

**Ayan Dawn**

**UG-II, Roll-15**

**Ramakrishna Mission Vidyamandira**

**A feast for the psyche!**

**A review of Oscar Wilde's *Picture of Dorian Gray***

Wilde called it 'my first long story'; formally linking it with the short stories, he had written for journals during 1887. Brilliant, Flamboyant and unconventional Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray* exists in two forms. The first was published in the American journal Lippincott's Monthly Magazine in July 1890; the next year an expanded version came out in London as a book, after the publication of the maxims as the 'Preface' in the Fortnightly Review in March 1891. It displays both the precision required of the short-story form and the discursiveness permitted by lengthy. Many of the themes entertained earlier recur: the relationship between art and morality, or, put differently between form and content (*The Sphinx without a Secret*); the question of influence, criminal propensity, and determinism (*Lord Arthur Savile's Crime*); the relationship between empiricism and the occult (*The Canterville Ghost*). Characteristic of the perspective reversals which Wilde deployed in the tales of *Lord Arthur Savile's Crime and Other Stories*, he presents in *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, a story which begins to be about the relationship between an artist and his model and turns into a story about the relationship between art and its content.

The novel revolves around Dorian Gray, who is the subject of a full-length portrait in oil by Basil Hallward, an artist who is impressed and infatuated by Dorian's beauty; he believes that Dorian's beauty is responsible for the new mood in his art as a painter. Through Basil, Dorian meets Lord Henry Wotton, and he soon is enthralled by the aristocrat's hedonistic worldview: that beauty and sensual fulfilment are the only things worth pursuing in life.

Newly understanding that his beauty will fade, Dorian expresses the desire to sell his soul, to ensure that the picture, rather than he, will age and fade. The wish is granted, and Dorian pursues a libertine life of varied and amoral experiences while staying young and beautiful; all the while his portrait ages and records every sin.

Wilde chose to cast his ideas into the form of a 'magic picture' story. However, there is no such logical explanation as to how an ordinary portrait turns into a supernatural one which ages thereby making Dorian Gray's youth immortal.

Now, the above statement makes it evident that youth or to be precise “obsession with youth” is a pivotal theme in this novel. It is noticed that all the chaos, which takes place in Dorian’s life, is due to his attempt to preserve his youth and hide “his secret” i.e. the picture from other people. At the beginning of the novel, Dorian is not obsessed with his beauty and youth but as the novel progresses his obsession reaches altogether to a different point. But this obsession has its beginning and here it is.

*‘People say sometimes that Beauty is only superficial. That may be so. But at least it is not as superficial as Thought. To me, Beauty is the wonder of wonders. It is only shallow people who do not judge by appearances.*

*Yes, Mr. Gray, the gods have been good to you. But what the gods give they quickly take away. You have only a few years in which really to live. When your youth goes, your beauty will go with it, and then you will suddenly discover that there are no triumphs left for you, or have to content yourself with those mean triumphs that the memory of your past will make more bitter than defeats. Every month as it wanes brings you nearer to something dreadful. Time is jealous of you, and wars against your lilies and your roses. You will become sallow, and hollow-cheeked, and dull-eyed. You will suffer horribly. ‘Realize your youth while you have it. Don’t squander the gold of your days, listening to the tedious, trying to improve the hopeless failure, or giving away your life to the ignorant, the common, and the vulgar, which are the aims, the false ideals, of our age. Live! Live the wonderful life that is in you! Let nothing be lost upon you. Be always searching for new sensations. Be afraid of nothing.’*

And the above word of Lord Henry was cast like a magic spell upon Dorian Gray.

Dorian remains young and beautiful, but he is trailed by rumours that he indulges in dark, sordid behaviour. Most people cannot help but dismiss these stories since Dorian’s face retains an unblemished look of “purity” and “innocence.”

Dorian treats his beauty and youth as a shroud over his sins.

A similarity between Dorian Gray and Shakespeare sonnet 54 can also be found. Dorian and Shakespeare both want to preserve beauty. Dorian takes the aid of the picture to do so and Shakespeare takes the aid of his sonnets to do the same. But the difference lies in the fact that Dorian fails and Shakespeare succeeds.



SONNET 54

*O how much more doth beauty beauteous seem,  
By that sweet ornament which truth doth give!  
The rose looks fair, but fairer we it deem  
For that sweet odour which doth in it live.  
The canker-blooms have full as deep a dye  
As the perfumed tincture of the roses,  
Hang on such thorns and play as wantonly  
When summer's breath their masked buds discloses:  
But, for their virtue only is their show,  
They live unwoo'd and unrespected fade,  
Die to themselves. Sweet roses do not so;  
Of their sweet deaths are sweetest odours made:  
And so of you, beauteous and lovely youth,  
When that shall fade, my verse distills your truth.*

Another theme which is dominant in the novel is "Influence". Without the influence of Henry Wotton, nothing would have happened. It is seen that the character of Dorian Gray gets filled up with the theories of Henry Wotton. When one reads the novel he/she initial falls for the views of Henry Wotton but slowly we realize that like Dorian Gray a part of us is also getting influenced. The painting and the yellow book have a profound effect on Dorian, influencing him to predominantly immoral behaviour over the course of nearly two decades. Reflecting on Dorian's power over Basil and deciding that he would like to seduce Dorian in much the same way, Lord Henry points out that there is "something terribly enthralling in the exercise of influence." Falling under the sway of such influence is, perhaps, unavoidable, but the novel ultimately censures the sacrifice of one's self to another. Basil's idolatry of Dorian leads to his murder, and Dorian's devotion to Lord Henry's hedonism and the yellow book precipitate his own downfall. It is little wonder, in a novel that prizes individualism—the uncompromised expression of self—that the

sacrifice of one's self, whether it is to another person or to a work of art, leads to one's destruction.

The novel also explores the superficial nature of society. A society that prizes beauty above all else is a society founded on a love of surfaces. What matters most to Dorian and Lord Henry is not whether a man is good at heart but rather whether he is "handsome". Indeed, even though, as Basil warns, society's elite question his name and reputation, Dorian is never ostracized. On the contrary, despite his "mode of life," he remains at the heart of the London social scene because of the "innocence" and "purity of his face." As Lady Narborough notes to Dorian, there is little (if any) distinction between ethics and appearance: "you are made to be good—you look so good."

*The Picture of Dorian Gray* is a delicious meal for anyone, be it a book-lover or not. However, there are some things which the reader does not get. Almost every character has a back story but all backstories are not fully developed. It would have been exciting if we got more insight into the psyche of Sibyl Vane. We learn briefly about Dorian's mother, her transgressions, and how she died of lovesickness but that's it. We even get massive gaps in Lord Henry's timeline.

All said and done *The Picture of Dorian Gray* remains one of the very few books which, like a quicksand, drag you within, and you, without resisting, just relish it.

7/10

Dipanjana Mukherjee  
24/4/19



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## On Multiple frontiers

Reading Amitav Ghosh's *Gun Island*

Out on a quest for the Bonduki Sadagor, Dinanath Dutta or Deen comes across a shrine or *dham* amidst the dense mangroves of Sundarban. In one of the blocks of the shrine which Deen considers to be of Bishnupuri style is impressed a symbol which Rafi describes as “dwiper moddhye dwip” i.e, an island within and island. The plot too, though complex, is well knitted by Amitava Ghosh similarly, like a story within a story. No surprise the novel has become the recipient of 2018's Jnanpith Award. The beginning of the story with reference to mythical and antique sources might make the reader recall a similar beginning of Umberto Eco's novel *The Name of The Rose*. The folk myth of the Bonduki Sadagar is the base structure of the fiction. The myth of the Bonduki Sadagar, or the Gun merchant traces its origin back to Manasa Devi.

Amitav Ghosh explores many domains of the myth that he follows throughout the novel while deciphering scrupulously at episodic intervals the hidden references in the cryptic expressions – symbols and lyrics. Be it the notion of the “Bhuta” or the demon, or the reference to any historic crisis or “pralaya” are all part of the unfolding of the novel. Besides, on it builds multiple themes of intimate personal relationships, the involvement of all stages of corrupt administrations in human trafficking, and also at the same time the notions of ecological concern. Amitav Ghosh draws parallels between the reality and the folk myth. The real and the folk are entangled together.

The notion of the subaltern and their connection to the outer world has been shown in the novel too. In fact, the novel remains partial to truth in depicting the bitterness of how rather than the legitimacy and the good of the urban has been unable to influence the “heart of darkness” in the Sundarbans while all the waste – both literally and metaphorically are dumped there; into the actions and beliefs of the young ones especially. Piya provides Tipu with all kinds of modern technological gadgets so that he can grow up to become able for the urban landscape. It proves that the use of any particular object lies in its dialectical and subjective understanding.

The novel expresses the daunting truths of inequality, climate change, capitalism, corruption, the arms trade, and also the oil industry. He links the west and the east through the operating global chain of human trafficking. Towards the end of the novel, he makes a serious note how the migrant labourers from the oriental nations go through nightmares to travel to the east only to lose their identities, become refugees in no man's land. In one of the episodes, none of the countries involved in the specific matter agree to accepting the refugees for they fear of the trafficking chain to be exposed in which higher authorities too have a share.

The informative expressions of religious notions and elements are notable. When Deen talks to Tipu regarding Demons, he refers to "pralaya" by the providence of which "everything dissolves, even time." He continues to say most probably of doomsday – "Zorastrians say rivers of molten metal will flow over the earth. The Christian say death, disease, famine, and war will bring apocalypse. The Incas thought it would start with earthquakes; Muslims say the oceans will burst forth and the dead will turn in their graves." Also, when Nilima narrates her experience of her visit to the shrine, she expresses her surprise about the Muslim boatman who was looking after a shrine which belonged to the Hindu goddess. The boatman notably answers that the dhaam was revered by all irrespective of religion: Hindus believed that it was Manasa Devi who guarded their shrine while the Muslims believed that it was a place of Jinns, protected by a Muslim pir, or saint, by the name of Ilyas.

The capitalist authoritarian investment in industries and its adverse effects on the environment is protested against by Piya in the novel. In fact, the ecological downfalls since the ice age have been summarised in one of the episodes. Rani is an anthropomorphised character in the novel which stands as proof to the river pollution by refineries. Though at the end, there is a sublime picturesque scenario of millions of migrating birds accompanied by splashing whales and dolphins. Women roles have been embodied with a certain amount of self-sustenance and firm character

As a whole, exploring the multiple domains of climate change, capitalist exploitation, religious considerations and folk myths, Gun island's narrative, as Supriya Chaudhuri writes, "exceeds our understanding but is nevertheless real, is an act of nature, ascribed by us to the logic of coincidence, the power of the marvellous, and the force of miracle."

7/10

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24/11/19



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## A carol worth a Christmas change

*A review of Charles Dickens' The Christmas Carol*

Five lines. A few symbols. Several dots – between the lines, on the lines, etc. Two clefs – bass clef and treble clef. Three types of notes – sharp notes, flat notes and major notes. These are what the eye sees. Oh! But what is that? What is the hand doing? The fingers are playing merrily on the ivory keys. Their joy is resounding in a melodious tune from the sound box.

What is it that this description brings to a mind? A joyous pianist on the piano? What is the tune speaking of? Merriment? Or is it mocking at the silent mass of dots and lines in front of the pianist? Well, this is exactly what *A Christmas Carol* sets itself upon. It speaks of a player, playing the piano of life by looking at the notation. But being so engrossed the tune is rendered as mere formations of black and white. That is what Dickens aims to put in but there he breathes everyday life into the pianist, makes him Ebenezer Scrooge. He transforms the music to everyday happenings. He gifts us a wonderful yuletide tale.

Conforming to the conventions first a problem is presented. The music is in its low-pitched nascence. Ebenezer Scrooge and his bitterly miserly cold ways are extracted from his interactions and attitudes. His business partner, Marley whose last rites he dispensed of in a filthy awkward manner, comes in form of a ghost to him. Warning him, Marley leaves Scrooge apprehending three spirits. The spirits come. They show Scrooge, EBENEZER SCROOGE. When they are gone, Scrooge becomes the himself he had lost.

The spirits or the ghosts form the heart of the novella. Their name – Ghosts of Christmas past, Christmas present, Christmas Yet-to-be speaks of their significance centered around a Christmas time. They make the Christmas day of the instant novel an origin of an axis. They relate to Scrooge various events relating to him in anyway. At the end of this, Scrooge is a different man. A remarkable way can be observed regarding the symmetry in which the ghosts are presented and also in respect of reaction of Scrooge to them. The first ghost is coercive with Scrooge, takes him through past; the second spirit only asks to follow, which he complies with; the third spirit doesn't even have to say anything. Again Scrooge drives the first ghost away, wishes the second spirit a little longer and tugs at the third spirit earnestly to stay and clarify things to him a little longer. The attachment as a whole remains constant – decreasing from ghost side and increasing from Scrooge side. The three ghosts differ in appearances designed in conformation with their metaphorical purposes. While the dwarf spirit of Christmas Past had an air of certainty and ambivalence; that of Christmas Present had a merry joyous mood and the Christmas Yet-to-be was enwrapped in uncertainty.

Yet the ghosts solve three different aspects. While Ghost of Christmas Past traverses forward through time axis, Ghost of Christmas Present dodges through space and ghost of Christmas Yet-to-be through psychologies of Scrooge's relations. Interestingly even the teachings and reactions to the ghosts vary. The first one showed indignation and produced the sense of wrong; the second showed an important cause of misery and filled him with remorse and repentance; the third fills him with despair by showing neglect. The contribution of the ghosts to the story-line is also great. They transform a man lost in the hilly terrain of life by ushering in beam of light of self-knowledge and self-introspection. They collectively administer him the medicine of "time" freeing him from ignorance and want, sheltering him from indignation and neglect.

The story paints larger than life characters who continue outside the pages of this book in the English society. It also enquires into the changing of the psychology of different people under bent of different circumstances. It inspects the impact of change in attitude of an individual on his relations, on society.

Besides it also points out how detached man can be when ignorant. Feeling the way of magnanimity that Christmas brings. Without touch of this magnanimity, no man is a real man. He is a chained ghost like Marley lamenting his ways while in the mortal world.

Heading to a close with weaving of a sweet "high-pitched" stave, the merriment reverberates. The pianist is alive with his sense of the sweetness the dots and the black lines imply. The response hence is as beautiful as the carol ends,

"And so, as Tiny Tim observed, God bless us, Everyone."

55/10

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## **Circumcision and the process of de-colonization in Ngugi's *The River Between***

The narrative of Ngugi in *The River Between* (1965) derives largely from an anxiety surrounding circumcision. The indigenous Kenyan rite practiced upon both boys and girls that ensures their successful passage into adulthood. Coupled with the novel's setting between two mountain ridges, Ngugi's portrayal of circumcision (particularly female circumcision) enacts a sustained sexual metaphor that crudely genders these mountain ridges as a female-coded liminal zone. Moreover, Kameno and Makuyu mountain ridges dramatize a cumbersome psycho-sexual allegory that points towards the anxiety surrounding female circumcision; the mountain ridges, that is, are crude signifiers of the "ridges" of Muthoni's labia that are excised much in the same manner that Kameno purists would excise the presence of Christianity that had corrupted their social landscape.

Circumcision, in the story assumes a paradoxical double-function. On one hand circumcision is an indigenous, traditional, and therefore perhaps anti-colonial rite that operates as a form of resistance against impending British imperialism. In the following passage, for example, Ngugi juxtaposes circumcision and Christianity in order to suggest how circumcision became a "pagan" rite transgressive of Christian principles.

Muthoni, in the story, represents a crisis in conceptions of girlhood. Girlhood, she believed is a "lesser" womanhood. When we first encounter Muthoni in *The River Between*, she utters two important statements to her sister Nyambura. The first is "I want to be circumcised." The second is "I—I want to be a woman. I want to be a real girl, a real woman, knowing all the ways of the hills and ridges". The stuttered "I" reminds us that Muthoni is speaking at the river Honia, which flows in the valley that cleaves the Kameno traditionalists and the Makuyu Christians. Muthoni's "I," therefore is separated and joined into the two "I"s, suggests the opposing forces that shape her existence: her allegiance to her father's brand of Christianity and her desire to be part of the ritually recognized Gikuyu. Simultaneously, this split, ego "I" registers the implicit distinction Muthoni draws between "real" and "unreal" girls and women.

Muthoni occupies a gendered limbo created by the coincidence of precolonial tradition and colonial Christianity. This gendered limbo creates an ontological and epistemological crisis for the Kameno traditionalists and the Makuyu Christians just alike Muthoni's ungendered state produces a crisis in ethnic intimacy that can only be managed by rendering her socially dead. Through the character of Muthoni, Ngugi explores how colonial modernity produces improperly gendered and sexed bodies that unsettle ethnic intimacy and threaten to unmake notions of ethnicity grounded in sex and gender differentiation.

Moreover, attacking the Christian origin of her spectrality, Muthoni claims, "The white man's God does not quite satisfy me. I want, I need something more". Her desire for "something more" critiques her father's brand of Christianity for failing to imagine gendered alternatives for eligible girls, failing, that is, to create a way for a girl to be real a girl or to "grow into a [real] woman." Central to Muthoni's sense of lack is her claim to Nyambura, "My life and your

life are here, in the hills, that you and I know". This attention to location is key, for Muthoni raises the question of how colonial modernity functions in a space that is deemed to be isolated from modernity's ruptures.

For Muthoni, sex and gender are not natural categories; they are produced through specific cultural practices. As Judith Butler puts it, "'sex' is a regulatory ideal whose materialization is compelled, and this materialization takes place (or fails to take place) through certain highly regulated practices". Among the Gikuyu, cultural practices were intricately bound to physical development. Indeed, it was believed that specific ceremonies, stimulated bodily growth and development. *Irua*, a specific type of occasion celebrated among girls, as noted above, takes place after puberty had begun but before menarche. It was intended to transform unproductive girls into reproductive women. For Muthoni, the stakes are high, for without becoming a "real" girl she cannot become a real woman; without real gender, a "life in the hills" is impossible. Caught in a gendered limbo, she remains outside ethnic identity, unrecognized by the people around her and by the land she inhabits, a visitor and stranger. A gender which became an object of desire, something elusive, something lacking.

For Nyambura, on the other hand she had learnt and knew that circumcision was sinful. It was a pagan rite from which she and her sister had been saved. A daughter of God should never let even a thought of circumcision come to her mind. Nyambura's reticence towards circumcision results from her internalization of Christian beliefs and her subsequent disavowal of indigenous cultural practices. This violence of circumcision forecasts somewhat the violence of decolonization.

Alice Walker and others have elsewhere deftly portrayed the violence and humiliation of female circumcision. Nyambura herself questions the legitimacy of the Christian censure of circumcision--suggesting not only that her Christian parents had themselves been circumcised but that the Old Testament itself betrays some ambivalence over the value of circumcision.

Clearly circumcision carries multiple, shifting meanings that are continually brought into crisis against each other. Arguably anti-colonial, secular, and spiritual, circumcision in one sense assumes a foremost position in the conflicts symbolized by the novel's setting.

6/10

Dipayan Muthoni  
20/11/19



## The Story Of 'Rani': Gender Discrimination In Girish Karnad's *Naga-Mandala*

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"I cannot invent plots therefore I use myths. I cannot invent stories and hence go to history"-- in these words Girish Karnad described his craft in an interview. He deliberately reaches back to retrieve, revive and recycle the myths and, by applying his creative genius, throws a light on the contemporary social concerns prevailing in the society.

*Naga-Mandala* (pub. 1990) was based on a folk tale related to him by A. K. Ramanujan. It was originally written in Kannada and later Karnad trans-created it into English. The play primarily focuses on Man-Woman relationship in the institution of marriage.

The Indian cultural traditions are male-dominated, hardly giving any scope for women to exercise their freedom for fulfilment of desires and development of identity which they claim as their own. Taught to repress her own desires and trained to practice self-effacement, women have tried to articulate a male constructed definition which she has to internalise. Therefore, when she speaks, it is patriarchy that speaks through her.

The title of the play itself is highly symbolic. "Naga" stands for the character of the King Cobra; while "mandala" consists of a triangle within a square, which provides the dramatic frame-work. The three points of the triangle are Rani, Appanna and Naga and the four sides of the square stand for the Flames (the observer), the Story, the Man (the writer) and the audience (the respondees). Here, the playwright himself is a character, hence the distance between the writer and the character does not stand.

The story of *Naga-Mandala* is narrated by a special character 'Story', which is born of a woman's mind who is strongly agitated due to her suspicion that her husband is carrying affairs with some other woman. Therefore, Rani and Appanna's story is not of any particular couple, it is rather an archetypal story of mismatched men and women in a typical Indian society. Therefore, Rani is married to "Appanna", meaning anyone-- "Well, any common name will do".

The name 'Rani' ridicules the Indian ideal of Womanhood as the Rani or Lakshmi of the household. As Virginia Woolf asserts in *A Room of One's Own*, "Imaginatively, she's of importance, practically insignificant. She pervades poetry from cover to cover, is all but absent from history".

Appanna is an example of male chauvinism. He goes to the concubine but keeps his wife under lock and key lest she would also get a lover. He is shocked to notice that Rani is pregnant in spite of all the restraints that he has imposed upon her movements. With the Indian concept of chastity in mind, he starts questioning her—“Tell me who it is? Who did you go to with your sari off? ...And you think I'll let you get away with that? You shame me in front of the whole village, you darken my face, you slut - !” He takes her to the village elders who ask her to hold a red-hot iron bar to prove her chastity, while Appanna, her husband, goes unquestioned, even unnoticed. Thus, Girish Karnad, in *Naga Mandala* emphasises upon projecting the female protagonist, Rani, analogous to Sita in *The Ramayana* and exposes the double standards of this so called *cultured society* that strongly demands the faithfulness of a woman to her husband while the husband is free to lead a licentious life.

Karnad remarks, “Appanna and Naga represent the two unconnected roles of a husband as a stranger during the day and as lover at night”. It is evident when Rani speaks at one point:

“... Don't ask questions. Do as I tell you. No, I won't ask questions. I shall do what you tell me. Scowls in the day. Embraces at night. The face in the morning unrelated to the touch at night. But day or night, one motto does not change: Don't ask questions. Do as I tell you”.

Towards the end of the play, Rani is portrayed as a goddess. She accepts to start a new life with her husband and new-born baby. But does that completely dry up the hidden, suppressed desire for greater love and personal fulfilment? The double ending of the play presents this duality through the structural device.

In End One, Naga enters Rani's bedroom again and dies for the sake of Rani and her family. Though Rani grieves for her lover, Naga's sacrifice paves the way for her happy married life.

In End Two of the story, the snake does not die. Rani allows him to live in her “dark, long and cool tresses, like snake-princess”. The dutiful and loyal wife may observe the social, moral code entirely, yet within her live the memories of the perfect lover who had given her the first emotional and erotic experience.

Thus, there is a definite shift in Rani's character- from an innocent, helpless, vulnerable, ignorant girl to a confident, courageous, clever, determined and self-assertive *lady*. She is also aware of it, “I was a stupid, ignorant girl when you brought me here. But now I am a woman, a wife, and I am going to be a mother.”

7-5/10

Dipanshu Chakraborty  
22/11/19



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**Twisting Oliver – A study of Dickens' England**

A review of *Oliver Twist* By Charles Dickens

The book – 'Oliver Twist' by Charles Dickens has an interesting plot and a timeless appeal. The story revolves around an orphan named Oliver Twist; whose mother died giving birth to him. The book review deals with the plot, characters and storytelling of Charles Dickens. It also sheds light on how the author challenges the discrepancies of society in the novel. The story took place in nineteenth century England during the Industrial Revolution.

Being a social reformer, Charles Dickens shed light on the prevalent social issues. The issues include class differences, exploitation of the poor and of child labor. The rich remained rich and snobbish, while the poor suffered. The society would determine the fate of the people. There were no scopes for the poor to rise and prosper. They had to stay the way they were as they were looked down upon. The poor remained miserable, yet the rich would keep thriving. The writer also brought focus to a society that was patriarchal, where women were oppressed and in a lot of cases, treated like an object. In the book, the character of the young man, Oliver, represents the struggles in the neglected lives of children who don't have a family, are orphaned and poor in a flawed society. The writer even brought attention to the sordid lives of the criminals and the criminal practice of the Victorian Era. This book review of *Oliver Twist* contains a summary of the plot as well as thoughts on the overall novel.

Oliver Twist was born in a workhouse where his mother died leaving him orphaned. The young man grew up in an orphanage where he got his name. Mr. Bumble took him away from the orphanage and put him to work. At the workhouse, his job was to pick and weave oakum. Child labor was not uncommon back in that time, so it wasn't too surprising to see him and other orphans working all day for the benefit of the ruling class with receiving little to no pay, extorted, overworked and starving.

Oliver was nine years of age at that time. He was sold to a coffin maker named Mr. Sowerberry as an apprentice by Mr. Bumble later on. Mrs. Sowerberry had a dominating and manipulative personality and Oliver wasn't shown affection or care by her even though he was a mere child, he was only seen as the house help. He fled from there after by Mr. Sowerberry had hit and punished him for getting into a fight with Noah. He traveled all the way to London on foot, hoping to get away from the miserable life he had lived till then.

After arriving in London, he met the 'Artful Dodger'. He happens to be part of a young boys' pickpocket gang led by, Fagin, an aged criminal. Oliver's trusting and innocent nature failed find any of his actions dishonest. He was taken to Fagin by the pickpocket. Fagin is a complex character; even though he's a criminal, he empathizes and nurtures the young kids while training them to become expert pickpockets. He wasn't portrayed as abusive towards children and he had a soft corner for the boy, Oliver.

Oliver stayed with the gang of pickpockets at their lair, believing that they make wallets and handkerchiefs not being aware of their criminal line of work. He learned that their real mission was to steal handkerchiefs when he went out with the 'Artful Dodger' and Charley Bates. From an old man called Mr. Brownlow, Bates and Dodger steal a handkerchief. When he noticed, however, young Oliver caught his eye and he suspected him of theft. Trying to run away out of fright, he got caught and taken to the magistrate. But seeing his innocent face and nature, Mr. Brownlow doubted the fact that it was him who was the thief. The owner of the bookshop where the incident of theft took place, cleared the confusion as he explained that it wasn't Oliver who was the thief. Mr. Brownlow took the child to

his house and was under the care of Mrs. Bedwin as he fell sick in the courtroom. Oliver blossoms and has a rapid recovery from the unexpected kindness from them.

Fagin, fearing that Oliver might disclose their wrongdoings to the police, wanted Oliver back in his lair. So, when Oliver was sent on a duty to pay for the books, Nancy and Bill Sikes – both working alongside Fagin, put on a successful act to capture and bring him back. The thieves took away the books, the five-pound note and took his new clothes off. Oliver tried to run away again calling for the police. Yet, Dodger and Fagin caught him. Nancy was the only female character with a different sense of righteousness there who was sympathetic to Oliver.

To re-involve Oliver in criminal activities, Sikes planned a burglary and threatened to take his life unless he cooperates. He was then taken to a house, asked to open the lock of the main door before being pushed into a small window to enter the house. They were heard and the robbery went wrong. The inhabitants of the house mistakenly shot Oliver and left him wounded. The people of the house, Mrs. Maylie and Miss Rose, took him in to care for him.

Readers get some idea about Oliver's identity when a mysterious man named Monks appears. He was later revealed to be Oliver's half-brother. Monks plotted with Fagin to destroy Oliver's reputation to inherit their father's wealth. Nancy eavesdropped when Monks was explaining how he traced Oliver's identity and decided to inform Oliver's benefactors about this. The following day, Mr. Brownlow returned to London from a trip when Oliver sees him and takes him to meet the Maylies.

Edward Leeford was the father of Monks and Oliver. He fell in love with Agnes, Oliver's mother, after he had separated from Monks' mother. Later on, Mrs. Rose Maylie was revealed to be Agnes' sister thus being Oliver's aunt. Nancy, being protective of Oliver, went on to meet them at the London Bridge and told everything to Mrs. Rose Maylie and Mr. Brownlow about Monks' plan and gave them an idea on how to save Oliver from Fagin, Monks and Sikes' hand.

Nancy did not realize that Fagin sent a spy after her because of her suspicious behavior who then informed everything to him. After Fagin disclosed whatever he heard to Sikes, believing that Nancy was a traitor, he brutally beat her to death that very night in a fit of rage turning himself into a murderer. Sikes fled from London.

Later on, the news of Nancy's murder spread across London and Sikes along with the criminal coach Fagin were wanted for their crimes. Sikes returned to London to steal money from Fagin and deciding to flee to France, where he accidentally hanged himself trying to get down from a rooftop as he was being chased by a mob mad at Nancy's murder. Fagin got arrested and sentenced to death by execution. Mr. Brownlow confronted Monks about his plot against Oliver and decided to give him a second chance. When asked, Oliver happily agrees to give Monks half of his inheritance. Monks misuses the money and dies in prison later. Accompanied by Mr. Brownlow on an emotional scene, Oliver visits Fagin, who was lost in a world of his own fear of impending death on the eve of his hanging in Newgate Prison.

Oliver Twist was adopted by Mr. Brownlow and was given love and care as well as a promise to live a proper life. Dodger was convicted with a punishment of transportation to Australia, Charlie Bates became an honest citizen and Noah became a semi-professional police informer.



Many critics hold the opinion that the main character – Oliver Twist needed more development as he wasn't very complex and lacked personality. He was portrayed as an innocent, incorruptible person who didn't give in regardless of the situation he was found in. The other characters such as Fagin, Nancy, Mr. Brownlow, The Maylies, Monks and the, Bill Sykes seemed far more interesting to me than the main character. The mild sarcastic tone of the writer about his own characters was noticeable and helped with the rather grim storyline. The workhouse portrayed the hypocrisy of the people in charge. Mr. Brownlow and the Maylies portrayed the goodness in a flawed society. We got an insight on the lives of the criminals, the rich and the poor. Overall, this Oliver Twist novel review maintains that encompassed many genres in an attractive yet serious storyline.

In this book review, we would like to conclude that Oliver Twist is a true Dickens classic. The social novel – 'Oliver Twist' was one of Dickens' early writings where he satirizes the hypocrisies of his time. The story shows how strong of an influence environment can have on a person's life and how it is possible to overlook and overcome these influences. The wonderful writing complimented the storyline even though certain characters lacked depth and full development as this was his second novel from his whole career. From that point on, the author's writing evolved and became richer later on.

55/10

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24/11/19

Aniruddha Chowdhury  
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## A Shooting Star in the Consumer Atmosphere

### Review of *The Great Gatsby* by F. Scott Fitzgerald

The smell of a daisy. What does it first bring to mind? A dew-washed splendour of the morning. A refreshed feeling. A touch of beauty and so on. Things that are as easily attained as nature. Say money bars you from all these. What happens? That is exactly what the book appears to be about.

Opening with the speech of an individual recently failing to finally settle with a job the story launches itself into a new arena of a capitalist great. The narrator's world thrives beside a newly building world of materials and capital – the world of possessions impresses all around. Party, merry making, join in the charade of a grand show off and impressions. The grand looming shadow of commodity appears to commodify anything and everything, most perceptible in the effort of developing 'relations' with women.

The narration seems to begin *in media res* of this world building beside the narrator's. Gatsby, a stealthily rich individual combines in himself the American ideal of a wealthy merry making individual. Parties prove him so but his source of money appears to be quite obscure. Gradually with the revelation of his love for whom he aspired and amassed so much wealth brings a turn in his life.

In the commodified world of Gatsby relationships assume disguisedly a morbid aroma of commodity. Of the few relationships portrayed hereby, Daisy-Gatsby, Buchanan-Daisy, Buchanan-Mrs. Wilson, solely thrive on possession of materials. Richness enslaves the heart and Gatsby carves himself out of this. He shoots himself to wealth and hence gathers influence round him. He burns out as a comet – phone calls round the clock and the world keep him busy. He has no great air about him and people in his parties are immaterial to his personal acquaintance. They take him for a great influential man, develop rumors for his greatness and that is why Gatsby harbors the parties. Beneath all these lay hidden Gatsby's actual dream of Daisy plays the air and burns the comet out. Buchanan's possession and portrayal is to a different degree. Buchanan marries Daisy for possession but resents which bursts out in the form of his love for Mrs Wilson. He appears to cross and bully Mr Wilson with the car as well as his wife. The result comes hopping. Gatsby enters the equation and events take an unexpected turn. With his most "prized" possession being threatened, Buchanan makes a comprehensive effort unearthing the making of Gatsby, his association with the underworld. This completely demolishes the entire world of all the lovers. Buchanan is stung by fate, Gatsby gets the even harder end of it.

Impressive shades colour every character of the novel especially the degeneration of feelings. Daisy has a strange whimsicality all round herself. We see her frequent shift of moods back at her home. Gatsby primarily appears to bring a shade of feeling in her but as the novel progresses the love for position and attractive looking man expresses itself all the more. A general technique in *Great Gatsby* is that the characters do not express clearly their mood. They behave in a rather peculiar way which is apparently from their attempt to suppress their real feelings. The acute degeneration brought about by a commodity laden world surfaces in Buchanan as well in his portrayal of the relations with women. His treatment of Wilson is devastating and ironically when Gatsby enters his world to make a 'Wilson' of him, Buchanan



deals with a strong hand. Buchanan shows an impressive strength which kind of makes him the right combination of Gatsby and Wilson, both collapsing in the end on direct conflict – physically as well as ideologically. Daisy here is a character who escapes the noose being the most prized possession of the novel. She entraps Gatsby, virtually sees his end but exits the scenario with Buchanan in a single go.

Wonderfully timed is the entrance of Gatsby's father. Feelings enter the mechanistic ground for the first time and gets stunned. The tremendous price a man pays is laid bare. Gatsby gave up his family for a dazzle and yet death showed the electroplate under the plating. Gatsby's father makes an ironic hero of Gatsby.

The parallel first person plot the narrator, develops around him is one of the *bildungsroman* whose flame burns the protagonists while he only receives the heat in a minimal form of Miss Jordan. He falls in love with her as suddenly in the novel as she breaks up and the reason is unknown. The acute lack of feelings of the narrator for anyone save Gatsby dominates the novel. He appears to be the only persona with shreds of feelings within him and then again the dazzle of Gatsby undermines the perspective. Gatsby projects as a hero of low birth who rose to have a fall and here is the mortified tragedy of the commodified times.

To be human is essentially social. One may have his own way of composing the society and Great Gatsby weaves the tale of five different persons composing their society of five different elements – elements which may not be mutually exclusive but are mutually inconsiderate. They collide and shape the society in their own shreds and at the end what is left is an unfeeling morbidity that's to be borne.

7/10

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24/11/19

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Review Title: The Ways Berger Sees

Book Title: Ways of Seeing

Author: John Berger

Publication: Penguin Books

ISBN: 0-14-013515-4

*Ways of Seeing*, a four-part TV series was broadcasted by the BBC in 1972. John Berger was the author, presenter and the 'iconoclast' who deliberately talked directly to the spectators illuminating his views, mercilessly abandoning the so called 'bourgeois' idea of art. Later, a book with the similar title, *Ways of Seeing* was penned by him and Mike Dibb. The paperback was published by Penguin Books and was co-authored by Sven Blomberg, Chris Fox, and Richard Hollis. The book is a 166-page collage of seven distinguished essays among which four are worded and in **bold** typeset and three essays are composed using only images. Berger is delicately original in harmonizing the intellectual sobriety with an engaging playfulness and in the book, we get a slice of his extraordinary ways of seeing this world. In an interview he had explained the title of the book where he had stated that "*the difference between looking and seeing: our eyes naturally look, but seeing assumes an idea, an understanding of the subject. An artist's subjectivity requires him to see the painting before he dabs pigment onto canvas, just as the observer sees a unique impression of a painting. Art is a symbiotic relationship in which both image and observer generate meaning. Film director Dziga Vertov once said, "I'm an eye. A Mechanical eye ... the creation of a fresh perception of the world. Thus, I explain in a new way the world unknown to you".* With this he steps into distinguishing optics and perspectives which makes it clear how we choose to focus on and how we neglect objects according to our conscience. He further explains our responsibility to self-scrutinise with the words "*Our principal aim has been to start a process of questioning*". The book harbours a profound essay on Renaissance history. His essay on post-Renaissance nudes is a triumphant marriage of humanity and scholarship. Berger writes with hyper-sensitivity about the power of the nude, applying its value to the present. Rather than severing ourselves from its primitiveness, nudity serves a revelatory purpose; raising our consciousness as sensual beings in the fragile filament of the body. Rembrandt's exquisite 'Danae' captures Berger's incisive approach; the soft light cascades onto Danae's cream body, making us feel



merciful towards not only the body of another but also our own. He asks, "What does this sight of the other mean to us, how does it, at that instant of total disclosure, affect our desire?" Such a question appeals to the architecture of nerves, organs, disarming the vulgarity associated with nudity. Instead of seeing the body as an object, Berger treats it as unveiling the whole individual person.

*Ways of Seeing* originally had raised controversy as it refuted the financial aspect towards art. Berger had depicted how, from the commercial collectability of oil paintings during the Renaissance onwards, art developed a social currency; a visual representation of the luxuries one could afford. Berger writes in objection to this socio-economic gulf that capital has created and art permitted. Indeed, the monetisation of art is prevalent everywhere today in the media; recently Jay Z rapped his modernist "Picasso Baby" flaunting grandiose statements spangled with art references: "Leonardo Da Vinci flows/ Riccardo Tisci Givenchy clothes ... House like the Louvre or the Tate Modern". The thrust of Jay Z's lyrics introduces the socio-economic climate art circulates in, where art now promotes extortionate materialism. It is in this arena where we must contend for art's justice, authentic beauty, and its salient purpose: to support universal human flourishing.

For Berger, the success of his book might not be measured so much by the answers we produce to his questions but instead in the silence we inhabit to formulate the answer. In this space of meditative engagement with our unique perception, we participate in the art of seeing. The graceful spirit of the book makes Berger feel very close to us - his contributions are not just academically meritorious but enriching to life.

7/10

Digvijay Kumar  
20/11/19

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Ramakrishna Mission Vidyamandira

## Real Champion of the World

A review of *Danny The Champion of The World* by  
Roald Dahl

In the children's novel section *Danny the champion of the world* written by one of the most beloved British author Roald Dahl, published in the United States by Alfred A. Knopf in 1975, the story takes place in rural place of England, where a boy named Danny, whom the whole story is going to revolve around, lives with his father, William, in an old gypsy van beside their own mechanic shop. Danny loves his life and more importantly, loves his father, William. He treasures every moment of his life, which he spends growing by having his father by his side. But his life turns upside down when he realizes that his father is not what he has been thinking about him all along, he is not the most perfect dad after all, as he had used to think this earlier in his childhood. Mr. Victor Hazelwood, the big business tycoon, has stocks of beer and very rich, William, Danny's dad goes secretly to hunt pheasants which he proudly calls the profession as 'poaching'. A culture which have been practiced proudly by the past generations of Danny's family, eventually Danny finds out about this and insist his father to let him come along, eventually they work together to infiltrate an event, which would have been hosted by Mr. Hazell. An event in which all the prestigious families would have come to shoot the pheasants, but the duo escaped with all the pheasants. Therefore, Hazell had to cancel the event. At the end it is shown that the pheasants had escaped but six died in the process, which they had divided among themselves to have a nice feast in Christmas.

This is truly a fascinating story about the strong relationship between Danny and his father, William. It also well details each of the characters and the humors are spread across the pages of the book. The really amazing thing about this book that it makes a one think about their father and how much one loves their father and father loves them, this book actually inspire you to write a book about your own life or mainly the special moments and adventures you share with your mum and dad and how the world would be without them, the challenges that is ought to face by individuals.

It feels as if the pages are being turned by themselves, this book truly makes you create and imagine the world in which Danny lives and one is ought to compare their relationship with their parents to Danny's, some pencil sketched pictures are also available in the book between and within the chapters to make it easier for the young ones, but the language is extremely simple and well- portrayed, so that no readers face difficulties having reading the book. The story is very interesting story as it hooks a reader to find out what had happened next, every time the author would give this feeling to the reader that Danny and his father would get caught, which obviously didn't happen. The story is a mystery packed light thriller



is one of a kind of genre, in which dahl had expertise himself in. this book is easily recommended to children who are just over eight.

It is common for Roald Dahl to create such great masterpieces. Along with his novels such as 'Matilda', 'Fantastic Mr. Fox', 'The BFG', 'Charlie and the Chocolate Factory', 'The witches', 'James and the Giant peach', 'The Twits', 'Boy', 'The enormous crocodile', 'Revolting Rhymes', 'George's Marvelous Medicine', 'Esio Trot', 'The Magic Finger', 'The Minpins' and many more, his collection of short stories are also vastly read and appreciated by readers of different age groups, especially the group consist of young children. His stories are full of feeling like love, emotions, friendship, attachments, sorrow, betrayal and obviously a love for life, but in his story stories a twist element is present at the end of every story which made it even more lovable by the readers. A reader would have a hard time to realize that those novels and the story collection would be written by the same person.

5/10

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24/4/19

Devoprio Das

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Ramakrishna Mission Vidyamandira

## Politics of Identity in Mahesh Dattani's "Seven Steps Around the Fire"

The crisis of the integrated, essential subjective self has been an important breakthrough that Modernist literature has brought about. The resultant 'search for identity', as a theme, is seen to be prominent in the postcolonial Indian theatrical scene. Mahesh Dattani, who is more or less a recent name in the history of post-independence Indian English drama, however tries to give a refined touch and complex direction to it. He continually addresses the issue of gender and identity in terms of the politics of inclusion and exclusion, through many of his marginalized characters.

*Seven Steps around the Fire* primarily focuses on the lives of the hijra (the typical Indian formulation of eunuch) who are arguably one of the least estimated and respected categories of people in an Indian society. Primarily, the play deals compassionately with their sufferings and looks into the questions of liberation and emancipation for these marginal figures. Through the characters of hijras like Anarkali, Champa and Kamla, the play holds up the issue of exclusionary politics in terms of gender carried out by discourses prevalent within a given society. French critic, Michel Foucault in his *History of Sexuality* speaks of the formation of identity through sexuality that according to him also is the determinant factor of an individual's onto-epistemological status. He is of the view that it is important to decipher "sexuality as the correlation of a domain of knowledge, a type of normativity and a mode of relation to the self" which aims at understanding how "a complex experience is constituted from and around certain forms of behavior: an experience which conjoins a field of study (with its own concepts, theories, diverse disciplines) a collection of rules. Foucault further elaborates that the respective discursive domains of medicine, law or religion determine and regulate the sexual behaviour of human beings inside a social system by creating normative construction of sexuality strictly as an activity of two



adult heterosexuals aimed at reproduction. Any act of dissidence or perversion that does not conform to or comply with this 'norm' is excluded from the purview of sanity and decency, and the practitioners are outlawed from the societal construct of gender. In *Seven Steps around the Fire*, the hijras suffer from such a predicament. Throughout the play, Anarkali or Kamla remains a 'thing' difficult to explain or address by normal and representative exponents of a normative society such as Suresh or Munswami:

*Munswami: You may see the hijra now if you wish.*

*Uma: Will she talk to me?*

*Munswami: SHE! Of course it will talk to you*

If we closely look at the character of Uma, the protagonist of the play, we perceive that she is also deprived of her individual autonomy. Being an adopted child in the house of the Vice Chancellor and a submissive female model in the house of the Police Commissioner, she too searches for her identity which would be exclusive of the identity offered to her by the society:

*Uma: .... what do you know about me?*

*Munswami : You Madam? You are the wife of Sir*

*Uma : Exactly.... And you are my husband's subordinate. That is all we care to know ... You don't know me and I don't know you....*

Under the circumstances, Uma empathetically attempts to uncover the mysteries behind the murder of Kamla and save Anarkali whom she befriends. However, the bond that Uma tries to build with the *hijras* with her efforts remains incomplete throughout the play as Anarkali and Champa are unable to see her detachment from the society in which the hijras have no place:

*Anarkali: .....if you were a hijra I would have made you my sister.*

*Uma: Oh. Thank you*

*Anarkali : But you are not a hijra, no?*

*Uma : No. Anarkali , So you will not be my sister.*

Uma is of course reluctant with the hope that she would justify the bond between them and thereby situate her 'self' somehow in spite of constant repulsion from the hijra:

*Uma : One day you will understand Anarkali I would love to be your sister, if you will be mine.*

*Anarkali: Oh! You are only being kind . Don't hurt my heart*

*Uma: No, I mean it.*

What Anarkali or Kamla is unable to grasp is the psychological bond that knits Uma with the Hijras with a knot equal in size. The question of such compatibility here can be attributed to the idea of performativity as propounded by Queer theorist Judith Butler in her seminal work *Gender Trouble: Feminism and Subversion of Identity*. Butler formulating her critical these upon the Foucauldian foundations speaks of gender as a 'performative construct'. For her, gender identity is not a solid and unchanging state but dependent upon the performative acts of different subjects. Hence an individual must act like a male/female to be called a male/female and to have a proper social recognition. The character of Uma in this regard may appear as a sane performer who normally plays the role of a hospitable and submissive housewife to her Superintendent husband. Her identity as a university research scholar is also rooted in the social discourses. But, a closer look will unveil her inability to cope up with the 'role' assigned to her. The most conspicuous instance symbolizing this occurs when Suresh's seductive tongue is bitten by Uma as he tried to kiss her while she was asserting a speech:

*Suresh: Ow! You! Bit me!* Uma apologizes while he checks his tongue. Hmmm. It's okay, sweetheart. I know you didn't mean to. Uma , (quietly) *No, Suresh. It's just that you put your tongue in my mouth while I was talking to you . Suresh looks at her trying to figure out if she means more than what she said.*

Uma's 'failure' to conform to the masculine demand of sex in this instance can be regarded as a potent symbol of a dissident voice growing inside her and this voice is strengthened by her close association with the hijra way of life.



The last scene of the play in which Uma stands still at a certain point of the stage and the hijras move like shadows in circular motion centering Uma produces a fine effect of a center/periphery binary. What can be deduced from the climax is that , Uma is visible to the public eye not as an individual of her own but as a performer inside the social dominant as against the 'hijras' who are unidentifiable entities within the discourse with no performative roles to play otherwise justifiable bodies outside it. Having said that, Uma at the same time, actually de-centers herself by associating herself with the hijras, raising her essential self against the performative norms assigned for her by the society of her husband Suresh, Munswami or Mr Sharma.

The politics of exclusion and inclusion by means of validating individual identities on the basis of their performativity is thus an inextricable issue as well as one of the internal dynamics of Dattani's play. No character in *Seven Steps around the Fire* could afford to escape this hegemonic reality. The only accent of a 'way out' could be heard in the silent and tacit implication of a somewhat utopian reality that the hijras can work upon to illuminate themselves if possible:

*Uma: ... I could not tell her I did not want bher blessings for a child. All I want is what they want..... To move on. To love. To live*

In fact, the hijras move on, but in a roundabout way, unable to step forward or step into, creating only a circle: most probably a 'zero'. Although they sing, they dance and they bless, these are regarded as invalid performative acts to vindicate their identities: this suffocating realization leads Uma also to identify herself with them : signifying exclusion, dissidence, alienation and a failed performativity.

6-5/10

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**The Existential Outside**

**A review of Albert Camus's *The Outsider***

*The Outsider* is one of the best known existential novels, and Albert Camus's early attempt to grapple with absurdism, and relay it in an abstract, accessible form. The philosophical ruminations are embodied by Meursault, a French office worker, who appears as a blank canvas, devoid of any true emotions; existing in, but not embracing life. The novel opens with the news that Meursault's mother has died – something that he greets with his usual apathy – and goes on to describe his lack of grief at the funeral, and his subsequent fling with Marie, a young woman he takes to the pictures the day after the funeral. Later, when he is befriended by Raymond, a man of dubious character, Meursault is drawn into unpleasantness, which ends with his murdering an Arab. The second half of the novel is concerned with Meursault's subsequent trial and incarceration and, more significantly, his awakening to the absurdity of life, and his passage, in the full knowledge of death, into authentic existence.

*The Outsider* touches on a number of philosophical schools of thought, and Camus borrows from his forbearers, notably Nietzsche and Kierkegaard. Although Camus claimed not to be an existentialist, Meursault undoubtedly embodies the existential spirit; he recognises that life is limited to this world and that death and fate is common to all men, is inevitable and final – he embraces this and, in doing so, offers hope that a life of strict immanence may still have, albeit limited meaning. By embracing authentic existence, Meursault sets himself apart as the outsider. Meursault's most striking characteristic is his strict adherence to truth; he lives without motive, with a complete congruence between his thoughts and actions. In perfectly embodying one of society's moral ideals, he causes friction between himself and a hypocritical society who cannot themselves attain the standards they set. That Meursault will not make concessions, will not bring comfort to others by buying into the illusion, is the true cause of his condemnation. At the murder trial – a surreal experience – Meursault is condemned by a jury who seek to preserve their own absurd existence.

Camus was an essayist first and foremost, and his prose can appear simple, with limited descriptions or metaphors, reading more as an extended essay. However, this is hugely deceptive - there is method in the style, and indeed in the overall construction of the novel. The plot itself is perfectly balanced, split into two sections, with the decisive murder sitting



right at its center. The narrative, written in the first person, slips between past and present tense, simultaneously emphasizing distance from the events, and suggesting the lack of a future from where the event might be relayed. The sentence structure is inconsistent, but generally speaking sentences are short and sharp, each existing as a solitary entity, self-contained with no future, suggesting the discontinuity of time and the idea that life, much like the novel, is a series of present moments, not a complete, coherent experience.

There are philosophical works that offer a deeper and fuller discussion of the human condition, and in comparison, to those, *The Outsider* can feel a little lightweight. However, the novel is so brilliantly constructed, the ideas presented in such an accessible and neat form, that it is undoubtedly one of the very best introductions to existentialism and the ideas surrounding absurdism and authenticity. The world that Meursault inhabits is a strange version of our own, and his attitude, his disconnect from society, strikes a chord with many, perhaps feeling most relevant to younger readers who are still developing their own perception of the world. As an introduction to the philosophical novel, *The Outsider* has an enduring quality, and is one of the most important books of the twentieth century.

6/16

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24/4/19