

Reviewing *Steamies*: The Literary Steam of 21st Century Feminism

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Abstract: With the socio-cultural emancipation of 21st century women, there have been noticeable changes in the trend of female writings. Post-modern novels, including those written in English, are increasingly becoming erotic in nature. That such novels, variously called 'mummy porns' and 'steamies', are enjoying wide readership is indicative of the fact that both the 21st century female writer and her female readers are quite comfortable not only with their body but also with the liberalisation of female sexual energy and jouissance. The trend of writing 'mummy porns' was popularised with the publication of E.L. James's *Fifty Shades of Grey* in 2011, and from then on, erotically-themed novels, which can be reread as feminist exercises, are being regularly written. The essay "Reviewing *Steamies*: The Literary Steam of 21st Century Feminism" proposes to make a very brief analysis of the situation of the rise of steamies post-*Fifty Shades* and critically read some of the erotic novels as literary feminist exercises.

Keywords: Mummy porn, Steamies, Feminism, 21st century literature, *Fifty Shades of Grey*, sexual freedom

With rapid modernisation of the 21st century world, socio-cultural milieus of different countries and ethnic groups, particularly those belonging to Europe and North America – and, to a lesser extent, of nation-states like Japan, India, Sri Lanka, and Brazil – are steadily and tolerantly admitting different visual and literary experimentations. Different sub-genres being intermittently added to literatures of these countries, constant coinage of new words and terms have become prominent – most so, in English. These include, for example, in English: 'bling' (expensive and ostentatious clothing and jewellery), 'chillax' (calm relaxation), 'crunk' (very excited or full of energy), 'droolworthy' (extremely attractive or desirable), 'frankenfood' (genetically-modified food), 'grrrrl' (an independent, strong, aggressive, and sexually-frank young woman), 'infomania' (a compulsive desire to check or accumulate news or information through internet), 'jeggings' (tight-fitting stretch trousers for women, resembling denim trousers), 'muffin top' (a roll of fat visible above the top of a pair of woman's tight-fitting, low-waisted trousers), 'screenager' (a young person with additive attraction to computers and internet), 'sexting' (the act of sending sexually-explicit messages or photographs over mobile phones), and '*Twitterati*' (keen users of the social-networking-website *Twitter*)¹. The *Online Collins Dictionary* has named 'mommy porn', another recent-addition to the English vocabulary, as a 'word of the year 2012' (for April)². The present essay proposes to offer a very brief review of the gradually-but-definitively maturing sub-genre of 'mummy porn', with special reference to different novels which have been collectively identified as 'steamies' (that is,

'steamy novels occurring as teen-erotica or young-people's-sexual-adventure-stories) by *The Independent*-correspondent Nicholas Clark in his 14 December 2012-article "*The Rise of 'Steamies': British Publishers get wise to American craze for Teen Erotic Fiction*", which was re-printed in the Kolkata-based daily *The Statesman – The Eighth Day* (Siliguri-edition; 23 December 2012 Sunday, page – 2). If the *Taliban's* shooting at (Mingora's) Malala Yousafzai (b. 1997) on 9 October 2012 failed to asphyxiate the wave of post-modern feminism gradually spreading in Southern Asia, or the Mayans' erroneous prediction of the *Doomsday* of 21 December 2012 strongly united international communities, the emergence of 'steamies' or 'mummy porn'-novels is expected to unify the feminist-litterateurs and consolidate the 'third wave' of feminism more than ever. The sub-genre of 'mummy porn' or 'steamies' can be identified as the latest contribution to a critical-literary circle of protestation, especially that in English, which began expanding after the publications of Mary Wollstonecraft's *AVindication of the Rights of Wōman* (1792), John Stuart Mill's *The Subjection of Wōmen* (1869), and Margaret Fuller's *Wōman in the Nineteenth Century* (1845) (Abrams 88). Critical feminist literature spread especially after the 1939-45 Second World War, with the release of Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* (1949) and Kate Millet's *Sexual Politics* (1970), and, as Kuiper *et al.* write, from the beginning, sought to expose the 'patriarchal biases' of established literatures and explore the 'cultural constructions of gender and identity' (*Merriam-Webster* 409). Early-21st century has witnessed an increased level of feminist movements and activities, with the *SlutWalk* protest-marches, which began in the Canadian town of Toronto in April 2011, spreading to New Delhi in June 2011 and to Kolkata in May 2012. Such radical feminist movements are identifiably based on Gayatri Chakravorty-Spivak's concept of 'strategic essentialism', which is a temporary acceptance of certain 'essentialising' prejudices as a postcolonial interrogative strategy³. On *SlutWalks*, Babbar writes in her *Hindustan Times* article,

After skimpily clad women paraded the streets worldwide, Delhi is gearing up for its own *SlutWalk* on 25 June 2011. The capital will become the runway for women to claim their right to wear what they want. On 28 May 2011, Melbourne saw women dressed in fishnet stockings, revealing corsets and butt-hugging shorts, participating in the *SlutWalk* – to claim their right to be sexy without being branded as 'sluts asking for rape'. *SlutWalk* was first held in Toronto this year after Michael Sanguinetti, a police officer, outraged women world over when he said in a speech to university students 'women should avoid dressing like sluts in order not to be victimised'. What started, as a protest in one city has spread over 60 cities worldwide to bring attention to society's penchant to blame victims of sexual assault by saying they were asking for it⁴.

Other than these obtrusive protestations, an ultra-feminist exercise attracted considerable media coverage and condemnation in end-October 2012 with a Brazilian student, Catarina Migliorini (b. 1992), selling her virginity over internet to the Japanese bidder 'Natsu' for

\$780,000. Migliorini perceptively considered it to be both her own privilege and responsibility to use herself according to her own will, and she become the third female to publicly auction her 'chastity' after the Bristol University-student Rosie Reid (b. 1986) and the impoverished New Zealander and post-graduation-degree-aspirant Natalie Dylan (b. 1987) 'sold' their respective virginities online respectively in 2004 and 2009. In late-2000's, some international female students, claiming full rights over their own bodies, sold themselves in the West over internet for body-advertisements. A similar daring and radical stance has led different 21st century young female English-writing authors to conceive and contribute to the subgenre of 'steamies'. They have begun accepting the traditional male psychosis of feminine sexual prowess as a form of self-empowerment. If in their respective widely-acclaimed writings, English-writing male authors like Herman Melville (1819-91), David Herbert Lawrence (1885-1930), Henry Miller (1891-1980), and Norman Mailer (1923-2007) have "aggrandise[d] their aggressive phallic selves and degrade[d] women as submissive sexual objects" (Abrams 88), steamies-writers assert the sexual powers of women and their unabashed enjoyment of union and erotica. The entry on 'mummy porn' (which can also be referred to as 'steamies') in the online *Macmillan Dictionary* focuses in details regarding the origin and nature of the word. The term, coined in 2012, was initially used to refer to a subgenre of erotically-themed novels similar in style to the English author E.L. James's (that is, Erica Mitchell's) *Fifty Shades of Grey*, published in June 2011 by the New York-based *Vintage Books*. The novel, which has sold over 50 million copies between 2011 and 2012, "describes an affair between fictional characters Christian Grey, a young entrepreneur, and Anastasia Steele, a 22 year-old student"⁵. As for the etymology or general background of the coinage, Maxwell further notes:

The [coinage of the] expression 'mummy porn' is [...] directly linked to the massive popularity of E. L. James's novel. The use of 'mummy' is presumably inspired by the fact that this type of novel appeals mostly to middle-aged rather than younger women, women who are therefore more likely to be 'mothers'. 'Porn' is of course short for the word 'pornography' [...], and the expression's success lies partly in the shock factor associated with this word, which usually has rather negative, risqué overtones. Taking inspiration from the expressions 'chick lit' and 'lad lit', informal ways of referring to novels aimed at women/young men, a spin off of 'mummy porn' has inspired the coinage 'gran lit', which refers to romantic literature designed to appeal to women in their 'autumn' years. [...] The novel *Fifty Shades of Grey* was in fact developed from 'fanfic' [that is, fan-fiction] inspired by Stephenie Meyer's *Twilight* series⁶.

If critics have traced the coinage of 'mummy porn' to the expression 'chick lit', one might as well observe that 'mummy porn' is actually a *thoughtful maturation* of the sub-genre of 'chick lit' itself. The term 'chick lit', which generally indicates novels on the problems of young, single, and independent women based and working in cities, was first coined in 1993 and includes, as the early examples of the sub-genre, publications such as Helen Fielding's *Bridget Jones's Diary* (1996), Candace Bushnell's *Sex*

and the City (1997), and Melissa Bank's short-story-collection *The Girls' Guide to Hunting and Fishing* (1999) (*The Postcolonial* 214). What is common to all these three publications is that they include instances of the respective protagonists' anxieties about their sexual life. Human sexuality has occupied an important part of literature – especially that produced in English – since the 1660 Restoration, when it was efficiently presented in different plays of George Etherege (c. 1636-92) and Charles Sedley (1639-1701). In the 20th and 21st centuries, scarcely any bestselling novel does not describe physical intimacy. The *Stylish* lifestyle website has compiled a list of critically-acclaimed novels which incorporate stirring descriptions of human lovemaking, including Henry Miller's *Tropic of Cancer* (1934), Sebastian Faulks's *Birdsong* (1993), Jilly Cooper's *Pandora* (2002), Julian Fellowes's *Snobs* (2004), Zadie Smith's *On Beauty* (2005) and Paul Theroux's *A Dead Hand: A Crime in Calcutta* (2010)⁷. A *Questia*-entry on "Sex in Literature" thus describes the connexion between human amour and writings, which E.L. James has perceptively re-invoked in her 2011 novel:

Sex is a common theme in literature and its portrayal has evolved across authors and genres. [...] Writers in Ancient Greece paid a great deal of attention to the topics of love and lust, providing detailed information about sexuality and its importance in society [...]. Literary texts describe great sexual freedom, at least for men. Married men were allowed to have sexual relationships with prostitutes. [...] While the depiction of an intercourse with a prostitute was socially acceptable, ancient writers generally avoided delving into the sex lives of a husband and a wife. In Ancient Roman literature, men are also described as being free to have extra marital relationships. Women, too, had relative sexual freedom, although those who veered away from a respectful marital relationship were often condemned by writers. Sallust's portrait of Sempronia describes a woman indulging in casual sexual relationships who 'had often committed many crimes of masculine audacity'. Allusions to Julius Caesar's [...] numerous affairs with married women also hint at sexual freedom for women⁸.

Other than the fact that human interest in physicality and its depiction is perennial, different bio-scientists, including John Van Epp, have underscored the fact that individuals' love and sexuality are deeply interrelated. Van Epp writes, "The primary reason why sex is always relational is because you cannot separate your body from the rest of who you are; therefore, what your body does, you do. Sex and self are inextricably linked, and during a sexual encounter something happens that is more than just a physical act" (289). It is therefore natural that steamies would naturally focus on sexuality. Moreover, general 21st century readers have become more interested in teenage love-and-sex-stories than in the traditionally adult relationships. Mundinger-Klow divides people, other than the usual *teleiophilics*, into *hebephilics* (who prefer individuals in the early puberty, generally ages 11-14 years) and *ephebophilics* (people who sexually prefer older adolescents, usually ages 15-19 years). Steamies cater to a considerable section of readers who are subconsciously ephebophilic. The trend of writing 'mummy porn' in

particular and steamies in general – though *Fifty Shades of Grey* has readership across different age-groups – was started in 1975 with the publication of Judy Blume's *Forever...* (New York: Simon and Schuster), which later won the *Margaret A. Edwards Award*. The novel, which focuses on how the teenage attraction between the high-school-seniors Katherine Danziger and Michael Wagner, which includes physical intimacy and mutual hope of 'everlastingness', gradually diminishes as the wiser Danziger chooses Theo, a mature tennis-instructor, over the inexperienced Wagner. As Ira Milne comments, "The book was written in the midst of the so-called *sexual revolution* of the 1970s, when young people were attempting to throw off limiting social rules that, on the surface, demanded that girls remain virgins, while they gave boys permission to act out sexually". If *Forever...* was hailed by the 70s' feminists, it also faced several challenges all throughout the United States of America because of its controversial handling of the thitherto-unexplored theme of teenage sexuality and its usage of graphic language to discuss the intercourse between Danziger and Wagner. General readers were unaccustomed to such a description of teenage social life as this:

At midnight Sibyl flashed the lights on and off and Fred wished me a Happy New Year, then tried to stuff his tongue in my mouth. I kept my lips shut tight; while he was kissing me I was watching Michael kiss Elizabeth. He was much taller than I first thought and thin, but not skinny (Blume 3).

The same aspect of the novel (that is, the awakening of pubertal sexual feelings), which attracted condemnation for Blume, also made the 70's Western mothers interested in its contents, and hence the term 'mummy porn' could be first applied to this publication. Adolescence is an inevitable but normal stage in every human life, and sensible parents, having had been influenced by *Forever...*, were ready to discuss different aspects of puberty with their wards. Another point of controversy to arise from *Forever...* was Danziger's consumption of oral contraceptive pills (O.C.P.). Though O.C.P. had been formally made available in the U.S.A. in June 1957, patriarchs were strictly against the proliferation of the drug's usage lest it should allow and even encourage girls to engage in casual and arbitrary physical relationships. Blume identifiably felt that O.C.P. was becoming an undeniable presence in everyday life, while feminists perceived the O.C.P. as a symbolic empowerment of women over her sexual rights. Severe criticism of *Forever...* notwithstanding, the American-Jewish litterateur Blume (b. 1938) remained unapologetic for her oeuvre dealing with basic phases and aspects of human life, such as the onset of menstruation in *Are You There God? It's Me, Margaret* (New York: Yearling, 1970), and pubertal male and female jouissance respectively in *Then Again, Maybe I Won't* (Bradbury Press, 1971) and *Deenie* (Bradbury Press, 1973). Blume's exploration of female jouissance in *Deenie* might be straightforwardly interpreted as a feminine stance vis-à-vis Hélène Cixous's usage of the term to indicate women's pleasure or sexual rapture which combines mental, physical and spiritual aspects of female experience. Talattof writes, "Hélène Cixous conceives a fundamental connection between the woman's body, sexual pleasure,

and sexual expression within women's writings [...] [,] [while] Luce Irigaray believes that masculine language cannot express women's sexual pleasure (jouissance)" (29) Cixous considers jouissance, the central theme of Blume's 1973 publication, to be the source of female creative power, and maintains that its suppression prevents women from finding their own fully empowered voice, and, following Irigaray's supposition, *Deenie* is a form of Blume's self-empowerment. Before *Fifty Shades of Grey* was published, brief explorations of teenage problems and sexuality continued to be intermittently published. However, apart from occasional descriptions of intercourse in different novels, direct focuses were sparse in number. The *Mills and Boon* romances like Anne Weale's *The Last Night at Paradise* (1980), Betty Neels's *When May Follows* (1981), Marjorie Lewty's *One Who Kisses* (1983), Penny Jordan's *A Savage Adoration* (1987), Patricia Wilson's *Impossible Bargain* (1988), Anne McAllister's *Out of Bounds* (1990), Helen Bianchin's *Reluctant Captive* (1992), Emma Goldrick's *The Balylemore Bride* (1995), Daphne Clair's *Grounds for Marriage* (1996), Catherine George's *An Engagement of Convenience* (1999), and Carole Mortimer's *Bound by Contract* (2000), among others, continued to be published, as late as in 2012 – for example, Emily McKay's *All He Ever Wanted* (2012) and Sara Orwig's *Midnight under the Mistletoe* (2012). But the escapist romances, in spite of the projection of independent women, have scarcely ever been considered for serious reading. In contrast, novels like Anne Rice's the *Lives of the Mayfair Witches* series (1990-94), Faye Kellerman's *Justice* (New York: Avon, 1996), Nicholas Sparks' *The Notebook* (New York: Warner Books, 1996), Kristina Laferne Roberts's *Nervous: A Novel* (New York: Atria Books, 2003), Sarah Mlynowski's *Monkey Business* (Buffalo: Red Dress Ink, 2004), Hailey Abbott's the *Summer Boys* series (2004-07), John Green's *Looking for Alaska* (Boston: Dutton Books, 2005), and Simone Elkeles's the *Perfect Chemistry* trilogy (2008-11) have been popularly read either for their detailed but artistic depiction of sexual encounters or providence of adolescent or youth attitudes towards physical intimacies. Steamies have 'gained enough steam' – if I am allowed to use the expression – with the publication of *Fifty Shades of Grey* in 2011. On the sub-genre of novels inspired by *Fifty Shades of Grey*, Nick Clark comments,

Steamies are described as 'escapist romances, featuring young women, the same age as the readers, exploring their first sexual desires and their first sexual experiences' by the book's publishers. The bandwagon has already started rolling in the U.S.A. with titles including *Nightshade* (London: Philomel Books, 2010) by Andrea Cremer and *The Vincent Boys* (New York: Simon Pulse, 2012) by Abbi Glines proving popular. Brenda Gardner, managing director at *Irresistible's* publisher *Piccadilly Press*, said: 'Young Adult publishers have been looking with envy at *Fifty Shades* knowing we could not do anything like that. Everybody was trying to work out what would be the next big thing'. The publishing industry discussed the issue over the summer amongst themselves and with booksellers. 'We thought there would be a way of doing it. But it's not about graphic sex, it's about passion', Ms. Gardner said¹⁰.

In *Fifty Shades of Grey*, the Washington State University-Vancouver English-

literature-student Anastasia Steele visits the young entrepreneur Michael Grey's Seattle office to interview him on behalf of her sick friend Katherine Kavanagh, and they almost immediately start a relationship. Mitchell's initial language and presentation in the novel is restrained but suggestive. As Steele first visits Grey's office, she topples over, is saved by the tycoon, and the first contact is established:

I push open the door and stumble through, tripping over my own feet and falling headfirst into the office.

Double crap – me and my two left feet! I am on my hand and knees in the doorway to Mr. Grey's office, and gentle hands are round me, helping me to stand. I am so embarrassed, damn my clumsiness. I have to steel myself to glance up. Holy cow – he's so young.

'Miss Kavanagh'. He extends a long-fingered hand to me once I'm upright. 'I'm Christian Grey. Are you all right? Would you like to sit?'

So young – and attractive, very attractive. He's tall, dressed in a fine gray suit, white shirt, and black tie with unruly dark copper-coloured hair and intense, bright gray eyes that regard me shrewdly. It takes a moment for me to find my voice.

Um. Actually – I mutter. If this guy is over thirty, then I'm a monkey's uncle. In a daze, I place my hand in his and we shake. As our fingers touch, I feel an odd, exhilarating shiver run through me. I withdraw my hand hastily, embarrassed. Must be static. I blink rapidly, my eyelids matching my heart rate" (James 7-8).

From this point onwards, *Fifty Shades of Grey* focuses on the deepening relationship between Steele and Grey, which begins with the businessman presenting the student with a copy of Thomas Hardy's 1891 novel *Tess of the d'Urbervilles: A Pure Woman Faithfully Presented*, and culminates in the two sharing a physical relationship inside an elevator and thereafter at Grey's plush apartment. Grey wants Steele to sign a *B.D.S.M.* (the acronym for 'Bondage and Discipline, Dominance and Submission, and Sadism and Masochism') contract according to which Steele would have to be submissive to Grey's dominance. The student refuses and breaks contact with the businessman until her college-graduation-day when he becomes a guest-speaker. Steele allows herself to be spanked and beaten with a belt in turn by Grey before realising their mutual incompatibility and returning to Kavanagh's apartment in a devastated state of mind. Erika Mitchell had initially tried to write *Master of the Universe* using the characters 'Edward Cullen' and 'Bella Swan' from Stephenie Meyer's *Twilight* series; later the respective protagonists were changed to 'Christian Grey' and 'Anastasia Steele'. The *Wikipedia* entry of 19 December 2012 thus attributes the novel's success:

The book's erotic nature and perceived demographic of its fanbase as being composed largely of married women over thirty led to the book being dubbed *Mommy Porn* by some news agencies. The book has also been reportedly popular among teenage girls and college women. By the release of the final volume in January 2012, news networks in the United States had begun to report on the *Fifty Shades* trilogy as an example of viral marketing and of the rise in popularity of female erotica, attributing its success to the discreet nature of e-reading devices¹¹.

As far as feminist approaches to the novel are concerned, Mitchell has not

only indirectly asserted the feminine right to sexuality but also explored the subconscious human desire for accepting or inflicting pain and restraint. Mitchell's honesty has endeared herself to the Third Wave Feminists for she has pointed out and revived readers' interest in sadism and masochism in literature. Reviewing the available volume of sadomasochistic pornography, Anthony Storr has commented that the Western culture and society are full of readers with direct or indirect interest in bondage (87). Sadism and masochism have been depicted in English literature since John Cleland's *Fanny Hill* (1749), and more popular publications on these themes include James Glass Bertram's *Personal Recollections of the Use of the Rod* (1868), Charles Sackville's *Maud Cameron and her Guardian* (1903), Anne Desclos's *Story of O* (1954), Alasdair Gray's *Something Leather* (1990), and Jacqueline Carey's *Kushiel's Dart* (2001). The themes of binding and torture have inspired in literature acclaimed works like Marquis de Sade's *Justine; or, The Misfortunes of Virtue* (1791), Leopold von Sacher-Masoch's *Venus in Furs* (1870), or Eric Stanton's comics-series. Even James Joyce explores the themes in his *Ulysses* (1922) through Martha Clifford's letter to Leopold Bloom in the fifth episode of the novel's second part. It may also be mentioned that bondage has occasionally been regarded as a symbolic empowerment of women in the situations when women act as dominatrices. Nevertheless, Brankin writes,

Of course, from Heathcliff to Mr. Big, most women love a bit of danger and darkness in their romantic heroes but this Christian creature – although intriguing in the beginning – eventually gave this reader the creeps. [...] The fictional Christian also has control issues but *Fifty Shades* seems to imply that women secretly want domineering men¹².

'E.L. James' or Erika Mitchell has initiated a literary sub genre that steadily focuses on the sexual freedom of 21st century women. In February 2013, *Simon and Schuster* is scheduled to release Christian Hobbs and Lauren Billings's *Beautiful Bastard*, an erotic romance novel that centres on the relationship between the workaholic Chloe Mills and her superior officer Bennett Ryan. Earlier, in 2008, *Gabriel's Inferno* (2008), on the physical attraction between Professor Gabriel Emerson of the University of Toronto and his graduate student Julianne Mitchell, written by the Canadian 'Sylvain Reynard' was released to contribute to the subgenre of erotic novels but it was not very popular. Liz Banks's *Irresistible*, to be released by *Piccadilly Press* in 2013, is, however, expected to attract wide readership through its reported openness to handling of the erotic themes. The protagonist Mia, a sixteen-year-old-girl is undecided about whom to choose between the caring Dan and the notorious but rich Jamie. It is an issue of examination whether by employing sexually-independent females in their literatures, 21st century feminist writers, many of whom are in their youth, are capitulating to the male desires of undressing women in imagination and to see them being dominated by males in sexual relationships. Peter Brooker, while noticing the media projection of the post-modern feminists, appears suspicious of the media's power of distortion and cautions against following of 'male-oriented knowledge' (Brooker 101). However, the 21st century feminists

do not overtly depend on media for proliferation of their philosophical stances. They rather depend on online advertisements and increased sale of books. The steam in the sail of steamies-publication has been deftly provided by James's *Fifty Shades of Grey*, and writers like Liz Banks and Abbi Glines appear to be determined to advance the notion of fiercely-independent girls with attraction to sexual escapades in both the western reading world and that in the Orient. About the opening up of 21st century female readers, Flic Everett writes,

'Women can let themselves be turned on by written erotica in a way they often cannot with visual porn,' explains *Radio 5's Late Night Live* psychotherapist Rachel Morris.

'Novels like this offer guilt-free thrills, because we do not have to compare our bodies unfavourably, the way we might with a video – we can just let ourselves be carried along by the story'.

But are we really all longing to be bound with cable ties and whipped? Or does erotica simply allow us to fantasise about sex we would never try in real life? 'Women can enjoy quite hardcore ideas but, for us, it is all about the context', says Rachel.

'If the heroine we identify with is both willing and in control, it allows us to imagine making the same choices and enjoying it – even if we would run a mile in real life'. Much the same way as we probably would not want to snog a vampire – but *Twilight* let us imagine the thrill of doing exactly that. Perhaps that explains the lacks of shame female readers are feeling over *Fifty Shades* and its like.¹³

Brankin likens novels like *Fifty Shades of Grey* to 'pedestrian chick lit'¹⁴ and it is important that such novels as Banks's are also spreading to India. The Mumbai-settled Bengali novelist Madhuri Banerjee, for example, has been producing combinations of chick lit and steamies like *Mistakes Like Love and Sex* (2012) and *Losing My Virginity and Other Dumb Ideas* (2012). However, in her interview with Sanaya Dalal for *Rediff*, (available on the U.R.L. <http://www.rediff.com/getahea/slide-show/slide-show-1-specials-interview-with-author-madhuri-banerjee/20121219.htm#1>), the young novelist Banerjee registers her reluctance at being identified as a 'chick lit writer'. In conclusion, it may be said that if women's movements, according to Barry, gave rise to feminist literature and feminist criticism (121), the sub-genre of steamies might be regarded as a product of the 21st century female championing of desires and sexual freedom. If the enlightened females are assumed to be in possession of every right over their own psyche and physique, one can only reason that the acceptability and enjoyment of steamies would continue to increase with the advancement of the present century.

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