Acknowledgements

While "gratitude" is too inadequate a word to contain my feelings towards the key characters in the saga of this thesis, this work would be incomplete without an expression of my deep thanks for your part in this journey.

To my teachers:

My supervisor Prakash Kona, you have supported me unfailingly throughout the course of my research. Regardless of my chronic inefficiency, you have been an encouraging guide who brings the best of critical advice and moral support together. Your patience and positivity are benchmarks I aspire to and I look forward to the day when I live up to the faith you have invested in me. Thank you Sir.

Professor A.V. Ashok, you are the most influential reason for my choice of topic. It was your class on Contemporary Prose that made me think about the writing and the reading of suffering and its ethical implications. I am blessed to have known an inspiring and honourable teacher like yourself who adds dignity to the vocation, giving credence to its nobility. Thank you for being the ideal, so that we know it is possible. Please forgive the excess, nothing less would do.

The Head of the Department, Prof. Rajiv C. Krishnan, whose brutally honest criticism is responsible for what little finesse this thesis exhibits, you are the voice in my head that reminds me that I ought to improve and never be complacent. Your uncompromising attitude towards work, which is only equalled by your generosity of spirit, are standards I would like to emulate in future endeavours. Thank you, Sir.

Professor Dilip Naik, thank you for the advice and guidance that helped ground this thesis. Navigating Ph.D. research has been much easier with your kind and ready assistance. Your
eloquence, attention to detail and encouraging attitude have had a huge impact on my work. Thank you for serving in my advisory committee and for smoothing the way towards the completion of my thesis. Thank you, Sir.

Dr. Shilpa Madam, who had the difficult task of initiating us rookies on the uphill journey of research, will always be a paragon of patience in my eyes. Thank you for your guidance and clear criticism in those chaotic days. I apologise profusely for the still unreturned copy of *Trauma and Recovery* which glowers at me from my shelf.

Dr. Jibu Matthew, your edifying conversations and timely help have contributed to my academic progress. I maintain that you are the human equivalent to a Google search. Your vast and detailed knowledge of subjects, be they arcane or prosaic, is "awesome". Thank you for your support and the steady shots of inspiration.

Professor Alok Bhalla and Professor Udaya Kumar, regardless of our brief interaction, your inputs have been a great influence in the formulation and crafting of this thesis. Thank you.

My special thanks to Nate Hinerman from Inter-Disciplinary.net for organising the illuminating conference “Making Sense of Suffering” in Nov 2013. The insights from this conference have deeply influenced this thesis.

The thesis would not have made any progress without the support of my batch-mates and friends both on campus and elsewhere. I doubt I would have escaped unscathed from the trauma of thesis writing without your irreverent protection.

Janani, Ashwini, Arun, Ronie and Avinash, thank you for the music, the Tamil, and of course the mutual admiration/sarcasm which saved me from turning into a pedant. And thank you for forgiving me all the reunions cancelled and calls missed.
Resham George, there are not enough words in this language or in our special brand of gobbledygook to express how much of a help you have been through this journey. You are a great friend, teacher and person, and I am so glad I know you. Thank you for being my personal ray of sunshine and goodness and for constantly pulling me back into life and happiness. I do not believe I would have managed half as well without your warm and generous support.

Tulika Bathija, thank you for being the good angel on my shoulder. Whether it was through the sound of your calm advice over broken phone lines or irreverent humour at academic foolishness, you have always been a great support. Plus, there is no greater encouragement than having your massive M.Phil smile down at my petite thesis to get me working. Thank you Tuli, for the inspiration.

Aparna Prem (Appukutty), if I could have just a thimble of the dedication and effort you invest into your work I would consider myself beyond reproach. Thank you Appu for being such a warm and loving friend, for the regular doses of Malayalam—movies, music and dialogues—and for putting up with me treating you like the human version of the MLA Handbook. I hope to match you in the efficiency of my work someday. Thank you for being such a great example.

Neethi, Annifred, Bhagi, Ruchi, Asha, Divya thank you for protecting my insanity and ensuring I don’t emerge from the thesis morass stripped of humour and geniality.

Thank you, Debo, Koel and Sanziou, for your generosity of spirit, warm hospitality, and of course the food and the gossip.

Rijuta Das, Sulfia Santhosh, of all my friends, I believe I owe both of you special thanks. Not only did you put up with my thesis angst, you also had to live with my day-to-day insanities.
Riju, thank you for regularly dragging me out of the rut I would quite obliviously have wallowed in if it weren’t for you. Your attention to detail and you determination are qualities I have always admired. Thank you for feeding me regardless of how much I pushed my luck, for introducing me to “North and South”, among others, and for the sound advice in all things. I will always dip my feet.

Sulfia thank you for your cheery smile, cheri songs and admirable patience, though I know I test the last to its extremes. It is never easy being the sane one, more so when the company is irreverent and occasionally stubborn. I truly appreciate the wealth of goodwill and affection that you have shown in not pitching me out the nearest window when I’m in one of my moods. While our acquaintance is relatively short, you have been a great help to me. Your keen intelligence and warm nature have been a great support during my thesis trials. Thank you.

This thesis would not have been possible without my family, both immediate and extended. If I did not have your constant support I would have long discontinued this arduous journey. Thank you for goading me on, calming me down and in between all this, reminding me to have a life.

Thank you, Acha. You have always known what is best from me, evidenced in the fact that you advised me to take up English Literature. Your focus, dedication and zeal have been motivation for me all my life. Thank you for the warm understanding, the cold voice of practicality, the generous affection, the stern control, thank you for the love and the kindness; thank you for giving everything I needed exactly when I needed it, even before I knew it.

Thank you, Amma. If eight letters could hold the world of love, admiration and gratitude I have for you, expression would be so simple. Your deep strength and your resourcefulness are benchmarks I can only hope to achieve. Thank you for being my confidant, my critic, my
sounding board, my partner in crime, my aspiration—You are my mother and my best friend.

And I couldn’t ask for better. Thank you.

Thank you Shrejjith, for constantly reminding me to keep it simple, and occasionally to keep quiet. My baby-brother gives the best advice. Thank you for being my oldest friend, my best cheering squad, and for getting all the jokes—no matter how lame.

Many thanks to my aunts, uncles and cousins who have gotten inured to the sight of me cooped up over the computer with manic eyes, unresponsive to greetings and requests, and have understood. Thank you for the love and the care. I promise I will make it up to you.

Thank you Baba for the prayers. Thank you Ma, for taking the trouble to check-in on me every day, regardless of your busy schedule. Thank you Nandu for keeping me company while I wrote chapters late into the night. And thank you Adwaita for being Mr. Right in more ways than one. Sometimes, annoyingly so.

Last but not the least I give thanks to the Almighty, who makes all things possible, the creator of problems, the giver of solutions. Thank you God!