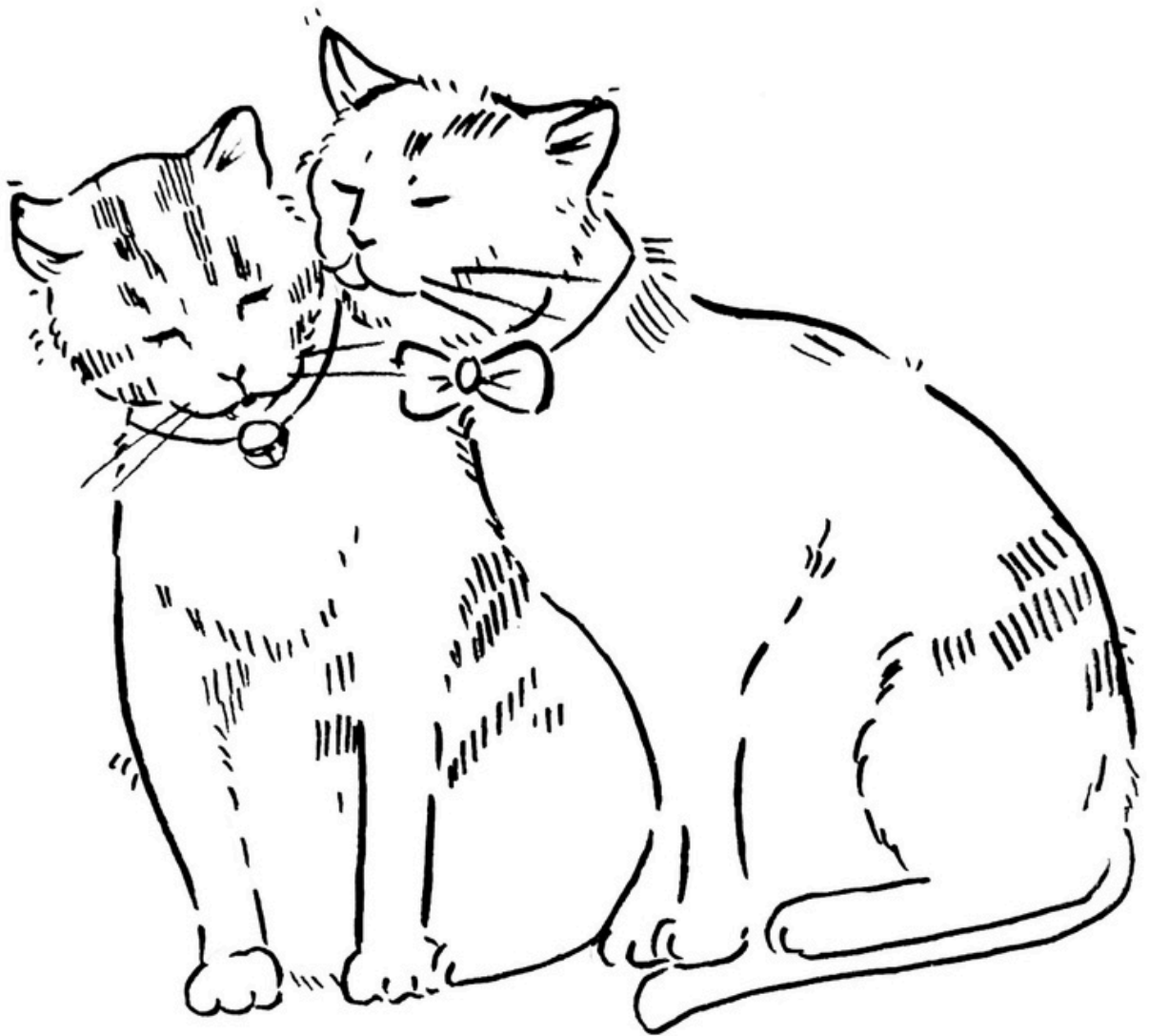
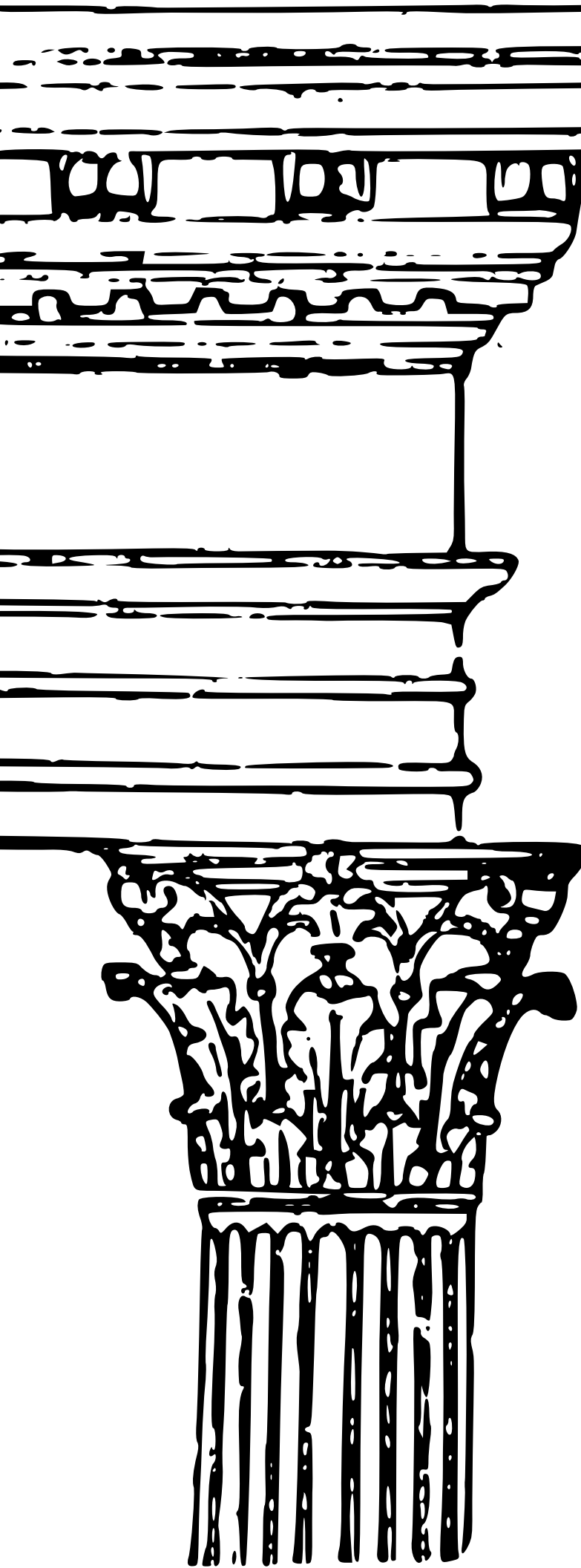


MONOGRAPH

YEAR 4. VOL.8



A STUDENT LED MAGAZINE FOR THE ARTS



MONOGRAPH

TABLE OF CONTENTS



Editor's Note

By Monograph Editorial Desk

Queer Materiality, Mobility and Intimacy in Wong Kar- wai's Happy Together

By Sukriti Chawla

Funny Face

By Prakriti Basu

Reconstructing the 'tribal'

By Aishi Saha

From The River To The Sea

By Amna Mannan

Five days after the janazah, burial

By Ifrah Fatima





Editor's Note



The militarisation of the Enforcement Directorate and the CBI in recent years has significantly contributed to a visible increase in tension surrounding the 2024 General Elections. The arrest of Arvind Kejriwal and the media circus that followed is one that deserves to be studied as an important signifier of a failing democracy. The introduction of Electoral Bonds, the demise of free press, the growing intolerance, the lack of transparency, and most recently the horrific sexual assault of thousands of women by an absconding MP associated with the ruling party are markers of a diseased government that has constantly put their needs in front of the country and ruled using fear and hate. Vote wisely. Read the manifestos. Study, instead of simply reading the news, learn to recognise propaganda (whatever the source be) and exercise your right to vote for a better tomorrow.



Written by the Monograph Editorial Desk:

Amna Mannan
Copy Editor

Ayush Chakraborty
Senior Editor

Anuraag Das Sarma
Editor in Chief

Sukriti Chawla
Editorial Head

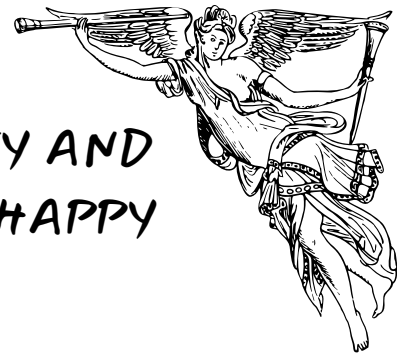
Aishi Saha
Literary Critic

Ritobrita Mukherjee
Copy Editor





QUEER MATERIALITY, MOBILITY AND
INTIMACY IN WONG KAR-WAI'S HAPPY
TOGETHER



SUKRITI CHAWLA

*“The ability to imagine a common future is contingent
on a mutual promise, one that is breakable and fragile.”*

The Work of Waiting, June Hee Kwon

The queer imagination of movement – that is, a queer individual involved in considering or building towards an imagined/potential future – is an imagination of liminality and ambiguity. Its promises include negotiations of both space and intimacy – their allowances and conditions, the way they may be realized or disrupted. I read the home(s) that arise out of such imaginations and promises in Wong Kar-wai’s 1997 film *Happy Together* in service of a familiar and evasive endeavour: to articulate the contingencies of the movement of queer individuals. The situation(s) that it arises out of and gives rise to, its peculiar and/or familiar iterations of waiting and wandering, and how none of these elements are fixed, isolated, or unchangeable. This reading of the film engages with those theoretical frameworks of mobility studies specifically concerned with queer movement and migration (Gorman-Murray; Fortier; Ahmed et al.), as well as those illustrating the symbolic, material and affective significance of objects in migrants’ lives (Pechurina).

Reading *Happy Together*’s queer movement and connection through the co-constitution of homes, identities, and relationalities, anchored in particular objects and places, I attempt here to build upon, and hopefully contribute to, current research and discussion on queer movement. The non-linearity of movement – as a refutation of clean dichotomies of arrival/return or place-of-leaving/place-of-arrival – is apprehended in queer narratives primarily through the ambiguous and conflictual nature of home and intimacy.

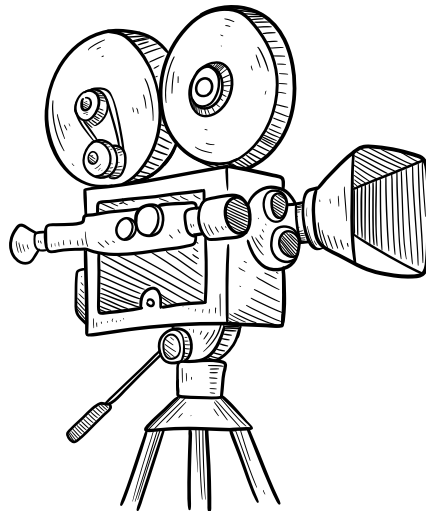
The film opens with jarringly rapid cuts, and the bureaucratic-cold clatter of passports being stamped is our first introduction to this story. We learn of two men – Lai Yiu-Fai and Ho Po-Wing. Both of them are “British National[s] (Overseas),” as intimated by their passport, issued/authenticated by the Hong Kong Passport Office. Set in 1995-97, *Happy Together* chronicles their migration to Argentina, with their reason for moving narrated by Lai in this manner:

“Ho Po-Wing always says “Let’s start over,” and it gets to me every time. We’ve been together for a while and we break up often but whenever he says, “Let’s start over,” I find myself back with him. *In order to start over, we left Hong Kong. We hit the road and ended up in Argentina.*”

Their relationship is evidently turbulent, the archetypal on-again-off-again of unpredictable passion. Their intimacy toes the line between aggression and care the very first time we witness it. Movement is then intertwined with (perhaps subject to) the negotiations and demands of their relationship, already inhabiting a place of uncertainty. In their introduction to *Uprootings/Regroundings*, academic-activists Sara Ahmed, Claudia Castañeda, Anne-Marie Fortier and Mimi Sheller call for a problematization of the dichotomous consideration of home and migration: how the tension between belonging and chance is not as easily separable into their allocation to stasis and movement. If “being grounded is not necessarily about being fixed; being mobile is not necessarily about being detached,” then the journey undertaken by Lai Yiu-Fai and Ho Po-Wing can be read as both/either an attempt

(a) to find a way of being together – grounded in each other – someplace different than where they have been

(b) to find a space to connect with each other that allows for something different than what has already been.



The film evades the neatness of disparate categories; Kar-wai's postal office is the space of paradoxes and juxtapositions in various dimensions. To complicate a reading of the passports we see, it is worth noting that *Happy Together* was released just a month before the 'handover' of Hong Kong, ending more than a century of British colonial rule and rendering the previous colony a 'special administrative region' of the People's Republic of China. Before *Happy Together*, Wong Kar-wai's work had been termed "synonymous with the neon-soaked alleys and high-rise skyscrapers of Hong Kong that had served as the iconic backdrop to all of his urban fairy tales."

The two protagonists are seemingly already divided across geographical locations, and while that would – in a theoretical assessment – immediately signal a divided 'cultural' identity, we witness Fai refer to himself as Chinese very early on in the film. Yet the ambivalence and displacement of time and space is not lost, especially with Kar-wai's choice of the place where the two men "end up" – Argentina.

In the last fifteen or so minutes of the film, Lai's voice-over tells us how, watching TV that particular morning, "[he] realized that Hong Kong and Argentina are on opposite sides of the world." The voiceover narration has, by now, given us the sense that their move was not intentional, in that the destination was not consciously or particularly chosen for any reason. To read the film in the framework of mobility studies, then, one is in a peculiar lack (of position). According to Ahmed et al., "Homing ... depends on the reclaiming and reprocessing of habits, objects, names and histories that have been uprooted – in migration, displacement or colonization." What do we call Lai and Ho's movement?



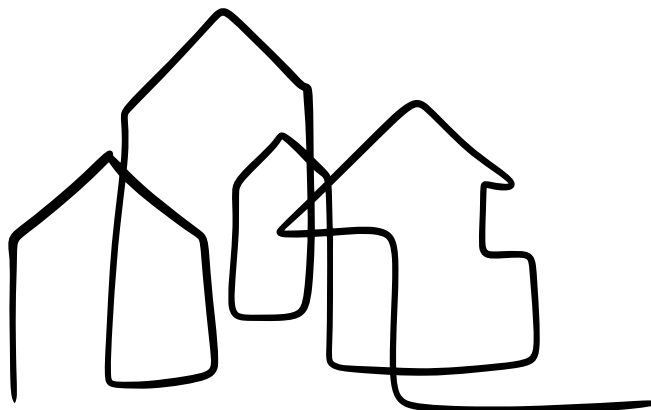
It is discernibly animated by intimacy – by a seeking to do something, to make something, with/of that relation – but, through the progression of the narrative, we learn that it becomes (or perhaps has always been) much more: negotiations of family, sustenance, and employment figure in a background of the desire to return ‘home’. Headily soon after the couple arrive in Argentina, they part ways. We find Lai working as a doorman at a tango bar – he tells us that it’s difficult to find work ‘there’ because “There aren’t a lot of Chinese around,” that he’d come to Buenos Aires after the break-up. The first words that we witness him utter in this new scenario are exclamations of “Welcome!” and “This way!” to the guests (several of them apparently tourists), him stationed permanently outside the door of the bar. Is their movement then to be termed a ‘displacement’ for the emotionally distraught and economically struggling picture of Lai in the image of its ‘other side’? The characterization is not so easy.

Taking forth Fortier’s argumentation against the linear and simplistic casting of queer migration as a “reversal of the diasporization narrative” where “there is no return, only arrival,” I contend that queer movement cannot be made to inhabit an ‘alternative’ or ‘unconventional’ formulation of the ideal migration – aspirational and ‘successful’. What is at stake here is to create space for the consideration of queer movement beyond the identitarian conceptualization of ‘queerness’, to fathom homeliness and belonging as outside of the negative of a childhood home, to problematize the space of that ‘out and proud’ existence in making distinct the material, affective and corporeal negotiations of homing. I bring together the understanding of home as “a site of ambiguity” and “a contingent space of attachment that is not definitional or singular” to consider the embodiment(s) of desire in movement, of how the ambivalent and conflicted find their sites of rootedness and negotiations in objects and spaces both in the material space of the home and away from it.

Winmark tells us that “both liminality and belonging are possible among queer migrants”; the immediate articulation evoked, for me, was that, queer migrants – characterized, for the purpose of this paper, to be queer individuals on the move, intending to move, or having moved (wherein these three states of being may not always be mutually exclusive) – possess, or have the claim to, a liminal belonging. Liminality here indicates not just in-betweenness as a characteristic of home but also that belonging can often only be found in such in-betweenness – in a contentious, conflicted/conflicting, and confusing attachment to spaces and people.

The word most fitting in my reading of both *Happy Together* and a queer figuration of home was ‘confusing’, and this is perhaps instantiated in how I mapped such a ‘liminal belonging’ through my own experience of home. My closest friend, S, is someone I have known since the eleventh grade, when both of us met within the first few weeks of arriving at a new school, disconcertingly similar in our peculiar miseries and joys. Today, their college is precisely 574km away from mine. I stay at their home in Delhi as much as I can, even when they are not here. It is the closest I have come to calling a place home in my twenty years of existence. My liminal belonging is figured in terms of both spaces and people: it is fixed, in that it is attached to these locations and bodies and my relationality with them, and yet it is unmoored.

In my iterations of what Winmark calls “home spaces,” I am scattered across Delhi, Jodhpur, Kolkata, and Sonipat, and yet none of them feel ‘complete’ – not the way that the “place you get to” is narrativized as being for queers. I do not believe they have to feel complete, for, as Fortier articulates it, home is “lived in motions.” It is “remembered by attaching it, even momentarily, to a place *we strive to make home* and to bodies and relationships that touch us, or have touched us, in a meaningful way.” Home is the “material space,” the “lived space,” of S’s house, of their room at college, sometimes of my room at my college, of spaces and corners of this godforsaken university that are sometimes made inhabitable and desired in their attachments to particular people and relations. It is, most confusingly, the space of my parents’ house (which I have stopped calling ‘home’ but sometimes I do slip up). This then exemplifies Winmark’s potential site of “negotiation, struggle and conflict,” not just with the place but with its other inhabitants, with its memories and its particular image and making of me.

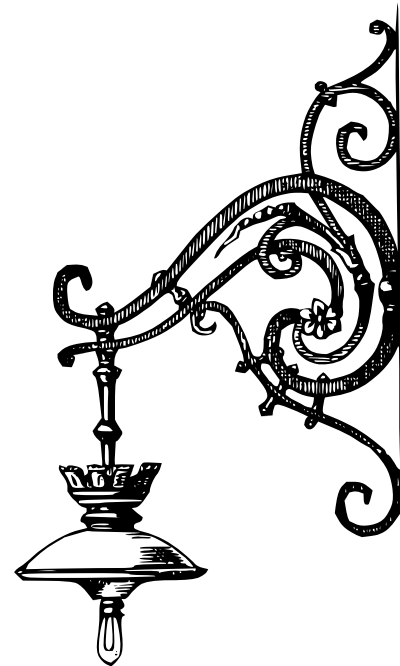


The liminal belonging of queer bodies is a contestation of all these four words: liminality, belonging, queerness, and bodies. To read *Happy Together* with theoretical frameworks of mobility, queerness and/or home is thus to articulate these negotiations, their bearings and the lives they gain for themselves.

Lai Yiu-Fai and Ho Po-Wing's arrival in Argentina is one of impulsive non-specificity and seemingly-careless wandering: "When we first got here, we had no idea where to go. Then Po-Wing bought a lamp, and I really liked it. We wanted to find the waterfall on the lamp. We found out it was at Iguazú. We planned to see it and go home, but we lost our way. ... I never did find out where we were that day."

The lamp and the Iguazú falls go on to figure as crucial sites and symbols of their homemaking, of this erratic yet purposeful arrival that is very early on detached from its 'reason'. For after they get lost on the way to finding the waterfall at Iguazú, Ho Po-Wing breaks up with Lai, saying that perhaps they may start over again someday. We learn in flashbacks that the men had rather different understandings of movement in the first place, in the very literal sense of whether it is to be stuck in a bus or lost in your own "wreck" of a car. Of what living and homing entails. Adrift in a desolate landscape, that which oriented their movement comes undone; the attempt to "start over" had involved the materiality of varying geographies, and when we see them an indeterminate amount of time later, both in Buenos Aires, this 'failure' has left them with contrastingly precarious lives.

The lamp has its first "sudden moment of visibility" when Ho Po-Wing enquires about its presence, remarking that he thought Lai would've thrown it away – he is almost-lounging on Lai's bed as the other scrubs his feet, at the beginning of a period where this apartment becomes their almost-'home'. It is, at the very least, a semblance of what might have been had they stayed together upon arriving to Buenos Aires. But this hinges, as Lai himself acknowledges, on Ho's being unwell, on him requiring Lai to provide him with food, shelter, and daily care.



The lamp is a reminder of their arrival, metonymous with the hopes, aspirations and desires that propelled their move, and what became of them in Argentina. It could hold promise or betrayal, past or future. It is, arguably, precisely such a “movement of desire” that anchors the brief, tentative, almost-volatile homemaking of Lai and Ho. In the midst of their conflicts and affections alike, it is the *marker* – to both them and the viewer – of what brought them here, what drove them apart, and what still could be. After all, at that juncture, neither of them has visited the falls yet; Ho Po-Wing’s response to Lai’s query makes the texture of hope and possibility thick in the air, even if it is momentary: “I was waiting for you.”

As Kwon tells us, “waiting constitutes an active attempt to realize a collectively imagined future.” Herein, the lamp is forceful in its reference to and evocation of the “emotional geographies” of migration. Its presence in the domestic space of Lai’s home is embedded in and reconfiguring that space, in the narrative and material sense, “both as homely and ‘unhomely’.” Although Winmark’s articulation of “liminal homemaking” is particularly grounded in the consideration of queer refugees, I would like to extend this composite state of liminality and homemaking to Fai’s home. A part of what Fortier challenges is the overwhelmingly ‘positive’ construction of home in an ideal or presumptuous queer imagination as “a necessary space of comfort and familiarity.” It disallows home as inarticulate, unresolved, by obscuring “the very materiality of ‘*making home*’.”

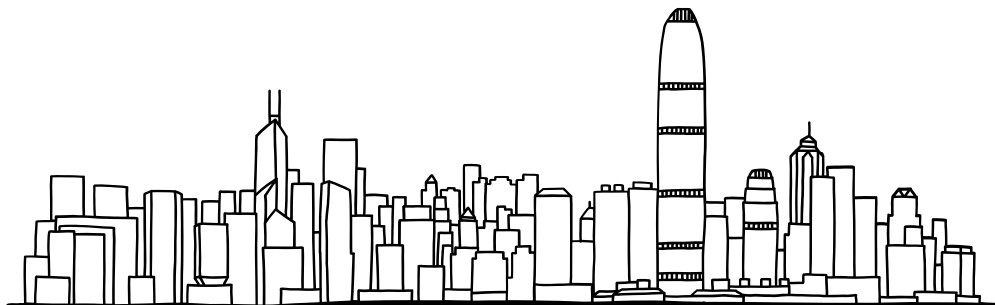
Lai’s home, which Ho remarks is “not exactly centrally located,” is cheap, it is competent: there is a bed, there is a sofa, a table, and a shared kitchen downstairs. The bed may get fleas during the winter but Lai earns and cooks, there are blankets and cigarettes. Pechurina characterizes “diasporic objects” – that which I consider the lamp to be an iteration of – as marking and symbolizing “experiences and feelings of having been here and there, of being *detached and present* at the same time.” The bed and the sofa are where the two men engage in their hesitant play, negotiating affection and wariness. Lai offers Ho his bed to sleep on while he recovers, taking the sofa himself; after a night, however, Ho tries instead to join Lai on the sofa, getting reprimanded and dismissed until Lai gives in, and they sleep on the bed together.

There is thus a very literal mediation of this ‘homely’ space, with the lamp watching over it all. It signals both familiarity and distance, the site of the lovers’ yearning, stretched/persistent across time: first when Lai is sitting by the table, intently staring at it, just before their first ‘fight’ since after Ho moves in with him; and later when Ho returns to the flat to find Lai gone, and the lamp finally left behind.

This lamp, as the bearer of their relationship’s potentiality, had arguably suggested to Ho Po-Wing that, in making his home, Lai had created some space for him, or, at least, for them. An instance of what Pechurina calls “creating *situations of ‘co-presence’* that can involve both tangible and intangible elements,” the presence of this lamp holds within it the constitution of a home through the desire for it.

However, this is not the only ‘home’ that *Happy Together* contends with. We see, from the very beginning, Lai’s struggle to make enough money to return ‘home’, that is, to Hong Kong. It is in fact evoked immediately when he first encounters Ho after the break-up: he comes to the bar where Lai works, accompanied by people who Lai would later refer to as the “white trash taking care of [Ho].” We see him through various jobs – he is, in fact, the only one of the two who is (or, at least, seen as) employed – doorman at a tango bar, cook at a Chinese restaurant, worker at the slaughterhouse.

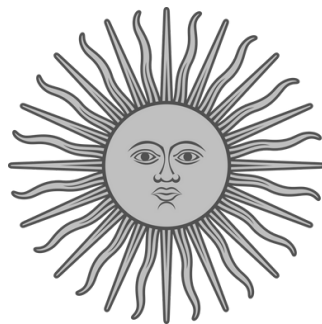
It is during the last one, situated towards the end of the film too, once he is finally separate from Ho Po-Wing, that we are made privy to the multiple negotiations that his life in Argentina has entailed, outside of this relationship: Lai tells us, “To boost my income, I’ve started working in a slaughterhouse. The pay’s much better and the hours suit me fine. Work all night, sleep all day. *I’m back on Hong-Kong time.*”



Argentina is not just the place he came to because his lover asked if they might ‘start over’. It is the place directly opposite his home, the place from where you can (only) see Hong Kong “upside down.” It is where he has inhabited a loneliness he would begrudgingly and painfully come to recognize as similar to Ho Po-Wing’s. It is where he has made and lost friends, made a home. Argentina is where he has been “working nonstop” since he came, because, someday, he wants to return the money he stole from his last job before leaving Hong Kong – employed by an old friend of his father’s, a job his father had gotten him. Someday, Lai wants to apologize to his father. Writing him a Christmas card that turns into a long letter, Lai Yiu-Fai says: “I hoped he’d treat me as a friend and give me a chance to start over.”

Gorman-Murray reminds us: “Migrants are not ‘disembodied actors’; sensual corporeality, intimate relationality and other facets of emotional embodiment also suffuse relocation processes.” The movement of Lai Yiu-Fai and Ho Po-Wing from Hong Kong to Argentina may have been animated by their relationship, and can thus be preemptively ‘categorized’ as a queer migration and all that its title entails, but the contingencies of relationality and spatiality are not so easily catalogable.

The homes that they find, make and maintain – their spaces and inhabitants and materials and narratives – are shaped by their personhood and positioning; “the identities of ‘home’,” as Fortier remarks, “as well as those who inhabit it are never fixed, but are continuously reimagined and redefined.” Imaginations and belongings are to be invested in and worked towards/for. The spaces that one moves through, the intimacies that are forged or let go of, negotiate the home and the person that is made, as well as the place they are in and that which they desire.



To articulate ‘where’ I have arrived (that is, to conclude), I begin by invoking the last two of my borrowings:

Alison James’s home as “spatial context where identities are worked on,” and Gorman-Murray’s body, “a locus of emotions and intimate relationality, simultaneously located and mobile.”

The queer body in movement does not singularly inhabit the linearity of a ‘conflictual’ childhood home and an ‘accepting’ other-outside-away home. I extend here the contention with queer migration as subject to the ‘reprocessing’ of homes, persons, relations, spaces, words, and their meanings. The liminal belonging of the queer finds its tentative place(s) amidst the demands and negotiations of social, cultural, economic, political and/or affective ‘agents’. It is imperative to allow for such a consideration of queer movement, taking into account the peculiar turbulence of a queer body, as well as making space for the particularity of that body’s existence in, attachments to, and movement through the world, its people and places. Queers, broken down across/in/outside their bodies and boxes and things and beloveds.





FUNNY FACE: AN EXPLORATION OF THE DIFFERENT SHADES OF INDIVIDUALITY



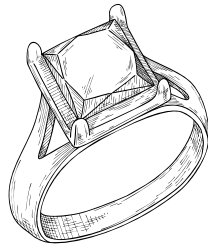
PRAKRITI BASU

With Audrey Hepburn as the titular ‘face’ of the movie, *Funny Face* (1957) builds up on philosopher Roland Barthes’ remark, “the face of (Greta) Garbo is an idea, that of Audrey Hepburn, an event.” His reference to her face as an ‘event’ magnifies the emotions portrayed by Hepburn while acting. Her emotions could never be predicted by an audience and hence, an entire movie revolving around her ‘uniquely funny face’ elucidates Barthes’ famous remark.

A musical directed by Stanley Donen, *Funny Face* revolves around a seemingly vapid yet intellectual bookkeeper, Jo Stockton played by Audrey Hepburn and how she becomes the face of the renowned fashion magazine, *Quality*. Her new role requires her to visit Paris, where she wishes to meet her favourite professor of philosophy, but her hopes are shattered when she learns the truth about him. Photographer, Dick Avery, played by Fred Astaire falls in love with her and their romance comes at the confluence of their two distinct universes. The character and vision of Dick Avery, who wanted to look for a girl ‘that can think as well as they look’ is largely based on *Vogue* photographer Richard Avedon, who was also involved in the production process.



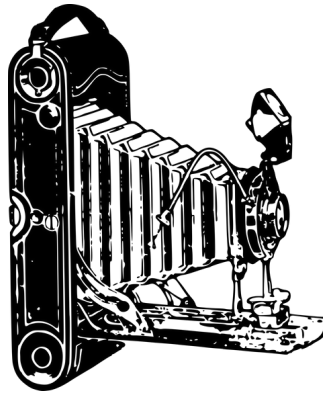
DEFINING MOMENTS



1. The explosion of Pink in the song Think Pink!

Right at the outset of the movie, one is introduced to Kay Thompson's character, Maggie Prescott – the feisty editor of the *Quality* magazine. Her introduction is ushered in through the song, *Think Pink!* The song features the explosion of pink and hyper-femininity in fashion that had taken over in the '50s. White and black are constantly contrasted against pink in each montage of the song and a woman swinging on a flowing sheet of chiffon shows how pink was equated with frivolity. Shoes, bags, jewellery and even balloons in different shades of pink are featured to give the audience an immersive sense of the colour of the season which Maggie Prescott is trying her best to sell. Every now and then, a word or two is uttered by her in French, to show her obsession with Paris and the power it wields over the fashion industry.

Takeaway: In the 1950s, most men had come back from war and taken over the professional spheres that had been taken over by women during the war. Women were again forced to retreat to the domestic sphere, and the song *Think Pink!* thus satirises society's emphasis on gender roles.



2. The model posing as a ‘thinking woman.’

Avery is shown in one of the scenes, photographing a feature on the intellectual woman, clad in a solid black gown with a well-structured silhouette and a futuristic humanoid figurine behind her. On being asked by him to think profoundly, she talks merely about ‘collecting Harold’s laundry.’ The movie thus shows her intellect is superficial – an irony because she is the face of a feature on the ‘thinking woman.’

Audrey Hepburn’s iconic black ensemble, which included a black turtleneck, cigarette pants and Chanel ballerinas has gone down in history as a classic statement of style. Actress Angelina Jolie featured on the cover of *Vogue* in 2021 recreating this very look of Audrey.

Takeaway: The great fashion icon Maggie Prescott herself however, does not wear pink. Neither does Jo Stockton. They are both seen in shades of brown and greys, setting themselves apart from the potential readers of the magazine – women who seem to be blindly following the latest trends in fashion. Darker colours like black and brown are established throughout the course of the movie as the colours of the intellectual woman. Later in the movie however, Stockton transcends the barriers of colours and is seen donning a bold red outfit during a photoshoot, while retaining her intellectual prowess at the same time.

3. The three characters expressing their desires in Bonjour Paris

Being a musical, the wittiness in the narrative of *Funny Face* is often brought about lyrically. In the song *Bonjour Paris*, viewers are taken on a journey to the picturesque cityscape of France's capital. Paris is projected as an idyllic sphere where art, culture and fashion come together. The perspective of the singers, represents each of these elements. Kay Thompson's verse talks about high fashion, Fred Astaire's talks about art and Audrey Hepburn's talks about philosophers and how Paris was a home to them. All the three characters however, end up meeting one another at the Eiffel Tower.

Takeaway: Each of their verses represents the American expatriate's dream. While the American Dream is for the middle class American, the 'Parisian Dream' as reflected through *Bonjour Paris*, is for the upper-class American expatriate.



4. Audrey Hepburn descends the Daru Staircase at The Louvre

Based on the superficialities of the media, especially associated with fashion, is dealt with thoroughly in the film. In one of the climactic scenes, a photoshoot features in the movie, where Fred Astaire as the photographer, becomes the beholder and capturer of art, while Audrey Hepburn is almost equated with a work of art herself. She poses with a dove on her arm to project a demure and tender state of femininity in one of the pictures. Her descent down the Daru staircase in a red gown however, is still remembered by filmmakers and fashion experts all over the world. She is seen standing right in front of the sculpture of Nike of Samothrace, with her arms stretched out, in an attempt to fly.

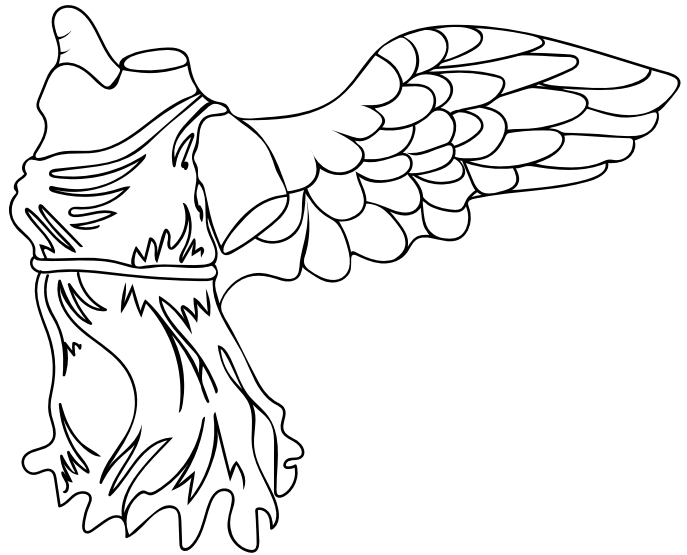


Takeaway: The sculpture shows the headless goddess almost finishing her flight. Her legs are not in the posture of walking, but trying to touch the ground right after descending. Audrey, in this scene, descends down the stairs, with her arms stretched, as if to emulate the headless goddess and paying homage to her. Here, she represents the fiery spirit of curiosity that she had within her for long. The photoshoot sequence also marks Dick Avery's realisation of feelings towards Jo

5. Audrey Hepburn's dance at a Parisian Beatnik Jazz Bar

The movie reflects through several instances how the photographer, Dick Avery's character takes on a rather orthodox and cynical attitude towards women. It is in this scene at the Beatnik bar that Stockton challenges Avery's

opinions. In a frenzied enthusiasm to join the crowd around her, she tells him, "Isn't it time you realised dancing is nothing more than a form of expression or release?"



Takeaway: Audrey Hepburn's dance to a jazz number called *Basal Metabolism* is fresh to the viewers of the 1950s. Her dance is a counter to the superficial and overtly formal ways of Maggie Prescott and Dick Avery. She proves to him that women are capable of containing multitudes and are not restricted to the pages of a magazine





RECONSTRUCTING THE 'TRIBAL': THE POLITICS OF GAZE AND THE ROLE OF LITERATURE



A I S H I S A H A

The literary and theoretical idea of 'gaze' was popularised by Laura Mulvey's iconic essay on the male gaze and its role in cinema. As such, the theory of the 'gaze' is fundamentally about the politics of power, about who constructs whom. It is akin to the politics of nomenclature, wherein one group of individuals has claim to the power to name and delimit another group or community, that is, to define another on their terms. The male gaze was the first such political gaze to be identified and dissected due to its pervasive presence across genres and geographies, the realisation that it has been a constant since time immemorial. Laura Mulvey delves into the field of cinema when dissecting the matter of the male gaze because, in filmography, it becomes most apparent. Part of camerawork is a lot like following the gaze of the director (in most cases, a man) as he conceives of the frames and images of the movie. In cinema, the male gaze is not just expressed through the camera used to shoot it but can also be gauged from the particular way in which a film is made either to please an audience primarily consisting of men or to construct an audience for whom male desire is normalised as the determinant lens. To be clear: the problem, of course, is not with male desire in isolation. It is what culturally entails the concept of male desire when it comes to women. In a cisgendered heterosexual setting, male desire usually manifests itself in the unnecessary sexualisation of women, treating and viewing them as sex objects, as inferior beings who are only of any use to a man for what they can do in bed and in the kitchen.

Departing from the specific topic of male gaze, this same power play of the 'gaze' can manifest itself in other scenarios between an oppressor and the oppressed. Every community whose political rights have been curtailed and stomped on is usually framed in a certain way to serve the interests of the oppressor. In the case of adivasis, the gaze (of the State, among others) constructs these communities as backward, primitive and underdeveloped. Under the British colonial era, many such tribes were criminalized in official government records due to the professions that they had generationally been forced to pursue. The gaze, however, is merciless and inconsiderate. It pigeonholes and catalogues according to its own frames, deeming their socio-political conditions, material and economic existences, and interpersonal relationalities, irrelevant. In TJ Gnanavel's 2021 film, 'Jai Bhim', the character of Rajakannu is murdered in police custody as a result of brutal, repeated beatings, premised upon the suspicion that he must have committed this burglary at the house of an upper-caste man. Rajakannu belongs to the Irula tribe, who have been forced to work as catchers of venomous rats and snakes from people's homes. On one such day of work, a piece of jewellery goes missing from the house where Rajakannu was called to catch a snake and, of course, the entire blame, without any solid proof, falls on Rajakannu because he belongs to a so-called lower-class tribe and, according to the affluent men in power, who else could possibly have the intentions or the want to steal riches but the poor? That is possibly the irony. Communities which are already at a socio-economic disadvantage are further ghettoized, made continuously exponentially vulnerable to conditions of poverty such that they are in fact pushed to commit crimes. It is important to note that even in the scenario that they were actually responsible for such a crime, it is not an individual fault but rather a structural and institutional shortcoming on the part of the state apparatus. In this case, however, Rajakannu actually does not bear the guilt of having committed the burglary. Regardless, all the blame falls on his shoulders and, in the end, even though justice is served in his name, he is not alive to see it. What kind of gaze is this, then? An accusatory gaze, a gaze that vilifies a community, assigning a linear 'meaning' to their existence, a reductive understanding of poverty and backwardness that builds off its own stereotypes about entire communities, using state power to then police and terrorise them in keeping with such a frame.

There is no attempt to actually try and view them as fellow humans, brothers and sisters. They can only ever exist to serve the narrative that suits the oppressors or to be a subject of pity to the liberals. When we talk about the political construction of the gaze, especially in relation to tribal communities, it is also extremely important that we talk about how this gaze exoticizes and sexualizes them. A lot of people (such as liberals who think they are superior to the oppressive state that kills and stigmatises tribal individuals) view them through the lens of exoticism, thinking that they are helping further the cause of the communities' liberation. It does nothing of that sort. Liberal politics and gaze plays into the oppressor's game of othering adivasis; by exoticizing them, the liberal gaze is essentially separating them from mainstream society, which is exactly what the state wants. Tribal women are blatantly sexualized, especially so on the basis of being tribal and a woman – so they are doubly marginalized (as G. C. Spivak points out in her essay 'Can the Subaltern Speak?').



Literature has always played, and will continue to play, what is possibly the most important role in subverting dominant narratives that perpetuate systems of violence and oppression. Every time a community's voice is silenced, their struggles erased and their rights violated, there is born an artist – in the form of a writer, perhaps a painter, an actor, a singer – who takes their cause and gives it expression. Adivasi literature contains stories, folklore, myths, legends, riddles of the indigenous traditions – their stories of hunting and merry-making, their loves and frustrations, their anger at being misrepresented on the world stage. In a world that is increasingly trying to push minorities even further into the margins, it becomes an act of defiance for literature to contain a narrative that is opposite to what is being preached. Literature thus provides one such avenue allowing for tribal individuals to create and/or share their own articulations of identity. There has often arisen an issue of authenticity of representation in this regard. If we weigh the work of a person belonging to an upper caste or class writing about tribal lives against that of an actual tribal person writing about their own experiences, which demands more intellectual attention and significance?

Ethically, it is obviously the latter. Unfortunately, however, this is often not the case. If one searches up Adivasi literature, the first few that show up will be works by people not from the community. It is not that such people cannot advocate for the suffering of tribal individuals but rather that, in some cases, there occurs appropriation when works by adivasis themselves are not given as much importance or hype as the former. Therefore, it is of utmost importance to talk about works written by tribal persons, about tribal lives. There are not many books in English by tribal authors about tribal lives since English education continues to be a privilege available only to a few. There is also an urgent need for the translation of vernacular Adivasi literature into English. There are fourteen million people in the Koitur tribe and not a single work in English that can be widely read and allow the experiences of the Koitur tribe to be known to all.

Jacinta Kerketta is an Oraon journalist who has a collection of poems called *Angor*, containing forty one poems in Hindi. The poems ‘Jamuni, tum ho kaun?’ (‘Jamuni, who are you?’) and ‘Humdardi’ (‘Compassion’) are reflections on the exploitation faced by Adivasi women. *Motyarin* by Usha Kiran Atram is another collection of poems, in Marathi, and she happens to be the first female writer and poet from her community. The title ‘motyarin’ is the Gondi term used to describe a woman leader who occupies a respected position in their tribal society wherein they supervise all activities of the Gotul, the most important centre of knowledge in the Koitur community. Atram also writes about the exploitation of women – the special double marginalisation that they face on account of being Adivasi and a woman. The discrimination and violence faced as a woman is not just from outsiders but from inside their own homes as well because after all, all men are products of patriarchy. This unique position of pain that women occupy within the genre of Adivasi literature deserves research and discourse of its own dissected from both angles of discrimination against tribes and women. Temsula Ao’s *These Hills Called Home* is a collection of short stories about Ao Naga lives before and after the declaration of Nagaland as a state of India in the 60s – their movement for self-determination, freedom and quest for identity which was, in mainstream media, portrayed as anti-national and seditious. Literature thus forms a major pillar in giving the tribals not only the voice they want but also is crucial in constructing their identity on their own terms.





THE LIFE OF A SITE: MAJNU KA TILLA



RUSHALI MUKHERJEE

Majnu ka Tilla, a Tibetan Colony situated in North Delhi, popular for its monastery, authentic food and local markets, was not a planned Tibetan settlement at the time of its conception in the 1960s and developed mainly through kinship and other affective networks. Owing to the fact that the area of Majnu ka Tilla was given to exiled Tibetans by the Indian government and they did not have the liberty to plan and build the monastery complex according to any religious prescription, through this note, I am going to look at how this site doubles as an expression of their religious and political identity in the way in which this site is built and interacted with.

The architecture and placement of the buildings in the monastery area play a significant role in marking the site as an important place. The entire monastery complex faces the courtyard, with four lanes feeding into the area from all sides. The two parts of the temple- the main temple (dukhang) and the other smaller temple lie adjacent to each other, while a white painted chorten and a large prayer wheel are placed opposite to the temples. In addition to these structures, the Residential Welfare Association's (RWA) office lies right next to the smaller temple, along with a few shops selling food and souvenirs that are placed in close proximity to one another. There are also temporary stalls selling food items such as laphing and religious items such as prayer beads, that do not set their shops in the middle of the courtyard of the monastery complex; it is always done on the periphery of the space.

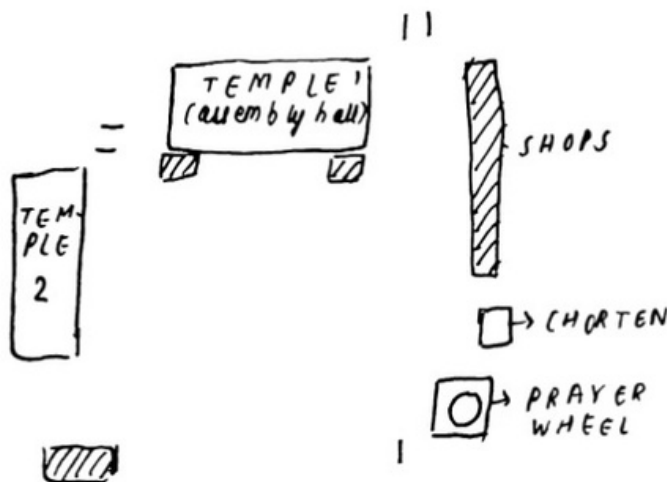
The visual vocabulary of this area that marks it as a Tibetan site is particularly stark and concentrated here, with the dominant use of red and gold, the profusion of prayer flags and the pleated fabric at the entrance of the temples as well as the shops, and most importantly, the use of religious motifs that are associated with Vajrayana Buddhism- lotuses, deer, vajras, conches, endless knots and victory banners among others.

The monastery complex also stands out as a sacred site for the exiled Tibetans in the way that they interact with the place- not only the interiors of temples that hold the deities but also the immediate area surrounding it. While the Buddhists, both residents and non-residents of Majnu ka Tilla who visit the temples, circumambulate the inside and the outside of the structures and turn the prayer wheels in a clockwise direction, light butter lamps and incense sticks, the residents of the community also work together to maintain the upkeep of the area, such as brooming and cleaning the temple and the courtyard every morning, carrying out repair when necessary and ensuring the general welfare of the site.

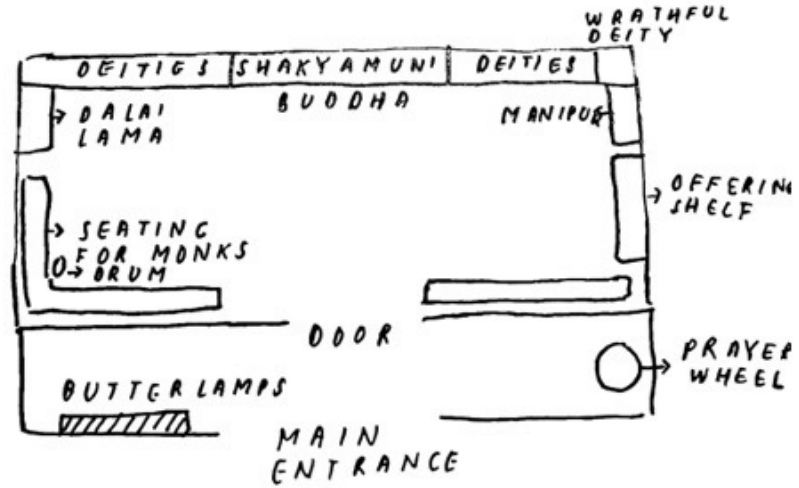
However, in the same manner that this courtyard is used as a religious site by the Tibetans, it is also used as a site of political resistance. Lakhar or White Wednesdays, which is considered an auspicious day for the Dalai Lama, is followed by the residents to celebrate their culture and establish their political ideas. While the residents perform their local songs and dance on this occasion, this space is also used to deliver political speeches and announcements as well as carry out discussions. Much like how the site is filled with religious motifs, the walls are also dotted with images of the Tibetan flag and posters with political notices and messages. Thus, the exiled Tibetans use the courtyard of the monastery complex to establish their identity and raise their voice against their unjust exodus from the land that they belong to.



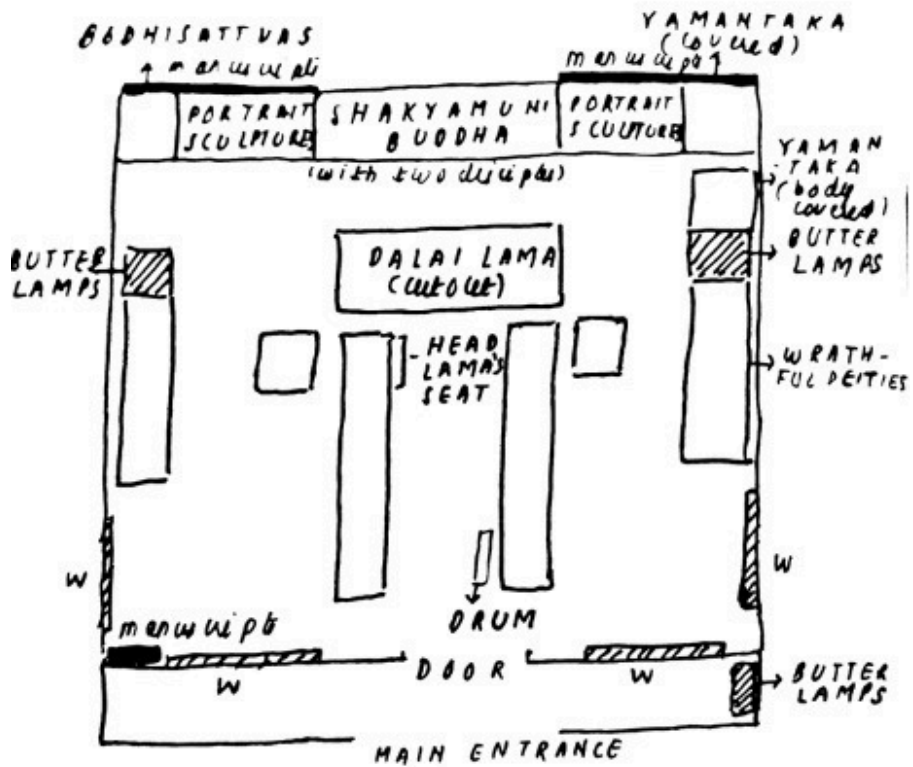
To conclude, while it is common for outsiders to dismiss Majnu ka Tilla as a place that symbolises the exotic other and see it as an area with “different” food and architecture, it is important to see how their identity is tied to the site through many complex networks of religion and politics. With the rise in the commercialisation and gentrification of the area due to the influx of visitors who mainly come to eat food at the various restaurants and cafes and shop at the local market, it is all the more important to see how this may negatively impact how the Tibetans relate to the place and how it takes away from their sense of belonging to the locality.



The layout of the monastery complex



The layout of the smaller temple



The layout of the dukhang



FROM THE RIVER TO THE SEA



AMNA MANNAN

A river meanders to embrace
the red sea

The red sea loves to be called red.

The colour red reminds the sea of the child blushing as his
paperboat sprang across the waves.

The red sea loved being called red, until a pool of pure scarlet
red of a mass burial made its way in a haze of looming smoke.
The sea is the colony of the blood.

The river recollects
that the tears
of the girl

holding the pieces of her brother
outflow and outrun the river itself.

The river hates big words like nationalism which mean
nothing,

big words which it can never spell right in a lifetime.

The words contort into imaginary lines called borders,
the river

flows through these lines unobstructed.

Segregation and partition.

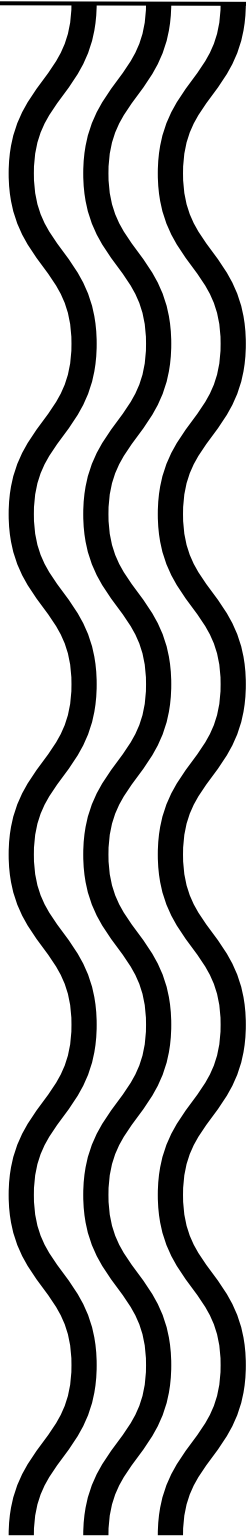
Partition like the apartheid walls which tower over the skies,
skies which dream of

waking up the world from its sleepy slumber,

of tearing the clouds apart

and replace it with

colours of



black, white, red and green.

From the river,
drank a drop of current that became a sea,
sea of allies across the world
which can flood and fracture the apartheid walls.

Apartheid walls.

Apartheid walls scream that they have been seen them before,
apartheid walls know their own history,
apartheid walls travelling all the way from the south of Africa to
settling across the river and the sea. From the river to the sea.
Apartheid walls know that the history is repeating itself, they
remember everything,
apartheid walls cry of deja vu.

The sea

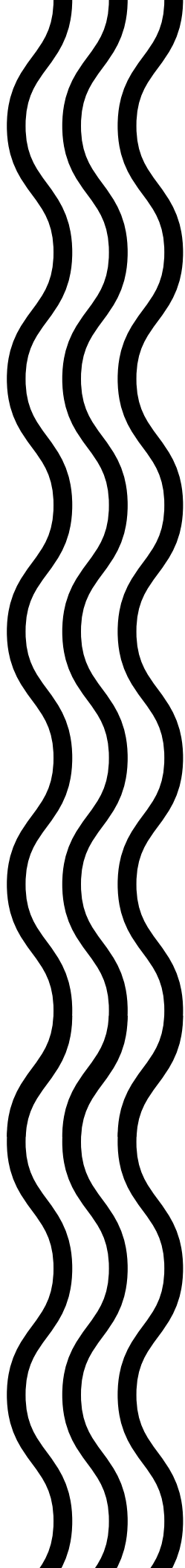
has a lapse of memory
recreating demolition of dreams
in another place, in another setting,
nightmares like being drowned at the bottom of an ocean, an
anchor holding you down,
with nowhere to swim
and claustrophobia clutching your throat telling you an omen of
impending doom
a concentration camp in another time, another place, another
setting.

A woman in the camp, just like any other woman,
wishes to be free
but forced to wash blood off her hands and clothes.

I was playing scrabble with my little nephew and he spells out f-e-
e-d-o-m
as freedom.

The missing R reminded me of how freedom is always incomplete
without the R for revolution.

Waves of revolution
come with tides of pain,
like the boiling heart of a father



whose children's limbs
he had to carry in a polythene bag,
like the dust on the clothes of the homeless man
with only rubble to call his own and the memory of a demolished
home.

In another moment of wonder, I asked my high school history
teacher, if everyone learns from history, why would its waves fall
back, bringing oppression once again?

they answered

just as clock strikes 9 everyday,
a cyclical motion of meaningless existence
flowers bud bloom and die,
the waves of the seas clash,
the river meets the lake,
the sun rises in haste and sets in sluggishly,
fighters come and go,
love eases pain
and empires fall.

History exists

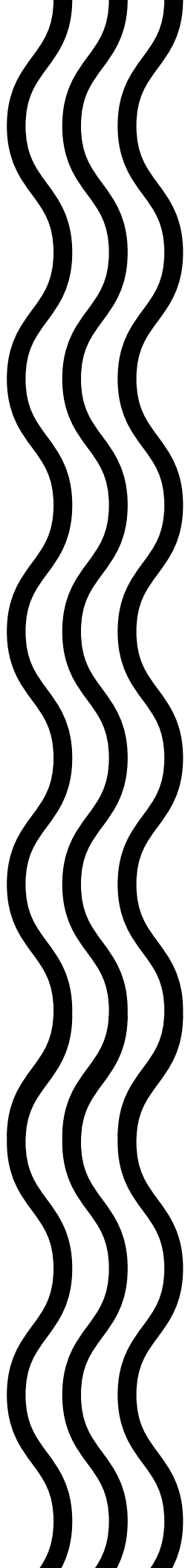
to guilt you into being on the right side of it, to
force the corpse of our conscience to resuscitate.

Remembrance is
a necromancer.

It revives the ones who died for freedom,
it revives the ones who were dead, dead in a long slumber of silence.

It revives the idea

that there is always a way to learn and unlearn,
unlearn hierarchies etched deep and deep in our heart,
etched deep like the blue colour indicating rivers and oceans on a
world map,
etched deep like molten lava in a volcano waiting to burst
etched deep like numbers of death toll on TV screens,
etched deep like forgotten stories of survivors that push through the
statistics,
etched deep like art which survives the ravages of time,
etched deep like your voice which resonated with someone to whom
you



berated your beliefs, and showed pictures of the seaside
landscape from your phone.
Seas of solidarity.

I try to recall my identity.

I define myself

what others seem to know me as, rains and tangibilities.

In the mirror, I tire myself believing my scars to be hideous
deformities.

Through the screen, strangers on social media call me a radical
anarchist, fanatical feminist.

In the streets, their gaze of pity settles on me as they see a
brainwashed woman covering her head, who they want to
liberate.

I try to recall my identity

Yet when I finally remember who I am, a surge of dignified
rage flows through me.

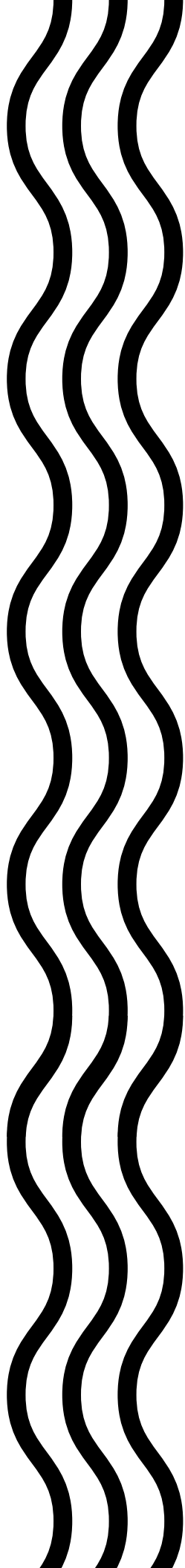
My liberation comes from resistance but those who are truly
enslaved by arrogance, hate and consumerism, I wish to
question them.

I wish to

create a narrative of my own

for as long as I live

until I remember what freedom is like.





FIVE DAYS AFTER THE JANAZAH, BURIAL



IFRAH FATIMA

The voices have left.
The touch is forgotten.
I sit with my legs folded.
The aluminium sauce pan stares at me,
hardened milk skins hang on its rim.

I look for a strainer
and then I don't.

I fill my cup.
I empty my grief.

The pan sits gaping.
I take a look.
A teaspoon of milk is crouched at its centre.
Shivering, surrounded by a silver nothingness.

I don't want to interfere,
and then I do.

I add some water to the pan.
Give it a swirl.
The translucent solution dances with pride.

I pour it into my cup.
Nothing remains.
I give the pan a last solemn look
before I place it in the sink.

Nothing lives in it anymore.
I've emptied my grief.

Our Staff.

Editor in Chief: Anuraag Das Sarma

Senior Editors: Ayush Chakraborty &
Amrisha Banerjee

Creative Director: Rushali Mukherjee

Editorial Head: Sukriti Chawla

Art Director: Aindrila Ray

Media Head: Aryaman Manna

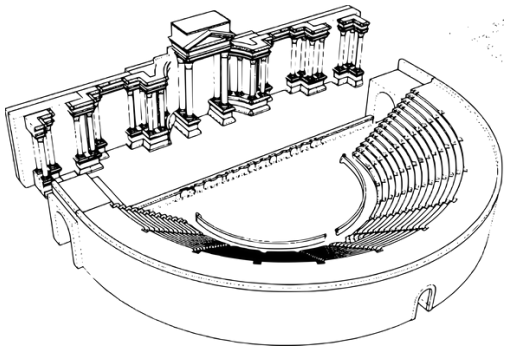
Social Media Head: Adrija Dutta

Literary Critic: Aishi Saha

Copy Editor: Ritobrita Mukherjee, Amna
Mannan

Intern: Ameerah Rahman

MONOGRAPH



Cover By: Rushali Mukherjee