

ENGLISH BREAK

20th Edition
November 2021

You Will Read:

- A New Horizon
- *Squid Game: A World of Our Own*
- On Lacan's "Homage to Marguerite Duras"
- The Precipice

English Break



THE CONCESSIONARE:

The Scientific English Association of Alzahra University

MANAGING DIRECTOR:

Arezoo Izadi

EDITORS:

Negarín Houshmandnia, Arezoo Izadi,
Zahra Jazayeri, Anahita Zarabian

PAGE DESIGNER:

Arezoo Izadi

WRITING BOARD:

Shadi Daryoush, Raha Fazlollahi, Kimia Goodarzi, Elham Hassannezhad, Atena Hooshmand, Nasim Hosseini, Arezoo Izadi, Zahra Jazayeri, Saba Mohaghegh, Fateme Sadhezari, Anahita Zarabian

PUBLISHER:

Alzahra University

CONTACT NUMBER:

09387204910

EMAIL:

EnglishBreakALZ@Gmail.com

ADDRESS:

Publication Department, Alzahra University,
Dehe Vanak st., Vanak sq., Tehran, Iran.



Table of CONTENTS

4	WE ARE
5	A New Horizon
6	The Nobel Prize in Literature
8	<i>Squid Game: A World of Our Own</i>
10	We Deserve to Cheer Up Sometimes
12	Sunflower
14	Imagery in “Mirror” by Sylvia Plath
15	On Lacan’s “Homage to Marguerite Duras”
18	Gordafarid, the Daughter of Iran
21	The Female Gothic
23	Unheard Words of a Mother, an Analysis of “Woman Work”
25	The Precipice



Arezoo Izadi

B.A. English Literature Student

WE ARE

“I took a deep breath and listened to the old brag of my heart. I am, I am, I am.”

Sylvia Plath – *The Bell Jar*

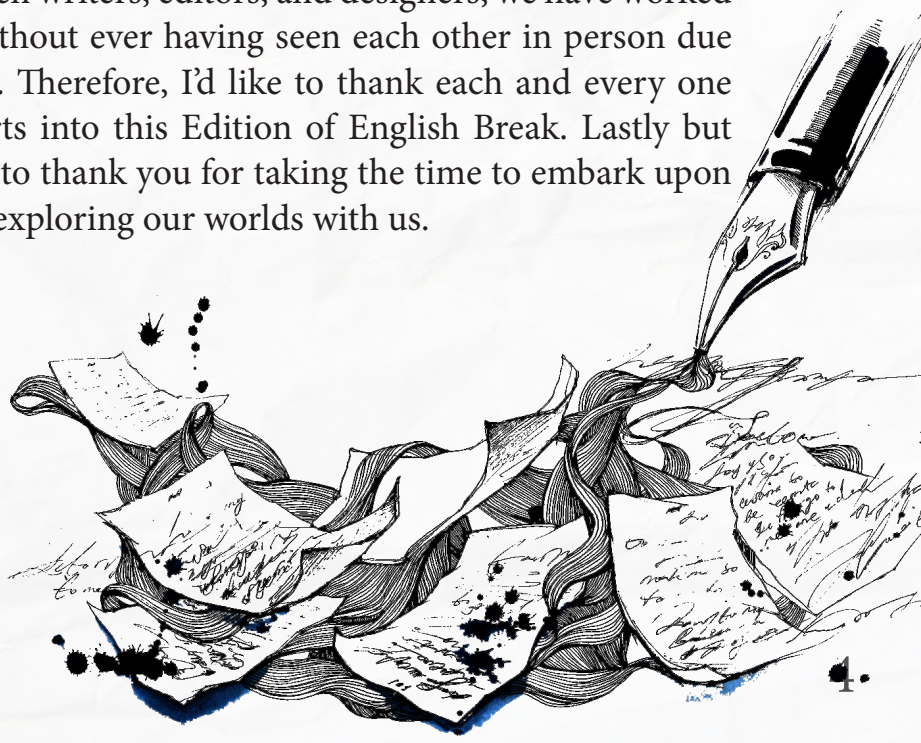
It has been exactly one year since a brand new team took over English Break, and soon enough we'll be handing it over to a new one, to direct toward the future.

In this past year, we, as a group of inexperienced young women started to explore our voices, our distinct color, our agency, and attempted to take charge of the narrative. In the past twelve months, we have put our art out into the world as an outlet to make our unique voices heard; we did so by writing poems, stories, and colorful pieces on what we were truly passionate about. We listened to all the little beats of our hearts, to the alluring murmurs of our being, and poured it all out to demonstrate, once again, that

WE ARE.

This is what we will continue to do to in this Edition as well as the future ones. In the 20th Edition, which you are about to delve into, we have aspired to make the voices of other women heard as well as our own; from lesser known and lost female characters in Persian Literature and fictional female narrators to acclaimed female literary critics, authors and poets, and nothing makes us happier than doing so.

As a team of exclusively young women writers, editors, and designers, we have worked hard to bring this Edition to life without ever having seen each other in person due to the continuing raging pandemic. Therefore, I'd like to thank each and every one of them for putting their best efforts into this Edition of English Break. Lastly but definitely not the least, I would like to thank you for taking the time to embark upon this journey of exploring our worlds with us.





Elham Hassannezhad

B.A. English Literature Student

A New Horizon

If you look closely, you can see the faint lines of the blueprint of a world that doesn't exist yet. Over the cliff, beyond the horizon and in a faraway land, you can see the shadows of a world you've never seen even in your wildest dreams. A world desired by many throughout history. A world your heart has yearned for from the moment it started to beat. A world of possibilities.

Come. Come a little closer and take a good look. Can you not see the sky getting clearer as it reaches the infinite land? The great vast ocean becoming bluer than ever as it stretches towards the horizon? The ground getting greener the closer to the borders it gets, and the irises starting to bloom? The singing birds are flying towards the edge of this world to find the new land. Come and take a deep breath. Can you not smell the faint pleasant scent of fresh hopes and dreams that the wind carries from the strange land?

In this exotic eccentric world, equality exists in its purest form. Your race will not define you. Your gender does not limit you. Your age may not restrict you. And your thoughts have a way of coming true. Freedom is a possibility there, and breathing has a different sense to it there. Everything feels alive there, the very earth you walk on, the water you drink, and it feels like the universe itself treasures every bit and second of your entire existence. You can be yourself there, a glorious powerful limitless being without the chains of some subjective meaningless rules trying to tie you down. In this place, hope is in existence, and happiness is an option. But for every world to be built, a previous one has to come to an end.

Our world collapsed a very long time ago. Maybe from the very beginning of time, some unknown stranger put a wrong brick on the early structure of our world. As time went on, calamities spread and everything got worse. We became our own doom and the bane of this world. The only solution for a fallen building is to rebuild it all over again. Like a phoenix rising from the ashes of its own corpse. The only way to start anew in a dark wrecked world is to set everything ablaze and shape your own future with your own hands from scratch.

The new world is waiting for us. A new equal world where you can be anything and anyone you want. If you listen carefully, you can hear its whispers calling to us. Like a beautiful sweet enchantment beckoning us forward. The sun is setting here in this wretched world, ready to rise over a new horizon in the faraway land. Freedom is just a few steps ahead. So take your wings and run towards the cliff. The new horizon is at hand.



Anahita Zarabian

B.A. English Literature Student



The Nobel Prize in Literature



The Nobel Prize in Literature is a Swedish literary prize awarded annually to an author who has produced “the most outstanding” work of literature. Following the instructions in Alfred Nobel’s will that his abundant fortune be used to fund an altogether 5 prizes in various fields, the Swedish Academy is in charge of selecting the winner from the plethora of nominees each year. It is noteworthy that the 18 members in the panel of judges at the academy are elected for life and master 13 languages altogether.

The winner, a Literature Nobel Prize laureate, is awarded a gold medal, a diploma and a sum of money that varies each year depending on the academy’s income. Ever since its inauguration in 1901, a total of 118 individuals: 102 men and 16 women have won the prize among whom many familiar faces are present: Alice Munro, Samuel Beckett, Gabriel Garcia Márquez, Pablo Neruda, etc.

Although the awarding of the prize revolves around a single work, the entire portfolio of the author does not go without regard. Moreover, the winner’s name must appear at least twice in the list of nominees before they are chosen. The most recent winner, in 2021, is Abdulrazak Gurnah, a Tanzanian novelist based in England.

The award was given to him for “his uncompromising and compassionate penetration of the effects of colonialism and the fate of the refugee in the gulf between cultures and continents,” the Swedish Academy announced.

A retired professor of English and Postcolonial Literature at the University of Kent in Canterbury, England, 73-year-old Abdulrazak has written 10 novels including *Paradise* which was nominated for both the Booker Prize and the Whitbread Prize. In his works, he shatters all the western stereotypes about Africa.

Born in Tanzania, he moved to the UK as a refugee in 1960 after the Zanzibar Revolution. About his immigration, he has said, “I came to England when these words, such as asylum-seeker, were not quite the same – more people are struggling and running from terror states.”

In addition to novels, he writes short stories and essays. In his works, he uses different languages such as Arabic, German and Swahili - his mother tongue.

He originally began writing in his 20s as a way of coping with being so far away from his land and the homesickness he felt as a result. His first novel, *Memory of Departure*, is filled with tales about alienation and longing for his homeland

written in 1987. There are many recurrent themes in his writing. The issues presented mostly have to do with the devastations of war, colonialism and all the promises that the state failed to keep.

In a recent interview after the announcement of his winning, the interviewer asked him to talk about the refugee crisis the world is facing now and he responded by saying, “When many of these people who come, come out of first need, and because quite frankly they have something to give. They don’t... they don’t come empty handed. A lot of them are talented, energetic people, who have something to give. So that might be another way of thinking about it. You’re not just taking people in as if they’re, you know, poverty-stricken nothings, but, yeah, think of it as you’re first providing succor to people who are in need, but also people who can contribute something.”

Works Cited:

- “Nobel Prizes 2021.” NobelPrize.Org, 10 Oct. 2021, www.nobelprize.org/prizes/literature/2021/gurnah/interview.
- “NPR Cookie Consent and Choices.” Npr, 7 Oct. 2021, choice.npr.org/index.html?origin=https://www.npr.org/2021/10/07/1043436576/nobel-prize-literature-2021.
- Wikipedia contributors. “Abdulrazak Gurnah.” Wikipedia, 17 Oct. 2021, en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Abdulrazak_Gurnah.
- . “List of Nobel Laureates in Literature.” Wikipedia, 20 Oct. 2021, en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_Nobel_laureates_in_Literature.
- . “Nobel Prize in Literature.” Wikipedia, 16 Oct. 2021, en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nobel_Prize_in_Literature.



Arezoo Izadi

B.A. English Literature Student

Squid Game: A World of Our Own

It is quite strange if you have not already heard about or have not caught a glimpse of the world of *Squid Game* in the last few weeks. The Korean Netflix show, created by Hwang Dong-hyuk has attracted millions of viewers around the globe ever since its release in September 2021.

The show illustrates how a highly organized hierarchal system recruits its subjects to play a part in 6 bloody, albeit traditional, childhood games with a grand prize. The organization lures the subjects in with the promise of money to gamble off their lives; some do so because they have so much to lose, and some because they have none, to the point where we come to the grim conclusion that for most players, being a participant in the brutality of the games is better than being out in the real world.

Money becomes the transcendental signified in the world of *Squid Game*; it is what gives each player their meaning, it is what gives each subject's relationship to the other meaning. However, this is where a question arises. Are the players to be blamed? Is this not the smallest consequence of the class struggles in a highly capitalist world? A world and society that have left laborers so helpless that they rather cling to putting bets on horse races, or murdering their childhood friends instead of honest labor. That is how they voluntarily embark on a fatal journey to perform as pawns in childhood games, wiped off of their innocence, where in order to rise up, they must stab the backs of the people with whom they have formed an alliance.

Furthermore, the players are wrapped up in a game where they are not addressed by their names and true identities, rather by numbers. In other words, they are not individuals, rather subjects who willingly, with consent, have been subjugated to the ideology of faceless forces that are turning them against each other, not once, but twice for that matter. They are, ironically, given equal opportunities to remove each other from the equation; a fabricated ideology of equal opportunities, so to speak, where the subjects are favored when it favors the system and are disposed of when it does not. This is all for one thing and

one thing only, and that is money. Money becomes another synonym for survival, and the will to possess it is what drives the players onwards, it is what grows the seeds of resentment among them because they cannot possess what they desire with the existence of their fellow players and much worse, their own partners. Is that not another side effect of capitalism that we witness with our own eyes day in and day out? The players fail to realize what their anger and resentment should be directed at, which is the same forces whose merciless ideology has interpolated them. Most spectators watch the series, and mock the stupidity of the players. They start to ask questions like, “why are they doing this? For what? At what cost? Is money really that important? Is it worth murdering and betraying your friends? Why can they not just stand up for themselves and leave when they clearly have the option laid out for them?” What they fail to realize is that they are living in a *Squid Game* society as well. Would the same spectators not do anything in their power to gain money? Not because they necessarily love money, but because it is what is required for survival, as crucial as air. The only difference between our world and that of *Squid Game*’s is that the latter operates in a colorful environment, with explicit rules for childhood games with brutal results. We are living in the same world. We are playing the same games; the only shuddering difference is that most of us are not fully aware that we are playing them.





Nasim Hosseini

B.A. English Literature Student

We Deserve to Cheer Up Sometimes

Even before becoming a literature student, I always knew that our syllabuses were going to be filled with emotionally challenging and complex literary works. In my mind, literature's biggest contribution to the world was to reflect on the major problems of a society by portraying its darkest and ugliest aspects and to get the public's attention towards what is not always openly talked about. Even though I had accepted it, I never imagined how hard it could get to be in a field that asks for one's emotional involvement during a period of time when all sorts of brand new difficulties rise from everywhere.

As I said earlier, it is a truly enormous job to raise awareness about issues, because it may help the society eventually find solutions for them. However, most of those issues are still relatable to this day (which is part of why some books are still so famous and important), but due to the strange atmosphere of the current times, the existence of the previous issues has become less threatening, while not less damaging. We are now facing difficulties that are new to the modern world. With the pandemic, came multiple problems for most of which, there still is no solution. Like everyone else, I tried to stay sane as long as possible, but I finally broke apart. To me, being constantly reminded of how ugly and brutal the world has always been, became unbearable especially when I knew things are much worse in my own time.

When our schedule suddenly became tight, I was in the middle of dealing with the loss of a loved one, high level of anxiety disorders, and lots of alone time that gave me more than enough time to hold on to grief (and I am sure I was not the only one having such experiences). We started covering several depressing works each week, and there was not much free time to let me understand how fast my spirit was sinking. After a long time of neutrally going with the flow, I suddenly felt like I was burning out and had lost all my hopes in life. I ultimately realized I had a fair amount of negativity in my life, but no positivity at all. Surely, my worldview had broadened owing to those heavily deep works, but I cannot exactly say it had become any more realistic. Authors who aim for creating change, often focus only on the dark side of the life which serves their goal very well; if they want the audience to feel

misery to the fullest, or to see the graveness of an issue, hope understandably does not have a place in their books. However, we are fragile humans too, who need hope to keep going, especially if our surrounding is so unstable.

When we live in a time when touching one's own face can be fatal, constantly reading about sadness is not very helpful. Watching the world working hard to keep things seem as normal as possible made me want to join and take an active role in creating the positivity I needed for myself. Since one of the sources of my low mood was written stories, I was automatically drawn to find something of the same nature, but an opposite direction, a delightful book, which would work as an antidote. I crawled back to my ultimate mood enhancer, L. M. Montgomery, who dealt with loss, depression and anxiety most of her life, but did her best to stick to the light. Her stories have always offered me what I needed to calm down: a stable world, the satisfaction of living in the nature, good friends and sweet ordinary moments of everyday life, all of which had been absent from my life for too long.

Perhaps understanding the importance of so many bitter books had made me find writing about sweetness in this corrupt world futile, foolish, and superficial, so I no longer took them seriously; however, living through such hard times made me realize that turning the darkness into light, finding beauty in ugliness, and searching for meaning in the suffering, in fact, shows strength.

I know you may think it is all obvious or needless to say, but we all need healing, and yet, we sometimes forget about it. The world has always been a mess, and as literature students, we know better than anyone that no one has ever been happy with it. To me, this knowledge was a relief; it allowed me to stop forcing endless dark thoughts to myself- because it was pointless- and opened the way for me to take charge of the intake I received. At last, I decided to read or listen to at least two cheerful books every month aside from the University's schedule so as to keep the emotional balance that any human being needs.

I understand there are issues that no book and no happy moment can solve, but you deserve to enjoy what you do, so please pick a book with a happy ending and do not pay attention if it does not add anything to you. I want to be assured that there are happy things in the world, even if I cannot see them, and I refuse to believe that others do not.



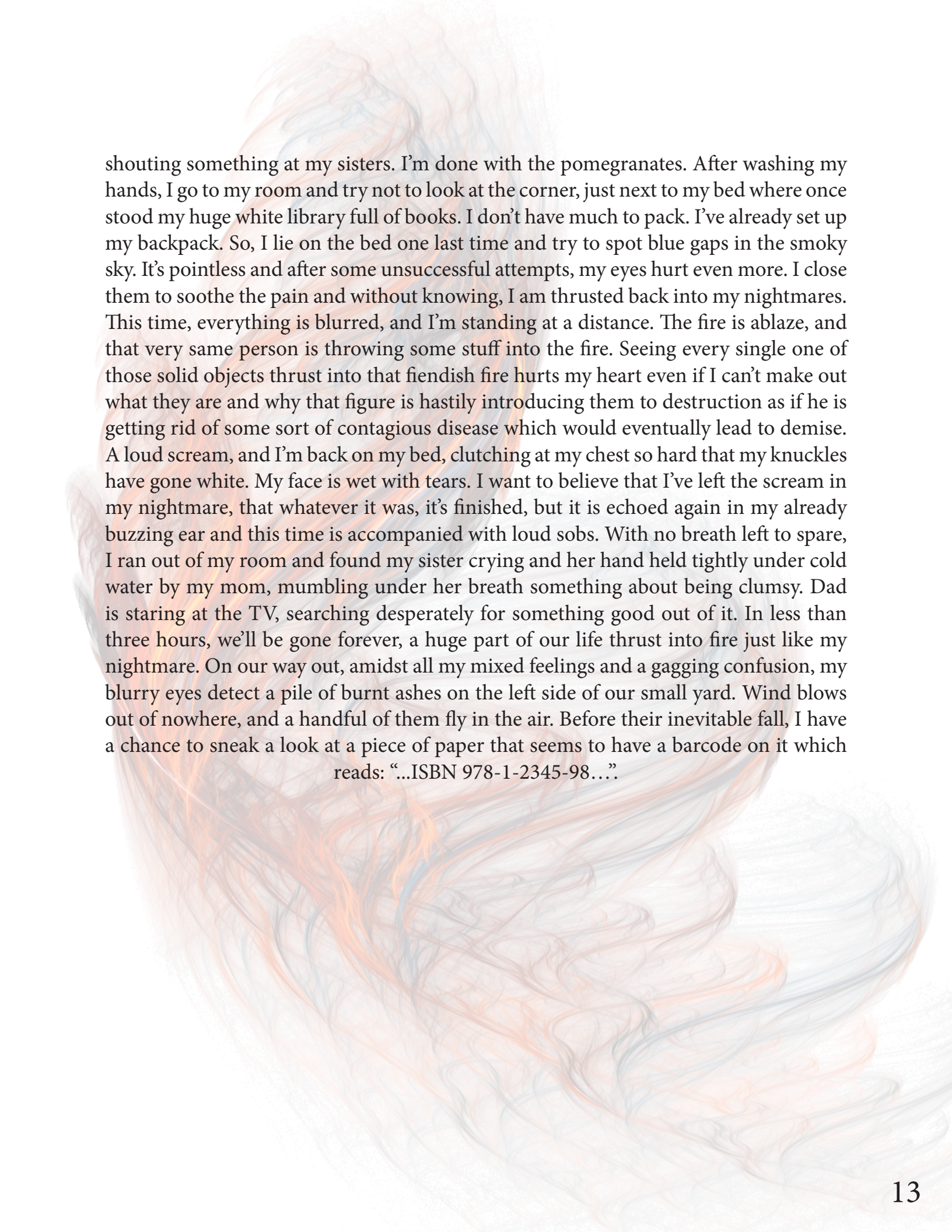


Kimia Goodarzi

B.A. English Literature Student

Sunflower

TV's been rattling on for almost three days now. The host's voice has been on repeat so much that it is now as annoyingly quotidian as the sound coming from our old refrigerator. Amidst these muffled sounds, mom is busy as a bee cleaning the house one last time. She has been non-stop the last three days; at first, she tossed all our clothes into the washing machine and later let them dry on a piece of wire in the balcony. Then, she picked up an old piece of cloth and started dusting the whole house, all the shelves, all the doors and of course all the windows. Later, it was vacuum's turn, and it cleaned the entire little home of ours once more, floor-wise. She is now on the go choosing proper clothes for our long expedition as if anything about this situation is at all proper! My older sisters have both found shelter in the kitchen. One of them is preparing small, bite-sized sandwiches for the trip (Would it be so short as to be called a trip?), mixing cooked potatoes with some eggs. The other is busy rinsing the rice for the last Kabuli Pulao we'd eat in this house. I'm sitting in a corner, near the window, peeling the fresh pomegranates dad bought the other day. The seeds are ruby red, and a fresh sour-sweet smell rises from them whenever I carelessly crush one of them with my fingers. This could be a normal day of our life if we were not obliged to take this trip. A look out of the window and the menacing gray shades of the clouds would make your stomach crumple. It is not the rain coming. It is too soon for that. This is a mixture of dust and future squirming in the air, dancing to our misery. My eyes are sore. It demands a huge portion of my strength to keep them open. Sleep has not knocked on my eyelids the past few days and any time it has, my never-lasting comfort has literally turned into ashes. I've been having nightmares. In almost all of them, I'm walking down a very narrow alley, carrying a bag full of something solid and heavy. I'd stop at a door, knock and go in. In the utter darkness, a few seconds after my arrival, something is splashed on a pile of what seems to be chunks of wood and immediately, gasoline's harsh smell disturbs my nose. The same hand searches for something in his pockets and then lights a feeble flame. The flame is shied at the pile and I wake up with a start, my heart pounding aggressively in my chest, my mouth as dry as a desert. Passports are scattered on the floor among the other documents one may need for a long ride with no return. Mom is



shouting something at my sisters. I'm done with the pomegranates. After washing my hands, I go to my room and try not to look at the corner, just next to my bed where once stood my huge white library full of books. I don't have much to pack. I've already set up my backpack. So, I lie on the bed one last time and try to spot blue gaps in the smoky sky. It's pointless and after some unsuccessful attempts, my eyes hurt even more. I close them to soothe the pain and without knowing, I am thrust back into my nightmares. This time, everything is blurred, and I'm standing at a distance. The fire is ablaze, and that very same person is throwing some stuff into the fire. Seeing every single one of those solid objects thrust into that fiendish fire hurts my heart even if I can't make out what they are and why that figure is hastily introducing them to destruction as if he is getting rid of some sort of contagious disease which would eventually lead to demise. A loud scream, and I'm back on my bed, clutching at my chest so hard that my knuckles have gone white. My face is wet with tears. I want to believe that I've left the scream in my nightmare, that whatever it was, it's finished, but it is echoed again in my already buzzing ear and this time is accompanied with loud sobs. With no breath left to spare, I ran out of my room and found my sister crying and her hand held tightly under cold water by my mom, mumbling under her breath something about being clumsy. Dad is staring at the TV, searching desperately for something good out of it. In less than three hours, we'll be gone forever, a huge part of our life thrust into fire just like my nightmare. On our way out, amidst all my mixed feelings and a gagging confusion, my blurry eyes detect a pile of burnt ashes on the left side of our small yard. Wind blows out of nowhere, and a handful of them fly in the air. Before their inevitable fall, I have a chance to sneak a look at a piece of paper that seems to have a barcode on it which reads: "...ISBN 978-1-2345-98..."



Saba Mohaghegh

M.A. English Literature Student - Shahid Beheshti University

Imagery in “Mirror” by Sylvia Plath

No one is in favor of truth; the truth is harsh, bitter, and often unpleasant. Therefore, usually, the people who are frankly honest are outcasts. This is the case with mirrors. They show us what we essentially are. No filters, no deceptions. The bare genuineness. As it is shown in “Mirror”, a poem by Sylvia Plath, in which the subject, the mirror, being truthful, is lonely. Therefore, the main theme of it is the loneliness of the mirror because of its honesty. Some devices are supporting this theme, one of which is imagery.

There are some instances of imagery in both the first and the second parts of the poem. In the first part, it is said that “Whatever I see I swallow immediately / Just as it is, unmisted by love or dislike” (2-3). Here, there are both gustatory and visual imagery in the words “swallow” and “unmisted”. The lines indicate the fact that the mirror is truthful. It swallows and reflects everything standing in front of it just as it is, unmisted by any favoritism. Also, line thirteen which is “I see her back, and reflect it faithfully” again shows how honest the mirror is. Moreover, the poet reflects the loneliness of the mirror by the following lines: “Most of the time I meditate on the opposite wall” (6), “Faces and darkness separate us over and over” (9), “Each morning it is her face that replaces the darkness” (16). Here, the mirror is alone; it has no one but the opposite wall upon which it meditates night and day. Also, darkness tends to be a faithful companion, indicating solidarity.

As it was presented, Sylvia Plath has included many devices in the poem to indicate the fact that the mirror is honest and therefore, alone. It was manifested by many devices. One of which is imagery, and she has used it quite masterfully throughout the poem.

Work Cited:

Plath, Sylvia. “Mirror.” All Poetry, <https://allpoetry.com/poem/8498499-Mirror-by-Sylvia-Plath>.





Shadi Daryoush

M.A. English Literature Student

On Lacan's "Homage to Marguerite Duras"

Lacan's association with Marguerite Duras, the author of 1964's wildly discussed novel, *The Ravishing of Lol Stein* could be considered as an important stepping stone towards the approach to the issue of femininity. This book made such a deep impact on Lacan that he personally called Duras and made an appointment to meet her at midnight in a bar. Duras describes the interview as intimidating. It was in the bar's basement and he came a little bit later. In a warm and affectionate tone, he blurts out to her: "you don't know what you're saying", he then started questioning her for 2 hours (Allouch 166).

What seemed to have shocked Lacan was that how Marguerite Duras, who had no allusion to Lacan's psychoanalysis and did not seem to have read him, could describe a "feminine passion" that brings a woman close to psychosis in terms that are so close to his own language?

He needed to ask her where she had found this character. She replied that she did not know. All this resurfaces in the essay he wrote about the book, in which Lacan mentions Freud's homage to artists who always preceded him as he says "it turns out that Marguerite Duras knows, without me, what I teach." There are indeed similarities between Duras's feminine theme, in which the characters all circle around the study of an excessive passion that can lead to despair, madness or death, and Lacan's type of feminine discourse.

Duras's new novel was soon claimed as the best example of what critics would be calling "Écriture féminine", or "women's writing". (Rabate 126) This is a term coined by French feminist and literary theorist Hélène Cixous in her 1975 essay "The Laugh of the Medusa". This theory draws on ground theory work in psychoanalysis about the way that humans come to understand their social roles. In doing so, it goes on to explain how women, who may be positioned as other in a masculine symbolic order, can reaffirm their understanding of the world through engaging with their own otherness, both within and outside their own minds, or consciousness.

The novel opens with the first scene of the ravishing. The opening scandal is disclosed from the start. At a ball given for her engagement, Lol Valerie Stein who is barely seventeen, sees her fiancé, Michael Richardson, inexplicably attracted to Anne-Marie

Stretter. He falls under the spell of this older woman, who has come with her daughter to the casino, and they dance together all night, oblivious of anyone else. Anne-Marie Stretter, the wife of a vice-consul, leaves with Michael. They experience a brief passion that lasts only a few months, leaving Lol prostrate and half-demented. She says she did not experience pain, and that she stopped loving Michael the minute he looked at Anne-Marie Stretter. Michael Richardson and Anne-Marie Stretter never return to the town of South Tahla where the event took place.

Lol becomes a recluse until one day, still very fragile, she meets a total stranger whom, on an impulse, she marries. They move to another town and have children. She lives a strict and orderly life, under the suspicion of her husband, that she is not completely cured. Ten years later, Lol and her husband go back to South Thala, and this is where Lol first meets Jacques Hold who is the lover of her old school-friend Tatiana, who's married to a doctor. Lol spies from a field of rye on the two lovers as they meet for their affairs in the Forest Hotel and obsesses over the beauty of Tatiana.

When Jacques Hold starts to fall in love with Lol, she insists that the two lovers continue their meetings. He obeys, knowing all the time that she is there watching, leaving Tatiana unaware and offering their love-making to Lol. Finally, Lol remembers her first ravishment more and more. She and Jacques go together to the Casino to reenact the primal scene and the night of dancing. Lol can at last experience pain and freely talk about the past. In the end, she returns to the field to spy on the two lovers. The novel finishes on an inconclusive note: "Lol had arrived there ahead of us. She was asleep in the field of rye, worn out, worn out by our trip" (Duras 181).

The central span of Lacan's essay "Homage to Marguerite Duras" is concerned with the question of the gaze. Lol exists as the center of the gaze but is herself only a "blind spot" in the sense of non-gaze and inattention (Lacan 10). Lacan suggests that Jacques Hold's understanding of his impossible attempts to hold down or capture Lol, is in fact the disappearance of Jacques as a subject. In Lacan's terms, to see without one's gaze being reciprocated is to experience one's own extinction as a subject. Lacan reverses this to Lol, and the moment in which the ravishment of her fiancé was revealed to her; therefore, access to herself, becomes "access to the female body". Lol attains this access through gazing as she occupies the "mid-position between Jacques and Tatiana" (O'Brien 237). Kimberly Van Noort in her essay "The Dance of the Signifier: Jacques Lacan and Marguerite Duras's *Le Ravissement De Lol V. Stein*" illuminates that Duras' novel points to the possibility of a "feminine" signifier, singularly distinguished by its quality of absence; proven by the transformation of the character of Jacques Hold who, as he comes into possession of the impossible narration of the ball, aligns himself with Lol. "He would thus be feminized, accorded the non-place occupied by Lol" (Van Noort 12).

Lacan's reading of Duras brought him to the enigma of a divine love experienced in a feminine key and proposed as a gateway to a different sexuality. It evoked his fascination for a philosophical topic that he later called a "literary theme": woman's enjoyment (Rabate135).

Works Cited:

Allouch, Jean. Cent trente-deux bons mots avec Jacques Lacan. Erès, 1988.

Duras, Marguerite, *The Ravishing of Lol Stein*, New York: The Grove Press, 1986.

Lacan, Jacques, "Hommage fait à Marguerite Duras du ravissement de Lol v. Stein," 34, Paris: Navarin, 1985. English translation by Peter Connor, "Homage to Marguerite Duras, on *Le Ravissement de Lol V. Stein*," Marguerite Duras, San Francisco: City Lights Books, 1987.

Noort, Kimberly Philpot van. "The Dance of the Signifier: Jacques Lacan and Marguerite Duras's *Le Ravissement De Lol V. Stein*." *Symposium: A Quarterly Journal in Modern Literatures*, vol. 51, no. 3, 1997, pp. 186–201. Crossref, doi:10.1080/00397709709598511.

O'BRIEN, JOHN. "METAPHOR BETWEEN LACAN AND DURAS: NARRATIVE KNOTS AND THE PLOT OF SEEING." *Forum for Modern Language Studies*, vol. XXIX, no. 3, 1993, pp. 232–45. Crossref, doi:10.1093/fmls/xxix.3.232.

Rabate, Jean-Michel. *Jacques Lacan: Psychoanalysis and the Subject of Literature (Transitions)*. 2001st ed., Palgrave Macmillan, 2001.





Fateme Sadhezari

B.A. English Literature Student

Gordafarid, the Daughter of Iran

We remember *Shahnameh* as one of the most iconic pieces while talking about Persian literature. Women have always been an important part of this book since they are portrayed as powerful and beautiful, both adding to their wisdom. Through this article, we are going to read about one of the most interesting and inspiring female characters of *Shahnameh*, Gordafarid. The story starts when Sohrab, son of Rostam, decided to attack Persia with the Turkish army - this word refers to people from Turan in *Shahnameh* - and sit on the throne. He wanted to make peace between Iran and Turan with the help of his father, Rostam, and the allies he had in Turan. To reach this goal, he needed to pass Dezhe-Sepid fort, which was under the command of Hazhir, who was a great warrior himself. This fort was the gateway to Persia, and he could not enter without conquering it. Since Sohrab's identity was unknown to everyone, all Persian soldiers saw him as a young foreigner who was there to ruin their country and kill their people. Gozhdaham, an old soldier and protector of the fort, had a daughter whose name was Gordafarid. Besides her richness in beauty and wisdom, she was also a great warrior who defeated many soldiers of her nation and others. Sohrab needed to pass through Dezhe-Sepid to enter Iran, so the army surrounded the fort. Hazhir decided to go and fight in the field himself, so he asked for a single combat. Despite his strength and power in fighting, Sohrab defeated him and decided to capture him as a source of information instead of killing him. When Gordafarid saw the army behind the walls of the fort and the commander in chains of the foreign boy, she became angry and decided to fight in the battle herself. Her hair as black as night, and her body as strong as a river traveling through the rocks of the mountain, she ran towards the battlefield. She wore an armor, and since she did not want the enemy to know her gender, she hid her hair and covered her face. She roared and asked if there was someone brave enough to fight her, Sohrab got prepared and went to fight the unknown soldier. When Gordafarid saw him coming towards her, she took her bow and started firing thousands of arrows on his head.

نبد مرغ را پیش تیرش گذر

کمان را به زه کرد و بگشاد بر

She took her bow and started shooting arrows in his way. No bird could fly like her arrows.



Sohrab used his shield and rode his horse towards her. When he reached Gordafarid, the combat started and the only thing heard was the sound of swords hitting each other. Both of them were fighting fiercely and bravely, but when Gordafarid realized that she does not have a chance against Sohrab, she removed her helmet, and Sohrab found out that he was fighting a woman the whole time.

بپیچید از او روی و برگاشت زود

به آورد با او بسنده نبود

She was not strong enough to fight him, so she turned around and tried to retreat.

Sohrab was defeated by the power of love the moment he saw Gordafarid's face, as he was watching her without saying a word, he whispered, "you are a woman! How come a woman has come to the battlefield?" Gordafarid, who was the winner now said, "it is a shame that your men see you fighting so hard with a woman, so let us go into the fort together, and I will let your men come in as well." She did not give him time to think and choose as she rode her horse towards the fort with Sohrab following her. Gozhdaham opened the gates for her daughter, but the moment she went inside, the gates were closed again and Sohrab, sorrowful and devoted to the girl he was once going to kill, was left behind the gates.

چنین گفت کای شاه ترکان چنین
هم از آمدن هم ز دشت نبرد

چو سهراب را دید بر پشت زین
چرا رنجه گشتی کنون بازگرد

When she saw Sohrab on his horse behind the gates, she told him to back to his country and surrender.

همی از پلنگان ببايد نهفت

دریغ آیدم کاین چنین یال و سفت

It is a pity that you are going to die in the battle you have ahead.

ترا بهتر آیدکه فرمان کنی رخ نامور سوی توران کنی

It is better for you to go back to Turan and rule instead of staying here.

نباشی بس ایمن ببازوی خویش خورد گاو نادان ز پهلوی خویش

You are not safe only by your power and strength since stupid people will die because of their stupidity as a cow does (she is being so sarcastic here.)

Gordafarid's character is an iconic one, since she is portrayed as a soldier who does not only rely on her power and strength, but also on her wisdom and tries to solve problems and win the combat by using both. She is one of the bravest female characters in *Shahnameh* and Persian literature. She shows us that gender is not important as long as you are confident about your abilities and try to use them in the best way. She is an inspiration for all the women who are struggling in an everyday combat of their lives. Stay strong and don't be afraid of your problems, you are a WOMAN!



Zahra Jazayeri

M.A. English Literature Student

The Female Gothic

The roots of the Gothic, as a literary genre, date back to the late eighteenth century and the publication of Horace Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto* in 1764. The novel was described as a Gothic story, presenting castles haunted by ghosts, strange deaths, and violent passions, all of which became characteristic motifs of the Gothic genre. By the 1790s, many other writers were trying their hands at writing such stories of terror, and the book market was filled with books whose dark and gloomy pages were haunted by unknown ghosts. Anne Radcliffe, Mary Shelley, and Jane Austen are among the female authors who wrote bestseller horror books during this period. Women continued to be prominent writers of the genre in the post-Romantic period as well; the Brontë sisters being the most acclaimed among critics. The Gothic genre blossomed during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century, but traces of its impact continue to be felt even in modern times.

The Gothic genre employs the powers of 'delightful horror', to borrow Edmund Burke's term from his *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* (1757), and echoes Aristotle's belief in the potential of pity and fear to evoke pleasure. Ominous castles, wailing specters, troubled dreams, and bizarre deaths are among the motifs that are present in the works of Gothic literature. However, the Gothic genre's popularity does not simply rely on a mere portrayal of spooky elements and basic sensationalism. At its best, the Gothic genre can be considered as a reaction against commercialism as well as a satire of established structures of authority.

The term 'Female Gothic' was coined by Ellen Moers in 1976 in her work titled *Literary Women*. At the most primary level of meaning, the term signifies the work written by women authors in the Gothic genre. However, recent developments in theories of feminism have complicated the meaning of the term and given it multiple meanings. Female Gothic, (alternatively referred to as Gothic feminism or women's Gothic) deals with historical as well as psychological interpretations of Gothic works written by women authors dating from the Romantic period to contemporary times. As suggested by the term, Female Gothic is feminist in its concerns and does not simply refer to works written by women, but also to their political, historical, and psychological interpretations and the importance of these

interpretations in women's rights movements. Critics and theoreticians of Female Gothic see the genre as a way for women authors to explore and express their dissatisfaction with the structures that patriarchy has imposed on them and their fears of being trapped within the domestic sphere through the use of Gothic motifs such as I have mentioned before.

In other words, what defines the Female Gothic and constitutes its significance for many critics, among whom is Juliann Fleenor, lies in the way the stories written in this genre explore and portray the historical realities of women's position in a patriarchal society. The belief that the mode of Female Gothic can be and has historically been used as a metaphor for the female experience of fear and anxiety which women have been subjected to by patriarchal authority is central to these theories.

In the most recent years, critics have focused more on socio-cultural readings of the Female Gothic works rather than psychoanalytic interpretations. Ideologies of gender and the domestic, and the way they relate to and interact with the capitalistic characteristics of our contemporary society have been of special interest to critics in recent years.

Although the Gothic flourished in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century, traces of its influence can still be found in contemporary times in both literature and cinema. Women were prominent writers of the mode from its early period and continue as such today. The Gothic genre explores the mystery of the human psyche and produces delight and entertainment through the strategic use of fear, but on deeper levels, it can be an exploration as well as a satire of established structures of authority, and the human anxiety that arises out of the conflict with these structures. Women writers have specifically used the genre in order to delve into an exploration of anxieties, fears, and frustrations they experience in a patriarchal society that limits them to the domestic sphere and entombs them in a rigidly defined ideal of the feminine role and character.

Works cited:

- Evans, Ifor. *A Short History of English Literature*. Penguin Group -Pelican, 1974.
- Greenblatt, Stephen, et al. *The Norton Anthology of English Literature, Volume D: The Romantic Period*. 8th ed., W. W. Norton & Company, 2005.
- Sanders, Andrew. *The Short Oxford History of English Literature*. 3rd ed., Oxford University Press, 2004.
- Wallace, Diana, and Andrew Smith. *The Female Gothic: New Directions*. 2009th ed., Palgrave Macmillan, 2009.



Atena Hooshmand

B.A. English Literature Student

Unheard Words of a Mother, an Analysis of “Woman Work”

Maya Angelou was a poet, storyteller, activist, screenwriter, and civil rights activists. She gained so much honor and received so many prizes. Angelou’s poetry can have its roots in African American oral traditions like slavery and work songs with special emphasis on personal responses to hardship, oppression and loss. Her poems often address race and sex on social scales. In 2013, she received the Literarian Award. She died in 2014, when she was 86.

The first stanza is the longest one. It is lengthy to emphasize the burdens on this woman, and the length has added to the effect.

We can infer that she is a mother, housekeeper, cook, gardener, and slave. She works on fields, suggesting that the setting is the United States of America or British North America. The reader gets the impression that

the woman is weary and has a hard time.

The second stanza is shorter than the first, and it has a calm atmosphere. It is enriched with imagery, showing the images of sun, rain, and dewdrops. She wants the sun to shine and the rain to pour. She wants the world to deliver her natural phenomenon which is in contrast to the slavery mentioned in the previous stanza.

In the third stanza, the speaker yearns for a storm to take her away. This stanza and the previous one, conclude with the word “again”. She has used repetition to vitally indicate the nostalgic peace. Wind is a symbol here, showing that she wants to find freedom in death.

In the fourth stanza, the speaker describes winter and uses cold to find peace in. It describes the difficulties of motherhood. Snow and cold are

symbols of death. When she calls for the snowflakes, it can be inferred that she can only find peace in dying.

The fifth stanza highlights the slavery mentioned in the first stanza; a mother who cannot have her children as her own. Again, we have wind here, which is a symbol of death.

Works Cited:

“Maya Angelou.” Biography, 10 May 2021, www.google.com/amp/s/www.biography.com/.amp/writer/maya-angelou.

Poetry Foundation. “Maya Angelou.” Poetry Foundation, 20 Oct. 2014, www.poetryfoundation.org/poets/maya-angelou.

“Woman Work Poem Summary and Analysis.” LitCharts, www.litcharts.com/poetry/maya-angelou/woman-work. Accessed 6 Nov. 2021.





Raha Fazlollahi

B.A. English Literature Student

The Precipice

What silent grief can do to a woman is still a mystery to men, but the time has come for them to be shined by the light of truth, and at these last moments, I dare muster my feminine sensations and confess what should've been confessed from the beginning of the eternity; obliteration. Grief obliterates a woman.

I, as lonely as ever, standing nowhere, with iron manacles all over my soul, on the edge of a precipice, am delighted to meet the hollow sun summoning up the cold essence of my heart. What a pleasure to be summoned to a glorious mirror with its broken glasses in the hands. If I could release myself- if but only if- she was my ultimate destination to have her melt the hell that sorrow has created inside my curved and bruised flesh and to pine for whom we have lost. Although she burns in avaricious flames, I perpetuate singeing with my thinly wet smoke, for her grief is more heart-wrenching; to lose a lover every dawn with her rising!

Yet, too high is the sky for my eye on this pale face, so another sight is surrounded to help me even see the sun. At the devil spur, the first could spare a glance, then dance till the morning dew was burnt out of the song. The spare one draws a false gleam of light upon my heart; a door to gloomy heaven, an abyss to dead goddesses. But I summon the vengeful rain and spiritless wind, but shed not, and blow not, let's prance through the shiny eyes and take them down. For no man needs a rose to behold a withered garden.

Nevertheless, the ocean below me is crawling heavenward, drop by drop, as if it's weeping faintly and shedding tears to the vast roof above us all. It will soothe the merciless sun, yet who's to soothe me? Who's to caress my unleashed hair floating along with the howling wind behind me? Who's to breathe after my pure gasp of horror? Yes, I'm in horror, in terror, I'm petrified, I'm frightened, and now where are the voices which called me feeble? Behold me fading, you iron-like creatures. I allow all of you to revel in your manly gloomy caves along with the muses and to dance till the high skies elevate you as creatures who deserve heaven as no other living being does.

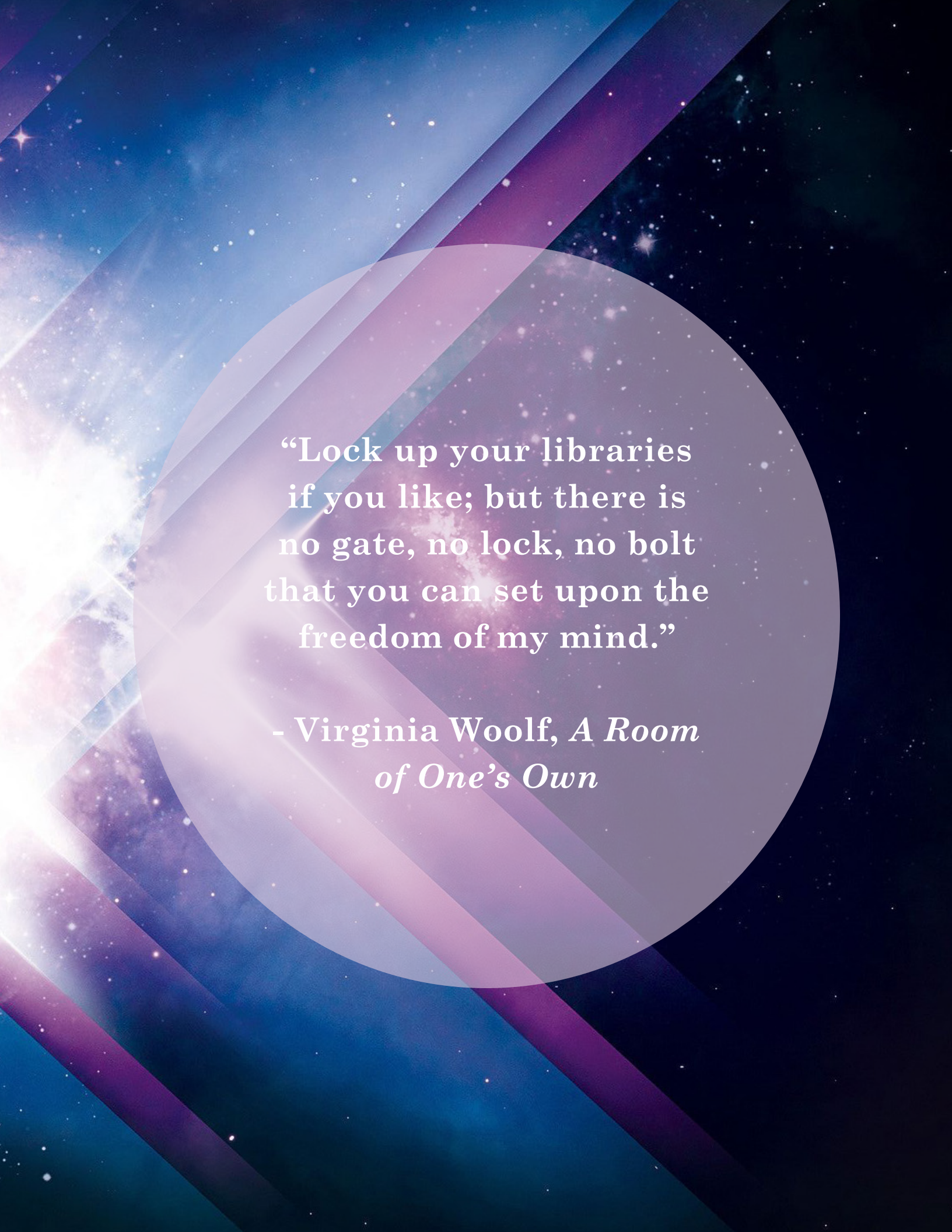
Revel in your cloudy castles, rosy grail, and radiant angels, and leave me here, lying on the edge. I have no intention to raise now that the ground is clear of warm breaths, who even needs to be warm among these falling mountain ranges? If my heart is frigid, whatever it feels must freeze too. But dearest heart, set the blossoms on fire, let the flames

burn the moon wilder than the cynical sun does. Tame the silver blood of moonlight while shedding forlornly on your fiery bosom and paint your lips with its sweet taste.

They call it my destiny! The dead gods who reign the sins and deaths are still immortal, the ones who usurp my eyes and plunder my once-smooth skin are still awake, the ones who inject the silver blood into my red and seize the spirit are still alive, yet they call it destiny. The avaricious thunders, swallowing flames, and the avenging waves all have failed me. I thought they would release me from the tornado I am trapped in. I was promised the burn of the black veil on my face, the firm chains around my waist were to shatter into pieces, I was told of freedom. And now, all together with the iron-like creatures, fondle the strings of their angelic harp in the middle of my battle cry. And at nights, when the wolves bestow silence to the moon, a shrill unknown voice shrieks my name as if asking the livings and the dead of my miserable existence, whether I still breathe or not, why did you even love me when longed to end me?

I've forgotten my face for some good years. These wistful eyes, had I always worn them? Or the silenced mouth, I swear, wasn't there. Would the ghosts chase me to color this pale skin? Forgettable, I guess, is my face. A diamond was never black, and the pearls not a place for my little neck. The hair was never silky, and no river ever flowed smoothly among the locks. A rose strayed the way when it touched my cheeks, and butterflies needed no abandoned heart. Now let me draw the face of guilt for the world, while men are perjuring themselves in the court of agony. Let me pursue the path of unknowns after them, it might lead me to you. Let me create a new moon to color it with our painful moments, perhaps it shines to the otherworld and reminds you of me, reminds you that someone is still pining for you after so many years. Although the last snow of winter never whispers through the wind, the last tide never deeply claws the shore, the last breath of life never warns in heart, the lasts never betray me as the firsts do, at least they'd been for a time. You were neither in the lasts nor the firsts, were you? Or has the grief obliterated my memory? What this grief is, that doesn't leave or betray a woman? Every moment that passes intensifies this hole inside me, to speak bluntly, I can't take it anymore.

To fall from the edge of the precipice is to fly towards the underworlds where the grief-grasped woman like me belongs. I'm one heartbeat away from death. Whether I stir a foot or he does, we may meet but weep at last, for I'm no Persephone, for no future is destined. All my life I've lingered on and on for a wistful minute of farewell; however, this one moment would suffice.



“Lock up your libraries
if you like; but there is
no gate, no lock, no bolt
that you can set upon the
freedom of my mind.”

- Virginia Woolf, *A Room
of One's Own*