



DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

# Newsletter

Number 1 / November 2022



## WHAT IS POPULAR LITERATURE?

Popular literature is the work of literature which is intended for the entertainment of the masses or we can say that the main purpose of popular literature is commercial approach. The popular literature is a fiction which is also a genre. Popular literature includes simple and everyday language, it does not seek a high degree of formal beauty or artistic language. The most important genre in popular literature is and always has been the romance, extending as it does from the Middle Ages to the present.

Some of the major works of popular literature are: Harry Potter, Sherlock Holmes, Chetan Bhagat's Five Point Someone, Socialite Evenings etc. Often people tend to associate popular literature with inferior literary value, however, that might not always be the case.





# POPULAR CULTURE AND POSTMODERNISM

**Priya Roy**

The activities, ideas, and items that are prominent or common in a society at a certain moment are known as “Popular Culture” by members of that community. Mass appeal, which is produced by what cultural analyst Theodor Adorno refers to as the “culture industry,” is the main factor that propels popular culture. Diving into the vast arena of literature, the works that appeals to the masses and is written with wider populace in mind is referred to as “Popular Literature”.



While taking “Postmodernism” as an undertone to “Popular Culture”, it is largely a reaction against the intellectual assumptions and values of the modern period. In general, the term “postmodernism” refers to a socio-cultural philosophy, a change in perspective and a range of fields, such as the social sciences, art, architecture, literature, fashion, communications, and technology. Even further, postmodernism willfully combines one genre with another, the past with the present, and mixes high art with low art; which is a major feature of Popular Culture as the contrasting elite, highbrow and lowbrow segments are faded. Television, music videos, movies, pop music, and advertising are just a few examples of the various cultural forms and cultural practices that could be brought up in a discussion about postmodernism and popular culture. “Popular culture is the culture that is left behind, after we have established what is high culture,” claims John Storey. Following the Second World War, expanding societal changes, changing media, and advancing technology connected it to media culture, image culture, consumer culture, music culture, and other cultures.





# WITCHES IN POPULAR CINEMA: TRANSGRESSIVE FEMININITY ON SCREEN

**Dibyadarshan Das**

“It would be hard to find a woman who is neither a bitch nor a ninny - if so, she will be a witch and fey”

**-Celine, Letter to Milton Hindus.**



When you think of a witch, you probably picture an image of an old and stereotypically ugly woman cackling on a broomstick or hovering above a cauldron. But if you examine all the many witches that have been a part of cinematic history since its inception, there's actually a huge variety to the archetype. From the three witches of Macbeth to the witch Bathsheba of The Conjuring, West has a very rich and fascinating history of witch hunts and supremacy. Shakespeare in one of his most popular tragedies Macbeth presented the three witches as figures not only of power but also of trickery, deception, and challenge. They are the “withered” and “wild” mysterious figures who destabilize the social, cultural, and political universe of the patriarchy and lead men to ruin and destruction. The movie that we will look at to understand the politics of the representation of witches on the screen is The Conjuring. The Conjuring is a 2013 American supernatural horror film directed by James Wan and written by Chad Hayes and Carey W. Hayes. This is one of the most popular movies in Hollywood centering on the alleged real-life exploits of Ed and Lorraine Warren, a married couple who investigated paranormal events.

The Conjuring which is set in 1971 revolves around a purportedly real-life witch Bathsheba Sherman. This movie is much feminist in its approach and presents both the witch and the female paranormal investigator Lorraine as equally powerful figures. The witch Bathsheba that constitutes the main antagonist is indeed a descendant of a Salem witch. In the movie, Bathsheba the witch who possesses mothers to kill children is a terrifying figure who has terrorized generations and is much daunted the Church as well. The Church actually plays an idle role in the movie. Even Ed's exorcism fails to suppress Bathsheba, the witch. This successfully shows why patriarchy stigmatizes witches, it's simply because they cannot control these powerful men and are scared of their power. Therefore, we may conclude that the idea of the witch is more of a social construct than anything real. It just reflects the fear of patriarchy from the powerful women.



# WOMEN HEROES IN POPULAR CULTURE

**Nandita Barkalita**



When one reads literature, it brings up a stirring question: that of gender-bias. Is it so hard to see a woman as a person first: championing a cause, delivering a world from evil and injustice, overcoming a great obstacle to become enlightened? I think of my favorite stories in literature, peopled by men and women; all heroes: Tess of the d'Urbervilles, Fahrenheit 451, King Lear, Solaris, The Grapes of Wrath, 1984, Doctor Zhivago, Brave New World, Martian Chronicles, and To Kill a Mockingbird – to name just a few. The gender of the hero I empathized with was irrelevant. What remained important was their sensibilities and their actions. The male hero stereotype in literature and films of western culture—and science fiction particularly—is often characterized by strength, courage, integrity & honor, intelligence, assertiveness, single-mindedness, faith in his quest, and boundless determination: he is the altruist warrior, often acting alone against an unfair society through his conscience. All traits honored, respected and esteemed in men. In a woman, these Boadicean qualities often qualify her as unwomanly, unlady-like, intimidating, and with lesbian tendencies. Women are often delegated to the role of enabling the “real hero” on his journey through their belief in him: as Trinity enables Neo; Hermione enables Harry; Mary Jane enables Spiderman; Lois enables Superman etc.

However women heroes have been able to define the decade in Pop Culture. The movie listed below is an example of a female character who is strong in more than just a spiritual or physical sense. The Hunger Games by Suzanne Collins (Scholastic Press). 2008. A series of books about teens forced to fight to the death on television.





# HAUNTED SHIPS AND THEIR CURSES IN POPULAR LITERATURE

## **Kaif Karim**

A phantom ship, also known as a ghost ship, is a vessel with no living crew aboard. It may be a fictional ghostly ship, such as the Flying Dutchman, or a physical ship found adrift with its crew missing or dead, like the Mary Celeste. The term is sometimes used for ships that have been found after breaking loose of their ropes and becoming carried away by the wind or the waves. The Flying Dutchman or De Vliegende Hollander is a legendary ghost ship, allegedly never able to make port, but doomed to sail the seven seas forever. Reported sightings in the 19th and 20th centuries claimed that the ship glowed with a ghostly light.



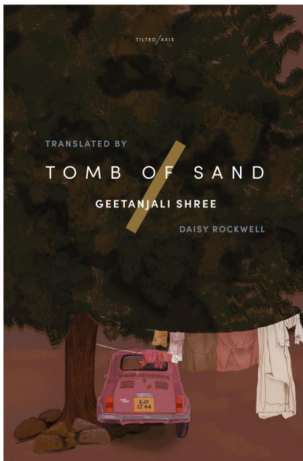
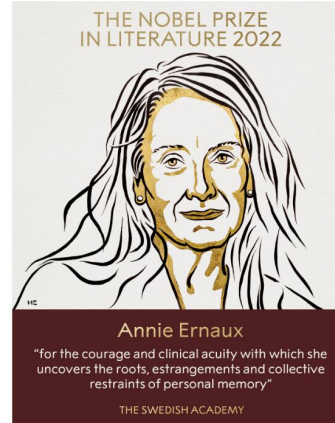
A well-known sighting was by Prince George of Wales, the future King George V. The 1797-98 poem by Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*, contains a similar account of a ghost ship, which may have been influenced by the tale of the Flying Dutchman. *Mary Celeste* was an American merchant brigantine discovered adrift and deserted in the Atlantic Ocean on December 4, 1872. She had left New York City for Genoa on November 7 and was still amply provisioned when found. None of those who had been on board were ever seen or heard from again. A new captain, Gilman C. Parker took charge in August 1884. Nevertheless, his professional reputation was ruined, and he died in poverty three months later. One of his co-defendants went mad, and another killed himself.

There are quite a few movies with such paranormal and ghost at sea themes. *Ghost Ship*, directed by Steve Beck is a 2002-cult classic starts out quite ordinarily before gripping the audience in a spine chilling plot. A township plagued by spectres of dead seafarers and sailors, *The Fog* was regarded to be a cult classic when released in 1980. *Bhoot-The Haunted Ship* is one such Indian horror movie. When an abandoned haunted ship called *Sea Bird* washes up on the shores of Mumbai, surveying officer Prithvi is assigned to solve the mystery and close the case.

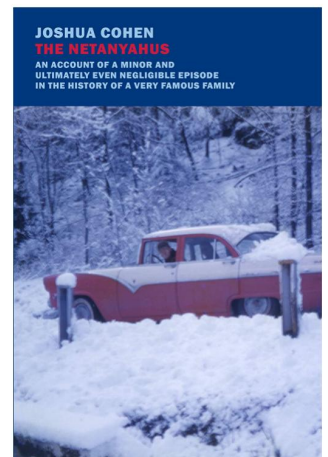


## BOOK AWARDS IN 2022

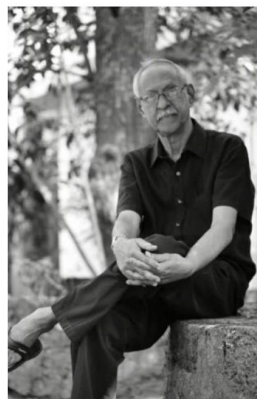
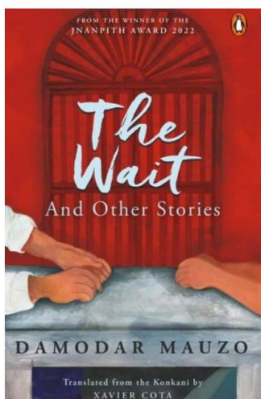
The 2022 Nobel Prize in Literature is awarded to the French author Annie Ernaux “for the courage and clinical acuity with which she uncovers the roots, estrangements and collective restraints of personal memory.”



Joshua Cohen’s novel *The Netanyahu* won the Pulitzer fiction prize, and Andrea Elliott’s *Invisible Child*, won the general nonfiction award.



*Tomb of Sand*, written by Geetanjali Shree and translated by Daisy Rockwell, has won the 2022 International Booker Prize for Translated Fiction.



Eminent Konkani writer Damodar Mauzo has been conferred with the 57th Jnanpith Award for the year 2022. The Jnanpith Award is the highest Indian literary award, awarded to an author for their "outstanding contribution towards literature".

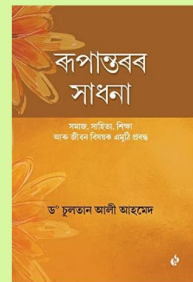




## RECENT ACHIEVEMENTS OF THE DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

### Faculty Achievements

- Dr. Subhas Ch. Das who was working as an Assistant Professor at BH College has now become the Academic Registrar of Bhattadev University.
- Dr. Sultan Ali Ahmed has published his book 'Rupantarar Sadhana', which is a collection of articles on various aspects.
- Hunjuli Katharpi has recently completed her M.Phil.
- Bidisha Dowarah has recently cleared her M.Phil Viva.
- Priya Roy has bagged gold medal at Harayana University.



### Student Achievements

Shahjahan Ali : He cleared NET-JRF in 2022 in English. He did his B A in English from B H College in 2017 and did his Masters in English from Cotton University in 2019.

Ashiqah Ahmed : She cleared NET in 2022 in English. She did her B A in English from B H College in 2017 and did her Masters in English from Tezpur University in 2019. She had also cleared SLET in 2019.

Nishad Ali : Won Gold Medal in 9th Commonwealth Karate Champion held in Durban, South Africa, 2018. Won two Bronze Medal in 10th commonwealth Karate Championship held in Brimingham, United Kingdom. Feliciated in the Abhiruchi Sports Day in the year 2017, 2018 and 2022.



Dibyadarshan Das : He has authored two books 'Covering Cricket' and 'Love Tussle', along with several journalist stints on sports.



Karabi Basumatary : She is a 5th semester student of English Department and has managed to bag the first prize in Wall Painting Competition. The theme was 'Anti-Ragging'.

Shri Hemen Das, IAS, who is now the Principal Secretary of Assam Legislative Assembly, was once both a student and later part of the faculty of BH College English Department. He was invited for an interactive session with the students and his speech left a last impression on the young minds aspiring to pursue civil services.



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