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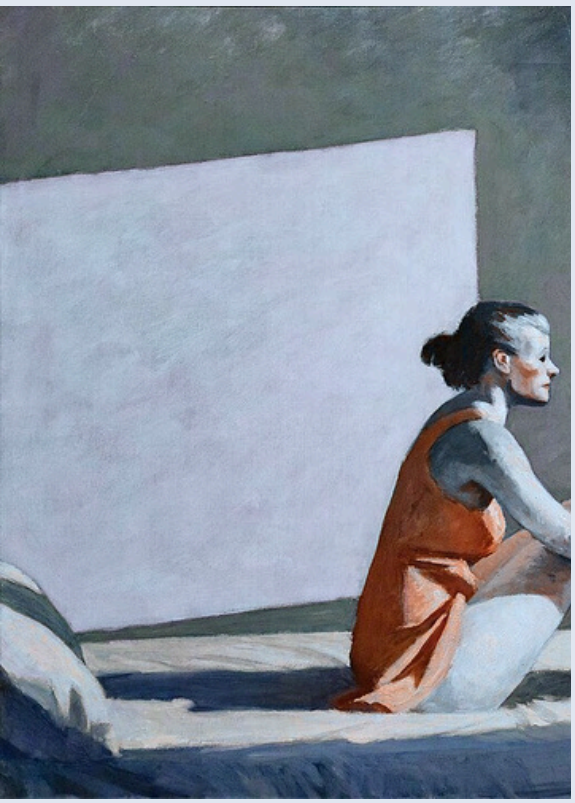
modern bard



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Edward Hopper, Morning Sun, 1952, oil on canvas, 101.9 × 71.5 cm, Columbus Museum of Art, Columbus, Ohio.

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CONTENTS

TOO WILDE TO BE A LETTER **6**

8 **FROM GILMAN AND WOOLF TO FLEABAG: THE JOURNEY OF WOMEN'S INNER VOICE**

THE SILENT SCREAM **12**

13 **THE ART OF DOING NOTHING WHILE DYING INSIDE: *THE SEVENTH CONTINENT* BY MICHAEL HANEKE**

SOLWAY FIRTH **18**

20 ***DONNIE DARKO* MOVIE REVIEW**

EATEN ALIVE BY DESPERATION **23**

24 **CANDLELIGHT, AESTHETICS, AND OBSESSION: TRACING DARK ACADEMIA THROUGH ENGLISH LITERATURE**

ET IN ARCADIA EGO **30**

32 **TÜRKİYE - THE COUNTRY OF "AŞIK" MEETING METAL MUSIC**

PIETÀ **34**

35 **ETERNAL SLUMBER**

HYBRIDITY AND LOSS OF SELF IN *THE SATANIC VERSES* **36**



EDITOR'S

Dear readers,

In this issue, you have been introduced to new voices, different perspectives, and a tradition. Tradition of a new beginning culture. Not only with this issue, but with this entire literary publication as a magazine, a culture has been created that denies any dualisms. Our vision has always been about being peculiar, creating an unfamiliar voice, and speaking the unheard.

Oscar Wilde has been the muse for both the cover and content because of his groundbreaking ideas, his hearty personality, and particularly his widely known words, "Art for art's sake." Inspired by him, we have questioned our epoch, bringing past and present together and creating a new discourse. We take courage from him and have tried to be daring and futuristic. Our aim has been to break the chains of the past and look at the future with bright eyes.

In this publication, we have brought academic, artistic, and pop-cultural works together, aiming for a postmodernist tapestry reflecting the complexities of our present. So, we may have seemed unrelated and inconsistent, but if you take a closer look, everything is part of an ecosystem within a bigger picture. Starting with a letter to the past, we will take you out on a ride of nostalgia and a feeling of aporia. There are thirteen papers in this very first and dear issue, all of which are dearer than others.

So, we present to you our deepest and darkest thoughts, hoping we can change something in this petty world of ours. We began this journey alone; yet, we have a huge audience to chant with us now. We present to you our seed, hoping that one day it will turn into a great tree, even wildwood.



NOTE

Beginning with a letter by İkbal Karabulut, "Too Wilde To Be A Letter" offers a sharp critique of our age by emphasizing the importance of perception. In "From Gilman and Woolf to Fleabag: The Journey of Women's Inner Voice," Nergis Nisa İder draws inspiration from gynocriticism, tying the past and the present through the stream of consciousness technique using characters of Charlotte Perkins Gilman, Virginia Woolf, and Fleabag. "The Silent Scream," written by Melisa Dağ, follows a similar inspiration; *The Yellow Wallpaper* and the concept of female hysteria form this poem. "The Art of Doing Nothing While Dying Inside: *The Seventh Continent* by Michael Haneke," co-authored by Yasemin Sunayda Koç and Aybike Demir, provides a Marxist reading of the movie. "Solway Firth," written by Mustafa Kocaman, is another poem, this time inspired by a photograph. "*Donnie Darko* Movie Review," written by İbrahim Kayıkcı, presents an insightful review of the movie. "Eaten Alive by Desperation," by Büşra Yumlu, is a gothic poem exploring the complexities of women's relationships. "Candlelight, Aesthetics, and Obsession: Tracing Dark Academia Through English Literature," written by Büşra Ecem İnce, is a cultural study that examines the notion of "Dark Academia." "Et In Arcadia Ego," also by Mustafa Kocaman, is a poem influenced by Greek, Latin, and Renaissance elements, forming an intertextual connection with his other works. "Türkiye—The Country of "Aşık" Meeting Metal Music," written by Enfal Bıyık, explores a pop-cultural intersection where literature and metal music, particularly Turkish metal, meet. "Pietà," by Feride Pelin Tufan, is a gothic story that strongly depicts the haunting weight of guilt. "Eternal Slumber," written by Dilara Kabak, employs a Marxist approach to arouse empathy for the working class. The final article, authored by Hakan Taymaz, is a postcolonial reading of *The Satanic Verses* by Salman Rushdie, offering a deep exploration of hybridity.

Finally, every part of this magazine means so much to our team and contributors. We crafted it with great care, and we put our hearts and souls into this publication. Especially, our publication has occurred after a very unfortunate event, and as a department, I would like to thank all my lecturers for their guidance and support.

I hope whoever is reading this would read it as the care we give it.

Fatma Zehra Görez

TOO WILDE TO BE A LETTER

İkbal Karabulut

16.10.2025

Dear Mr. Wilde,

As I write this letter to you, I do not wish my words to resemble the embellished sentences of the Victorian ladies in their letters, since we are no longer speaking with flowered hats but with a fire of becoming oneself. You know, carrying those big hats for a long time would be even more of a burden anyway.

I write to you not as one of your admirers, but as one of your creations. As I read your work, I look into the mirrors of your era but see the contradictions of modernized human beings. Even though your elegance is still lingering, we can no longer expect beauty alone from art in the world. We no longer need art to decorate life, Mr. Wilde. Since it feels like our lives have already been decorated by others out of our will. You once said that all art is quite useless, which means only beauty matters, not the usefulness. Perhaps it was easier to believe in this in your era when words still carried the gravity of beauty. Today, art is not useless, but we are exhausted. The art has been photographed, filtered, and shared a thousand times. You masked and symbolized your truth, while we are drowned in ours. Yet still, both sides remain lonely, Mr. Wilde.

You were a man punished for his desires; I am a woman rewarded for my restraint. We are silent now, Mr. Wilde. We have lost our passion so completely that silence is all we have been left. Writing to you is my petty attempt to break my own silence, a small spark for the fire I still carry inside. We turn a blind eye to everything fake that life presents to us. I wish we were not so captivated by the magic of beauty while reading you. Then we would not be fooled by what is presented to us as beautiful and aesthetic in today's world. That is why we may never have understood you, Mr. Wilde.

Now we, modern people, are called free, Mr. Wilde.
Yet this freedom feels like an expensive object displayed in a luxury window.
Of course, it has its price.
Our freedom echoes in this hollow silence.
They are selling us our own desires then have made us pay again to reach them.
In an age where the system of perception decides our direction, are we truly free?
Tell me, Mr. Wilde: Were you free in your desires and your choices? Or were you, too, disillusioned by simulation and simulacra, just as we are?
That is how things work in our time, after all.

Perhaps we no longer speak the same language, Mr. Wilde.
Yet the fire you left behind still burns somewhere.
We modern souls may have lost the meaning of our words, but we still try to write.
Since sometimes writing remains the quietest form of resistance.

I do not expect an answer, Mr. Wilde, but if one ever came, it would probably scare me.

Y*ours sincerely,*
Anyone



FROM GILMAN AND WOOLF TO FLEABAG: THE JOURNEY OF WOMEN'S INNER VOICE

Nergis Nisa İder

Over the years, women's inner worlds have been expressed in various ways, and this expression has undergone significant changes. Three of the most important examples are Charlotte Perkins Gilman who explained this inner world by giving psychological depth in her story *The Yellow Wallpaper*[1]; Virginia Woolf who gives this sentimental emotional state via stream of consciousness technique, and eventually Phoebe Waller-Bridge in her show *Fleabag*[2] which shows directly that how a woman talks about her internal struggles with the metafiction and self-reflexivity technique by using irony and blending it with the third wave feminism, which is strategically responded to theoretical challenges by emphasizing intersectional personal narratives, embracing multivocality, and adopting an inclusive stance against divisive gender politics.[3] This paper examines how women's inner worlds are portrayed through various techniques. Furthermore, this article questions whether there has been a significant evolution in liberation and progress, from the repressed expressions of Gilman to the profound psychological explorations of Woolf and the direct and challenging attitude of Waller-Bridge.

[1]Charlotte Perkins Gilman, *The Yellow Wallpaper* (New York: Martino Fine Books, 2018).
[2]*Fleabag.* Created by Phoebe Waller-Bridge. Directed by Harry Bradbeer. BBC Three, 2016.
[3] R. Claire Snyder, "What Is Third-Wave Feminism? A New Directions Essay," *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 34, no. 1 (2008): 175–96.

First, in *The Yellow Wallpaper*[4], Gilman talks about a woman's growing obsession with wallpaper, her sense of being a nonentity, and her feelings about this belittling situation. The story is told through a fragmented journal structure, with inner monologues offering direct access to her mental state and internal voice. She struggles with madness and deep isolation, and because of this, her physician husband confined her under the guise of a rest cure. The wallpaper, a powerful symbol in the story, reflects not only her feelings about the rest cure but also her precious female voice. Her crying for freedom is a strong example of female expression challenging patriarchal restrictions in the 19th century. As Gilman herself later wrote, "It was not intended to drive people crazy, but to save people from being driven crazy, and it worked."[5] With Gilman's style, the female voice is liberated, and the desperation of the confined mind is conveyed to the reader.

Similar to Gilman, Woolf explores her character's inner world through stream of consciousness technique which reflects character's internal world very profoundly in order to show how female psyche shaped as a mirror of social influences. "She observes, describes, connects, provides the materials for a judgment about society and social."[6] For instance, Virginia Woolf portrays the conflicts of *Mrs. Dalloway*[7] regarding identity, gender, and possibly sexuality in her pioneering work. Clarissa plans to throw a party, then she struggles with the tiny details. This story illustrates how female psychology is influenced by societal and patriarchal expectations. Woolf also supports the idea of "a room of one's own" to write fiction, underlining the preciousness of the female voice and its expression with the feminist modernist approach.



Gilman and Woolf share some similar ideas regarding female psychology and societal expectations. However, this idea is still viewed as a form of resistance against society. Their techniques, such as stream of consciousness and inner monologue, offer a profound insight into women's psychology, their capabilities, and their struggles. These two writers attempt to normalize feminist ideas, now widely accepted, whose aim is to amplify women's voices.

While the expressions of Woolf and Gilman were suppressed and hidden in earlier feminist waves, Phoebe Waller-Bridge, through her series *Fleabag*[8], introduces a new form of expression using metafiction and self-reflexivity. The protagonist breaks the fourth wall by talking to the audience. At first glance, it may seem closer to Woolf's stream of consciousness technique; this narration is more ironic, humorous, and brave, departing from the traditional form of expression. "On the one hand, we find direct address: Fleabag constantly addresses the audience, she either speaks to us or looks playfully or ironically to the camera."[9] In the series, the character does not show how an ideal woman should be; on the contrary, we encounter someone who is flawed and challenges stereotypes.

[4] Gilman, *The Yellow Wallpaper*.
[5] Charlotte Perkins Gilman, "Why I Wrote The Yellow Wallpaper," *Advances in Psychiatric Treatment* 10, no. 5 (2004): 342–44.
[6] Alex Zwerdling, "Mrs. Dalloway and the Social System," *PMLA/Publications of the Modern Language Association of America* 92, no. 1 (1977): 69–82.
[7] Virginia Woolf, *Mrs. Dalloway* (New York: Albatross Publishers, 2017).
[8] *Fleabag*. "The poster has also been taken from this series."
[9] Paula Romero Polo, "Fleabag and Metamodernism: Exploring the Intersubjective Space," *Acta Philologica* 63 (2025): 41–53.

Regarding this flawed character, Fleabag herself says, “I have a horrible feeling that I am a greedy, perverted, selfish, apathetic, cynical, depraved, morally bankrupt woman who can't even call herself a feminist.”[10] Also, she is considered a bad feminist. Like Roxane Gay said, “I want to be independent, but I want to be taken care of and have someone to come home to”[11], and Fleabag says, “I want someone to tell me what to wear every morning.”[12] This shows how stereotypes are broken.

In this case, the camera replaces what is written on paper, and the viewer replaces the reader, acting as a kind of confidant accomplice, giving visibility to the inner voice of women. It is seen that the voice of women is not only suppressed and hidden in literary texts but is also constructed and shared visually. As Viebahn explains, “She often interrupts her diegetic-self mid-sentence before slipping effortlessly back into the scene, implying that she controls the story or otherwise exerts power over how viewers interpret and experience her life.”[13]

Furthermore, irony plays a central role in *Fleabag*, as in third-wave feminist discourse. While Woolf and Gilman employ psychological and emotional depth to evoke empathy, *Fleabag* achieves this through irony and humor. When she experiences something quite upsetting, she looks directly into the camera, that is, at us, and turns to the camera as if mocking herself, which highlights the effectiveness of the metafiction technique. The character is aware of her own fiction and draws us in. Additionally, the character critiques herself, fosters self-awareness, and cultivates empathy. Fleabag makes a sharp and brave transition by leaving the inner monologue and addressing the audience directly. Fleabag looks directly into the camera in a restaurant bathroom and says, “This is a love story.”[14] Unlike the characters of Woolf and Gilman, she not only observes but also re-examines her own observations.

As a result, the journey of women's inner voices, from Gilman's repressed narrator to Woolf's stream-of-consciousness heroines, eventually evolves into the self-aware antihero of Waller-Bridge. This transition may be considered as the liberation of women's restricted minds. While Gilman's characters scream, trapped in the wallpaper, and Woolf's characters' inner worlds, reflecting societal expectations, still symbolize a kind of resistance, Fleabag's direct address to the audience, her self-criticism, and her use of irony and humor reveal that women are confronting themselves and the world with greater courage. This is not just a marginal statement but a defiant one. In this context, Fleabag's flawed character and instability are a feminist development. It shows that she is no longer trapped, that she can directly confront and challenge.

As explored in this academic review of the critical and ironic approach of third-wave feminism, Fleabag’s flawed character and her attitude that rebels against norms show that women are no longer confined to “ideal” images but are at peace with their shortcomings and present them as elements of strength. This is not only a literary transformation but also a social one. Women’s inner voices are no longer confined to private spaces but are expressed directly, imperfectly, and defiantly, opening new horizons for both art and gender equality.

[10] *Fleabag.*
[11] Roxane Gay, “Bad Feminist,” *The Guardian*, August 2, 2014, https://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/aug/02/bad-feminist-roxane-gay-extract.
[12] *Fleabag.*
[13] Aviva Dove-Viebahn, “Controlling the Narrative, Examining the Self: The Unruly Femme Subjectivity of Fleabag,” *Sexualities* 27, no. 8 (2024): 1401–1414.
[14] *Fleabag*.

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THE SILENT SCREAM

Melisa Dağ

I was exiled, in a way,
Pushed to where the light dares not stay
Whose were those screams of the days
Waiting to emerge from dark states.

They first caged me behind four yellow walls
Then warned me, “Do not write, stop writings”
“You need a break,” they softly advised,
“You will get through it,” lightly lied.

They did not listen to me, and could not hear
These walls were closing near
Stucked in silent cases
Flutttering wings seek open spaces.

And it was, yes it was
Passing through my body.
Was it me truly?
Questioning the light silently.

But John knew it clear
What I felt-did not, my dear?
No, these walls were sick;
Such thoughts were never meant to cling.

No more those dull colors,
No more those patterns,
Hanging like a broken neck in the air
Destroyed themselves, completely bare.

I gave myself up to darkness’ soul
Yet still, I felt my freedom whole.
Whatever comes, however far,
And you, John, remained where you are.



THE ART OF DOING NOTHING WHILE DYING INSIDE: *THE SEVENTH CONTINENT* BY MICHAEL HANEKE

Yasemin Sunayda Koç & Aybike Demir

Known for his thought-provoking films, auteur director Michael Haneke's *The Seventh Continent*[1] tells us the story of a middle-class European family that, while trying to find their own place in modern society, slowly detaches from the world and ultimately takes their own lives. In their attempt to construct a sense of identity through material possessions, they ultimately lose themselves. Inspired by a true story, the film portrays how an "ideal" family becomes disconnected from society, ultimately leading to silent destruction. Haneke does not aim to entertain, explain, or comfort; instead, he presents a straightforward narrative that leads the audience to consider how modern society can erode individuality and connection. Through themes of alienation and meaninglessness, Haneke invites us to reflect on how modern society consumes the individual.

[1] All these pictures have also been taken from the movie: *The Seventh Continent*, directed by Michael Haneke (Vienna: Wega Film, 1989).

Haneke's opening sequence describes the burden of living in a consumerist society. The film opens with the sound of an alarm clock. It is six in the morning. Georg, an engineer, his wife Anna, and their daughter Eva move through the same sequence every day. They share a simple greeting of "good morning," brush their teeth, and eat their breakfast. The film presents the daily routine of an ordinary middle-class family to the audience. These actions demonstrate sincerity, stability, and love, which are the expected qualities of an ideal family to have. However, the family functions only in mechanical terms. They fulfill roles and complete tasks but remain emotionally distant. There is no connection or affection. Carefully framed shots of breakfast and dinner tables reveal more than just food; they hide emotions. Small details, such as toothbrushes in separate glasses, symbolize a deeper disconnection. It shows the audience how everyday actions can feel empty, which highlights the subtle sense of isolation found in daily routines. The director illustrates that the ideals of contemporary consumer lifestyle diminish the human spirit by depicting a family that possesses all the attributes and social values, such as comfort and order, yet they lack the emotional intimacy expected within familial bonds.



Karl Marx's term of "alienation" (Entfremdung) is particularly relevant in this context. Under capitalism, Marx argues, people have become alienated from their labor, themselves, and each other.[2] In Haneke's film, the characters are not only alienated from society but also form the meaning of life. They live surrounded by good-quality furniture and nicely arranged consumer goods, but these things bring them no comfort. Instead of expressing their feelings, their possessions take the place of identity. Their cold, well-organized home feels more like a showroom than a place to live.

[2] Gajo Petrović, "Marx's Theory of Alienation," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 23, no. 3 (1963): 419–26.

It is not just that the family is alienated by clinging to products, but also their position in society adds to their alienation. Anna sits alone in a hospital corridor. Faces in the waiting room are turned to the wall; people avoid even eye contact. The city, like the family home, and the hospital, becomes a place of isolation. In another key moment, Georg and Anna witness a car accident. They stare at the injured person, then silently drive away. Their reaction is flat and affectionless. According to sociologist Georg Simmel, overstimulated city dwellers develop Blasiertheit, a condition of emotional numbness.[3] Haneke's characters seem to have absorbed this condition fully; they are so disconnected that even empathy has lost its meaning.

The turning point occurs just before the family decides to end their lives. They go shopping to prepare an expensive and beautiful breakfast. For the first time, they decide to use the money they have been saving for their future, not on a basic necessity, but rather on a delightful meal. The priorities of the family have changed. This ritual reflects the perspective of the working class, who view the consumer system as a mechanism of reward and punishment. Because they have never considered themselves worthy of spending money on something as trivial as a meal, this decision represents a quiet denial of the logic that has governed their lives. Throughout the film, they have treated consumption only as a means to sustain life, never as a source of joy. Saving and planning have defined their moral order. Now, they choose for the first time to spend it not on necessities but on desire itself. Even in the shadow of death, when they decide to experience something pleasant before their end, what comes to mind first is consumption. This echoes Jean Baudrillard's idea that "consumption is the new morality."[4] In a world where genuine and artificial needs blur, people define themselves through what they consume. In the face of death, Anna prepares the perfect breakfast in an attempt to briefly feel the kind of fulfillment that their material world has always promised but never provided. The scene highlights the contradiction of contemporary life: pursuing abundance and pleasure becomes indistinguishable from pursuing emptiness.



[3] Georg Simmel, *Bireysellik ve Kültür*, trans. Tuncay Oğuz Kara (İstanbul: Metis Yayınları, 2009).
[4] Jean Baudrillard, *The Consumer Society: Myths and Structures*, trans. Chris Turner (London: SAGE Publications, 1998).

The most striking sequence of the film is the collapse of the family. As Speck mentions, Haneke's films consistently portray violence within the educated urban middle class, which also happens to be his main audience.[5] This act of violence can be seen in this sequence clearly. The family destroys the furniture, clothes, and tools they have, and finally, the aquarium. The fish fall helplessly to the ground, their immobility leading to their inevitable death. According to Haneke, the fish represents the soul of the child.[6] This death symbolizes not only the physical world, but also a spiritual end. In the final scene, an unplugged television keeps producing static. When the screen is empty, there is no image, but the sound continues. This moment recalls Baudrillard's idea of hyperreality, in which reality is replaced by endless simulations and signs.[7] Even after the family's destruction, when silence fills the house, the system continues. The noise lives longer than people, just like in modern society, the superficial replaces reality. In Haneke's world, not even death brings peace; the noise goes on, long after meaning is lost.

The Seventh Continent is a strong reflection of consumerist life as well as a story of a family in crisis. Through repetition, stillness, and dissolution, Haneke reveals how performing daily roles and consumerism can cause alienation. The family is so stuck in the routines of modern capitalism that death seems like their only way to escape. When they discard their money and belongings, it works as a symbol that protests the world shaped by what Baudrillard calls the "morality of consumption."[8] However, this is not a real rebellion; instead, it reveals their awareness that they cannot resist or transform the system on their own. Marx's idea of alienation helps to explain why they feel stuck: the family has become separated not just from their labor but also from their own sense of self, forced to live by economic rules that shape what they want and who they are. Their decision to end their lives is a final, inevitable act to take control in a world where even meaning has become a commodity to be bought and sold.

[5] Oliver C. Speck, "Self/Aggression: Violence in Films by Michael Haneke," *Modern Austrian Literature* 43, no. 2 (2010): 63–80.
[6] Thomas Assheuer, *Yakın Plan Haneke*, trans. N. Pakkan (Istanbul: Agora Kitaplığı, 2013), 104.
[7] Jean Baudrillard, *Simulacra and Simulation*, trans. Sheila Faria Glaser (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1994).
[8] Baudrillard, *The Consumer Society*.

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SOLWAY FIRTH

Mustafa Kocaman

"The Solway Firth Spaceman incident occurred in 1964 when Jim Templeton took a photograph of his daughter in Cumbria, England. After developing the film, he noticed a mysterious figure in a white suit behind her that resembled a spaceman. He claimed that no one else was present at the time. The image sparked media attention, conspiracy theories, and even investigation by authorities, but no definitive explanation has ever been confirmed."[1]

Sitting on my throne, I watch Solway,
Feel the breeze that finds itself astray
Between the boughs clad in credulity
Before find themselves with absurdity.

At this side, I stare at the rolling hills
Imposing scene of them fear instills
Other side, glimpses of lochs and thistles
Pan, amidst the scene, gleeful, whistles.

Betwixt the trees, I see a family coming
To find something unexpected, numbing
Just a day off, to see Solway, its boons
Yet fate hides something for their fortunes.

Oh, these are Templeton's! Here are they
To enjoy in glee their day here far away
From other city-born aliens, to find peace
Enttäuschung! at their door to find police.



[1] Following picture has been taken from: "Solway-firth-spaceman.jpg," RationalWiki, n.d., https://rationalwiki.org/wiki/File:Solway-firth-spaceman.jpg#/media/File:Solway-firth-spaceman.jpg.

Look at little Elizabeth, how gay and naive
Jim likewise, afore our scoundrel bereave
Them of their serenity while leading the way
To help our hero find his bitter doomsday.

These earth-born shapings love to capture
The scenes they wander, to later enrapture
Jim gets from his bag the alien-crafted tool
To find their ease by the foe will overrule.

Waited they a little, developed the apparition
Baffled Jim, his wife Annie, Betsy no exception
“No one was present there! How? It’s noon”
“Daddy, who is that man like- like from moon?”

A surge of fear, checked they around
Couldn't find any but rain-made mound
Jim, old fireman, must stay calm, a father
Yet this, eke he cannot escape, will bother.

This Firth is wont to miracles, unexplainable
Yet truth how far it seems can be attainable
The eyes to figure the enigma as the means
Far better than the city-born aliens' lenses.

The eyes, guardians of truth, I said afore
To not believe the tools, not adore anymore
To see the vision, to find longed-for veracity
Had better without ado flee your post-truth city.

DONNIE DARKO MOVIE REVIEW

İbrahim Kayıkcı

Puzzle Still Remains Unsolved: Time Travel, Parallel Universes Sacrifice, and Fate in *Donnie Darko*

Spoiler Alert: This review contains a detailed analysis of plot twists, time travel, and the movie's ending.

There are a few movies that call out not only to be experienced but also to be solved. They remain mysterious. Due to their enigmatic nature, they lead to numerous interpretations, and when it comes to exploring the movie as a whole or explaining its ending, the interested reader feels intrigued. Not many can withstand the curiosity-evoking potential of *Donnie Darko*.[1] Even after 24 years, *Donnie Darko* still gives the audience goosebumps at the end of the movie.

Released in 2001, *Donnie Darko* is a cult-classic psychological sci-fi/thriller movie directed by Richard Kelly. Starring Jake Gyllenhaal as the titular troubled teenager Donnie, the movie explores the themes of time travel, sacrifice, fate, and parallel realities in a rich plot. Regardless of how attentive the viewer is, it is almost impossible to fully understand every message the movie conveys in one sitting. From complex time-travel theories to the concept of "tangent universe," a temporary alternative reality that drives the film's time-travel narrative. Together, these aspects show why *Donnie Darko* remains so fascinating. So, this review will discuss the deeper meanings and symbols of *Donnie Darko* and try to clarify the ending.

What is the real chronological order of the film?

The story unfolds in October 1988, in a suburban American Town. Early on, we see Donnie, a teenage boy, who is out there sleepwalking in the forest and somehow avoids a plane crash that lands in his bedroom. Following this event, strange things start to happen in his life: a guy in a rabbit suit whom only Donnie can see, an inner voice that talks to him, glowing, worm-like portals, and a strange encounter with an old lady who always checks her mailbox who later turns out to be the writer of the time travel book, Roberta Sparrow. These strange events never seem to stop. It is obvious that these oddities have a special purpose in Donnie's life.

[1] Richard Kelly, *Donnie Darko* (Los Angeles: Newmarket Films, 2001).

One day, he sees a silhouette of a rabbit, which he later calls "Frank." The rabbit tells him that the world will end in 28 days. As the days pass, the rabbit has almost full control over Donnie's life. Under the rabbit's influence, he sneaks into the school at night, attacks the water pipe, and becomes obsessed with Roberta Sparrow, the writer of "The Philosophy of Time Travel." His first act causes a flood, forcing the school to close for a while. Later, Frank wants Donnie to burn Jim Cunningham's (motivational speaker) house. That's the time when the puzzle's pieces start to come together slowly. Following this arson, the police arrive to investigate; they discover his cache full of child pornography, which later leads to Jim's arrest. Things start to happen too quickly. While Donnie's mother is out of town to keep an eye on her daughter for a dance trip, Donnie and his girlfriend Gretchen are at home celebrating Halloween.

Towards the end of the movie, Donnie becomes more obsessed with time travel and wants to make sense of it. So, he decides to find Roberta, suspecting that Roberta's time travel manifesto might help him to save the world. On the way to Roberta's home, Gretchen is killed by a car that swerves to avoid hitting an old woman.

A rabbit, a hallucination, or a symbol… Who exactly is Frank, an imaginary friend of Donnie?

Frank at first appears to be nothing more than a hallucination, a product of Donnie's fractured mental state, but as the story unfolds, we learn that he is neither an imaginary friend of Donnie nor a symbol of his inner chaos. Early in the movie, Frank seems to be nothing but a product of Donnie's psychological discomfort, an imaginary friend speaking through a rabbit mask. This complexity makes Frank's identity especially riveting for the viewer: we wonder if he is real or a mental product. Frank is considered imaginative because his rabbit-suited disguise helps viewers wonder whether he was a creation of Donnie's psyche or something more, and the twist of his real identity makes his role irresistibly intriguing for the audience. At the end of the movie, the secret identity of Frank is revealed in a shocking way. Frank is, ladies and gentlemen, actually a REAL PERSON. He is Donnie's sister's boyfriend who accidentally kills Gretchen by running over her with his car during the waking hours of Halloween. This tragic event makes Donnie shoot Frank in the eye. The same injury we've seen on the bunny figure earlier in the movie. Frank's death creates a loop, and from within that loop, he becomes a part of something much bigger: he is the catalyst for Donnie's epiphany and final sacrifice. His death allows Frank to become something more: a "Manipulated Dead," according to Sparrow's time travel book. It occurs that Frank's purpose is not to harm Donnie but to guide him, help him fix the timeline, and prevent the tragedy. He is like a time-travel guide who comes from the future, helping him understand what he must do to restore the primary universe and undo the chain of tragic events.

Film still from Donnie Darko, directed by Richard Kelly (Los Angeles: Newmarket Films, 2001).

The Ending of Donnie Darko: Tragedy, Sacrifice, and Going Back in Time

Shortly after, Frank's prophecy for Donnie comes true as he sees a plane going down in the sky. As the plane that carries his sister and mother starts to crash, Donnie travels back in time to the beginning of the movie, going back to bed and allowing himself to be hit by the falling jet engine, which exactly strikes his bedroom. He does this since, with his death, no one will ever expose Cunningham, so that the outcomes that cause Donnie's mother and sister to be on the unfortunate flight will not happen. So that they will not die. He sacrifices himself for them.



Time Travel and the Tangent Universe: The Film's Central Topic

At the core of *Donnie Darko* lies a science-fiction framework inspired by metaphysics and theoretical physics.

Roberta Sparrow's book outlines the existence of a "tangent universe," which is a temporary reality that is not stable and must collapse in order to avoid destroying the primary one in which we live.

The film introduces artifact causality (the fallen jet motor itself sparks the tangent universe), wherein the jet engine acts as the catalyst that initiates the tangent universe and triggers later events. Donnie takes over the role of the living receiver, a chosen individual capable of perceiving anomalies, passing wormhole-like portals, and orchestrating the timeline's restoration. Simultaneously, Frank functions as a "Manipulated Dead," a deceased guide whose actions lead the living receiver toward his destiny. This unstable tangent universe exists within the primary reality and must be closed to save both worlds. Donnie's acts create temporal paradoxes, "time loops", that both depend on and resolve the film's events—making his mission even more complicated.

At first, Donnie unknowingly becomes a "living receiver," a chosen one whose duty is to restore the proper timeline. Donnie realizes that he is the chosen one, and he gains an understanding that he must sacrifice himself to reset time and prevent the tragedy—the death of Gretchen, his mother, and his sister. In the end, in the film's emotional climax, Donnie stays in bed and allows the jet engine to crush his bedroom, erasing the tangent universe and restoring the original timeline.

Donnie Darko poster, 2001, directed by Richard Kelly (Los Angeles: Newmarket Films, 2001).

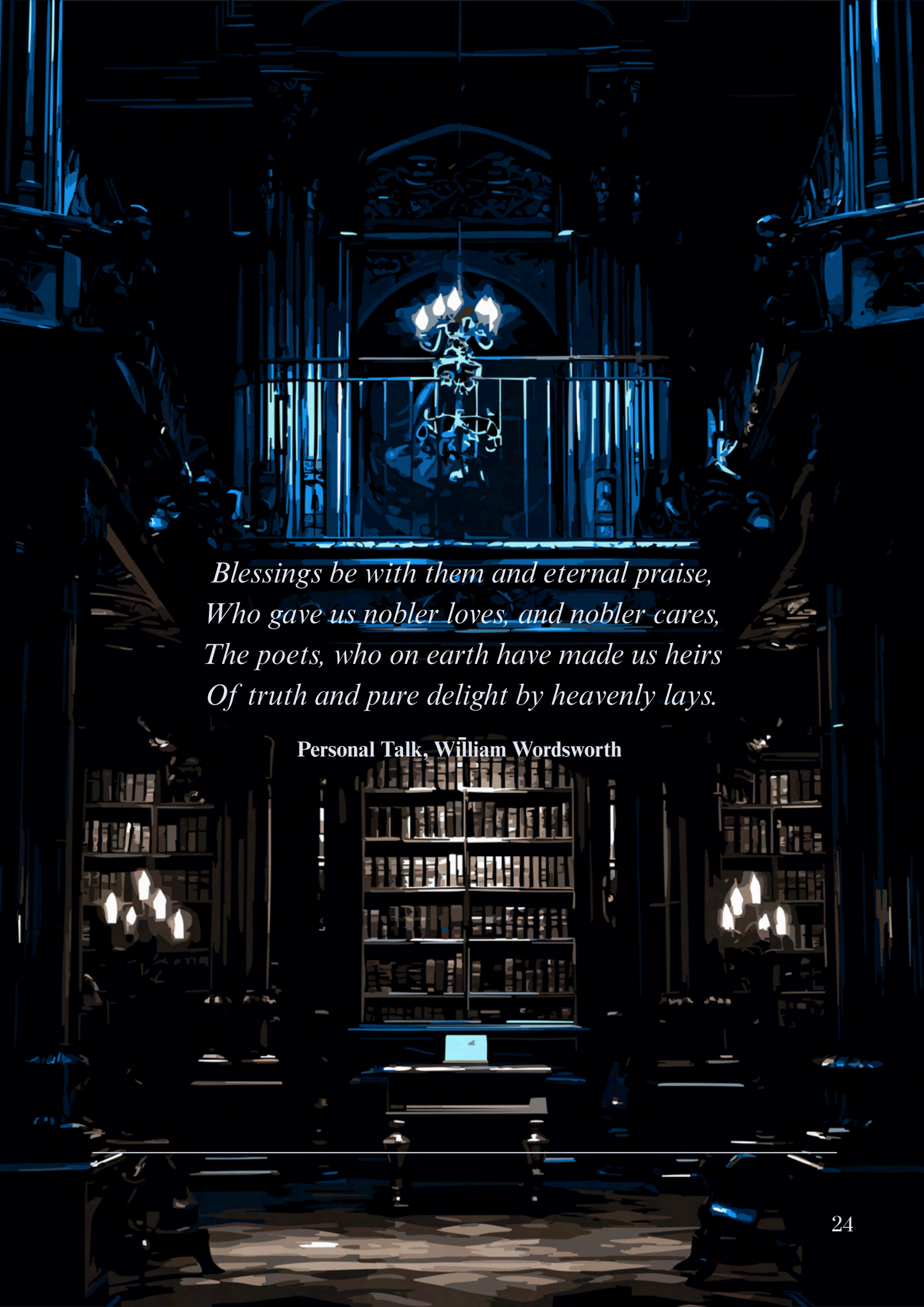
EATEN ALIVE BY DESPERATION

Büşra Yumlu

“A passionate love can make you disappear.”
You should have listened to me, dear
Now, you fall for a liar
Please not let him see our layers

You are the daughter of a witch
Thus, you know how to stitch
When you hear his swish,
You may feel like a captured fish,
unable to breathe.

Haunted houses and lingering ghosts
Did you keep them close?
While talking, do not blink,
It will leave you frozen.



Blessings be with them and eternal praise,
Who gave us nobler loves, and nobler cares,
The poets, who on earth have made us heirs
Of truth and pure delight by heavenly lays.

Personal Talk, Wīlliam Wordsworth

CANDLELIGHT, AESTHETICS, AND OBSESSION: TRACING DARK ACADEMIA THROUGH ENGLISH LITERATURE

Büşra Ecem İnce

You will agree that there is something quite alluring about reading in a candle-lit room, with raindrops and thunderstorms outside. The perfect recipe for an Instagram story with moody background music, if you ask me. Well, if that sounds just as appealing to you, then you might be interested in the world of "Dark Academia," a subculture that marries moody beauty with academic intellectuality.

But Dark Academia is more than just an Instagram story, a TikTok edit, or a Pinterest board. When we look closer, at its very core, we see that it is a literary and philosophical movement deeply rooted in English literary history. From the gothic romantics to the postmodern novels, English literature has created and shaped what Dark Academia is and feels like today.

What is Dark Academia?

Dark Academia is a niche aesthetic and literary movement that romanticizes academic life, especially in social sciences, such as Latin, literature, philosophy, and ancient history.[1] The visual cues are quite obvious to notice: gothic buildings, vintage typewriters, handwritten letters, ink-stained fingers, and secret-filled staircases.

However, if you decide to dig beneath all of these moody visualities, you will see something deeply hidden: a love for knowledge, but also its destroying power, a fear of outrunning time, and a quiet obsession with beauty, death, and meaning.[2] And the literature that fuels this movement is just as equally tragic, classical, and intellectually intense. You will soon hear the voice that invites you to dwell in the corridors of your mind just as much as in ivy-covered halls.

But how does it go back from *Babel* to Byron? When we look closer and lift all the aesthetic mood boards and modern writings, we will see the lifeblood of Dark Academia running through English literature itself. How? From the academic paranoia of T.S. Eliot's Prufrock to the decaying beauty of Oscar Wilde's prose, the English treasure chest is full of texts that mirror the key themes of Dark Academia that we listed while defining the movement.

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[1] Beyond the Aesthetics: An Introduction to Dark Academia." *LibAAC*. https://libaac.de/home/full-view-post/detail/News/beyond-the-aesthetics-an-introduction-to-dark-academia/.

[2] Brooke, Eliza. "Dark Academia: The Aesthetic That's Seducing the Internet." *The New York Times*, June 30, 2020. https://www.nytimes.com/2020/06/30/style/dark-academia-tiktok.html.

Romantic poets, like Lord Byron himself, provided the brooding intensity and poetic despair that define the mood.

> *I had a dream, which was not all a dream.*
> *The bright sun was extinguish'd, and the stars*
> *Did wander darkling in the eternal space,*
> *Rayless, and pathless, and the icy Earth*
> *Swung blind and blackening in the moonless air;*
> *Morn came and went –and came, and brought no day,*
> *And men forgot their passions in the dread*
> *Of this their desolation…*[3]

On the other hand, gothic fiction helped to add mystery and decay; *Frankenstein*, *Wuthering Heights*, and *The Picture of Dorian Gray* have become canon of Dark Academia.

…for her master had an odd notion about the chamber she would put me in, and never let anybody lodge there willingly. I asked the reason. She did not know, she answered: she had only lived there a year or two; and they had so many queer goings on, she could not begin to be curious…[4]

Tracing back the footsteps of the disillusioned student in modern fiction, the isolation of the romantic wanderer in English literature, once again, shows us the echoes of Dark Academia in the literal timeline.
However, the quintessential Dark Academia novel as we know it today is more recent. Donna Tartt's *The Secret History*, set in a New England college, is a classic example of this subcategory. This story, written in 1992, is a tale of ancient Greek mythology, tragic beauty, and murder, mixing elitism with existential dread.[5] The ultimate Dark Academia mix.

Now, obviously, all of this is not only about aesthetics or tea, but also about:
Obsession: The pursuit of knowledge as a dangerous, even self-destructive force.
Melancholy: Aestheticization of sadness, loneliness, and intellectual burnout.
Nostalgia: A yearning for a "golden age" of scholarship.
Alienation: Feeling like no one else understands your passion for metaphysical poetry (and Shakespeare).
As dreamy as all of it sounds, one asks, do we, just maybe, romanticize Dark Academia somewhat too much?
Some critics point out that Dark Academia often glorifies Eurocentric, white, patriarchal, and upper-class academic life while ignoring diversity. Let us also not forget the romanticization of unhealthy behaviors like sleep deprivation, mental illnesses, and toxic competition in the name of brilliance.[6] Does this mean, with years of evolution, Dark Academia is on the verge of cancel culture?

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[3] George Gordon Byron, "Darkness," *Poetry Foundation*, accessed June 2, 2025, https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/43825/darkness-56d222aeeee1b, lines 1-8.
[4] Emily Brontë, *Wuthering Heights*, Chapter 3, *Lit2Go*, University of South Florida, accessed June 2, 2025, https://etc.usf.edu/lit2go/159/wuthering-heights/2773/chapter-3/.
[5] Tartt, Donna. *The Secret History.* New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1992. https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/29044.The_Secret_History
[6] Ahmed, Nida. "The Dark Side of Dark Academia: A Critique of the Aesthetic." *The Teen Magazine.* https://www.theteenmagazine.com/the-dark-side-of-dark-academia-a-critique-of-the-aesthetic.

Good news: After centuries filled with toxic romantics, this movement is changing in a positive way. Recent works like R.F. Kuang's *Babel* and M.L. Rio's *If We Were Villains*—both of which are amazing modern Dark Academia examples—interrogate the elitism of academia while still embracing the aesthetics. Authors, social media creators, and artists -looking at Taylor Swift's *The Tortured Poets Department* (2024)- are reshaping the genre to include queer, postcolonial, and feminist works that add a whole other path and much-needed voice into the English literature-rooted movement.

As English literature students, it makes sense that we are drawn to Dark Academia. For us, this is more than an aesthetic –it is a way of saying: "I take poetry, beauty, and knowledge seriously."

In a world that underestimates the meaning of "the red door" in a poem, that is too fast, that is AI-generated, and a bit superficial, Dark Academia is a form of resistance. It gives us permission to slow down, read deeply, and feel intensely: a literary movement with roots in the past and eyes on the future.

Like any movement that has been born, whether that be literary or scientific, Dark Academia is evolving. It is becoming more inclusive, more critical, more diverse, and more aware of its shadows. So, whether you are reading Oscar Wilde by candlelight or annotating Olivie Blake in a moody café, you are not just part of a trend –you are part of a long-lasting tradition, a rebellion, or a quote scribbled in the margin of a library book, waiting to be found, if you will.

Let us end our words, in a quite dark academic fashion, with the words of William Wordsworth, who honors authors and poets by thanking them for their lasting legacy.

> *Blessings be with them –and eternal praise,*
> *Who gave us nobler loves, and nobler cares,*
> *The poets, who on earth have made us heirs*
> *Of truth and pure delight by heavenly lays.*[7]

[7] William Wordsworth, "Personal Talk." *All Poetry*, accessed June 2, 2025, https://allpoetry.com/Personal-Talk, lines 51-54.



Illustrated by: Yusuf Gençarslan

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ET IN ARCADIA EGO

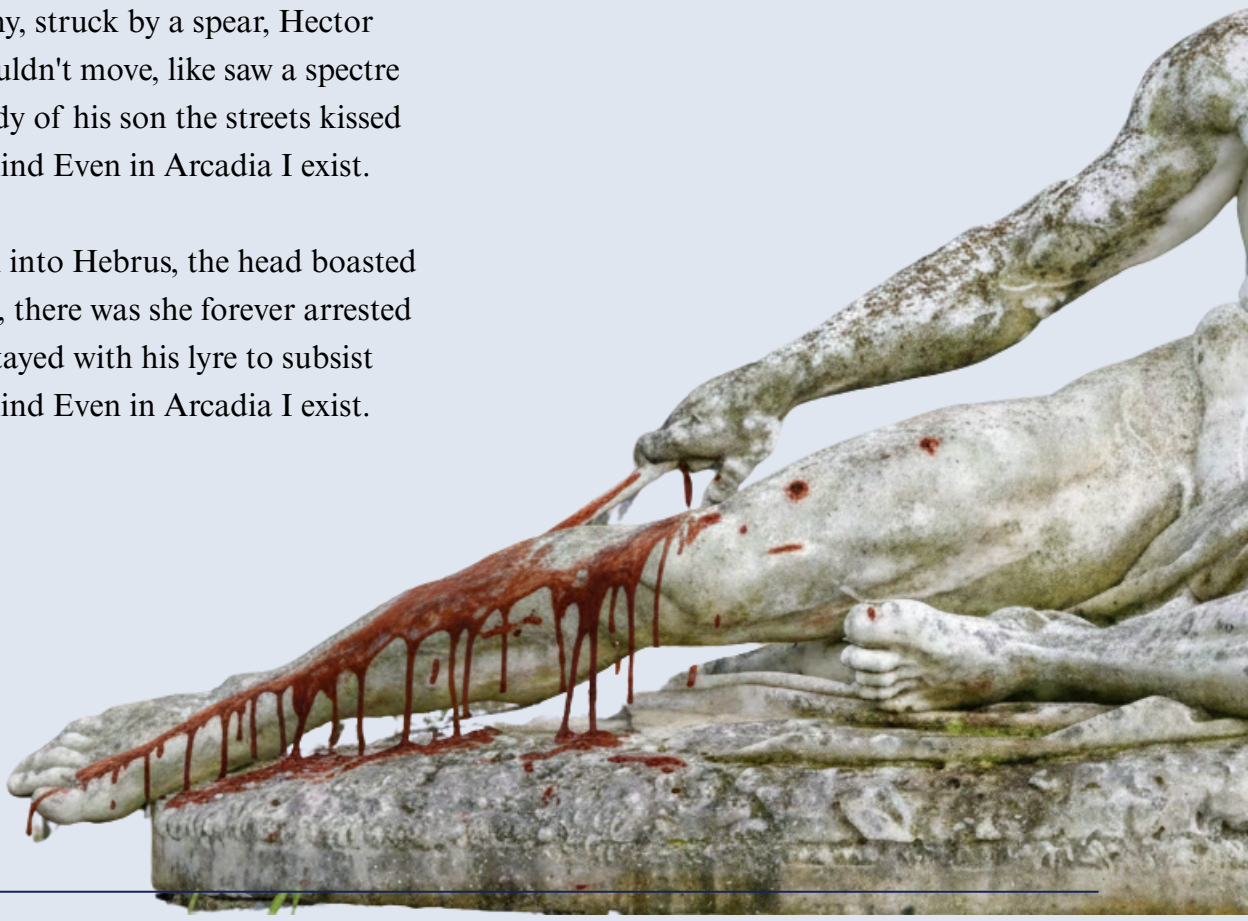
Mustafa Kocaman

I reigned, reigning, will reign forever
The tie betwixt breath and earth I sever
Many from their ideals by dint of me desist
Yet bear in mind Even in Arcadia I exist.

The indignant warrior of the war Trojan
Found me in fashion that is not ambrosian
Mother-fault, in childhood, his heel assist
Yet bear in mind Even in Arcadia I exist.

His archenemy, struck by a spear, Hector
His father couldn't move, like saw a spectre
When the body of his son the streets kissed
Yet bear in mind Even in Arcadia I exist.

Afore thrown into Hebrus, the head boasted
Looked back, there was she forever arrested
Had he but stayed with his lyre to subsist
Yet bear in mind Even in Arcadia I exist.





With his own face, proudful, he fell in love
Let alone Echo, affronted mountains above
Beauty and vanity must not in same body coexist
Yet bear in mind Even in Arcadia I exist.

Dethroned all Troy, rode home with bold chest
Vanity of him dripped through his bright vest
The home with traitors rife, him a knife kissed
Yet bear in mind Even in Arcadia I exist.

Though opened his eyes being a demigod
His fame, not out of a clear sky, but to plod
Hercules put his faith in love and it did twist
Yet bear in mind Even in Arcadia I exist.

Enumeration is a mission that is not easy
Much more in store, you would be queasy
Like this Mr. Lappel, now to your own way persist
Yet bear in mind Even in Arcadia I exist.

TÜRKİYE - THE COUNTRY OF "AŞIK" MEETING METAL MUSIC

Enfal Bıyık

At the time Metal Giants of the Universe was discussed, metal music was not yet a mainstream topic in Türkiye. However, it has a great history and a strong structure. The process started with Pentagram and has been developed by many groups. The folk poet tradition, which has played a huge role in Anatolia for centuries, has also influenced metal music. In addition, Turkish metal music has also been inspired by foreign literary works.

Pentagram—40 Years of Scream

Founded in 1987 by Cenk Unnü and Hakan Utangaç, it has now become a big family of eight members and thousands of fans. The band, which initially played thrash and speed metal, achieved their real success with the album *Anatolia*, which was released in 1997, and gained recognition nationwide. In this album, Pentagram blended the musical influences of Anatolia with metal music, combining eastern music modes with western instruments. The albums *Unspoken* (2001) and *Bir* (2002) continued this style. Especially in these three albums, literature has greatly influenced the lyrics and the concepts of the songs.

Gündüz Gece—Aşık Veysel

As the fourth song of the *Anatolia* album, "Gündüz Gece" is a poem by Aşık Veysel, a bard from Sivas. Pentagram, which was experimenting with new ideas, made a great impact with this interpretation. Murat Ilkan's voice, fitting perfectly with this style, has won the hearts of all literature and metal lovers in Türkiye. The song "Anatolia" in this album also deeply reflects the old Turkish bard culture.



Lions in a Cage—Aleister Crowley

Pentagram expanded their literary references even further with their *Unspoken* album, benefiting from different kinds of sources. "Lions in a Cage" is a song combining historical events with occult philosophy. The song is about Osman the Third, imprisoned by his brothers for fifty years, and is blended with Aleister Crowley's Thelema. Cenk Unnü's intense drum rhythms, Metin Türkcan's hypnotic guitar solos, Tarkan Gözübüyük's fat bass, and Murat Ilkan's vocals as the narrator create an atmosphere reflecting Crowley's dark world. The last line of the bridge, "Do what you wilt shall be the whole of the law," directly refers to Crowley's teachings.

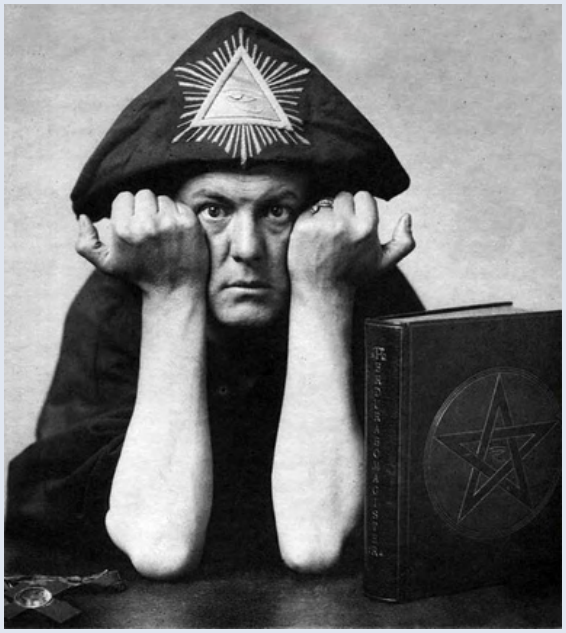
Âşık Veysel, photo, in "Aşık Veysel Photo Album," Ministry of Culture and Tourism of Turkey, accessed November 1, 2025, https://www.ktb.gov.tr/EN-117858/asik-veysel-photo-album.html.

Bir - Pentagram

While *Unspoken* was being produced, some other songs were collected in a new album called *Bir*. This album also has the same elements. However, the usage of the ney (a traditional wind instrument) is much more prevalent in this album. Using their unique style of songwriting, they made the song "Bir," which is the most beloved by Pentagram fans. In addition, Aşık Dertli's poem "Şeytan Bunun Neresinde" turned into an aggressive metal song and a response to the satanist claims in the early 2000s. Another interpretation, "Bu Alemi Gören Sensin," takes its place in this album. The composition is also one of Aşık Veysel's works and expresses the rebellion through Hakan Utangaç's dirty vocals.

Almora

Almora, not actively producing, was a band producing symphonic metal ahead of its time. The 2004 album *Shehrazad* is a reference to *One Thousand and One Nights*, as its name suggests. The full album is quite related to literature. In *Shehrazad*, the titular character is asked to tell the reader a story. The song starts with a quite impressive drum intro, and then amazing riffs come out with those creepy vocals. In the middle section, it feels like a journey to Iran, with a guitar solo blending with screams. As a fan of progressive and symphonic metal, Almora is a band that is strongly recommended.



Cem Köksal

Cem Köksal is also among those who blend literature and metal. The song "Don Quixote" reveals his admiration for this character. With the help of Mats Levén's vocals, the song is a direct homage to Miguel de Cervantes' legendary novel. Both the bass and guitar solos reflect that storytelling from the novel. In addition, the quotations from the novel show that music is not only a narrative tool but can also be treated as a literary work.

Aleister Crowley, Black Magic Recordings, album cover, 2007, Spotify, accessed November 1, 2025, https://open.spotify.com/intl-tr/album/5IJCnv6BzeyeKJO4wTasyd.

PIETÀ

Feride Pelin Tufan

They asked my name again this morning. I said nothing. Not because I have forgotten it, but because I no longer believe it belongs to me. There is a mirror in the hallway. I sometimes catch my reflection. I do not recognize the woman who stares back at me. Her eyes had forgotten how to hold light. Her mouth moves as if it remembers speech but has forgotten its words. I am not writing to confess but to remember. I need someone to know that I was once human. That I made a mistake; it buried everything else beneath it. And now, here I am. Writing this, hiding it between walls that do not listen. If you are reading this, I am already gone. Not dead, not free, just no longer here. And I can never erase what my hands remember. I never meant for any of it to happen, or at least that is what I tell myself when the nights get too still, and my thoughts start crawling under the skin. The cell is so quiet that I can hear my heartbeat. They say that if you stay in a room so silent that you can hear only your heartbeat, you go insane. This is not what madness is supposed to feel like. It cannot be. Can it?

People say prison is punishment, but I was trapped long before the cell door ever shut. Silence is louder than any sentence. I scrub my hands until my skin burns, but her blood lives beneath my skin like an oath that no one dares to say aloud. I write this not to confess, but because guilt has the sharpest teeth that eat you alive. And now that it knows my name, it will not stop whispering. I cannot talk about what happened, some memories are too sharp, too raw to touch. But I feel its weight every day, pressing down like cold stones do. I ask myself if I could have chosen differently, if I had paused, or swallowed my pride, or walked away. But questions are ghosts, haunting me, never answering, only echoing. Every night, I struggle with her silence, the absence that fills this room like heavy fog. I am a prisoner not just of bars and locks, but of memory and regret. Sometimes I wonder if she forgave me. I write to remind myself that I am still here, breathing this heavy breath of guilt. And perhaps, I am going to die here in a rage, like a poisoned rat in a hole, as Jonathan Swift once said. Now I truly feel every letter of this sentence. But I cannot hide it anymore. No wall covers the truth, and no passage of time erases the shape of what I have done, hands that reached for me, eyes that still believed in me. Maybe I could tell myself she would forgive me. Maybe.

But the fall was real.
The silence was real.
I killed her.

And now I carry her, not in arms, but in memory; cold, standing still, and unbearable. Like a Pietà carved from guilt instead of marble.

And that silence… It has become my name.

ETERNAL SLUMBER

Dilara Kabak

*D*ead silent it was in the belly of the mine which deprived them from light,
*O*nly broken by the groans of men and boys tormented with tiresome grind,
*O*dor so dreadfully foul stank, weary and sweaty skin, under pressure it sank,
*M*ine dust tainted their feeble lungs, brushing their guts with lethal blight,
*E*very breath was to be soiled with cinder, coarse whispers hard to veil,
*D*amnation could be seen in their eyes, as the silent visitor, Death itself, had prescribed.

*M*orrow had not been promised in gold nor did they await it, truth be told,
*I*ll-fated souls not yet aware of the cruel bell which for them relentlessly tolls,
*N*ay shall their bodies be found, buried far beneath in ashes and coal dust
*E*ver did they wonder, what life could have been if fate had been fairer?
*R*est they should, for the life they yearn for is but a second away,
*S*hackles! NO! of mortal worries nor woes shall be a bother beyond the sacred River.

*B*earing the scythe of Providence, may it be benevolent to these men of labor,
*R*eap their souls in a whisk so they will not bear any more aching torture.
*O*h, ever so sweet was the eternal slumber, shall they make merry in it in leisure!
*K*now they must, my friend, that Death is nothing but an amenable companion.
*E*bony-colored cheeks of theirs washed away in tears, sore throats coughed out shaky pleas,
*N*o dread was seen in their countenance, as the kindly visitor, Death itself, had remarked.

*N*eglected souls' weeping echoed in the collapsed walls of the accursed mine,
*O*nly silenced by the noises of the folk who gathered around to catch a glimpse,
*M*ourn ye shall not, for thou hast not given any thought whilst their lungs knew no coal!
*O*nly when they lay under piles of rock, have they suddenly gained thy awe regard?
*R*eflect upon guilt thou must not refrain from, for it requires to question,
*E*ver did they wonder, could life even be able to bring them glory like it does to any other?



Gustave Doré, *Destruction of Leviathan*, 1865, in Illustrations by Gustave Doré (London: Cassel, Petter, and Galpin, 1866)

HYBRIDITY AND LOSS OF SELF IN *THE SATANIC VERSES*

Hakan Taymaz

"To be born again, first you have to die."[1] This line mirrors the lives of immigrants who often find themselves caught between their own culture and the pressure to change in a white-ruled society and to adapt to a new world with newly forged identities. In Salman Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses*, the characters wrestle with the challenge of reinventing themselves, leaving behind their past identities to survive in a world that rejects and dehumanizes them. They navigate the struggle of being non-white in a white-ruled society, where they are asked a question: "In the act of change, can they hold on to what they are?" Some postcolonial thinkers, such as Homi K. Bhabha, have argued that identity is fluid, especially for immigrants.

Previous scholars have examined these issues through different perspectives. Harveen Sachdeva Mann, for instance, highlights how the novel embraces multiple identities and the blending of Eastern and Western cultures as a way to overcome binary divisions.[2] Tim Brennan focuses on Rushdie's deliberate avoidance of direct religious or political conflicts, arguing that the novel instead uses hybridity to explore identity formation in a globalized world.[3] Meanwhile, R. Radhakrishnan offers a more critical view, suggesting that hybrid identities in postcolonial works often remain shaped by Western influence rather than existing freely.[4]

While these studies provide valuable insights into the novel's treatment of identity and hybridity, they often remain limited to discussions of cultural fusion or political avoidance. This study adopts a different approach by shifting the focus from religious controversy to the immigrant's inner identity crisis. It explores how the characters' supernatural transformations, turning into demons and angels, serve as symbolic expressions of alienation, assimilation, and the loss of self, ultimately leading to acceptance and rebirth as something new. By employing hybridity theory as a standpoint, this research aims to demonstrate how Rushdie portrays the psychological and cultural costs of survival in a world that demands reinvention at the expense of belonging.

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[1] Salman Rushdie, *The Satanic Verses* (New York: Penguin, 1988), 1.

[2] Harveen Sachdeva Mann, "Being Borne Across Translation and Salman Rushdie's The Satanic Verses," *Criticism* 37, no. 2 (Spring 1995): 285.

[3] Tim Brennan, "Rushdie, Islam, and Postcolonial Criticism," *The Centennial Review* 41, no. 2 (Spring 1997): 272–73.

[4] Rufus Cook, "Cultural Displacement and Narrative Duplicity," *The Centennial Review* 41, no. 2 (Spring 1997): 272.

Theoretical Framework

This study analyzes the adaptations immigrants undergo in Salman Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses* without losing their cultural identity, using Homi K. Bhabha's concepts of "Hybridity" and the "Third Space."[5] Postcolonial theory provides a lens to understand how colonial histories, power dynamics, and cultural encounters shape immigrant identity and the construction of the self in a new environment.

Bhabha's theory of hybridity emphasizes that identities are never fixed but are shaped by the meeting of different cultures. He argues that, "Cultures come to be represented by virtue of the processes of iteration and translation… through which their meanings are addressed to an Other,"[6] showing that cultures change and grow through contact with others, rather than staying pure or separate. Within this framework, the third space represents a liminal arena where conflicting cultural positions meet and negotiate differences. Bhabha notes that, "The empty third space… at once bar and bearer of difference, is closed to the paranoid position of power"[7], highlighting its potential to resist domination and enable new cultural formations.

In the context of *The Satanic Verses*, immigrant characters' experiences of abuse, transformation, and self-doubt exemplify the negotiation of identity in this liminal space. Their identities are forged between inherited traditions and pressures to assimilate into Western society, showing how hybridity can be empowering for immigrants adapting to Western culture. This framework allows an analysis of how characters such as Saladin Chamcha and Gibreel Farishta navigate cultural dislocation, alienation, and the tension between belonging and adaptation.

Furthermore, Bhabha's concepts help to illuminate the psychological and symbolic dimensions of immigrant experiences. Exploring the characters' supernatural transformations, this study analyzes how hybridity is manifested not only in cultural negotiation but also in the personal and emotional costs of migration. While previous scholars often emphasize cultural fusion or political commentary, this approach highlights the internal crises of identity that arise in postcolonial contexts, revealing the dynamic and often painful process of forming hybrid selves.

[5] Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, (London: Routledge, 1994), 36.
[6] Bhabha, *The Location of Culture,* 58.
[7] Bhabha, 101.

Exploring *The Satanic Verses*

Salman Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses* is a complex postcolonial novel that changes the lives of two Indian Muslim protagonists. Gibreel Farishta and Saladin Chamcha, with a controversial narrative exploring the intersections of identity, faith, and cultural conflict, explore the themes of alienation. The novel depicts characters' literal transformations into angelic and demonic figures in a way that represents their struggles as immigrants. Bhabha, with his insightful look, tells us, "Hybridity is a problematic of colonial representation and individuation that reverses the effects of the colonialist disavowal, so that other 'denied' knowledges enter upon the dominant discourse and estrange the basis of its authority."[8] Thus, with their transformation into unnatural beings, the novel mirrors the feeling of nonwhite immigrant struggle with their forbidden forms.

Gibreel Farishta, a Bollywood star, symbolizes the allure of Western success. Yet his career, often portraying Hindu gods, contrasts sharply with his personal struggles and his conflicted relationship with his religion. After the plane crash, Gibreel undergoes a surreal transformation, at one point even believing himself to be the Archangel Gabriel. This shifting sense of identity becomes central to exploring the tension between Eastern spirituality and Western cultural expectations. Gibreel's difficulty in reconciling these forces reflects what Homi Bhabha describes as the "borderline negotiations of cultural translation,"[9] where cultural difference is not merely a matter of demographic plurality but is enacted in the in-between spaces of adaptation and identity formation. In Gibreel's case, the boundaries between his true self and the society he aspires to belong to become blurred, highlighting his failure to fully navigate the cultural borderlands. This notion of lost culture manifests in his bad breath, a marker of his Indianness that evokes Saladin's discomfort and rejection of his origins.

Saladin Chamcha, a voiceover artist, attempts to gain whiteness in British society, resulting in alienation, self-loathing, and eventual abuse. He even marries a woman just because of her "Englishness". This hatred for his own people originates from his father's ignorant way of looking at white cultures, and the fact that his father had no respect for his son's wishes to adapt to a new environment. Chamcha's father, however, has a few reasons why he hates the whiteness of his current surroundings. This reason stems from colonization of his beloved country and loss of his culture, and watching his son lose his own culture makes him regret ever coming to a white nation. This notion is described by Bhabha as, "The critic must attempt to fully realize, and take responsibility for, the unspoken, unrepresented pasts that haunt the historical present."[10]

[8] Bhabha, 114.
[9] Bhabha, 223.
[10] Bhabha, 12.

Saladin's deep hatred for his own heritage is a prominent theme throughout the story. His hatred for the Indian way of life, particularly when his Indian way of speaking resurfaces, makes him think, "Past bubbled up, transmogrified vowels and vocab? What is next? Would he take to putting coconut oil in his hair?"[11]At first, Saladin rejects his roots with bitterness and discontent, and he distances himself from any connection to his cultural background and even family. This rejection represents his desire to gain whiteness in British society, which he perceives as superior, and to shed the parts of himself that seem lesser than white. Saladin even goes as far as to abandon his father and tell him to get rid of a tree that symbolizes his soul's redemption.

However, as the story progresses, Saladin witnesses the abuse that his fellow immigrants experience and gradually comes to terms with his Indian identity, reconciling with his father before his death. This acceptance of his hybrid identity reflects the complex process of reconciling multiple cultural influences, acknowledging that he is neither entirely British nor entirely Indian, but a blend of both, as Bhabha notes, "The theoretical recognition of the split-space of enunciation may open the way to conceptualizing an international culture, based not on the exoticism of multiculturalism or the diversity of cultures, but on the inscription and articulation of culture's hybridity."[12] The bad breath of Gibreel transferring into Saladin gives him back his Indianness, and adding to this, his transformation into a demonic figure opens his eyes to the sufferings of his fellow immigrants, who also turn into animals, repressed by the authority. Upon accepting his true Indian self and the white cultural outlook, Saladin loses both his demonic horns and his bad breath, becoming a new being that is neither one nor the other culture, but both cultures combined.

Saladin's journey toward self-acceptance contrasts with Gibreel's. Gibreel, who previously played Hindu gods, becomes delusional as he believes himself to be the archangel Gabriel, and his mental state deteriorates. Gibreel's inability to reconcile with his sense of self highlights the dangers of rejecting hybridity and the destructive consequences of refusing to integrate multiple aspects of one's identity. While Saladin learns to embrace his hybrid nature, understanding that his identity is shaped by both cultures, Gibreel's breakdown serves as a cautionary tale of the struggle that comes from resisting the coexistence of multiple identities within oneself.

Gibreel's mental deterioration is most prominent in the controversial retelling of the life of the Prophet Muhammad, or as he is referred to in the book, *Mahound*, which is an evil depiction of the prophet. Although controversial for depicting Muslim history as evil, Rushdie does this to tell the reader of misunderstood cultures and voices, and how immigrants who are not willing to adapt to a new culture can attack their own kin. The fictional account of the "Satanic Verses" explores the messages of God and questions the nature of divine revelation and religious authority, challenging traditional interpretations of Islamic history, and questioning whether what we hear and what we say are the correct interpretations of the real message.

[11] Rushdie, *The Satanic Verses*, 44.

[12] Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, 45-50.

Through the characters of Gibreel, Saladin, and their interactions with other immigrants, Rushdie examines the broader postcolonial experience, focusing on the fluidity of identity, the fragmentation of self, and the psychological impact of cultural displacement. The novel critiques the world that does not accept what is different from them and the complex dynamics of hybrid identities, illustrating how individuals who are ignored and left behind by the broader culture navigate the tensions between heritage and white culture in a globalized world. This hybrid nature achieved through the use of metaphors is explained to us by Bhabha as follows: "The nation fills the void left in the uprooting of communities and kin, and turns that loss into the language of metaphor."[13]

Salman Rushdie captures the experience of hybridity when he asks, "How to ever smile again, if first you won't cry?"[14] This notion reflects the deep emotional and psychological toll of navigating fragmented identities in a postcolonial world and shows us that without struggle and adaptation, we cannot attain happiness.

Gibreel's bad breath transferring into Saladin further illustrates how, even if a true citizen, immigrants are forced to endure the harsh truth, while those who look modern are accepted into society. Once Saladin inherits Gibreel's affliction, the social hostility and abuse he faces become unbearable. As Bhabha notes, "It is precisely in these banalities that the unhomely stirs, as the violence of a racialized society falls most enduringly on the details of life."[15] The narrative shows us this when Saladin is humiliated by immigration officers who brutally force him to eat his pebble-like excrement while declaring, "In this country, we clean our messes."[16] This harsh scene reflects the systemic racism and violence that immigrants endure to achieve a more hybrid nature, further supplementing the need for change and escape from the abuse.

These moments of physical and psychological transformation reflect the postcolonial themes of hybridity, alienation, and resistance. Through Gibreel and Saladin's experiences, Rushdie critiques the enduring impacts of colonialism and racism faced by immigrants by illustrating how individuals deal with fragmented personalities while conducting their journey through cultural and systemic power imbalances.

It should be noted that Gibreel's dreams of his angelic fantasies also introduce post-colonial discourse. The most important dream is about religious leadership and the inability of the colonized to create a third space between different identities to create a more sublime environment. In the absurd dreams of Gibreel, religious groups fight with each other, but in the end, it is only the followers who get hurt in their cause. This is a direct opposition to the third space where hybrid and different identities can live together in order to achieve freedom of mind and unshackled chains, rather than being lost in religious discourses.

[13] Bhabha, 139.
[14] Rushdie, *The Satanic Verses*, 1.
[15] Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, 45-50.
[16] Rushdie, *The Satanic Verses*, 166.

In the final moments of *The Satanic Verses*, Rushdie crafts an ending that is quite heavy and shares the results of their efforts to fit in. The protagonists, Gibreel and Saladin, both experience profound transformations that reflect the central postcolonial themes of hybrid identity, alienation, and the struggle for self-definition. Gibreel's death shows how his inability to accept both his Indian self and White nation that sees him as an angel can cause the downfall of immigrants. Meanwhile, Saladin's journey towards reclaiming his human form suggests a tentative return to his roots, but even this resolution is fraught with uncertainty, as the novel never fully resolves whether he can escape the psychological scars of his past. Rushdie leaves readers with a sense of confusion, as the characters' personal rebirths symbolizing a larger postcolonial struggle for identity and self-worth remain incomplete. This ending reflects the complexities of postcolonial existence, where transformation is necessary for some immigrants. This necessity demands that one should not forget their origin but learn to adapt to whatever comes ahead in their journeys. One cannot achieve a fulfilled life without first reaching an equilibrium in this postcolonial world.



Gustave Doré, *Jacob Wrestles with the Angel*, 1855, in Illustrations by Gustave Doré (London: Cassell, Petter, and Galpin, 1866).

Conclusion

Salman Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses* presents an exploration of identity, hybridity, and cultural alienation within the context of immigrant struggles and racism faced by them. Through the transformations of Gibreel Farishta and Saladin Chamcha and their experiences, Rushdie reveals the complex psychological and emotional cost of cultural dislocation. Immigrants explore the tension between their heritage and the pressures to be white rather than brown by the dominant culture. Applying the postcolonial theories of Homi Bhabha's "Hybridity" and "Third Space", this study shows how Rushdie's characters embody the fluidity and repair of fragmentation of identity in a postcolonial world by adaptation.

The characters transform from angelic figures to demonic beings. The immigrants transform into animals. All these mirror the internal conflicts faced by immigrants in a globalized society. This highlights the profound challenge of adapting to a new identity when individuals are caught between conflicting cultural worlds, as well as the struggle of not being accepted into a new system without first changing themselves. These supernatural changes are not only fantastical elements but serve as symbolic representations of the psychological and emotional alienation that colonized and marginalized groups endure. By needing to adapt their cultural roots into a newly acquired culture, the characters attempt to forge new identities to illustrate the struggle for belonging in a world marked by colonial legacies and systemic power imbalances.

The Satanic Verses calls attention to the complexities of identity formation in postcolonial contexts, urging a reevaluation of the forces that shape personal and collective identities. The novel emphasizes the importance of reconciling one's heritage with the pressures of modernity, offering a poignant reminder that the quest for self-identity is a deeply transformative and often painful journey. In its depiction of the immigrant experience, Rushdie's work contributes to the broader postcolonial discourse, urging readers to confront the lingering effects of colonization and the ongoing negotiation of cultural identities in an increasingly interconnected world.

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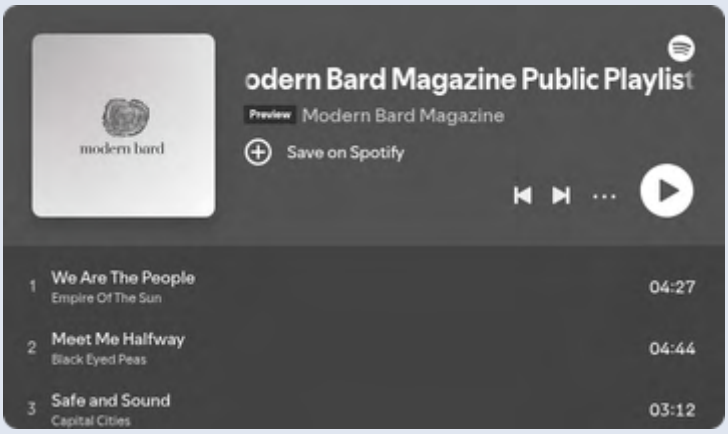


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