AboutUs: http://www.the-criterion.com/about/

Archive: http://www.the-criterion.com/archive/

ContactUs: http://www.the-criterion.com/contact/

EditorialBoard: http://www.the-criterion.com/editorial-board/

Submission: http://www.the-criterion.com/submission/

FAQ: http://www.the-criterion.com/fa/

ISSN 2278-9529

Galaxy: International Multidisciplinary Research Journal

www.galaxyimrj.com

Locating the Grotesque in Githa Hariharan's *Fugitive Histories*

Sangeetha Alwar
Ph. D Scholar,
Department of Studies in English,
Manasagangotri,
University of Mysore, Mysuru.
https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.13683805

Article History: Submitted-19/06/2024, Revised-13/08/2024, Accepted-23/08/2024, Published-31/08/2024.

Abstract:

The manifold depictions of the grotesque and the abject in Githa Hariharan's novel *Fugitive Histories* are critically examined in this study. By traversing from Bakhtin's conception of the carnivalesque grotesque to Kristeva's theorisation of the abject, this analysis aspires to furnish an analytical framework for interpreting the characters, settings, and identities within the narrative as manifestations of a polyphonic imagination meticulously crafted by Hariharan. Recognising Hariharan as a non-diasporic author, this paper further seeks to underscore the pertinence of a postcolonial critique of the grotesque in engendering meaning within the increasingly fragmented milieu that such writers navigate.
Keywords: Bakhtin, Grotesque, Kristeva, Abject, Postcolonial Grotesque.

Abjection and grotesqueness form consistent undercurrents in *Fugitive Histories* (2009). They play out through various streams, be it a direct representation of the abject in the form of violence, the grotesqueness of abused bodies, the myriad forms of physical abuse in the Gujarat riots (which is the primary concern of the second section of the text); or in an indirect, existential presence of the abject through the eyes of the characters, the erasure of the line between the abject and reject through Asad's paintings and the view of the city as a personified abject in Sara's lived experiences.

This paper seeks to locate grotesqueness in *Fugitive Histories* by considering its representation in four themes: Motherhood, Old Age, City Spaces and Art. Motherhood as grotesque is explored through the character of Mala. Her grandmother Bala embodies the grotesque and the abject in both physical and psychological manners. Asad's character struggles with the politics of witnessing through his career as an artist, the lack of resolution

sets him on a path toward abjection. The cities present in the novel take on grotesque personalities through Sara's eyes. The research considers Bakhtinian and Kristevan concepts to interpret these themes, first by considering the theory of the grotesque carnivalesque and then by locating the abject in its various forms in the novel.

Set against the backdrop of the 2002 Gujarat Riots, the text traces the lives of three women, Mala, Sara and Yasmin in their quest for meaning, purpose and memory. The book is divided into three parts titled Missing Persons, Crossing Borders and Funeral Rites respectively. Read through the lens of Bakhtin and Kristeva, these titles themselves are primary indicators of abjection - a sense of loss combined with the transcendence of bodily and socio-cultural boundaries resulting from the acknowledgment of the corporeality of the human body.

Mikhail Bakhtin considers the body as a narrative. He termed the intersection of the body's aesthetic with the rites of carnival, as "grotesque realism". He defined this grotesqueness of the body as "a body in the act of becoming . . . never finished, never completed . . . continually built, created, and build(ing) and creat(ing) another body" (317).

Bakhtin's grotesque body is one of celebration; it foregrounds the haptic nature of skin. The body becomes a continual carnival of its functions - its crevices, folds, egresses, and ingresses. This body is defined by and against its antithesis—the ideal body viewing it as a finished product as opposed to the grotesque body as something incomplete. In *Fugitive Histories*, Hariharan presents the reader with a "metaphorical mirror" through Asad's sketchbooks. There is a distinct nature of celebration in his portraiture of Bala:

> The face the charcoal brings to life has a wide unlined forehead and a big nose the nostrils the little lifted to prove that this nose can breathe every type of air…the cheeks are fleshy… above the rounded chin, the toothy mouth is stretched white open.. so full-fledged is its laughter that it makes every exposed tooth gleam, it makes every part of the face full of the crazy joy of life. (26-27)

However, Bakhtin does not draw a relationship between the grotesque and womanhood. This is furthered by Kathleen Rowe in her book *The Unruly Woman: Gender and the Genres of Laughter*. She opines that the female body, with its functions, becomes an embodiment of the grotesque:

> The grotesque body is above all the female body, the maternal body, which through menstruation, pregnancy, childbirth, and lactation, participates uniquely in the

https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.10448030

> carnivalesque drama of 'becoming,' of inside-out and outside-in, death-in-life and life-in-death (33-34).

Hariharan seems to agree with Rowe's idea of an eternal journey towards "becoming" in her representation of women in her novel. Their corporeal reality is present throughout the text. Rather than being idealised bodies, they are living, breathing, inscribing their physicality and writing themselves into reality (Cixous 881). Cixous further evaluates the relationship between the feminine and the grotesque. Focusing on the image of the Medusa as grotesque yet beautiful, she says, "You only have to look at the Medusa straight on to see her. And she's not deadly. She's beautiful and she's laughing" (885). The female characters in Hariharan write and rewrite themselves, one example of this is in the way the female body of Sara responds during intercourse and climax (121).

Bakhtin admits that his theory cannot be stringently applied to twentieth-century artistic and social manifestations. However, this does not mean that his ideas are disregarded, but as Biscaia argues, they should be consulted for their "inestimable interpretative potential" (13):

> The psychological grotesque is not dissociated from images of grotesque realism and, in fact, it can be said to arise from them. Our vision of the world is displaced and our orientation alienated vis-à-vis the spectacle of our fragile corporeality. For Bakhtin, the grotesque image reflects a phenomenon in transformation, an as yet unfinished metamorphosis, of death and birth, growth and becoming. (14)

The Bakhtinian grotesque seems more suitable than the one proposed by Kayser in the reading of the selected text since they consider the body as the loci of such transmogrification. Harpham's theories on the relationship between language, myth and the grotesque state that:

> Grotesques disturb us with the prospect that the trifling fictions which we feel should not be there at all may in fact be another kind of Word, a tolerant kind in terms of which our Word is but one among many. To see that 'myth' is everywhere (and everywhere in chains) is to recognise the omnipresence of this other system, and the constant potential for the grotesque. (144)

As Bisacia remarks, it is Harpham's preoccupation with language that "is a mark of the dislocation of the grotesque to a postmodern lieu where the Lacanian imprint is felt" (114). Proceeding from this understanding, the paper arrives at Kristeva who proposed the

https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.10448030

theory of the abject.

What transformations do the literary manifestations of the grotesque body undergo when women writers adapt it into their writing? In her work on abjection in *Powers of Horror*, Kristeva explores the drastic and sometimes intense human reaction to a perceived loss of meaning resulting from a "loss of the distinction between subject and object or between self and other" (Felluga) and mentions that apart from a corpse, items like an open wound, faecal matter, sewage and other matter might elicit such an abjection.

The abject is defined by *The Concise Oxford Dictionary* as "misery, poverty, self-abasing" ("abject") and abjection as "a state of being extremely unhappy, poor" ("abjection"). These definitions, though helpful, are not adequate; it is necessary to consider the literary expression of abjection and how it ties to Kristeva's ideas on the same. Creed considers fundamental socio-cultural markers of the abject such as incest, women's bodies, cannibalism and murder and writes:

> The place of the abject is where meaning collapses, the place where I am not. The abject threatens life, it must be radically excluded from the place of the living subject, propelled away from the body and deposited on the other side of an imaginary border which separates the self from that which threatens the self. (65)

This understanding lies in contrast to Lacan's ideas on "objet petit a" (285) or "object of desire", where this object acts in sync with the subject's desires, thus allowing meaning to persist, the abject, Kristeva explains, "draws me toward the place where meaning collapses" (2). Further, speaking of the violence that ensues from abjection, Kristeva opines, "abjection preserves what existed in the archaism of pre-objectal relationship, in the immemorial violence with which a body becomes separated from another body in order to be" (10). The corporeal grotesque is much more complex than what Bakhtin allowed for in his discourse, it becomes increasingly gendered when used as an integral part of misogyny. In referring to Miles and Carson, Shapira states:

> The image of a female body dominated by gaping orifices and biological flux is part of the historical arsenal of misogyny, a way of grounding women's "aberrance" in their distasteful corporeality and thus naturalising it. Frequently correlated with disorderly behaviour, promiscuity, verbosity, and gluttony, grotesque female bodies have served as a kind of battle cry, an announcement of danger, and a call for punishment and containment. (54)

https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.10448030

The story begins with Mala confronting the trunk her late husband has left behind. Almost immediately the reader is confronted by the abject nature of the trunk and the memories it holds for Mala. The trunk here is used as a metaphor for Mala and her sense of identity. She uncovers the trunk and in doing so, begins the arduous journey of "uncovering" parts of her she has hidden from herself since the death of her husband, "the trunk looked strange at first. It was both recognizable and unfamiliar as if she had come face to face with someone she knew well but hadn't met for years" (3).

In *Fugitive Histories,* Hariharan presents two distinct narratives of the abject; one as matter or items - as things and objects that the characters come face to face with and are provoked by and the second narrative as the characters themselves undergoing abjection - as a reflection of self. More specifically, Kristeva extends the idea of the abject to the interruption of routine lives with "The Real" (3). This eruption of our daily lives elicits a pre-linguistic response and forces us to confront the materiality and trauma of our existence.

In *Fugitive Histories* this confrontation is represented through the subversive acts of its female characters. Mala enters a temple when she is menstruating (being an abject body): "the childish thrill Mala gets from going to the temple with her grandfather while she has her periods…how she, timid little Mala has polluted the temple the old man thinks he owns!" (67). Sara recognises this interruption of her reality with the arrival of her period, "Sara feels something turn over in her stomach, then it becomes a dull weight. Maybe it's the masala of the noodles or the butter of the popcorn; or her periods, showing up a week too soon" (51).

This abject body is also closely associated with *jouissance*, "one does not know it, one does not desire it, one joys in it violently and painfully." (Kristeva 9). There is an inexplicable attraction towards the abject, not as one experiences the dynamic of desire but of pleasure much like Freud's concept of "repetition compulsion" (18.15). Mala's recurrent return to Asad's art despite its damaging effects on her psyche encapsulates what Clark defines as an indicator of the grotesque narrative: "the paralytic horror that some dread cataclysm awaits him together with the equally shattering fear that nothing whatsoever will happen" (7). Mala sees this process as inevitable, something she needs to undertake even when it seems life-threatening.

Towards the end of the novel, it is Asad's art that brings clarity and closure to the narrative and the terrors that haunt Mala. Their grotesqueness plays a predominant role. Kristeva emphasised the role of art in reincorporating the "female and the abject and

https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.10448030

separating the pre-Symbolic from the criminal" (Willette).

As an artist, Asad confronts the abject notion of the riots simultaneously as a witness and an insider. The narrative takes us through his gradual decline and final death as he struggles to bridge the gap between the violence of his environment and his act of representing it on canvas. Mala comes across a sketch of a noose in her perusal of Asad's sketchbooks:

> The man in the drawing has a face that hangs upside down. He's bodyless, this man with the hanging head, but he demands that Mala imagine his body into existence in empty space. What she can't imagine is already in the picture a long steel-like cord hanging from nowhere. The cord makes a loop at its lower end, a loop to which is attached an evil-looking hook. The hook is not quite around the neck of the hanging face, but it's awfully close. The man's eyes stare at the hook. It's almost there, it's about to encircle his neck. How else will it keep him from falling into the sheer drop of space below? (219)

The image of this contorted body as well as a noose-like symbol indicating death can be understood as "Chora" (161). This chora is accessed through a confrontation with the symbolic, it becomes "a gaze that gradually defamiliarises itself with its subject and creates a scary monstrosity that is nothing but a phenomenological monster" (Fatzadel and Darabi 256). This is why Mala reacts the way she does. In order to make sense of the abject, she associates it with other events in her life. This way, the abject ceases to be just the Bakhtinian grotesque that provokes disgust or anger but also induces sympathy and maybe love:

> Maybe this is not just a drawing in a sketchbook. Maybe it's a man, a real man. That's why he makes her feel the pity, love, sadness and revulsion she felt when she held Asad's sleepless head to her right breast, just as she used to hold the children when they were fretful at night. (219)

By focusing on a visual representation of witnessing and shame, Hariharan reveals Asad's sense of implicit collusion with the abject and the shame that drives him to illness and finally, death. Bennet speaks of art as "a mode of embodied perception" (10) where the empathetic viewer does not only mimic trauma but "feels into it" (14). This elaboration of an "empathic vision" (15) is necessary for us to understand the visual realm of violence and grotesque that Hariharan renders through the sketches of Asad. This shame that Asad feels is evident in his final sketch. It depicts five men in a circle on the right holding various

https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.10448030

weapons. A sixth empty-handed man is crouching in fear, his head hanging (214). And another man who seems to be an observer, “he looks as if he knows he can only stand there and look” (214). In the absence of semantic indicators, Mala confronts the grotesque:

> In fact, there's no one in the painting… Yet it's able to make Mala feel, it makes her feel, just for an instant, something like the warm rushing blood of life. If she rubs the paint here and there in small patches… she may find people hidden underneath. But without her help, left to itself, the painting is reluctant to yield its secrets… the skin of the painting also wraps itself round a bigger mystery, perhaps the biggest mystery of all. But till she learns how to peel off the skin, all it can do is lie there like a riddle, or a thing that's forgotten how to live. This dead thing, this painting or body that used to be Asad's, stares at Mala in uncompromising silence. (220)

Hariharan thus seems to propose a model for a “transhistorical memory via a triangulation of the political, mnemonic and the sensual/erotic” (Mitra 218). In her presentation of Asad, Hariharan also makes a statement against Sontag’s idea of photographic seeing as “mainly the practice of a kind of dissociative seeing” (79). In repudiating this aspect of photographic voyeurism and dissociation expressed by Sontag, Evernden refers to Berger’s idea of the two functions of photography and states:

> The photographer can deliberately seek to engage his subject so as to suggest a context. Sontag assumes no context, while the expressive photographer assumes a significant one, a context open to all who feel kinship to the subject. And that sense of kinship need not be restricted to members of an immediate family: it may apply equally to the family of subjects. (85).

Hariharan also constructs the character of Asad as a Bakhtinian grotesque, in the sense that it always escapes meaning and definition. It is Asad’s increasing preoccupation with identifying selfhood in the violence he seeks to depict through his art and his subsequent failure in doing so that leads to his demise. Kristeva connects this incomplete signifying process to the art and the artist in her essay in *Revolution in Poetic Language*. She says:

> The subject never is. The subject is only the signifying process and he appears only as a signifying practice, that is only where he is absent within the position out of which social, historical, and signifying activity unfolds. There is no science of the subject. is incumbent upon "art" to demonstrate that the subject is the absent element of and in his practice. (144)

https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.10448030

Harrington highlights this sense of loss in Kristevan subjects as an entity "in process/on trial, and as such it points to the space where production is put into practice as a continual moment of rupture and of loss" (145). Asad's final loss of selfhood can thus be understood through Kristeva's words: "the signifying process that is the movement and dialectic between the semiotic and the symbolic "will be replaced by a nothingness - the 'lack' (131).

In offering some ways out of abjection, Kristeva refers to religion and art as fields that engage themselves in the purification of an abject body. Literature provides a place where "we are confronted with an archaic space before such linguistic binaries as self/other or subject/object" (Felluga). Despite socio-historical backgrounds, Kristeva privileges literature as a space for both the abject and the sublime. This is because "literature explores the way that language is structured over a lack, a want" (Felluga).

Mala looks into her late husband's trunk and finds his sketchbooks. The first sketch she sees is that of a man and a woman naked, they seem to be in movement, defying the one-dimensional page. They seem to cross Kristeva's "imaginary boundary" (20) into the realm of death, mutilation, blood, and horror. Here, Mala passes through a metaphorical door to her husband's world of imagination which threatens to inflict itself into her real life.

> Both man and woman are naked…their heads are thrown back, necks stretched as far as they can go… Her legs are wide apart, straight with the tension of holding herself up. The man is learning to be an acrobat. Though his torso strains with the effort, he is practically airborne, supported only by an arm…but something more than the obvious sexual spark between them makes them throw their arms and legs in the air with abandon. (7)

This image of a door acting as an intermediary into and out of the real world is played out throughout the narrative. This acts as "the line of abjection" (Kristeva 9); a metaphorical line that separates the real world from the world of abjection. The text introduces Mala's grandfather as a terrifying creature who inhabits a room overlooking the corridor at their ancestral home. It is inside this room, after Mala gets noticed by her grandfather in the corridor that he assaults her. Leaving her to question the nature of reality and also leaving scars that haunt her dreams even when she is sixty years old.

Throughout the text, Asad's art acts as an abject item in Mala's eyes. They force her into a confrontation of the real world and its limitations even going so far as to challenge her

https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.10448030

lived reality. Mala recalls a portrait of hers that Asad painted, "there's a look in the girl's eyes - it's not quite panic but some vague unease… Mala left that girl behind a long time back… but like the girl, Mala is frozen" (9).

Asad's art becomes a grotesque medium even in the life of his child, Sara. Though we see that Sara is protected against some terrors that her mother and father faced, there is a looming sense of doom that follows her. Her father's art at once anchors her and uproots her sense of meaning:

> In the dark room, lying alone in bed, she can see the painting hanging on the wall like the crucifix that used to hang in her college hostel room… He even had a little pool of bloody paint bulging out where his heart should be. Like the crucifix, Asad's painting guards her. And like the hanging Jesus, it also scares her. (48)

The portrayal of Asad as an unconventional artist is enhanced through his approach to sacred objects. Asad's art amplifies the anthropomorphic features of Hindu gods like Ganesh, creating a grotesque representation of divinity and the virtues it symbolizes.

> The soapstone Ganesh moved to Delhi with them, took up residence in Asad's studio. Having acquired a taste for travel, this Ganesh was willing to partake of the hospitality of a godless house And he's been generous in return. He's not only allowed Asad to put him into this drawing, he's even transforming himself all over again. He's taking on afresh the features of man and beast and god so he can belong to Asad as well as Mala, and to every other living creature. (57)

The transformation is neither horrifying nor repulsive to Mala, nor by extension to the reader. Instead, it conveys a sense of reassurance, perhaps even a sense of naturalness. As the narrator notes, "the final effect of the drawing is grotesque. But despite its grotesqueness, the image comforts Mala" (58).

Bové, in a review, mentions that the metaphor of the mask enables Kristeva to strike a delicate balance between nature and culture, to assert that abjection is not biologically determined by sex as much as the writer's or a particular character's personal confrontation with what they consider to be abject or demonic (155). In *Powers of Horror,* Kristeva states:

> If 'something maternal' happens to bear upon the uncertainty that I call abjection, it illuminates the literary scription of the essential struggle that a writer (man or woman) has to engage in with what he calls demonic only to call attention to it as the inseparable

https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.10448030

> obverse of his very being, the other (sex) that torments and possesses him. (208)

Kristeva also portrays motherhood as grotesque, particularly when she echoes Bakhtinian concepts by stating, "I am in the process of becoming an other at the expense of my own death. During that course in which 'I' become, I give birth to myself amid the violence of sobs, of vomit" (3). Similar to Douglas's theory of purity and defilement, Kristeva's notion of abjection is rooted in the categories of the unclean and improper, such as blood, vomit, excrement, and filth (Biscaia 147). In *Fugitive Histories*, motherhood is divested of the male gaze and patriarchal language, and is depicted not only as beautiful and affirming but also as Kristevan abjection. Through Mala's perspective, Hariharan presents a distorted, pregnant figure, writhing in agony and grappling with its trauma and existence.

> Mala sits on the high bed, naked. The pain is giving her a brief holiday so she can look at herself. She can't see her legs; they hang over the side of the bed but don't reach the floor. She can see her breasts, the nipples that must be on loan from someone else. They used to be brown but are now almost blue-black; their neat circles have grown smudgy around the edges as they spread themselves out. But their strangeness is nothing compared to her stomach. The upside-down pitcher where her stomach used to be is the size of a giant pumpkin. (30)

Mala's experience of pregnancy drives her to confront her growing body in all its fleshy reality and the possibility of death and decay:

> And the skin it's all wrapped in is so thin, so stretched, that it's giving way, it's only pretend-wrapping … One side of her stomach balloons, then the baby finishes rolling over. Only, there is something trying to poke its way through the skin; she can see its shape jutting out like a tent. (30)

This abjection can be understood as the recognition of "death infecting life" (Kristeva 4). Kristeva, in discussing the abject, states, "It is something rejected from which one does not part [...]. Imaginary uncanniness and real threat, it beckons to us and ends up engulfing us" (7). The conventional understanding of motherhood and its associated responsibilities mirrors this concept, representing a gradual erosion of identity and selfhood in the pursuit of childcare.

Kristeva's notion of abjection centers on the continual denial of the abject and its power to transgress boundaries. She explains, "The abject is perverse because it neither gives up nor assumes a prohibition, a rule, or law; but turns them aside, misleads, corrupts; uses

https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.10448030

them, takes advantage of them, the better to deny them" (15). Hariharan explores this corrupting nature of the abject through the character of Mala's grandmother, Bala.

Bala, described as the "inmate" of her husband's house, is confined to the storeroom within her own home due to her perceived hysteria. During a forced two-month stay with her children, Sara and Samar, Mala observes her grandmother with growing incredulity and fear. On one occasion, she follows her grandmother from her confinement to the storeroom, wondering, "what if she went into the storeroom with Bala and there the old woman suddenly became someone else, the person who seemed to live inside her sometimes?" (22). Through her behavior, her deviation from traditional femininity, and her apparent madness, Bala, and by extension Mala, embodies the abject.

Ageing is portrayed as a grotesque phenomenon through the character of Bala, embodying all that youth dreads—loss of agency, bodily autonomy, power, and beauty. Bala undergoes a transformation in the reader's eyes, from a young, blushing bride to a hideous, hysterical figure, becoming something grotesque. Yet, this transformation elicits not only fear but also sympathy, and in Mala's case, empathy. Bala's metamorphosis is depicted as a natural, inescapable response to the fear instilled by her husband, underscoring the inevitability of such a decline.

> Bala lies in bed in the little room, windows and door wide open to dilute the reek of urine, shit, vomit, old age, madness. It's not just her body or the soaking bedclothes, how many ever times they are changed; even the walls of the room flake with an old sorrow, the obscenity of pure decay. (75)

Due to Githa Hariharan's emphasis on the sociological dimensions of grotesqueness, Bala is perceived as grotesque largely because her family views her that way, thereby illustrating the interdependent nature of the grotesque subject and the environment that shapes it. Biscaia argues, "It suggests that the true nature of the grotesque, in a non-Bakhtinian interpretation, lies not in the bodies they are attached to but in the producers of the ideas of grotesqueness or grotesque subject/object" (127).

A key element in constructing an abject identity is the perception of it as infantile (Biscaia 127). The narrative presents Bala engaging in peculiar behaviors to undermine her husband's cruelty—cutting her hair, carrying tales, and sneaking around her own house—behaving almost childlike. However, when faced with her husband's death and the possibility of freedom for the first time in her life, Bala takes control of her physical self by exploring

https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.10448030

the degrees of abjection she can impose on her body:

> Now that she belonged to no one Bala had grown her hair into long stringy rat-tails…she refused sponge baths most days and her sari was the shameful rag just like her choli on the days she agreed to wear it (25)

This exploration of the grotesque and abject in Githa Hariharan's *Fugitive Histories* highlights a significant intersection of postcolonial critique, feminist theory, and literary aesthetics. Through the nuanced application of Bakhtinian and Kristevan frameworks, this analysis reveals how Hariharan's narrative not only embodies but also interrogates the complex dimensions of the grotesque and the abject. The characters, spaces, and identities in the text are depicted as sites of polyphonic imagination, challenging and expanding the boundaries of these theoretical constructs.

Hariharan's depiction of the female body, particularly through the frameworks of Kathleen Rowe's concept of the unruly woman and Hélène Cixous's notion of medusan laughter, highlights the intersection of gender and grotesqueness. Her female characters' corporeality resists idealization, presenting them as dynamic entities engaged in a continuous process of becoming. This emphasis on the body extends Bakhtin's concept of grotesque realism, situating it within a feminist postcolonial context that critiques and reconfigures conventional narratives of femininity and the body.

In *Fugitive Histories*, the grotesque and the abject are employed as powerful narrative strategies that disrupt normative constructs, encouraging a deeper exploration of the material and symbolic dimensions of trauma, identity, and resistance. By navigating the intricate interplay between the symbolic and the real, Hariharan's narrative underscores the transformative potential of the grotesque, establishing it as a key element in the ongoing discourse between postcolonialism, feminism, and literary representation. Viewed through this lens, *Fugitive Histories* stands out as a pivotal work that not only reflects but also redefines the boundaries of contemporary literary and cultural critique.

Works Cited:

"Abject." Cambridge Dictionary, https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/abject. Accessed 16 Aug. 2022.

"Abjection." Cambridge Dictionary,

https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.10448030

https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/abjection. Accessed 16 Aug. 2022.

Bakhtin, M. M. Rabelais and His World. 1st Midland book ed, Indiana University Press, 1984.

Beardsworth, Sara. "Love's Lost Labors: Subjectivity, Art, and Politics." Psychoanalysis, Aesthetics, and Politics in the Work of Julia Kristeva, edited by S. K. Keltner and Kelly Oliver, SUNY press University presses marketing [distributor], 2009, pp. 127–43.

Bennett, Jill. Empathic Vision: Affect, Trauma, and Contemporary Art. Stanford University Press, 2005.

Biscaia Pimentel, Maria Sofia. Postcolonial and Feminist Grotesque Texts of Contemporary Excess. Peter Lang, 2011.

Bové, Carol Mastrangelo. "Review of Powers of Horror. An Essay on Abjection, Léon S. Roudiez." Discourse, vol. 11, no. 1, 1988, pp. 151–56.

Butler, Judith. "The Body Politics of Julia Kristeva." Hypatia, vol. 3, no. 3, 1988, pp. 104–18. PhilPapers, https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1527-2001.1988.tb00191.x.

Cixous, Hélène, et al. "The Laugh of the Medusa." Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society, vol. 1, no. 4, July 1976, pp. 875–93. DOI.org (Crossref), https://doi.org/10.1086/493306.

Creed, Barbara. "Horror and the Monstrous-Feminine: An Imaginary Abjection." Horror, the Film Reader, edited by Mark Jancovich, 1st ed., Routledge, 2002, p. 208.

Evernden, Neil. "Seeing And Being Seen: A Response to Susan Sontag's Essays on Photography." Soundings: An Interdisciplinary Journal, vol. 68, no. 1, 1985, pp. 72–87.

Fatzade, Hassan, and Marzieh Darabi. "Proposing the Idea of Corpopolitics Based on Kristeva's Thoughts." Journal of Philosophical Investigations, vol. 13, no. 27, Aug. 2019, pp. 255–72. philosophy.tabrizu.ac.ir, https://doi.org/10.22034/jpiut.2019.8030.

Felluga, Dino. "Modules on Kristeva: On the Abject." Introductory Guide to Critical Theory, 31 Jan. 2011, https://cla.purdue.edu/academic/english/theory/psychoanalysis/kristevaabject.html.

Fitzpatrick, Katie. "The Politics of Place: Spatialities and the Abject." Counterpoints, vol. 432, 2013, pp. 75–109.

Freud, Sigmund, et al. The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud. W.W. Norton, 1986.

Hariharan, Githa. Fugitive Histories. 2009.

Harpham, Geoffrey Galt. On the Grotesque: Strategies of Contradiction in Art and Literature. 2nd ed., Davies Group Publishers, 2006.

Harrington, Thea. "The Speaking Abject in Kristeva's 'Powers of Horror.'" Hypatia, vol. 13, no. 1, 1998, pp. 138–57.

Kristeva, Julia. Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection. Translated by Leon S. Roudiez, Nachdr., Columbia Univ. Press, 2010.

---. Revolution in Poetic Language. Columbia University Press, 1984.

McClintock, Anne. Imperial Leather: Race, Gender, and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest. Routledge, 1995.

Mitra, Rituparna. States of Affect: Trauma in Partition/Post-Partition South Asia. Michigan State University, 2015.

Rowe, Kathleen. The Unruly Woman: Gender and the Genres of Laughter. 1st ed, University of Texas Press, 1995.

Shapira, Yael. "Hairball Speaks: Margaret Atwood and the Narrative Legacy of the Female Grotesque." Narrative, vol. 18, no. 1, 2010, pp. 51–72.

https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.10448030

Sontag, Susan. On Photography. Reissued, Penguin, 2008.

Sorensen, Rosemary. “Githa Hariharan Interviewed by Rosemary Sorensen.” Kunapipi, vol. 15, no. 3, June 2019, https://ro.uow.edu.au/kunapipi/vol15/iss3/8.

Tellis, Ashley Jude Mario. “The Corporeal Aesthetic in Ismat Chughtai’s Lihaaf.” Lesbian Voices Canada and the World: Theory, Literature, Cinema, Jan. 2006. www.academia.edu, https://www.academia.edu/4066830/The_Corporeal_Aesthetic_in_Ismat_Chughtais_Lihaaf.

Willette, Jeanne. Julia Kristeva and Abjection Art History Unstuffed. https://arthistoryunstuffed.com/julia-kristeva-and-abjection/. Accessed 18 Aug. 2022.

https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.10448030