


BRAINWARE UNIVERSITY

# Rhetorica

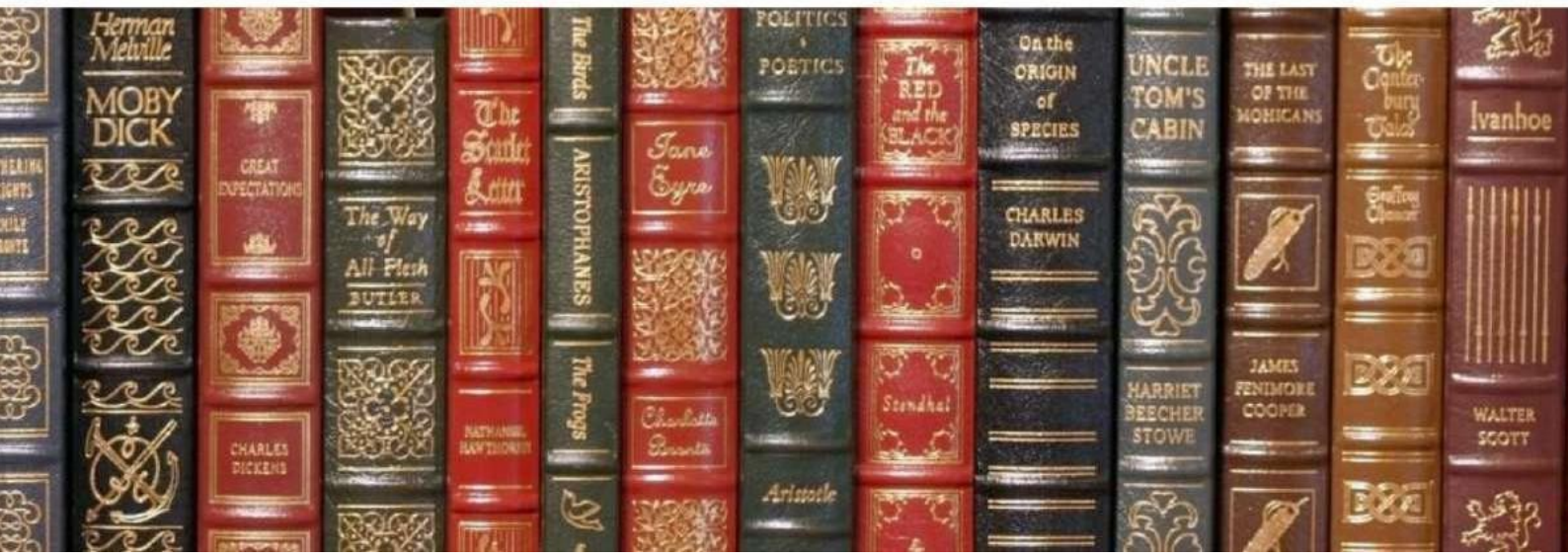
**Department of English & Literary Studies**

Brainware University



# *Rhetorica*


Department of English & Literary Studies
Brainware University
Kolkata 700 125

# *Rhetorica*

## *June, 2024*

Editors: Pritam Bhaumik, Anandi Ghosh

Department of English & Literary Studies
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Barasat, Kolkata 700125
West Bengal, India

## Acknowledgment

This maiden venture was brought to fruition by the contributions and encouragement of many. The Honorable Chancellor of Brainware University, Mr. Phalguni Mookhopadhayay, has been steadfast in his encouragement of the Journal from the very beginning, and has been instrumental in motivating the Editors towards pursuing a standard of excellence.

We are especially grateful to the entire English and Literary Studies Department for extending their support and valuable insights that made possible the inception of *Rhetorica.* We are especially indebted to Mr. Ratul Ghosh, former Assistant Professor, ELS, Brainware University for his invaluable contributions in the designing of *Rhetorica*.

# *Rhetorica*

Issue 1 • June 2024

1-30 Faculty Contributions

1 Adventure in Kipling Country

5 *Hope and Misgivings*

7 Report on the events organized by the English and Literary Studies Department in Even Semester 2022-23

9 Remembrance of what was to come

10 Music for the Disillusioned

15 Poems of Melancholy
*Angels*
*Stand Up Comedy*

18 A Few Books to Peruse

18 *Sophie's World* by Jostein Gaarder [Translated by Paulette Møller: 1994] A Book Review

23 A Reading List

26 Austen and Woolf through a 21st century Lens

28 *Mahanati*: An Ode to the Legendary Actor Savitri

30 *The Room*

32-46 Students' Contributions

32 *The Porter*

34 My First Semester in Brainware University

35 Cityscapes

37 Offbeat

39 Behind the Limelight

35 "Underprivileged, but Not Hopeless": An NGO Report on the Occasion of International Literacy Day



42 Skyscapes
43 *The Brightest Star*
44 The Ouroboros and an Economy of Consumption
46 Inspired Brush Strokes

49-60 Distinguished Contributions

49 Poetry
*Acid Attack*
*On Hold*
*Deal With It*
*On the Death of Kindness*
54 The Rain Dance
60 *Ode to my City*
**Know Our Department**



## Message from the Desk of the HoD

With the demand for creative writing on the rise in Academia and the Corporate sector alike, literary magazines offer an ideal platform for young minds to express their thoughts and feelings to a broader audience. *Rhetorica* aims at offering students and faculty members alike a forum to share their diverse insights on literature and life. The Magazine has striven to facilitate an interplay of the myriad artforms which have been showcased in its maiden issue—from Poetry and Short Stories, to Painting and Photography. I look forward to seeing this ambitious publication making an impact on its readers in the years to come, and consolidating an aesthetic appeal.

The entire experience of giving shape to the inaugural edition of the Magazine has been a delightful one for me. I am immensely grateful to the Editorial and Designing teams for their unwavering commitment to staking out a new path for the Department of English and Literary Studies.

I express my sincere gratitude to all the contributors and wish *Rhetorica* a grand success in its future endeavours.

Dr. Poulomi Mitra

*Head of the Department,*
English and Literary Studies.

## A Letter from the Editors

June 2024.

Dear Readers,

It is with immense pleasure that we bring to light the Inaugural Issue of *Rhetorica,* on behalf of the Department of English and Literary Studies at Brainware University. A sincere thank you to everyone who spent countless hours doting on each word and donning many hats to make this happen. The Department of English and Literary Studies at Brainware University has always been known for their sheer creative brilliance and their out-of-the-box thinking. The 2024 publication brings together a diverse array of artists and writers, all embodying a plethora of voices, passions and stories. We would like to extend our heartfelt congratulations to the Faculty members and the students for the hard work they have put in.

This is the product of the boundless enthusiasm and devotion of the Department of English and Literary Studies. The Editors and the Designers were keen on ensuring the high quality of this Issue. Pulling off this uncompromised vision would not have been possible without the intimate engagement of the Head of the Department, Dr. Poulomi Mitra. It is a matter of tremendous honour to be able to present our collective vision to the Chancellor of Brainware University, Mr. Phalguni Mookhopadhayay.

The Departmental Magazine is committed to providing students and teachers alike with the platform to showcase their creative leanings in the years to come.

For further information about our organization, please email us at
**prb.hu@brainwareuniversity.ac.in**

**adg.hu@brainwareuniversity.ac.in**

Sincerely,

Pritam Bhaumik and Anandi Ghosh

*Rhetorica*

The Editorial team

Department of English and Literary Studies Brainware University.

# Faculty Contributions

# Adventure in Kipling Country

*Dr. Poulomi Mitra*

Associate Professor & HoD, ELS, Brainware University

Going beyond beaches and mountains, we ventured into the forests of Central India last year. The experience certainly managed to make us yearn for the jungle all the more. The forests of Central India have a tremulous beauty, the tall trees all shimmery green, the grasses golden in the wind. The atmosphere of dense solitude is gently broken only by the jungle breeze, rustling leaves, chirping of birds, and the frenzied alarm calls of the tiger land!



The drive from Nagpur to Tadoba offered many picturesque moments. We cruised along cotton plantations, paddy fields, forested hills, idyllic lotus ponds and halted now and then to capture the stunning views in store—the magical vermillion sky, peasants returning from the fields and the sinking sun peeping through the thick foliage at dusk. As night descended on Moharli village, we finally entered tiger territory.

Having spent the night in excitement and anticipation, we were all set to explore the secrets of the wild in the wee hours of the morning at Tadoba National Park. This wasn't our first game drive in the jungles of Central India in search of Sher Khan–the elusive big cat that Rudyard Kipling affectionately immortalised in *The Jungle Book*. Despite the lack of a sighting so far, we had learnt to love the surprises offered by the jungle—a plethora of fascinating experiences many of which the camera had failed to capture—a herd of barasingha emerging out of tall grass, a spotted deer leaping in golden dusk, a huge sambar deer

blocking the narrow mud path and an unforgettable starry night. All these would remain with us as indelible memories brought back from *Kanha National Park*.

Day 1: Moharli Core

On day 1 we set out to explore the core zone of Moharli. By the roadside, as we crossed the buffer zone, we spotted a massively built Indian Gaur/bison with a



gigantic head, upwardly curved horns and white stalkings from hoof to hock. Across the river, the forest was quiet, full of promise in the morning light. As we ventured into its innermost regions, the woods became thick and dense, such that we had to keep breaking the branches that obstructed our path as we advanced forward. We were greeted by langurs shaking the branches above, a kingfisher perching on a tree, sloth bears in search of *mohua*, the *dhol* (wild dog), a crocodile and much more. But no sight of Sher Khan yet. As the pursuit continued, a fork in the road presented itself, and our driver instinctively stopped the vehicle as he spotted the fresh pugmarks of the big cat. Shahnaz, an expert tracker, was our guide for the day. From her we learnt that the tigress Sonam's cubs had been spotted in the early morning hours near a water body. We headed towards the water body with anticipation in our hearts. There was pin-drop silence and we focused on auditory clues: any sound of movement, deer and langurs sending alarm calls were all signs of the predator's presence nearby. As we drove through the dense bamboo woods, fresh dew drops fell upon us before making contact with the jungle floor. The jungle came alive with its exotic aromas. Predominantly strong among them was the scent of wild Tulsi (Basil). Soon we came across a wildlife photographer from Bangalore in another gypsy. He had been waiting patiently exactly at that spot for hours now. He

pointed towards the tall grass and the adjacent waterhole in the distance and said that a big cat was right there. We halted and after a rather long wait we saw the bright stripes—the back and tail of a sub adult that soon disappeared into the grassland before the camera lens could freeze the moment. Thus, the chase began afresh. We followed the calls and spotted yet another male sub adult bathing in a waterhole. A row of gypsies competed for strategic positions around the water body. The show continued for a while and slowly he rose from the water, and disappeared into the bushes. We were thrilled!

And now the twist in the tale....

All the gypsies left one by one as the big cat disappeared. But Shehnaz, who had heard a growl from a distance even before we had reached the waterhole, insisted that we wait because the growl indicated that the mother was close to her cubs. We waited on in absolute silence. To our surprise, within a few minutes, the tigress Sonam emerged in all her glory from the tall grasslands, right in front of our gypsy like a ghost! For a moment we froze then



and there. As adrenaline pumped through our veins, we could barely breathe. A low growl reverberated and she locked her eyes with ours as she advanced. We began to retreat cautiously, maintaining a distance



of four feet between us and the beast.

The catwalk continued for quite some time before she walked into the dense jungle leaving us speechless and exhilarated!!
Our ‘Sherni’ Shehnaz truly deserved to be celebrated as the ‘Lady of the Jungle’ for her intimate knowledge of the tiger land.

They may be watching you all the time, even when you believe there's nothing around!
They are watching you even when you aren't seeing them....

Day 2- Devada Buffer Zone-Morning Safari.

This time we were fortunate to have yet another expert tracker, Manoj. Ours was the first gypsy that spotted this massive male tiger resting amidst bamboo bushes so dense that we almost drove past the spot. We had almost given up hope when suddenly Manoj stood up in excitement and the driver pulled

the brake with a jerk. And there he was.... Bajrang! He had walked into the TATR from Kanha. The sight left me speechless. I couldn't take my eyes off him even for a second. The huge size of his face, his grumpy mood and piercing gaze made my heart skip a beat. It was truly an unforgettable moment! The anticipation of seeing the fabled yet elusive beast, coupled with the acute alertness of having to move with the beast in sight is a hypnotic melange of sensations that cannot be captured in language. It seems surreal now in retrospect. This episode will persist in my memory for a long time. There is something enigmatic in these woodlands—their emerald green and the wonders they camouflage. As long as these forests beckon, I would always have an incentive to escape the drudgery of life and lose myself in the magical Kipling country.



# Hope and Misgivings

*Pritam Bhaumik*

Assistant Professor, ELS, Brainware University

Habit. The dawn of one's reflection on
the glass pane of the door.
The day's demands still await. Unsure, one
pauses, and seeks traces
of footsteps, left behind
by known marauders. Austere. Blind.
In these parts now bogged with marble.
Children of the arable earth, inured
to birds and holy babble.

Here were (more) trees, presumably,
That since made way for partitioned rooms with
arabesques that stave off
a cavalcade of words.
Too laden, too barren. Some tenderness in the pith,
though remains.

But all is flux, and our
words are replaced daily,
and fall asunder to
the sluggish trail of our planet's orbit.
These are all we inherit and transmit.
—that grow tuberous, or into caryatids to
leverage your daily conversation.

The day ends in levity, for the ones
homeward-bound. Sifters of revelation.
You, who are another,
know the tale already;
but do not know your way around the hall
of mirrors. Oh, spirits of time!
In you, I see stardust,
rimming the cosmic grime, I too

once bore and braided into rhyme.

You are trees, mycelial sprawl, tunnelling
underneath the earth, endless and nowhere,
that will climb through these ceilings with
their gravel-footed roots,
and blister our gaze with new rain.
Some of you will unbind the very seams
holding these books in place,
or toss them off, thinking them cold and vain.
Some will kindle oceans, that is,
once you unmoor the hull and the cordage.

But, if profound sensation disenchant language,
flit off. No longer fireflies that
render the world intelligible, but
world-builders of their own.
Perhaps that will shelter someday some of the words that I have sown.

# Report on the events organized by the English and Literary Studies Department in Even Semester 2022-23

*Kunal Barman*
Assistant Professor, ELS, Brainware University

Department of English and Literary Studies, Brainware University had organized a number of events in the last semester. After the commencement of the Even Semester 2023, the department had organized a Three-Day Workshop on Editing and Publication Management in the month of February. The workshop was conducted by Dr. Saswata Banerjee, founder of Magic Seeds Books LLP





Months of planning and dedication turned out to be fruitful when the Department successfully organized its 1st International Conference on Literature, Film and Web Adaptation in the month of March where a number of Indian and foreign professors, scholars and students participated and presented their enlightening papers.





The Department also organized a social outreach programme titled “Spreading the Colours of Happiness” in the month of March to stretch a hand of help towards few underprivileged members of the society. The little we could do gave us immense joy and pleasure.




The Department organized a seminar on Gender Sensitization titled "Engaging Boys and Young Men in Gender Equality". The speaker of the session was Ms. Ronita Biswas, Assistant Teacher of Garden High International School. The Seminar was organized to promote the ideas and ways to achieve gender equality in society in which boys and young men could play a key role, as believed by the speaker.

Overall, the last semester was an eventful one for the department and we hope to conduct more such events for the students in near future.

# Remembrances of what was to come

*Shrestha Chatterjee*

Assistant Professor, ELS

"*When I reached my bed I too cried out: We're men, we are tired, not wretched*"

-*W.S. di Pierro.*

I can't remember if I was ever truly happy? The panorama of my past continues to fade silently and inconsolably as time marches on at its unforgiving pace leaving my heart arid. Sometimes a feeling wells up within me at the thought of losing my grip on the past but like all things it passes as I wake and think, and forget. Here it is again, the painful feeling of a breath clawing itself out of my chest and into existence after being submerged underwater for ever. Happiness is like a strange bird that alights on my shoulder with the feather-light touch of a half-forgotten long beloved voice that calls me with a name that has died. It is there in my brother's shy smile that sits oddly on his growing face, like the gentle yet demanding pats of my dada's hand as he coaxes me to get up, get up right now. Some of it remains in the lost corridors of all those halls we used to walk, the classrooms where we boldly discussed the dreams of a forgotten future. It is there in meetings and partings. I can feel it in the warmth of my grandmother's hand framing my face gently, so gently. It is there in shared lunches, in whispered secrets and the gentle scolding of all those who treat me gently. It is there in the smiles on my students' faces and the smiles on mine. It is the wish to stand beside them in every photograph and in all the hands I want to hold forever. It is in the jokes we share and the stories we don't. It is part of all the reasons I feel stripped to the bones like something has withered within me, but the embers continue to light up the path and lead me home like flashes from a distant lighthouse. The patchwork of dreams remains.

# Music for the Disillusioned

*Pritam Bhaumik*
Assistant Professor, ELS, Brainware University

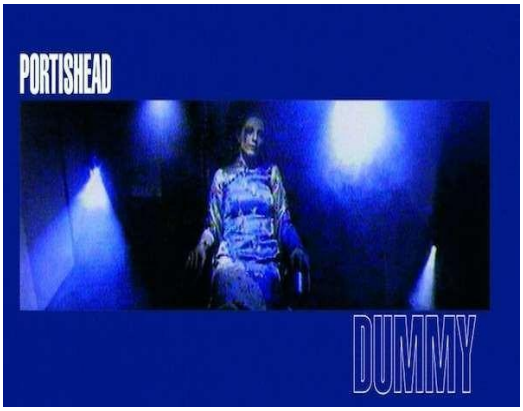
The following list appears in no particular order, whether chronologically as per the release date of the album, or by generic grouping. In fact, the lack of order is meant to mimic life- bewildering, inchoate, gorgeous and evanescent in its dismissal of your/our queries and qualms. Some of these may attach themselves to certain colours, smells and become mired with memories you haven't had yet or have had already.

Feast on the cascade of harmonies. "Come as you are". "Lose yourself".




1. "The Dancer", P. J. Harvey [1995]

For the album To Bring You My Love to end on a note of accentuated, almost operatically rendered grief of losing one's beloved brings it to an unexpected closure. The note of defeat that comes at the end, despite the promissory salvation voiced in the beginning of the song ("He came riding fast like a phoenix out of fire-flames") bursts through as a screech—a primordial how that refuses to accept the loss, by lying down. The opulence of Gothic melancholia doesn't take away from the unflinching intensity of the piece. You do not dance to this song, rather feel it swerve within you, haunting you as you stave off death and long evermore.



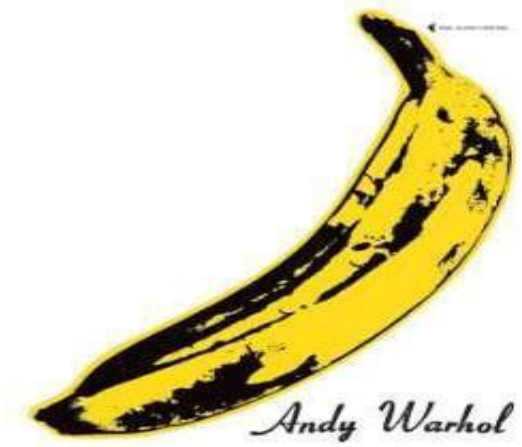

2. "Roads". Portishead [1994]

Beth Gibbons' harrowing battle-hymn is about choosing and accepting one's road(s) in life. The process, tinged with the recognition of pain and solitude, flitters gently across a landscape that seems flat, grainless, unremitting in its indifference towards the individual at the crossroads. Never has been a voice as powerful and a bass more trenchant made to induce such excruciating agony, such trepidation that falls short of breath. I mean it. Bated breath is what I end with on the last note, with the last feeble muttering of "this wrong".




3. "As", Stevie Wonder [1977]

The entire album (and not just the song) houses what I feel are the best grooves ever made in popular music till date. High praise, notwithstanding my limited musical forays, but a well-deserved one, given the incredulous, almost surrealistic images conjured by the song. There's a reason why this song, covered many times by multiple artists, hails from the "Classic" period of the musical genius. It is a masterclass on generic hybridization, a visionary statement on life, an affirmation of the power of love. And not in a corny or cheesy way.




4. "Venus in Furs", The Velvet Underground [1967]

Students of literature, take note. This is the epitome of avant-garde (you may be familiar with the martial connotation of the originary term) music in the Sixties, a decade rocked by turmoil and incessant torpor on many fronts. The hypnotic twangy whip of John Cale's viola renders the figure of "whiplash girl child in the dark" into a nightmarish reality (depending on what your nightmares are made of, of course). A literary tribute to the pleasures and pains of masochism, its shimmering brilliance cascades through the sights of shiny leather, and brings forth the punk ethos that would only emerge in its name a decade later.




5. "Sometimes I feel I'm a Motherless Child", Odetta [1961]

This is the chanteuse about whom Maya Angelou had famously remarked:

"If only one could be sure that every fifty years a voice and a soul like Odetta's would come along, the centuries would pass so quickly and painlessly we would hardly recognize time."

The pain. Of black slaves singing in the

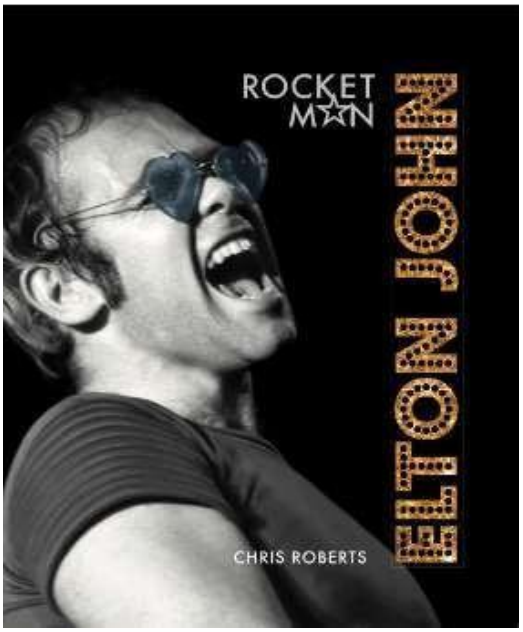
plantations. Longing for God. For release. For an end to days. Close your eyes and bathe in the

baptismal bliss of the harmony hummed by the backing vocals, that feel less like human grief, and more like a specter guiding the grieved towards absolution.



6. "I just want to see his face", The Rolling Stones [1972]

That the song has been eclipsed by the other contributions from this behemoth of an album astounds me. Wanting to see God's face is staggering given that the invincibility of faith should suffice, at least for the faithful. Oh, well. Jagger's high-strung and exaggerated falsetto seems so incongruous with the kernel of the gospel tune at play, but does make for a recording that reminds one of a Church ceremony. Boundless ecstasy for the exiled.




7. "Rocket Man", Elton John [1972]

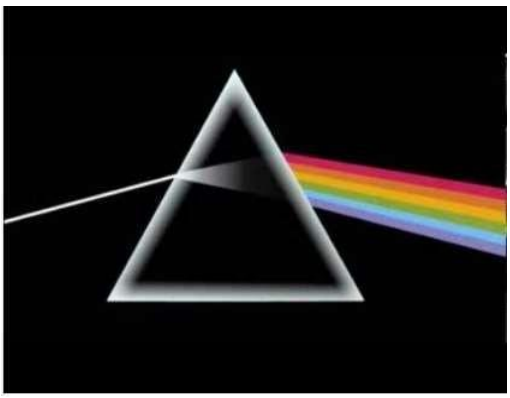
If there ever was a voice that embodies the music of the soul for me, it would be this man. Not that you should care; but you should care about the man aboard a rocket trip to Mars, professing to be "burning up his fuse up here alone." The droned-out glacial sound of the guitar culminates in one man's doomed recognition of his own fall down the cosmic ladder. There is unsentimental drudgery and a kind of raw unembellished pathos (remember King Lear's "unaccommodated man") that should keep you off of some of the pretentious stuff that is churned out now.



8. "If You Go Away", Helen Merrill

featuring Stan Gatz [1989]

This is the most subdued and heart-wrenching of the many adaptations made of Jacques Brel's classic "Ne me quitte pas". Beyond the melange of jazzy restraint and an elegant way of dealing with the loss of love (reminiscent of Joan Didion), this is a timeless gem. That dissipates, undermining its own resplendence. Never one to shine bright, never one to let go.



9. "The Great Gig in The Sky", Pink Floyd [1972]

Has there ever been a more iconic album cover? A concept album that is a more comprehensive survey of human greed, avarice, madness, war, and of the collapse of human civilization? I think-eth not.

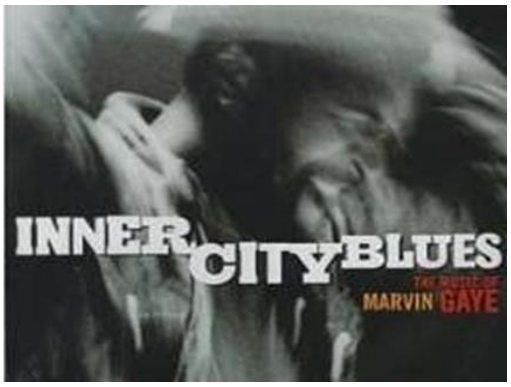
Well, the story goes that session vocalist Claire Torry was taken into the studio and asked to sing long, mellifluous notes after being shown images of war, madness and horror. The result is this exquisitely strung oceanic sprawl of music, that sweeps through every conceivable shade of anger and grief, that has since peered into light away from "the dark side of the moon".




10. "Famous Blue Raincoat", Leonard Cohen [1971]

"What can I tell you, my killer, my brother?/
What can I possibly say?/
I guess that I miss you, guess I forgive you/
I'm glad you stood in my way."

The prophetic utterances on love and hate, pivoted around the specter of Jane and her famous blue raincoat, are brought to illumination by the angelic backing vocals on this track. Not even Joan Baez could do this track justice in her cover of the song, and that's saying something! The devastating placid strokes with which the narrator sings of his despair evokes his forlorn days in New York and stands testament to the woes of the male ego, reduced to a blur, a vessel of memories.




11. "Inner City Blues", Marvin Gaye [1971]

This bluesy funk tune which is a poignant commentary on the socio-political inequities in Inner Detroit, was not far from the Black American imaginary during the George Floyd protests. There is more than the voice of one disgruntled, disenfranchised, brutalised soul chiming in Gaye's soulful refrain that is less of a query and more of an anguished demonstration: "What's going on?" If you haven't listened to him yet, you're missing out.



12. "Sponge", Vic Chesnutt [1991]

This is a song that sounds, feels, suffocates, and grips like a creature borne of the ultimate howl during the end of times, except that it comes from one man, innocuous in appearance and stranded in his wheelchair for the majority of his short life. For those unfamiliar with Chesnutt, he was blessed with a voice that could wrench the devil out of every soul. The world is a sponge absorbing the rancour of the streets, the phoniness of the earth, and within it, one man, aware of the dying of his days, who screams away at the unremitting cesspool that is the world.

# Poems of Melancholy

*Utsab Ray*

Assistant Professor, ELS, Brainware University

.

(1)

**"ANGELS"**

You, clutching the railing

Of your fifth floor balcony

Thinking if to step over or not

Your half lit figure,

Your white robe flutters in the wind,

The hair undone, the heart too full.

The empty bottle of whiskey on the table,

The empty paper you stared blankly at

Through an empty hour,

Days, weeks, the empty years,

The room, the world that you intend

To leave empty of you tonight -

A heart too full!

A plunge

Into the darkness, into the arms

Of the stranger you haven't yet met,

The stranger who waits patiently down below.

Across the emptiness

Between you and the balcony opposite

Transpires a whisper.

You standing there

And I dreaming of your face in my sleep,

We are the angels of the night.

(2)

**'STAND UP COMEDY'**

The backdrop is basic,

A brick wall, true to its composition.

A merchant of laughter

Is setting the evening on fire.

I sit faceless in the crowd

Joining the uproar with every cue,

Ignoring the backdrop that might remind me

Of that Pink Floyd song

No, it's not time for that music yet.

And so it goes. Comedy.

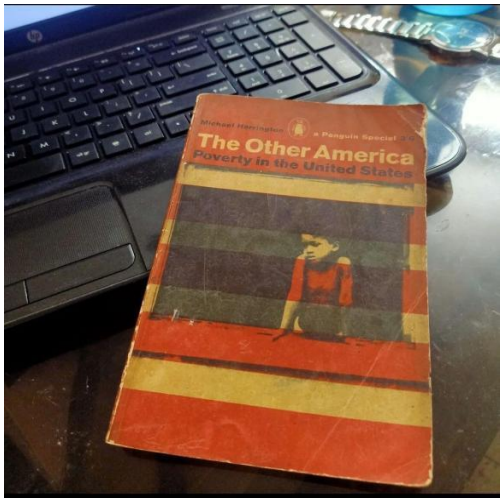
It's only after all's said and done,
The overpriced drinks (oh, don't mind that,
we've all paid with our lives for a good time,
have we not),
It is only after that brick wall is gone,
That one walks back
Almost catching themselves singing
Half forgotten lines -

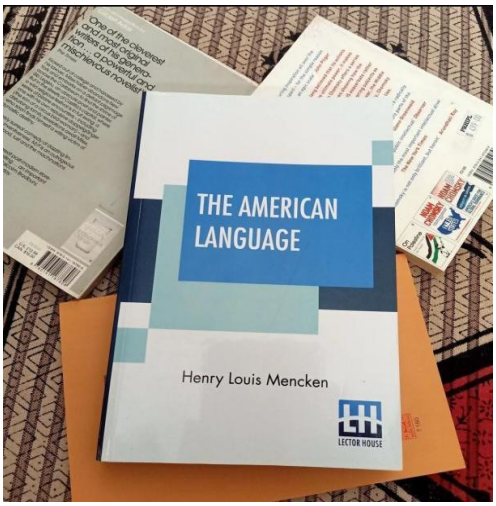
'Tum itna jo muskura rahe ho...'

# A Few Books to Peruse

*Ratul Ghosh*

Former Assistant Professor, ELS, Brainware University




Name: *The Other America*
Author: Micheal Harrington
Year of publication: 1962
Published by: Penguin Books USA

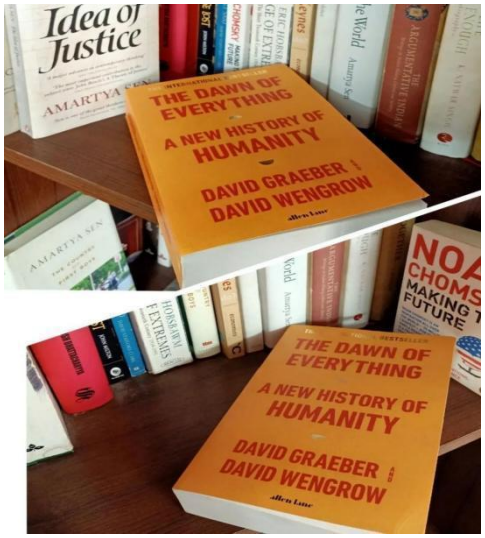
The Other America, by one of the most influential advocates of socialist democracy in the USA, Micheal Harrington, writes the truth of poverty in America that mostly remains hidden behind the imagery of the 'affluent society', which is deliberately projected by the big kahunas of High Street. Poverty, and the way it manifests itself, is idiosyncratic to the nation afflicted by said socio-economic condition. The US of A is no exception to the same. This book is a fine read by one of the most authentic and authoritative commentators on the issue, in the United States. I highly recommend this book.

Another fine publication from Penguin Books USA.

Name: The American Language
Author: Henry Louis Mencken
Year of publication: 1919
Published by: Lector House

The American Language, by Henry Louis Mencken - and published, or should I say reproduced, by Lector House - was first published in 1919. It is a wonderful work, worth preserving, that reads like a timeless classic today. It is sure to prove to be a riveting read to both the serious student of linguistics and language studies as well as those who are uninitiated, yet, ardently curious about things linguistic. A master work on the growth and development of American English, it has not lost its historical value and relevance, even in light of the latest advancements in the field of language sciences, - rather it has aged like a bottle of fine wine. A must read for those who are interested in the history of the

English language, the rise of American English as a distinct variety, historical linguistics, sociolinguistics, language usage and about the varieties & dialects of any language. The text is beautiful and




amazingly accessible.

Name: The Dawn of Everything

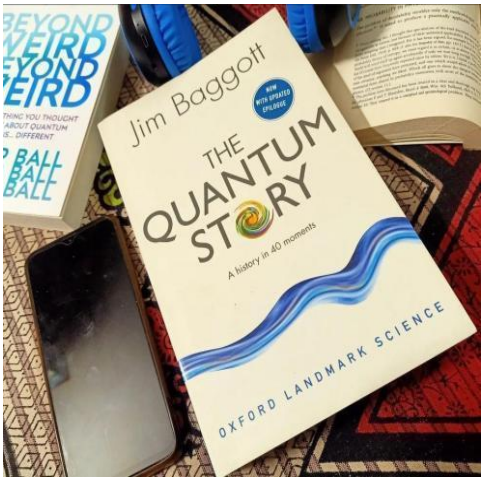
Author: David Graeber

Year of publication: 2021

Published by: Penguin Books USA

My latest purchase - The Dawn of Everything: A New History of Humanity, by the late Prof. David Graeber and his friend & colleague, Prof. David Wengrow, published by Allen Lane (an imprint of Penguin Books) - is an international bestseller!!! This was the very last book that the world renowned anthropologist, Prof. David Graeber, of the London School of Economics, authored, prior to his sad and premature demise in 2020, allegedly due to COVID-19.

This book shall bear as a glowing testimony to the intellect and activism of Prof. Graeber, for generations to come.




Name: The Quantum Story

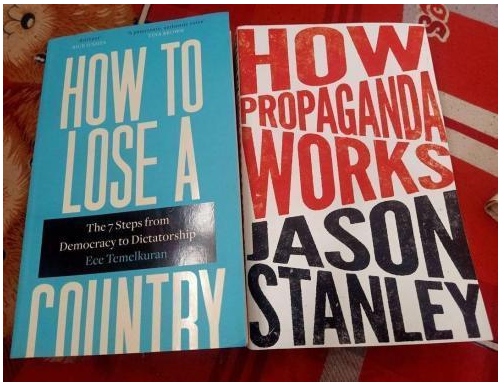
Author: Jim Baggott

Year of publication: 2011

Published by: Oxford University Press

Reading this book has been an exhilarating experience. Presenting the history of the Quantum Revolution in just 40 moments - without losing any clarity nor compromising on the elegance of this massive scholarly endeavour is truly an amazing feat by Jim Baggott. The Quantum Story is such an incredible read! Reading it is highly recommended!

And kudos to the venerable Oxford University Press for publishing the books as a part of the Oxford Landmark Science series.

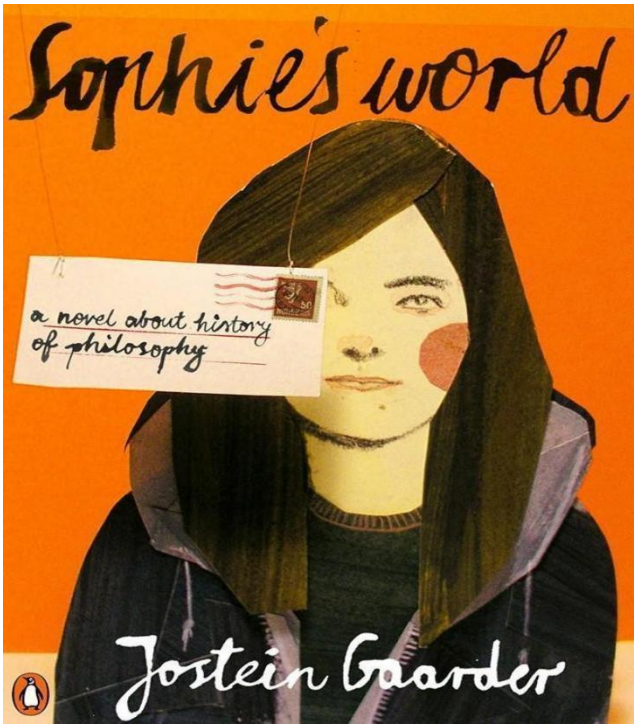



Left to Right:

| | |
|---|---|
| Name: How To Lose A Country<br><br>Author: Ece Temelkuran<br><br>Year of publication: 2019<br><br>Published by: Fourth Estate | Name: How Propaganda Works<br><br>Author: Jason Stanley<br><br>Year of publication: 2021<br><br>Published by: Princeton University Press |

My latest acquisitions promise to be timely reads of immense contemporary pertinence. I recommend all to take up the two titles and more of such similar literature/research/commentaries to steer clear of propaganda and the nuanced techniques of subjugation - be wary of the signs of a democracy decaying into a dictatorship.

*How to Lose a Country* by Ece Temelkuran and *How Propaganda Works* by Jason Stanley are highly appropriate reads.




# *Sophie's World* by Jostein Gaarder [Translated by Paulette Møller: 1994] A Book Review

*Kunal Barman*

Assistant Professor, ELS, Brainware University

Sophie Amundsen, a fifteen year old Norwegian girl, lives a rather ordinary life in the small town of Crescent Cove. One
fine day after coming back from school, she comes across two letters in her mailbox containing two questions:

"Who are you?"

"Where does the world come from?"

Quite naturally, the unknown letters and more importantly, the questions puzzle Sophie. She starts thinking about the creation of the world and why it was created at all. The next letter contains typewritten pages detailing information about the *History of Philosophy* by Alberto Knox. Who is he? We come to know about him in the course of the novel.

The narrative proceeds with a series of letters which Sophie receives from the same person. The letters in fact turn out to be a crash course on philosophy, both for Sophie and the readers. The letters trace the ideas and philosophical thoughts of Classical thinkers like Democritus, Socrates and Plato and carry over into the Victorian and

Modern eras through thinkers like Darwin, Marx and Freud.

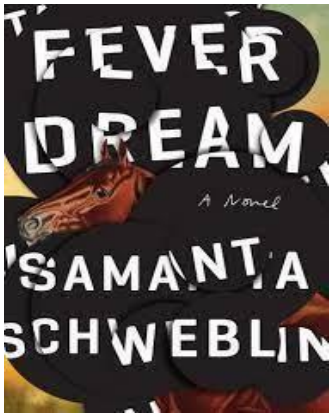
However, a puzzle continues to befuddle Sophie. Though she finds the letters in her mailbox, not all these contain her name. Some of the letters are in fact written for someone called Hilde Moeller Knag. Who is she? How is she connected to Sophie? The mystery unfolds as the narrative proceeds.

*Sophie's World* presents before us a world of "Philo-sophy" ["Philo-Sophia" literally translates to the love for wisdom] in its rudimentary form. It can be read as a beginner's guide to Western philosophical ideas. What makes this book interesting, however, is its fictional approach towards complex philosophical theories. Gaarder has been successful in interpellating intricate theoretical ideas into an otherwise riveting plot. This book reminded me of *Glimpses of World History* whereby Jawarhalal Nehru tried to enlighten his daughter about global political and historical trajectories through a series of letters. Needless to say that this book should be on your to-read list if you are a Philosophy enthusiast. It can be an excellent resource for dipping your feet in the fundamentals of Philosophy before diving deep into the oceanic sprawl of Western Philosophy.

# A Reading List

*Shrestha Chatterjee*

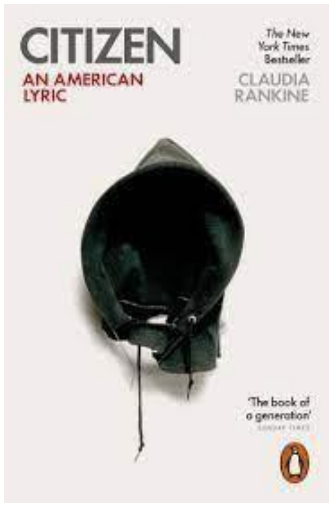
Assistant Professor, ELS, Brainware University




Book Name: *Fever Dream* Author: Samanta Schweblin Published: 2014

*Fever Dream* by Samantha Schweblin

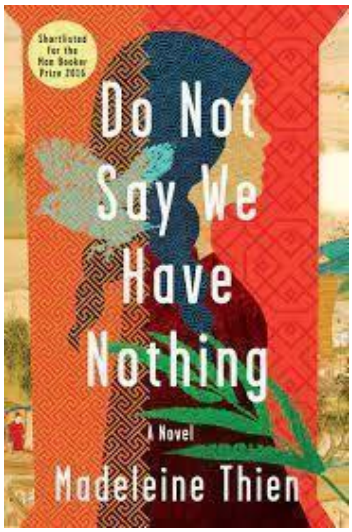
Engrossing. Surreal. Disorienting. Schweblin's novella leaves the readers gasping for breath as they are forced to witness the characters' descent into death and madness.




Book Name: *Citizen*: *An American Lyric*
Author: Claudia Rankine
Published: 2014

*Citizen*: *An American Lyric* by Claudia Rankine

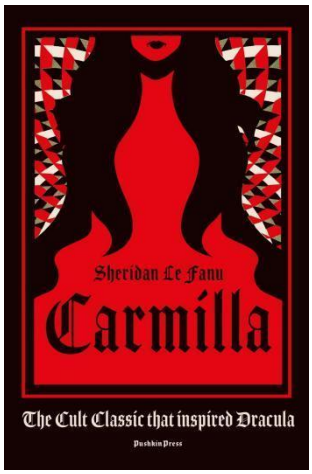
Rankine's book is an unflinching portrait of race relations in America written with a curious blend of poetry, prose, and mixed media that makes us question our own complicity.




Book Name: *Do Not Say We Have Nothing*
Author: Madeleine Thien
Published: 2016

*Do Not Say We Have Nothing* by Madeleine Thein

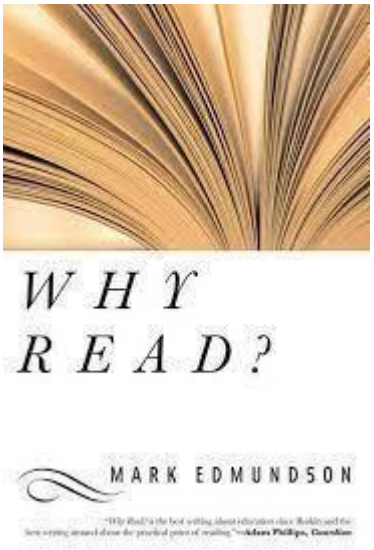
Thein's intergenerational story is a tender ode to music and the little ways in which love and stories linger even when humans cannot.




Book Name: *Carmilla*
Author: Sheridan Le Fanu
Published: 1872

*Carmilla* by Sheridan Le Fanu

A dark gothic tale surrounding two women, *Carmilla* is often credited to be the first vampire tale in the English language. Read if you are interested in sexual intrigue and vampires




Book Name: *Why Read?*
Author: Mark Edmundson
Published: 2004

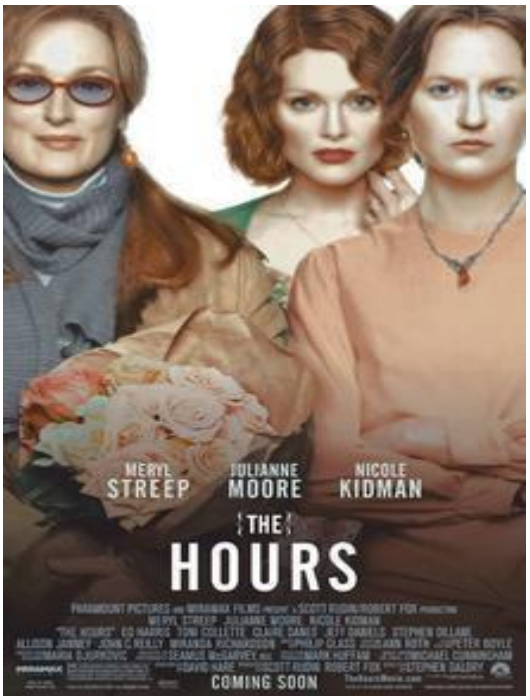
*Why Read?* by Mark Edmundson

Renowned author, teacher and critic, Mark Edmundson, advocates for the serious pursuit of literature and discourages fellow members of the teacher fraternity from reducing the entire discipline for nothing more than a source of facile entertainment, fit to be pursued casually, so as to make it relevant to the lives of all those who turn to reading.

# Austen and Woolf through a 21st century Lens

*Dr. Poulomi Mitra*

Associate Professor & HoD, ELS, Brainware University




**Virginia Woolf in the 2002 film *The Hours:***

The biopic has emerged as a popular mode of film making in contemporary culture. Like its literary counterpart—the biography, the biopic too is a fascinating but complex and hybrid genre interlacing the 'real' and the 'reel'.

Directed by Stephen Daldry, with a screenplay by David Hare, the 2002 film *The Hours* is an adaptation of Cunningham's 1998 novel of the same name. Cunningham's novel in turn uses the original working title of Woolf's novel and bears an intimate correspondence with *Mrs. Dalloway* (1925). Cunningham's novel, *The Hours* engages with many of Woolf's themes, and often simulates Woolf's writing style while echoing her distinct voice. Like many adaptations, it underscores certain themes in Woolf's text and re-presents them in contemporary contexts. However, Cunningham's decision to introduce Woolf as a character in his novel makes *The Hours* different from other adaptations of Woolf's texts. *The Hours* becomes much more than a mere adaptation of Woolf's novel *Mrs. Dalloway*; rather, it transmutes the figure of the renowned yet enigmatic author herself.




***Becoming Jane*:**

Hollywood screened Jane Austen's works for the very first time in 1940 when *Pride and Prejudice*, starring Laurence Olivier and Greer Garson, was produced. Since then several cinematic adaptations and TV dramatizations have followed, resulting in what is often referred to as 'Austenmania'. From 1995- 1996,

the Austen fever spread: from then on all her novels have been adapted for the screen numerous times.

Austen's cultural legacy in the present age, however, is gleaned not only from the multiple adaptation of her works, but also from the screening of the woman in a series of recent biopics.

Austen biopic *Becoming Jane* (dir. Julian Jarrold, Screenplay by Kevin Hood and Sarah Williams (2007)) . The title of the film *Becoming Jane* seems to be taken directly from Jon Hunter Spence's biography *Becoming Jane Austen* (2003).

The film has some interesting moments to offer. One such scene is when Austen meets Ann Radcliffe. There is no historical evidence that such a meeting ever took place between them; however, Austen had certainly read her works. In the course of this imaginary meeting, Radcliffe inspires Austen to embark on a literary career and also illustrates the challenges faced by female writers at that time. Radcliffe explains to Austen how her independence was won 'at a cost'. She states how in those days, 'to have a wife who had (has) a mind is considered not quite proper. To have a wife with a literary reputation was (is) nothing short of scandalous'. Through this scene in particular, the screenwriters have compellingly demonstrated some of the more pervasive impediments women writers had to conquer in order to enter the heavily male-dominated 'literary marketplace'. It is in these very moments that the biopic comes to stake its claim as an autonomous artistic text, even while 'inventing' or fictionalizing that which has no historical basis.

# *Mahanati*: An Ode to the Legendary Actor Savitri

*Merry Baghwar*

Assistant Professor, ELS, Brainware University



MAHANATI SAVITRI

*Mahanati Savitri*: An Ode to Legendary Actor Savitri
Cast: Keerthy Suresh, Dulquer Salmaan, Samantha Akkineni and Vijay Deverakonda.
Director: Nag Ashwin.
Rating: 3.5.

The queen of Tamil and Telugu cinema, Mahanati Savitri is popularly known for having starred in three hundred films. Keerthy Suresh, one of the best Tollywood actors in the Indian film industry, nails the biopic of the actor Savitri. In the film, Savitri's husband, Gemini Ganesh's character is played with finesse by Dulquer Salmaan, an established actor of Kannada and Telugu cinema.

Born as Nissankara, Savitri was the victim of envy, jealousy, as well as physical and psychological violence at the hands of her husband, Ganeshan. It was her staggering fame that was in some ways responsible for the life of misery that she led. It is beyond dispute that Ganeshan never could accept for his wife the love of her fans, her brilliance and her stardom. The legendary Savitri was in fact. one of the highest-paid Indian actors of her era, and well-known by the epithet, Mahanati.

To recall a short clip from the movie, Mahanati, the Director had asked the heroine to shed two teardrops from one eye, with the other casting love and ecstasy. The bottle of glycerine the actor was using fell, however, and when the scene fell through consequently, the Director decided to pack up for the day. Savitri, however, was not one to give up, and insisted that she would pull off the scene without the glycerine. The determination to do justice to the vision of the filmmaker despite circumstantial adversities, quickly brought her renown in film circles.

In retrospect, The Mahanati earned the adoration of the masses due to her acting presence and her on-screen presence. Apart from being an acclaimed actor, she was also a playback singer, dancer, director and producer. At one point in her career, she had garnered renown for producing films in both Telugu and Tamil. She would eventually make the transition to Kannada, Hindi

and Malayalam cinema, and concluded her stellar career with over two hundred and fifty films in her bag!

Her public eminence infuriated her spouse, Gemini Ganeshan, who gradually began to resent her fame and nurture hatred and envy for her. What started off as a bridge between the spouses soon led to Ganeshan's deeming himself a relative failure in the coordinates of an industry that had elevated her to such monumental heights.

Ironic to think that it was Ganeshan who had paved the path for Savitri in the film industry! She had fallen in love, married and settled with Ganeshan. How exquisite her life must have seemed in the beginning!

The discovery of such unexpected resentment in Ganeshan, compounded with the news of his adulterous liaison (whereby he ensured that Savitri would be bereft of the limelight) certainly devastated the actor. The turn of events takes a toll on her physical and emotional health. She begins resorting to alcohol as a means of escaping the grief and putting herself to sleep. She spiralled into addiction, and became a recluse. She began neglecting her children, and dismissing all offers as well as prospective achievements and awards from the industry that had given her so much! Grief begot grief, as her trusted servant went on to snatch her assets and money away from her. The legendary actor must have felt despondent at not having known the requisite speech to use or the right maneuver to keep things afloat.

Savitri had a complete breakdown that led to a rather unfortunate end to her life. By the time her name was besmirched in the industry, her will to live and prosper had extinguished. She struggled with a plethora of ongoing issues till her last days. It was only when she went into a coma for fourteen months that a discerning journalist began researching the life and career of Savitri. This masterpiece of a film seeks to portray the woman's myriad strengths, and not give into sensationalism and her supposed failures. Director Nag Ashwin has depicted with trenchant beauty and pathos the life and career of the veteran actor, Savitri.

# The Room

*Alankar Das Dalal*

Assistant Professor, ELS, Brainware University

## The Room

Another new day yet the same old story.

The room is still locked.

You wake up and look out of the window. Nothing has changed.

You scream but only to be ignored by all.

Silence.

Today the room looks smaller than yesterday.

You read the newspaper. No vacancies anywhere even today.

There has been a fire in the cinema hall. One dead, few injured.

England has defeated Germany by two goals.

Partial lockdown has been extended for the next two weeks.

You look out of the window.

You scream.

Silence.

The room seems even smaller.

You take your bath.

You see four WhatsApp messages. Logging in.

You have online classes from 10:40.

You open your laptop. You feel a sudden ache in the left hand near the shoulder.

You realise the pain of the vaccination has not yet subsided.

You check your mailbox.

One Google sheet to be filled by 12 noon, one event to be reported by 3pm.

The four walls of your room seem to be closing in.

You hear a scream of your neighbour from the window.

Silence.

You take the classes, cover the event and have your lunch.

The walls have come very close now.

Your bed is only a thin bench and the window reduced to a single pane.

You check WhatsApp status.

Funny memes. Students worried with exam. People getting vaccinated.

Another mail. Meeting from 6pm.

You see the wall consuming your bed.

You have murdered sleep, you shall sleep no more.

Silence.

The meeting begins.

The window in your room has disappeared.

The walls have cornered you from all sides.

No room to move.

You scream but can hear no voice.

Darkness.

Silence.

# Students' Contributions

# The Porter

*Al Minar Mahmudur Reza*

B.A English, 2nd Year, Brainware University

Here's a knocking indeed— On
the gate of Hell by the fire:
Knock, knock! Who in the name of Lucifer
Comes in this deadly hour of darkest desire?
Desire? Ha! The night's so dark, suits favourable
For a man to die by a murder so cruel
That even sons committing patricide would fear, Even
the ravens that caw, caw by the shore Would be alarmed
by the knocking on the door. Knock, knock! Knocking
on the door,
As to remind, "Ah, look! A farmer from the lore Where
he hung himself but couldn't hang
The season which came, rang and sang Of full
harvest of a year—alas! Alas!
Greedy farmer died with greedy hopes, thus.
Knock, knock! Ah, I smell gunpowder here Foul
is the smell yet foul is fair,
Or is fair foul? Oh, my dear!

In sleep a king waking to no matter, Sleep's
peace and a good equivocator
Of senses and senseless: unnatural in nature, Yet the
king sleeps well in this cold, cold hell, Yet does he
not know? It is in such hour
Ambitious men grow filthy desire

And commits crime, oops- unspeakable! Knock,
Knock! Who's there? Oh, look a tailor! Came to give
me tight clothes, how you dare? You may roast your
goose in here,
But why say, 'tis the fit I give to make French hose While you
cut away fabric from my clothes
No matter, no matter! Trot in

For all of you are invited for a greater scheme. Knock,
knock! Ah! Almost a beating heart

Like that of a murderer who did their art And
now wash hands yet not a spot clear, All must
unveil soon, oh my dear!
Knock, knock! Anon, anon!

Must be some witches from land unknown! Halt,
halt! The man is here—
So very soon truth shall you hear, Till
then, I pray you, son or daughter
Remember me, my words, remember the porter.

# My First Semester at Brainware University

*Anushka Chaudhuri*

M.A, English, 2nd Year, Brainware University

On November 5, 2022, my life took a complete turn as I enrolled in the Department of English and Literary studies, Brainware University to pursue my Masters. My admission got delayed due to various reasons both personal and otherwise. However, despite joining this university later than the others, I never felt I had missed out on anything. As other newbies, I too, was nervous, excited, almost palpated with excitement for my first day in the University.

New people, new opportunities, and new experiences were knocking at my door which excited and scared me at the same time. But once I entered the class, fear took a backseat as I sensed that I was about to embrace a new life. I never expected to find such humble, knowledgeable, and helpful professors who would help expand the frontiers of my knowledge. My professors at Brainware University helped me cope with the Semester so effectively that it never felt like I was a late joiner. Professors here use modern teaching methods like audio-visual aids, power-point presentations and movies to help the students understand the topic better. Apart from the effective teaching methodologies used by the professors, many seminars and extracurricular activities were also arranged by the University to expand our knowledge and provide us with new opportunities and experiences.

The campus life of Brainware University is quite engaging and collaborative; it accommodates a number of students from different parts of the world. It is aesthetically pleasing to take a stroll through our campus as it hosts lush green trees, plants and myriad flowers. It also consists of a greenhouse to fight against climate change. Brainware University provides its students with every possible amenity that students might need. These amenities include hostel, gym, Food Court, Library, Seminar Hall, and Common Room for students. Other services like mental health support, medical check-ups, and legal aid are also provided to the students.

However, the most striking aspect of my time at Brainware University thus far is that it feels like a home away from home. Every individual I have encountered here is very nurturing and down to earth as well. It has been only two months since I joined this University, and it already feels like I've been here for a long time. From amazing professors to supportive friends, this University has offered me everything that I could hope for, and more. The University has not only been treating me well, but also gives me hope of acquiring new experiences in the forthcoming semesters, which shall stay with me in the years to come.

# Cityscapes

*MD Ferdous Hossain*

M.A. English, 1st Year, Brainware University



"Emerald Dreams"

"The City that Never Sleeps"





"Unceasing"

"Adventures. Elsewhere"



# Offbeat

*Aishi Seal*
B.A. English 2nd Year, Brainware University

Come! For your next weekend trip, let's go to Chilkigarh Kanak Durga temple, Jhargram. It's a perfect destination for wildlife and nature lovers.

Take any train from Howrah to Ranchi and get down at Jhargram station Then take a taxi or toto to Chilkigarh Kanak Durga temple. On our way we shall encounter the mesmerizing beauty of Shal forest on either side of the road. It takes an hour to reach our destination.



On our way to Chilkigarh Kanak Durga temple

The temple is a 10 minutes walk from the main road. It's a small, 500 years old temple amidst the dense forest. A narrow road leading through the dense forest takes us to the temple. On both the sides of the road ancient trees and their natural inhabitants (monkeys) welcome us. There is also a river of cool sparkling water flowing by the side of the forest. One can take a refreshing and holy bath in the Dulung river and go for Goddess Kanak Durga's worship.

There are many stalls selling various worship-materials. Human sacrifices were a part of the ritual here in the ancient times, but Chilkigarh's queen abolished this ritual. Today goats are sacrificed during the worship and the process symbolizes the purgation of the sins within us. Devotees tie saffron coloured scarfs and make their wishes. The priest helps the worshipers to make their wish in front of the Goddess.



Chilkigarh forest and monkeys welcoming the tourists



Dulung river dancing and flowing on the beats of nature

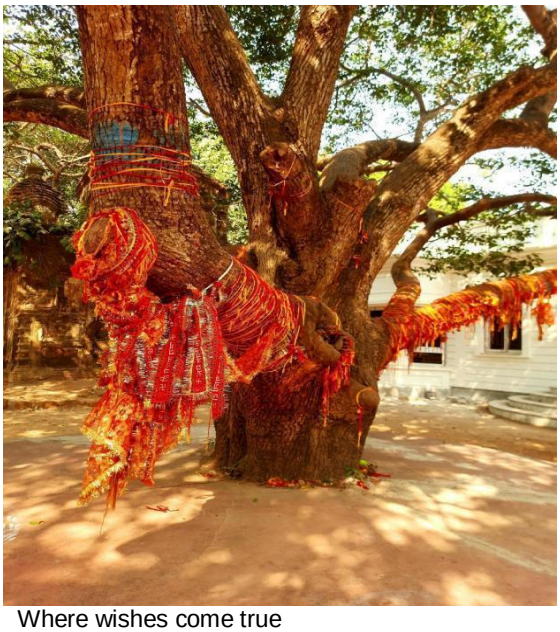
The idol is made of gold. The temple derives its name from here, "kanak" meaning gold. It is said that the idol was made from a queen's bangle. The vibe and the aura of this temple is quite exotic. This place bestows one with positive energy and reinvigorates one's spirits.



500 years old Kanak Durga temple

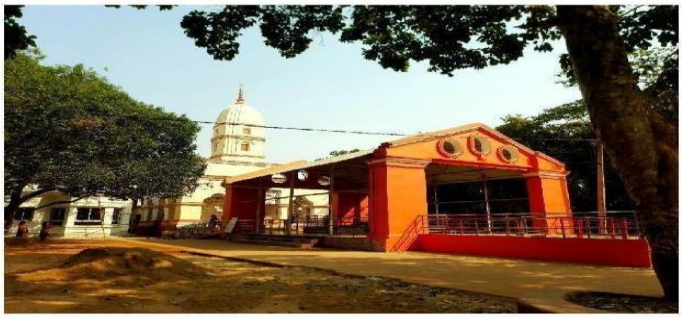
The idol has been shifted to a new temple complex as the old one has fallen prey to the ravages of time. Now, only the remains of the old temple can be found in the complex. This place has something to offer to people of every age group.

There is a small park for children with boating facilities for tourists and various local snacks to munch on.



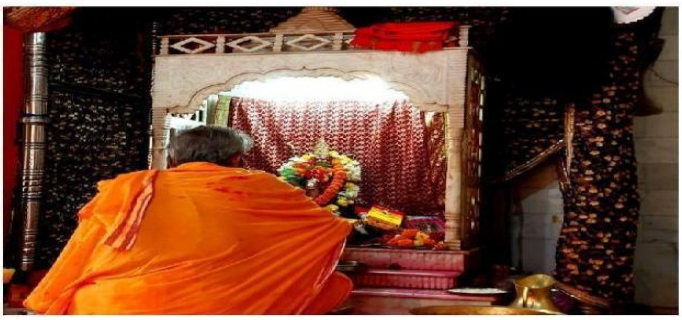
Where wishes come true

So, what are you waiting for? Pack your bags and plan your next short weekend getaway to Chilkigarh Kanak Durga temple.



Kanak Durga temple (New complex)

Idol of goddess Kanak Durga



# Behind the Limelight

*Anisha Dutta*
B. A. English, 2nd Year, Brainware University

"This is so heartbreaking! How could people do this to a child?" said the famous philanthropist Anuradha Sen from the other side of the call. This is the fifteenth time she had rescued a homeless child who was a victim of child labour. Anuradha Sen, a famous social worker, is loved and praised by netizens. She has always been in the limelight for her work in welfare. It is devastating for her to know that a twelve year old child was made to clean bathrooms without the neighbours' knowledge. Her heart broke a little when she received the news from her P. A., Mr. Bansal, while watching her favourite T. V. show, *Matribhoomi*. Mrs. Sen instantly instructs him to rescue that child. It was a chilly winter night outside. As soon as she hangs up the phone, her eyes dart towards the television set. "**UNCLE KILLS AND BURIES HIS EIGHT YEAR OLD NEPHEW IN HIS OWN BACKYARD**!", the pop-up read. Mrs. Sen burst into tears, and murmured, "How could anyone do this to a child!"

Her son came running towards her when she was watching the program. He hugs her and says, "Momma, look at my drawing! I topped the class in our drawing competition." After all the bad news, she smiled for the first time. Feeling somewhat glad, she began talking happily with her son and thought of playing with him. It was then that she heard her son's stomach start to rumble. She looks at him and realizes that he hasn't had his dinner yet. "Where is Mita-di? Why hasn't she fed you yet?", she remarked. Mrs. Sen's son answers that Mita-di has been sick since the evening and couldn't make the meals. Anuradha gets up from her couch, trying to locate her whereabouts. She walks speedily towards the kitchen, and turns on the light, hoping to find Mita. A scrawny girl, twelve or fourteen at the most, she was lying on a mat with a light scarf draped over her bony back. Anuradha found her shivering, pale and drooping from fever. "Get up! Now! Are you gonna catch a cold and make matters worse?", she screams. Wincing in agony as she is pulled by the hair, Mita mutters "I am sorry, Madam. I have been sick the entire day. Please let me rest for a while." Indifferent to her ministrations, Mrs. Sen forces her upon a tool and makes her take a gulp of water with Saridon pills. Anuradha is infuriated by Mita's initial reluctance, and screams out, "Don't you know you're supposed to take medicine when sick? Are you trying to make things worse when you haven't even started cooking yet! Get back to work. My son is hungry!" Before she could mutter a word, Mita was pushed onto the mat. Fearing that she would lose her job, she mustered the strength somehow to get back on her feet, and started prepping the veggies.

The kind and angelic Anuradha seems more like a woman lamenting her lot in life. On her way back to the room, she was not thinking of her son anymore. She picked up a call and began to

remind the unsuspecting acquaintance of how ungrateful her maid is: “I told them to take this crippled girl back to where she comes from, but I am stuck with this ingrate. How sprightly and full of intent I was at her age. You see, this is what I have to deal with.”

# "Underprivileged, but Not Hopeless": An NGO Report on the Occasion of International Literacy Day

*Mousumi Das*
M. A. English, 1st year, Brainware University

On the occasion of International Literacy Day, with a bid to make the students aware of the current educational state of underprivileged children, the Head of the Communication Club of the Department of English and Literary Studies, Dr. Poulomi Mitra, and the Head of the Department of Media Science and Journalism, Dr. Shatabdi Som escorted twenty-four students of Brainware University to visit Mahajibon NGO and meet poor children and their parents at Khardah Police Station adjacent to B.T. Road (Sodepur) on 8 June 2022 from 10 am to 3 pm. Dr. Poulomi Mitra and Dr. Shatabdi Som conducted the program, and under their supervision, the students interacted with the children, their parents, and some significant members of the NGO.

Apart from teaching them Mathematics and English, the students of Brainware University also taught them how to draw. The team also successfully raised some funds to procure some of the necessary amenities for the needy children. This was accomplished in no mean part due to the collaboration of the NGO Organizers of the day, Subhashish and Sourav. Subhashish Boral commented on the spirit of perseverance of the children we met: "Look at their happy, beaming faces. They are content with life, despite not having much to sustain themselves. They may be malnourished, but brimming with talent nonetheless." Sourav Das talked about the significance of education for the upliftment of the underprivileged: "Education plays a pertinent role in the growth of underprivileged children."

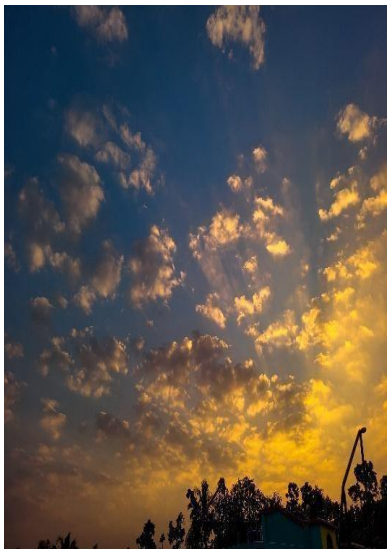
Founded in 2012, the Mahajibon NGO is currently providing them not only monthly groceries and necessary commodities, but also offering them quality education to shape their futures. The children are equipped with books, school bags and provided their daily lunches as well. They are thoroughly aware of the value of the education that they receive, and are mostly adaptable and quick learners. Their steadfast dedication towards education comes from a cognizance of their own dire circumstances, and the understanding that education is a tool for their future success.

The children seemed very elated when the students interacted with them. Their parents were relieved finally having gotten to share the harsh reality of their poverty and suffering. What stood out in these meetings is that despite having meager resources at their disposal, many of the parents expressed their heartfelt gratitude for the personnel of Brainware University for bequeathing many of the basic amenities for their children. In a nutshell, it was really an enriching experience for all.

# Skyscapes

*Dwipyan Kumar Mohanty*

B.A. English, 2nd Year, Brainware University



"Light in Motion"



"Suffused"



"Nestled in the Sky"

# The Brightest Star

*Angela Ganguly*

B. A. English, 2nd Year, Brainware University

Looking at the star-filled sky,
I was thinking about things which came by.

Millions of stars in the sky,
Each one shone the brightest–that I can't deny.
You were right by my side,
Our hands holding each other's tight.

Looking at your pretty eyes, deep down my heart I smiled,
You're the only one I prayed for.

While looking at the shooting star, I sighed, ever so thankful to the Almighty for my prayers were not denied.

The stars in the sky shone so brightly!
But, that which shone the brightest were your eyes.

# The Ouroboros and an Economy of Consumption

*Taatparjyo Moitra*
Former Student, Brainware University



The Ouroboros symbol

The Ouroboros refers to a symbol depicting a snake twisting in and on itself, eating its own tail. It is a symbol that can be traced back to the ancient Egyptians. In general, the symbol represents a number of things, ranging from the cycle of life and death to infinity. For the purposes of this paper, I shall argue that the Ouroboros is representative of the modern market system.

**Visions of the future**

If one were to look at the art produced during the retro-futurist movement, it had artists imagine what the future would look like. They imagined flying ships, travelling hotels and a host of other amenities.



"1950's depiction of the future with self-driving cars"

These pictorial representations of a hypothetical future are aesthetically pleasing, but their core philosophical underpinnings require further investigation.

These images, I would argue, stem from a certain desire of a future of equality. These are, moreover, teleological in nature, which is to say that these bear an end-goal in mind which is oriented towards the unfolding of futurity. This end-goal, as the essay seeks to demonstrate, is what is ostensibly lacking in the modern political-economy.

**Paradise Rejected: Or, the Insatiability of Political Economy**

In the Long Earth series by Terry Pratchett and Stephen Baxter, a unique event happens. Mankind suddenly is bequeathed access to multiple earths, and with it, multiple possibilities in each of these. A person can simply travel to another version of earth as easily and effortlessly as they breathe. All those earths in question are replete with natural

resources, thereby nullifying the issue of food scarcity. Mankind is emboldened to an array of infinite resources.

Mankind now has infinite food, infinite energy sources– in fact, infinite of everything. But what is the result of this paradise of sheer fecundity? Catastrophe. The global economy faces an apocalypse. Gold becomes as valuable as a random rock. Titanic conglomerates collapse as market demand becomes non-existent. Why buy food from any company when other earths exist for free navigation and harnessing? Why worry about taxes and costs, when one can travel to another earth, build a home there, and live without any worries.

Such a narrative is not far-fetched from our own immediate reality. Modern corporations go to great lengths to ensure that large supplies of resources are never available, in order to control prices, regardless of human costs. The company De Beers, for instance, controls the principality of the global diamond supply, and it is only through an enforced regulation of the supply chains that it manages to astronomically hike the prices of diamonds everywhere.

A world of no demand, and of no desire, is the nightmare that haunts the CEO of a company.

**Where Are We Heading?**

Like the Ouroboros, the current political economy plays out with no end-goal in sight. The market cannot fathom the existence of a world without demand. In fact, the market desires for the cultivation of an insatiable appetite in the public to facilitate a limitless consumption of products and services. Forever consuming, forever fueling the system. The teleological goal that underlies many religions is also denied in the contemporary market grid. Everyone must be consuming, and doing so in excess, so as to effectively stave off the collapse of the global economy. The paradise promised in the scriptures becomes impossible.

**Conclusion: What Should We Do ?**

To ‘fix’ this situation, a fundamentally philosophical question must be answered: “What is the end-game we should work towards?”. To answer such a question, we must create an end-goal for our society, an absolute and objective goal that all of society has to collectively aspire and work towards. What would such a goal be? Answering this loaded question might be one of the most difficult endeavours contemporary socio-political philosophy has to undertake in the coming years.

# Inspired Brush Strokes

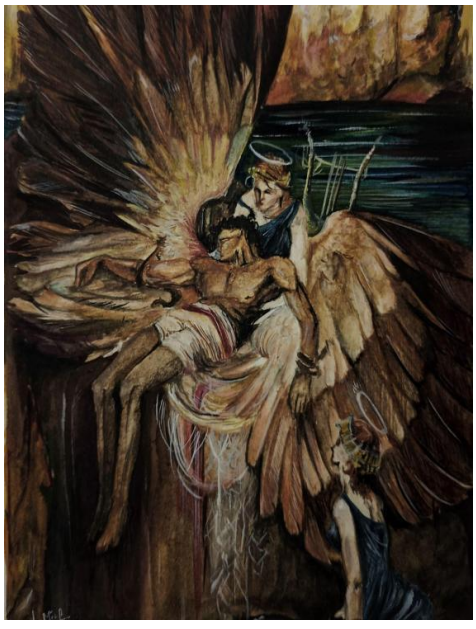
*Alminar Mahmudur Reza*

B.A. English, 2nd Year, Brainware University



Inspired by the poem “Dover Beach" by Matthew Arnold, "Dover Beach moonlight" is an acrylic painting depicting the serenity and melancholy the poet wanted to depict in his poem.

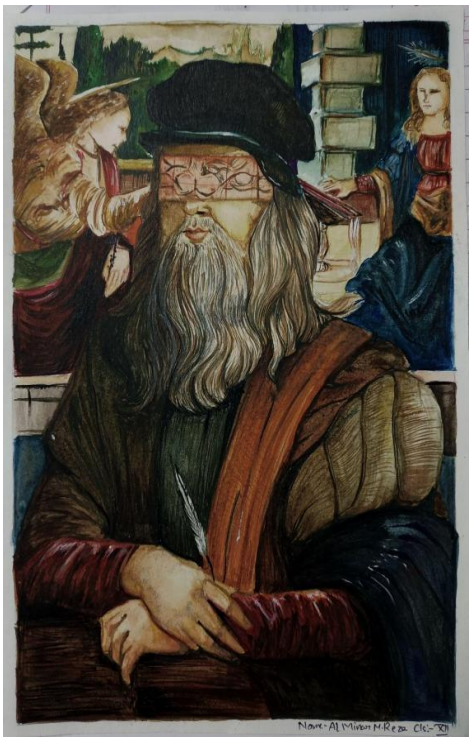
"Icarus Fall" is inspired by the painting "The Lament for Icarus”, by Herbert James Drapper; based upon the Greek Classical myth of Icarus.





“Joy is Found" is an abstract painting which shows the blooming of flowers, though wilted, to reflect upon the psyche of a joyous individual.

"Da Vinci Metamorphosis" is a conglomerated painting of Leonardo Da Vinci's masterpieces, from Mona Lisa, to the Vitruvian Man and The Annunciation, the painting includes elements from the master painter's famous works.



# Distinguished Contributions

# Poetry

*Pragya Bajpai*

## ACID ATTACK

That night, I remember
Something splashed on my face
It burned me like a piece of
plastic twisting and turning and
twitching gobbling up my ears
and eyes
and all of it merging with skin
More than life
I prayed for death
which was easier to get at that moment
I felt defeated
My parents helpless
After several days
I find myself under medical care
writing a terrible fate
that even time cannot erase
I was saved
with eighty percent burns
promising perpetual pain
with someone's fragile ego etched on my face
How easily he took away my right to be
The price of assertion was heavy
I wasn't ready to pay
My screams still catch me unawares
It's been a decade since
acid was once thrown with full force
But society reminds me everyday
The piercing eyes and words and questions
apparently with no intention of hurting
kills me, slow and steady
But I'm still living
Where your courage ends, my begins!

**ON HOLD**

Today I put everything on hold
I baked veggies to make it quick
instead of a complete meal
of dal, gravy, rice, chapati
and I felt a sudden ease
as I indulge in looking at the melting cheese
slowly turning brown in microwave
I finally found twenty fifth hour of the day

I took a leisure stroll without a smart watch
instead of a compulsive brisk walk
just to be present in the moment
and I found new meaning in the same old song
That touched a nerve, I didn't know ever
existed

I called off meetings
without making excuses or
uttering futile lies and I found
ways to take a glimpse of my
bucket list
that has outgrown my tiny
fist unnoticed over the years

I didn't answer any calls today
and I noticed
the sweat of summer making its way
down the spine through the waist
of my ancient body
still waiting to be praised

I put everything on hold
because the ticking of clock was beyond
control It has its own pace, own ways
emotionless and detached

I'm not a clock so I slow down
I need breaks
Slowing down, taking breaks are so underrated

**DEAL WITH IT**

You have two ways to
deal with dire disaster
and wild waves of wicked weather

Padlock the panes,
draw the curtains
put the phone on flight mode
and firmly latch the door
So the sunset won't
see you stain your pillow
Let no fleeting flow
of oxygen sneak in
Let there be overthinking,
Overwhelming you again and again
Until the looming wrenching pain
kills you, destroys your senses
and you turn into a bloodless mess
you become a mere relic of your own being

Other way is to
Unlatch the door
Until you are drunk on
vital elixir to the core
Until the callous candour
pierces your bones
Fling yourself into the
bed, be bare, brave and
bold tell yourself to be a
brash Believe,
this too shall pass!

## ON THE DEATH OF KINDNESS

*Poet Pragya Bajpai paints a vivid picture of the condition of women in Iran, in light of the killing of Mahsa Amini, who died while in the custody of the nation's moral and religious police.*

Mehsa, did you hear
the protest has erupted all over the
west against the savage injustice, cold
blood and heartlessness
Protestors are killed but not defeated

We saw your ears profusely bled
at the hands of moral police
guilty of killing kindness
Up there, does it hurt any less?

You must be sleeping well
But here with death of consciousness
The spell is broken, the heaven has fallen,
your women are fighting hell
with no bomb, bullets or bayonets

But undeniable oneness
and no pistol in hand
the fire's flaring up in your country land
gobbling scarves, hijabs
and false prestige
As cursing lips chant
"death to the dictator" in the streets of Tehran

Isn't it better to fight and die
than to let the unkind thrive
Pray for your fierce women, dear Mehsa
Pray for justice to your soul
Wish them courage and tide in their head
Wish them fearlessness till the end
Iran is now a picture of rebellion

## About the Contributor

Pragya Bajpai, Ph.D. is a Central Government Officer serving on the faculty of English at the prestigious National Defence Academy, Pune. Her debut book, A Potpourri of Proverbs, a collection of poems based on 51 English proverbs was published in 2021. She has co-edited four anthologies; Unkahi: The Unsung (2021), The Force is With Us: An International Anthology Celebrating the Armed Forces (2022) and Memoirs of Covid Warriors in Olive Green (2022), and another anthology of Hindi poems titled Dabe Paanv (2022) to her credit.

# The Rain Dance

*Tithiparna Sengupta*

It was a late summer afternoon. Dark clouds had gathered on the horizon, a fresh wet breeze had suddenly sprung up, the Amaltas tree in the garden, its leaves yellow as sunlight, trembled in anticipation. And, miraculously enough, all the three children were home, apparently without any homework or other work to do. They sat in their open balcony, Roshan and Abira enjoying a hearty chat with their *Dadu*, and Aman, observing keenly, with *Dadu*'s age-old pair of binoculars, a pair of sunbirds that darted through the flowering shrubs, dodging each other in their age-old game.

It was like old times - when they were children, almost always together, romping in *Dadu*'s warm, loving presence - playing cricket, reading story books or going on long walks in the park where *Dadu* would introduce to them the feathered denizens of the town: the nesting Bulbul, the black-and russet crow-pheasant and its sinister whoops, the sunbird with its purple plumage gleaming like a jewel, the hop-happy magpie-robin, the lapwing which kept asking frantically "Did-he-do it?" (to which the children would always whisper in unison "Yes, he did!").

Strictly speaking, they could not be called children any more, for Aman was already in college, and Abira would follow suit the very next year, and Roshan the year after. They were, in fact, all young adults, each one busy charting out one's own journey through the usual highs and lows of life - cricket and football matches lost and won, a seemingly unending series of examinations, falling out with a friend followed by the inevitable making up, falling in love, unrequited love, project submissions, school fests, college elections and other momentous events. They rarely get to spend time together these days. Caught up in the frantic rush of everyday life, no one really noticed this, let alone miss the old days of togetherness.

Except *Dadu*, of course. When you get old, you become a time-gazer. You notice the passing of each day, look back reflectively at the past, wishing that time would slow down a little. Youth, on the other hand, with all its exuberance, often wonders why time should travel at such an unhurried pace.

Interestingly, that afternoon, their conversation drifted to journeys in time, space, longings, memories.

It all started with Roshan sharing with others one of his wildest fantasies. "Only if there was a gadget to fast-forward these horrid years of Board exams…" he had mused. "….and land up straight at your college days…days of pure bliss, when you go trekking in the Himalayas with friends, visit rock concerts, cast your vote in the elections instead of being a mere onlooker." Abira had continued, in full

agreement with her younger brother, looking wistfully at Aman who seemed these days to be doing all the things Abira and Roshan could only dream of.

*Dadu* smiled, reminded of his own youth, its tenderness, impatience and yearnings.

"So, we are talking of leapfrogging into the future, are we? A strange coincidence indeed," said Aman. "Why, we have just started the special theory of relativity in our Physics class and have been trying to wrap our heads around the concept of time dilation."

"What on earth is that?" demanded Roshan.

"Well, time behaves rather oddly in the world of relativity," Aman started to explain, but he was interrupted by the sky suddenly opening its flood gates. The clouds rumbled and the rain came tumbling down in hazy white sheets. It burst into a splendid spray at the railings of the balcony. They could have sat there forever watching the rain. But then along with the rain came the wind too, in mighty gusts.

Absolute mayhem! The wind entered the living room, swirling and whistling; newspapers, magazines flying around; several empty plastic water bottles rolled off the table merrily onto the floor; curtains flapped madly, as if each one of them had grown a pair of invisible wings.

No choice but to rush indoors and shut all the windows and doors tight. It was some time before they had all settled down in the living room and Aman resumed his discourse on time dilation.

"Time, you see, is measured differently for a moving object than an unmoving object," he said. The rain meanwhile played its own *raga* in the background. Ah, time and rain! Rain and time! Together, they brought forth, to a septuagenarian (a Mechanical Engineer, who had spent almost his entire life amongst grimy turbines and engines) the achingly beautiful memories of another time, another rain.

"But you would notice the effect of this only if the moving object is travelling at a very high speed, a speed close to the speed of light," continued Aman. "For example, if you were to get into a rocket that travelled very quickly away from Earth, time inside the rocket would slow down in comparison to that on Earth. You could visit a nearby star and return to Earth at nearly the speed of light, and a few years would have passed on Earth while possibly only a few weeks or months would pass for you. So, you have technically fast-forwarded to the future, that too without aging much. This, in brief, is the idea of time dilation," Aman finished with a flourish.

"What a brilliant idea! Isn't it, *Dadu*?" Roshan asked eagerly.

"Yes, of course it is a wonderful idea. Except that at my age one would rather time-travel to the past than to the future – a future where I am older and greyer," replied *Dadu* with a grin. "**I wish I could turn back the clock and bring the wheels of time to a stop.**"

"Stopping the wheels of time ….freezing time…interesting…..but then at which moment, *Dadu*?" Aman asked the question they all wanted to ask.

"Well, at a moment one would have loved to live in forever. A moment, when time, it would appear, had indeed come to a stop," *Dadu* said mysteriously.

"You mean as in that song *Kuch na Kaho*? *Samay ka ye pal thamsa gaya hai, aur is pal mein koi nahin hai, bas ek main ho, bas ek tum ho...Ah,* don't I smell love here? ", quipped Roshan.

"Not just love, but a nice little love story, just perfect for this rainy day! Let us hear it," insisted Abira.

Aman frowned at Rosan and Abira. How could the two be so brazen?

But *Dadu* didn't seem to mind. "I am afraid I am not a good story-teller," he said. "But someone else was. Why don't you hear the story from her?"

*Dadu* left the room and came back a few minutes later with a thin notebook.

Abira turned the pages gingerly. It was an old notebook, but in a surprisingly good condition, largely empty, its antiquity given away only by the yellow pages with its pale striations— ruled lines once that had faded and blended with the background - and the fading blue ink of the words written, in a slanting cursive, on those yellowing pages.

Running across the middle of the first page were the following lines:

*kar rahā thā*
*ġham-e-jahāñ kā*
*hisāb*

*aaj tum yaad*
*be-hisāb aae*

*(As I began counting the*
*pains and*
*sufferings of the*
*world, I couldn't help*
*but think of you*
*infinitely)*

*- Faiz Ahmed Faiz*

An empty second page, and then the story from the next page onwards. Their innate wisdom told them that this was not a story meant to be read aloud. So they pored over the pages together, but each one drank in the words at one's own pace, silently, thirstily.

The story had a curious name: "The Dance of the Sarus". It was the story of Aruna and Sameer. Two friends, who had grown up together and were studying at the same University. She was spirited, adventurous and romantic to a fault. A student of English Literature, she dabbled in poetry and politics (left-wing, Aman noted with relief). Sameer, quiet, reserved and practical. A student of Mechanical Engineering, to whom mathematical equations were as compelling as poetry. No one knew whether he cared about politics for he chose not to talk about it, something that irked the girl immensely:

*"Do you know what Bertolt Brecht said? He said that the worst illiterate is the political illiterate. The political illiterate sees nothing, hears nothing...Sameer, you don't care about politics simply because you don't care enough!"*

*Sameer laughed; he knew better than to argue with Comrade Aruna.*

Two lives, so different, yet inextricably linked by two entwined threads - a shared childhood and a shared love. The feisty Aruna, her head filled with Marx and dreams of revolution, loved nature and wildlife. So did Sameer, the boy who also loved machines and equations.

Their shared love often took them together to faraway places - places not geographically quite far away from the city but lightyears removed from its prosaic din:

*It was beautiful by the canal. Aruna had never come this way before and she loved everything that they saw- the shimmering stretch of water, the burst of red and yellow in the Gulmohar trees, the kingfisher that swooped down like a steak of lightning on to the water and the pile of dark clouds in the sky.*

*"Clouds pile upon clouds, darkness descends….why keep me sitting all alone, outside your door?. ".*

*Thus wrote Tagore, perhaps on a day like this.*

*But, Sameer, you would keep me sitting alone, forever.*

*All of a sudden, Aruna could feel the tears welling up inside her. Did Sameer not understand how much he meant to her? Of course, she had never told him, but could he not make it out from all the secrets that she shared with him, him alone amongst all her friends? Surely, he understood, but he just chose to ignore. In his heart he had love only for machines and birds.*

*Why even now, he was busy training his binoculars on a tree branch. Aruna had ceased to exist for him.*

*Aruna fought back her tears and hers thoughts. Crying for the love of a person, it was weakness of character, so unbecoming of someone who wished to change the world, she scolded herself. Life had been wonderfully kind towards her all along, bestowing her with innumerable gifts, and here she was wallowing in self-pity simply because the person she longed for did not love her back! If this was not selfishness and ingratitude, what else was?*

*"Aruna!" Aruna was jerked out of her thoughts by Sameer, who was excitedly pointing towards his left. Aruna turned to look and stood transfixed. For a moment she could not believe her eyes. Some distance away in the mustard fields, were two birds dancing-yes, dancing!*

*For once, Sameer, always the first one to recognize any bird, need not tell her the name. The sparkling white body, the red head and beak –they were unmistakably the Sarus cranes. The sight was heavenly-the white birds dancing against the dark clouds.*

*Yet another gift, possibly the best one she had*

*received in life so far. The tears came in a rush now and this time she made no attempt to stop them. For these were tears of happiness and gratitude. Sameer, the birds and everything else around became a blur of happiness.*

*Then she heard Sameer's warm voice.*

*"Sarus – one of the rare monogamists in the bird kingdom. Aruna, do you know that in Gujarati folklore the Sarus is regarded as a symbol of love and fidelity?" Sameer was asking eagerly. "No".*

*"Well, it is. And don't you think..." Sameer's voice trembled as he reached out for Aruna's hand, "Don't you understand that it is significant that we, just the two of us, got to see the courtship dance of the Sarus?"*

*Aruna, still immersed in tears, could only nod her head. But the smile on her lips lit up the world. At that very moment, the first drop of rain fell on Sameer's face and streamed down his cheeks. The clouds had taken up the cue from Aruna's eyes.*

*In the mustard fields, the two birds were still dancing- now to the music of the rain. Sameer and Aruna stood still under the Gulmohar tree, holding hands and watching the birds.*

*Time stood still too, to watch the birds and – them.*

****

For a while none of them spoke. They just sat there, their hearts thoroughly soaked in the tenderness of the story they had just read, their minds in a state of turmoil, tossed and turned by many a question and realization. And a strange sense of longing to meet Sameer and Aruna.

Their *Dadu* (the bird and Mechanical Engineering combination was such a big giveaway!) and *Thamma.*

*Thamma,* who they never saw. For she died young, a week after giving birth to their father.

*Thamma,* who they had only heard about from others – an extraordinary person, strong in her love and convictions, who had defied her parents and societal conventions to marry their *Dadu*. *Thamma,* who never cared about wearing bangles (or any jewellery), but would nevertheless spend the entire money in her purse buying bangles from the hawker-boy in the bus.

*Thamma,* who could love infinitely.

Aman looked around, gathered that *Dadu* had walked out to the balcony, and joined him there. The two stood in the rain, which had now slowed down to a steady drizzle.

"Dadu, did the two of you really get to see the dance of the Sarus? Or was it just a...just a story?" Aman asked after a while.

"That's for you to guess," Dadu replied. "By the way, Aman, I have decided to give my pair of binoculars to you," he added after a long pause.

Aman smiled. He knew that it was not just a pair of binoculars, but something else, intangible but very special, that was being passed from *Dadu* to him.

For this pair of binoculars had been witness to a very special moment when the wheels of time had stopped, just once.

## About the Author:

Tithiparna Sengupta is a high school teacher of Mathematics and Chemistry. She is fond of reading and occasionally writes short stories for young adults.

# "Ode to my City"

*Sudipa Palit*



*"A Picture of The Howrah Bridge"*

On the eve of festivity,

I take to the bylanes- of laughter and vendetta.

Calcutta, which is now Kolkata, Is so
graciously full of such fecundity. The
city of Joy, the city of sorrows!

The old lanes of my Calcutta
Rise towards new tomorrows.
Here I have found the
meaning
Of living amidst social screening.
My parents are middle-class,
Third generation literates, B.A. pass.

(I am the fourth, or am I?)
Degrees abound so abundantly
Here in the streets of my beautiful city.
People ask personal questions—
They guffaw and pat on my
back

For answers to the
unquestioned.

If I am a lady, why have I not married yet?
If I am married, how is there no child to pet?
If I have a job, does it pay enough?
Does it give me time to cook for my husband? And play with my sons?

What kind of a job is it then? It is more of a jab
Between the ribs that pains
Far longer than expected,

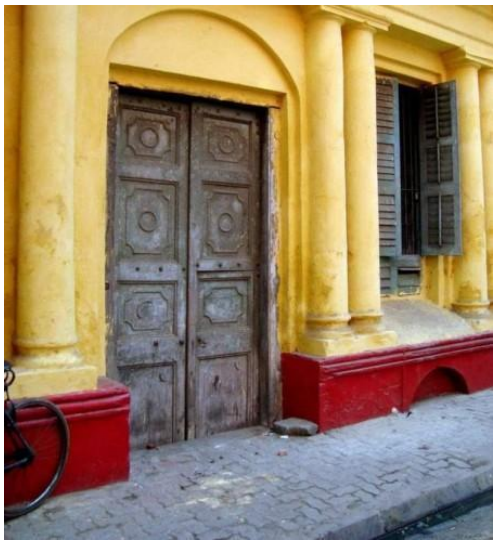
And lingers in memory's terrains.
If I am a man, a self-assured guy,
How have I not got a decent job, by the by?
Do I want to marry or too long tarry
With that cute girl in a saree?
Time and age wait for none—
Bring marriage and a child to the table anon.
They sincerely hope I don't like a guy;
That cute girl is not just a friend, don't deny!
Tell them the truth, out out with it
The streets of my city are full of my kith.

And yet! And yet on a rainy twilight
When I take to the bylanes of delight

atch faces beaming down the old verandahs,
Listen to the last calls of the street vendors,
My city comes to life with tall posts alight.
My city hugs me from all around burning bright.
The sense of finally having arrived
At my home, in my city of lives

Calcutta, Calcutta will remain where it thrives.
In the miseries, memories and the happy tears

Of its homely pat-prone, smile-prone and shout-prone knot
It will live in the mind and soul of its urbane lot.



"The Entrance to a North Calcutta Home"

## About the Contributor:

Sudipa Palit lives in the City of Joy. She has spent most of her career as a teacher of English Literature, in schools and colleges. She has edited a number of stories in the collection The Goddess's Homecoming by Nibedita Deb. Currently, she is working as an Instructional Designer at a corporate firm.

# Know Our Department



"A teacher is best suited here, amidst her students, whom she has nurtured. Proud to be a part of the Brainware family for years now."

*Monamie Mukherjee*
Assistant Professor, ELS, Brainware University

"So we dribble about the texts, cut inside interpretations, pass it through the faultlines and shoot our analyses into the top corner! So as Captain Kirk said, "May ELS live long and prosper!"

*Sourav Das*
Assistant Professor, ELS, Brainware University





"So many years, so many memories. I have been with Brainware University and the Department of English for so long that it feels like a second home. It has been a pleasure to watch the university scale new heights and cater to the futures of so many budding students."

*Oindrila Roy*
Assistant Professor, ELS, Brainware University



"The journey of this department from 'Arts and Humanities' to 'English and Literary Studies' has been enriching and I cherish every moment of it."

*Alankar Das Dalal*
Assistant Professor, ELS, Brainware University



“Can't fly?
Run!
If you can't run
Walk!
Can't walk Crawl
Either reach there one day Or
regret everyday.”

*Merry Baghwar*
Assistant Professor, ELS, Brainware University

“I am Superman without superpowers and Batman without money - just an alien with trust issues.”

*Kunal Barman*
Assistant Professor, ELS, Brainware University





"Life is a tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing."

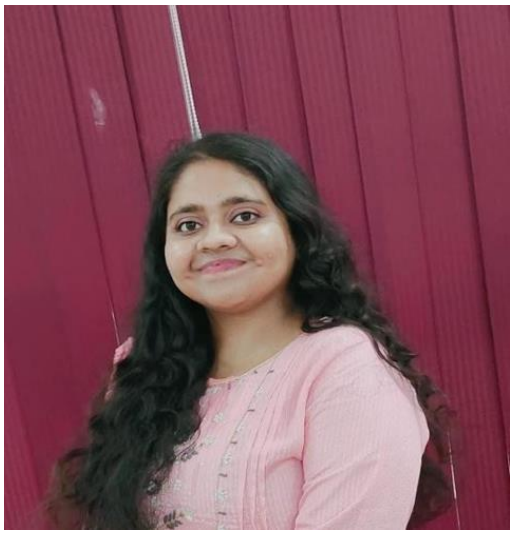
- William Shakespeare

*Anandi Ghosh*
Assistant Professor, ELS, Brainware University

"Jack of all trades, master of none Ironic?
Well isn't everything in life that way?"

*Supriti Saha*
Assistant Professor, ELS, Brainware University



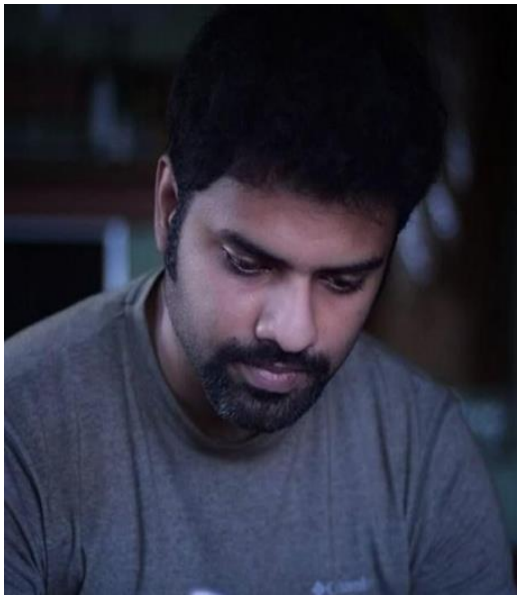


“From the start the department has helped me, guided me, and encouraged me to be a better academic and human being. I feel fortunate to be a part of the Brainware family.”

*Shrestha Chatterjee*
Assistant Professor, ELS, Brainware University

"The only true dream is that which doesn't let you sleep."

*Utsab Ray*
Assistant Professor, ELS, Brainware University





"Maya Angelou was right- without Courage we cannot practice any other virtue with consistency. When you know that your intention is good, take a stand for what you think is right. The road may not always be easy but giving up is not an option."

*Dr. Poulomi Mitra*
Associate Professor & HoD, ELS,
Brainware University

"Blessed be the young who know not back pain."

*Pritam Bhaumik*
Assistant Professor, ELS, Brainware University





"It matters not what someone is born, but what they grow to be."

*Gennia Nuh*
Assistant Professor, ELS, Brainware University

"The battles we dare to fight, define us."

*Abhishikta Bhattacharjee*
Assistant Professor, ELS, Brainware University





"Happiness can be found, even in the darkest of times, if one only remembers to turn on the light."

*Sanghamitra Baladhikari*
Assistant Professor, ELS, Brainware University

"Who says teaching is stressful?"

*Manasi Patra*
Assistant Professor, ELS, Brainware University





"In the end, there's always …"

*Soham Roy*
Assistant Professor, ELS, Brainware University

"In the dark times
Will there also be singing?
Yes, there will also be singing.
About the dark times."

*Srija Chakraborty*
Assistant Professor, ELS, Brainware University





"I live. Occasionally, I write."

*Soumabha Chakraborty*
Assistant Professor, ELS, Brainware University

"Literature is the most agreeable way of ignoring life." - Fernando Pessoa

*Barsa Mondal*
Assistant Professor, ELS, Brainware University





"Differences of habit and language are nothing at all if our aims are identical and our hearts are open"

*Trisha Sengupta*
Assistant Professor, ELS, Brainware University

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# Maya

*Dr. Poulomi Mitra*

Associate Professor & HoD, ELS, Brainware University



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