

Volume No. 6 Issue 1



CHRIST
UNIVERSITY

BENGALURU, INDIA

Declared as Deemed to be University under Section 3 of UGC Act 1956

Department of English

Quill's Will

An initiative of MA English with Communication Studies

CONTRIBUTORS

Editorial Team:

Aayushee Garg
Nikhila Maria James
Santhiya S
Satvika Ohri
Shrishti Abrol
Sreemoyee Basu
Steji Johnson

Design:

Sybil S Fernandez

Students of I MA English

*“For last year’s words belong to last year’s language
And next year’s words await another voice.
And to make an end is to make a beginning.”*

-Little Gidding, T.S. Eliot

write to us at:
quills.will2016@gmail.com

“Anyone moderately familiar with the rigours of composition will not need to be told the story in detail; how he wrote and it seemed good; read and it seemed vile; corrected and tore up; cut out; put in; was in ecstasy; in despair; had his good nights and bad mornings; snatched at ideas and lost them; saw his book plain before him and it vanished; acted people’s parts as he ate; mouthed them as he walked; now cried; now laughed; vacillated between this style and that; now preferred the heroic and pompous; next the plain and simple; now the vales of Tempe; then the fields of Kent or Cornwall; and could not decide whether he was the divinest genius or the greatest fool in the world.”

-Virginia Woolf, Orlando



Beginning of Another Year

On the 8th of June, Christ University and the Masters Programme on English Literature became a dream that came true for us and it came with a lot of expectations. The Dream University had a Dream for its people. The programme officially commenced with the formal inauguration by Professor Daniel Gnanaraj, coordinator, BA English Honours. Then our Dean Dr John Joseph Kennedy and our Head of the Department, enlightened the crowd on how this particular dream works in the Christ Culture and that when we start meeting what is expected out of us, our expectations are satisfied at the same time. That expectations are incentives to go higher, a means to keep moving and improving.

The head of the Department, Dr Abhaya N B specified the need to have a deeper academic bond with the department and facilitate research through mutual interaction. She recited a few inspiring verses to

drive the point across in the most poignant and befitting manner. She also spoke at length about the expectations of the department and emphasized on building a trustworthy relation with the department. The orientation stressed on the intense Research that was going to be part of our journey taking us to another level, to another platform. And that this platform deserves persistence, drive and hard work. The orientation ensured that

the teachers of our department were made familiar to us, to make the rapport smooth and productive, benefiting both the crowd, for the high paced knowledge sharing. And this is a team work that we have started. On the 8th of June, Dr Randhir R P, Manager, Knowledge Management and Ms Anusha Rhoda, Specialist from Unisys, Bangalore, made sure that all of us are on board with high spirits.

-Nikhila James, I MA English



Scholars Forum

Scholar's Forum is an academic platform, initiated by the MA in English with Communication Studies students. The primary objective is to promote academics through active interactions and healthy discussions. Here various aspects of literature and cultural studies will be discussed through academic points of view. The prime objective of this forum is to inculcate the power of critical thinking of "the Self, the Society and the Imagined". Every week this Forum focuses on different topics of literature and cultural studies through presentations and discussions and prepares students for the challenges of academic world. Occasionally, guest speakers are invited to deliver lectures as well.

Inauguration

On 10 June 2016, students of MA Eng with Communication Studies gathered at the Panel room, Block II for the inauguration of Scholars Forum. Inauguration was graced by the Registrar, Dr Anil Joseph Pinto. He expounded on how we design our growth by our choices in life and declared the forum open.

The Head of English department, Dr Abhaya spoke on how research for everyone should be as much a part of our lives as that of other activities. It was followed by Professor Arul Gaspar's, valuable introduction to the MOOC courses that we will have to complete in our academic tenure. We had an engaging

Prof. Arul Gaspar's session



time clearing our doubts of the task up ahead. The session acted as a preparation to the various grooming tasks and activities. The event ended with the two classes bonding over fun, dance and music.

-Steji Johnson, I MA English

From left to right : Dr. Anil Pinto ;
Prof. Abhaya ; Rony George



Guest Lectures

On Contemporary Literary Theory and Criticism

On 24 June 2016 Dr .N. Krishnaswamy former professor of EFLU, was invited. Ragesree Roy of second MA English introduced the guest to the department and the audience. The guest was formally welcomed by Dr John Joseph Kennedy, Dean of Humanities and Social Sciences. After the welcome, Dr John Joseph Kennedy was requested to speak a few words about the speaker, which was inspirational.

Later Dr N. Krishnaswamy, spoke about the various concepts of contemporary literary theory and criticism, its history, emerging trajectories and ever evolving na-

ture. The lecture was very informative oriented but presented in the simplest manner to the students. Later, some students posed a few questions which he answered with enthused attitude. At the end of the session students were given opportunity to go through the books written by Dr .N. Krishnaswamy, and many students appreciated the authorship of Dr .N. Krishnaswamy. The session was very productive and relatable as all of us were dealing Literary Criticism at different levels, and the lecture added to the interest.

-Santhiya S, I MA English



On Dalit Aesthetics by Professor Joshua

“Dalit Aesthetics stems from suffering”, said Prof. Joshua as he traced the evolutions of Dalit Aesthetics. He discussed the problems with studying Dalit Literature and other Indian Literatures on the same platform. Speaking of Limbale’s notion of authenticity in and of Dalit Literature, he attempted to delve into the politics of the genre. He talked about ‘Akkarmashi’ and ‘Ponnuthai’ as fundamental works that explored the attribution of

identity in the Dalit community.

In summing up the essence of Dalit Aesthetics, he said that it explores the ideals of Untruth, Unholly and Unbeauty as opposed to the Satyam Shivam Sundaram of Brahmanical Literature.

-Santhiya S, I MA English



On Post Modernism by Prof. Babu Raj

Prof. Raj mentioned the transformation affected by Post Modernism in our understanding of the world around us. Reflecting on Lyotard's opinion on Post Modernism as "an incredulity to meta narratives", he traced the shift in thought from Modernism's notion of unity. He elucidated upon four stages of Simulacra as stated by Baudrillard and said that today, symbols are losing their sanctity. He dichotomised Modernism from

Post Modernism by outlining the movement from determinate to indeterminate texts.

In conclusion he drew examples from cinema and mentioned the film 'Rashomon' as a representation of the Post Modern, multiple perspectives of reality.

-Santhiya S, I MA English



Paper Presentations

Gender Differences and Breaking Stereotypes:

On the 17th of June, the Paper titled "Gender differences and Breaking Stereotypes in Contemporary Indian Television Advertising and Marketing Responses", co-authored by Amrita and Nidhi from II MA English, discussed the issues of gender stereotypes in popular advertisements, prod-

uct placement and product colour in shopping malls of the city. The paper paid attention to the easily ignored or neglected fixations on gender discrimination that are working in the everyday context, involving everyday products. The presentation was followed by responses and provoked critical ar-

guments in the crowd. The discussion received personal comments towards the advertisements that were displayed. The research paper threw light on how we have accepted and got used to the stereotypes and at the end of the presentation, these stereotypes were questioned.

Satvika Ohri, I MA English

The Great Indian Railways:

India as a country can be painted differently depending on the different lens it is being observed through. The documentary titled "The Great Indian Railways" that came to the screens in the year 1995, didn't fail to take up the Western Attitude towards the Eastern standards and ways of life, especially a country that was a colony of the British Crown. Postcolonial

approach is different lens to look at this documentary and on the 5th of August, Yashaswi and Christy Simone from II MA English took this perspective to analyse and interpret this particular visual text. The presentation facilitated the crowd to look at it from the colonized perspective, and realise that the documentary fails to draw a genuine, whole picture of the India.

The documentary seems to point out the laggings of India from that of the west and doesn't really paint India for what it is made of and what it is capable of. The presentation incited arguments on the discrimination held against India and Indians in today's context with the postcolonial approach.

-Shrishti Abrol, I MA English

Knowledge Sharing:

The very first knowledge sharing session happened on the 17th of July by Sajitha and Prathiksha from I MA English. The two gave an introduction to cryptography and engaged the two classes by taking them through the process deciphering crossword.

The first of July's forum com-

menced with a knowledge sharing session conducted by Sambhavi Sudhakar and R Dhanya from BA Honors on 'National History, Identity and Diaspora in Khaled Hosseini's The Kite Runner'. They discussed briefly about the historical context of the novel, its diasporic overtones, identity of Afghan im-

migrants in a post 9/11 scenario, doctrines of Taliban, condition of women etc.

It was followed by a short film screening, conceived by Aravind Deepak from I MA English titled Atomiki, a bold dystopian expressionism.

-Santhiya S, I MA English

Theatre

Walking a Mile in Another's Shoes – The Effects of Playback Theatre

“...for there is nothing heavier than compassion. Not even one's own pain weighs so heavy as the pain one feels with someone, for someone, a pain intensified by the imagination and prolonged by a hundred echoes.”

- Milan Kundera, *The Unbearable Lightness of Being*

If you are anything like me, you have not reached out to another human being in a very long time; not for the lack of good intention, but in a bid to keep up in the race that is life. Many of us perform our perfunctory roles, without having the stillness to realize that it has been long since we truly listened to what another person is saying – since we soaked ourselves in their words and their experiences, until we feel them reverberate within us in “a hundred echoes”.

While the need for compassion in the world can only be rising, the capacity to give it is drastically reducing. And yet, all of us seem to be equipped with the potential to be compassionate. We know this because if we are honest to ourselves, we will find that perhaps when we were younger, the stories of others easily moved us. Many of us may have had our sensitivity curbed by society, many others may have shunned those parts of ourselves of our own volition. As a result, it lies now in some forgotten recesses of our mind.

Playback Theatre is a way to recall that forgotten ability which allows us to relive another person's life experience as if they were our own. It allows one to physically empathize with the experience of a stranger, while also creating a safe, non-judgmental environment for the viewers to confide their personal experiences. It does so by eliciting stories from the audience which are then enacted by the actors on the spot.

Having a playback theatre workshop for MA students, especially when a batch of students were new to the institution and many were new to the city itself, allowed them to bond in a way which may have taken months otherwise. Rajesh P.I, the co-founder of Script People's Theatre was invited by one of the second-year students, Aishvarya Sinha, herself a practitioner of Playback theatre, to conduct this workshop on July 15, 2016.

The workshop started out with exercises that progressively revealed to the group where others were from, where they lived in the city, what their likes and dislikes were, what their passions were and how many others shared that with them. It was easy to let go of inhibitions when a whole room full of people were all confiding to each other. It helped to build instant associations, many of which persisted

through the semester and bloomed into friendships.

At a later stage of the workshop participants were paired off with relative strangers, with whom they shared some parts of their lives that defined them. It concluded with a few sessions of playback itself wherein members of the group shared their stories and others ‘played them back’ to them. Even in this brief exposure to the process of playback, many of us were deeply affected by the therapeutic potential of it.

Further reading revealed to me that playback theatre is in fact grounded in psychological theories of existent therapeutic practices. It is akin to the Person-centered therapy of Humanist psychology, where the therapist helps his patient through achieving ‘accurate empathy’. It is also akin to Non-Violent Communication (NVC) methods



P. Rajesh explaining about Playback Theatre

EVENTS OF THE DEPARTMENT

developed by Marshall Rosenberg in the USA.

It would seem that various people who are engaged in the business of helping others, have come to see that empathy is the balm that

heals the many wounds that life inflicts upon us. How they choose to arrive at empathy may differ, but ultimately, it is invaluable to our emotional and mental health. I believe that corporeality of playback

theatre allows it to truly achieve empathy, hence liberating the audience as well as the actors of some of the baggage they may be carrying.

-Sreemoyee Basu, I MA English

Street Theatre: Action in the Arena

“All the world’s a stage,
And all the men and women merely players;
They have their exits and their entrances,
And one man in his time plays many parts”

-William Shakespeare, *As You Like It*

The quintessential essence of theatre is to hold a mirror to the vicissitudes of society. The director’s, the scriptwriter’s, and the actor’s efforts aim to infuse life into the unsaid as well as the over-said experiences of life. The 2nd year students of M.A. English lived this phenomenal experience while performing street plays for their mid-semester exam for Theatre Studies. The entire class was divided into three groups. Each group chose topics that delineate the contemporary nuances of society. Each selected topic envisaged certain social issues that comprised a conflict. The three street plays were performed on 3rd August 2016 at the basketball court. Each team put up performances for ten to fifteen minutes.

The preparation for the street plays had commenced almost a month ago with multiple revision of scripts which incorporated human formations and innovative techniques to depict a scene. All the teams endeavoured to incorporate ingenious ways of rendering their chosen stories, breaking away from the clichéd style of usual street plays.

Under the guidance of Professor Ashokan O, the teams focused on dramatic entry and exit, development of the plot, ingenious use of props, suggestive costumes and make-up, effective dialogue delivery, and most importantly the variations of team dynamics which is crucial for the success of a street play. Despite individual idiosyncrasies of the team members, all

the teams coordinated together to put up remarkable performances.

The day dawned with the team members running in a frenzied motion to gather all the props, have the final rehearsals, and deliberate on their make-up. Each team put up a colourful array of face-painting, where the hues of the colours symbolically represented the respective themes of their plays. At 2 P.M, all the teams gathered on the basketball court in the presence of the eminent judges Dr Rajeev K and Mr Mohammed Arif . The furious pull of the wind posed a hindrance as many of the lightweight props were not being held in place. This was a huge detriment since there was no covered space in the basketball court to keep the props. However, nothing could diffuse the raging spirit of the team members that day. They improvised on the spot and changed their movements accordingly to accommodate the props, holding it in their hands or keeping it behind them during the performance.

The first team dealt with the topic “Censorship in India”. They focused on the prevalent condition of Censorship in the country. The discouraging attitude towards art in the society was portrayed in the first scene. The second and the third scene discussed the situation





of Emergency and the banning of M.F. Hussain's paintings respectively. The fourth scene showed Salman Rushdie moving to another country because of the controversy surrounding his books. With the use of coloured masks and charts, the actors skilfully conveyed their message. They concluded that art is the medium through which a positive change can be ushered in for the society, but for that, art needs the agency of freedom to function on its own.

Second focused on Advertising Ethics in the modern society. The increasing influence of media that determines the building of our self-image was highlighted. The plot of the play demonstrat-

ed how marketing and advertising affect almost every event of our lives coaxing the global consumers to become material consumers of even inconsequential things that we don't require at all. They added a dramatic twist to their story by personifying 'branding', 'advertising', and 'marketing' as a board of directors. The entire play revolved around the profit-oriented decisions they take and the impact those decisions entail upon the lives of ordinary consumers. The humorous dialogues kept the audience on tenterhooks throughout.

The final team delineated the stupendous role of Social Media that pervades the modern lives. With an attempt imbue an element of theat-

rical surprise, the team adopted the character of the 'gods' and illustrated a space (Heaven Hotspot) where the God's lives to revolve around social media. The play was divided into two halves, where the first one encapsulated the tenor of intrigue surrounding the "wifi-gods" and the second part depicted the consequences of the obsessive use of social media. The crimes enacted were backed by a demonstration of true statistics while a real life incident was portrayed to accentuate the brevity of the perilous situation that we inadvertently get caught in due to excessive use of social media.

The judges shared their valuable comments about each team's performance and appreciated the efforts of the class as a whole. For many of the team members, this was their first street play performance; hence they were overwhelmed with the positive and encouraging feedback from the judges as well as the mob. It was a moment that each member of 2nd M.A. English would cherish forever.

-Ragesree Roy, II MA English



A Parade of Personas

“With a monologue you can be unendingly elliptical”

-Mike Birbiglia

A “character” envisages the essence of any play – be it a comedy or a tragedy. How a character experiences the vicissitudes of transformation determines the quintessence of that particular character. Playing the role of a “character” is like living a day in another person’s life – comprehending the idiosyncrasies of that character and then imbuing it in one’s way. Hence “character-sketch” becomes the most intriguing activity in a theatrical setting. The second year M.A. English students experienced the nuances of this activity when they performed their monologues on 7th and 8th September 2016. “Character sketch” or enacting monologues was their 3rd CIA in Theatre Studies. Under the guidance of Prof Ashokan O, the students had selected the characters that they wanted to portray. The chosen characters ranged across different eras and encapsulated the ideas of different sensibilities – some chose classical characters from Shakespeare’s plays like Lady Macbeth and Mark Antony, some depicted popular characters from fiction like Hester Prynne (The Scarlet Letter by Nathaniel Hawthorne), while some created their own characters (a suffering daughter, a schizophrenic, a pregnant woman, a terrorist’s mother).

Accentuating upon the brevity of the character, most of the students modified the actual scripts and rendered a creative adaptation of the same. They adapted the dialogues and situational motifs in the original scripts to their context. For example, Lady Macbeth was delineated as a woman on the

verge of losing her sanity while she sang songs to bring Macbeth back to her; Helen of Troy was shown to narrate her inner vengeance. Though most of the students chose to perform tragic characters, few of them tried a hand at comic expressions. A melange of emotions was displayed in the performances over the two days – anger, laughter, sorrow, revenge, and fear.

The students had arranged for complementary costumes and make-up too. Though the allotted venue was the classroom space, the students utilized the space effectively and created an imaginary stage out of it.

The ingenious use of props made up for the absence of stage lights in the classroom. Many of them had prepared Power Point presentations which rendered the feel of a background setting. Music and sound effects enhanced the performance of the student and helped conveying the mood effectively.

While scripting their monologues, the students focused on the aspects of temperament, physiological and psychical delineation, relational development of the character, and the playwright’s intention to make the characterization unique and realistic.

The students discovered the nuances that a scripter engages in while sketching a character for stage. They learned the process of illustrating a character. While experimenting with various expressions and speech enunciations they not only acted, but lived the character that they portrayed.

-Ragesree Roy, II MA English



Theatre in Class

The pragmatic aspects of an art form cannot be taught in classroom spaces. When it comes to proscenium theatre, experience on the stage is the greatest teacher. It also promotes a sense of belonging to the group and group dynamics among the crew. The end semester evaluation proved to be a way to imbibe the true essence of the course "Theatre in Practice". It allowed the students to be the directors, the actors, the stage managers they were purely capable of being. The 19th, 20th and the 21st of September 2016 witnessed their excellence in Theatre. Thus, the performances were real learning experiences for the students and they received constructive feedback from the judges and audiences. Further, all the groups helped each other in staging a commendable performance.



Assistant professor Ashokan O. was always with the students giving them guidance and correcting them throughout the process. The Department of English, especially the Head of Department Dr. Abhaya NB and Course coordinator Dr. Arya Aiyappan were extremely supportive of this endeavour with-

out whom this would not have been materialised. The students from first and second MA English with Communication Studies and other students from various departments and faculty members were present among the audience during all the three performances.

-Ronnie George, II MA English

Centre for Academic and Professional Support session on Research Skills.

The seventh session of Scholars' forum on the 29th of July 2016 conducted an informative session on Research Skills organized by CAPS (Centre for Academic and Professional Support). CAPS is one of the wings of support for students to enhance their academic performance. Three trainers from the team organized the event which was conducted through a power-point presentation. The presentation was used as a key tool during

the session along with informative videos and activities.

The session commenced with basic information regarding research skills and unfolded the technical aspects of how to initiate the process of research, having pre-requisite knowledge in this area. Providing examples and references from day-to-day activities, the session effectively conveyed comprehensive ideas and methods to understand the process of learning. Key terms related to research were explained. Main features of the presentation were understanding research skills, manuscript writing, writing for conferences etc. Key points for conducting interviews were taught keeping in mind the ethics of conducting an interview so that research is conducted in a

desired discipline.

The session was conducted with regard to the academic course plan so that students are able to brush-up what they have learnt in class and therefore, are able to reflect and improve their basic understanding on the subject. To maintain the interest of the audience the session included interactive activities in which students were asked questions on related topics and were motivated to participate in all the activities.

The session was effective in its approach as it projected all the major ideas. The presentation was much appreciated in the feedback session and the team invited students for further discussions and guidance.

-Meghana Ravichandran, II MA English



CAPS team in interaction with students

'A Promise to Self:

A poem to show important you must be to yourself.'

Sakina Thanawala

Crossing my legs, I sat where I was told.
I gazed at myself;
I was wearing what I was told.
The way I looked,
Was enough for a stranger to learn my creed.
The bus was taking me away, shaking me a(II the)way.
But I realized that nothing was making me smile.
And I had promised myself to wear it all the time.
So I hung my head outside the window.
Letting the dry air kiss my moist skin,
It broke the bun; my black hair flew free
In its rhythm.
My eyelids fluttered heavily when
The sun tickled me through the moving trees.
My cheeks curved and then, I smiled.
I am a woman with a detailed eye
My eyes did not miss a single localite
Who watched me with their bewildered eyes.
I smiled. I loved to be seen as a traveler.
I gazed at the sky, the yellow clear evening sky.
Amidst the undisturbed tranquility,
I forgot who I am, to feel what I am.
Earth. I am made up of Earth.
I am the blowing wind and the rough mud.
I am the naked mountains, I am the flying bird.
I was passing through so many of me.
My cheeks turned curvy, again I smiled.
I was fulfilling the promise
And nothing was more important to me than it.

But Glee

Aayushee Garg

Sin, not a Crime	Care, but Share
Framed, but Free	Layer, not Rare
Floating, not Flying	High, not Sigh
Ocean, not a Sea	Word, not Dream
	Why, not My
Immersed, but Dry	Dearth, but Glee
Forest, not a Tree	
Sign, not a Line	Mud, not Blood
Me, not We	Rain, not Grain
	Route, not Fruit
Way, not a Kind	Hurt, but Glee.
Bird, not a Bee	

Tears and ink..

Meghana Ravichandran

So someone
Maybe of yore
Said that the
Pen is mightier
Than the sword
She felt that true
And so did he
When they wrote
Of their breakup
In their books
And poetry
The inked words
Showed them cracks
Of which the harmony
Perceived once got lost
It stung them in
Their mind and soul
That they hid much more
Than they had of
Each other ever known
Thus the pens
They used wept too
On pages where their
Writings with tears
Mingled to various hues
So its true and proved
That the pen is indeed
Mightier than the sword
As it strikes deeper
Much deeper
Deeper than ever though
Right in the core
Of these people with
Broken hearts...

Coffee For Two

Shrishti Abrol

Amidst the hubbub, the blabbering tongues and chortling lips
Amid the soap and scrub, spill and splash
The dexterous hands emerged to submerge in the frothy dip
Tuned with the anxious toes ready to dash

When a scream left them sprinting from one table to other
What I saw was a boomerang head serving in all corners
Startling me, approached those innocent eyes in the body of my brother
Small hands, same legs, small face, same mouth that said 'order'

'Ah, Coffee for two', screeched the blob of flesh on the chair behind me
Leaving the small face of "Ah" bobbing, with a radiant smile and two missing teeth
Taking few steps back, he stood on his haunches so that we could see
Blooming with pride proclaimed, "I am me, the Ah" resembling the soiled lily of granny's wreath.

When the innocence of childhood is shrouded by poverty, when the days of fun and frolic are clouded with labour, when an orphan has an unknown past and a bleak future, the story of anonymous "Ah" serving dishes in a shack, becomes a familiar reality!

I Hung Myself on the Steel-railed Balcony.

Sakina Thanawala

I hung myself on the steel-railed balcony.
Loose I stood, freeing self from
The riddles of life difficult to solve.
The humming of the washer touched my calmed ears,
While my eyeballs were stuck on the walking rickshaws
Until they disappeared.
The neighbor's radio ornamented the air
With some soothing music,
Whereas the littlest birds winged gaily
In the fresh morning sky.
Then, my gaze
Fell on people
Who stood, just like me
Losing selves in this utter tranquility.
My ponderer mind (a deity or a demon?)
Twitched its brows when I thought:
To the hardships of our lives,
Are we completely bound?
Or amidst this complete serenity,
We are unconditionally found?

Dear Grandmother

Prerna Bidalia

I went there yesterday,
There, where not so long ago,
You ceased to exist.
The place doesn't look much different,
The same room in the same house is,
The same.
They have retained some
Of the furnishings too.
Although something's changed,
Though the room is yours,
You are nowhere to be found.
A strange sort of emptiness
Reigns in the room,
Though by the looks of it
It does not seem bare.
I know not where you went,
I still am in denial,
Somewhere, someday I'm sure
I'll find you,
Sitting in your room
I'll be there
And you'll ask me to come sit by you awhile.
But yesterday was not that day,
Nor is it today.
I went there yesterday,
The place where not so long ago,
You ceased to exist,
The room where the doctor
Announced the time of death
It's the same room in the same house
Which is no longer the same.

What If

Aayushee Garg

What if the Moon was Black.
What if the World was Mad.

What if the Sage was High.
What if the Truth was the Lie.

What if the Oasis was another Desert.
What if the Foot was Revered.

What if Paper was Water.
What if Pen was Slaughter.

What if Colour was White.
What if Happiness was Spite.

What if the Soul was Batter.
What if Music was Matter.

What if They were Magic.
What if She was Tragic.

What if the Nature was Bare.
What if the Universe was a Layer.

What if Sunshine was Agony.
What if Stars were Blasphemy.

What if the End was Terse.
What if the Beginning was a Curse.

On A Road Less Travelled By..

Anand VM

Window seat;
Cool breeze sparkling my mind!
Good old memories; bright future dreams!
Intermittent rain; non-stop music.
At the peak of glee!
On a road frequently travelled by!
To the city of dreams...

I Believe in Pink!

Saachi Sarogi

“**Y**ou’re favourite colour is PINK!!!” screamed some random boy in the first grade. “I’m going to call you PINKY!!!” he yelled in my ear and ran away after tugging my ponytail.

I sat there and burst into tears at being called Pinky. Horrifying, isn’t it? Since childhood people assume that your favourite colour must be pink just because you’re a girl. And this is not limited only to the use of a colour. There are so many assumptions made just because you’re a girl.

You should dress appropriately because you’re a girl.

You should be soft spoken because you’re a girl.

You shouldn’t abuse because you’re a sweet, innocent girl.

I’ll buy you something pink because obviously you’ll love it.

If you wear black nail paint, then you’re one of those Goth people.

The list is endless. For me, I happen to naturally love everything girly because that is who I am. From a pink bedroom, to laces and frilly things, I’ve always had them all. Seventy percent of my wardrobe has hues of pink and peach in it! My phone cover, my earphones and even my Macbook cover are of different shades of pink.

“If the creators of Apple saw your Mac right now, they would hide their faces in shame. You’ve dressed it up and murdered it.” someone had told me, when I had proudly shown off my new laptop, which is pretty as a picture!

I am writing this today because, it is so tiring to see people label each other everywhere. Because I wear glittery headbands and a soft, pink shade of lipstick I’m labelled as ‘Cute and Girly’. Someone, who at the back of your mind is soft spoken, sweet natured and gullible. On the other hand, if you see a girl wearing red lipstick and monotone colors then she becomes a ‘Woman’. Someone who is in a position of power, and who commands your respect.

But then if someone walks out of a club in a tight mini skirt, high heels and red lips, God save her because we would call her a slut. I wonder what makes us label people like this. Why can’t we all have our own distinct style without assumptions? Why can’t I be in a power position inspite of soft, pink lips? Or maybe a girl who wears stilettos with red lips and smoky eyes actually sweet and innocent! Ever since I was a child, my brother would get everything in blue and I would get pink. And if by some anomaly we spotted a guy wearing a pink tee, he would just be gay for us.

But secretly how many of us find our boyfriends irresistibly sexy when they wear a pink shirt? I know I do! In fact it’s my favorite shirt to see him in! If we see our guy friends cry, we tell them to stop acting like a girl because they are Men! How can they let anyone see them cry? Only a girl can be weepy and emotional. But when a man steps up and admits that he is emotional and has cried when he needed to, it is the most unmanly thing ever. These are nothing but labels again.

Don’t cry because you’re a man.

Be a man and ask her out.

Why are you driving like a girl? Go faster!
You're the man! You have to make the first move.

See how we burden everyone with assumptions? But the rules are changing today. Women no longer shy away from taking control whether it is behind the wheel, for financial decisions or even in bed. And when a man lets his woman be in control, it shows the level of respect he has for her and does not make him weak. It does not question his manhood.

Everyone has their own distinct style. Don't shy away from who you are, whether you're a girl who loves pink (like me) but still wants to show the middle finger to a pervert who gropes her, or if you're a girl who loves black nail paint and red lips but doesn't wish to be called a slut or even if you're a guy who loves to cook or has shades of pink in his wardrobe! No, you're not gay.

"We believe in dressing up in gorgeously impractical things, like tulle, sequins, sparkles and lace!!"

This is who I am!

Stories

Saachi Sarogi

"Stories. Storytellers. What is it that is so fascinating about them? Why is that every time I get drawn to a story, a storyteller? Somehow they bring a burst of colours in my otherwise mundane life!" Nikhil ran his pen across his book, filling its empty pages with the images in his head.

He was sitting alone under a tree in his college campus. It was late evening which meant that there was an unusual quietness all around. The coveted spots under the canopy of trees were mercifully empty today where, otherwise there were hoards of students vying for the place. Nikhil liked this time of the day the most. It was now that he could shut the world out, yet remain more connected to it than ever, through the stories that buzzed around his beautiful campus!

"Its strange how our souls come alive when we are telling someone a story. I don't think I have seen a more expressive pair of eyes in my life before. Eyes which have been carefully lined with kohl but are just a little bit smudged at the edges which crinkle each time she laughs. Her infinity ring sparkles each time she lifts her hand to brush her hair away from her forehead. Hair that falls down her shoulders and back in wavy curls. Unruly and untamed curls, maybe just like her stories!" he wrote while, watching this girl who was talking to her girl friends!

He sat there watching her for how long he himself did not know. He was mesmerized by her expressions. Her dancing eyes, her animated hand gestures, how every time she took a sip of chai she left a little lipstick stain on the cup. He couldn't hear a word of what she was telling her girls but he knew that anyone who had so much life in her could only be beautiful beyond words. Suddenly there was a gust of wind that blew across the place bringing with it the swaying of trees and the rustling of its leaves. Nikhil closed his eyes feeling the cold breeze on his skin. When he opened them, he saw her standing in the walkway, her eyes closed, wind blowing her hair astray and a small smile on her pink lips but he knew in that moment that she was feeling the warmth of the cold breeze just like him!

"Are you stalking me mister?" she inquired of him standing there, her big black eyes flashing with a tinge of annoyance.

"Not stalking, just observing! Are you always this expressive and dramatic while talking to people?" Nikhil asked her with a twinkle in his eye.

“Excuse me what? I’m not dramatic okay?” she thundered at him, her silver bangles clinking as she raised her hand to tuck a strand of hair behind her ear which had managed to escape the order just like her words.

“Okay, okay if you say so!” he said holding up his palms as a sign of defeat.

But as she walked away he saw the spring in her step, the slight smile on her poker face, her eyes sparkling with curiosity as she glanced back before she hid her blushing face behind a novel.

‘Of Human Bondage’ : this was what she was hiding behind.

‘Human bonds are first created by the stories we share. A new mother with her first born, an elder sister with her younger brother, one best friend to another, two lovers sharing their lives together! If there were no story-tellers in this world, what would be the purpose of living? People say that reading gives you a thousand lives in just one lifetime but what truly makes us alive are those tiny little stories strung and held together that make up our lives. Every time we share them with someone, the thread gets stronger and the stories shine brighter. All we have to do is look for these moments and capture them with our stories!’ Nikhil’s book was almost over now.

Both of them sat in the arms of the trees just a few feet from each other on opposite sides. But both were lost in their own worlds, worlds that could collide any moment. It just needed another story!

Beauty visits once a year

Shambhavi Tiwari

That morning when I woke up, I tried to peep through my windowpane, for my idea of beauty. I had seen her coming the very day. The snow was gradually covering everything. The haziness on the glass and the golden sun hiding behind the clouds had made me realise that winter was coming. I was in my best of moods that day. It is a very old saying “BEAUTY LIES IN THE EYES OF THE BEHOLDER”. Well, yes like everyone I too, have my first love. I have an immense love and attachment with the winter season. Being a December baby, I have loved the magnificence of winter with all my heart. Winter has always been special to me as it has made me fall head over heels for it. Haven’t you realized lately, how pure it is?

Look through my eyes and you will perceive the striking picture of the chilly winters. The short days and long nights. The time when the sun is of less significance, when the cold water droplets fall from the end of leaves, just like pearls are tumbling down. When you see snowflakes and fog, when you sit by the fireside, when you get the opportunity to shovel snow and make snow balls to hit each other. And who doesn’t loves making the snowman? Imagine yourself in a very cold place, won’t you go for ice skating? How about the love for winter fashion? Furry coats, gloves and a scarf, right?

Well, that’s what winter does to me, it gives me chills down my spines, literally. Something like winters is no ordinary thing. A hot coffee with a novel inside a white furry blanket gives me much pleasure and eases my mind. But walking through the collected snow on the roads, is not a bad idea either. The trees and grounds are covered in fresh white snow. You can never run out of options in winters. Whether you stay in or out, you will surely relish this season. This season will never betray you and will love you eternally. I will never want this beauty to vanish in few months as this separation is long term. My beauty visits me once a year and that is the time I cherish the most and spend the rest in waiting for next winter to come. If you ever want to fall in love with the winter, hunt for people who can elucidate the essence of this season. Once you fall in love with it, you will never want anything but, winters forever.

Beauty does visit once a year and I wait eagerly for my next winters. I hope I did make some winter lovers here. I hope this winters would be fervently awaited for. Winter is coming. Make the most use of it before it runs away as no winter lasts forever.

The Dirge of the Lone Guardian

Ivan Sanjiv Lazar

It was simply called the Arena, it rained and pattered in streaks of ink and silvery tears,
 I huddled in the backalleys of the street, by the filthy grimy dead end near the junk and wastes,
 Illuminated under the circular solitary sheen of the sodium streetlight, I fumbled through the wastes, searching frantically for my heart.
 Have you seen my heart?
 The world, as we had known it already, had moved on to something more sinister,
 It was the spark of ideas that preserved mankind from raging into a neurotic storm of despair,
 The human mind was infested with a virus that made them crave for stories, for ideas that would unleash a chemical called eureka, not euphorin,
 Working its magic on the frontal lobe and influencing the adrenal gland, thereby making these fragile monsters of humans prone to an ethereal peace,
 Like the high of an opium addict who seeks solace from the oppressing pain of reality,
 After which they would rage and begin their spree of violence only to be held at bay by the soothing of imagination,
 By the narration or manifestation of words.
 It is to this vortex of surrealism that I beckon you, O Navigator of Senses, to help me find my heart.
 So that I can help these creatures again and in so doing, write the one ultimate story that will bring back humanity to its sane level of consciousness.
 Have you seen my heart?
 Lightning flashed in a frenzy and thunder rolled menacingly and the rain lashed at my bifocal rims, going down my beard and pattering on the road,
 Forming pools of stagnant water reflecting the decay of the city, somewhere a power line sizzled and went out, a distant scream was heard and then no more,
 I kept searching amidst the pile of junk, reject, unused, for I knew this was where I had last seen her, the Courtesan who laughs and chuckles throatily like a woman with a secret,
 All was silent except for the rain and the thunder.
 This dead end used to be her regular haunt, where other Writers and Cravers frequented.. where Courtesans flourished in their trade to satisfy these beings that now roam for stories.
 Yet where are they now, they have fled, the dreams turned real and perhaps had begun to choke them, like an overdose of their own humor perhaps?
 A sexual appetite is what these stories are to mankind and the Writers are devoured and consumed by these walking nightmares,
 They stalk, they roam, they prowl, they scourge, they die in agony when the last spark dies in their brain, yet these are humans still, ones who had a life yet now are just a revenant,
 After the great plague that infested them whole, one single virus of an idea that got implanted in their heads as a whole and then metastasized like cancer and spread.
 Have you seen my heart?
 Only stories that are truly heartfelt does help in unleashing the hormone for these Cravers, otherwise they just feed on the words and like a flicker they live the story for a moment and then come for you the very next hour,
 Dear Navigator, this was exactly how I had been surviving. Now I am out of time,
 I hear the sound of squelching footsteps and from the dark I see a shadow growing more prominent as it draws near to me,
 I blanch and ready myself for the horror and the shadow emerges and the silhouette brightens to reveal a bluish tinted child with whites for eyes and in disheveled rags, a mere infant approaching me, regarding me with curiosity.
 Struck by a thought so sudden I began, "Once upon a time in a land far far away.. there lived.."
 And the boy's bluish tint gradually decreased and the mist in his eyes evaporated for an instant and I beheld that one rare emotion called Innocence, lying dormant like the last blooming flower in an arid desert.

I went on with the tale,talking about Rapunzel,talking about the Pied Piper,and then finishing with the tale of Noah,these tales awakening gradually from the themes of Innocence to the horror of Reality,

And there before me I saw this child,this tender soul weeping with arms raised as if imploring me to deliver him from this disconcerting life,to take him away into peace,a child of such beauty and fragile radiance,

In another hour he too would come looking for me,alongwith the rest,they are more than a hundred by now, I have failed them,I have doomed myself too,there is no escape,I have to leave the boy there and flee,to continue looking for my heart,

Without it I am doomed to save these people,

Have you seen my heart?

I flee in shame as the boy's cries and mounting wails fade away in the roar of thunder,the water splashed as I moved and the streetlights flickered and sizzled,

Sparks flew and over the distance I could hear the noise made by the Cravers,

This is my story and its not over yet.

I cant tell any more stories without my heart,I have to find it and I have to find her,the Coutesan the one who taught me to dream being a barren one herself,

I have to find my heart for only then can I still hope for a better story,a better future for my people,the whole world hangs in the balance,

I have to find my heart.

Have you seen my heart?

Say Please, Say Thank you.

Santhiya Sivakumar

I miss the music of these phrases. It is not the same, when it is actually not meant and reminds me of, the lack of polite and courteous conversations found with hierarchy in our country. Holding a higher or sophisticated authoritative power, is often miss took and misused as a privilege to neglect the qualities of being sociable. The difference in the ranking may not be so massive. It could be an assistant in any government office, and a person with a complaint. It could be a person conducting a government bus, and a passenger. The assistant might have been chewed off by his boss with a power that makes the assistant lose his temper and take hold of the same inconsiderate power, over a person whom he assumes to be less powerful. The bus conductor could be filled with a sense of owning for the bus. And that false proprietorship leads to his impolite haughty loud attitude. The hierarchy based dominion exists at different levels and different intensities.

The guy in the Indian Customs counter in Chennai International Airport gave my friend a disapproving look when she mistakenly took a different paper form. She was sorry for the chaos. But he didn't spit a word. He rolled his eyes to another counter for the right form. He managed the entire situation without a word. And that is not being shrewd but being churlish. Power must not encourage such demeanour. No person should be daunted with subjugation. Every single one deserves a notion being of being thanked for a good job and not to be tossed around with a rude grim. This issue of social mistreatment we give one another is an upsetting reality. Our culture is facing this issue at a serious rate but it is being ignored easily because it is not considered a crime. This particular kind of power gives a person the leverage to act uncouth and uncivil.

If power lets a person be rude, harsh and irrationally insensitive, then the power is not exercised right. And it has to be. It must be. We need to practice the benefits of mutual respect. As A.G. Gardiner puts it "Please' and 'Thank you' are the small change with which we pay our way as social beings". A respectful manner that we ought to cultivate can make a difference in the society. And all of us need the change.



Chaotic somewhere in the middle of the sea
Ankura Nayak, I MA English



Songs of Innocence
Obiya Jolly, II MA English



Sublime rendition
Ankura Nayak, I MA English



Prayer is man's greatest power
Obiya Jolly, II MA English

