



# WHIPLASH

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Learn something about cinema, but first learn  
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# P R O S E

## Defining Gentrification and Art

Arnav Sheth

The textbook definition of gentrification proposes movement into a formerly deteriorating neighborhood community by the affluent and the middle class (Davis, 2013). However, this definition remains agnostic toward the corollary of the previous statement, the massive social cost that falls upon the displaced poorer residents (Saunders, 2016).

A cruder, causal definition is one that reads:

*Gentrification: "The process by which high income households displace lower income residents of a neighborhood, changing the essential character of the neighborhood Hillyer(2012)."*

The latter half of this definition touches upon the controversy-generating feature of gentrification; it is the transformation in essential character of neighborhoods that causes much discontent.

While the above definitions may appear to be comprehensive, their authors disagree vehemently on the causes and effects of this process, leading to a great amount of in-determinability and ambivalence. Gentrification is "still a vague, imprecise and loaded term" (Florida, 2014) in the general context; however it can be better defined for the specific context of this paper.

For the purposes of this paper, art will refer to music, street art, fine art, sculptures and installations. Artists will refer to the creators of the aforementioned art.

Gentrification, for this paper, is the process of higher-income residents being drawn to ethnically homogenous neighborhoods due to the artistic affinity of these neighborhoods, which results in the displacement of not just the dominant ethnic group but also the artists themselves.

It would be foolish to dismiss any other causes of gentrification such as the natural proclivity to better neighbourhoods and a higher standard of living, and the author seeks not to do the same – this paper simply aims at affirming art as one of the major reasons that gentrification takes place.

### **Explaining the Process**

To substantiate the claims of art causing gentrification, the process will first be delineated, after which several cases will be analyzed.

Perpetually resigned to the lower-end of the income spectrum and in constant need for larger, more accommodating spaces for their installations, music and Bohemian lifestyle, artists looked toward neighborhoods that offered such spaces. These tended to be, in America especially; neighborhoods occupied by non-White migrant populations, which then gave way to gentrification. Artists themselves would be unable to gentrify these neighborhoods, however due to the recent 'hip' quotient of the neighborhood; wealthier tenants are drawn to these spaces. It is this inflow that raises rent prices and drives out the original inhabitants, creating gleaming buildings, well-paved roads and upscale restaurants. It is the allure of living amongst art, creating the façade of culturedness and non-conformity that attracts these individuals to artsy locales, oblivious to the vast social repercussions of their whims.

### ***New Economy Inevitability, Opportunity Cost or Yuppification: Comparing Barcelona, Brooklyn, and Paris***

Bushwick, a neighborhood in Brooklyn, New York, is a textbook case of artist-induced gentrification. It also brings out the spatial, adjacency and almost-Ricardian elements of gentrification. As the movement of artists into SoHo is well-known and well-documented, around the same time, Bushwick was lowest on the pecking order of neighborhoods in either of the two Burroughs. It was a destitute neighborhood with its residents living in constant fear of being jumped or having their house burnt. The overwhelmingly colored nature of the neighborhood still persists; however, it is under serious threat.

With an attraction to the Bohemian lifestyle in the late 1980s and early 1990s coupled with the dotcom boom that took place, the process of yuppification began. These 'young upwardly mobile professionals' were attracted to the massive art galleries and structures of SoHo, that formed the core of the artists work, as well as to the alternative ways of living of these artists – the yoga, electronic music and odd food. The free market then adjusted itself to higher rents, inevitably displacing the artists.

The artists followed a rather straightforward trajectory, moving to the East Village where the same process took place, then across the Hudson to Williamsburg in the early 2000s and now finally to Bushwick. These movements have been from adjacent neighborhoods to adjacent neighborhoods in a linear fashion.

For a neighborhood known for crack addiction, the sourdough pizzas and raves are a discernible shift. As the artists were displaced from Williamsburg to Bushwick, what came with them was the allure of alternative lifestyle and the increasing commoditization, romanticisation and fetishisation of this way of life. Street art that is meant to display social solidarity and remain a cathartic expression is now a capitalist tool used to create an atmosphere of hipsterness. This draws the overwhelmingly white, young and well-educated population to this 'cool' locale, which drive out the Hispanic and Black inhabitants, who tend to be far less well-off. The latest manifestation of this merciless form of the free market is "Ghetto Tours", resembling of the "Slum Tourism" of Bombay, or Favela tours in Rio. This brings fancily clad, DSLR-wielding and 'woke' (millennial term of political awareness) tourists to Bushwick on a tour meant to showcase the street-art of Bushwick. The tourists are hapless in their aiding of gentrification, and appreciate the original street art as well as the corporate funded advertisements masquerading as street art (Glazma, 2017).

The yuppies are more than happy to pay higher rents as they are populating a visually aesthetic part of town that has been created by real-estate agents in order to attract the yuppies themselves, while the actual flavor of the area has been lost. An induced sense of adventure, uniqueness and culturedness – all essential components of the lifestyle of the New Economy – has been manufactured by real-estate developers, much to the dismay of artists and previous inhabitants.

Similar developments have taken place in Paris – neighborhoods become trendy and popular – with street art being a sign of vibrant avant-garde culture (Hauger, 2013).

Paris' tipping point was when the Piscine Molitor was closed down in 2011.

The heart of Catalonia, Barcelona, has a thriving street art scene. The city is also considered the 'Mecca of Skateboarding' (Parmenter, 2016), an activity typically associated with street art and graffiti. A seaside neighborhood dubbed the Catalan Manchester due to its industrial character, Poblenou, is the site of obtrusive and marked gentrification.

When Barcelona was selected as the host of the 1992 Summer Olympics, a massive upheaval of transport, communication and general infrastructure began to take place. This was the result of combined public and private investment which led to rising rent across Barcelona, however, this rise was not uniform. Poblenou's rent, too, increased; however it was not as marked as in other, more central neighborhoods such as Born and Raval. This resulted in artists abandoning their traditional locations in the heart of the city for Poblenou's large spaces and low rents. For nearly two decades, the street art scene exploded with world-renowned institutions such as the Hangar Collective at the fore, who had assembled themselves in abandoned factories (Casellas, Dot-Jugla, Pallares-Barbera, 2012).

Toward the turn of the millennium, Barcelona's drive to establish itself as part of the New Economy led to great investment in training the service economy, specifically the ICT industry. In order to facilitate this transition, land and capital were required, and thus began the gentrification of Poblenou. This is obtrusively epitomized by the '22@Barcelona' programme, which seeks to "transform 200 hectares of industrial land in Poblenou into an innovative district offering modern spaces for the strategic concentration of intensive knowledge based activities" (taken from the 22@Barcelona website). This has led to these artist workshops, squats and quarters being taken over by real estate developers who have transformed these factories into offices that possess the industrial character that has become increasingly popular among yuppies, in New York City's Meat Packing District and even in Bombay's Lower Parel area. The artists, for no fault of their own, are forced to protest these developments. They have fallen prey to the realization of the massive rent-gap and the demands of the cut-throat New Economy.

The case of Barcelona has been taken up to establish that artists can be affected by gentrification without being complicit in the same. This is not the case for Paris or Brooklyn, where the inflow is primarily a result of art.

## **Adjacency: Modeling Gentrification through Ricardo**

The most well-known of all rent theories in economics is the one proposed by David Ricardo, a British political economist.

The theory states that rent emerges from putting a piece of land into its most productive use, when compared to a piece of land that has minimal productivity (marginal land – land that is rent free). His model proposes a relation between productivity (output) and differential qualities of land. Rent for the first plot of land emerges as the difference between the productivity of that plot of land and the succeeding, less productive plot of land<sup>1</sup>.

A crude extrapolation of this theory can be made to understand how gentrification spreads. This hypothesis will establish a relation between differentiated land and cultural capital, versus economic capital as suggested by Ricardo. In the aforementioned illustration, land is differentiated on the basis of fertility that implies productivity and thus drives up rent. In this case, cultural capital will be the basis of productivity.

Assume the following scenario:

City Wolfallice is a thriving metropolis with inner city A, ghetto B, financial district C and upscale resident area D. Second generation residents of D tend to be well-educated. The artist population previously living in D look for alternate residences due to space and cost constraints, and decide to move to Area A. Area A has a low institutionalized cultural capital and a low objectified cultural capital. With the inflow of artists who represent cultural capital but do not represent the corresponding economic capital, the market reorients itself to the change in composition of Area A. The increased cultural capital does not necessarily imply the existence of economic rent, as the question of displacement has not yet come up. It is when employees of Area C move into the culturally attractive Area A and bring with them economic capital that displacement becomes a possibility. The original residents of Area A have two options – to continue living in Area A at higher rents or move to Area B. The difference in colloquial rent will be a function of the cultural capital of Area B. Regardless of the choice that the residents of A make; there will be a situation where economic rent exists, which literally drives up the colloquial rent.



iAdjacency is a feature of this movement as the spillover is typically into adjacent neighborhoods. This has been analyzed above, especially in the case of Brooklyn. Gentrification is an allocatively efficient process. Allocative efficiency refers to the optimal distribution of goods and services, taking into account the preferences of consumers. This is usually the point on the free market where demand and supply are at equilibrium. A proxy that was typified by Marshall for price is Marginal Utility. Allocative efficiency is that point at which the marginal utility gained by a consumer is equal to the supply of that particular good.

When the neighborhood was being populated by artists, they represented a purchasing power akin to the original inhabitants; therefore there was no change in demand. However, once affluence began to seep in, there was an upward shift in the demand curve. Consumers were prepared to pay higher prices for a good that had a constant supply. This leads to an increase in price, in this case rent.

### **Transformative Land Use: the Effect of the Starbucks**

A universally accepted marker of gentrification has been a Starbucks Coffee Shop. Homes in the USA within a quarter mile of a Starbucks saw their value shoot up by 96% from 1997 to 2013, versus 65% for all other homes (Rascoff and Humphries, 2015). While this may be a boon for homeowners, it is bound to apply upward pressure on rents – standard protocol for gentrification. However, this section of the paper seeks to analyze the long term effects of these investment injections, regardless of the underlying motives of these investments. There is an inflow of new businesses that are bound to cater to the niche wants of the new residents. These can be broadly divided into two categories based on the genre of employees they will require. Both are service based businesses, very much a feature of the New Economy. The first kind of business is one that hires relatively unskilled employees, something like a Starbucks or a restaurant or a book shop. The second kind is one that hires technically sound and proficient employees, something like a travel agency or a designing firm would require. The former genre of firms is likely to generate local employment for a multitude of reasons – the tendency of gentrifying neighborhoods to be relatively poorly educated, therefore the availability of semi-skilled labor in abundance. The nascence of these businesses is a visible process, as is the hiring process. Word regarding the same is likely to permeate the community, thus leading to employment generation.

Some gentrifying cities, such as San Francisco, have compulsory local hiring policies, ensuring that new businesses hire a certain quota of local employees. In the short term, this employment may appear as a boon to the area, however as time goes on and the cost of living begins to increase, it becomes difficult to sustain oneself on the slightly-above minimum wage that chains pay.

The second kind of skilled business is unlikely to have major benefits to the local economy, as the probability of an original resident being employed is low, as is the probability of an original resident availing of the services being offered. If anything, these niche businesses will attract their employees to the neighborhood, speeding up gentrification.

Another discernible financial effect of transforming neighborhoods is an increased credit score for businesses in the area. This is, on the surface, a general benefit to the region. It provides all businesses with the opportunity to access credit more easily, often at a cheaper rate. Local mom and pop stores have the same access to investment as franchisees and other chain firms. What should be a harbinger of competition is in fact something that perpetuates inequality – locally owned firms have little use of additional investment. Their models are rarely based on expansion and they look to do nothing more than serve the neighborhood they live in. It is also likely that these firms lack the technical knowhow to scale. Chains and franchisees, on the other hand, can use this increased access to further expand operations within the neighborhood or across the general region- leading to the upward pressure on the economy.

## **Concluding Remarks**

In every gentrifying area, there exists a narrow window of time during which changes stop being organic spillovers and begin to be methodical, profit-driven and deliberate. Movement, intra-urban migration and redevelopment are bound to take place, and must not be dubbed as gentrification. When these processes begin to pander only to the affluent and ignore the incumbent inhabitants of the area is when the situation becomes problematic. Artists require space and freedom to uninhibitedly engage in creative processes. As long as this art remains untouched by corporations and their malicious sales ventures, it will continue to remain productive to the neighborhood by adding unique tinge of flavor and identity. As the profit motive enters, productivity of this art increases manifold, however this is at the detriment of the artists and former

# POETRY

## Arihant Verma

*Arihant Verma is a Software Developer by profession, but has quit his job to find out why is he doing what he's doing. He wrote his first poem to impress his 9th grade English Literature teacher, whom he was smitten with. He started writing poetry sincerely after Sridala Swami politely roasted him in a follow up post of a public poetry prompt she'd give, which he had insincerely written on. He started writing short stories after reading Stephen King's On Writing. He longs to learn Sanskrit and subsequently other languages, so that he could avoid the loss in translation. He enjoys making animations and visual art using programming when he's unemployed.*

## Unexpected Attendance

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Not talking to a point  
where, going to the loo  
excusing the grass being stood on  
and the space that changes shapes  
by the slants of the moving coke  
as you tilt your glass up and down  
anxious that you are drinking  
either too slowly or too quickly  
wary, of the eyes on you,  
making your breath paralytic  
like in sleep, where a bubble  
suppurating, would burst, unattended,  
and that night in the dreams,  
because fantasies have lost their power  
to amuse you anymore, any longer

you are haunted by a beautiful peel  
of a fruit, because that is all you've got,  
as the truck which had that particular  
ripe, green, juicy piece in it  
decided to be the slush  
inside someone else's mouth.



## Limbo before a Kiss

A spider is crawling between the rows  
of stacks of books queuing up to not fall,  
spider the size of an open palm, footloose  
on the makeshift tables for cupboards  
you can't afford to purchase.

It counts on its awareness of your lack,  
to make its living, like the limbo  
that settles before a kiss  
pisses you off by its existence  
yet you can never be sure.

But like silence that fills the nights  
day after day and night after night  
you can not be not sure either –  
is it still lingering around,  
or has it gone out of the room?

The limbo lies on the bed,  
aware and unaware  
of a bed beside it  
waiting to be nursed

by the sight of the spider  
the size of an open palm  
or a face laid back on the bed,  
or as small as the moment  
you saw yourself in the mirror,  
fascinating, terrifying and beautiful;

or by the constant haunt  
of the anticipation  
that it'll walk your forehead  
in the middle of the night.

## Rungs of Ladder

Reaching thumb on the mines of memories  
wavering closely over the screen to decide  
if a photograph should be mined  
and given to the world through erasure,  
(electrons ejecting EM waves on state changes)  
The cost of doing it guesstimated  
over a lingering moment,  
before locking the caves and feeling helpless.

Limbering eyes across the crossroads  
of wire meshed windows  
focussed on a small weed swaying freely,  
frightened and prepared for the inevitable adjustment,  
finding a quiet moment  
before the click of the shift —  
from outside to inside, staring the wires,  
rehabilitating to the gridlocks of corroded iron  
dreams left and sequestered outside,  
listening to the inability to architect dreams.  
A vertigo droning like the dial tone  
at the start or the end of a landline call,  
disconcertingly acute, wuthering weight  
of the freedom outside lulling mind  
to excavate  
a dream from the inside,  
or altogether —  
close the eyelids in a fit of a moment,  
floating in the carrot ocean of phosphenes  
and run out blinded, blindsiding the wires  
to touch the weed, kiss it and sway with it.  
Wisdom found in unboundedness,  
rather than chasing dreams of freedom.

Giving up on a snag, of lost breath,  
ducking a boulder thrown at your chest  
intended to make the next breath

a full court shot  
with a long wheezing gasp,  
pulsating through  
dried saliva and mucus, at the back of the throat,  
like dried purple stains at the bottom of a wine glass.  
Forcing a gulp of blob only  
to lose the next inhale.

Choking, hauling, struggling to take  
the next sliver of air, from the mouth,  
let alone nose; but at the next moment  
as the last extant fill of the lungs exhaust,  
and they ready themselves to become fat again,  
mouth closing and head lifted up chin high  
letting the most precious thing in the world,  
make body giddy and mind whirly,  
out of breath, legs pulling to stop immediately.  
Await a wait between birth and death  
about to rise.

Isn't it what we call, life?

# Supriya Kaur Dhaliwal

*Supriya Kaur Dhaliwal is a poet and writer from the Himalayan town of Palampur, currently based out of Dublin. She is the author of two poetry books, The Myriad and Musings of Miss Yellow. She holds an MPhil in Irish Writing from Trinity College, Dublin. Supriya is one of the twelve poets selected for Poetry Ireland's Introductions Series this year. She has contributed to the Beckett Digital Manuscript Project in Antwerp, Belgium.*

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## Food and Drink

Ate breakfast for lunch.  
Your morning ham sandwich rests  
for lunch in your land.

Lost in translation  
I sip coffee in exile.  
You sip from known tongues.

You like milky tea.  
I, lactose intolerant,  
liked you, anyway.

Identity crisis  
sweeps two peas in a pod, we  
are pistachio shells.

Like an ant, you stick  
to my sweet indifference.  
Am I a candy?

I'm a candy  
because you feared dying a bad  
diabetic death.

I was drunk on you.  
You, the rum in my coffee.  
Now I'm sober.



# Mapping Sleep

One day, when you'll sleep over your grief  
of losing a pet and when the rising light  
of the day will fail to wake you up,  
you'll lie there stoned, on caffeinated dreams,  
twitching every now and then like touch-me-not,  
thinking of your favourite dog buried in the yard.

You'll think of your father's car parked in front of the yard,  
with him behind the wheel, overwhelmed with grief  
of losing his father, his mother, his first dog; of not  
being able to give them all a ride in his newest car, a light  
shade of grey, the colour of his unfulfilled dream  
of welcoming these guests that'll now never show up.

You'll twitch at the absence of a sound, your pup  
not splashing his paws in the pond in your backyard.  
You'll doze off thinking this isn't the country of your dreams,  
this isn't your bed, this isn't your dog barking, but this is your grief  
of eating your supper alone in the daylight,  
of wondering if you'll wake up to another life or not?

You're a dreamer or are you not?  
You'll toss and turn when you dream of breaking a teacup  
in the middle of drinking your tea at day's first ray of light.  
You'll heave when your dog will choke on its shards in the yard.  
With him and his muffled bark, you'll bleed with grief,  
your voice the fall of an avalanche. You'll wish this dream

you dream is only a dream. Lost in a daydream,  
one day, you'll slip into slumber, without wishing of not  
seeing your despised dog again. Your seven stages of grief  
will appear like a staircase you'll never climb up.  
You'll never relearn to live, to climb or to sip tea in the yard.  
You'll rather learn to sleep though the hours of daylight.

No wagging tail to shoo away the sleep off your face, the sunlight  
now your most hated enemy; you'll want to dream  
of your canine's wet nose pecking your cheek, of your yard

basking in the whiff of freshly baked cake, but it does not work like that. There's no dog anymore to lick up the remains of your cake, so savour your icing of grief.

Coco's bones are now buried in the yard. They were not her only remains. The sunlight shines on them, on your dreams, a constant reminder to wake up. You choose to sleep over your grief.

# **I was offered a rose.**

by a woman on Exchequer Street in Dublin.  
I grew up believing people didn't share flowers,

like they didn't share medicines.  
My first instinct made me nod my head in denial.

But she insisted.  
As soon as I gripped the stalk,

scared to have accidentally squished a thorn or two,  
the woman asked for €2.

I was carrying no cash,  
not even a single coin.

Sometimes I spend €100 on coffee each week,  
or maybe that's an exaggeration

but I never carry any cash on me.  
Money gave me anxiety.

The woman took the blood orange rose away.  
Money gave everyone anxiety.

## **A domestic scene from the winter of 2015.**

I poured coffee for  
two- a cup for myself,

another fresh cup  
for the loved one

departed, awaiting  
his arrival. Come soon

for if you delay your  
arrival, the taste of

coffee will turn bitter inside  
your mouth, like everything (else).



residents. It is imperative that urban policy realizes the incredible social cost of gentrification, and enforces mechanisms that take these costs into account.

# Vartika Rastogi

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## The Leaver's Song

I will leave soon  
Like the rustling wind in winter that makes you shiver.  
You want it gone, but once it passes you will be really cold.  
Put on a jacket.  
Put on another.

I can't promise to take away the knives buried in your front.  
Believe that there are none in your back – I made a shrine out of it  
(and no one stands armed in places of worship).  
The knives were meant to cut butter.  
You were soft, despite all the churning.  
Forgive me.

There will be a breeze, perhaps a blizzard,  
that reminds you of the way my hair flew around,  
and of the destruction in my eyes.  
The house you build next without me will brave all storms.  
Make a home in it.

You will remember that you waltzed with the winds  
as your feet dug into mounds of sand.  
You will find grains of time trapped between your toes  
and in the back of your mind.  
Don't put the ashes of my anamnesis in the river of your sorrow.  
Build me a grave along the banks, let time bury me as you kill it.  
Walk away from the sea of the dead.

I can't promise to take all your memories of myself along.  
You will be born again, an infant baptised  
– always reminded and made aware  
of the sins you needed to be washed of.  
Rise above the dogma.  
Become a non-believer.  
Forgive me.

I will leave soon  
You will take your heart someplace safer, and let it beat.  
I will take what you will never miss  
– a dine-in bill, a ticket stub, the mark on my shoulder,  
myself.

# The Big Bang (alternatively titled 'Inconclusive Poem')

We will explode. It may not be today,  
not a few days hence. But certainly  
sometime in the future,

We will explode.

Because our composure in

life is lent to us, temporarily:

Look how complacent we are

with being nothing, doing nothing.

This satisfaction we find

in idling away sounds

like the slow trickle of ambition going out  
of our lives

and falling flat

into nothingness.

We will explode.

Because in that nothingness, all lost ambition  
takes form again – of disappointment.

It trickles down

and pools up

right where we can see it, like a dark portrait  
of ourselves.

Like a time bomb, ticking away

(Only, time bombs change themselves  
elementally

before they give way; and we

are fireworks propelled by the mounting  
pressure

of feeling around for reassurance. We

will combust with

out changing a thing

– nobody else will light us on fire,  
the fire will stem from within).

The world was ended by a flood once. We

are already 70% water, carrying the flood inside of us,  
like a souvenir from the past. We

Are dams ready to let loose  
Even as the rivers we carry are pools  
of stagnancy  
(Staring back at us, living paradoxically)  
– Everything is a metaphor for life.  
We were born to this world and it has ever since been  
One step ahead of us:  
The earth is 71% water  
Most of which is the tears it sheds  
for our future:  
One we look forward to, but don't bother  
To look at. But Atlas  
has too much time on his hands  
Time more perhaps  
than the weight on his shoulders  
From holding up a sky pregnant  
With clouds as heavy  
As our despair in merely rotating  
on the same axis,  
day after day.  
When Atlas decides to shift  
The sky to his knees, we will see  
how one escapes any punishment  
By mere volition, and let  
the flood gates open, because we  
don't believe that free will exists.  
When we  
Decide we can't help it  
and continue to punish ourselves  
We will explode.  
And explore  
the world as fire and dust  
Water and rust  
covering the debris  
of our caged past, now shattered  
and liberated  
(For atoms disjointed from one  
another

Will find something to bind themselves with)  
We  
will find a way make something of ourselves  
When there's nothing left of our selves

But pieces halved  
and halved again..



# Drishti Soni

*Drishti is a 20 year old literature major. She loves observing the world around her and finding love and absurdism in it. She has been writing for years as a mode of expression. Now she hopes to connect with others through her writing. She believes in always being open to new experiences. She's a little hyper and very confused, but she gets by! You can find her on Instagram : @articulately\_sublime*

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## Aamchi Mumbai

by a woman on Exchequer Street in Dublin.

I grew up believing people didn't share flowers,

like they didn't share medicines.

My first instinct made me nod my head in denial.

But she insisted.

As soon as I gripped the stalk,

scared to have accidentally squished a thorn or two,  
the woman asked for €2.

I was carrying no cash,  
not even a single coin.

Sometimes I spend €100 on coffee each week,  
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but I never carry any cash on me.  
Money gave me anxiety.

The woman took the blood orange rose away.  
Money gave everyone anxiety.

# C I N E M A

**by Vishnu Sivkumar**

*Vishnu Sivakumar is not a film student, but he is about to finish his graduation on something he has no love for. He's an ardent film enthusiast who spends his time understanding life through cinema and books. He also pursues to be a writer and a filmmaker.*

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## **Film Noir**

*I was quite embarrassed for not exploring film-noir earlier when I was getting a glimpse of every other genre during the early stages when I was discovering cinema for the first time. What destroys most people who are passionate about discovering literature, cinema, or any of the arts is the beginning of a venture to create something of their own. I know it has broken me. Why wasn't it simply enough to be a mere spectator? Why do we begin to create?*

*For a long time now, I haven't enjoyed cinema as much as I enjoyed it when I was 18. I first discovered my passion for movies on a cold January night in 2015 when I had just come out of a theatre having watched Jia Zhangke's *Mountains May Depart*. I drove home alone that night. The roads were empty and so silent that I felt wonderful about how alone I was. There was not a single thought that crossed my mind throughout the ride home. I forgot to get myself dinner and I even took a completely different route home as I had missed taking the correct turns. When I reached home, I went straight to bed. I was so lonely, but was tired enough that I slept without trouble. When I woke the next day and pondered over the previous night, I understood what it felt like after watching a great movie—nothing.*

*Right now I don't feel so embarrassed about not getting into film-noir earlier—not after what I did last month. I explored a genre ambitiously. Some say that film-noir is not a genre but a kind of mood or tone of a film- It's something that can't be agreed nor disagreed. The noir films developed over the years according to their time, and the other films apart from the classic film-noir are considered neo-noir—the films made after 1959.*

*Some time ago I came across a discourse on the internet whether Hitchcock was film-noir or not? This was the very reason what tempted me to explore film-noir deeply for the first time ever because I had always thought Hitchcock was film-noir.*

*The world of film-noir is empty, bleak, corrupt, miserable, lonely, and tragic – to put it simply, it is real. The character's actions have real life consequences in film-noir. There is always an underlying existential philosophy in these films. The setting of these films is designed in a precise way to show a darker world. The style of cinematography set the mood of the film from its low and skewed angles to the contrasting black and white images. The locations are all eerie and empty. The characters are pessimistic and the dialogues; brutal.*

*"It is the most American film genre" says Roger Ebert in his guide to film-noir, "because no other society could have created a world so filled with doom, fate, fear and betrayal, unless it were essentially naive and optimistic."*

*The Americans of the post depression era did not just enjoy these films; they began to identify their world with the atmosphere of film-noir.*

*During my exploration, the only feeling or mood that I felt after watching a film was loneliness. It always reminded me of that night in January 2015—not the feeling of having watched a great movie but the drive itself.*

*Film-noir displays one of the saddest part of human condition through its characters—loneliness. It shows the errors that people can commit because of their loneliness. The characters are mostly against the world all alone, what more can be a fitting representation of loneliness?*

*The characters in these movies are always given the space they needed in their time of loneliness. In most of these films, they always blunder at their loneliest moment.*

*In The Asphalt Jungle the Riedenschneider character, who is a fugitive on the run gets caught by the police because he stops to watch a girl dance. The reason why he stopped was that he had been in jail for 7 years all and had not seen such a thing like that in a long time.*

*And, in Billy Wilder's Double Indemnity Walter Neff, an insurance salesman falls for Phyllis Dietrichson, a wife of a client.*

When Phyllis invites him home one day to seduce him, she hints at Walter to kill her husband and claim the insurance. Walter reacts disapprovingly and berates Phyllis before he leaves. He then spends the rest of the day drinking and bowling all alone. A while later when Walter is home, he is seen smoking as he watches out the window. The lights are off; his living room is quite dark. Here, we see him at his loneliest position before he decides to conspire with Phyllis.

Later, the neo-noir films explored loneliness in a deeper sense. Films like *Blade Runner*, *Taxi Driver*, *The Conversation*, and *Chinatown* showed the protagonists in absolute isolation and silence which defined their characters. These films were treading on much newer grounds because they weren't making movies in black and white any more. Guy Budziak, an artist who makes woodcuts of Film-noir explains the significance of black and white in film-noir perfectly:

"What's interesting about black and white as opposed to color is this: color more accurately depicts what we all see in visual reality. The same cannot be said of black and white, of course. So in a sense everything filmed in black and white is unreal, or perhaps can be construed as an alternative reality, but not one that we experience naturally."

One such neo-noir that I watched recently was Kathryn Bigelow's *Strange Days*. The ending of *Strange Days* is quite hopeful unlike the doomed ending of film-noirs. The characters don't always have to be doomed at the end now, but during the 40's and 50's, the censorship was pretty strong against letting the bad guys win or get away in the end. This particular rule itself determined film-noir to be much bleaker.

After my expedition of the noir genre, I decided to revisit Hitchcock to see if I felt the same way now.

Hitchcock's work never came under the term film-noir but he made films with dark plots that were quite associated with the mood of it. The reason why Hitchcock is close to film-noir is that he too explored loneliness in films like *Vertigo*, *Rope*, *Psycho*, and *Shadow of a Doubt*.

Film-noir wasn't well received in Hollywood by the majority of American audiences but it had its own fan following, especially outside of America. The genius of Hitchcock is that he took the dark, bitter, rotten world on film-noir and gave his films a satisfactory twist for the American audience or he just plainly manipulated them.

Here is an example of how Hitchcock manipulated his audience. (Spoiler Alert) In *Shadow of a Doubt*, Charlie (Joseph Cotton), a widow murderer eventually dies in the end, but Hitchcock introduces another character in the middle of the film, a detective (Macdonald Carey) who suspects Charlie of murder. The detective rises to substi-

tute him as the protagonist at the end after the death of Charlie.

The closest Hitchcock ever came to making film-noir were *Notorious*, *Suspicion*, *Strangers on a train*, *Rebecca*, *Shadow of a Doubt*, *Rope*, *Dial M for Murder*, *The Wrong Man* and his most personal venture being *Vertigo* which came quite late in his career in 1958.

If you're new to film-noir, a great place to start with would be a classic like Jules Dassin's *Rififi* or Fritz Lang's *M*. I doubt that I should even be giving out recommendations in this category as I have watched just less than forty movies during this time and I have barely scratched the surface. Although, I know I'd have been delighted if I had watched *Rififi* or *M* beforehand. Too bad I had to watch *The Asphalt Jungle*. It is still a great one nevertheless.

For me, film-noir is simply nothing more than loneliness right now. I need time, I really wish I could write more about film-noir but I'd be sharing nothing new. I have a long way to go, and on my way through thousands of more movies to escape from this awful world I hope to rediscover movies once again like that night in January 2015. "Are you alone?" a woman asks Nicholson over the phone in Polanski's *Chinatown*. "Isn't everybody?" he replies.

# ART

**by Akanksha Rastogi**

*She is a graphic designer, a healer and an artist who heals through her work. She believes that art is a therapy and it helps each of us to enunciate our feelings in our own way. She has found a way through her work to allow her emotions to explode in a silent way. No matter how different people are, in her paintings they can find something that speaks to their inner selves. She believes art is conveying expressions of emotion and connection; of life and energy. It has broadened her horizons in both ways emotionally and spiritually.*

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This project was started with the purpose presenting in a few frames, devoid of human figures, the altered perception of mornings in the mind of an individual suffering from depression. It's devoid of human figures because while your mind is affected with this condition you tend to delve in your own thoughts, in your own self. You drown out the difference between self and the others. They become what you feel for yourself. Their purpose of talking to you, become how it affects you. It's in your mind and it eventually becomes your mind.

The series starts at a terrace, goes around the city in search of something that eases a sort of discomfort. Emphasis also lies in the stark contrast with how mornings are usually perceived.

There is said to be a new clarity, the feeling of a fresh start. Whereas we see different textures of blur in the photographs, which are meant to stand out for difference. None of these in perspectives within the mind going through this unrest, and the entirely different popular perception of mornings which is far from what the experience puts forward.



# AWAKENING

Spiritual gateway to all realms and dimensions

Material: Acrylic on Canvas | Size: 12"x16"





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