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A Dialogue at the Threshold:

Analysing Marginal Existence in *Bury Me My Love*, *Kuroshitsuji*, and *The Alienist*.¹

For a willingness to descend into that alien territory...may...open...the way to conceptualizing an international culture, based not on the exoticism or multiculturalism of the diversity of cultures, but on the inscription and articulation of culture's hybridity. To that end we should remember that it is the 'inter' –the cutting edge of translation and negotiation, the in-between...that carries the burden of the meaning of culture...It is in this space that we will find those words with which we can speak of Ourselves and Others (Bhabhan.pag).

If academic and political re-visioning impulses of contemporary transmedia fiction has a key theme beside race and empire, it is the exploration of the refugee problem as regulated through the social, cultural and political discourses. This paper analyses the representation of the 'marginal', the 'immigrant', and the 'migrant' in transmedia narratives of the Neo-Victorian novel *The Alienist* by Lucien Carr, the videogame *Bury Me My Love* developed by the Pixel Hunt, and the English anime adaptation of the Japanese manga *Kuroshitsuji* by Yana Toboso. I intend to critically enquire whether transmedia narratives can be instrumental in the imperative dialogue between politics and academia for they emerge as the "cutting edge of translation and negotiation", as Bhabha has contended, where the

¹The stylesheet followed for formatting the abstract is Modern Language Association (MLA), Seventh Edition.

individual and the other is provided the space to converge and communicate. The paper argues that these texts expose an emergence of a new narrative medium surrounding discourses such as that of the experience of being a migrant refugee, trauma of forced displacement and alternate sexuality of the marginalised communities, and further critique the amorphous and uncanonical transmedia narratives on migration and trauma in order to challenge the myth that popular media is universally acceptable, as well as to problematize the debatable ethics involving the monetization of these narratives without considering the migrant's subjective agency.

Within academia, political narratives are generally concerned with ethnicity, race, religion, and sexuality, while largely overlooking the intricate issues of the representation of the migrant in popular narratives, alternate sexuality of the migrant, and the problematic consumerism of the refugee problem in twenty-first century convergence culture. However, an academic dialogue can be effectively started by examining paratexts such as the popular transmedia narratives, emerging from both developed and developing nations alike that today represent the complexities of existing on the threshold of indeterminacy. The three narratives that are chosen for analysis in this paper represents, each in its own way, the multifarious tenets of existing at the threshold.

Set against the backdrop of 'Victorian American' society of the nineteenth century, *The Alienist* is a neo-Victorian period novel that chronicles Dr. Laszlo Kreizler's murder investigation of several migrant male child prostitutes by a white upper-class American, male, Willem Van Bergen (Josef Altin), a privileged son of an elite class couple secretly being protected by the Mayor and the police. While Dr. Kreizler and his team is set to catch the killer mostly by employing the science of psychological determinism –pursuing the killer by analysing his mind and tracing his motifs and stimulants, the novel also brings to the foreground the issue of Victorian fear of deviant sexuality of the migrants as portrayed

through the fear of the mutilated body of the migrant male child prostitutes. Kreizler's pursuit takes the readers to the shabby quarters of the migrant communities in the slums of lower side Manhattan with all its dirt, filth, and illegal trades such as smuggling, trafficking and prostitution.

On a similar note, *Kuroshitsuji (The Black Butler)*, set in Victorian England of the late nineteenth century, narrates the tale of a Japanese immigrant aristocrat household, the Phantomhives, who have long been in private service of the English crown. Phantomhives' current master, Ciel Phantomhive, also known as the 'guard dog of the Queen' (episode 2, "His Butler, Strongest") along with his demon-butler, Sebastian Michaelis undertake a series of gruesome assassination and investigation tasks directly assigned by the Queen, while trying to covertly investigate the truth behind the murder of Ciel's parents. Ciel's journey climaxes when he discovers that the Queen had ordered the assassination of his parents because she had perceived the existence and surging power of the Phantomhives as a threat to the imperial throne (episode 22, "His Butler, Dissolution"). Thus, the anime not only emphasizes a problematic blend of the Japanese and English history in light of English history of colonialism, but also highlights the Victorian fear of the eastern other, especially of the eastern immigrants.

While *The Alienist* and *Kuroshitsuji* are predominately concerned with the issue of migration on a thematic level, Pixel's videogame *Bury Me My Love* offers a meta-critique of the genre of videogame itself that has materialised on war, migration, displacement, and refugee crisis. Developed as a 'message-based' game that uses the interface of WhatsApp messenger as the gaming platform, it revolves around the journey of the Syrian refugee, Nour across Syria to her parents in Germany. The reader enacts the role of her husband, Majd who stays behind in Syria to look after his parents. The gameplay is developed in the form of WhatsApp messages, snapshots and voice notes that the couple exchange throughout Nour's

journey. However, the narrative is not a linear one having a typified ending. It keeps on changing with the choices that the player makes in advising and guiding Nour, which results in multiple endings. Furthermore, the individual connection that the player establishes with Nour as her husband also merits an interrogation of how videogames offer a site for the personal and the political to coalesce in negotiating the identity and the selfhood of not only the migrant but also the player.

Consequently, the diversified treatment of the refugee crisis and the figure of the migrant in transmedia narratives have caused the emergence of a secondary scholarship that analyse the effect of such narratives on the popular reception of refugees and migrants in the convergence culture. For instance, critiquing the heterosexual-white-male-dominated sphere of videogames that often brutalise and mutilate non-white, transsexual and female experiences, Adrienne Shaw in *Gaming at the Edge: Sexuality and Gender at the Margins of Gamer Culture* argues that video games provide a platform for the players to experience race, gender and ethnicity concurrently. Establishing a dialogic framework for representation of divergence and difference in a participatory culture of user-generated content and individualised media consumption, Shaw provides new insights on how the marginalised player in his/her constant negotiation of selfhood in the digital space also influences the mainstream gamer culture. Similarly, in *Neo-Victorianism and the Memory of the Empire*, Elizabeth Ho examines the decolonized dimensions of Neo-Victorian transmedia narratives, to argue how appropriation of Victorian images in contemporary literature and culture has emerged as a critical response to the crises of colonization and Imperial collapse.

While the transmedia narrative quiver on the threshold of indeterminate genre designation and between literature and reality, they become the perfect metaphor for the twenty first century refugees who have to constantly negotiate between multiple layers of insecurities, gossamer selfhoods, fragile national affiliations, inevitable rootlessness, and

transgressive sexuality. Thus, the paper examines different iterations of contemporary transmedia such as a Neo-Victorian novel, the English anime adaptation of a Japanese novel, and an American videogame to explore how this fluid genre both represents and perhaps even monetises on the presence of the refugee, the displaced, the migrant and the immigrant. Contextualising my arguments in light of game and Neo-Victorian theories as expostulated by the works of Shaw and Ho, the paper thus posits that the emergent transmedia narratives asserts the creation of a new narrative medium surrounding the discourse of trauma, that redresses the lacuna in the field of academic scholarship in relation to migration, and refugee problem, and also adds ways to further critique the discourse of trauma in transmedia narrative themselves. As such, the paper is divided into three sections: the first section analyses *Bury Me My Love* in light of the depiction and experience of the migrant in the game narrative which further contests the ethical parameters of monetising narratives of migration and trauma; the second section argues how *Kuroshitsuji* offers an insidious critique of the Victorian fear of the sexuality of the migrant; ultimately the third section analyses *The Alienist* as not only a critique of the Victorian society but also our contemporary one in context of our negotiation with the sexual identity of the migrant.

“Games do not necessarily have to be fun and trivial”²: The Refugee Crisis and Problems of Monetisation in *Bury Me My Love*.

I’d been texting back and forth with my wife for a couple of days when she suddenly goes quiet. Then, I got a call: a voice recording that told me that she’s been taken into custody, she doesn’t know what will happen to her, and she doesn’t know when she’ll see me again — if ever.

And then she was gone. (*Bury Me* ending)

²The given quote is excerpted from an email interview of Pixel Hunt with Polygon.

The American videogame *Bury Me My Love* has nineteen different endings, one of which ends with Nour suddenly disappearing without a trace, after being taken into custody, and the player in Majd's persona wondering what fate befell Nour, as a result of the decisions that he/she had taken. Such acute personal involvement with the gameplay offers an insight into how the videogame medium can offer a detailed and personal perspective at what millions of Syrian refugees, in the particular context of the game narrative, and refugees in general, have to go through, filtered through the relationship of Nour and Majd (the player). In this section of the paper, I argue that based on the Syrian refugee crisis, *Bury Me My Love* is a critique of game narratives on the refugee problem, problematizing the ethical boundaries of such productions and realistically portraying the paradoxical nature of migration that calls into question one's national, racial, personal identity as well as existence.

By playing the role of Nour's husband, the player is offered an intensely personal window to the refugee problem. It coalesces the identi-(ties) of the player- as his own self and as the husband of a refugee who has embarked on a perilous journey through fraught borders from the war-torn Syria to a safer refuge in Germany. For instance, the player accompanies Nour to the bus stand from where she had arranged a conveyance that will take her out of Syria. Similarly, the player constantly engages in text-based conversations with Nour, ranging from the condition of border patrols to the taste of Starbucks Coffee. Thus, the game enables 'deep emersion' of the player into the game narrative, thereby allowing him/her to establish a personal link with the character, and he/she becomes individually involved with the fate that Nour faces in the game. However, this simple dialogic mode of gameplay is problematized by the fact that often the player is just an onlooker privy to the text messages of Nour and Majd, and only in certain critical situations the player is given a choice to decide and act- such as advising Nour to not trust the taxi driver who's offered her a safe passage across Syrian border for a heavy price (Fig. 1). Moreover, on several occasions, Nour doesn't listen to the

player's advice, or hides incidents that are happening around or with her from him/her. Sara Upstone invokes "Deleuze and Guattari's argument for the power of this multiplicitous, fluid, and moving space which strikes at the core of the structure of the state and, more importantly, is explicitly anti-colonial—a 'nomadism' that is 'deterritorialized par excellence' and subversive as 'it is the vital concern of every State not only to vanquish nomadism but to control migrations'" (146–147). Drawing on Upstone's argument, Souvik Mukherjee also contends that "in the videogame, too, a similar threefold spatiality can be seen. For the real and the imagined spaces posited in the game, there is also the lived space of experience that is conveyed through records of gameplay experiences" (49). Consequently, the game narrative reflects the simultaneous existence of multiple truths and realities that often collide within the consciousness of the player. He/she had to constantly juggle his/her real existence outside the game, as well as the virtual reality of living inside the game- acting and reacting to Nour's decisions. The gameplay thus induces the player to experience life at the margin- not only of the precipice between real and virtual existence, but also that of one country and the other, similar to how a refugee has to negotiate their national identity and existence.



Fig 1. Conversation between Nour and Majd on how Nour should cross the Syrian border and whether Nour should trust the taxi driver. *Bury Me My Love*, 2017.

The player's partial freedom to affect the course of the games also merits an analysis of the videogame's multiple endings. Depending on the player's choices, Nour may end up caught, dead, or successful in reaching Germany. For instance, in the quote with which the section began, Nour has been caught by the border patrol, and soon all connection with the player is lost. The game ends with the player uncertain about Nour's fate. In another ending, the player receives a poor audio recording in which Nour keeps telling how she loves her husband, and the player hears of her no more (Fig. 2). Such experiences bring the player empathetically closer to understanding the real tragedies and traumatic experiences of the refugees across the world. The inconclusivity of the game narrative and the polymorphousness of its endings also recalls to the mind, the fate of refugees in real life, who are also forced to keep on trudging across border, deracinated, without hope and unsure of their end.

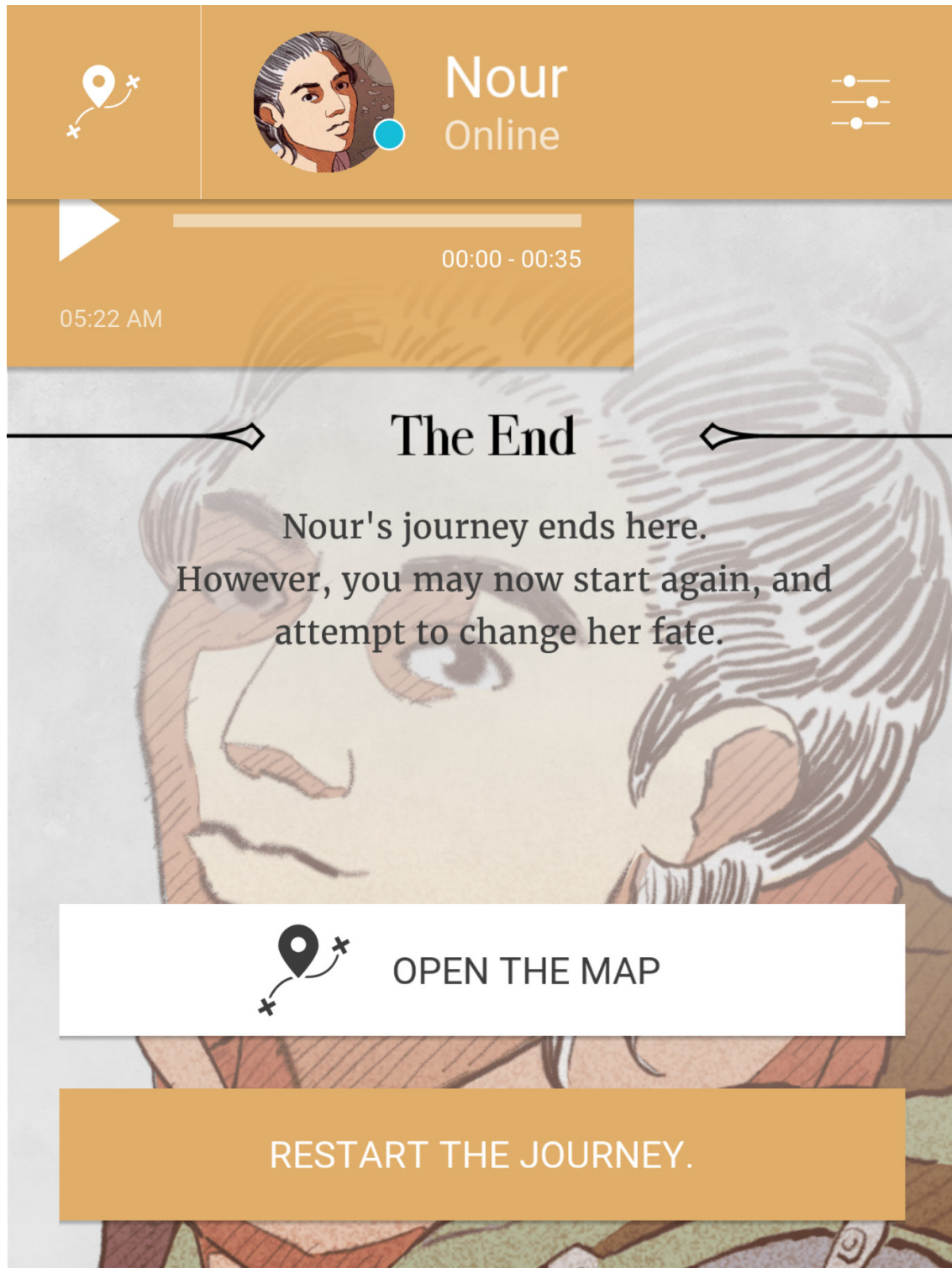


Fig. 2. Majd receives a voice note from Nour, and then all connection is lost. *Bury Me My Love*, 2017.

The fact that the narrative of the gameplay is based on a real life refugee crisis enables the game to depict certain vivid experiences of the life of a migrant. For instance, Nour sends the player images of the border patrol, concentration camps for the displaced (Fig 3), when she was badly bruised (Fig. 4), and when she had to cross a river with other refugees. The duration of such incidents often coincides with the chronological time in real life which further problematizes the experience of the player within the videogame. The narrative is designed to last few hours, a day or to several days, depending on the choices that both the player and Nour make. Furthermore, sometimes Nour initiates conversation which appear on the player's phone as text notifications. Whereas on other occasions, Nour may not respond immediately to the player's messages, since she doesn't have a SIM card or her phone runs out of charge, and the player must wait for Nour's response for the game to proceed forward. The temporal dimension of the gameplay thus often coincides with time in real life, making the player's experience more realistic, vivid and personal.



Fig. 3. The concentration camps for displaced refugees of the Syrian War. *Bury Me My Love*, 2017.

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Fig 4. Nour's Bruise. *Bury Me My Love*, 2017.

While the protagonists are fictional and the events depicted are a combination of several incidents, the fact that the game has been inspired by the real accounts of five Syrian refugees have contested the ethical parameters of producing a videogame on a severe issue like the Syrian Refugee crisis. Critics have often pointed out how games developed on war, refugee crisis and forced displacement, to name a few, tend to trivialise the trauma and the suffering of the migrants in real life. For instance, ““We Put Our Hands on the Trigger with Him””: Guilt and Perpetration in *Spec OPS: The Line*” published in *Criticism* 59.2 (Spring 2017) analyses the theme of guilt or its lack thereof generated from the act of killing in the game narrative. Moreover, the article also emphasizes the perils of developing games on refugee and migration problems in an increasingly consumer culture because the harrowing experiences of the refugees is often trivialised as well as monetised. On the contrary, it can be argued that, the personal link established between the player and the protagonist through the game narrative helps the player to build an empathetic humanised relationship with the character, eventually allowing a deeper understanding of the traumatic experience of refugees. Emphasizing this dichotomy of game experience, in his review of the game, Vikkie Blake contends that:

“It’s a curious thing, though. On one hand, *Bury Me* expertly retells the harrowing plight real refugees face every day, unravelling this story via warm, relatable characters so that it truly - if only briefly - puts us in the shoes of those directly affected by conflict. On the other, it gamifies this heartbreaking experience, wrapping it up in a game with 19 different endings, tempting you to undertake multiple replays” (n.pag).

The game narrative is successful so far in focusing on the experience of the refugees in an attempt to humanize them. Different paths taken by the player emphasizes the multitudinous ways in which a refugee has to struggle in real life. Contrarily, in its attempt, the narrative runs the risk of oversimplifying the refugee experience for in real life, refugees such as

Nour will not get 'do-overs'. Further, the internalisation of the gameplay doesn't help the player in understanding the lived experience of the refugees which are more traumatic and harrowing than a videogame platform can effectively reproduce. However, in its complex portrayal of the refugee crisis, the game narrative is successful in extending to the popular culture a platform for addressing the concerns of refugee crisis. It successfully captures the complexities of such issues, similar to canonical cultural texts, but goes beyond the canon to produce a further graphic and interpersonal contact with the experiences of the other. It facilitates a negotiation where imperial spatiality is challenged. This 'deterritorialization' in turn dissolves the fixities of representation and replaces it with the experiences of the other, and problematizes the debatable ethics involved in the monetization of these narratives which often do not consider the migrant's subjective agency.

Kuroshitsuji and the deviant sexuality of the migrant.

It is the sexuality of the migrant figure that assumes primacy in my analysis of the next transmedia narrative, *Kuroshitsuji* (*The Black Butler*). Set in Victorian England of the late nineteenth century, the manga and its anime adaptation critiques the Victorian paranoia of the sexuality of the migrant 'other' that has been often depicted as exotic, monstrous, and deviant. As James Eli Adams has observed in "Victorian Sexualities", Victorian Literature is dotted with references to queer subtext, coding and decoding (128). For instance, Sheridan Le Fanu's "Carmillia", which portrays a female vampire who preyed on young women; Bram Stoker's *Dracula* that has often been argued to display nuanced homosexual motif; Robert Louis Stevenson's "Jekyll & Hyde" which represents the paradox of identity- living a double life as an upstanding citizen as well as a sinner of the filthy underbelly of London. Employing the themes and motifs of Victorian Gothic literature, and by infusing the Japanese and the

English cultures, *Kuroshitsuji* offers a critique of the Victorian society that lived in fear of the deviant sexuality of the migrant others.

Consequently, the main protagonist, Ciel Phantomhive, the immigrant Japanese lord whose family had long served the English Crown, plays with the conventions of gender and sexuality within a Victorian setting. On several occasions, in the anime, Ciel disguises himself as a young girl. He deceives and manipulates his targets not only by lying and pretending, but also with his body. For instance, in episode four, “His Butler, Capricious”, on Her Majesty’s order, Ciel and Sebastian investigate a series of murder of prostitutes in London, recalling the infamous Jack the Ripper cases of Whitechapel. They narrow their suspect down to an aristocrat knowledgeable in medical practices, called Viscount of Druitt, and plan to infiltrate his party that they thought he uses as a pretext to sell young virgins and murder prostitutes. Ciel disguises himself as the young niece of Madame Red (an aristocrat lady and his late mother’s sister) and accompanies her to Viscount’s ball. Ciel not only entices the Viscount but the later also describes his body as ‘pure’, ‘slender’ and ‘chaste’, recalling how the Victorians would label and glorify the body of their women. It is the horror of Ciel’s ‘truth’ when he is eventually discovered that makes Viscount bewildered enough to slip up during the auction and he is arrested. As Elizabeth Wesseling has argued,

The corruption of colonisers...can be interpreted as a neo-Victorian critique of exoticism that undermines the ideals of [Victorian] masculinity...more specifically, the moral ideal of Christian manliness. This ethical framework, also called “manly Christianity”, “manly morality”, or “muscular Christianity” [was] central to the Victorian age (324).

Consequently, it can be argued that it is Ciel’s ‘gender performativity’ that unsettles the white upper class male Victorian who is ‘horrified’ at Ciel’s infringement of normal sexual code

and surrenders. Ciel's role playing seems to be a direct attack on the Victorian sexual standard that sought to restrain and codify sex within its society.

Furthermore, the fact that Ciel is assisted by a demon butler (also of Japanese origin) plays on the supernatural motif of Victorian Gothic literature that was also associated with deviant sexuality. Like his master, Sebastian too indulges in wanton sexual activities, ranging from seducing a Catholic nun to a Christian white maid. The sexual abandon of immigrant master and butler duo that they both utilize as an agent of destruction of the Crown's enemy emphasizes the Victorian's anxiety about the sexuality of the Eastern other. Frank Mort argues that at the apex of modernization, and post the publication of Charles Darwin's *Origin of Species* (1859), the Victorian consciousness was plagued by the fear and anxiety of racial, cultural, biological and sexual degeneration, and the influx of eastern immigrants 'infesting' their society was considered to be the root cause of their degradation (133). Furthermore, crucial to understanding the image of the migrant in the Victorian consciousness is also Ciel's confrontation with queen Victoria, who has been shown as being obsessed with sexual purity and preservation of youth (episode 22). The episode reveals that the English queen was behind the murder of Ciel's parents because their surging power posed a threat to the Crown. The queen also reveals that the assassination jobs that she had assigned to Ciel were also meant to take his own life for he too belonging to the Phantomhive household and increasingly nearing to unveil the truth behind his parent's murder, was a threat to the Imperial crown. Consequently, Ciel and his butler as being a demon from hell effectively captures Victorian imagination of the deviant, devilish and monstrous immigrants as harbingers of their downfall.

While talking about the sexuality of the immigrant, one cannot overlook the representation of the female immigrant in the Victorian period. Madame Red embodies the figure of the deviant eastern female who is bent on defiling the purity of the Victorian womb.

In the anime, Red is also a medical practitioner and is eventually revealed to be the one behind the murder of the prostitutes in Jack the Ripper case. Red and her butler Grell Sutcliff (a transsexual demon) murder countless innocent female sex workers on the streets of London, both instigated by envy due to the fact that they cannot have children: Madam Red due to an accident that killed her unborn child and Grell due to his biological sex. At first glance, Red seems to be the loving and caring maternal figure to Ciel. However when her truth is revealed she is murderous and merciless. Red's paradoxical representation plays on the Victorian ideals of womanhood. The perfect Victorian woman was the kind, asexual maternal figure. The fallen woman on the other hand was sexual, a danger to both children and other women. Madam Red was represented both: her desires to be a mother eventually turned her into a serial murderer whom took the lives of countless women. The dichotomy of her character embodies the Victorian imagination of the immigrant woman as not only deviant and monstrous, but also enticing the Victorian chaste maiden into defiling herself and the society.

The Victorians were fixated on preserving the appearance of purity, normalcy, and chastity, while trying to cast out that which was deviant in its society onto the body of the other. Consequently Victorian literature is replete with sexual coding, subtext and decoding. *Kuroshitsuji* effectively plays on these tropes to graphically represent the Victorian anxiety of defilement, corruption, pollution and degeneration by the immigrant other.

The Alienist and the representation of the immigrant body.

We enjoy neo-Victorian fiction in part to feel debased or outraged, to revel in degradation, reading for defilement. By projecting illicit and unmentionable desires onto the past, we conveniently reassert our own supposedly enlightened stance towards sexuality and social progress (Kohlke 346).

According to Marie-Luise Kohlke thus, the “neo-Victorian sexsation” appeals to the posterity of the Victorian period because they are able to credit themselves with a sense of moral superiority and sexual inclusivity by attributing illicit desires, deviances and exclusivity to the Victorians. By excluding the sexual and moral defilement from their own society and casting it on the Victorians, the posterity is able to cherish the idea of upholding a more civilised and inclusive society. Endorsing Kohlke’s observation, I argue that Caleb Carr’s *The Alienist* contests the twenty-first century society’s claim of moral superiority and gender and racial inclusivity. While on one hand the novel critiques in retrospect, the Victorian trauma about the racial, sexual and moral degeneration at the *fin-de-siecle*, on the other hand, the novel forces its contemporary readers to confront their own anxieties about sexual, racial, and moral deviances.

The novel uses the murdered and mutilated bodies of the male child prostitutes as site of infestation, pollution and endangerment. The body that has been transgressed and in turn transgresses the established sexual and racial hierarchy of the nineteenth century society, thus challenges the heterosexual and heteronormative construction of ‘stable boundaries’ of sexual as well as racial identities. Consequently, when Willem Van Bergen (Josef Altin), a privileged son of an elite class couple being protected by the Mayor and the police, and who is the killer in *The Alienist* leaves behind the body of one of his victims (a semite boy) in Battery Park, the narrator John, cannot help noticing a deeper meaning in the murderer’s actions:

Whoever our quarry was, and whatever the personal turmoil that was propelling him, he was no longer confining his activities to the less respectable parts of town. He had ventured into this preserve of the wealthy elite and dared to leave a body in Battery Park, within easy sight of the offices of many of the city’s most influential financial elders. Yes, if our man was in fact sane, as Kreizler so passionately believed, then this latest act was

not only barbarous but audacious, in that peculiar way that has always produced a mixture of horror and grudging acknowledgement in natives of this city (Carr 139).

The murderer had thus attacked the heart of the city. In his infringement, he had also forced the collapse of the racial hierarchy of the nineteenth-century American society. The invasion of the social, sexual, ideological, and moral normative space by the mutilated corpse of a semitic, migrant, male, child prostitute had further fuelled the anxiety of the mainstream people who had already begun realising the gradual degeneration of their moral, class and racial hegemony. As Mary Douglas has suggested in *Purity and Danger*:

All social systems are vulnerable at their margins, and that all margins are accordingly considered dangerous. If the body is synecdochal for the social system *per se* or a site in which open systems converge, then any kind of unregulated permeability constitutes a site of pollution and endangerment (qtd. in Butler 180).

Consequently, by situating the successive murders of male child prostitutes at the heart of nineteenth-century New York, the text attacks the 'social system' by bringing the mutilated corpses inside its secure perimeters of normalcy. Such an act not only establishes a connection between the American mainstream population with the marginalised community of migrants who are graphically depicted as leaving in abject poverty in slums, and engaging predominantly in illegal trades like human trafficking and prostitution, but also disassembles the class and racial hierarchy of the Victorian American society.

Child sexuality and migrant identity thus seem to lie at the heart of the narrative of *The Alienist*, as the white male killer John seems fascinated by the body of the migrant male child prostitute. John specifically targeted migrant boys of different racial origins such as Georgio Santorelli, and Ali ibn-Ghazi, who had been sold to Scotch Ann by his father. The novel opens with the murder of the thirteen-year-old immigrant child prostitute

Georgio “Gloria” Santorelli, whose mutilated body is discovered with wrists tied, legs bent in a kneeling posture, and his face pressed on the steal walkaway. The narrator gives a graphic detail of the series of mutilation that the victim had undergone at the hands of his butcherer:

The face did not seem heavily beaten or bruised ...but where once there had been eyes there were now only bloody, cavernous sockets. A puzzling piece of flesh [his genitals] protruded from the mouth...Large cuts crisscrossed the abdomen, revealing the mass of the inner organs...At the groin there was another gaping wound, one that explained the mouth –the genitals had been cut away and stuffed between the jaws. The buttocks, too, had been shorn off, in what appeared large...one could only call them carving strokes (Carr 16).

Consequently, John’s attempt at specifically dispensing and mutilating Georgio’s sexual organs seems to betray the nineteenth-century society’s fear of the sexually profane and morally depraved migrant ‘other’. H.G. Cocks argues that ‘ascribing queer sex to other nationalities was a familiar practice’ (qtd. in Coleman 39). Homosexual practices was predominantly distanced from mainstream life and considered outside the national identity of nineteenth century Victorian American society. (Coleman 39). A similar stance was taken against prostitution. Jonathan Coleman argues that “prostitutes were [considered] “increasingly foreigners” and that the trade itself was “Eastern in its origin.”” (39). Prostitution and queer sex were considered contingent on the premise that both were inherently non-Western. Consequently, the reiterative attempts of the killer to infest the Victorian American society with the defiled bodies of the migrant re-inscribes the boundaries of the migrant body along new cultural lines that transgressed the racial and sexual binaries.

Conclusion

I have argued in this paper that the transmedia narrative medium offers “simultaneous possibilities” to negotiate the reception of the figure of the refugee in popular culture as well as the representation of the sexuality of the migrant in neo-Victorian anime and novel that cast a critique of not only the Victorian society but also its afterlives. The paper has analysed how these narratives expose an emergence of a new narrative medium surrounding traditional discourses such as that of the experience of being a refugee, trauma of forced displacement and alternate sexuality of the marginalised communities, to name a few. It has also focused on the amorphous and uncanonical transmedia narratives on migration and trauma, in order to challenge the myth that popular media is ahistorical and apolitical.

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