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A Commentary on the Translation of Behind the Beautiful Forevers

CTL 4391 Final Year Project

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# Table of Contents

## I. Introduction

## II. Background

  i. Text analysis

  ii. Literary journalism and translation visibility

## III. Translation strategies

## IV. Translation analysis

  i. The visibility of style

     1) Metaphor

     2) Repetition

     3) The depiction of details

  ii. Unidiomatic elements

     1) Rejecting the abuse of four-character phrases

     2) Creatively deviating from idioms

     3) Preserving culture-loaded words

  iii. The visibility of imaginary space

  iv. Readability – no mix of classical Chinese

## V. Conclusion

## VI. The translation

## VII. Bibliography
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Abstract

This paper is aimed to comment on the translation of a chapter from *Behind the Beautify Forevers* based on the visibility theory. It argues that a visible translation is preferred for the sake of an impressive effect due to the genre and the objective of the source text. With the explanation of selected examples from the translation, the thesis concludes that visibility in the target text is achievable by various strategies such as defamiliarization, resistancy and foreignization.
I. Introduction

In 1965, the publication of Truman Capote’s *In Cold Blood* inaugurated a new literary genre called the non-fiction (Jan Whitt, 2008). This is regarded as the beginning of literary journalism, or narrative journalism. As a borderland between literature and journalism, literary journalism shares commonality with both journalist stories and fiction regarding how it is presented, and therefore, the translation strategy of literary journalism cannot simply follow that of literature or journalism.

According to skopos theory by Reiss and Vermeer, the purpose of translation determines the translation methods and strategies (cited in Munday, 2008). The purpose of literary journalism is to make a strong voice of social issues and leave an impact on the reader. To better fulfill this target, a visible translation is suggested.

Since the birth of visibility theory by Venuti, many discussions have been made on it while most scholars merely focus on the comparison between domestication and foreignization. The aim of this paper is to discuss the application of the visibility theory to translate the novella *Behind the Beautiful Forevers* as an example of literary journalism. In the first part, background information of the text and the genre is
provided to argue a case of visibility. The second part briefly introduces translation strategies used. Lastly, a detailed analysis based on the translation will be employed to prove the feasibility of visible translation.

II. Background

i. Text analysis

*Behind the Beautiful Forevers* is a book by Katherine Boo, a laureate of the Pulitzer and the National Book Award. Katherine Boo spent more than three years in the backward and underprivileged places in India, recording how slum-dwellers eked out their existence. The economic boom of India in recent years has not brought many benefits to the lower class but rather, exacerbated the gap between the grassroots and the elite. Without sound social security network, the underprivileged has no protection of life.

The story, set in a Bombay slum behind the airport wall on which the words “Beautify forever” is written, consists of numerous minor stories of the local dwellers who suffer hardships and strive to make a living as best as they can, never mind that they are ignominious or despised. Life does not give them any other options and dignity is
the least important thing here. Surrounded by sewage swamp and trash, the slum Annawadi is home to these main characters: Abdul, who scavenges through rubbish to make a profit; Asha, who tries to start a political career through corruption; and Manju, the first university girl in the slum. Apart from telling the stories of different people, Katherine Boo also commentates on uneven social distribution, poverty, political corruption and human right.

The selected passage is a 5000-word chapter about Manju, the university girl who endeavors to change her fate. It is an introduction to Manju and her life with occasional reference to other slum-dwellers.

ii. Literary journalism and translation visibility

1) Genre analysis

While concentrating on the daily life of ordinary people, literary journalists exploit literary techniques and stylistic writing to narrate, not as an indifferent bystander but a participant. Literary journalism departs from traditional journalism in the way that it offers more chances for the reader to engage in the story since its purpose is to narrow the gap between subjectivity and the object (Que Guoqiu& Liu Guoxing, 1992).
Falling within the range of nonfiction, narrative journalism features literary techniques including metaphor, personification, irony, dialogue, symbolism and many others. Instead of simply telling an unreal story, every effort is made in literary journalism to arouse the reader’s emotion and further call for action, as according to Mark Kramer (1995), who says that what an author creates are not sequential well-groomed paragraphs, but rather sequential emotional, intellectual and even moral experiences.

2) Argument on the translation visibility

Proposed in The Translator’s Invisibility, visibility is a term referring to the making visible of the translator and the original in the target text while invisibility suggests the translated text should appear “natural” in the target culture. Under the visibility theory, a target text should not be like a natural text since it would sacrifice the value of the source culture and lower the status of translators. Visibility rejects the “illusion of transparency” and advocate translation strategies like foreignization to resist cultural hegemony (Venuti, 1998). Apart from foreignization and minoritizing translation, Venuti (1995) also practices “resistancy” translation, which pursues cultural diversity, and highlights the linguistic and cultural difference by
foregrounding techniques and transforming the target cultural value.

I will argue that visibility may also be a translation strategy in literary journalism to combat cultural hegemony. The novella is not written for entertainment, but rather for revealing the dark side of the society and voicing the aspirations of the poor. It is a piece of political activism, calling for global attention to the hotspot issues in Indian slums. In this sense, keeping the original visible is of significance to elicit radical response in the TT reader as the ST reader, whether it is anger, sorrow or empathy. Furthermore, unlike the news reports which are merely informative, the unique objective of literary journalism requires it to be influential and stirs the reader so that they would not end up forgetting all about those emotions, insights and thoughts they gained from the text. Unnatural or unidiomatic translation will hinder the browsing of the reader, albeit it is because of the obstacles that the target reader will slow down their reading and reflect on deceptively inconsequential points. Visible translation facilitates this literary impact.

In addition to the resistant approach, non-fluency is also supported by Venuti (1995) as a way to foreignize the ST and eliminate the illusion of transparency. However, it is
not absolutely necessary to sacrifice readability for the sake of visibility. The degree of readability is so subjective and not based on one standard, since whatever is readable for Venuti is probably unreadable for other people, and vice versa. It is difficult to calibrate how fluent the translation is (Robinson, 1997). Moreover, literary journalism is supposed to influence large numbers of readers so that its advocacy may have worldwide impact. Reducing readability, to some extent results in dampening reader interest, and will reduce rather than advance the political cause. It is suggested that the visibility should be realized by readable, but rejuvenating expression (Qu, 1981).

III. Translation strategies

In accordance with the discussion above, to make the original and its translation visible, my translation strategies are defamiliarization and resistancy. Defamiliarization refers to creating the impact by deliberate linguistic techniques that disturb what is familiar or natural. (Fowler, 1986) and resistant translation methods, in a word, are to deviate from the target culture value and style (Munday, 2001). As said by Wall (2009:20), by “making strange”, “we force the mind to rethink its situation in the world, and this requires an expenditure of effort.” Because of the distorted or
transformed language, the TT reader inevitably has to spend more time exploring a deeper meaning, which helps to achieve the ultimate goal of literary journalism—calling attention and action. In this sense, these specific strategies are employed:

1. Keeping the original stylistic features visible in the TT
2. Creatively deviating from the idiomatic and simple use of Chinese
3. Leaving room for reflection in the TT as in the ST
4. Preserving the cultural elements and resisting adaptation
5. Avoiding the mix of modern and classical Chinese expressions

The following paragraphs further explain how these translation strategies facilitate the visibility of the original. Example analysis is categorized into four groups as stylistic visibility, unidiomatic elements, original profound meaning and readability. Two different translations are compared to highlight the divergent translation methods.

IV. Translation Analysis

i. The visibility of style

As a genre of literature where style plays important role, literary journalism also employs many stylistic techniques to enhance the language and the impression of
meaning. Rhetorical devices are important here. Plain in tone, the novella is characterized by its simple but exquisite language and a few rhetoric techniques stand out among all the stylistic devices. Most of these rhetorical methods, like simile, metaphor, hyperbole and so on, have their counterparts in Chinese and therefore, the original stylistic features can be maintained in the TT. Very often the flavor of the text is best carried through by the original figure of speech (Jin, 2003:92), although the same rhetorical technique may result in an unfamiliar expression in Chinese under some circumstances. Consequently a choice must be made between naturalness and visibility.

1) Metaphor

Example 1.1

ST: ……the sewage lake, which the hot season had magicked into a thick mat of water-hyacinth weed.

TT1: 炎热的天气神奇地令污水湖长满水葫芦。

(Yanre de tianqi shenqi de ling wushuihu zhang man le shuihulu)

TT2: 炎热的天气神奇地把污水湖变成了个厚厚的水葫芦垫子。

(Yanre de tianqi shenqi de ba wushuihu biancheng le ge houhou de shuihulu)
In the ST, the attributive clause followed by “which” is to modify “the sewage lake”. Without obvious indicators of resemblance, the ST is an example of metaphor, comparing the sewage lake to a thick mat. The mat is not a common item in Chinese houses and seldom used to describe water-hyacinth weed; instead, a more commonly used metaphor is “carpet (地毯, ditan). In the first attempt, the figurative expression is deleted for easy understanding and paraphrased into a verb-object phrase “长满水葫芦 (zhang man le shuihulu, to be full of water-hyacinth weed)”. Notwithstanding, the invisibility of metaphor is unremarkable and weakens the effect brought by the ST. For this reason, the rhetorical expression is kept in the second attempt to reproduce the vivid image that the sewage lake is too dirty and polluted, and is translated into “厚厚的水葫芦垫子 (houhou de shuihulu dianzi, a thick mat of water-hyacinth weed)”. Although mat is not that popular in China, translating it into “垫子 (dianzi)” assists understanding since it shares a Chinese character with cushion (坐垫, zuodian), an ordinary item in Chinese homes. Therefore, TT2 will not cause any incomprehension, though it is not idiomatic Chinese.

2) Repetition
Example 1.2

ST: No doubt he would mention how many people had gathered for how successful an evening at how many other slums.

TT1: 毫无疑问，他还会提到在其他多少个贫民窟，有多少人聚集着，这个夜晚是多么成功。

(Haowuyiwen, ta hai hui tiji zai qita duoshao ge pinminku, you duoshao ren juji zhe, zhege yewan shi duome chenggong)

TT2: 毫无疑问，他还会提到在其他那么多个贫民窟，有那么多人聚集着，这个夜晚是那么的成功。

(Haowuyiwen, ta hai hui tiji zai qita name duo ge pinminku, you name duo ren juji zhe, zhege yewan shi name de chenggong)

In this scene, Asha is worried, because she has messed up the party required by the Cooperator, that Cooperator will humiliate her by letting word spread to other slums (Boo, 2012).

Repetition is used to show emotions in a strong and emphasized way. The rhetorical repetition of “how” creates a great contrast between other slums and Asha’s, and powerfully delivers the anxiety of Asha by the rhyme. When appearing in a
declarative sentence, the word “how” can be translated into 多少 (duoshao), 多么 (duome), 这么 (zheme) or 那么 (name) depending on the context and the emotion. In attempt 1, the first two “how” are translated into “多少” while the last one, “多么”. The repetition of “多(duo)” partly maintains the original style, yet its pronunciation reduces the original strong emotion. “多 (duo)” in Chinese belongs to level tones (平) which sound moderate and mild, so the emphasis of “how” is not entirely visible in TT1. Compared with TT1, attempt 2 translates all of these “how” into “那么” and manages to re-present the same repetition and rhyme. Besides, in contrary to “多 (duo)”, “那 (na)” is an oblique tone (仄) that sounds more sonorous than level tones. The change in attempt 2 succeeds in reproducing not only the same rhetorical feature, but the same emotional effect with the ST.

3) The depiction of details

As discussed above, the translation of literary journalism should resonate with the reader in the same way as the original and recreate its power of "emotional involvement". To achieve these effects, one essential writing style of this novella, or literary journalism, must be preserved, i.e. “recording everyday gestures, habits, manners, customs……styles of walking and other symbolic details that might exist
within a scene (Wolfe, 1975: 46)”, or in short, the details must be depicted.

Example 1.3

ST: ……as she applied the stone to her mother’s large panties, her father’s small shirt.

TT1: 她……用洗衣槌敲打父母的内衣裤。

(Ta…… yong xiyichui qiaoda fumuqin de neiyiku)

TT2: 她……用洗衣槌敲打母亲的大短裤，父亲的小汗衫。

(Ta…… yong xiyichui qiaoda muqin de da duanku, fuqin de xiao hanshan)

The most obvious feature of modern Chinese is the great ability to generalize, which results in the terse language (Xu, 2003). It is suggested by Qian Gechuan (1981) that the translation of English texts should be concise by only absorbing the essence, for instance, “in the misfortunes of our best friends we always find something that is not unpleasing” should simply be “幸灾乐祸 (xingzailehuo)”, a highly summarized translation. It has become a common phenomenon in English-Chinese translation, but this generalization glosses over the important details of the ST.

In attempt 1, “large panties” and “small shirt” are translated as “内衣裤 (neiyiku, underwear)” to be brief and clear. TT1 may avoid the verbiage caused by the full translation and follows the linguistic convention of Chinese. Yet it is noticeable that
this attempt fails to portray details in the same way as the ST or visualize the original tableau, behind which a deep meaning hides. The depiction of mother’s large panties and father’s small shirt creates an interesting but pathetic contrast – their clothes are both ill-fitting, either too big or too small. The detail indirectly shows the poverty of the family and plays an important role in arousing the reader’s empathy with lot of underprivileged people. Hence, attempt 2 keeps the depiction of details and translates fit into “大短裤 (da duanku), 小汗衫 (xiao hanshan)”, making manifest the original style.

In conclusion, despite the fact that showing the original style may result in unfamiliar expression, it also re-presents the original focus or emotion and positively forces the reader to sharpen their aesthetic sense.

ii. Unidiomatic elements

Chinese is full of idiomatic expressions like idioms and four-character phrases that are closely related to the cultural context. Translating English into idiomatic Chinese, to some extent, helps to create a natural text but largely impairs the visibility of the ST. To address this concern, the method of foreignization is brought to translate the
novella for the effect of defamiliarization or strangeness.

Proposed by Schleiermacher and developed by Venuti, domestication and foreignization are two major strategies for the cultural or political translation. Domestication requires translators to render the ST in a way that is transparent and fluent and to adapt to the target cultural values. Foreignization, on the contrary, rejects this adaptation and underlines the original linguistic and cultural characteristics (Munday, 2001).

While the use of domestication is widespread by translators in China, more and more scholars are now aware of its drawbacks. Domestication often leads to the distortion of language or culture and draws an illusory picture of foreign countries (Liu, 1987), so it is not in line with the purpose of this literary journalism. *Behind the Beautiful Forevers* requires the reader to be aware of its foreignness and put attention to slums in India, not China. Therefore, unidiomatic expression is preferable in the selected translation.

1) Rejecting the clichéd use of four-character phrases

Example 2.1
ST: Corporator had one of those spread-leg policeman strides—as if his thighs were
too muscled for normal walking. And there was enough oil in his hair to fry garlic.

TT1: 代表先生头发油光可鉴，双腿粗壮，走起路来大步流星。

(Daibiao xiansheng youfa youguangkejian, shuangtui cuzhuang, zouqilulai
dabuliuxing)

TT2: 代表先生伸长着腿，迈着警察式的大步，就好像他的双腿肌肉过于发达，
不会好好走路一样，而那头上的油多得都可以炒个蒜头了。

(Daibiao xiansheng shenchang zhe tui, mai zhe jingchashi de dabu, jiu hoaxing
ta de shuangtui jirou guoyu fada, buhui haohao zuolu yiyang, er na toushang de you
duo de dou keyi chao ge suantou le)

The ST is a fascinating description of the peanut politician Corporator, showing his
arrogance, by irony and hyperbole. In the first attempt, the ST is domesticated into
clichéd Chinese that is concise and paratactic by using three four-character phrases.

Four-character phrase, a unique type of Chinese expression, is terse in content and has
a rhythm to it. Nevertheless, the abuse of four-character phrases easily leads to under-
or over-translation since it cannot always correspond to a certain expression in
English. Idiomatic though it is, TT1 neglects the sense of irony while writing it in a
more neutral tone, and the hyperbole, an outstanding technique to inspire the reader’s
imagination, is also omitted. The domestication of language in attempt 1 reproduces
the Corporator as an energetic character but the irony in the original is lost.
Considering this, in attempt 2, the problem caused by four-character phases is avoided.
Although it is too long to be natural in Chinese, TT2 manages to convey the original
sense of irony in the same way as the ST. A similar method to deal with four-character
phrases can be found in the following example:

Example 2.2

ST: Several dozen parents in the slum were getting by on roti and salt in order to pay
private school tuition.

TT1: 贫民窟中几十家父母都为了支付私人学校的学费而省吃俭用。

(Pinminku zhong jishijia fumu dou weile zhifu siren xuexiao de xuefei er
shengchijianyong)

TT2: 贫民窟中几十家父母都为了支付私人学校的学费, 只靠饼和盐充饥。

(Pinminku zhong jishijia fumu dou weile zhifu siren xuexiao de xuefei, zhi kao
bing he yan chongji)

The reified description of “be getting by on roti and salt” is replaced by a
four-character phrase “省吃俭用 (shengchijianyong, to save money on food and
expenses)” in attempt 1. If the ST is translated in this way, it seems those families
were poor but still can afford the tuition fee by being frugal. Actually, the harsh reality is not by practicing frugality as a virtue, but that eating roti and salt is the only way for them to subsist as they cannot afford the expense. The use of idiomatic phrase again fails to achieve the expected effect. Consequently, the literal translation that “只靠饼和盐充饥(zhi kao bing he yan chongji)” is put to use in attempt 2.

2) Creatively deviating from idioms

Example 2.3

ST: Too much learning reduced a girl’s compliancy.

TT1: 女子无才便是德

(Nvzi wucai bian shi de)

TT2: 女子多知少听话

(Nvzi zhi duo tinghua shao)

In the ST, it is said that parents in India still hold the traditional belief that girls should not get any education since it would make them incompliant. In regard to this context, two translation versions are tried with different strategies, one by domestication, and the other by foreignization.

At the first glance, the ST is similar with a Chinese idiom that “女子无才便是德
(Nvzi wucai bian shi de)” which literally means ignorance is a virtue for girls. However, the connotation of this idiom is not that simple as it appears. “德 (de)” here not refers to any general virtues, but specifically to what is required by Confucianism and traditional family ethics, namely the three obediences and the four virtues (三从四德). The domestication method is likely to mislead the reader that the same Chinese family ethics or requirements apply in India. Furthermore, the underlying meaning of this sentence contrasts with the superficial understanding, as in the Chinese context, this sentence says that women should use their talents to obey, or not at all (Liu, 2009). In a word, the cultural connotation of TT1 is so ingrained that should not be used under this circumstance.

The second version, “女子多知少听话 (Nvzi duo zhi shao tinghua)”, is an example of foreignization. TT2 deviates from the idiom “女子无才便是德 (Nvzi wucai bian shi de)” but conveys the original meaning in the same format to be novel and impressive, like “foreign wine in domestic bottle”. This attempt challenges the linguist and cultural norm of the target culture and lifts the reader to experience the source culture. This avoids misunderstanding between cultures.
3) Preserving culture-loaded words

Culture-loaded words are the miniature of history, ideology and customs of the source culture. The foreignization of these words is a simple but effective way to make the ST visible in the target cultural.

Example 2.4

ST: ……it reserved other elections strictly for low-caste candidates……

TT1: ……也有一些选举仅限于低阶级候选人参加……

(Ye you yixie xuanju jinxian yu di jieji houxuanren canjia)

TT2: ……也有一些选举仅限于低种姓候选人参加……

( Ye you yixie xuanju jinxian yu di zhongxing houxuanren canjia)

Caste initially means social class, but in the ST it indicates a unique Indian social system that is inherited from Hinduism and based on occupation and clan (Li, 2005).

In this sense, the translation of caste should bring out the cultural background rather than turn it into an element of Chinese society. Attempt 1 translates “caste” into “阶级 (jieji, class)”, an widely used word in Socialism that refers to social groups categorized by the ownership of productive means (Xiandai hanyu cidian, 2011: 692).

Using this same term for a Chinese audience betrays the meaning of “caste” in the source culture and also hinders cultural exchange. To reveal the same indication, “种
姓（zhongxing，literally ethnical surname）is finally adopted. It may puzzle the reader because it is unfamiliar, but this attempt retains the similar cultural meaning in the ST and encourages the reader to further look into caste system in India.

All in all, creative deviation helps a lot in making translation visible by dealing with idiomatic expression in an unfamiliar way. In addition, translators should choose foreignization over domestication when there is cultural connotation involved or impact required.

iii. The visibility of imaginary space

Good literary works are always profound in meaning, but their meaning can be presented either explicitly or implicitly. When it is implicit, the text leaves enough room for the reader to use their imagination and read between lines for complete understanding. In this sense, the space of imagination in the ST places translators in a dilemma, because adding information benefits comprehension but limits imagination, but literal translation leads to confusion (Xu, 2000).

Example 3.1

ST: She hungered for virtue……
In the story, Manju’s mother Asha acquires material benefits by behaving badly and corruption, which disgraces Manju so much that she wants to be a more virtuous person than her. The author does not clarify what virtue means in the context but it quickly reminds people of “middle class virtues”. “Virtue” in the ST not simply means being moral but acting with clean hands, at least seemingly. Hence, while the “virtue” in the example leaves some space to think, it also gives the reader hints to interpret the connotation. In TT1, “美德 (meide)” is a literal translation of virtue, yet its connotation is so broad in Chinese that can refer to any moral excellence because of the lack of explanations. To remove this generalization, “美德” is changed to two phrases “做人干净 (zuorenganjing, to be morally clean)” and “做事无暇 (zuoshiwuxia, to act flawlessly)”. Nevertheless, this detailed addition causes another problem that the translation limits the imagination since it lays bare the meaning
before the reader. Apart from being too clear, the extension of “virtue” is also diminished to be part of the original meaning. In attempt 3, “得体处事 (detichushi, to act in a proper way)” replaces the other two version and manages to strike a balance between the two extremes.

In this regard, the translation of “decency” in the next paragraph is changed from “德行 (dexing, literally means moral deeds)” to “正派 (zhengpai, literally positive deeds)” for the same effect as the last example. The first attempt in the bracket performs as a comparison with the final attempt.

Example 3.2

ST: Manju’s instrument for demonstrating her decency was the school she ran out of her hut every afternoon.

TT: 文珠通过每天下午上课的棚屋学校, 展示自己的正派作风(德行)。

(Wenzhu kao meitian xiawu shangke de pengwu xuexiao, lai zhanxian ziji de zhengpai zuofeng)

iv. Readability— no mix of classical Chinese

The novella is written in modern English that is easy for the public to understand, so
correspondingly, the translation should be in the same way to facilitate the ease of reading, or, be written in modern Chinese. What’s worth noting is that the mix of classical and modern Chinese always appears in translation, resulting in an awkward language. Unless the ST contains both ancient and modern English, the interference of classical Chinese in the TT should be avoided since readability is most likely achieved by the language spoken by contemporary readers (Qu, 1981).

Example 4.1

ST: ……before his father got hit by a train.

TT1: ……其父亲被火车撞之前。

(Qi fuqin bei huoche zhuang zhiqian)

TT2: …… 他的父亲被火车撞之前。

(Ta de fuqin bei huoche zhuang zhiqian)

“His” is a possessive pronoun, meaning “of a male”. It has two different versions in the TT, ancient Chinese“其 (qi)” and modern Chinese“他的 (ta de)”. In attempt1, the mix of old and new expressions raises the register of the ST since “其 (qi)” is a formal expression. Besides, the usage of “其 (qi)” is so quaint that it would be better to choose other pronouns as there are many alternatives in modern Chinese (Wang, 1985). “他的 (ta de)” in attempt 2 solves this problem and keeps the original register.
Similarly, translators should refrain from using abstruse Chinese words if the ST is easily readable.

Example 4.2

ST: Manju always looked angry when emerging from her hut.

TT1: 从棚屋出来时文珠总是怫然不悦。

(Cong pengwu chulai shi wenzhu zongshi furanbuyue)

TT2: 从棚屋出来时文珠总是一脸不悦。

(Cong pengwu chulai shi wenzhu zongshi yilianbuyue)

The ST uses a very simple phrase — looked angry — to describe Manju’s facial expression. But in attempt 1, as a phrase of classical elegance, “怫然不悦 (furanbuyue, to show an anger on face)” is only used in written language (Xiandai hanyu cidian, 2011:419). Due to infrequent use, it is possible that many readers do not know the character “怫 (fu)”. Attempt 2 selects a modern Chinese phrase, “一脸不悦 (yilianbuyue)”, which means the same with “怫然不悦” but differs in register, and therefore, is closer to the ST expression.

V. Conclusion
The commentary on the translation of Manju from *Behind the Beautiful Forevers* explains the necessity of visibility in translating literary journalism and proves its feasibility. It concludes that the effect of visibility is achievable by the following methods. First, the original stylistic features should be maintained to arouse the same reaction among the target reader. Second, for the purpose of impressing the reader and encouraging them to think further, translators should employ techniques like foreignization and defamiliarization to deviate the TT from the target culture. Last but not least, readability should also be taken into consideration so as to build a large audience.
VI. The translation of Behind the Beautiful Forevers

Manju 《文珠》

对阿莎的女儿而言，小说《达罗薇夫人》的情节没有任何意义。文珠翻看着大学课本，身子有些懒散疲沓，这让她担心自己又患上登革热或疟疾了—住在离嘈杂的污水湖 30 英尺的地方，就免不了这风险。不，她断定不是患病，仅仅是天气的缘故罢了。虽然只是春天，太阳便已灼热，那刀子般的白光刺得人眼睛生疼，也提前使阿纳瓦迪的水牛感到酷热难耐。

文珠觉得母亲也脸色苍白，但许是因为有人在法庭指控代表人萨伯哈什•萨万特选举舞弊的缘故。阿莎可是希望代表人能提拔自己做贫民窟的头头。

文珠第一次来打听流言时，阿莎耸耸肩，对此不以为意。她的老板曾抹去两单谋杀指控。正如代表先生放言，“在孟买，操控个官司不成问题。” 既然如此，为何他硕大的身躯看起来耷拉着？衣领上的冷汗也不该出现在这种天气。

正如印度政府规定了某些选举只有女性才能参选，也有一些选举仅限于低种姓候选人参加。低种姓群体历来受到排挤，政府希望借此令他们更多地参与国家的政治领导层中。前些年，76 选区内的选举便是给低种姓选民参加的，代表人轻而易举地赢了。萨伯哈什•萨万特可不是低种姓，他只不过伪造了新的种姓证明、出生地和一套宗谱来获取竞选资格。其他选区里，至少 10 位候选人采取了同样的措施，他们大多是民族主义政党—湿婆神军的人。

然而，76 选区有个国大党（印度国民大会党）的候选人确实属于低种姓，却屈居第二。他收集了萨万特作假的证据，准备向高等法院上诉，请求法官推翻选举
结果。忽然之间，代表人意识到他需要市民的拥戴。他已经经营选区 10 多年了，却几乎回想不出乘坐过的嘟嘟车以及从前发生的恶性行为。于是，他开始访问选区内各个贫民窟，来获得选民的支持，希望这张王牌能盖过资料上的不符。

下一个便轮到阿纳窟选区。阿莎和文珠要将贫民窟的居民集中在污水湖边的粉色寺庙里，为他祈祷，祝他赢得官司。

萨万特的命令让阿莎有些退缩。如今正是学校考试季，家长都不愿离开自己的小棚屋，免得孩子把课本给扔了。为了确保可观的出席人数，阿莎必须发挥她全部的影响力。

在指定日子的傍晚，萨万特身着做工精良的白色狩猎装，昂首阔步地踏进阿纳窟，旁边还跟着个随员。苏尼尔和其他拾荒人远远让出一条路来。代表先生伸长着腿，迈着警察式的大步，就像他的双腿肌肉过于发达，不会好好走路一样，而那头上的油多得都可以炒个蒜头了。

文珠和朋友米娜为典礼烹制的油饼和土豆很合代表人的心意，他也对小庙里的装饰感到满意，尽管只是摆放了一张旧的金属书桌。定居在阿纳窟的泰米尔建筑工人（米娜的父母也在其中）建造了小庙，并将它献给保护人们免受瘟疫的女神。阿莎凭借萨万特的许可，帮助马哈人夺来了小庙的管理权，自此以后，这个粉红的寺庙多数时候都锁着。这个下午，文珠和米娜彻底擦洗了一遍寺庙。死苍蝇和老鼠屎都打扫得干干净净，崭新的神像闪闪发光。

“去召集人们，我会在晚餐后演讲。”法人先生对阿莎说道，之后便与他的随员
乘车离去。晚上 8 时，阿莎敲响了寺庙的钟，不一会儿，庙里便人山人海。鼓手轻声敲击着塔布拉鼓，阿莎坐在书桌旁，身着她最好的纱丽，衣服的金边在还愿烛的映照下熠熠生辉。

庙里的人都属于低种姓，阿莎也不例外，其中大多数人还是湿婆军想要从孟买驱逐出去的移民。居民集中在这里，倒不是害怕不来会激怒阿莎，而是出于对代表人的寄望。

他们知道萨万特贪污，也明白他伪造种姓证明。“但是只有他来我们这儿露一下脸”，贫民窟的居民表示。每次选举前，他都会拿城市资金，或是从世界宣明会（一个杰出的美国基督教慈善团体）的慷慨捐赠中抽取些钱，在这里建造便民设施：有公共厕所、旗杆、排水渠，还有污水湖旁的混凝土平台，他来时总会站在上面。每一次萨万特来访，都会向居民诉说自己历尽了千辛万苦，只为拖延着机场当局，不让推土机清拆阿纳窟。2001 年和 2004 年时，这个贫民窟就曾被夷为平地。无论是机场的现代化进程，还是对孟买的管理，代表人都只是个小角色，一个为政客开路的马前小卒。但是，在阿纳窟人的政治想象中，他的身影比印度总理还要高大。萨万特需要人们的选票，人们也需要相信他有能力给予庇护。

“他什么时候来？”人们问道。

“很快。”阿莎向他们保证。拥挤的寺庙被汗水浸湿，热得人都快熟了。在城市的高温笼罩下，无论是寺庙还是贫民窟的其他住所都糟糕透了，令人酷热难耐。第一个小时内无人诉苦，但是下一小时，寺庙中便弥漫着声声叹息。

时间对阿纳窟人而言十分宝贵，即使不紧张孩子考试的人也一样。他们从黎明开
始忙碌，屋子需要打扫，孩子需要洗澡，更重要的则是赶在水龙头的涓滴流干前去打水，一排便是几个钟头。市政厅将水供应到阿纳瓦迪的6个水龙头，早晚各开放90分钟。湿婆神军党的人私占了水龙头，向左邻右里收取使用费。人们厌恶这些“掮水客”，但更厌恶世界宣明会的“老鼠”社工。他们借口修建新水龙头，向阿纳瓦迪人集资，之后便携款潜逃。

夜晚10时，汗水将阿莎脖颈和腋窝的纱丽都浸透了，她也终于联系到萨万特的司机。阿莎告诉人们“他正在路上”，并让他们开始集体祈祷，如此，代表人到达时即能看到居民在努力地祷告。

11时，他仍未到来，阿莎朝女儿打了手势：“去拿食物。”文珠准备的食物本该留给典礼后食用，但是人们已经开始了祷告，而萨万特和他的司机都不接听电话，准备主持的人吃了食物后便回家了，庙里只剩下十多人，大部分都是些不中用的醉汉，阿莎的脸色都变了。

不仅离开的人会说阿莎承诺让代表先生过来，却未能实现，更糟的是，等萨万特这个习惯于深夜出现的人来到时，便会看到空荡荡的寺庙。这简直是个灾难，因为萨万特只会指责阿莎一人。他会给阿莎那种难以理解的笑容作为辱骂，也会说阿莎不受居民爱戴，阿纳窟还未准备好接受一个女首领。毫无疑问，他还会提到在其他那么多贫民窟，有那么多人聚集着，这个夜晚是那么的成功。

正当阿莎苦涩地向女儿例举这些可能性，一个年轻美貌的阉人漫步走进阿纳窟。他看到灯光明亮的空旷寺庙里，鼓手无所事事地坐着，便走了进来开始跳舞。
这个人有着一头浓密的长卷发，翘起的睫毛能触到眉毛，手上带着廉价的金属手镯，臀部缓慢地摆动起来。这才刚开始。他双臂张开保持静止，而双腿则滑动开来。鼓手重现精神，开始演奏。文珠的嘴张得大大的，这个阉人的上下身好像由不同人在控制着。之后，他停下来，以齿衔起一根还愿烛，又开始旋转，令火苗都熄灭了。

在孟买，阉人或被人畏惧，或受人追捧。他们命运不济，导致性别模糊不清，而人们更是觉得阉人的噩运会蔓延开来。阉人来到家门时，人们便要给他们钱，让他们离开；如果想让他们在对手面前抛个椰子，也可以付多一些钱。然而，一旦抛出椰子，恶运之眼便粘上了对手，即使对方请来苦行僧在盛满米的杯子里烧三炷香，上面还撒着朱砂粉，也无济于事。

阿纳窟住着六个阉人，生活的艰辛都表露在他们大花脸上，其中一些人晚于这个年轻人入寺。但是，这个年轻的阉人是个陌生面孔，一身清白，他的女子特征倒不是衣着和口红，而是面孔给人的那种不可言说的感觉。他并不为拿钱离开。此时，他快速地旋转着，转得头发垂直于地面，汗水飞溅到那些重回寺庙的居民脸上，人们看得心神荡漾。

年轻人跳起后四肢着地，高翘着臀部，接着便唱了一支清亮高昂的调子，随着他的摇动回响。他叫苏拉吉，今年 18 岁。别人没想过，但阿莎的儿子拉胡就曾猜测：苏拉吉的身子是完整的。苏拉吉单纯是觉得自己有七分像女孩，三分像男孩，从记事起便如此，尽管这让他母亲和姐妹伤透了心。如今，他靠在挨个贫民窟赚取小费为生，如此卖力地跳舞让他患上了肠病。如阿莎一样，苏拉吉也努力让自己在 76 选区成名。
两个女人也加入进来，与苏拉吉一同旋转，变成弯曲起伏的残影，红绿难分。而后，苏拉吉猛然跌倒在地，人们倒吸一口冷气，以为他癫痫发作，随后他宣称住在自己体内的女神有话要说：“叶蓝玛女神说，给她一片苦楝叶，她便回答你关于未来的问题！”

阿莎蹙起了眉头。要是萨万特到来时看到这个表演怎么办？不过她觉得这也比见到空荡的寺庙要好。人们不断地过来，蹦跶着让苏拉吉能在人头攒动中瞥上自己一眼。路上的男孩，妓院老板和他的顾客都走了出来。操场上，斑马照管员罗伯特的儿子点燃了两个轮胎，兴奋极了；寺庙里，人们向寄住在苏拉吉灵魂中的女神提出许多问题。

“要不要贷款修理房子吗？”“这人说可以为我找个工作，要不要给他钱呢？”“我怎样才能筹措出嫁妆？”“我儿子会成为什么人？”许多是关于孩子能否通过考试的问题，有一个关于心脏瓣膜的，还有更多是有关机场那些人的一“机场的人什么时候会来拆了我们的房子？”女神应该会比萨万特知道的更多吧。

苏拉吉的回答像胡言乱语，或是些无人能懂的神仙腔调，但这并不重要。这声音，无论是女神的还是他的，都飘忽得令人神游，本身就像是祝福。此时，人们都尖声叫着各自的问题。在操场另一边的侯赛因家里，都能听到尖叫声。

“这是在干什么！他们何时能闭嘴？”阿卜杜的兄弟摩奇叫喊道，把头抵在数学书上。他还怎么为九年级的考试复习呢？父亲一边踱来踱去，一边咒骂着代表以及阿纳窟的印度教徒：“一年一百个节日里，这些逃避工作的信徒都在给我们嗓
音折磨。现在倒好，不是节假日也能跳舞跳到昏了头……一群舞痴。”

阿纳窟学历最高的学生名叫普卡诗，21岁，住在与寺庙隔着四户人家的地方。他坐在家里，膝上摆着经济书，双手捂着脸，指间滚动着两滴泪珠。毕业前的期末考试十分要紧，而这个跳舞的阉人把它全毁了。只要一有机会，普卡诗就会飞奔到班加罗尔，他觉得读书人在那里能得到更多尊重。

凌晨1时，代表先生接了电话。他并没有过来，而是忙着接待更重要的人。不过他对阿莎十分满意，电话那边传来的人声鼎沸，令他感到荣耀，以为是所有阿纳窟居民为他举行的集会。阿莎还很走运。“进来吧。”他对文珠说。“来了，”文珠茫然地答道，眼睛还盯着那个汗流浃背的阉人，“不过，妈妈，我这辈子还没见过这样的事情呢。”

阿纳窟人都认为文珠本不需这么友善，她相貌姣好，母亲有政治关系，而且日程十分辛苦。早上，文珠要上学；下午，她在棚屋里打理着阿纳窟唯一的学校。其他时间里，则要为一家五口煮饭、清洁、打水、洗衣。完成所有工作靠的是每晚仅仅4小时的睡眠支撑，而她的性情却不曾受影响。可是今个春天，一连串奇怪的传染病和热病考验着她的沉着冷静。

阿莎担心女儿的身体发热，因为这可能令她行差踏错。文珠倒不会有这种风险。她将少年时光都用于改变自己，努力成为一个行为得体、举止文雅的典范——她觉得母亲缺少的正是这些。

一日下午，文珠的兄弟拉胡站在家里墙上的小镜子面前。他一边用文珠的“美白
秀丽亮肤乳”涂抹着脸，一边从斑驳的茶色镜面中打量着她。文珠正跪在地上，秀丽的发辫在肩上摆动。她低声念着英语单词，越来越拼命。

“你做什么苦着脸？”拉胡说道。

文珠抬头一看：“拉胡，别用那么多面霜!”

“美白秀丽乳”是文珠保持肤色白皙的关键，也是在婚姻市场中维持地位的关键，但是拉胡和小弟甘尼用得大手大脚，更甚于她。

拉胡打开电视，里面正播着卡通《猫和老鼠》。文珠看了一会儿，又叹起气来。

“我都不知道自已在做什么。”她说，“学生一小时后就来了，而我自己的作业尚未完成。老师说‘去问你母亲想让你做什么，图像作业还是家务?’要不然他会给我不及格。还有，我有没有跟你说昨天心理课上的事情？我去洗手间时把钱包落在桌子下，有人拿了我的钱，都是些什么人啊！其他女孩的钱都比我多了。我干嘛要跟你说这些？你的眼睛都看到电视里去了，根本没有在听。”

“我在听，”拉胡反驳说，“只是你紧张的事情太多，我不知道该想哪一个。”拉胡也有自己的烦心事，九年级考试和深夜的酒店临时工作都需要安排好。到现在，他能够熟练地模仿洲际酒店的服务生走近客人时的模样。他们既要身子向上倾斜，传达出“随时可以为您服务”的意思，又要下巴恭敬地低下，意为“您可以当我无形，先生。”拉胡的面容真诚坦率，一双眼睛善于发现乐子，阿纳窟的姑娘争相围着他。可是拉胡觉得，好好理一下面容，也许在最近的酒店聚会上，他就不至于那么受辱。

事情起源于一个唱片骑士。午夜后，他似乎通过心电感应读到了拉胡的请求，将
歌曲换成拉胡现在最爱的舞曲《向上》。

“向上！别再往下沉沦。”

“向上！我终于打破锁链。”

这些英文歌词对他来说没什么意义，只是难以抵抗其低音旋律。每次听到这首歌，拉胡都会随之摇摆。第一段和弦旋律从酒店音响传出时，拉胡可能笑了笑，或是用脚打了下拍子。突然，两个年轻的酒店客人拉扯他的手，要求他表演“孟买舞步”。

大家都知道，烂醉的白人给小费十分大方。拉胡开始自认为谨慎小心地表演了一些舞步，只动头和脚，不动肩和手。

“你疯了吗？蠢货！”

酒店主管一把揪住他，其他经理则从其他角落跑了过来，就好像拉胡用刀子刺伤了某个宝莱坞明星。酒店长工嗤笑着看他被人拖着拉进垃圾房。直到后来，拉胡在家休养时，找到一条可能用于自行申辩的论据。如果酒店工作的第一条准则是不许盯着顾客，那第二条难道不是有求必应吗？

卡通还在放着，拉胡转身对着镜子，而文珠开始阅读英国文学的专业读物。今天的功课是 18 世纪王政复辟时期的戏剧以及康格里夫的作品《如此世道》。

文珠没读过《如此世道》，她的教授也不指望她会读。除了以高种姓和富家学生为主的最佳学府，印度的人文科学教育都是靠死记硬背。在狮子会建立的普通女校中，老师提供的总结归纳了教程上的每部文学作品，文珠只需将它背熟，在小测和之后的邦际考试中复述即可。文珠有着出众的记忆力，她称之为“我的记忆法”，但是，她觉得《如此世道》中的人物着实难记。
“米拉曼，米拉贝尔，普特伦……你听过这些名字吗？而且书里还有更多。”过了一会，文珠对拉胡说道，“书中每个人为了金钱而说谎和戏弄他人，但是老师写了故事意义的地方，我却一点也不明白。”

句子“爱是从属”便是问题所在。虽然文珠从未与同龄男孩牵过手，但是她自信能理解英文单词“爱”。不过单词“从属”仅仅令她想起对母亲的不满，母亲答应过买英马词典却食言。拉胡和母亲都不懂英语，他们愤愤不满的是要在办公室或酒店寻得一个体面活，必须会说印度前殖民者的语言，而马拉地语只不过是种值得敬重的语言。

对于文珠而言，英语有着新的重要意义。她期待着一个更加国际化，更能任人唯才的印度，而英语便是这种变化带来的副产品。一个人学语言无论是通过康格里夫的作品，还是在口语补习班练习“大通银行信用卡”的对话，又或是参加国际呼叫中心工作的培训课程，都不重要。通英语，是一个人通达世故，接受过高级教育的证明，也是离开贫民窟的潜在跳板。文珠的英语讲得仍然缓慢生硬，但是在阿纳窟里是数一数二的。

英语讲得最好的人是普卡诗，他是个经济系学生，住在离寺庙不远处。阿纳窟的年轻人有着错综的社会等级，如今他们的等级更多的是基于未来收入而非种姓，其中普卡诗首屈一指。他的父亲被火车撞之前，他在好的私人学校读过中学。业余时间里，普卡诗为工信投银行（工业信贷投资银行）销售共同基金，靠打推销电话赚取微薄的佣金。
文珠认为普卡诗应该会知道“从属”的意思，可他们从未说过话。贫民窟的年轻女子需要权衡与男子交往的潜在价值以及随之而来的流言。一个板球员弄到文珠的照片，并制成了心形，对此人们已是议论纷纷。因而，当文珠外出洗衣服时，对处于几步之遥、坐在屋外看书的普卡诗，她连看都没看一眼。

“米拉贝尔—花花公子。米拉曼—风度翩翩。戴农先生—戴绿帽子。”她一边嘟囔着内容简介，一边用洗衣槌敲打母亲的大短裤，父亲的小汗衫。

“不对，米拉贝尔才是风度翩翩。”文珠将拧干的衣服拿进屋，挂在靠墙的绳子上。部分墙体离屋檐 2 尺间是空的，她父亲一直保证会填补空隙，但这种可能性无异于母亲带着本英马词典回家。

文珠清洗着双灶炉子，嘴里还重复着“主题是爱情故事、社会地位和金钱”。上百只蟑螂跑了出来窸窸窣窣，她跨过睡在台阶上的拉胡，把食物残渣拿了出去，倒入污水湖。炎热的天气神奇地把污水湖变成了个厚厚的水葫芦垫子。

“米拉贝尔通过与佳人米拉曼结婚，来获取社会利益。”

文珠背诵时，总会将自己代入为女主角，但她对米拉曼没什么好感，因为这个姑娘家世富有，足够独立，可以商议自己的婚姻，却还发牢骚。文珠希望大学毕业后去当老师，而她很担心母亲会赌气，将自己许配给一个不认为女人应该有工作机会的农村小伙。那样的话，她会累死累活地做着现在的家务：清扫外面吹进来的灰尘，拖地，再接着清扫拖地时吹进来的灰尘。

“康格里夫的剧中，金钱远远重要过爱情。”
这显然就是母亲的观点。文珠的弟弟甘尼在屋前照看着小杂货店，杂货店是阿莎最新的创业计划，还在苟延残喘。为了开这个店，阿莎借了堪博先生为心脏瓣膜而筹资的政府贷款作为抵押。阿莎本想让丈夫经营这个商店，但是她丈夫把收入都用在工作时买醉，现在正醉倒在甘尼脚边。

文珠对钱不是很感兴趣。她渴望的是能得体处事，既是渴望，在一定程度上又是惧怕。文珠学习时会抚摸颈上的疤痕，那是几年前的夜晚，她从母亲那里偷钱买巧克力，阿莎用斧头留下的。文珠渴望正派做人也是种反抗，意在谴责自己母亲。据称阿莎是靠行为不端而获得电视机和其他好处。

文珠通过每天下午上课的棚屋学校，展示自己的正派作风。学校由中央政府出资，天主教慈善团体管理，阿莎则是正式教师。可是阿莎总是忙于应付湿婆军党，文珠七年级时便开始教课，尽心尽力地令她母亲觉得厌烦。虽然阿莎很高兴学校能给全家带来微薄收入，但她认为文珠只需在上级检查的日子上课即可，很多棚屋学校的老师便是如此。

中央政府将文珠的这种学校称作“桥梁学校”，旨在为童工和因家务而留家中的女孩提供每日两小时的课程，让他们适应并热衷于正规教育。激发他们的学习并不难，因为每个贫民窟居民都知道，有三条路可以摆脱贫困：创业，就像侯赛因家靠垃圾发家；从政和贪污，阿莎便将希望压在这条路；还有教育。贫民窟中几十家父母都为了支付私人学校的学费，只靠饼和盐充饥。

过去五年里，机场附近新开了一百多家学校，有的极好又昂贵，有的为诈骗，还有的由无资格的少年授课，例如文珠家的，但都比麦罗市立学校（阿莎是其签约
教师) 一样的免费学校好得多。各邦公立学校教师中近 60%的人未完成大学学业，还有很多常任教教师要给学校领导高额红包来保住饭碗。代表先生和许多政客一样，更愿意把这些糟糕的学校作为政治资本，而非进行改革。他便借助挂名负责人开办了自己的私人学校。

“在麦罗，我们玩闹，休息，再玩闹，然后吃午餐。”尼泊尔男孩阿达如是描述学校课程。学校尽管不上课，但提供的免费午餐还是很有吸引力的。阿达会在日常上学之余来到文珠的学校，毕竟文珠还教点东西，往往是她努力记住的故事简介。文珠的学生不会比她更理解《达罗薇夫人》的情节，但知道奥赛罗是不可信之人，因为他皮肤黝黑。

这时，另一个学生旋风般地飞奔进屋，连湿婆军党创始人海报上的钉子都震落了。
“的沃，你来早了!”文珠不满道，“还有你忘了脱鞋!”她的视线从地板上泥泞的脚印转到学生血迹斑斑的脸上。
“哦。”男孩托着头说，“是出租车……”

阿纳窟的孩子总是在混乱的路上被车撞到，且去麦罗市立学校要穿过一个危险的十字路口，事故经常发生。打着新电话的新手司机是个亡命组合。文珠赶忙站起来，一把抓来炉子边的姜黄，将粉倒在的沃头上。姜黄粉对伤口疗效之奇佳，堪比其对婚礼前新娘之重要。文珠搓揉着姜黄，直到与血混合为橙黄的浆糊，然后用力按压。她正检查血是否止住时，的沃那个独眼又孀居的母亲走了进来，挥舞着一英尺长的金属棍子。

1 在印度，婚礼前新娘会以姜黄粉涂抹全身，否则婚礼将不完整。
“车撞不死你啊！别指望神会救你！让你过马路漫不经心，我非打死你不可！”

的沃冲到文珠家的储物木柜下，棍子还没打下来便受挫地嚎叫了一声。的沃母亲把他拉出来，开始用金属棍子打他。

“不要！”文珠喊道，“别打头！别打受伤的部位！

“我非打烂你的牙！打到你屁股开花。”的沃母亲叫嚷着。在阿纳窟，令经济最快损失的方式便是伤病，而这个妇女为了支付已故丈夫的住院费，已欠下高利贷。 “要是司机把你伤得更严重，我还怎么付医药费？的沃你说啊。我还有一个子儿来救你吗？”

“停下。”文珠喊道，试图抓住她的手却未能成功。拉胡现在醒着，翻了个白眼—他觉得棚屋学校就是个磁石，引来各种家庭闹剧。平静的时候，文珠会替做父母的分辩，称他们害怕失去对子女的控制，因为城市中危险事物不断增加，而他们对这个城市也不甚了解。再者，文珠有多厌恶暴力行为，少许鞭打就能起多大作用，例如偶尔用用斧头，可以让孩子待在家附近。

然而，的沃母亲已经超过良性教育的程度了。文珠冲到母子中间，试图抱住的沃母亲。

“你来保证，”文珠喘着气对的沃说道，“不会再走到马路中间。”

“不会了，”的沃抽噎着，“我再也不会犯同样的错误。”

离开前，的沃母亲单眼盯着文珠说：“明天如果他没有在你这里学习，我就打断他的腿，泼他一脸煤油。”
文珠再次帮男孩止血，这时一个小女孩表示不满：“老师，你迟到了。”

文珠解开自己掺了血和香料的围巾，说道：“走吧，叫其他人一起。”要是家里无人看管，学生使用起“美白秀丽乳”，会比她弟弟还要没节制。

从棚屋出来时文珠总是一脸不悦。每个人走出她家都要紧闭双唇，否则便满嘴苍蝇。贫民窟中也只有苍蝇才热衷于阿莎新店里的货物。“过来上课了。”文珠呼唤着穿过操场，放轻脚步绕过阿卜杜分好类的垃圾堆。文珠是知道这个人的，因为拉胡和他的兄弟摩奇一起闲逛，不过当然，她从未与阿卜杜交谈。据她所知，这个拾荒者从不与任何人说话。

“孩子们快点，”文珠一边拍掌，一边转入了小巷。“啪啪！时间不早了！”她的公职是个麻烦事，要将学生都召集起来。难道他们不应该自觉出现吗？

事实上，教书期间文珠喜欢待在屋外，朝门里窥视，收集些邻居的闲言碎语，老师的身份使她免受非议。今天的激烈争论涉及到印着本田摩托车广告的剪贴板，这些都是由美国阿肯色州西罗亚泉市的代理商所提供，世界宣明会本意赠予在阿纳窟赞助的 36 名孩子，但是负责分派的社工把剪贴板都囤积了起来。听到本地丑闻时，文珠往往会因母亲未在其中扮演关键角色而如释重负。

文珠的学生大多是 12 岁以下的女孩，一个接一个地从棚屋里走出来。她们的裙子晒到褪色，有些拉链也坏了，露出骨瘦嶙峋的后背。文珠不用为小夏达操心。夏达的母亲肺衰竭之前曾在路上砸碎石头，这个姑娘生而带刺，和她妈妈一样。拉什米则身世可怜，她的继母把食物都留给自己的孩子。妓院老鸨 11 岁的女儿
穿着黑色单车裤，戴着耳坠，拉着她的兄弟。嫖客来找乐子的时候，尤其是母亲接生意时，两个孩子更愿意离开自家棚屋。对于很多孩子而言，文珠的小学校根本不是座通往更高教育的桥，他们所能接受的教育仅此而已。

一班学生朝着米娜家走去。米娜是文珠的朋友，也是秘密的学生。她的父母在女孩和教育问题上坚持着陈旧观点：女子多知少听话，文珠只能偷偷地教她英语。

米娜今年 15 岁，是在阿纳窟出生的第一个女孩，在她出生两年前，其父母帮忙将沼泽地建成贫民窟。米娜是贱民阶级，而文珠属于昆比种姓，尽管落后但仍比贱民等级高。和大多数阿纳窟的年轻人一样，两个女孩并不在意困扰长辈的种姓，只把它视为人为规定。文珠和米娜因同样喜欢舞蹈而成为朋友，相互又能保守秘密，所以友谊长存。

这时，米娜看见文珠出现在门口，露出笑容。她的微笑如明星般得摄人心魂，不该是贫民窟人所有，引得其他女孩徒劳地模仿。今天的笑容意味着“走开吧”，表示米娜被关在家里，只能出去取水或上厕所。她今天犯了和往常一样的错误，与父母兄弟说话时没有管好自己的嘴巴。为什么她就不能听听操场上的男孩讲酒店的事情？为什么她就不能上学？她白天要做家务，但晚上有时脾气就会上来。米娜的母亲和兄弟都觉得有必要逼她控制脾气，因为这种行为会破坏正在为她安排的婚事。

文珠时常建议米娜要像自己一样，保持对自身的不满。尽管如此，泰米尔姑娘的不合作还是引起文珠内心的共鸣。今早文珠准备上学时，额上的银色眉心贴滑落到脖颈，闪闪发光，很是好看。阿莎已经去工作了，文珠便任由眉心贴留在那里。
女孩不需完美也可以高洁。

回到棚屋里，她的学生已经在血迹斑斑的地板上坐好。

“同学们早上好。”她用英语说道。

“老师早上好。”孩子们大声回答道。

文珠顿了顿，不确定接下来做什么，因为她没有掌握足够多《如此世道》的情节来教给学生。迟点准备晚餐时——在母亲为父亲醉酒开始打架之前——她才能吸收那些内容。当天的课堂任务是学习水果的英文名——苹果，香蕉，芒果，木瓜。文珠会逐步来教，先复习完上节课的单词：汽车，火车和飞机。然而一开始，孩子们相互拨弄，要耗费精力花十分钟来唱儿歌《头，肩膀，膝盖和脚趾》。

这个时间，学生的歌声总是响彻操场。苏尼尔是个年轻的拾荒人，来向阿卜杜卖东西时喜欢偷听上课。一月里，他有几天来旁听文珠的课，学会了英文歌《小星星》，而后决定为了吃饭，还是花时间工作为好。现在苏尼尔觉得文珠的学校就是棚屋里小游戏。

阿卜杜只能对小男孩的优越感表示疑惑，他倒认为文珠是阿纳窟里什么都有的女孩。这些星期里，在独腿婆子烧死之前，一切如旧之时，阿卜杜自负的一件事便是他能预测别人的命运，尤其是拾荒者的，但是苏尼尔的未来难以辨析。虽然遭受轻视会改变一个人，但是只要苏尼尔还想着背诵儿歌《A 是苹果》会令生活有所不同，捡垃圾就不会影响他的内心。
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<table>
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<th>Source Text</th>
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<td>The plot of this novel, Mrs. Dalloway, made no sense whatsoever to Manju. Doing her college reading, Asha’s daughter felt so sluggish that she feared she’d caught dengue fever or malaria again—hazards of living thirty feet from a buzzing sewage lake. No, she decided. It was simply the weather: Only spring and already the sun was scorching, a knifing white force that made the eyes ache and sent Annawadi water buffalo prematurely into heat.</td>
<td>对阿莎的女儿而言，小说《达罗薇夫人》的情节没有任何意义。文珠翻看着大学课本，身子有些懒散疲沓，这让她担心自己又患上登革热或疟疾了一住在离嘈杂的污水湖30英尺的地方，就免不了这风险。不，她断定不是患病，仅仅是天气的缘故罢了。虽然只是春天，太阳便已灼热，那刀子般的白光刺得人眼睛生疼，也提前使阿纳瓦迪的水牛感到酷热难耐。</td>
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<td>Manju thought her mother looked wan, too, but this was possibly because Corporator Subhash Sawant—the man Asha hoped would make her slum boss—had been accused in court of electoral fraud.</td>
<td>文珠觉得母亲也脸色苍白，但许是因为有人在法庭指控代表人萨伯哈什·萨万特选举舞弊的缘故。阿莎可是希望代表人能提拔自己做贫民窟的头头。</td>
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| When Manju first asked about the rumor, Asha had shrugged it off. Her patron had previously made two murder charges. | 文珠第一次来打听流言时，阿莎耸耸肩，对此不以为意。她的老板曾撤去两单谋杀指控。正如代表先生放言，“在孟买，操
disappear. “Court cases can be managed in Mumbai,” as the Corporator put it. So why did his bulk seem to be slipping from his chest to his belly? The clamminess around his collar seemed imperfectly correlated to the weather.

Just as the Indian government allowed only women to stand for certain elections, it reserved other elections strictly for low-caste candidates, to increase the presence of historically excluded populations in the country’s political leadership. In the previous year’s elections, restricted in Ward 76 to low-caste candidates, the Corporator had won handily. Subhash Sawant wasn’t low-caste, though. He’d simply manufactured a new caste certificate, a new birthplace, and a new set of ancestors to qualify for the ballot. At least ten candidates in other city wards, mostly Shiv Sena, had done the same.

But the Congress Party candidate for Ward 76 was a different story. Valencia was a part of the low-caste community, and he was determined to prove that he was worthy of the support. He had spent years preparing for this moment, studying the issues that mattered to his constituents and honing his oratory skills.

However, the evening was not going according to plan. Valencia was nervous, and his hands were sweating. He glanced around at the sea of faces in front of him, hoping to find some familiar faces. But there were none. He took a deep breath and tried to focus on the speech he had prepared.

As he spoke, Valencia could feel his energy level dropping. He was struggling to connect with the audience, and his words were not resonating. He glanced at the clock, hoping for some salvation. But the clock just ticked away, and Valencia felt more and more isolated.

Then, something unexpected happened. A woman in the audience stood up and spoke. She had a strong voice and a message that resonated with Valencia. He felt a surge of inspiration and energy, and he rallied to her side. Together, they delivered a speech that captured the hearts of the audience and won the election for Valencia.
76, a genuine low-caste who had finished second, was now papering the High Court with evidence of Subhash Sawant’s falsifications, asking the judge to overturn the election. Suddenly, the Corporator felt the need for citizen homage. He’d been running this ward for more than a decade, could barely recall the auto rickshaw-driving and petty thuggery that came before. So he’d begun visiting the ward’s slums to receive the love of his constituents, in hopes that it might somehow trump a paperwork discrepancy.

Anawadi’s turn next. Asha and Manju would assemble the slumdwellers in a pink temple by the sewage lake in order to pray with him for a victory in court.

Asha winced when he gave the order. It was the season of school exams, and parents were reluctant to leave their huts and risk having their children abandon their textbooks. She had to bring all her influence...
to bear to ensure a respectable attendance.

At sunset on the designated night, Subhash Sawant strode into Annawadi in an impeccable white safari suit, accompanied by an entourage. Sunil and the other scavengers gaped from a distance. The Corporator had one of those spread-leg policeman strides—as if his thighs were too muscled for normal walking. And there was enough oil in his hair to fry garlic.

The Corporator approved of the poori bhaji that Manju and her friend Meena were cooking for the ceremony. He was pleased, too, with the decorations in the tiny temple, which was furnished with an old metal school desk. The Tamil construction workers who’d settled Annawadi, Meena’s parents among them, had erected this hut and consecrated it to Mariamma, the goddess who protects against plagues. With Subhash Sawant’s approval, Asha had helped wrest control of it for the
Maharashtrians, after which the pink temple sat locked most days. But this afternoon, Meena and Manju had given it a proper scrubbing. The dead flies and rat turds were gone, the new idols shining.

“Call people, and I’ll come after dinner to speak,” the Corporator told Asha before he and his entourage departed in their SUVs. Asha rang the temple bell at 8 P.M., and soon the place was packed. As a tabla player drummed quietly, Asha arranged herself by the school desk, the gold border of her best sari catching the light of a dozen votive candles.

Almost every person in the temple, Asha included, was genuinely low-caste. Most were the migrants Shiv Sena wanted to banish from Mumbai. But the residents had come not just out of fear of angering Asha, but out of belief in the Corporator himself.

They understood Subhash Sawant to be

“去召集人们，我会在晚餐后演讲。”法人先生对阿莎说道，之后便与他的随员乘车离去。晚上8时，阿莎敲响了寺庙的钟，不一会儿，庙里便人山人海。鼓手轻声敲击着塔布拉鼓，阿莎坐在书桌旁，身着她最好的纱丽，衣服的金边在还愿烛的映照下熠熠生辉。

庙里的人都属于低种姓，阿莎也不例外，其中大多数人还是湿婆军想要从孟买驱逐出去的移民。居民集中在这里，倒不是害怕不来会激怒阿莎，而是出于对代表人的寄望。

他们知道萨万特贪污，也明白他伪造种姓
corrupt. They assumed he’d faked his caste
certificate. “But he alone comes here, shows
his face,” Annawadians said. Before each
election, he’d used city money or tapped the
largesse of a prominent American Christian
charity, World Vision, to give Annawadi an
amenity: a public toilet; a flagpole; gutters;
a concrete platform by the sewage lake,
where he usually stood when he came. And
each time he visited, he told residents how
hard he’d been fighting to hold off the
bulldozers of the airport authority, which
had razed huts here in 2001 and 2004. In the
scheme of the airport modernization project,
and of the governance of Mumbai, the
Corporator was a bit player, a pothole-filler
of a politician. But he loomed larger than
the Indian prime minister in the political
imaginations of Annawadians. He needed
their votes; they needed to believe in his
power to protect them.

“When does he come?” people asked.

“Soon,” Asha promised. The packed temple

“他什么时候来？”人们问道。

“很快。”阿莎向他们保证。拥挤的寺庙
grew ripe with sweat. Slum dwellings, temples included, sucked in the heat of the city and held it, but in the first hour the misery went unexpressed. The next hour, the temple was teeming with sighs.

Time was precious to Annawadians, even those not tense about their children’s exams.

They had work at dawn, homes to clean, children to bathe, and above all water to get from the slum’s trickle-taps before they went dry, which involved standing in line for hours. The municipality sent water through six Annawadi faucets for ninety minutes in the morning and ninety minutes at night. Shiv Sena men had appropriated the taps, charging usage fees to their neighbors. These water-brokers were resented, but not as much as the renegade World Vision social worker who had collected money from Annawadians for a new tap, then run away with it.
At 10 PM, Asha’s sari blouse was soaked at the throat and armpits, but she’d finally reached Subhash Sawant’s chauffeur on the phone. “He’s on his way,” she told the crowd, then struck up a group prayer, so that when the Corporator arrived he would find the residents hard at their devotions.

At 11 PM, he still hadn’t come. Asha gestured to her daughter. “Get the food.” The dishes Manju had prepared were to be consumed after the ceremony, but people were starting to leave, and neither the Corporator nor the chauffeur was answering his phone.

The would-be celebrants ate and went home, leaving only a dozen people, mostly sad-sack drunks, in the temple. Asha could not compose her face.

The departees would say that Asha had promised to deliver the Corporator and failed. Worse, Subhash Sawant, a late-night

夜晚 10 时，汗水将阿莎脖颈和腋窝的纱丽都浸透了，她也终于联系到萨万特的司机。阿莎告诉人们 “他正在路上”，并让他们开始集体祈祷，如此，代表人到达时即能看到居民在努力地祷告。

11 时，他仍未到来，阿莎朝女儿打了手势：“去拿食物。”文珠准备的食物本该留到典礼后食用，但是人们已经开始离开了，而萨万特和他的司机都不接听电话。

准备主持的人吃了食物后便回家了，庙里只剩下十多个人，大部分都是些不中用的醉汉，阿莎的脸色都变了。

不仅离开的人会说阿莎承诺让代表先生过来，却未能实现，更糟的是，等萨万特这个习惯于深夜出现的人来到时，便会看
type, would arrive to find an empty temple. It was a catastrophe for which she alone would be blamed. He would give her that smile that could not be read but as an insult. He would say that she didn’t have the respect of the residents, that Annawadi wasn’t ready for a female slumlord. No doubt he would mention how many people had gathered for how successful an evening at how many other slums.

As Asha bitterly laid out these probabilities to her daughter, a beautiful young eunuch wandered into Annawadi. Seeing a drummer sitting idle in an empty temple glowing with light, he went inside and started to dance.

The eunuch had long thick curls, lashes that touched his eyebrows, cheap metal bangles on his wrists, and hips that swiveled slowly, at first. He held his arms out, statue-still, while his legs became slithery things. The drummer came to life. Manju’s mouth fell open. It was as if the eunuch’s upper and lower bodies were being controlled by different people. After that, he stopped, biting his teeth.
lower body were being operated by separate controls. He paused to take a votive candle in his teeth, then launched into a spin that extinguished the flame.

The eunuchs, or hijras, of Mumbai were feared and fetishized both. They had so much bad luck, being sexually ambiguous, that the bad luck was understood to be contagious. When eunuchs came to your doorstep, you had to pay them to go away. You paid a little more if you wanted them to throw a coconut in front of your enemy. But once the coconut was thrown, the evil eye would stick, even if your enemy hired a baba to burn three incense sticks in a glass of rice with a sprinkle of vermilion powder on top.

Six eunuchs lived in Annawadi and wore hardship on their makeup-smeared faces. Some of them had come into the temple behind the young one. But this young eunuch, a stranger, was unblemished, his

在孟买，阉人或被人畏惧，或受人追捧。他们命运不济，导致性别模糊不清，而人们更是觉得阉人的噩运会蔓延开来。阉人来到家门时，人们便要给他们钱，让他们离开；如果想让他们在对手面前抛个椰子，也可以付多一些钱。然而，一旦抛出椰子，恶运之眼便粘上了对手，即使对方请来苦行僧在盛满米的杯子里烧三炷香，上面还撒着朱砂粉，也无济于事。

六名阉人住在阿纳窟，生活艰辛都表露在他们大花脸上，其中一些人晚于这个年轻人入寺。但是，这个年轻的阉人是个陌生面孔，一身清白，他的女子特征倒不是衣着和口红，而是面孔给人的那种不可言
femaleness not a matter of dress and lip
paint but of something in his face beyond
naming. He did not want money to go away.
He was now spinning so fast his locks were
perpendicular to the ground, his sweat
splattering the faces of the slumdwellers
who had come back inside the temple,
ensorcelled.

Dropping down on all fours, he bucked, butt
high in the air, then sang a clear, high note
that reverberated with his jerking. His name
was Suraj, and he was eighteen years old.
Asha’s son Rahul guessed at once what
others did not: Under his tight jeans, Suraj
was intact. He had simply felt, for as long as
he could remember, and to the heartbreak of
his mother and sisters, that he was three
parts girl, one part boy. Now he lived on the
tips he earned going slum to slum, dancing
so hard it gave him intestinal affections.
Like Asha, he was trying to make his name
in Ward 76.
Two women pushed forward to spin with the eunuch, becoming sinuous red-and-green blurs. Then the eunuch collapsed on the floor. People gasped, suspecting a seizure, until he announced that a goddess inside him had something to say. “Yellamma says bring her a neem leaf, and she will answer your questions of the future!”

Asha frowned. What if Subhash Sawant arrived to witness this performance? She decided it was better than his finding an empty temple. People were still arriving, jumping up to try to catch a glimpse of the eunuch over all the other heads. The road boys came out, as did the brothelkeeper and his customers. The sons of the zebra-tending Robert set two tires on fire in the maidan, compounding the excitement, while inside the temple, questions were put to the goddess lodged in the eunuch’s soul.

“Should I take a loan to fix my house?”

“要不要贷款修理房子吗？”“这人说
“Should I pay this man who says he can get me a job?” “How will I afford my daughter’s wedding?” “What will my son become?” There were several questions about whether children would pass their exams, one question about a heart valve, and many questions about the airport authority. “When are these airport people going to break our houses?” The goddess might know even more than Corporator Subhash Sawant.

It mattered little that the eunuch’s responses were gibberish, or some goddess-tongue that no one understood. The voice, whether the goddess’s or the eunuch’s, was hypnotic and felt like a blessing in itself.

People were now screaming their questions. Inside the Husain house, across the maidan, screaming could also be heard.

“What is this! When will they shut up?” Abdul’s brother Mirchi cried, placing his

可以为我找个工作，要不要给他钱呢？” “我怎样才能筹措出嫁妆？” “我儿子会成为什么人？” 许多是关于孩子能否通过考试的问题，有一个关于心脏瓣膜的，还有很多是有关机场那些人的—“机场的人什么时候会来拆了我们的房子？” 女神应该会比萨万特知道的更多吧。

苏拉吉的回答像胡言乱语，或是些无人能懂的神仙腔调，但这并不重要。这声音，无论是女神的还是他的，都飘忽得令人神游，本身就像是祝福。

此时，人们都尖声叫着各自的问题。在操场另一边的侯赛因家里，都能听到尖叫声。

“这是在干什么！他们何时能闭嘴？” 阿卜杜的兄弟摩奇叫喊道，把头抵在数学书
forehead on his math book. How could he study for his ninth-grade exams? His father paced back and forth, cursing the Corporator and the Hindus of Annawadi. “These work-shirking idolaters inflict their noise on us on a hundred holidays a year, and now, not even a holiday, they’ve lost their heads over this dancing … freak.”

The most advanced student in Annawadi, a twenty-one-year-old named Prakash, lived four doors down from the temple. He sat at home with an economics book in his lap and his head in his hands. Two teardrops rolled between his fingers. His all-important final exams before college graduation, sabotaged by a spinning eunuch. He would flee to Bangalore, a city he considered more respectful of scholars, the first chance he got.

At 1 AM, the Corporator answered his phone. He wasn’t coming, was tied up with more important people. But he was pleased
with Asha, for he assumed the glorious din he heard over the phone was all of Annawadi rallying in his honor. Asha’s lucky streak was continuing. “Inside now,” she said to Manju.

“Coming,” Manju said vacantly, her eyes still fixed on the sweat-wet eunuch. “But, Mother? Never have I seen such a thing in my life.”

Annawadians agreed that Manju was nicer than she had to be, given her looks, her mother’s political connections, and her punishing schedule. Mornings, she went to college. Afternoons, in the family hut, she ran the slum’s only school. In the other hours, she provided cooking, cleaning, water-collection, and laundry services to her household of five. These obligations were fulfilled by sleeping only four hours a night, and rarely impinged on her temperament. But this spring, her composure was being tested by a series of mysterious infections.
and fevers.

Asha worried that her daughter’s body ran hot, which increased the risk that she’d lose her virtue. Manju was hardly in danger. She had spent her teenaged years turning herself into a model of proper and gentle deportment—deportment she thought her own mother lacked.

One afternoon, her brother Rahul stood at a small mirror tacked on the wall of their hut. As he massaged his face with Manju’s Fair and Lovely skin-lightening lotion, he considered her through the brown freckled glass. She was kneeling on the floor, glossy braid flung over her shoulder, muttering English words with an escalating desperation.

“What a face you’re making,” Rahul said. Manju looked up. “Rahul, not so much cream!”
The Fair and Lovely lotion was crucial to maintaining her light complexion, and thereby her status in the marriage market, but Rahul and their younger brother, Ganesh, applied it more liberally than she did.

Rahul turned on the TV, where the cartoon mouse Jerry, disguised in shoe polish, was convincing Tom that he’d swallowed enough explosives to blow up a city. Manju watched for a minute, then sighed again. “I don’t know what I am doing,” she said. “My students will come in an hour, and I’m behind on my own work. My computer teacher said, ‘Ask your mother what she wants you to do—your Photoshop assignment or your housework?’ Else he will fail me. And did I tell you what happened yesterday in psychology class? I left my purse under the desk to go to the toilet and someone took my money. What sort of people! And the other girls have more money than I do. But why do I bother...
telling you? Your eyes are inside the TV—not even listening.”

“I am listening,” Rahul protested. “You’re just sitting on so many tensions I don’t know which one to think about.” Rahul had his own tensions, balancing ninth-grade exams and late-night hotel temp work. By now he could expertly mimic the way the Intercontinental waiters fixed their faces when they got near a guest. There had to be both an upward tilt, saying I am alert and obliging, and a chin-down servile thing: I am invisible to you, sir, if you’d prefer that. His own face was open, with amusement-seeking eyes. Annawadi girls came around to it quickly. But he thought that a better-managed face might have spared him the humiliation he had suffered at a recent hotel party.

The trouble had begun with a deejay who, after midnight, seemed to be reading his telepathic requests. A Christina Aguilera
“向上！别再往下沉沦。”
“向上！我终于打破锁链。”

| belter— I am beautiful, no matter what they say— segued into “Rise Up,” a dance song that was Rahul’s current favorite.  
Rise up! Don’t be falling down again  
Rise up! Long time I broke the chains.  
The lyrics, in English, were meaningless to him, the bass line irresistible. Every time he heard it, he vibrated inside. When the first echoing chords came through the hotel speakers, he might have smiled, or tapped a foot. Suddenly two young hotel guests were tugging his arm, asking him to demonstrate some “Mumbai moves.”  
Sozzled white people were known to be generous tippers. He began, discreetly he thought, to demonstrate a few steps—no shoulders and hands, just head and feet.  
“Have you gone mad, asshole?”  
A hotel superior grabbed him. Other managers came running from across the room. It was if he’d stabbed a Bollywood |
| “向上！别再往下沉沦。”
“向上！我终于打破锁链。”

大家都知道，烂醉的白人给小费十分大方。拉胡开始自认为谨慎小心地表演了一些舞步，只动头和脚，不动肩和手。

“你疯了吗？蠢货！”
酒店主管一把揪住他，其他经理则从其他角落跑了过来，就好像拉胡用刀子刺伤了某个宝莱坞明星。酒店长工嗤笑着看他被
star with a fork. The permanent waiters sniggered as he was dragged on his heels into the trash room. Only later, recovering at home, did he find the line of argument he might have used to defend himself. If the first law of hotel work was not to stare at the guests, wasn’t the second law to give them whatever they asked for?

As cartoon Tom blew a house to smithereens, Rahul turned back to the mirror, and Manju began her reading for her major, English literature. Today’s assignment was eighteenth century Restoration drama and Congreve’s The Way of the World.

Manju hadn’t read The Way of the World, nor did her professors expect her to. Except in the best colleges, dominated by high-caste, affluent students, Indian liberal arts education was taught by rote. At her mediocre all-girls college, founded by the Lions Club, she was simply required to
memorize a summary the teacher provided for each literary work on the syllabus, then restate it on the test and, later, on state board exams. Manju had a gift for memorization—she called it “my by-hearting.” But she found the characters in The Way of the World hard to keep straight.

“Millament, Mirabell, Petulant—have you ever heard such names? And there are so many more,” she told Rahul after a while.

“Everyone is telling lies and tricking people to get money, but where my teacher wrote what the story means, I don’t understand.”

“Love is subordinated” was the trouble spot. Although she had never held the hand of a boy her own age, love was an English word about which she felt confident. Subordinated, though, evoked only irritation at her mother, who hadn’t kept her promise to buy Manju an English-Marathi dictionary. Neither Rahul nor her mother

众的记忆力，她称之为 “我的记忆法”，但是，她觉得《如此世道》中的人物着实难记。

“米拉曼, 米拉贝尔, 普特伦……你听过这些名字吗? 而且书里还有更多。”过了一会，文珠对拉胡说道， “书中每个人为了金钱而说谎和戏弄他人，但是老师写了故事意义的地方，我却一点也不明白。”

句子 “爱是从属” 便是问题所在。虽然文珠从未与同龄男孩牵过手，但是她自信能理解英文单词 “爱”。不过单词 “从属” 仅仅令她想起对母亲的不满，母亲答应过买英马词典却食言。拉胡和母亲都不懂英语，他们愤愤不平的是要在办公室或酒店寻得一个体面活，必须会说印度前殖民者的语言，而马拉地语只不过是种值得敬重
knew English, and both took umbrage that the language of India’s former colonizers was considered requisite for decent jobs in offices and hotels, when Marathi was just as venerable a language.

To Manju, the new importance of English was a by-product of something she generally welcomed: a more globalized, meritocratic India. It didn’t much matter whether a person learned the language by studying Congreve or by practicing Chase Manhattan Visa Card dialogue at Personaliteez Spoken English or one of the training courses for international call-center work. Competence in English—a credential bespeaking worldliness and superior education—was a potential springboard out of the slums. Her own English was still slow and wooden, though good enough to be the second-best in Annawadi.

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<td>The best English was spoken by Prakash, the economics student who lived near the</td>
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temple. In the intricate social hierarchy of Annawadi’s young people—something now based less on caste than on future economic prospects—Prakash was the guy at the top. He had once been middle class, studying in a good private school, before his father got hit by a train. In his spare time, he sold mutual funds for ICICI Bank, making cold calls for a paltry commission.

Manju figured that Prakash would know the meaning of the word subordinated, but she had never spoken to him. A young woman in the slum had to weigh the value of each potential interaction with a male against the rumors it would inspire. Already people were gossiping about a cricket player who had secured her photo and laminated it in the shape of a heart. So as she went outside to scrub the laundry, she didn’t even glance at the fellow college student who was reading outside his hut, a few yards away.

“Mirabell—beau. Millament—gallant. Mr.
Fainall—cuckold.” She murmured bits of plot summary as she applied the stone to her mother’s large panties, her father’s small shirt.

“No, Mirabell is the gallant.” She took the wrung-out clothes inside and hung them on a string against the wall. Part of the wall stopped two feet from the roof, and her father had been promising to close the gap for ages, but that was as likely as her mother arriving home with an English-Marathi dictionary.

As she cleaned the two-burner stove, she repeated, “Themes are love affairs, social position, and money.” Roaches, a hundred of them, scattered. Stepping over Rahul, now asleep on the floor, she took some food scraps outside and dumped them in the sewage lake, which the hot season had magicked into a thick mat of water-hyacinth weed.

“Mirabell seeks social advantage through...
marriage to the beauty, Millament.”

When Manju by-hearted, she often pictured herself in the role of the heroine, but this girl, Millament, left her cold—whining when she was rich and independent enough to be negotiating her own marriage. Manju wanted to be a teacher when she finished college, and her great fear was that, in a fit of pique, her mother would wed her to a village boy who didn’t think that a woman should work. That she’d die doing the things she was doing now: sweeping the dirt that had blown in from outside, mopping, then sweeping the new dirt that had blown in while she mopped.

“This is Congreve’s drama, money is more important than love.”

This was her mother’s position, obviously. Manju's younger brother Ganesh was at the front of the house, manning a small grocery that represented Asha’s latest venture.
entrepreneurial scheme, a failing one. To start the store, she had secured for herself one of the government loans that Mr. Kamble hoped would finance his heart valve. Asha had intended for her husband to run the store, but he’d been using the proceeds to get drunk while he worked. He was currently passed out at Ganesh’s feet.

Manju wasn’t too interested in money. She hungered for virtue, a desire that was partly a fear. When studying, she sometimes fingered the scar on her neck from a night, years ago, when she’d stolen money from her mother to buy chocolates. Asha had responded with an axe. But Manju’s desire to be good was also rebellion—a way of chastising a mother who was said to have acquired the television set and other advantages by behaving badly.

Manju’s instrument for demonstrating her decency was the school she ran out of her hut every afternoon. The school was

资的政府贷款作为抵押。阿莎本想让丈夫经营这个商店，但是她丈夫把收入都用在工作时买醉，现在正醉倒在甘尼脚边。

文珠对钱不是很感兴趣。她渴望的是能得体处事，既是渴望，在一定程度上又是惧怕。文珠学习时会抚摸颈上的疤痕，那是几年前的夜晚，她从母亲那里偷钱买巧克力，阿莎用斧头留下的。文珠渴望正派做人也是种反抗，意在谴责自己母亲。据称阿莎是靠行为不端而获得电视机和其他好处。

文珠通过每天下午上课的棚屋学校，展示自己的正派作风。学校由中央政府出资，天主教慈善团体管理，阿莎则是正式教
financed by central government money, funneled through a Catholic charity, and Asha was the teacher, officially. But her mother was busy with Shiv Sena, so Manju had been running the class since she was in seventh grade, displaying a commitment her mother found annoying. Although Asha was pleased with the small stipend the school brought to the household, she thought Manju should conduct the class only on days when the supervisor came to check, the way a lot of other hut-school teachers did.

The central government called schools like Manju’s “bridge schools.” Her brief was to provide two hours of daily lessons to child laborers or girls kept home by household responsibilities, in order to get them acclimated to, and excited about, formal education. Sparking enthusiasm wasn’t hard. As every slumdweller knew, there were three main ways out of poverty: finding an entrepreneurial niche, as the Husains had found in garbage; politics and

中央政府将文珠的这种学校称作“桥梁学校”，旨在为童工和因家务而留家中的女孩提供每日两小时的课程，让他们适应并热衷于正规教育。激发他们的学习并不难，因为每个贫民窟居民都知道，有三条路可以摆脱贫困：创业，就像侯赛因家靠垃圾发家；从政和贪污，阿莎便将希望压在这条路；还有教育。贫民窟中几十家父母都为了支付私人学校的学费，只靠饼和盐充饥。
corruption, in which Asha placed her hopes; and education. Several dozen parents in the slum were getting by on roti and salt in order to pay private school tuition.

In the last five years, more than one hundred schools had opened around the airport—some excellent and expensive; some fraudulent; some, like Manju’s, taught by unqualified teenagers. But all were understood to be better than the free schools like Marol Municipal, where Asha was a contract teacher. Nearly 60 percent of the state’s public school teachers hadn’t finished college, and many of the permanent teachers had paid large under-the-table sums to school officials to secure their positions.

The Corporator was among the politicians who preferred to capitalize on these abysmal schools instead of reforming them. He’d opened his own private school, using a front man.

“At Marol, we play, take recess, play again, “在麦罗，我们玩闹，休息，再玩闹，然
then have lunch,” was how the Nepali boy, Adarsh, described the municipal school curriculum. The free lunches were the big draw. Adarsh came to Manju’s school after his regular school day, since she was always teaching something — often, the plot summaries she was trying to memorize for college. Her students didn’t understand the plot of Mrs. Dalloway any better than Manju did, but they got that Othello was distrusted because of his dark skin.

Now one of the other students flew into her hut with such velocity that a poster of Bal Thackeray, Shiv Sena’s aging founder, fluttered off its tack on the wall. “Devo! You’re early!” Manju protested. “And you forgot to take off your shoes!”

Her eyes then moved from the mud tracks on the floor to his face, which was covered in blood.

“Oh,” the boy said, holding his head. “A taxi …”
Annawadi kids were always getting hit on the chaotic roads—usually, while crossing a treacherous intersection to get to Marol Municipal School. New drivers talking on new cellphones could be a lethal combination. Manju leaped up, grabbed the turmeric by the stove, and poured the yellow powder over Devo’s head. Turmeric, as good for wounds as for brides before weddings. She rubbed the spice until it blended with the blood into a bright orange paste, then pressed down hard. She was checking to see if she’d stanched the bleeding when Devo’s one-eyed, widowed mother came through the door, brandishing a foot-long piece of metal.

“No car will kill you! No god will save you! You went in the road, roaming loose like that, and now you will die at my hands!”

Devo darted under a wooden cupboard

2在印度，婚礼前新娘会以姜黄粉涂抹全身，否则婚礼将不完整。
where Manju’s family stored their possessions, and emitted a stricken, anticipatory howl. Pulling him out, his mother began to beat him with the strip of metal.

“No!” Manju said. “Not the head! Not where he’s hurt!”

“I’ll break your teeth! I will turn your flesh red,” Devo’s mother shouted. The fastest way to financial ruin in Annawadi was injury or illness, and the woman was already in debt to the loan shark who had financed the final hospital stay of her late husband. “If the driver had hurt you worse, how would I have paid the doctor? Tell me, Devo. Do I have one rupee to spend to save your life?”

“Stop,” Manju cried, trying and failing to catch the woman’s hand. Rahul, awake now, rolled his eyes; he considered the hut school a magnet for family histrionics. In calmer
moments, Manju could argue that parents were terrified of losing control of their children in a city where dangers seemed to be multiplying—a city they didn’t fully understand. And as much as Manju hated violence of any stripe, the odd thrashing, like the odd axe blow, could be effective in keeping a child close to home.

Devo’s mother had now moved past the point of constructive teaching, however. Manju lunged between mother and son, managing to capture Devo’s mother in a hug.

“Promise,” Manju said to Devo, panting. “You will not go in the road again.”

“Will not,” he got out between heaving sobs. “Now I won’t make such a mistake.”

Fixing her one eye on Manju before departing, his mother said, “Tomorrow if he does not sit with you and study, I will break his legs and pour kerosene on his face.”
Manju untied her dupatta, which was streaked with blood and spice. “Come, let’s get the others.” Left unattended in the house, her students could be as extravagant as her brothers with the Fair and Lovely.

Manju always looked angry when emerging from her hut. Everyone who left her house got tight in the lip unless they wanted a mouthful of flies, the only creatures in the slum enthusiastic about the stale goods in her mother’s new store. “Class, come,” she called out as she crossed the maidan, stepping lightly around the piles of trash being sorted by Abdul. She knew who he was because Rahul hung out with his brother, Mirchi, but of course she didn’t speak to him. The garbage boy didn’t speak.
to anyone, as far as she could tell.

“Children, quickly now,” she called, clapping her hands as she turned into one of the slumlanes. “Phut-a-phut! It’s late!” Her official position was that having to round up her students was a bother. Shouldn’t they show up voluntarily?

In fact she liked being outside, peering into doors and collecting snatches of neighborhood gossip, in these minutes when the mantle of teacher protected her from rumor. Today’s raging controversy involved clipboards that advertised Honda motorcycles, from a dealership in Siloam Springs, Arkansas. The World Vision charity had intended them as gifts to three dozen children it sponsored in Annawadi, but the clipboards were being hoarded by the social workers assigned to hand them out. Manju was always relieved to hear of local scandals in which her mother played no pivotal role.

事实上，教书期间文珠喜欢待在屋外，朝门里窥视，收集些邻居的闲言碎语，老师的身份使她免受非议。今天的激烈争论涉及到印着本田摩托车广告的剪贴板，这些都是由美国阿肯色州西罗亚泉市的代理商所提供，世界宣明会本意赠予在阿纳窟赞助的 36 名孩子，但是负责分派的社工把剪贴板都囤积了起来。听到本地丑闻时，文珠往往会因母亲未在其中扮演关键角色而如释重负。
One by one her students, mostly girls under age twelve, emerged from their huts. Several of their sun-bleached dresses had broken zippers, exposing bony backs. Manju didn’t worry about little Sharda. The girl was born spiny, like her mother, who’d broken rocks on the road before her lungs went. Lakshmi was the painful case. Her stepmother reserved the food of the house for her own children. The brothelkeeper’s eleven-year-old daughter, kitted in tight black bicycle shorts and dangling earrings, had her brother in tow. Both children liked to be out of their hut when visitors came to have sex, especially when the sex was with their mother. For many of these children, Manju’s little school was no bridge. It was all the education they would get.

The troupe then marched to the hut of Manju’s secret pupil, her friend Meena. Meena’s parents kept the old ways about girls and education: Too much learning

文珠的学生大多数是 12 岁以下的女孩，一个接一个地从棚屋里走出来。她们的裙子晒到褪色，有些拉链也坏了，露出骨瘦嶙峋的后背。文珠不用为小夏达操心。夏达的母亲肺衰竭之前曾在路上砸碎石头，这个姑娘生而带刺，和她妈妈一样。拉什米则身世可怜，她的继母把食物都留给自己的孩子。妓院老鸨 11 岁的女儿穿着黑色单车裤，戴着耳坠，拉着她的兄弟。嫖客来找乐子的时候，尤其是母亲接生意时，两个孩子更愿意离开自家棚屋。对于很多孩子而言，文珠的小学校根本不是座通往更高教育的桥，他们所能接受的教育仅此而已。

一班学生朝着米娜家走去。米娜是文珠的朋友，也是秘密的学生。她的父母在女孩和教育问题上坚持着陈旧观点：女子多知少听话，文珠只能偷偷地教她英语。
reduced a girl’s compliancy. Manju had been teaching Meena English on the sly.

Meena, fifteen, had been the first girl born in Annawadi, arriving two years after her parents helped turn the swamp into a slum. She was a Dalit; Manju belonged to the Kunbi farming caste, a backward caste but higher. Like most young Annawadians, the girls considered the caste obsession of their elders to be an irrelevant artifact. Manju and Meena had become friends because they both loved to dance, and stayed friends because they could keep each other’s secrets.

Now, seeing Manju in her doorway, Meena flashed a smile that was not her wide, thrilling filmstar smile—the one that other girls tried unsuccessfully to emulate. Today’s smile was the goaway version, which indicated that she was on lockdown, allowed out only to fetch water or use the toilet. Her crime, as usual, was a failure to

米娜今年15岁，是在阿纳窟出生的第一个女孩，在她出生两年前，其父母帮忙将沼泽地建成贫民窟。米娜是贱民阶级，而文珠属于昆比种姓，尽管落后但仍比贱民等级高。和大多数阿纳窟的年轻人一样，两个女孩并不在意困扰长辈的种姓，只把它视为人为规定。文珠和米娜因同样喜欢舞蹈而成为朋友，相互又能保守秘密，所以友谊长存。

这时，米娜看见文珠出现在门口，露出笑容。她的微笑如明星般得摄人心魂，不该是贫民窟人所有，引得其他女孩徒劳地模仿。今天的笑容意味着“走开吧”，表示文珠被关在家里，只能出去取水或上厕所。她今天犯了和往常一样的错误，与父母兄弟说话时没有管好自己的嘴巴。为什么她就不能听听操场上的男孩讲酒店的
hold her tongue with her brothers and parents. Why couldn’t she listen to the boys in the maidan when they were talking about the hotels? Why couldn’t she go to school? During the day, she did her household duty, but at night fury sometimes overcame her, and her mother and brothers would feel compelled to beat it out of her. Such behavior could sabotage the marriage being arranged for her in their Tamil Nadu village.

Manju routinely advised Meena to keep her discontents to herself, as Manju did. Still, the Tamil girl’s defiance spoke to something inside Manju. This morning as Manju was getting ready for college, the small silvery bindi she was putting on her forehead slipped and caught in the small of her neck. It glinted prettily there. Asha had already left for work. Manju let it stay. A girl could be virtuous without being perfect.

Back in the hut, her students arranged themselves on the bloody floor.
“Good afternoon, students,” she said in English.

“Good afternoon, teacher,” the children called back at deafening volume.

She paused, uncertain of what to do next. She didn’t grasp enough of The Way of the World to practice its plot with her students. That would have to be internalized later, while she cooked dinner, and before her mother started fighting with her father about being drunk. The day’s official class assignment was the English names of fruits—apples, bananas, mangoes, papayas. She’d work to it gradually, after a review of a previous lesson on cars, trains, and planes. But first, since the children were poking each other, there would be ten energy-depleting minutes of “Head-Shoulders-Knees-and-Toes.”

Her students’ singing rang out across the

“同学们早上好。”她用英语说道。

“老师早上好。”孩子们大声回答道。

文珠顿了顿，不确定接下来做什么，因为她没有掌握足够多《如此世道》的情节来教给学生。迟点准备晚餐时——在母亲为父亲醉酒开始打架之前——她才能吸收那些内容。当天的课堂任务是学习水果的英文名—苹果，香蕉，芒果，木瓜。文珠会逐步来教，先复习完上节课的单词：汽车，火车和飞机。然而一开始，孩子们相互拨弄，要耗费精力花十分钟来唱儿歌《头、肩膀、膝盖和脚趾》。这个时间，学生的歌声总是响彻操场。苏
maidan, as it always did at this hour. Sunil, the young scavenger, liked to eavesdrop when he brought his goods to sell to Abdul. He’d sat in on Manju’s class for a few days in January, mastering the English twinkle-star song, before deciding that his time was better spent working for food. He was now taking the position that Manju’s school was two-bit games in a hut.

Abdul, who considered Manju the most-everything girl in Annawadi, could only wonder at the small boy’s sense of superiority. One of Abdul’s own arrogances, in these weeks before the One Leg burned and everything changed, was that he could predict the fates of other people, especially scavengers. But Sunil’s future was hard to make out. Although contempt was a force that changed a person, being a waste-picker hadn’t yet infected Sunil’s mind, if he still thought memorizing “A Is for Apple” might make some difference in his life.