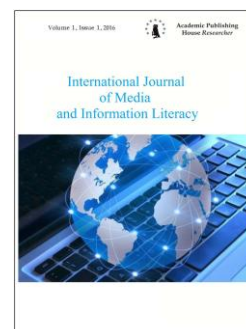


Copyright © 2019 by Academic Publishing House Researcher s.r.o.



Published in the Slovak Republic
International Journal of Media and Information Literacy
Has been issued since 2016.
E-ISSN: 2500-106X
2019, 4(2): 50-59

DOI: 10.13187/ijmil.2019.2.50
www.ejournal46.com



Metanarratives of Identity in Web-series: A Narrative Analysis of Netflix's *Ghoul* (2018)

Sonali Srivastav ^{a, *}, Shikha Rai ^b

^aNational Institute of Fashion Technology, , Bhubaneswar, India

^bSchool of Journalism and New Media Studies, IGNOU, India

Abstract

Internet is providing a platform to alternative narratives to unfold. Bypassing censorship laws, requiring lesser budget and tapping the raw nerve of the audience with instant and incessant feedback, Web series are destabilizing the existing entertainment industry comprising of films and Television. Comparatively a new field of study and critical analysis, web series are being treated as another audio-visual product, thus deriving from the critical film theories as a paradigm.

Akin to films, that are considered to be a mirror of the society with an imprint of the story teller, according to the auteur theory, the web series also is an audio-visual work of art, woven with a narrative. The identity of the story teller impacts the telling of the story, and the choice of the story as well. In the light of the Auteur Theory (Bazin, 1957), this paper discusses the perspectives of the director and employs an in-depth narrative analysis of the Netflix's Indian Web-Series *Ghoul* (2018) to study the representations and identity of various characters on the basis of their gender, race and religion. The paper studies the plot devices, themes, visual and audio design of the narrative by the filmmaker in reference to his personality and discernment. In the light of the auteur theory, the paper discusses the perspective of the director on representation of gender, race, politics and religion in the story. The metanarrative, with its many layers and contextual frames brings in an innovative actuality in the politico social and cultural milieu.

Keywords: narrative analysis, web series, metanarrative, identity, racial, religious and gender depiction.

1. Introduction

It is much more personal and quainter Web is taking over our worlds at a rapid pace. It also makes its presence felt in the way we humans have been creating, narrating and consuming stories. Back when the availability of the storyteller was of the prime importance, the premium selling point was the film ticket, the prime time on TV and the price spent on buying a book. Now as the web shifts the fulcrum of interest, it is the audience who has access to multiple platforms and avenues for entertainment and a plethora of stories to choose from. The medium could be text, audio or video or their amalgamation with interactivity, the story teller could be all powerful and omniscient like traditional medium or a collaborator like the new medium's. The avenues for feedback are a plenty and a number of stories are finally seeing the light of the day due to the nature of the platform (Tryon, 2009).

One of the avenues supported on the internet is the web series. Initially formulated like a stage in between TV shows and Films, the web series are emerging as another imperative cultural

* Corresponding author

E-mail addresses: sonali.srivastav@nift.ac.in (S. Srivastav), shikharai@ignou.ac.in (S. Rai)

product, closer to the audience due to the nature of the medium. The stories are less opulent, but deeply rooted, the targeted market is less vast, but more critical and the film makers are less glamorous but sincerer about the tales they aim to deliver. Audience also connects with the content differently with the trend of binge watching, and the interpersonal relationships people forge with their electronic devices like smartphones, laptops and tablets. Viewing a web series is neither a family activity like watching TV, neither an outing with friends or family like watching a film. (Alice, 2016).

Sticking to the Public Sphere model (Habermas, 2006), YouTube is a platform, which allows each individual to share video content and see video content uploaded by others. Being democratic in nature, the content rules who is more popular or rather gets a greater number of hits. With heavy traffic on a channel, the advertisers also want to hook in the audience. YouTube heralded the onset of web-series, with users creating and hosting their own video stories which involved less capital, great experimentation and relatable stories (Lambert, 2013).

Metanarrative and other relevant aspects is the narrative of narratives is a narratological enquiry into the stories, their mode of delivery, choice of themes etc. Done from a structuralist point of view, metanarratives try to look at a language beyond what is implied to ascertain the reasons and the context of the meaning assumed. Thus, discussing the metalanguage as well, freeing the words from their explicit meanings.

As Derrida put it, words are only vessels created to carry the meaning across, but what if the meaning is carried beyond in much more than the combination of words (Derrida, 1997). This is in the context of language and storytelling for the literary mediums, but can we juxtapose this with the Montage theory (Eisenstein, 2010) from the soviet school when discussing films? The theory states that when two shots are combined, the meaning could be much more than their combination. $A + B$ is not equal to C .

Drawing parallels, the visuals mean much more than what they are when combined together in a specific space, time and context provided by the cinematic moment. Aid this with the dimension of sound, and the implicit meaning can be affected exponentially.

With the advent of a new medium, which hosts stories different from the mainstream, gives the mouthpiece to segments silenced till now and empowers the audience instead of assuming them as mere passive beings, there emerges a necessity of studying and chalking a metanarrative for it. What are the stories being told, why are they being told now, why are they being told at all? Who are the people who are telling this? While the auteur theory states that their persona an important factor, how does this relegate on this particular medium? This paper is an attempt to get an insight into such and related questions.

Before the Internet boom in the silicon city, Netflix began as an DVD renting company in 1997 in California. From an initial DVD sales and rental services, the giant is now foraying into TV and Film Production. Currently placed at the tenth position in the list of world's largest Internet based companies, Netflix is starting to prove a worthy competitor to entertainment giants like HBO and Fox Entertainment. As the subscriber base increased and spread across the globe, so did the choice of content.

Within a time span, the creators realized that existing content might not be enough to keep the audience hooked. Thus began the commissioning of original content in 2010. By mid 2011, Netflix began live streaming of content, which is akin to broadcasting, but customized for content. In 2013, *House of Cards*, first series created, produced and streamed by Netflix debuted. Co-produced by Hollywood producers Kevin Spacey and David Fincher, the success of the series heralded a new entertainment platform and cross industry collaborations. It is like Hollywood met Silicon City.

Slowly TV channels began borrowing content from Netflix for their audience, for Example *Orange in the New Black* and *Thirteen Reasons Why* (Masters, 2016). In 2016, Netflix entered the Indian markets, testing waters with streaming first (Lieberman, 2013); plans for indigenous production unfolded in 2018 with *Sacred Games* (2018), *Ghoul* (2018), along with the films like *Love Per Sq. Feet* (2018), *Lust Stories* (2018), *Brijmohan Amar Rahein* (2018), etc. This paper concerns itself with case study of *Ghoul* (2018), because of reasons that will be discussed later in the paper.

Ghoul (2018) is an Indian horror web series based in Arabian folklore of a monster named Ghoul. The three part series is written and directed by Patrick Graham. In totality, it is lesser than

an average feature length film releasing in India. It was produced by Anurag Kashyap, Jason Blum amongst many others. Blum had also produced Hollywood success *Get Out* (2017) last year, another horror set in social reality. His production house, called Blumhouse Productions produces microbudget films and is famous for giving full creative control to the directors. One of his earliest production was the pathbreaking film in the horror genre, *Paranormal Activity* (2005).

Ghoul was conceived by Graham after he had a dream about a scary prison and a scarier inmate. Blending in with Arabian folklore of ghoul, who fits in 'because of his characteristics' (Rosario, 2018). Graham being a British, wrote the script in English, while the dialogues were later translated into Hindi. It is one of the first major works by the Director Patrick Graham, who has directed few shorts over past 5 years.

This paper aims to analyse *Ghoul* (2018), a widely viewed web-series, its various depictions and portrayals in the series and Graham's perspective in its creation and telling.

2. Materials and methods

Aims and Objectives. The overarching aim of this study is to analyze the perspectives taken on political, racial, religious and gender depictions taken by the director in the web series *Ghoul* (Netflix, 2018).

The objectives of this research are:

- to study the depiction of Indian political scenario in *Ghoul*;
- to analyze the representation of female gender in *Ghoul*;
- to evaluate various themes, tropes and the horror genre as depicted in *Ghoul*;
- to ascertain the role of the director while formulating the narrative description for the above

themes.

Research questions for the study are stated as follows:

- How is gender depicted in *Ghoul*?
- How is religious politics depicted in *Ghoul*?
- What are the various themes depicted in *Ghoul*?
- What are the major tropes used by the director to weave the narrative?
- How does the director use mythology, politics and social set up to create horror?
- What is director's perspective in the story universe?

Methodology: The paper utilizes narrative analysis method with the theoretical framework of auteur theory to answer the research questions.

3. Discussion

Williamson discusses the idea of representation in his book *Almost a Girl: Male Writers and Female Identification*. He states that men have trouble expressing emotions which are supposed to be feminine, thus they end up siding with extremes (Williamson, 2001). Feminist writer Gardiner, elucidates that because of difference in life experiences, male writers usually have trouble writing female characters (Gardiner, 2011) On the other hand, Pratt states that men have patriarchy so deeply imbued in their minds, that it is difficult for them to look beyond gender stereotypes while creating a character (Pratt, 1981).

Discussing female portrayals by male directors, Griffin in her paper discusses how black female bodies were still gazed at by white supremacist capitalist patriarchal gaze (Griffin, 2013). Smith et al in their paper studied how diversity behind the camera resulted in a diverse story telling as well, which was found lacking at the moment. They also found out that greater representation on and behind the screen lead to less stereotyping in stories as well (Smith et al, 2013).

Discussing the social politics of a horror film, Tompkins discusses the social allegories hinted at by horror narratives (Tompkins, 2014). Another researcher Cooley cites in his work that horror is nothing but collective cultural fear of a society (Cooley, 2015). Lastly discussing the auteur theory, which states that the director is the auteur or the author of the film, and his personality, perspectives reflect through his story and characters (Bazin, 1957).

Thus on the basis of review of these research papers, the study is designed to look at religious, social, racial and gender depictions in the web series in concern.

4. Results

Narrative Analysis

Ghoul is a 2018 Netflix series based in a future dystopian Indian society. The genre chosen is horror, starring Manav Kaul and Radhika Apte. The series was shot as a 3 episodic feature by Netflix. It has been conceptualized, written and directed by Patrick Graham. Graham is a British born, Christian-white-male film maker settled in Mumbai. The paper studies his perspective in a narrative universe based in Indian sub-continent, touches upon the Hindu Muslim tension prevailing in the country, involves the brown race and the protagonist is a female. Thus, we get the insight of an outsider into the religious, political and social milieu of the country and into the mind of the female character, Nida Rahim, who belongs to a stratified disadvantaged minority.

The plot does not specify which time, but it is stated that it is set sometime in near future when India is facing a major internal security terror threat and has resorted to extreme measures to curb the insurgency (Figure 1).

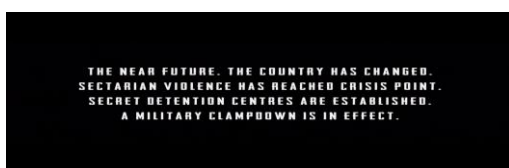


Fig. 1. *Ghoul* (2018): screenshot

There are regions specified for ‘Scheduled Religions’ and people crossing those regions are supposed to pass through a thorough security check and passed only after verifying that they pose no threats to security, like crossing a border. While not specifying any religion/s, geographical demarcations have separated all religions. People are being hunted, jailed and punished for practicing a form of religion (Islam, in this case) which is considered to be antinational. Books are being burned, religious preachers are being jailed and lives are being closely monitored. While neither of the characters on screen say that it is Islam which is considered to be a national threat, but the language and mannerisms of few characters specify that it is the Muslims who are bearing the brunt of all the security concerns.

The activities are possibly stemming from the fear prevailing in minorities in light of far-right ideology being practiced in the country today. Being termed as redefined ‘nationalism’, any deviation from the mainstream is being called out on social media and public platforms for public shaming and marginalizing. Graham’s depiction of near future is dark and bleak for not only many communities, but for the nation as well in totality as the roads and building seem deserted and the general visual mood is dark and barren. What makes it even more relatable is the fact that the actions leading to it (as shown in the series) are not too far removed from the actual events in today’s time, only a bit more extreme in color. Extremist attitude towards a religion, silencing all voices of dissent in name of sedition and one monolithic definition of patriotism, all these issues are resonant with the condition of Indian society right now. Book burning, distribution of ‘seditious literature’ underground and a character in the national security force claiming that ‘Intellectuals are not ideal citizens’ resonate with a lot of current occurrences in the country. It resonates with the ‘Urban Naxals’ and revokes memories of Kanhaiya Kumar from JNU, Arundhati Roy and many more.

Director: Patrick Graham is a British born film maker, now based in India. His choice of story and methods of storytelling make for a curious observation. Being a white, British, Christian male, the way he depicts a brown, Indian, Muslim woman is striking. First of all, as an outsider to the country and its affairs, he starts with a dark comment on the state of the nation and the way it handles its internal issues. It reminds one of many societies which lose their individuality in the quest of homogenizing and eradicating voices of dissent. It also hints at the repercussions of the current wave of nationalism without calling a spade a spade.

Characters: The characters etched by Graham have their own individual background stories, which are important to base and establish guilt and thus fear of repercussions in them. Nida Rahim, played by Radhika Apte is a naïve young Muslim woman, who believes in saving her country from a non-patriotic ideology. She joins the special security cell’s Advanced Interrogation unit, for interrogating prisoners and is a strong determined soldier. She is the highest scorer in the

training academy and turns in her father for an extremist anti-nationalist bent and propagating it through his teachings to his students.

Colonel DeCunha is played by Manav Kaul. He is a celebrated and decorated war hero who runs the advanced interrogation unit. He is guilty of beating and abusing his wife but yearns to be called a hero publicly. He drinks away to absolve himself. He strongly discredits any allegations against Rahim initially, showing the side of mistaken, yet trusting male character, who is disciplined and yet sympathetic. A Christian male, he is the character closest to Graham in identity. Shown to be a sympathetic, is the only voice of sanity and responsibility in the unit in the time of distress. Towards the end, he is the only one who ends up helping Rahim in her quest for fighting against the ghoul. But despite his solidarity and sympathy, his character is also not given a shot at redemption as he dies at the hands of Rahim in the end as she discovers that he is not the patriot he claims to be, but a corrupt man, killing innocent prisoners.

Das is another female interrogator, played by Ratnabali Bhattacharjee, at the detention center, who is depicted as a staunch extremist Hindu. She speaks in masculine proverbs, credited to her regional dialect and shows none of the stereotypical feminine characteristics. She is the only fellow soldier who rags Rahim and wants to imprison her on her arrival, for her ties with her father and her religion.

Now dissecting and discussing the narrative with different perspectives one by one. Firstly, the gender perspective. Many studies quote that while writing female characters, male writers tend to sexualize, infantilize or/and victimize the female characters up to various degrees (Ward, 2016; Bong, 2015). This results in stereotyped characters fitting into pre-designed bills and fulfilling specific roles in the narratives, such as the Madonna and the Whore. Bollywood too suffers from this, as female centric films are hard to come by, and even if they do, they show characters dealing with situations with extremist measures, such as *Matrubhoomi* (2003), *Lajja* (2001) or *Mother India* (1957). Such narratives push the strong female prototype to the fringes of society seeing them as a once in a while revolutionary and not just another character who could have been replaced by a male character easily. Most of the Indian films also fail to pass the Bechdel Test (Bechdel, 1985) which tests whether the film lies in the paradigm of feministic cinema or not.

Considering *Ghoul*, which has been directed by a male director, it creates a very distinct perspective for a female protagonist. Firstly, it is unusual for female characters to be called by their last names or the family names. In the Indian context women change their surnames post marriage, and thus are entrusted with the family legacy in a literal sense in patriarchal societal setups (Anujan et al, 2012; Dudrah, 2006). This is probably the first popular film/TV show/web-series of its kind where a woman is burdened with her father's legacy, to carry it forward and to clear his name. This is the first time that a female character is portrayed as an heir in the right of the Bollywood narratives as the character is also called by her last name in the military set up. Mainstream cinema has had female characters with no last names, to the ones who adopt last names of the husbands. Here is a character who has her father's last name and is called by it.

Secondly the director does not sexualize the character. While the character is dressed in a religion abiding hijab in the initial scenes, she is shown stripping down to underwear after entering the military set up, in front of a fellow soldier, without any inhibition to change into the work wear. She has her hair tied severely, sports no make-up or form fitting clothes. While Apte has played glamorous roles otherwise in her career, Graham decides not to play with her physical attractiveness, and pushes her femininity into the background, into the shadows of the detention center, under the garb of the uniform. Apte's femininity is used not as a visual device, but a narrative one.

The director though infantilizes the character up to some extent. First with the father telling her that she is naïve, later DaCunha adopting a savior and mentor's role. But unlike many Bollywood narratives, which portray the female lead as a child woman, needing to be rescued, or at least had the back of in case of action scenarios, Apte's Rahim is adept mentally and physically as an agent. She shows presence of mind, control over fear and physical and mental strength, which is required by the soldiers in such scenarios, as explained by the narrative in multiple places. But still, she needs a male character to anchor her. But in a twisted climax, Graham has Rahim kill both her fathers, actual and figurative.

Lastly victimizing the character. Rahim is shown to be in a constant dilemma, of having ratted on her father. She is haunted by the guilt but keeps her faith in the system. This could be her naivety and a hint towards being a child-woman. Hers is the only character that feels trapped,

claustrophobic at the center. Her entrapment is not only physical but also mental as she wants to prove to the authorities that she is a patriot. While she is not very comfortable being a part of the actual interrogating process, she gets involved trying to justify to herself and others that she is an able soldier.

She is also very vocal about telling herself and others, reaffirming the need for such detention centers and the process. But Graham abstains from giving her any sort of redemption towards the end. Her guilt is not resolved through her experiences, but is converted in enlightenment, depicted by an artificial halo created by a light (Figure 2). In a Buddha like pose, Apte appears like a person who is inherently peaceful, but has learned to derive the meaning of peace for herself. The enlightenment puts her on a path of another crusade, this time on a different side.

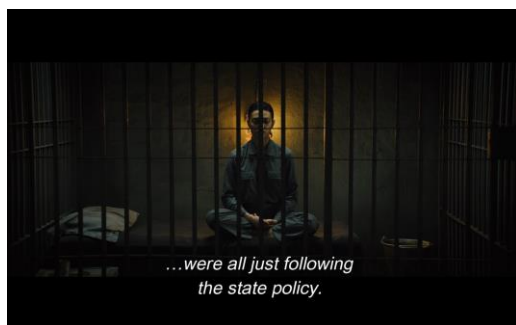


Fig. 2. *Ghoul* (2018): screenshot

Religious perspective: Graham's position is of a man taking a perspective stand on people who are too engrossed in their battles to see the larger war. It resonates with the 'white man's burden' or 'white saviour' trope used to salvage inferior races (Beeman, Narayan, 2011).

Secondly, while Graham's race is not in common with any of the characters, his religion is. Colonel DeCunha is a Christian and is considered to be the most powerful and in authority character in the universe of the story. He is idolized by Rahim for his idealism and patriotism. Starting as a hero, he suffers from his own demons. Depicted to be a family man, his major bone of contention is depicted to be his family as he used to abuse and hit his wife. This guilt turns him into an easy target for the ghoul, and his actions under the garb of patriotism make him the last kill for Rahim.

Graham takes a benched view at religious politics. While he does not vilify any religion, he does his part of reprimanding by showing the consequences of extremist's actions. He also creates a distinction between a good Muslim and a bad Muslim as accepted by the society today, by setting stark demarcations between the two; thus, also skirting the issue of Islamophobia.

Political perspective: The story talks about a fascist, authoritarian regime and according to several film critics, the story satirizes the Hindutva politics and bringing of 'acche din' in the nation by hinting at extremist consequences of the same (Datar, 2018). While the director hints at a dystopian future, it is not very far put as one can see the reasons, factors and their consequences leading up to that situation. Graham takes a position of a person in midst of a socio-political upheaval, but still as aloof as to enable telling of the story. He does not pick sides, does not name any religion or person, but it is unambiguously hinted at throughout the narrative.

The current milieu of the country is fostering extremism and populist ideology in name of nationalism and promoting Hindutva (Gupta, 2018). The right winged politics of the nation is at the moment dedicated to pleasing and agreeing with a propagandist ideology. The minorities also answer back severely, with a greater causticity. Hate speeches, Facebook groups and posts seem like vehicles of spreading the hatred and scratching the political backs (Sharma, 2018). Graham uses this as the crucible for the narrative.

There are multiple tropes used by the director to carry the story forward, which colour and flavour the narrative uniquely. Most prominent ones are guilt, concealment, suspicion and justice. The theme of guilt runs parallel through the story. It revokes the famous work by Agatha Christie, *And Then There Were None* (1939). It plays on the theme that guilt is a very personal and individualized emotion. It also plays upon the act of concealment of guilt, which is directed at firstly to the characters in the story universe and later metaphorically towards the

audience. Concealment and guilt create a vicious circle leading to suspicion. Everyone is suspicious of everyone, Das is suspicious of Rahim and Colonel, while the nation is suspicious of a particular religion. Graham very well plays on the three factors again revoking the religious and political condition in the country. Lastly justice, who serves justice, what is justice and how do we redeem ourselves. Many characters seek redemption and affirmation of their actions, by others and by themselves, creating an environment of uncertainty.

The mythological story that is the basis of the narrative involves a demon that prays upon guilt of people. Graham also appeals to the collective conscious of the Indian mass, posing some unsaid but extremely uncomfortable questions to be answered. Rahim states in a scene towards the end that everyone is guilty, and the guilt will eat them away, and one can't help but wonder if the statement holds truth only in the narrative universe or is an appeal for larger masses.

Futuristic and moreover dystopian narratives are usually aimed at self-reflection and analysis of actions. Ghoul arrives with a non-partisan and foreign perspective to do just that. Dystopian societies are characterized with dehumanization, in this case of a particular religion, a tyrannical government, environmental disasters or any other form of decline of society (Reddish, Reddish, 1990).

Mythology: Graham from his benched perch, looks at the stories of the culture with the eyes of a child. And this tends to exotify the phenomenon or things which are considered run of the mill by us. For e.g., the story of ghou. A creature that can be invoked by blood sacrifices, referring to the blood magic, the vilest form of magic considered by Christianity. The ghou preys on the guilt or the fear of the people. Taking the help of mythology, Graham primes the audience about the repercussions of the current extremist politics. The mythological story of a djinn or ghou is picked up from an Arabian folklore as Graham exotifies a mid-eastern culture to tell a fantasy. Hinting at cannibalism, he also paints the culture in a primal light. Graham mixes this trope with the help of mythology, along with inspiration from the famous urban legend of the Russian sleep experiment.

Horror Genre: It is a Lovecraftian format of horror, where man/mankind is a child merely, trapped in a situation which is much more immense than he can assume. A common trope in the horror stories appearing in the western world (Lovecraft, 1992). Lovecraftian horror has an individual who understands his or her insignificance in the larger scheme of things and goes insane while understanding this. The settings of Lovecraftian horror were usually desolated and away from the civilization like the unit *Meghdoot 31* in this case (Figure 3). Lovecraftian horror also draws upon the helplessness and hopelessness of individuals facing a problem.

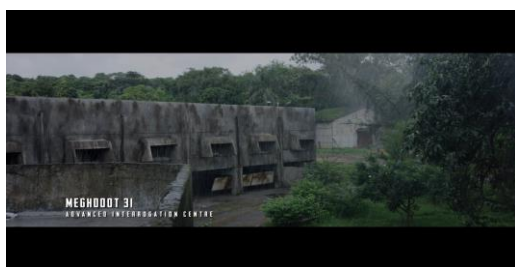


Fig. 3. *Meghdoot 31*: screenshot

In past few years, a new genre has been surfacing in films, it can be termed as social horror for the lack of a better word at the moment. Social horror talks about perils of an accepted social malpractice and shows us the extreme and horrific aftermath in the future, if the practice persists unflinching. Social horror derives maximum spooks from the fact that the factors/reasons causing the horror are extremely relatable in the current condition of the society. It appeals to the larger public about the perils by scaring them.

For e.g. *Get Out* (2017) talks about blatant racism and mixes sci-fi to create horror in the narrative (Holmes, Lang, 2018). Similarly, *Babadook* (2014) talked about single parenthood and micronuclear families. It mixed mental condition of lack of sleep, suppressed grief and maternal depression to create horror (Jacobson, 2016). *A Quiet Place* (2016) talked about parenting and utilized a dystopian future set up and post-human era. Similarly, *Ghoul* deals with religious

altercations used for politics, stemming from the current socio-political situation in the country and mixes mythological fantasy to spook the audience.

Lack of stereotypical feminine: Graham emphasizes on the lack of feminine in the story universe. While the apparent fight is between the two religions, there is another fight that does not happen on screen, the fight between the two genders. The only female characters that are seen are emasculated and refrain from displaying any feminine traits. Hinting at an imbalance, the narrative plays on that in order to survive in an apocalyptic future, the women will need to let go of the stereotypical features of femininity and pick up the gun literally.

Visual setup: *Ghoul* tries to critique the current situation of society by projecting a dystopian future which is bleak and dark with a constant fear lurking over the shoulders. Several checking points, guerrilla existence, establishment of national security cells, Scheduled Religion's Zones and finally the unit, which seems like the paramount picture of such society comprise the visual set ups. Most of the unit is underground and whatever part is over it has its windows painted black, so that the daylight does not break in. At a point in the story, Rahim tries to scratch away the paint in order to check whether the sun still rises in the world outside ([Figure 4](#)) marking and acknowledging a disconnect in her reality and actual reality.



Fig. 4. *Ghoul* (2018): screenshot

It also rains throughout the major part of the film. From dripping to torrential downpour, depending upon the amount of drama in the story at the moment ([Figures 5](#) and [6](#)). The metaphor of long dark and rainy night is depicted throughout the narrative.

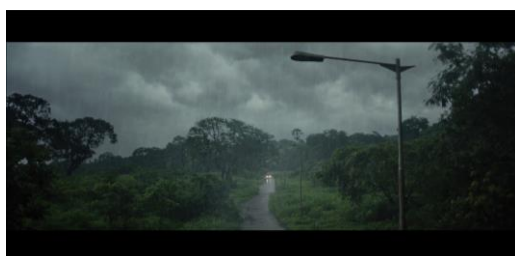


Fig. 5. *Ghoul* (2018): screenshot



Fig. 6. *Ghoul* (2018): screenshot

The only shot in day light is towards the end, where Rahim, a prisoner and DeCunha escape out of the unit ([Figure 7](#)).



Fig. 7. *Ghoul* (2018): screenshot

Seeming like the light at the end of the tunnel, the director saves the last act of attempted reclamation for the day light set up. What could have been a new beginning for her, Rahim shoots DeCunha in front of the forces, burdening herself for a life in prison in exchange of fulfilling what her father aimed for.

Alternative content: The horror is supplemented with a lot of gore and violence, which makes the content deemed suitable only for the adult viewing. The content is also suitable only for a platform like web series as the cultural and religious undertones of the content along with the blood and the gore would have been very difficult to pass through the censorship laws in India. *Padmavat* (2017) was released after much riots and ruckus by a particular community in India, it is difficult to assume that a film like *Ghoul* would have passed the Indian censor board with its severe religious and socio-political undertones.

5. Conclusion

Many foreign filmmakers have found India to be an imperative set up for many of their stories. They tend to exoticify the culture, the social conditions and the history. The colors, the people, the social milieu provides an interesting backdrop for ever more intriguing stories.

Ghoul is a noteworthy story because of the social horror genre set up in the current contextual scenario of the country, which beacons the 'acche din'. While not discarding the narrative, it is important to note that films have been an agent of white supremacy in Indian and International cinema as well, with many renowned film makers infantilizing other cultures which are deemed to be less developed. Shadeism or colorism in cinema is telling stories about races that are supposed to be inferior, with a loftier attitude (Hole et al., 2016).

But at times, a distant perspective is required to see things in totality, and Graham helps us in doing that through this web-series, as it is tacit that such plots could not be revealed on Indian film screens or Television sets without hurting few religious or racial sentiments. Stills

References

- Alice, 2016 – Alice, J. (2016). Clicking with audiences: Web series and diverse representations. *Metro Magazine: Media & Education Magazine*, 187: 58.
- Anujan et al., 2012 – Anujan, D., Schaefer, D.J., Karan, K. (2012). The changing face of Indian women in the era of global Bollywood. *Bollywood and Globalization: The Global Power of Popular Hindi Cinema*, 63: 110.
- Bazin, 1957 – Bazin, A. (1957). De la politique des auteurs. *Cahiers du cinema*, 70 (10).
- Bechdel, 1986 – Bechdel, A. (1986). *Dykes to watch out for*. Ithaca, NY: Firebrand Books.
- Beeman, Narayan, 2011 – Beeman, A., Narayan, A. (2011). If You're White, You're Alright: The Reproduction Of Racial Hierarchies in Bollywood Films. *Covert Racism*. Brill: 155-174.
- Bong, 2015 – Bong, M. (2015). Grotesque Depictions and Seduction: Exotification of Asian/American Women. *Claremont Colleges*, 33 p.
- Cooley, 2015 – Cooley, J.N. (2015). The societal allure of fear: Horror films as representations of current day cultural fears. California State University, Dominguez Hills.
- Datar, 2018 – Datar, Saraswati (2018). *Thenewsminute.Com*. [Electronic resource]. URL: <https://www.thenewsminute.com/article/ghoul-review-some-genuine-scares-and-frightening-insight-future-87240>
- Derrida, 1997 – Derrida, J. (1997). *Deconstruction in a nutshell: A conversation with Jacques Derrida*. No. 1. Fordham University Press.

- Dudrah, 2006 – Dudrah, R.K. (2006). *Bollywood: Sociology goes to the movies*. New Delhi: Sage.
- Eisenstein, 2010 – Eisenstein, S. (2010). *Towards a Theory of Montage: Sergei Eisenstein Selected Works*. Vol. 2. London: IB Tauris.
- Gardiner, 1981 – Gardiner, J.K. (1981). On female identity and writing by women. *Critical Inquiry* 8.2: 347-361.
- Griffin, 2014 – Griffin, R.A. (2014). Push ing into precious: Black women, media representation, and the glare of the White supremacist capitalist patriarchal gaze. *Critical Studies in Media Communication*, 31 (3): 182-197.
- Gupta, 2018 – Gupta, U. (2018). *Ghoul: If You Cry 'Anti-National' Too Frequently, One Might Just Turn Up*. *Business-Standard.Com*. [Electronic resource]. URL: https://www.business-standard.com/article/opinion/ghoul-if-you-cry-anti-national-too-frequently-one-might-just-turn-up-118090100684_1.html
- Habermas, 2006 – Habermas, J. (2006). Political communication in media society: Does democracy still enjoy an epistemic dimension? The impact of normative theory on empirical research. *Communication theory*, 16 (4): 411-426.
- Hole et al., 2016 – Hole, K.L. et al. (Eds) (2016). *The Routledge Companion to Cinema & Gender*. Milton Park: Taylor & Francis, 2016.
- Holmes, Lang, 2018 – Holmes, N., Lang, F. (2018). One year later to Black and White perspectives on *Get Out*. *International Journal of Applied Psychoanalytic Studies*, 15(4): 305-310.
- Jacobsen, 2016 – Jacobsen, P. (2016). The Babadook and maternal depression. *Psychologist*, 29 (11): 840-841.
- Lieberman, Andreeva, 2018 – Lieberman, D., Andreeva, N. (2018). Netflix Picks Up Four Marvel Live-Action Series & A Mini Featuring Daredevil, Jessica Jones, Iron Fist, Luke Cage For 2015 Launch. *Deadline*. [Electronic resource]. URL: <https://deadline.com/2013/11/disney-netflix-marvel-series-629696/>
- Lovecraft, 1992 – Lovecraft, H.P. (1992). *Crawling chaos: selected works 1920-1935*. Vol. 4. Powder Springs: Creation Books,
- Masters, 2016 – Masters, K. (2016). The Netflix backlash: why Hollywood fears a content monopoly. *The Hollywood Reporter*, 14.
- Pratt et al., 1981 – Pratt, A. et al. (1981). *Archetypal patterns in women's fiction*. Indiana University Press.
- Reddish, 1990 – Reddish, M.G. (1990). *Apocalyptic literature: a reader*. Abingdon Press.
- Rosario, 2018 – Rosario, K. (2018). From Arabic Folklore To An Indian Prison. *The Hindu*. [Electronic resource]. URL: <https://www.thehindu.com/entertainment/movies/from-arabic-folklore-to-an-indian-prison/article24762704.ece>
- Sharma, 2018 – Sharma, S. (2018). Ghoul Review: Netflix'S Latest Series Is Unnerving Because It Is Unafraid. *The Indian Express*. [Electronic resource]. URL: <https://indianexpress.com/article/entertainment/web-series/ghoul-review-netflix-web-series-radhika-apte-5320571/>
- Smith et al., 2014 – Smith, S.L., Choueiti, M., Pieper, K. (2014). Race/ethnicity in 600 popular films: Examining on screen portrayals and behind the camera diversity. *Media, Diversity, & Social Change Initiative: 202007-2013*.
- Tompkins, 2014 – Tompkins, J. (2014). The Cultural Politics of Horror Film Criticism. *Popular Communication*, 12(1): 32-47.
- Tryon, 2009 – Tryon, C. (2009). *Reinventing cinema: Movies in the age of media convergence*. Rutgers University Press.
- Ward, 2016 – Ward, L.M. (2016). Media and sexualization: State of empirical research, 1995–2015. *The Journal of Sex Research*, 53(4-5): 560-577.
- Williamson, 2001 – Williamson, A. (2001). *Almost a Girl: Male Writers and Female Identification*. University Press of Virginia.