produced humans akin to Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* (Heise 143). It was even feared that the availability of assisted reproduction to unmarried couples would threaten stable family structures. Thus, scientific advances were now being regarded as putting the value of human life in question and paving the way for subversion of social structures – potential gains in human health and knowledge had to be weighed against fundamental questions of the value of human life and the extent to which humans have the right to intervene in natural processes (ibid).

With the cloning of Dolly, the Sheep in 1996 and the mapping of the human genome, the possibility of human cloning also appeared within reach. Heise notes that this is significant in the fact that "the creation of human life through technology had a long history in the cultural imagination"–science-fiction writers were not alone in such musings as this possibility had been pursued from the conversion of Pygmalion's statue into a woman in Ovid's *Metamorphoses* in the year 8 AD all the way to Victor Frankenstein's artificial creation in Mary Shelley's famous 19th century novel. Now that science seemed to be inching closer towards rendering fantasy into reality, questions regarding the ethics of such processes began

to be fiercely debated. Amongst the hope for effective cures for fatal diseases there was the dystopian scenario of "designer humans" that would degrade human life to yet another commodity to be produced at will (144). The fascination of being liberated from the limits of human physiology was accompanied by deep-seated fears about what it meant to be human, to be an individual.

Anthony Burgess, whose seminal novel *A Clockwork Orange* has persevered as a brilliant example of literary dystopia, had a body of work which deeply reflected on this dichotomy in the nature of humanity–he "is skeptical of the idealistic program as a means of eliminating the conflict of opposites man senses in life. Yet, he is also attracted to the question of why man persists in seeking permanent solutions for his own and society's problems" (Moran 3). Burgess' fiction exposes humanity's feeble attempts at locating their utopias. His dissatisfaction with the utopian ideals of man and society stems from his own vision of man as "complex, contradictory, irreparably bloody-minded–not … as political theory says he ought to be" (4). His works stress the basic concept of free will as a capacity to do good or to do evil– a concept he drew from the fifth-century theologian-philosopher Augustine. Augustine believed the full significance of human choice dwells in the dignity man retains with the capacity of choice even if he misuses it–the place of evil in the order of life is to emphasize the importance of freedom. Burgess sponsors this line of thought in his article "Clockwork Marmalade", essentially a tract on the importance of free choice. Both Augustine and Burgess would rather punish man's misuse of his freedom that deprive him of that faculty for in doing so it would reduce his essence to that of a lower, non-rational level of existence (9). The latter even fears evil being rationalized out of existence because the consequence of such would deprive man of his individuality.

Alex, the violent protagonist of *A Clockwork Orange*, exists due to his author's conviction of the reality of evil and the dirt of life. The character undertakes an evil which is "his own thing, embarked in full awareness. Alex is evil, not merely misguided" (Burgess 1972, 198). He still however recognises the criminal's potential for goodness–"That by the time his (Alex's) conditioning starts, he has not yet made the better choice does not mean he will never do it" (ibid). As Moran points out, a punishment that would rather chasten both sin and sinner but leaves the faculty of free choice intact reflects both justice and mercy (Moran 11). This doctrine is placed in stark contrast to what happens to Alex in the novel–betrayed by members of his own gang, he is punished by the state for his numerous crimes of violence, murder, rape by undergoing behavioral conditioning which seeks to eliminate the aggressive impulse. He is given medication and forced to watch filmed violence and perversion that by association he sickens at (164). The extent of his reconditioning is such that even the music of Beethoven– which one might consider an indication of something good within the nature of this wanton criminal–becomes repulsive to the point of physical torture upon hearing it.

Burgess clearly wishes to impress upon his readers the complexity of individual choice against a central, mechanical authority by making his protagonist an individual who chooses to kill, maim and rob his fellow man–is it ultimately better to have a world of evil chosen as an act of

will than a world conditioned to be harmless and stable? (Moran 159). The ruling power in Alex's dystopian world clearly have their priority–they wish for a 'Clockwork' society full of citizens "…ready to turn the other cheek, ready to be crucified rather than crucify, sick to the very heart at the thought of even killing a fly" (Burgess 131). Having come to terms with the inhumanity of a life stripped of all freedom of choice, Alex resolves towards the end of the novel to take on maturity as the escape route for his pathetic predicament. He attempts to reintegrate with social norms, seek a wife and start a family–he also recognises that he may be as helpless to prevent mistakes in the future as his parents and teachers were. The cycle of recovery and continuity of life serves as the silver lining here to the pessimism of defeat at the hands of dystopian schemes. As Moran neatly summarizes:

> Like Huxley's Savage in *Brave New World*, Alex comes to realize that what is a utopia to others – a world controlled and ordered by science–is a dystopia to him. A world which can leave out Shakespeare or music, which expels the exceptional in favour of scientific control, is not worth living in (Moran 168).

The Illusion of Choice: *Mr. Robot* and the Grand Metanarrative
The questions of individual choice and freedom were quite keenly regarded by the likes of Huxley and Burgess, almost in anticipation of the technological boom which was to become a driving force of the Twentieth century. As the influence of scientific advancement began to take over even the minutiae of our lives, the idea of trust becomes very relevant as we slowly become part of the system. The Lyotardian 'incredulity towards metanarratives' became a significant philosophy around which one could organize one's life as layer upon layer in the fabric of the everyday aroused suspicion as to whether individual action was still a valid concept or whether it was in fact merely a step in the grand orchestrations of some overarching authority.

This fear of losing individuality, which Burgess had so brilliantly problematized in his fiction, has been taken up as a significant motif in popular culture. Take for instance the following lines from the opening episode of the television series *Mr. Robot*:

> What I'm about to tell you is top secret. A conspiracy bigger than all of us. There's a powerful group of people out there that are secretly running the world. I'm talking about the guys no one knows about, the ones that are invisible. The top 1 percent of the top 1 percent, the guys that play God without permission. And now I think they're following me. (Esmail: "esp1.0_hellofriend.mov").

The lines above are spoken by the protagonist Elliot Alderson, a brilliant hacker and cybersecurity engineer who suffers from social anxiety disorder and clinical depression. Elliot is recruited by the insurrectionary anarchist known as 'Mr. Robot' to join a group of hacker-activists known as 'fsociety'. The group aims to destroy all debt records by encrypting the financial data of the largest conglomerate in the world, E Corp. Once more, some of the parallels to dystopias past are quite uncanny–a story told from the perspective of an individual

who does not conform to societal norms, the vice-grip of a single organizing commercial enterprise which exerts unchecked power, the narrative which follows a group of individuals who seek redressal by holding those responsible for creating their dystopia. What makes a series like *Mr. Robot* all the more impactful apart from its contemporary nature is the fact that unlike the far-removed dystopias of Burgess and Scott which are quite distinguishable from the world as we know it, the television series strives to retain every ounce of realism that it can so that it provides a mirror image to our current times with only a few altered events. The writers for the series have shown their savvy in adapting to real world events–a memorable scene suggests the possible influence of corporate overlords in the election of Donald Trump to the Presidency of the United States–which readily conveys to viewers that we are perhaps only a few moves away from this fiction transcending into reality.

The overwhelming nature of the anxiety often takes the shape of Elliot's furious venting: "How do we know if we're in control? That we're not just making the best of what comes at us, and that's it?... It's all part of the same blur, right? Just out of focus enough. It's the illusion of choice. Half of us can't even pick our own cable, gas, electric. The water we drink, our health insurance. Even if we did, would it matter?... our choices are prepaid for us, long time ago" (Esmail "esp1.1_ones-and-zer0es.mpeg"). Ideas such as these bring us uncomfortably face to face with concepts such as the surveillance state and the lack of true individual will–we appear to inhabit a technological dystopia where the images of Orwell's Big Brother have been replaced by those of shadows; we are not aware of who is surveying us nor the true extent of their influence.

Another common thread which binds together the various dystopias discussed in this paper is the sense of dichotomy which sheds light on the human condition–there is after all no utopia without a few seeds of dystopia present. Just as science had to contend with balancing progress with ethics, so too shall humanity have to contend with the desire to find lasting solutions to their problems while possessing a nature which inherently consists of constantly overcoming contradictory passions. It is a line of thought which has been passed on through the realms of science-fiction and has even seen some concepts coming to pass in our reality; indeed, many of these ideas have come to shape the very world we live in. It is thus at times a question of observing which impulse of ours we allow to be our guiding power. Such are the two sides of the coin, between delight and despair:

> Every day we change the world. But to change the world in a way that means anything, that takes more time than most people have. It never happens all at once. It's slow. It's methodical. It's exhausting. We don't all have the stomach for it. (Esmail "esp1.4_3xpl0its.wmv").

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Utopia of the American Dream: Revisiting Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby*

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Abstract: A utopia is an imaginary world that has perfect qualities for its people. It is a dream paradise or heaven, a perfect world or society without any problem. It is an ideal place which one wishes or dreams of; a wish-fulfillment that is articulated in literature. The American Dream is the national ethos of the United States which includes the ideals of democracy, rights, liberty, opportunity and equality for all Americans. It implies equal opportunity for all for prosperity and success, and an upward social mobility for the family and children which can be achieved through hard labor in a society with few barriers. It is an idea that defines the experiences of the people of America since its existence. The concept of the American Dream is based on the idea that given equal opportunities anyone can achieve success through hard work. Equal opportunities and hard labor are key words in American Dream. Anyone can achieve anything by means of hard labor if he gets equal opportunities to realize his dream. The idea of utopia has been a part of the American Dream since its very conception. Scott Fitzgerald is a modern American novelist. This paper highlights the search for utopia and the failure of the American Dream in Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby*. It underscores how the American Dream of success through hard work is a utopian idea in the modern American society which is corrupt and morally degenerated to its very core.

Keywords: Utopia, American Dream, Success, Morality, Failure

A utopia is an imagined community or society that possesses almost perfect qualities for its citizens. It is a dream paradise or heaven, a perfect world or society without any problem. It is an ideal place which one wishes or dreams of; a wish-fulfillment that is articulated in literature. The American Dream is the national ethos of the United States which includes the ideals of democracy, rights, liberty, opportunity and equality for all Americans. It implies equal opportunity for all for prosperity and success, and an upward social mobility for the family and children which can be achieved through hard labor in a society with few barriers. It is an idea that defines the experiences of the people of America since its existence. The term was coined by historian James Truslow Adams in 1931 in his book *Epic of America*. He defined American Dream as 'a better and richer and fuller life' for every American, with opportunity for each according to ability or achievement' irrespective of 'social class or circumstances of birth.

The American Dream can be traced to the Declaration of Independence, which proclaims that "all men are created equal with the right to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness." The Preamble of the U.S Constitution declares similar freedom to "to secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity."

The idea of the American Dream existed long before James Truslow coined the term. Historically it originated in the American quest for new lands and the conquest of the Frontier. The Governor of Virginia expressed it well in 1774, the Americans "for ever imagine the Lands further off are still better than those upon which they are already settled . . . if they attained Paradise, they would move on if they heard of a better place farther west." When the Europeans first came to settle in America after it was discovered by Columbus in 1492, they found America a New World, a virgin land, a land with infinite possibilities. It was a land of great promise for them where they could attain their dream of success by means of hard labor. American dream puts emphasis on the concept of the self-made man, that is, a person can attain his dream goal of success by means of hard labor. He does not depend on others of success. "The dream became the pursuit of self-actualization, the pursuit of wealth and social standing that elevated one's lot and improved the quality of life" (Introduction 7). However, the dream of happiness or success was synonymous with acquiring lots of material wealth which opens the gate to power, position and status in society. It was a dream that one could acquire lots of wealth by means of hard labor and thus could achieve upward social mobility to be a member of the upper class.

The concept of the 'American Dream' has repeatedly found its place in popular discourse as well as in American literature. A few instances are: *Autobiography* of Benjamin Franklin, Mark Twain's *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (1884), Willa Cather's *My Antonia*, F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* (1925), Theodore Dreiser's *An American Tragedy*, Toni Morrison's *Song of Solomon* (1977) and Arthur Miller's *Death of a Salesman*. Writers like Hunter S. Thompson, Edward Albee, John Steinbeck, Langston Hughes, and Giannina Braschi used the theme of the American Dream as well in their writings. Besides, the American Dream is often used as a theme by Asian American fiction writers as well.

Francis Scott Key Fitzgerald (1896-1940) was an American novelist, whose writings illustrate the flamboyance and excess of the Jazz Age, that is, 1920s. Though he was a popular writer and achieved fame and fortune in his life, his novels did not receive much critical acclaim until after his death. Like Ernest Hemingway, he was the most notable member of the 'Lost Generation' of the 1920s. He is renowned for his four famous novels: *This Side of Paradise*, *The Beautiful and Damned*, *The Great Gatsby*, and *Tender is the Night*. His unfinished novel *The Last Tycoon* was published posthumously. He also published four volumes of short stories and contributed around 164 short stories in magazines during his lifetime.

The Great Gatsby is a classic of American literature. It is a critique of the American Dream and the modern American society. This paper highlights how Fitzgerald depicts the all-pervading and corrosive moral degeneration in American society which has resulted in the failure of the American Dream in the modern America. Basically, the plot revolves around the dream of the protagonist Jay Gatsby, though other characters like Tom Buchanan, Jordan baker and Myrtle Wilson have their dreams in their own ways. Tom Buchanan, a former national football player, dreams of "the dramatic turbulence of some irrecoverable football game" (29). Myrtle Wilson, the wife of the garage owner on the Valley of Ashes, George Wilson, dreams

of upward social mobility and a luxurious life through her illicit relationship with wealthy Tom Buchanan. Unlike the American dream which presupposes hard labor on the part of the dreamer to achieve his goal, the dreams of Tom Buchanan and Myrtle Wilson are not backed by hard labor in true sense of the term. On the contrary, Jay Gatsby has two dreams of his life—to be wealthy and to marry Daisy whom he loves intensely. First, his original name is James Gatz. He hails from a poor peasant family in North Dakota. A chance meeting with a millionaire, Dan Cody, with whom he works, makes him dedicate himself to achieve wealth. His second but primary dream is to marry Daisy. It is his romantic dream. When getting training to be an officer in Luisville, he meets and falls in love with the most beautiful Daisy who hails from a rich aristocratic family. Daisy is courted by several officers; but she falls in love with Gatsby and promises to wait for him. But she marries a wealthy and powerful young man named Tom Buchanan who belongs to the same upper class wealthy aristocratic family. When Jay Gatsby returns from War, he devotes his life to get back Daisy. He acquires wealth by corrupt means in order to be very rich so that he can go back to his past and marry Daisy. Actually, he becomes fabulously rich by hard labor, though by corrupt means. He is a self-made man. Unlike the traditionally rich Tom and Daisy, he does not inherit any wealth and property. He acquires it. His dream centers round Daisy. He is a romantic lover. In the very first chapter, Nick Carraway, the omniscient narrator describes how he finds Jay Gatsby, his neighbor:

> I decided to call him. Miss Baker had mentioned him at dinner, and that would do for an introduction. But I did not call him for he gave a sudden intimation that he was content to be alone—he stretched out his arms toward the dark water in a curious way, and far as I was from him, I could have sworn he was trembling. Involuntarily I glanced seaward—and distinguished nothing except a single green light, minute and far away, that might have been the end of the dock. When I looked once more for Gatsby he had vanished, and I was alone again in the unquiet darkness. (40)

This green light is a significant recurring symbol in the novel. It signifies Gatsby's romantic dream for Daisy. His stretched-out arms suggest his dream to embrace Daisy. After he meets Daisy in the house of Nick, he no longer sees the green light. Jay has no friends so to say. He is all alone in his pursuit of his dream.

He owns and lives in a huge Gothic mansion in West Egg of Long Island, just the opposite of East Egg where Daisy and Tom live. He throws lavish parties every Saturday night with the hope that someday Daisy would come to his party and their relationship would revive, but no one knows anything about him. Even the guests do not know who their host is. He appears to be a mysterious man whose reputation is built by rumours in his great parties. They speculate about his identity. Eventually Nick receives an invitation from Jay Gatsby to his lavish party. In the party, he meets Jay Gatsby and Jordan Baker. Jay Gatsby requests Nick through Jordan Baker to arrange a meeting between him and Daisy in his house. Jay Gatsby is so much obsessed with his dream of getting back Daisy in his life a that he wants to obliterate the years of their separation and to redeem the past years of his passionate love with Daisy and to marry her. The following conversation between Nick and Jay Gatsby makes it clear:

He wanted nothing less of Daisy than that she should go to Tom and say: "I never loved you." After she had obliterated three years with that sentence, they could decide upon the more practical measures to be taken. One of them was that, after she was free, they were to go back to Louisville and be married from her house—just as if it were five years ago.

. . . . "You can't repeat the past."

"Can't repeat the past? "He cried incredulously. Why of course you can!"

He looked around him wildly, as if the past were lurking here in the shadow of his house, just out of reach of his hand. (105-106)

Nick arranges a meeting between Jay and Daisy. After some time, Jay invites Nick and Daisy to his house. He shows them all his rooms and things. Fitzgerald describes the reaction of Jay through Nick:

He hadn't once ceased looking at Daisy and I think he revalued everything in his house according to the measure of response it drew from her well-loved eyes. Sometimes, too, he stared around at his possessions in a dazed way as though in her actual and astounding presence none of it was any longer real. Once he nearly toppled down a flight of stairs. (92)

While Jay Gatsby loves Daisy with his mind and soul, Daisy's love for Jay is not so deep. She is drawn towards the artificial outward glamour of life. When Jay shows his expensive suits, dressing-gowns, ties, shirts, 'piled like bricks in stacks a dozen high,' Daisy screams in great joy. Fitzgerald describes her joy in these words:

Suddenly with a strained sound, Daisy bent her head into the shirts and began to cry stormily.

"They're such beautiful shirts," she sobbed, her voice muffled in the thick folds. "It makes me sad because I've never seen such—such beautiful shirts before." (92)

Jay Gatsby's romantic love and his dedication for Daisy do not match the object of his dream. Daisy loves outward glamour of life. She lacks the depth of true and sincere love for Jay. Jay feels this lack of depth in the love of Daisy for him and Fitzgerald expresses this idea in these sentences:

His heart beat faster and faster as Daisy's white face came up to his own. He knew that when he kissed this girl, and forever wed his unutterable visions to her perishable breath, his mind would never romp again like the mind of God. (106)

After Tom comes to know about the relationship between Daisy and Jay, he becomes furious. He knows that Daisy would not leave him; but he wants to prove his superiority to Jay. So, one day he arrogantly proposes all of them to drive to New York. While returning he insists that

Daisy and Jay drive together by Jay's yellow car. Daisy drives the car and runs over Myrtle who rushes forward thinking that it is Tom who is driving the car because while going to New York Tom was driving the same car. Daisy and Jay do not stop and rush forward. Then Nick and Tom return along the same road and find that Myrtle is dead. Tom drops the hint to angry George Wilson that the yellow car belongs to Jay. George vows to take revenge thinking that Jay is Myrtle's secret lover. When Nick returns home he finds Jay waiting behind a bush keeping watch over Daisy and Tom. Jay thinks that Tom may create problem for Daisy. Nick and Jay find Daisy and Tom sitting opposite each other at the kitchen table with a plate of cold fried chicken between them and two bottles of ale. Fitzgerald describes the intimacy between Daisy and Tom as if nothing has happened:

> They weren't happy, and neither of them had touched the chicken and the ale—and yet they weren't unhappy either. There was unmistakable air of natural intimacy about the picture and anybody would have said that they were conspiring together. (133)

Jay Gatsby refuses to budge from his watch over Daisy and Nick returns home. In the words of Nick:

> "I want to wait here till Daisy goes to bed. Good night, old sport." He put his hands in his coat pockets and turned back eagerly to his scrutiny of the house, as though my presence marred the sacredness of the vigil. So, I walked away and left him standing there in the moonlight—watching over nothing. (134)

Next day Gatsby is found murdered in his swimming pool. The body of George Wilson is also found in the nearby garden. Wilson first kills Gatsby and then commits suicide. Nick takes upon himself the responsibility of arranging the funeral of Jay Gatsby. Nick instinctively calls Daisy only to find out that she and Tom have left for some unknown destination. Nick contacts many of Jay's business partners, friends and guests to attend the funeral. Nobody except Jay's old father, Henry Gatz, the Owl-eyed man, the West Egg post man and a few servants attend his funeral. Jay Gatsby lives and dies alone. He becomes great for his idealistic and romantic love for Daisy.

In this novel Scott Fitzgerald depicts the failure of the American Dream in the failure of Jay Gatsby to achieve his dream, that is, Daisy. Daisy is not worthy of Gatsby's dream and love. She is fickle-minded and artificial in her love for Jay. She is a hypocrite like her husband Tom. She never reveals the truth that she was driving the car when the accident occurred. She is careless and callous in her attitude. She does not attend Jay's funeral who sacrifices his life for the sake of her love. No doubt Jay acquires his wealth by unfair means. But he is great for his single-minded devotion to achieve his dream of Daisy.

Besides, Fitzgerald exposes the degeneration of moral values in all spheres of life in modern American society. It has crept into the family, the basic unit of society. There is illicit and immoral relationship and hypocrisy between husband and wife. For instance, Daisy and Tom

have no true love between them. Tom has extra-marital relationship with the wife of a low-class garage owner, Myrtle Wilson. And Daisy knows that Tom has illicit relation with someone, though she has no idea about that woman. It reveals artificial relationship between Tom and Daisy which lacks honesty, sincerity and faithfulness on which true relationship between a husband and a wife should be based. On the contrary, their relationship is based on wealth and glamour of the traditionally rich aristocratic families without any moral values. What seems to be a successful happy family has no solid base of moral values. In this manner Scott Fitzgerald shows in this novel how in course of time the American dream of success has become divorced from moral values and hence it fails.

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Bana Yeh Mulk Mashaan Kitna: A Study of the Post Partition Dystopian City

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Abstract: This paper seeks to examine the modern dystopian cityscape as represented in South Asian art, with a specific focus on the post-Partition era. The volatile changes and divides resulting from the momentous year of 1947 have found a creative space in the primary site of isolation: the city. Urbanity and industrialisation have become not just historical developments but a part of modern-day complexities in South Asia. Apocalyptic visions of the Indian subcontinent are represented in different ways by F.N. Souza, Gopal Ghose and Arpita Singh in their respective interpretations of major cities. The imagination of Pakistani artists such as Zubeida Agha, Shakir Ali and several members of the Karachi School of Art over the last few decades has also been deeply captured by the fragmented, struggling metropolis, particularly through intermingled troubled memories of Lahore, Karachi, Aligarh and Lucknow. Visual images of conflicted history fused with those of a world stepping into a technological age dominate the urban landscapes of these artists. The cityscape has thus become a recurrent subject in modern Indian and Pakistani painting. The paper will look into the ways in which the dystopian cityscape is portrayed, structurally and thematically, in such visual media to bring out deeper issues of social divide and modern-day disillusionment.

Keywords: Dystopia; Cityscapes; Partition Art; Modern Indian Painting; Pakistani Art; Cubism

The purpose of this paper is to examine pre and post Partition art in the light of the depiction of the modern South Asian utopian and dystopian cityscape. The tremendous changes and divides arising from the momentous year of 1947 are reflected in art of the period. The urban space has thus become a subject in artistic representations. The study focuses on an examination of modern Indian and Pakistani painting and the evolution of new modes of expression. A way of representing crisis and post-war trauma in South Asian painting has been through the primary site of isolation, the city; since urbanity and industrialisation have become not just historical developments but a part of modern-day complexities. Bombay, Delhi and Calcutta were major sites of global encounter in India, represented in different ways by Gopal Ghose's riot-torn landscapes and F.N. Souza's abstractionism. The 1940s were a tumultuous period for the Indian subcontinent. There was a tremendous mental shift from British colonial rule to an independent nation which despite its liberation, was now deeply divided. This disjunct, fragmented mood is reflected in the artwork of Indian artists in this decade and beyond. The key centers of conflict, Calcutta, Bombay and Delhi are depicted as torn-apart cityscapes, reeling under the violence of riots and communal disunion.

Meanwhile, the newly born state of Pakistan suffered through violence and its nascent stages of development. While governments and regimes changed rapidly, artists strove to express their new world in a language that would be adequate enough to express their pathos and isolation as well as intrigue and excitement. Zubeida Agha, Sadequain and Shakir Ali evolved new modes of expression to depict the cityscape around them. Parallel languages thus developed in the art of both countries, a result of the new historical era that was born in 1947.

Cityscapes: The City as Visually Archived in Indian Painting
The year of Partition had its severest impact on urban spaces and the common people of both countries. The pain of this fragmentation is expressed through the paintings of various Indian artists. Gopal Ghose, a member of the Calcutta group of artists, painted during the period of riots that were tearing the country apart. One of his paintings (Fig. 1) shows a yellow-green field in which black vultures descend from the sky to pounce on the skeletons below.
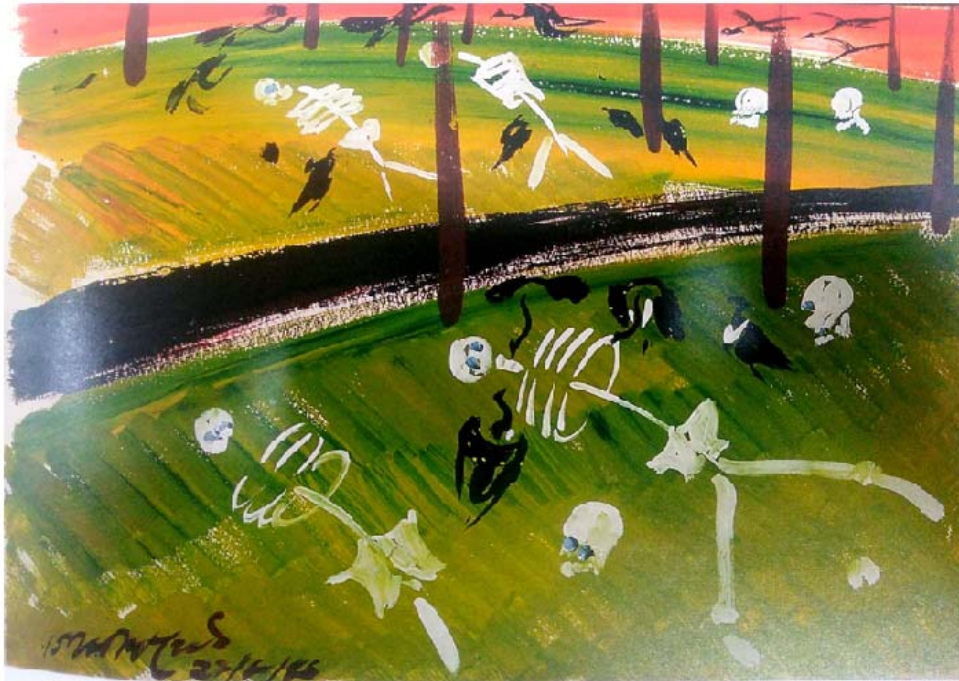

Fig. 1. Gopal Ghose. Untitled. 1946.
Ghose picks up the theme of the city destroyed by riots in much of his work. Sanjay Malik remarks on the process of his disillusionment. "The painter who celebrated the calm and majestic expanse of rural landscapes, turned to his tormented city, the flourish of brush-strokes responding to the violent flames and burning vehicles (Malik 157). Light brush strokes have been deliberately used to depict the relentless flight of the birds and the vulnerable, fragile skeletons. Ghose explores a similar theme in another painting.

Fig. 2. Gopal Ghose. *Riot (Burning Vehicle)*. **1946.**

Riot (Burning Vehicle) (Fig. 2) contains many of the compository elements of a cityscape but thrown in disarray. Vehicle, streets and throngs of people are enfolded in angry, violent colours that impinge on the vision. The artist seems to juxtapose normalcy with sudden violence, as the car bursts into flames on a routine day on a Calcutta street. The dystopian cityscapes focus on the chaos in 1946-1947, infusing the landscapes with the trauma of communal divides.

Artists juxtapose the landscape of the destroyed city with the equally destroyed landscape of the mind through deep symbolism. Perhaps no other painting exemplifies this as well as *Leaping Bridges* (Fig. 3) by Arpita Singh. She experiments with space and perspective on the canvas to create complex landscapes that deploy a quirky modernist touch to make a point. The change of power in 1947 required a redrawing of maps, an exercise that allegorically rearranged cityscapes and mindscapes. The seemingly utopic ideal of the newly born country in fact became a dystopia as citizens lived through suffering, fragmentation and violence. Singh's painting captures this hopelessness as she depicts a deer leaping through a web of unnatural lines, dividing a broken nation haphazardly. Arpita Singh remarks on her painting "This is how Partition divided the country-the Line of Control even cut through people's kitchens. The golden deer from the Ramayana leaps across the border. From a distance, the picture appears as though it is a patchwork of fabric with cross-stitch; or a barbed wire; or even an ECG

reading- depending on your perspective" (Jayaraman, *Drawing from Life*). The city map is full of broken patches and jagged lines. Singh also uses text to highlight significant words across this barren landscape, words that have taken on painful meaning. "Border," "security" and "no man's land," "my land" and "your land" pepper the canvas, self-explanatory in their usage. The Ramayan motif serves to make a subtle comparison between a unified past of shared mythology and values as opposed to this modern-day fractured cityscape. The open sky is barely visible as the looming city with black colours envelops it darkly.

Fig. 3. Arpita Singh. *Leaping Bridges*. 2015.

While paintings representing the violence and pathos of Partition captured the imagination of many Indian artists, the influence of modernist art movements seeped in gradually as well. This brought about a more symbolic portrayal of the fragmented, dystopic city- in the very form and structure of the painting itself rather than an overt display of realistic violence. The modern

movement, Cubism, influenced many artists, both from India and Pakistan. The artwork of this movement uses geometrical precision to delineate the fragmented nature of the subject. This is to subtly highlight the fact that with changing times and historical eras, reality is no longer absolute; it is as broken and fragmented as is the milieu of the artist. Cubism is a rather ingenious crossover between disciplines. Art, mathematics and science blend together in a Cubist painting, implying that many theoretical and application-based subjects question the notion of reality. This is to further indicate that analysing subjectivity is not just a motif or purpose of the humanities. Even so-called logical, practical and applicable fields such as science and geometry can be used to question the nature of fixed reality.

Geometrical shapes and lines provide a strong component in artwork. In many of them, actual instruments such as compasses and rulers were used. The creators were careful about measurements and used them to provide scientifically fascinating optical illusion. In other words, the Cubists rejected linearity and single-point perspective. Their inclination was keenly towards abstraction in art and the aim was to show that there was no natural way of depicting an object; rather, there were many ways and it was completely in consonance with the free will of the creator.

There has been much study on the relationship between Cubism and science. More specifically, there has been a wide range of research comparing this movement with Einstein's Theory of Relativity. Both gained prominence at about the same period of time and albeit belonging to divergent fields, have some overlapping arguments. The comparison between painting and contemporary physics is not as outlandish as it may appear. Both, for instance, are significantly concerned with different ways of looking at space. According to Paul M. Laporte:

> The profound change in modern physics, and with it of philosophy, came when it was recognised that space and time could no longer be conceived as absolutes, but must be considered as being in an integral and functional relationship with one another. The equally profound change in painting, which occurred at exactly the same time, can best be explained in terms of the very same functional relationship of space and time. (244)

In other words, both Cubism and the Theory of Relativity contest the notion of an absolute, or a transcendent. "The absolute of one is necessarily the relative of the other" (Gleizes and Metzinger qtd in Laporte 243). It is therefore interesting, also surprising, to see a field as logical and cause-effect based as science question the nature of reality. This theorisation can be further enhanced by a short discussion on Einstein's Theory of Relativity. In his path breaking book, the scientist points out that geometry has always been associated with terms such as "plane," "line" and so on. He immediately questions the idea of definite, the propositions that all scholars are trained to believe as true. We might work according to the assumption that a certain proposition, in geometrical, mathematical, or scientific terms, has been proven to be true. However, it can be stated equally effectively that these propositions have been derived from certain axioms. Thus, the truth of the former then needs to be based on the truth of the latter. The axiomatic principles, in their turn, are also derived from a particular vantage point and not

a universal one. Einstein simplifies this theory by giving a few examples. If a straight line, he says, stretches from one point in space to another, these two points are also seen from a particular angle. Moreover, locations, lines and geometrical conclusions are drawn keeping in mind a "rigid body" or a "well-defined point," from which the coordinates are calculated (Einstein 16-18). In actuality, however, objects in space, time and location in the science field are drawn keeping in mind a frame of reference, a rigid body.

> In the first place, we entirely shun the vague word 'space', of which, we must honestly acknowledge, we cannot form the slightest conception…it is clearly seen, then, that there is no such thing as an independently existing trajectory, but only a trajectory relative to a particular body of reference, [or] a 'system of coordinates.' (Einstein 27)

A painting that applies the above theoretical principles is *Portrait and Township* (Fig. 4) by F.N. Souza, a member of the Progressive Artist's Group. It was painted in 1957 and shows a dismembered city and the horror of ever-changing political regimes and the unrest and fragmentation in urban life that follows consequently. According to Karode and Sawant, "The draconian face of state power and the mass mobilisation of religious fundamentalism both reared their monstrous heads during this turbulent period" (192).

Fig. 4. F.N. Souza. Portrait and Township. 1957.

The Dystopic City in Pakistani Art

The imagination of Pakistani artists over the last few decades has been deeply captured by the two invigorating cities of Lahore and Karachi. These were cultural hubs in the second half of the 20th century and beyond, places where there was rapid globalisation and urbanisation. "A new set of visual images was invading dreams, fueling aspirations, and creating desires…trucks, tractors, rickshaws, food stalls, cinema posters, and calendars, employing a multitude of motifs, decorate and drown the urban environment" (Salima Hashmi, 27). There was a constant influx of migrants to the cities, and the rise of Karachi as a buzzing metropolis, especially through Ayub Khan's regime and "decade of development" (1958-68). The

cityscape thus became a recurrent subject in modern paintings. The existentialist crisis and disillusionment with humanity after Partition was profound. The post-Partition artists Zubeida Agha and Shakir Ali, in Fig. 5 and Fig. 6 respectively, provide different interpretations of the modern Pakistani cityscape. They both employ fragmentation to skillful effect. Ali's painting evokes a sense of anguish and gloom in a pile-up of broken pieces, within what appears to be a series of buildings. The dull colouring and jagged edges are expressive of a fractured post-war world. This recalls F.N. Souza's sketch of Fig. 4, which encompasses a similar theme.
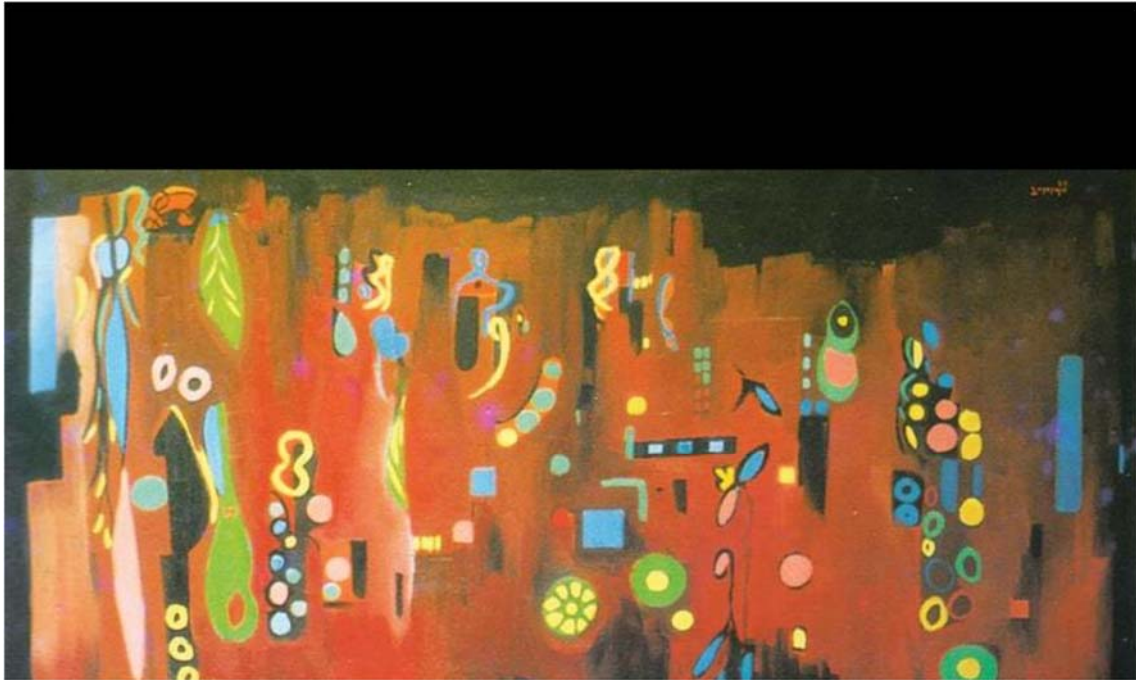

Fig. 5. Shakir Ali. Untitled.

Fig. 6. Evening. Zubeida Agha

Evening (Fig. 6) is similar to this one in its depiction of Pakistan's urban cityscape and culture. Agha's fragments are brightly coloured and full of life and energy. However, the very brokenness of the subject subtly indicates the pain within. There are natural images, such as flowers and leaves, but tossed carelessly in broken pieces on the canvas, suggesting their displacement and the loss of a simpler time. Ali's painting captures the commercial, industrialised nature of the modern city, a definite break from the past, as well as the self-same city in a state of fragmentation and divides. While both artists present an individualised form of art, this in no way takes away from the way in which they represent their milieu. Other artists have paralleled this trend. In Lahore, and later Karachi, Ijaz-ul Hassan during the 70's used specific images to represent the city, particularly through pop art motifs such as billboards and cinema hoardings. His art later evolved into a form of protest against the stultifying landscape of the Zia Ul Haq regime, a unique response to crisis and suppression that used subtle symbols. One of these was the window, which formed a series of paintings showing the bars of a window looking out on an outside world, caged literally and metaphorically (Figs. 7 and 8).
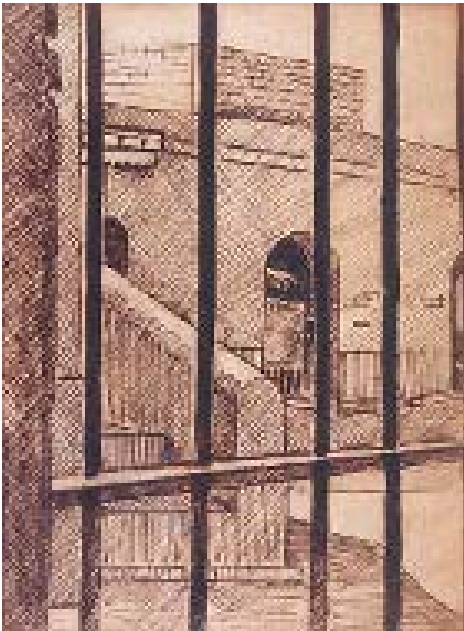
Fig. 7. Ijaz-Ul-Hassan. View from a Window Series. 1980.

Fig. 8. Ijaz Ul Hassan. View from a Window Series 2. 1980.

Fig. 9. Zubeida Agha. *Urban Landscape*. **1982.**

Urban Landscape (1982) (Fig. 9) has elements of the natural with the artificial as the artist depicts flowers which are yet caged within a vase. The buildings provide a backdrop to the image of enclosure in the painting.

Representations of the city have the thread of loneliness and estrangement as a weaving motif, also seen in the artists' public personas. Artists like Ali and Agha consistently refused to speak about either their art or their personal life on public fora. On the one hand, the silence and evasion can mean a disavowal of political "reality." On the other, however, the fact of escape may indicate the pain of this reality and consequently, the adoption of new techniques to both escape from and in a sense, deal with it. Dadi discusses Ali's views in the following lines:

> He claimed that the adoption of modernism by Pakistani artists was not a repudiation of the past but was in a deeper sense in conformity with it. In another essay, published in 1963, he articulated in a more detailed fashion the existential cosmopolitanism of modern artistic practice, claiming that "today, relationships in life have become more complex, and the mutual link between the artist and society that was tied to one group, one nation or religion is no longer there. Under today's industrial commotion, the artist has become lonely to the degree that he has become a stranger [*ajnabi*] to his very self [*zat*]." (Dadi 128)

This parallel conflict of a divided self and a divided country deeply connects the art of Pakistan. There are conflicts not just with the world and the dizzyingly transforming society around them, but also with the self. Dadi remarks that Pakistani modernisms are constructed around

"evasions and silences" (99). One of their major preoccupations is addressing philosophical questions about the society around them and the position of the individual.

For them, the break from the old order and the entry into the new has left an indelible scar. Their subjects are fragmented, yet there is a relation between the various components, an internal sense of unity. The unity arises from a shared experience of occupying a broken era, yet accompanied by a desire to find a space for their art within all the repressions. In a sense, Pakistani artists are *ajnabi*; they withdraw into themselves and refuse to participate or voice their views. There is a deep sense of isolation in their cities; they reject any formulaic notions and instead focus on personal response to the angst and schisms of 20th century Pakistan. These paintings and the cities they represent become microcosms of the larger position of Pakistan within South Asia. Like its citizens, Pakistan's conflicts arise from changes of rulership, religious divides and violence. The constant divide between a sense of national identity and a personal one appears to have deeply troubled Pakistani artists. The former languages and conventional modes of expression hence become redundant in capturing this state of being. An intricate, intersecting web can thus be traced, where each artist strives to find a new language to address the seemingly inexplicable realities of their modern existence.

Dystopias in art reflect the changing moods of the times and trauma of the Partition era. The symbolic representations of the cityscapes of Bombay, Calcutta, Karachi and other centers of conflict reflect the boundaries that seemed insurmountable to the artists who lived through such troubled historical times. The suppression, claustrophobia and violence of the times found creative space in the artwork of these individualists, who grant a voice to the very human pain that moves beyond all barriers of religion and nationality. While the conflict continues to this day, artists continue to seek meaning in the existential angst of the *mulk* that has become a *mashaan*.

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Godot and the Gate: A Comparative Study of Dystopia in Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* and Basma Abdel Aziz's *The Queue*

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Mirza Sadaf Fatima

Abstract: Dystopian novels have taken different shapes and different significance across the world in different periods. These texts are set in an imagined space where the everyday present reality is turned into grim and cruel absurdness. Waiting for Godot (1955) by Samuel Beckett and The Gate (2015) by Basma Abdel Aziz reveals a similar kind of situation. Waiting for Godot depicts the meaninglessness of post-war Europe while Basma Abdel Aziz exposes the failures of the ideas of the Arab-Spring in the post-Mubarak Period. The proposed research will compare and analyze the two texts to understand the concept of dystopia by tracing the significance of images both the texts display. The paper will be divided into three parts, with the first looking into the imageries of the 'Gate' in the Abdel Aziz and Godot in Beckett and how they represent the peculiarity of an ideal state. The second part will compare and analyse the imageries of 'waiting' and the 'queue' to understand the futility of existence in a heavily surveilled state and the third through the imagery of the 'Disgraceful Events' and the World War II will seek to understand.

The Arab Spring came with a lot of hopes and prospect of changes in the Arab world starting from Morocco to Bahrain. Mass movements across Arab countries unpredictably reached a new height when Tunisian youths for the first time have demonstrated to oust the autocratic president Zine El Abedin. People demanded an end to regime and wanted the government to address issues like economic crisis, low quality of living, better health policies, jobs for youths, better educational facilities etc. Soon the wave spread to other Arab countries notably in Algeria, Libya, Egypt, Sudan, Yemen, Syria, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Oman, Palestine, Iraq and some other Arab countries. Interestingly, in most of the Arab countries, autocracy prevailed for a long time and although they have seen small-scale protests but it was not as large as it was seen in post to December 2010.

The Arab Spring proved to be good for certain countries like Tunisia, Jordon or Oman where the rulers agreed to step down or introduced reforms which did not led to bloodshed at the end. A few countries like Libya, Yemen, Syria and Iraq have faced the most unfortunate result where those countries have entered almost a decade long civil war and mass destruction. In Tunisia the president Zine El Abidin left his office and fled to Saudi Arabia; Hosni Mubarak in Egypt resigned, Yemeni president Abdullah Saleh resigned. Although it brought major changes in Sudan and Iraq later on but only to retract the decisions to resign by respective leaders Omar Bashir and Nuri Al-Maliki. Uniquely, Egypt is a country where the movements and subsequent events to it were most dramatic.

Aspirations of "long revolution" a popular slogan during October 2011 demonstrations in Egypt propagated by a Facebook page led to a mass protest in Tahrir Square. Significantly, after the resignation of Mubarak, the army ceased the power suspended the constitution and dissolved the parliament and lifting of 31-year-old emergency. Democratic elections were held to replace Mubarak as a president; but Mohamad Morsi was elected as the new president. Hosni Mubarak and his former interior minister Habib el-Adly were sentenced to life in prison on the basis of their failure to stop the killings during the first six days of 2011 revolution. His successor, Mohamed Morsi, was sworn in as Egypt's first democratically elected president before judges at the Supreme Constitutional Court. But fresh protests erupted again on 22 November 2012. On 3 July 2013, the military overthrew the replacement government and President Morsi was removed from power (Wiki). This was precisely the backdrop when Basma Abdel Aziz penned the novel *The Queue* or *Al Quun* in Arabic to be translated by Elizabeth Jaquette and published in 2016.

The novel starts with Yehya Saad el Ghab who is hit by a stray bullet while returning from his office. It was the incident of Disgraceful Events when the youth of the country had started protesting against the authority which is controlling the country, the Gate---a gate, just a gate. Interesting to note that Basma Abdel Aziz does not indicate to us which country is it or is it a country at all. But names, streets, characters all seems very familiar---it is Egypt or any other Arab country which has suffered long years of dictatorship under charismatic and popular leaders. When Yehya went to Zephyr Hospital, one of the government-run hospitals in the district, he was told to seek a permission from the Gate and a Certificate of True Citizenship to remove the bullet. Authorization to remove bullets shall not be given until a citizen proved to be loyal to the Gate, representing the country. He, along with Nagy his friend and Amani his lover started the process to secure a permission and a certificate from the Gate and they all stand in a queue leading up to the booth of the Gate.

To their surprise, they learn that the queue is not ending but rather growing. In fact, two micro-buses have been deployed to manage the crowd from the districts to the queue. The queue resembles a man's existence in a country ruled by an extremely autocratic government. People have been standing in the queue for days and nights. People around the queue seem to have developed a habit of standing in the queue; their whole life and existence is translocated with the queue. Gradually, the queue become the central focus. The novel not only reveals severe inhumane state of excessive documentation burdening the life of common man in post-Spring Egypt, but also reveals the crude side of heavy documentation in a modern nation in general. Gradually the novelist takes the opportunity to introduce different characters with significant and symbolic role. The characters exhibit different characteristics which is very normal as a human being, but Abdel Aziz did not forget to indicate a relation of theirs with the Gate. She suggests that in a heavily surveilled nation where humane needs may bring people in distress closer to each other but nobody could not be trusted. Anybody could be a spy employed by the authority, be it willingly or forcefully. Um Mabrouk is such a character. Although she has nothing to do with the politics in the state, but she becomes an inevitable part of the gate's

existence through the queue. Um Mabrouk is the very common women who is not very much educated and lives her live with much difficulty. As a single mother and apart from taking care of her family she not only has to care for her family but also to stand in the Queue to get a permit for her daughter's operation. Eventually she could not obtain it and her elder daughter had died. Even after her death, Um Mabrouk had to obtain a death certificate to show it as a proof in order to provide medical facilities for her second daughter whose health is deteriorating.

As we move on, we see how several people are managing to adjust themselves with the queue. While standing in queue Um Mabrouk soon opened a makeshift shop in the queue and starts selling mint tea attracting a lot of customers. She does not go home, rather the circumstances in the queue have forced to create home in the queue. People actually started living in the queue, they do not have home; there is no mention of their home or whereabouts. The man in the galabeya is one of the interesting characters in the queue. He lingers around the queue all the time preaching people and calling people to the path of God. The man in galabeya was the first person to embrace the High Sheikh's Fatwa regarding boycott of a candy company because they were using candies to produce chocolates with Gods name inscribed in it and it is blasphemous. The Man in galabeya took a microphone and stood alongside the queue, read the statement aloud from the copy of the High Sheikh's Fatwa. Mahfouz and Shalaby two former security guards worked with the Gate are the representatives of the autocrat government where they do not understand anything apart from orders from the top. In fact, Shalaby thought of slapping Ines when she justified the death of Mahfouz because he shot during the Disgraceful Events and it killed protesters.

In this novel, we see a complete re-alignment of religious fundamentalism autocracy and going together hand in hand. Interestingly, the Gate does not go against religion and religion does not oppose the Gate. Supports and understanding coming from both the sides are mutual. Abdel Aziz laid substantial lights on religious fundamentalism in the novel. How by some people religion is manipulated and people made to believe in things delivered by the High Sheikh and the man in galabeya. They announce: "A believer who is weak in faith, and does not join his brothers, is guilty of a sin, which shall be weighed on the Judgement Day. This sin can be absolved by fasting, or by making seven consecutive phone calls, each one not separated by more than a month" (Chapter Four).

Having understood the background and proposition of Basma Abdel's novel, we propose to bring Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* (1952) for a comparative study to understand the concept of dystopia in the Arab world post to 2010. Although it is a comparative study between the two texts, this paper will mainly focus on the *Queue* primarily because it is a lesser known text and much have not been talked about dystopia from/in Arab world. In this paper we shall argue how Abdel Aziz attempts to rewrite reality through absurdity of characters, events, actions and settings in her novel in the Post-Spring Egypt or rather the Arab world compared with post-war Europe as depicted in Beckett. In this novel, apart from an Orwellian situation where we see the Big Brother as the Gate, the absurdity of existence is extremely important.

We further argue that the experience of living in Post-Arab Spring Arab world is no less absurd than living in a meaninglessness world of Godot, the Europe after devastating World War II. The aim of the paper is to analyse and compare the two texts in order to get a better picture of the concept of dystopia by tracing the captivating images presented in the two texts. Dystopian fiction is a genre of speculative fiction that explores social and political structures. In both the selected works we see interplay between society and politics. *Waiting for Godot* can be called a dystopia because of the purposeless waiting for the unknown and *The Queue* can be seen as one because of the way the government treats its citizens and the absurd gate and its permits.

The situational similarities between the texts are less. But what connects the texts is the background and the aftermath which could be taken as a starting point of our research. The two literary works are completely different. They belong to different ages, genre, languages, cultures, time and of course different contexts. But what exactly connects the two texts? The Absurdity of the situation. As the play perfectly reveals the absurdity of existence the novel by Basma Abdel Aziz also unveils absolute absurdity of a twenty-first century dystopic nation-state where Yehya had to get a permit from the Gate to remove a bullet lodged in his body a few days back. Eventually, in the process of securing a permission paper from the Gate, Aziz introduces swarms of people waiting outside in queue for various reason---for hospital concession, to travel, start a new business etc. Interestingly, the queue is not moving up, rather it is getting longer and people seem to have started a new lifestyle where they developed a habit of accommodating with the queue as a part of their existence---existence in the post-Arab Spring Arab world; more precisely in Egypt which has seen a drastic change in authoritative power.

The way Vladimir and Estragon spend their days in a "country road. A tree" is no different from Yehya or women with the short hair waiting in the queue for the gate to open to opt a Certificate for True Citizenship. Here if we try to understand the landscape, we must remember how the European countryside was devastated during the war. In the same way, the modern city mentioned in the *Queue* is somehow dry and ruthless and unreal but this unreality cannot be rejected as a fiction. Pozzo and his slave Lucky and their absurd behaviour too is no less different than Um Mabrouk who later on builds a shop in the queue and it became the center for gossips and the woman with the short hair who first initiated the Boycott Violet Telecom later turned out to be an absolute religious after the fatwa by the High Sheikh and the man in the galabeya who was constantly preaching in the queue. The spaces, the characters and actions in the play are dystopian whereas in the same way the Queue, people standing the queue and related to it somehow and other are very much dystopian. Waiting in the queue and waiting for Godot becomes synonymous when hope against hope becomes a major turn in the text.

The Gate is the central force in the novel which controls and dominates each and every man and action in the novel. The control of the Gate goes far more beyond the Big Brother of Orwell's in terms of absurdity and murkiness of the situation. In this novel the Gate is nameless, faceless. Although it is a single entity, it has so many branches and parts to help it. The Disgraceful Events are failed popular uprising organized by the frustrated educated youth but

the Gate was soon able to manage the situation by opening fire at the protestants, secret killings, prosecutions, and denying medication to the wounded like as Yehya's. It could be one of the reasons that Yehya was denied any treatment because the authorities have suspected that he was also a part of the protest, although Dr. Tarek at the Zephyr was eager to treat Yehya. But soon he faced the wrath of the Gate when an investigating officer visited him in the hospital. In the report published by the Gate, it termed the protest movement as the "Disgraceful Events" and it "took a violent turn to damage public property."

It is not just Yehya who was hit with a bullet, there were so many people who are lodged with many bullets in their body and waiting to be operated in the Zephyr Hospital. The murkiness and absurdity of the situation becomes tense as Aziz with her unique narrative technique showed that the wounded men are not getting treatments but they are not dying as well. Strangely they are alive with a bullet (or many bullets) in their bodies. Even Yehya could not be operated on the fourth day. They had to wait so much that the bleeding had stopped and wound covered from outside and the end of the novel see Yehya buying lots of painkillers and in fact those painkillers are the sole solace he can get under such a circumstance. Amani has tried to get an x-ray copy of Yehya's document from the hospital but she is caught and taken into prison. Perhaps she is raped and tortured. She does not pick up Yehya's calls anymore nor does she meet anybody. Eventually Yehya could find the x-ray reports from the lady in the reception but she refused to have any files on June 18th as it was the date of the Disgraceful Events. Next time Yehya and Amani visits the Gate only to see the Gate has displayed a huge picture of them in an attempt to segregate them from the processes of obtaining certificates and permissions. Although the Gate make so many promises but it never opened and people in the queue kept on waiting till the end of the novel. Yehya's wound becomes deep and blood is coming out with this urine now. But still he was not able to manage to remove the bullet from his pelvis and with such an absurd note the novel ends.

In chapter four the absurdity of the situation takes a twist where the past acts of Yehya are kept on record by the officials at the Zephyr Hospital and certain acts by him termed as "rebellious." Because as seen in *square* more than once and there was no reason to be there. Sabah a nurse working with the Hospital got threatened from a very influential man in high position not to ask questions who has been helping the bullet victims relentlessly. Through the free services given by Violent Telecom it started recording people's conversation in the queue and sending it back to the Gate: The Gate wanted to analyse them to know which of citizens possess more threat to their authority. Ehab had reported that all of them are under surveillance which was confirmed by Ines, other women standing in the Queue, people realized this and started boycotting the telecom. Interestingly, newspapers have not reported the boycott of the Violet Telecom but they reported other sorts of boycott led by Fatwa and Rationalizations Committee which is headed by the High Sheikh. We see an absolute decree of Fundamentalism when we Shalaby believing in the report by the Fatwa team where the word God could be seen in a candy and which was publicly destroyed and people looked at it with awe and praised the god. And eventually they rejoined by the man in galabeya, Um Mabrouk, Shalaby and Mrs. Alfat another women standing in the queue. By the end of the chapter The Booth, when people are getting

angry over the gate and in a process to start a fresh protest, the Gate is using all its powers physical and diplomatic to suppress the uprising and divert the attention of the public.

Dystopia in the Arab World

Godot never appears, Gate never opens. An attempt to find meaning of the search for Godot and standing in the queue will be the same--absurdity, meaninglessness. But this meaninglessness or absurdity has become a part of living in a war-torn Europe and Post-Spring Arab world, more precisely in Egypt. Normally, an easy parallel could be drawn between *1984* and the *Queue* where the surveillance of a totalitarian state penetrated even the very personal life of an individual. But in fact, the Queue goes beyond that. Interestingly, Abdel Aziz did not forget to suggest that the world has moved far beyond and technology has become the sole tool of a totalitarian regime to spy on its citizens moreover, involvement of a foreign hand in the Disgraceful Events or uprisings against the government is always treated in the same way. It takes less effort to suggest that the situations in the gate is not only self-controlled by also remote-controlled. Needless to say, the USA, France, England and some other European countries have always had a role to play in the Arab world, notably in Algeria, Libya and some other countries.

The Arab world witnessed numerous bloodsheds, colonization, neo-colonization, coups, assassinations, invasions, civil wars, popular movements, cultural movements and there is no end to it. Although Hamid Dabashi in his book *The Arab Spring: The End of Postcolonialism* (2012) claimed that the Arab Spring brought to a real end of colonialism in the Arab world but in our understanding, it actually has brought with its chilling neo-colonialism. The effect of the Arab Spring could still be seen in Syria and Iraq where the ISI militia still trying to hold their ground resulting in mass destruction, loss of millions of lives and mass displacements. As a result, the hope of living in a better (Arab) world is shrouded in uncertainty. The situations in the novel is not only similar to those of in *Waiting for Godot*, rather it is very much akin to all modern nation states in the era of Post-Truth and manufactured consent where centralized power, military coups, rise of right wing and neo-fascism throughout the world and characters like the man in the galabeya or Shalaby has become a very common reality.

Notes

As we are using Kindle book for Abdel Aziz's novel there is no page no. as such, therefore we have not indicated the page number here but the location of quotations could be brought up in case of any requirement.

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Utopian Vision in Master Poems: Tagore and Sri Aurobindo

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Abstract: Like Kabir, Meerabai and Sri Aurobindo, Rabindranath Tagore is one of the greatest devotional poets of India. He received the Nobel prize for *Gitanjali* in 1913 which is a classic devotional poem of Indian literature. A classic or timeless literature is an outstanding instance of expressing some eternal passion and in a particular style of the author which endures time. It greatly influences the readers of all times. In other words, there is something unique in the subject matter and the way it is presented. Both W.B. Yeats and Ezra Pound were fascinated by the English translation from Bengali of these poems by Tagore himself and praised it as great art. W.B. Yeats wrote the Introduction to *Gitanjali* which appeared in 1912. This paper would highlight how devotional poems contained in *Gitanjali (Song Offerings)* are unique and timeless in their theme and artistry; how these lyrics not only reflect Tagore's love of the all-pervading God, but express his love of Man and Nature as well; how his mysticism is combined with his humanism in this collection of poems.

Rabindranath Tagore and Sri Aurobindo are two outstanding poets in the domain of Indian English poetry. Tagore was awarded the Nobel prize for his idealistic vision reflected in his masterpiece *Gitanjali*. Sri Aurobindo created sensation and won admiration in the literary circles for the composition of his epic poem *Savitri* in the 20th century. In this voluminous epic Sri Aurobindo highlights the evolution of superman. Both these master poets dream of better future on this Earth torn by wars, strife and "walls" erected on the grounds of race, religion, creed and nationhood. Tagore metaphorically states in the *Gitanjali* that the narrow domestic walls' stand as barriers in the path of a new world order which corresponds to that of a utopia— a fictional island in which the citizens possess highly desirable qualities. Thus, both these poets are gifted with a better and superior world vision which can be termed as utopian. The aim of this paper is to analyze the thought-provoking passages from both *Gitanjali* and *Savitri* and show how the idealist in both these poets asserts and pictures a world that needs to be contrasted with the present world of suffering and torture. The effort is also made to show the distinctions between the two poets in their narration of utopian vision. The paper is divided into four sections: the first section is the introduction; the second section dwells upon the poetry of Tagore and drops hints about the nature of utopia the poet dreams; the third section concentrates upon the analysis of the splendid passages from Sri Aurobindo's *Savitri* and sheds light upon the seer poet's prophetic vision that can be labelled utopian; the fourth section is the conclusion in which the utopian vision of Tagore gets contrasted with that of Sri Aurobindo. On the whole, this paper makes a modest attempt to show the relevance of utopian vision in an age where the

power-drunk politicians, religious bigots and terrorists worsen the conditions of the Earth to live.

II

Tagore is a patriot and visionary; through his vision he could dream of India to be an ideal land-a land that corresponds to the Thomas More's idea of utopia. In the poem no *XXXV* of *Gitanjali* Tagore pictures his dream of motherland. The poem reads as follows:

> Where the mind is without fear and the head is held high;
> Where knowledge is free;
> Where the world has not been broken up into
> fragments by narrow domestic walls;
> Where words come out from the depth of truth;
> Where tireless striving stretches its arms towards perfection;
> Where the clear stream of reason has not lost its
> way into the dreary desert sand of dead habits;
> Where the mind is led forward by thee into ever-widening
> thought and action-
> Into that heaven of freedom, my Father, let my
> country awake. (40)

The poem is written in a single sentence-a complex sentence which has several clauses. The principal clause is "let my country awake." The poet longs for awakening of the motherland to "that heaven of freedom" which has necessary conditions that are prevalent in a utopia. At the outset he holds that the citizens of the land must be fearless; they must stand straight and live righteous lives. They won't bow down before any forces of intimidation. He puts emphasis on free thinking and knowledge to be acquired must be freed from superstitious beliefs, irrational ideas and dogmas. Tagore's vision is global, total and holistic. He does not appreciate the division of the world on the basis of race, religion, creed, caste and above all, nationality; such division is the product of narrow outlook. Tagore uses a dexterous phrase in context of human speeches or utterances that is "depth of truth." Truth has various levels and different degrees; to explore truth is not an easy task. Tagore wants the citizens of such a dream land where they will voice their innermost feelings. Tagore categorically states that the citizens of such a land strive ceaselessly for perfection because perfection is an ideal. The poet personifies "striving" because efforts should be lively and the doers should be dynamic. Tagore is a rationalist and reason is just like a clear stream that flows. Clarity is the typical feature of reason; confusion characterizes irrationality or sentimentality. The poet uses a striking phrase "dreary desert sand of dead habits" which is alliterative as well as pregnant with profound significance. By "dead habits" he means the habits that don't yield pleasure nor joy nor new knowledge nor anything creative. Hence, he uses the metaphorical expression like "dreary desert sand" which is vast but cheerless. In India under British rule most of the citizens were not progressive thinkers; they were lay men and women acting under fear, suspicion, jealousy, anger, infatuation and any human vice. They were not introspective; they didn't have the habit to question their own activities, thinking process and feelings. Tagore is a staunch believer in God; he believes in

God's grace for the success in human endeavors. Human endeavors can be highly productive and multi-dimensional if the doers receive Divine grace. When Tagore uses the expression like "my Father" he refers to God, the governor of the universe.

Thus, the entire poem gives a picture of Tagore's dreamland which can be viewed as a utopia-a perfect society in which the citizens are happy because they cultivate fearlessness, strong sense of reasoning, free thinking, faith in God and human virtues which pave the way for progress, prosperity and peace. Tagore's vision of India is utopian which is clearly evident from his Nobel Prize Acceptance Speech; an extract from it is given below:

> I do not think that it is the spirit of India to reject anything, reject
> any race, reject any culture. The spirit of India has always proclaimed
> the ideal of unity. This ideal of unity never rejects anything, any race,
> or any culture. It comprehends all, and it has been the highest aim of
> our spiritual exertion to be able to penetrate all things with one soul,
> to comprehend all things as they are, and not to keep out anything in
> the whole universe-to comprehend all things with sympathy and love.
> This is the spirit of India. Now, when in the present time of political
> unrest the children of the same great India cry for rejection of the West
> I feel hurt. I feel that it is a lesson which they have received from the west.
> Such is not our mission. India is there to unite all human races. (*Gitanjali* 140)

The passage above contains the essence of Tagore's philosophy that permeates through all his master poems. Tagore's vision or culture is inclusive. The great poet does not like to reject anything that promotes the ideal of unity among the humans. He perceives that India has a message to tell the whole world, that is, there is only one culture that is human culture, one religion that is human religion, one race that is human race. A true Indian think of humanity as a whole. Thus, the poet's vision is holistic; holism is the hallmark of utopia.

III

 Sri Aurobindo, a seer poet, educated at Cambridge, and well versed in Indian scriptures visualize a new world order. He believes in the theory of evolution and visualizes that there will be the emergence of a better human race which he calls the superman. His concept of superman corresponds to Thomas More's concept of utopians because a utopian claim that it is possible to build a new and perfect society where every human being will be happy and joyful. Sri Aurobindo's superman is the embodiment of undiluted happiness and peace. *Savitri*, the masterpiece of Sri Aurobindo's poetical achievements, contains several passages that delineate supramental consciousness which can usher in an age of progress, prosperity and peace. Perfection is the watch word in the ideology of the utopians. Here is a brilliant passage from *Savitri* where Sri Aurobindo dwells upon the source, the nature and the effect of perfection in any domain of human activity:

> A fourth dimension of aesthetic sense
> Where all is in ourselves, ourselves in all,
> To the cosmic wideness re-aligns our souls.

A kindling rapture joins the seer and seen;
The craftsman and the craft grown only one
Achieve perfection by the magic throb
And passion of their close identity. (112)

Human world, to borrow the phrase from Robert Frost, is "lovely, dark and deep" because man, the paragon of creation is gifted with the aesthetic sense-the sense of beauty that yields a higher order of pleasure. In any kind of aesthetic product, be it poetry or painting or a piece of sculpture ordinarily there are three dimensions: the world of producer or creator, the consumer and above all, the product or the creation itself but Sri Aurobindo visualizes the fourth dimension of the aesthetic sense. Here the creator absorbs himself in the act of creation to such an extent that he perceives that his product belongs to the universe and he himself is a part of the universe. This cosmic dimension of aesthetic object adds value to the work and such a dimension is felt in a better world which can be labelled as utopia. Sri Aurobindo categorically states that when the observer and the observed, the actor and the act are one perfection is achieved. Thus, the poet has a message that total absorption in any act is the key to perfection-the idea with which the utopians are haunted.

Sri Aurobindo's preoccupation with better world order is based upon certain premises. In the following passage the poet reflects upon the limitation of humans and their efforts to climb upon the ladder of consciousness for a better world view. The poet writes:

Only when we have climbed above ourselves,
A line of the Transcendent meets our road
And joins us to the timeless and the true;
It brings to us the inevitable word,
The godlink act, the thoughts that never die.
A ripple of light and glory wraps the brain
And travelling down the moment's vanishing route
The figures of eternity arrive. (110)

In the passage above Sri Aurobindo is making a striking point in regard to the emergence of a better human race. He harbours and visualizes that as man rises higher and higher in the ladder of consciousness there is a descent of God's grace. The whole creation is governed by a power: invisible and gracious that we are moving towards the better. Man is mortal; his life is time-bound; his memory fades with passage of time but Sri Aurobindo visualizes the messengers of eternity. In fact, these messengers herald a new era which can be aptly called the era of utopians or the perfectionists. Such a perfectionist will be endowed with a brain that will not experience fatigue; he will experience the timeless through time. The humans are such beings that their minds or hearts are always preoccupied with the strange ideas-utopia is one of such ideas. The poet writes:

As the mind's visitors or the heart's guests
They espouse our mortal brevity awhile,
Or seldom in some rare delivering glimpse
Are caught by our vision's delicate surmise. (ibid.)

The humans have a tendency to infer, conceive or perceive but utopic experience can be had if the humans try to explore the grandeur of the soul. In the *Book of Love* Satyavan tells the heroine of the epic Savitri how the visionary powers grow within him:

> As if to a deeper country of the soul
> Transposing the vivid imagery of earth,
> Through an inner seeing and sense awakening came. (404)

Utopia is experienced only through vision and just to have it one must visit through the country of soul through "inner seeing" and awakening of inner sense which can be termed as intuition. The seer poet reflects upon human predicament which prevents vision that is utopian.

> A city of the traffic of bound souls,
> A market of creation and her wares
> Was offered to the labouring mind and heart. (197-198)

Human beings have been constituted of such materials: labouring mind and heart that they find it difficult to visualize utopia. The mind or the heart that exerts experiences pain or suffocation or frustration but not happiness. Happiness can be cultivated if one visualizes the infinite-the limitless and meditates to have it. But in human world the humans focus on specialization, logic which do not elevate the humans to experience pure bliss or happiness that the utopians hope for. Sri Aurobindo aptly remarks:

> A specialist of logic's hard machine
> Imposed its rigid artifice on the soul;
> An aide of the inventor intellect,
> It cut Truth into manageable bits
> That each might have his ration of thought-food. (242)

Sri Aurobindo views that just to experience truth is the way to be happy or live in a world of utopians but truth can't be experienced only trough intellect. One is to go beyond the realm of intellect in order to experience the splendour of soul-in that experience lies happiness.

IV

To conclude, the concept of utopia is spiritual in its connotation. When utopia is translated into Indian language it means Rama Rajya. Rama is the incarnation of God. He was born just to destroy the evil and restore the world order. When this word is used by Thomas More it refers to an imagined perfect society. From its inception the word generated a lot of controversy among the philosophers. Whatever may be the controversy the word in its essence refers to a perfect world. Perfection is a term that is much used by the utopians. In this paper two outstanding Indian poets: Tagore and Sri Aurobindo merit attention because both of them love perfection. Tagore categorically states in his famous work *Gitanjali* that in the ideal world of his dreamland "tireless striving stretches its arms towards perfection." The poet in Tagore unconsciously uses personification in context of striving which should be non-stop. Both the poets have faith in God who can transform this imperfect world into a perfect world or utopia.

Sri Aurobindo's *Savitri*, as read by disciples or critics, focuses on something Divine or celestial for the betterment of humanity or the emergence of a new race-a race of people who can be branded as utopians or super humans-definitely much better than the humans who struggle, suffer and experience split personality. The distinction between Tagore and Sri Aurobindo lies in the fact that the latter is a greater seer or mystic than the former but former appears to be a more popular and better poet. Sri Aurobindo visualizes things and represents them in such a language that proves to be difficult for the ordinary readers to comprehend. On the other hand, the translated poems in *Gitanjali* are easier to understand. Doubtless, much of lyricism evaporates in translation from Bengali to English but the appeal of the poem is beyond dispute. Tagore elevates the consciousness of the readers and enables them to have the vision of utopia; Sri Aurobindo transports the reader's mind to a different world where one can experience and visualize perfection as the utopians long for. Finally it can be said, with any kind of discourse on utopia these two poets merit mentioning because both of them were gifted with superior order of creative imagination and both of them advocate perfection in any area of human endeavor and both of them have unflinching faith in the powers of Divine to execute a better world order which the utopians visualize.

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