Crossings

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EDITORIAL NOTE

Crossings is moving from strength to strength. For this volume, we had eminent novelist Debesh Roy as our guest editor who commissioned two interesting articles. Chaiti Mitra's "Ravished Angels: the Memsahib in 1857 Mutiny Fiction" discusses the double piston of victimization and objectification of white female bodies in mutiny fiction, while Tirna Ray's overview of Japanese authors in "No Sushi Recipe for a Japanese Story" proffers a wonderful insight into the ways writers from the Far East are "weaving universal [narratives] out of the territorial."

Oxford-based poet Joe Winter was at ULAB to inaugurate a series of events to mark the 400th death anniversary of Shakespeare. We did not want our readers (which include our students) to miss out on Winter's new evaluation of the sonnets of the bard.

A quick glance at the submissions included in our "Literature and Cultural Studies" section shows how the radar of English Studies is locating new areas of research. It is refreshing to find our local scholars expanding their horizons of research. This volume is enriched by Farhana Zareen Bashar's firsthand experience of living in Nigeria and her understanding of how the pidgin language has been successfully used by writers like Chinua Achebe and Wole Soyinka. Hossain Al Mamun offers a reading of Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* to recount the process of societal healing through magic. Munasir Kamal traces the idea of trauma and resistance among the Native American community through her reading of Linda Hogan's *Mean Spirit.* The same postcolonial approach has been adopted by Khandakar Ashraful Islam who gives an alternative reading of our fishing community. Sharjita Yeasmin discerns the inescapable trap of memories in Jhumpa Lahiri's *The Lowland,* while Hasan Al Zayed delves into the ancestral lineage to unearth the ideological crises in Amiri Baraka.

Anik Biswas analyzes Satyajit Ray's film *Ganashatru* as an appropriation of Henrik Ibsen's *An Enemy of the People.* A. B. M. Monirul Huq and Md. Firoz Mahmud Ahsan contextualize Ginsberg's famous poem on Jessore Road, which has become a landmark of the cultural history of our liberation war. Mohammed Mizanur Rashid, in contrast, reflects on the sports mania and creation of fandom.

By the time you get to Leema Sen Gupta's "Conflict between the Individual and Society in *The Scarlet Letter"* you may finally think of a canonical text as a rare entity. Good old fashioned textual reading is available in Sonika Islam's exploration of Mary's gradual lapse into madness in Doris Lessing's *The Grass is Singing* and Zakiyah Tasnim's reading of the language of children in Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things.*

The "Language and Applied Linguistics" section contains four articles that shed light on the teaching practices in Bangladesh. Rumana Amin, a Research Fellow at Assumption University of Thailand, tells us about the paradigm shift occurring in the teaching-learning condition in Bangladesh. Rumana Hossain, a PhD candidate at Leeds University, shares her findings about the impact of studying abroad on English Language teachers in Bangladesh. The other two

papers conduct quantitative surveys to highlight problems with giving feedback and speaking anxieties.

As usual, our last section reviews books that are making noise.

The Editorial Board of *Crossings* is working towards enlisting the journal with international digital libraries in order to make it available to a wider audience. The positive feedback from the academic community as well as the presence of international papers has emboldened us to impose the double peer-reviewing process, an idea that delayed the publication of this issue. The challenge for us is to publish the journal within a strict deadline.

We look forward to your patronage and constructive comments.

On behalf of the Editorial Board,

Shamsad Mortuza, PhD
Editor, *Crossings* Vol. 7

OCCASIONAL PAPERS

Ravished Angels: The Memsahib in 1857 Mutiny Fiction

Chaiti Mitra

Associate Professor of English, Ramakrishna Sarada Mission Vivekananda Vidyabhavan, Kolkata

In the ideology of the British Raj, the "civilized" and "refined" Englishwoman, in sharp contrast to the veiled and "degraded" Indian woman in need of rescue, was seen as a marker of British superiority. The memsahib or the colonial Englishwoman out on her "civilizing mission" has been considerably visible in Indian cinema. In Amir Khan's *Lagaan*, she plays an important part with communicable ambivalence. Satyajit Ray in his *Ghare Baire* had a memsahib as Bimala's music teacher to suggest Bimala's exposures beyond her traditional household. That was a seminal suggestion. Rituporno Ghosh in his *Chokher Bali* explained Binodini's contacts with memsahib missionaries to add another shade to her character beyond her widowhood. We see missionary memsahibs hawking in the bylanes of Calcutta to gather girl students for their schools. This sequence establishes the film's historicity. In his other film, *Antarmahal,* Rituporno, with his keen sense of history, shows a Durgapratima (clay idol) with the face of Queen Victoria being carried to the rural zamindar's palace through paddy fields and canals and orchards. Shyam Benegal in his *Junoon*, however, deviates from this apparent role-fixing of the memsahib. *Junoon* is the story of a one-sided love—a rebel sepoy of the 1857 Mutiny falls in love with an English girl whose family he has rescued and sheltered.

In these film stories, the memsahib is an exotic beauty, an angel who can guide the Indians to a higher life, be it by teaching English alphabets, or English music, or English manners and attire, or the English game of cricket. She is to be worshipped, and desired, from afar.

The matriarchal iconography of the Hindus codifies exoticism on their mother images. This exoticism found an easy way to mingle with the exoticism of the memsahibs. Especially the mother image of Queen Victoria as the Empress of her Indian empire acted as the catalyctic agent to build up the angel image of the memsahib, so brilliantly expressed by the Durga idol travelling over the green expanses of rural Bengal in Rituporno's film. Indian literature following the Sepoy Mutiny bears evidence of this massive appropriation of the pure and angelic image of the memsahib. There are numerous instances of bad sahibs, but bad memsahibs are hard to come by. Cross-breedings and cross-fertilizations between two alien cultures are fortuitously abundant in more visible channels in colonial times.

This angelic image of the memsahib finds a strange corroboration in the memsahib figure in a sizeable amount of Mutiny fiction in English, in which she is a site loaded with ideological and symbolic significance, where race, gender, politics, and culture converge.

The Sepoy Mutiny, as the British chose to call the 1857 Indian uprising started by some native regiments of the East India Company and joined in most places by discontented civilians, peasants and landlords, was one 19th century military event that commanded an unusual level of public attention in Britain. The rebellion, which did not spread in all parts of the country,

nor lasted much over a year, was seen as a very serious threat to British dominion of India, primarily because its violence involved civilians, including British women and children.

Featured initially in dispatches, political debates, and newspaper reports, the Mutiny soon provoked a vast body of writing: political, historical, biographical, autobiographical, personal, and fictional. The Mutiny novel became an important sub-genre of the 19th century Anglo-Indian novel, especially in the years between the uprising and the First World War. The first ten years following the event produced just three novels, the next twenty saw nine novels being published. The most productive years were the 1890s, with sixteen novels, followed by about fifteen novels written till 1914. As the First World War, a much larger and much more complex political crisis, threatened the very existence of the British Empire, the interest in the Indian revolt waned, though authors continue to use the Mutiny as a background in quite a few late works till date.

This article examines the diverse representations of the colonial Englishwoman within the genre. In the process it actually maps the "construction" of what is perhaps the most complex and layered of all colonial representations, namely the "Mutiny memsahib." I have chosen two early novels, Edward Money's *The Wife and the Ward; or A Life's Error* (1859), and James Grant's *First Love and Last Love: A Tale of the Indian Mutiny* (1867) to trace the "construction" and violation of the angel/memsahib. In keeping with the popular representation of the rebellion as the "barbaric attack of the dark savage native" on the "helpless white woman" or the memsahib, the two representative works of early Mutiny literature reiterate the predominant representation of the memsahib as the silent, passive sufferer, totally at the mercy of the male attackers and rescuers.

The duration of the films I mentioned are almost the same as the duration of the Mutiny novels, the period between 1857 and 1914, though the novelizing and filming times are at least two thirds of a century apart. However, the memsahib retains her angelic quality through these times.

The popular view about the Englishwoman in all forms of Mutiny narratives is that she is predominantly the victim, the sufferer, and in some versions, she is also the instigator of the Mutiny, primarily because of her aloofness and snobbery. Mutiny novels, at least the early ones, reiterate the tendency to simplify the complexity of the imperial military crisis by suggesting that the memsahib *is* one of the primary causes of the Mutiny, though it is a very different kind of instigation that they talk about. I would like to begin with a dream. Marion Paris, the young heroine of Edward Money's *The Wife and the Ward; or A Life's Error***,** the first novel I deal with in detail, has a terrifying dream (extracted below), which is a projection of the familiar deep -seated distrust and fear of the white woman of the unknown dark Asiatic, something which was probably always present, but surfaced more aggressively post 1857. As she is forced to venture into a threateningly unfamiliar territory, thrown out of the comforting safety of her white enclave, her anxiety and unwillingness to tread into the unknown translates into this nightmare. But I suggest that Marion's dream is worth paying attention to for another reason: it has in it the seeds of the image of the British woman as the object of lust and hence the

perpetrator of the insurgence and its sacrificial victim, an image very prominent, but yet to be explored by commentators:

> Shortly after, a messenger with a flag of truce appeared, and … said he had been sent by the rajah to offer them deliverance; but that one condition must be accepted therewith, which was, that the Missie Baba [Marion] should be given over to his master, as the rajah loved her, and wished to marry her. … As the messenger retired, he told the servants the offer he had brought, and added that, on the refusal being received, the mine that was prepared under the house would be fired …. The servants, who had hitherto fought bravely in defense of their masters, then came in a body, and insisted on the terms being accepted, … and were about to open the doors to the besiegers. Edgington and Mr. Peters remonstrated; but even as they did so, a guard of the Nana's entered the house, followed by the rajah himself, who advanced to claim his bride. He took her hand … and passing his arm round her waist, was about to remove her, when poor Marion awoke with a shriek …. (Money 295-6)

I argue that in the fictional accounts, she does not initiate the Mutiny by her snobbishness or racial aloofness, in fact, the Mutiny memsahib is rarely the stereotyped ignorant, intolerant and gossiping figure, whose vindictive ways infuriate the natives, sparking off the mass unrest against the rulers. She is, on the contrary, young, ignorant, innocent, and powerless and passive. But she is also extremely beautiful and attractive, and hence extremely desirable to the "dark natives"; she thus allures Indian men of power, who break into rebellion not only to defeat the British but also to possess her. And the novelists naturally take great care in creating the pristine virginal beauty of the memsahib, so that long before she is actually physically threatened by the mutineers or loses the security of her home and her family, she is carefully constructed as the potential victim of the Mutiny. This careful and gradual construction of the memsahib as a combination of the unsuspecting, innocent temptress and sacrificial victim in Mutiny fiction has not attracted much comment from critics. But it is definitely interesting to note how she is carefully and deliberately constructed as a sexualized victim. In the novelists' erotic description of her pristine virginal beauty, one detects a male gaze acutely aware of her sensuousness and sensuality—it is as if she is looked at through the eyes of the "barbaric Asiatic" that can conceive of her only as an object of sexual fantasy. Marion Paris in *The Wife and the Ward* is the pure, beautiful, defenseless, young Englishwoman, "just bursting into womanhood"; her "wonderfully perfect Grecian profile," ivory skin and massy blond hair, detailed with utmost care by Money, identify her as an object of desire to the readers much before the Nana Sahib of Bithoor lusts for her (Money 216-17).

Similarly in Grant's *First Love and Last Love*, the Weston sisters are described in unmistakably erotic terms. Madelena Weston, as she first appears, is dressed in flowing, transparent white muslin, her white shoulders and tapering arms visible through the fine texture of her dress (Grant 45-46). Her younger sister Polly is abducted by a native. When she tries to elude his grasp, "he grasped her rudely by the shoulder, tearing all her muslin dress, and rending her bodice, and then the lovely English girl stood palpitating before them in all the ivory whiteness of her skin, bare almost to the slender waist"(Grant 143). Thus, in most early Mutiny novels,

the Englishwoman is the object of unbridled native lust much before the Mutiny actually breaks out, and she is at the mercy of the "brown skinned rapists." Typically the Anglo-Indian heroine would stand out for her beauty, poise and grace, she would be blond, beautiful, blue-eyed, and well-dressed. The Mutiny heroine possesses the same attributes, and in balls and such social gatherings, she often finds herself the object of interest and ultimately of unbridled desire of Indian men of power, both Hindu and Muslim, be it the Nana of Bhithoor, or Azimoolah Khan, his deputy, or the lecherous princes of Delhi or smaller kingdoms.

I look at this sexual objectification of the memsahib's body as the Mutiny novelists' first step towards the construction of the memsahib as a victim of the rebellion, redefining the term "victim." She is a victim because she is abused, hunted, raped and killed by native mutineers; but before that she is first consciously constructed as a sexualized "object" to be desired, possessed and mauled, her beautiful body specifically identified as a site of unspeakable atrocities by dark-skinned native offenders. This identification of the memsahib primarily as a body or as a beautiful object, combined with emphasis on her physical frailty and helplessness, leads to the ultimate unspeakable torture she faces in the accounts, that is, rape and murder. The torture meted out to her, in its turn, provokes every self-respecting Englishman to avenge her suffering, thus creating the masculine "hero" of Mutiny fiction. The memsahib, I contend, plays a very complex and significant role in the Mutiny novel: that of a catalyst, passive yet pivotal; it is primarily because she is desired, tortured or killed, that the men get to play the role of the heroes. In other words, it is only because she is pretty and passive, that her men get to be active.

I begin with this very first novel on the Sepoy Mutiny, written barely a year after the rebellion was over, in 1859. The choice of Edward Money's *The Wife and the Ward; or A Life's Error* (renamed *Woman's Fortitude: A Tale of the Cawnpore Tragedy* in a subsequent 1881 edition) is not solely due to chronological reasons, but primarily because of its difference with the novels that follow. Being a very early work, it belongs to the category of what Gautam Chakravarty calls the "novel of insurgency"; that is, a novel which depicts the violence of the incident, focusing on the treachery of the murderous villains—the natives, and does not have enough scope to glorify the heroic acts of retaliation by the British. It is perhaps the only Mutiny novel where the heroine dies without the hero avenging her misfortune.

Money's novel, drawing heavily on newspaper accounts ("fiction founded on fact," he says in his dedication) (7), begins in the practice of the Anglo-Indian "station romance," as is evident from the choice of his first title, with a meticulously detailed picture of the "English social life in Hindoostan." The hero is the popular, honest, and "not so handsome" Captain Arthur Edgington, an officer of the 99th Native Infantry stationed at Dinapore. He commits his "life's error" by entering into a loveless and incompatible marriage with the cold and calculating Beatrice Plane, daughter of a retired Patna judge. The "ward" who comes between the "wife" and Captain Edgington is the exquisitely beautiful sixteen year old Marion Paris, who arrives from England to live with them. She wins over both her guardian and his wife with her innate goodness and sympathy, and gradually a bond develops between Arthur and Marion. But then the plot moves into "the saddest scene in the late Bengal mutinies," and to the domestic

complications of the Edgingtons is added the political upheaval of British India. Beatrice escapes as she had already left for Patna to be with her ailing mother. Arthur and Marion face the Mutiny together. The novel ends on the "bloody boat-docks" of Satichaura:

> "Arthur," said a tremulous voice, "Arthur, I will be shot by your side." Edgington turned, and there, as an angel of light amidst the dark scenes enacting, stood Marion Paris, still beautiful, with a wild light in her eyes, and her partly-untrammeled gold hair, blown out by the hot blasts, brushing against his cheek.
>
> But it was not Edgington alone who remarked the young girl and her wild beauty; the rajah, on the bank, did so too, and shrieked out, ---
>
> "Cease firing on that boat. There is the prize—the girl in white. A hundred gold mohurs to whoever brings her to me."

Terrified, Marion begs Arthur to save her from the clutches of the Nana.

> "There is but one way," whispered Edgington, as he bent his head to hers, while a frightful pallor overspread his face.
>
> "I *choose* that way! It is that way I mean. Your promise—remember! Quick, 'twill be too late directly."
>
> "God bless thee then in death, my Marion!" exclaimed Edgington, as he imprinted one long and ardent kiss on the lips of the young girl. It was the first and the last kiss that he ever gave her. She shut her eyes, for she could not look on the instant death which she knew awaited her. One instant more, as, with a trembling hand, the pistol was cocked, and the next the brains of Marion Paris bespattered the chest of her guardian. (Money 402-3)

And thus Mutiny fiction gets its first memsahib victim. But, as I have already pointed out, Money had already marked Marion as a victim of native lust long before she dies. As she appears in the social circle of Dinapore, the author dedicates a considerable amount of textual space to describe her appeal. Spotted and stared at by the Nana of Bhithoor at a party, she suffers from a sense of humiliation and insecurity:

> The Nana … gazed at Marion with his fiery eyes, while his lips moved as if he muttered to himself. Miss Paris, accidentally looking up, caught his passionate gaze fixed on her, and started as she did so. She did not blush: she turned pale, and moved uneasily in her chair. She was frightened; but why, she could not say. (Money 273)

Published about a decade after the rebellion, James Grant's *First Love and Last Love* depends heavily on the sensational newspaper reports of systematic rape and mutilation of British women at the hands of the rebel soldiers. In his graphic and repeated detailing of the mutilated and raped bodies of the defenseless women strewn on the streets of Delhi, he violates what is perhaps the most powerful literary taboo of the Victorian era, which otherwise censored the mention, leave alone description of naked female bodies. Grant's novel abounds in such sensational and gory descriptions, where the Englishwoman is shown as nothing more than a

brutalized body, displayed, as it were, through words, to be pitied and avenged. The chaplain Rev. Jennings is butchered in front of his daughter, "a young lady possessed of great beauty" who had recently come from England. She too perished, after being subjected to indignities "which a Mohammedan would consider the worst and vilest his own wife or daughter could suffer" (Grant 47-48). Scenes of violence and torture are described in graphic detail:

> The women were always stripped of their clothing, treated with every indignity, and then slowly tortured to death, or hacked at once to pieces, according to the fancy of their captors. Poor little children were dashed on the pavement, ripped open, or quartered alive by the ferocious 3rd Cavalry (a corps chiefly of Mohammedans) ... No mercy was shown to age or sex. Delicate women were stripped to the skin, turned thus into the streets, beaten with bamboos, pelted with filth, and abandoned to the vile lusts of blood-stained miscreants, until death or madness terminated their unutterable woe. To possess one drop of European blood, or to be suspected of being a Christian, was sufficient to ensure a merciless death. (Grant 58)

At times, Grant directly quotes from sensational reports and rumors about the torture meted out to the women, without even attempting to fictionalize these accounts:

> Then the sepoys fixed their bayonets and brought forth the melancholy prisoners—eight ladies, eight gentlemen, and eleven children, all in the agonies of thirst and utter exhaustion, and deliberately they placed them all in a row under a burning sun. Mrs. Rhys, who had an infant in her arms, implored the soubadar to give it a little water, and to take her own life as the price of the gift; but the barbarian snatched the poor babe from her breast and dashed it on the ground head foremost.
>
> "Oh Father in Heaven!" shrieked the poor mother, attempting to throw herself over the quivering body of the child, but she was thrust back by a charged bayonet; a few volleys followed, and they were all left together in a gory heap, under the hot meridian sun.
>
> The king, the princes, and leaders, seized upon the British Treasury, containing more than half a million sterling; but they seized upon more than that; "forty-eight females, most of them girls from ten to fourteen years, many being delicately nurtured ladies, were kept for the base purposes of the leaders of the insurrection for a whole week." At the end of that time, their clothes were rent from them, and they were surrendered to the lowest ruffians in Delhi, to amuse in the streets and the open light of day. Fingers, breasts, and noses were cut off; "one lady was three days dying; they flayed the face of another, and made her walk through the streets, perfectly nude," according to a native eyewitness. (Grant 74-75)

The novel is unabashedly about victims, more than it is about heroes and villains. It is as much about the violence faced by the "victims"—the Weston sisters Madalena, Kate and Polly at the hands of mutineers in Delhi in May 1857, as about the heroic efforts of the two young British officers, Rowley Melon and Jack Harrower. On what was supposed to be Kate and Rowley's

wedding night, all hell breaks loose in Delhi as the Flagstaff tower falls. The Westons—three sisters and their father, the chaplain—are separated, Lena and Jack manage to escape the bloodbathed streets of Delhi and move about for several days in the outskirts of the city, taking shelter in the ruined temples in the jungle, and in homes of faithful villagers. Lena thus escapes "a fate worse than death" as she finds a protector in her admirer Jack. To avoid being recognized, she dresses up as an Afghan woman—a device that more "active" heroines would adopt in later novels in their attempts to participate in the action.

Kate's adventures are more complicated. As Rowley goes off to join the force, she is initially given shelter by an old Parsee cloth merchant Jamshetjee who tries to smuggle her out of Delhi wrapped up as a corpse being carried to the Tower of Silence. But the trick is discovered, and she is locked up in her own house by one Pershad Singh, who lusts after the young and pretty Kate. There is the constant threat of her being raped by him, but Pershad Singh is forced to send her to Meerut to escape the wrath of Prince Mirza Mugol, who wants Kate for himself. Thus Kate, too, survives the uprising. After Delhi is recaptured by the British, the two friends get their rewards—Lena agrees to marry Jack, and Rowley and Kate's marriage is consummated.

The fate of the fourteen year old Polly is much worse. She is tricked into accompanying their trusted servant Assim Alee, who hands her over to the Dervish Hafiz Falladeen: "She felt as if in a dream; her fluttering heart died within her, and her knees bent under her, as the grasp of the hideous dervish tightened to a tiger clutch on her delicate arm, and his keen, fierce and sensual eyes gloated over her fair face, her golden hair, and wonderfully bright and beautiful complexion" (Grant 39-40). She is lusted after by Prince Abu Baker, who sends his trusted attendant Baboo Bulli Singh to get her. Prince Abu Baker tries seducing the terrified Polly, she spurns him but has wits enough to bargain for her dear father's life. Dr. Weston dies wasted by confinement and sorrow, and Polly falls sick. She is filled with hatred bordering on insanity for the prince, who waits for her recovery and consent. His wives, too, wait for an opportunity to get rid of the "feringhee" girl, but leave her to her fate. The siege of Delhi comes to an end with British forces entering the city, Abu Baker's patience runs out; he finally loses control when Polly, encouraged by the bugles, pounces on him and strikes him (symbolizing her nation's attack on the savage Indians). Furious, he orders her to be tied hand and foot to a twelve pound gun, and handed to the sepoys and then to the "budmashes of the city." Polly "was torn from her bed; her muslin night dress rent from her by coarse, remorseless hands,"(Grant 270) and she was then dragged down the white marble stair of the Cuchuc-Oda. After much fighting Delhi is retaken by the British, the princes are killed by Hodson, and Jack Harrower finds "against the palace wall … the body of a girl, snowy white, sorely emaciated, and nailed by her hands and feet against the masonry …" (Grant 310). Poly Weston thus emerges as the archetypal sacrificial victim figure in her Christ-like suffering and painful end, a favorite stereotype of numerous later novelists, as also a symbol of Britain, attacked by treacherous natives, but ultimately victorious.

As we see, thus, the memsahibs in the first phase of Mutiny fiction perfectly fit the definition of the wronged Englishwoman, they are the victim-heroines, silent, passive sufferers, constantly

threatened by violation of their virginal bodies and preferring violent, painful death to dishonor, encouraging their men to take unimaginable risks to avenge the wrongs done to them. But, as shown above, they are conceptualized as pristine white female bodies to be desired by dark Indians, the novelists' descriptions invariably emphasizing their physical attributes, which tempt Indian men of power and spark off the Mutiny, to put it very simply. These novels seem to hinge on the racial superiority of the memsahib, suggesting that her white skin put her at a disadvantage, emphasizing the "otherness" of the inferior Indian male illustrated by his almost primitive instinctive reaction of the memsahib. To the "barbaric Asiatic," she is seen as a prize to be won, her unfamiliar white body a curious object to be desired and possessed, as James Grant explains in *First Love and Last Love*:

> To the brutal Mussulman and sensual Hindoo, the position occupied by an English lady, or any Christian woman, seems absurd and incomprehensible; and hence came the mad desire to insult, degrade, and torture, ere they slew them. (76-77)

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No Sushi Recipe for a Japanese Story: Japanese Authors in Review

Tirna Ray
Scholar in Japanese Literature, Washington DC

In 2011, when Sam Anderson landed in Tokyo, he floundered, grappled, lost his way and was shocked to find no English speakers to help him around. He was on his way to interview the well-known Japanese writer, Haruki Murakami and, well, he was very late for the appointment.

What went wrong with Sam? In this unusual case, we may take the creative liberty of saying, he got caught in a story and perhaps lost the plot.

It may seem pretty dramatic, but what actually happened was that Murakami unfortunately let him down. As Sam, critic at large for *The New York Times Magazine*, wrote in a 2011 article,

> Under the influence of Murakami, I arrived in Tokyo expecting Barcelona or Paris or Berlin—a cosmopolitan world capital whose straight-talking citizens were fluent not only in English but also in all the nooks and crannies of Western culture: jazz, theater, literature, sitcoms, film noir, opera, rock 'n' roll. But this, as really anyone else in the world could have told you, is not what Japan is like at all. Japan—real, actual, visitable Japan—turned out to be intensely, inflexibly, unapologetically Japanese.

While he was later picked up by Murakami's assistant and we were rewarded with an insightful article, *The Fierce Imagination of Haruki Murakami*, the incident triggers fundamental ways of "story-making" and its relation with "reality/specifics." Sam's experience of Murakami is not unique. In fact, as is now a well-known fact, the leading Japanese author's works have often been criticized for not being Japanese enough. He describes himself, in an article by Steven Poole in *The Guardian*, as the "outcast of the Japanese literary world," an "ugly duckling" and never the "swan."

Kazuo Ishiguro, the British novelist who left Japan when he was five years old, only to return after a long 30 years, is another author who has often suffered the anomaly of an identity when it comes to his readers. Often, he seems to disappoint a new global reader who expects his novels to be reflexively aligned with his proper name and country name.

On the flip side, someone like Junichiro Tanizaki, who constantly explored sexuality and eroticism within an evolving Japanese society, probably more easily fits into the image of a "Japanese" storyteller. Or, acclaimed writer Banana Yoshimoto perhaps could be tagged as more of a Japanese storyteller because she describes youth and their angst in modern-day Japan.

But why do we tend to pin down a "story" and imprison it within the confines of the rubric of a country, its language and people? What, in fact, makes a story Japanese or not-so-Japanese?

Element of Familiarity

Yoko Ogawa's *The Housekeeper and the Professor* is set in contemporary Japan. Originally published in 2003, the novel explores the relationship between a mathematics professor

and his housekeeper. The professor, following a severe head injury in an accident long ago, can retain no more than an 80-minute bout of fresh memory. In other words, his short-term memory gets refreshed every 80 minutes—although his memories preceding the accident remain intact.

This particular novelistic strategy of building the story on an inverted trick of memory or any other human element as Portuguese writer José de Sousa Saramago did with the epidemic of blindness has nothing national about it but has a notional allegory as the motive. This has become a dominant European way of novelization.

Nonetheless, in the present instance, the Japanese professor copes with his daily life, predominantly supported by a housekeeper. In the course of the novel, we are introduced to a little boy, the housekeeper's son. His affectionate relationship with the professor leads us to another side of the old man's personality and makes the plot novel.

In the entire novel, there is nothing that the reader can register as overtly Japanese. Instead, it is the story of two people who bond with each other amidst a range of personal specifics that are within the personal ambit of human experiences. For a reader experiencing the novel in English, there is no way to sniff out any Japanese clue, even if she were to don a detective's guise. It is just a story that we can relate to spontaneously.

In the reader's mind, as the daily events unfold—with the housekeeper trying to grasp the mathematical equations that the professor puts forth—rarely does one imagine the housekeeper in a kimono or the professor slurping Ramen (Japanese noodle soup). Instead, the reader floats along with the characters, trying to follow the beauty of numbers.

The professor is a problematic "client," and several housekeepers have already been sacked. This housekeeper, who is new, seeks the key to a stable job in her new client's house. She is exhausted with working in a string of different houses, trying to meet the demands of her job. When she is sent to the professor's house by the placement agency, she is ready to stretch herself to keep the job, while aware that the job is difficult.

As the story sets the pitch for a gradual and intense rapport that borders on the personal and the professional, in no way do the characters trespass the thin line of a social construct called "decency." Also, the dynamics between the employer and employee stick to a familiar hierarchical grid. However, gradually, the housekeeper tries to decode a web of memories in flashes—sometimes stored in hidden boxes and sometimes in the sparkling eyes of an old, weary man.

While she uses the abstraction of numbers to comprehend the incomprehensible man hiding behind it, there are moments when the variables of life barge in and mess up a neat mathematical formula. If we were not equipped with the knowledge of the author's name, we would have perhaps not even had a latent consciousness of the novel being a Japanese one. Mathematics professors have a reputation of being forgetful, absentminded, kind but erratic, and definitely cranky. In other words, people with a special mind belong to a distinct genre/species with which we are familiar.

Since *Auto Da Fe* by Elias Canetti (1935), the professor-housekeeper relationship has

become a favorite with the novelists as this intimate dailiness opens up a series of events of interpenetration of two separate domains of the cultural and the physical.

The reason we are able to relate to Ogawa's story is that stories or novels do not have borders or boundaries. They are essentially your or my story. Our broader experiences are drawn from a template, which is determined by human experiences or the perceived empirics of life. Even if they are tweaked, the totality of human experiences is such that however abstract it may be, we can stretch ourselves and still touch it, understand it along with its nuances. Those experiences are not subject to geographical contours or countries we reside in.

Also another pertinent point could be that the modern virtual world today blurs an apologetic territorial consciousness. An American or a Japanese teenager in California or Tokyo and an Indian teenager in Mumbai are in no way privileged or disadvantaged because of their location. Living in the virtual time that we are, they are all homogenous products of a conglomerate global culture—a consequence of the digital invasion.

International digital platforms, be it either visual (Instagram) or dating sites (Tinder, OKC) or social media (Facebook), are soon creating a linear world where any global engagement—literary or otherwise—is routine and regular. Hence, reading a Japanese novel may be no longer delving into an unknown world. With the invasion of *manga* culture or the Anime series—now a global favorite, there is a natural element of familiarity in the foreign, Japanese or otherwise.

Grief in monochrome

Another example could be Banana Yoshimoto's *Moonlight Shadow*. The story of two young people who have lost their partners to an accident dwells upon the pall of gloom that engulfs them and how it creates shadow lines in their lives. The accident has no causality. It is a given.

Hiragi, Satsuki or Urara could be youngsters from anywhere—Russia, China, America, or India. The sadness that they carry in their hearts; the heaviness that seems to weigh them down; the irreparable sense of loss they wake up to everyday has nothing particularly "Japanese" about them. Rather, it is a life-component that any reader from anywhere will be able to relate to. Grief does not come with any nationality, skin color, facial features, or a specific DNA composition.

A Family Supper by Kazuo Ishiguro again seems to reflect a similar universality. A son comes back to stay with his family; the mother has passed away and the father has a strained relationship with the son. The sister is a supporting prop who helps us take a peek into the father-son duo's minds from her perspective. Yes, it indeed is about a Japanese family, but the story has little to do with the Japanese part of it.

Strained relationships are an inseparable component of modern families—more so between fathers and sons. And like in most of those relationships, behind the facade of this autocratic father, lies a vulnerable human being who knows deep inside that now that his son has grown up, he has lost that essential hold on him. Yet, he does not want to accept it. He keeps trying, as if rehearsing for a come back. Does that sound very Japanese? Perhaps not.

According to the Swedish Academy, Kenzaburo Oye, the Japanese author who won the Nobel Prize for literature in 1994, "creates an imagined world, where life and myth condense to form a disconcerting picture of the human predicament today." Interestingly, Oye at his Nobel banquet speech said that he is a "strange Japanese" whose childhood was influenced by Nils Holgersson (*The Wonderful Adventures of Nils* by Swedish author Selma Lagerlöf). As the boy from Shikoku Island grew up to study literature in Tokyo, works of Dante, Balzac, Rabelais, Sartre, and Yeats, to mention a few, had a deep impact on him. In fact, his writings do not find much appreciation in his own country. Not only because he blows out the flame of appearance that he feels the Japanese wind-cup presents, but also because his narrative structure is a departure from the customary lyrical style that focuses particularly on the "beautiful." Instead, his style of grotesque realism is broken and abrupt, challenging all traditional notions of the Japanese storytelling modus operandi.

Yet, Oye's stories are deeply Japanese—reflecting the "Oriental" caught in the aspirational cacophonic imitation of the "Western"; conveying the country's war and postwar histories; expressive of an intriguing script/language that lends itself to intricate nuances not always aptly tangible in translation. But, finally, whether Japanese or not, Oye is best known for his ability to connect the "personal" and the "universal" through stories that are intricate narratives of human experiences; of truths that are his or hers; their or theirs; mine or yours; Japanese or not-Japanese.

Is the novel as an art form then dichotomic? It is written in a language that is particular to a nation or country or territory or locale. And it weaves a universal out of the territorial. The cinema has "light" as an equipment. The novel has to, unfortunately, describe a "light." And "light" is to be seen and not to be read about.

Sonnets of Shakespeare: A New Evaluation

Joe Winter
Poet, Educator, and Translator, UK

Shakespeare's *Sonnets* remain at the edge of the public's awareness of the works of the poet-dramatist and also, to an extent, on the border of the academic world's engagement with the oeuvre. Every now and then a new edition comes out, or a more general book, to assist students and the "ordinary readers" come to grips, as best they can, with the extraordinary declamation that the sequence of 154 poems amounts to. But such enterprises themselves scarcely come to grips, in my opinion, with what is going on in the sequence. I have a book coming out in April of this year—April, of course, being Shakespeare's month, when he was born and died, and this year is the 400th anniversary of his death. In it I endeavor to gather together the diverse threads, at least to a small extent, and to provide an intelligible hypothesis as to the intent of the whole. The book will be called *Two Loves I Have,* a quotation from Sonnet 144. The two loves, the young man and the older woman, to whom or about whom the poet devoted so much poetic energy, may or may not have existed outside the poet's imagination. Some think they were merely creations of the mind behind a sonnet-drama, so to speak. Others—including myself—think they probably did exist. It does not really matter: they are real to the poems, as one reads. What matters more is that readers appreciate the poetry, and experience the underlying thought in such a way that does not interfere with their own individual journey of understanding, different for everyone alive.

I have used the terms "the intent of the whole" and "the underlying thought" as though I knew what Shakespeare had in mind. That is not the case. The poems' intent is bound to be beyond what he had had consciously in mind. It is bound to change from age to age as the writing engages anew with new and different minds; and the "underlying thought" similarly is ours as much as the artist's; and so it is with all works of art. What I offer is in the nature of a joined-up approach to two different series of poems, those to the man and those to the woman, and the reader is of course at complete liberty to reject my approach and indeed is almost bound to do so, somewhere along the line. There are three minds involved in the reading of a poem, the poet's, the reader's, and that of the poem itself, something indefinable but assuredly there. As in all works of art it is what makes the art live.

Gradually, as I read or quote from one sonnet and then another, I hope that the approach I take to these two diverse series as to the sequence as a whole, will be felt to stand as a reasonable hypothesis. I would ask for no more than that. Shakespeare's *Sonnets* offer something of an outlandish journey, with frequent moments of intense interest, some enchanting, some enchantingly strange, some savage, hurtful, even vicious, not least to the writer himself (or to the narrator's persona). It is a lacerating double series of poems, an exposed nerve, yet it is not overdramatic. It is as life is, often quiet, somber, sometimes joyful, and with moments where existence itself simply seems to wield a lash. Above all, it is a journey of experience and learning: of knowing. This is true for the writer-persona and the reader both.

"From fairest creatures we desire increase": The first line of the first poem states the theme of the miniseries of the first seventeen sonnets, all of which exhort a certain young man to sire a son. It is the only true way to ensure that his beauty will stay in the world after his death. At one point, the writer appeals to the youth's similarity to his *mother* as an argument for his begetting a son (the idea of his siring a daughter appears inconceivable, if that is the right word). What seems to have happened is that Shakespeare wanted to write a sonnet-sequence that would, as was the custom, echo the medieval literary passion for a kind of pilgrimage of the soul, a knight-errant seeking the all but unattainable grail of a lady's love—and did it his own way. I shall assume for the purposes of this paper that the youth in question did exist, the "dark lady" also; it becomes wearying to add the reservation each time they are mentioned; and as far as the sequence of sonnets is concerned, they are there on the page. So the writer took advantage of a close friendship with a younger man that was to become a passionate friendship, one of the deepest love; and used an extraneous factor—the apparent need to get him married off—to embark upon a journey that was to become a quest, a pilgrimage, in search of a holy grail: to experience in words the meaning and the mystery of love.

In the opening seventeen poems, the poet comes to terms with the demands of the sonnet form and of his chosen variant: three quatrains, alternately-rhymed *ababcdcdefef*, ending with a succinct closing couplet *gg*. It works: he allows his passion for the youth's company, his admiration for his looks and indeed his character—"fair, kind and true" he calls him later—to take him over, so giving freedom to the poetic force within him to seek out its object or end. It is a gradual, tortuous, repetitive process, taking in three relationships: the writer's with the youth, the writer's with the lady, and the youth's with the lady. It has the tang of reality throughout. At the same time, at least for the first services, in the first 126 poems to the youth, there is something unreal on a physical level and real in the world of ideal forms. The writer is investigating the Platonic ideal.

For now, however, he is urging a young man to find some young woman, presumably marry her—and "get a son." Some magically arresting moments are upon us already. Here is Sonnet 12:

> When I do count the clock that tells the time,
> And see the brave day sunk in hideous night,
> When I behold the violet past prime,
> And sable curls all silvered o'er with white;
> When lofty trees I see barren of leaves,
> Which erst from heat did canopy the herd,
> And summer's green all girded up in sheaves,
> Borne on the bier with white and bristly beard;
> Then of thy beauty do I question make
> That thou among the wastes of time must go,
> Since sweets and beauties do themselves forsake,
> And die as fast as they see others grow.
> And nothing 'gainst time's scythe can make defence
> Save breed to brave him, when he takes thee hence.

Again and again, from the first sonnet till the last, short passages, lines here and there leap out—an occurrence that will happen differently for every reader. Here, for me, it is lines 9 and 10 which I find unutterably beautiful. At such times, the last thing one wants to do is examine the intricacies of the phrasing, etc. Sometimes, to read and hear poetry is akin to taking a drink, if one may put it coarsely—after all, it may be of nectar—and allowing the elixir to enter one without analyzing the ingredients.

In Sonnet 18, the writer drops the poem-excuse of the need for the youth to "get a son." He has his "sonnet-legs" now; the form is second nature to him. Its quatrains progressively develop a rhetorical sweep till the couplet, often wonderfully, subsumes all that has gone before in a resolution that leaves feeling and reason, the mind and the heart, as a single and complete moment of existence. As at the end of every true poem, there is a unity of saying and feeling. Shakespeare's use of the sonnet-couplet is unique and often very subtle, with a layer or layers of meaning that one only half-gathers on first reading or hearing, if that. And yet the couplets almost always work in that the essential meaning is clear, and other possible readings seem to be there as confirmatory in some way.

My book has quite a lot to say on the couplet in the sonnets. It gives the text of each poem and a commentary on it that deals with particular words whose lexical meaning the reader may not know. The commentary also develops—like a long essay—themes and ideas about the whole. Regarding Sonnet 18 I say in the book:

> It is a love-poem. Nothing could be more expressive of the poet's commitment than the closing words. The ritual exhortation of the first group of poems has disappeared as if it had never been; there is a sense of exuberant play, and sometimes steadier, stronger. Something is burning behind the scenes. Whatever else is going on there, to make the full statement, the means employed does not for a moment interrupt the end. In a sense this poem, the first of a long series in which the poet has freed himself of an initial encumbrance, is the key to the rest of the section 1 to 126. We will continue to know or sense next to nothing of what the youth is actually like. Other worlds hover within that of the poet's regard for a person. But the personal aspect still is the be-all and end-all. And never is it more joyfully engaged in than here.
>
> Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?
> Thou art more lovely and more temperate.
> Rough winds do shake the darling buds of May,
> And summer's lease hath all too short a date.
> Sometime too hot the eye of heaven shines,
> And often is his gold complexion dimmed;
> And every fair from fair sometime declines,
> By chance or Nature's changing course, untrimmed.
> But thy eternal summer shall not fade,
> Nor lose possession of that fair thou ow'st,
> Nor shall death brag thou wand'rest in his shade,
> When in eternal lines to time thou grow'st.

So long as men can breathe or eyes can see,
So long lives this, and this gives life to thee.

Now it is the poetry that will ensure the youth's immorality—not any child of his own. And yet, Shakespeare is not boasting. Rather he is celebrating the act of poetry, the achievement of Art, to counter the ravages of Time.

Time is on stage as a character of immense power. The next poem begins, "Devouring Time, blunt thou the lion's paws, /And make the earth devour her own sweet brood; /Pluck the keen teeth from the fierce tiger's jaws, /And burn the long-lived phoenix in her blood." Time is the enemy, and the battle is death-defying. It is fought till the last breath of the first series, Sonnet 126 line 14. The second series, 127 to 154, all to or about the woman, amazingly does not even contain "time" as a word.

In several sonnets, the writer evinces a sense of unworth, of being despised by the crowd, of being treated unfairly by Fortune in the game of life. How much he really feels this we do not know. There must be something in his experience to make it sound so real—even when it is Shakespeare we are dealing with, who can fling himself into a world of make-believe characters and indeed make us believe. Sonnet 29 uses the idea of a cursed situation very finely to illuminate the sense of a pure relief prompted by a loving friendship.

When, in disgrace with fortune and men's eyes,
I all alone beweep my outcast state,
And trouble deaf heaven with my bootless cries,
And look upon myself and curse my fate,
Wishing me like to one more rich in hope,
Featured like him, like him with friends possessed,
Desiring this man's art and that man's scope,
With what I most enjoy contented least;
Yet in these thoughts myself almost despising,
Haply I think on thee, and then my state,
(Like to the lark at break of day arising
From sullen earth) sings hymns at heaven's gate;
For thy sweet love remembered such wealth brings
That then I scorn to change my state with kings.

But a snake is to enter the Garden of Eden. Sonnet 40 begins: "Take all my loves, my love, yea, take them all; /What hast toughen more than thou hadst before? /No love, my love, that thou mayst true love call; /All mine was thine, before thou hadst this more." In brief, the young man has met the poet's mistress and embarked upon an affair with her. The writer, or writer-persona, is hurt to the quick, as may be imagined but steadfastly refuses to blame his dearest friend. It is essential to the course of the poetic quest that he does not. The young man represents an ideal: the most he can be found guilty of is allowing himself to be led astray. He is a paragon, the ideal form. It certainly makes for a riveting mise en scène.

"Those pretty wrongs that liberty commits," the poet begins the next sonnet, "When I am sometimes absent from thy heart"—such wrongs could scarcely be a greater betrayal of their friendship. He blames the woman. "For thou art covetous, and he is kind," he says to her in 134, regarding what must surely be the same situation. Though the entire poem to the woman follows those to the man, in the original and accepted edition that was printed by Thomas Thorpe in 1609, it is at least probable some of them overlapped in their composition. But he reserves his outburst of disgust and disappointment for the woman.

And for himself. Time and again he draws attention to a sense of unworthy, as well as to a wretched figure he is convinced, for one reason or another, he cuts in the eyes of the world. I would draw attention here to a remarkable underlying similarity between the person of the narrator of the Sonnets and the narrator of Rabindranath's *Gitanjali*. I have translated the latter, and while there are any number of differences on the surface, the personal tone of the speaker is hauntingly similar. It is as though there were two situations, differing in time and place, subject and language, for the same person. Both speak of *biraha*, though Shakespeare deals with earthly love and different words. In both the soul is naked, the *aim* on a rack—and this though Shakespeare may be making up the whole set of outward circumstances. Both know they are of no worth, but try only to admit their faults, to be who they are and do what they can. Both are ideal composers of the confessional lyric, and neither wallows in any kind of self-admiring sham emotion, in what may be called a false nobility of suffering. The two poets face the world, and see the world, with the eyes of the same soul.

This is in passing. Coming back to the series to the young man, our author can summon a poetic effect from nowhere it seems. "Like as the waves makes towards the pebbled shore," he begins Sonnet 60, and the line simply lodges in one's bones. The pebbles are there, the sea clattering gently over them, the tide coming in, the inevitability of the natural force summoned by the precise yet spontaneous music of the line. It is a line, as so many, of genius of Shakespeare. He is talking of the depredations of Time, that only art may make a stand against. There is a wonderful phrase later in the same poem: "Time doth transfix the flourish set on youth …." How often as a teacher have I thought of this, seeing a young person, young people before me, at a moment in life when (to quote myself again), "a young person passes a relatively amorphous stage and is stamped, almost branded, with a look that for a good many years is his or hers. It is not entirely facial expression; it is also gestures, a way of being, a vital outwardness, carried unknowingly like a banner. What better word than "flourish"? Or "transfix" for its catching and setting? What can this ever-living poet not say?"

There are three sonnets together, halfway through the first series, Sonnets 64, 65, and 66 that are very different from one another and yet are unsurpassed by any of the others, I feel, for poetic delicacy and sheer force. I know of no succession of poems like them anywhere. I shall read them with a brief comment on each:

64

When I have seen by time's fell hand defaced
The rich proud cost of outworn buried age;
When sometime lofty towers I see down-razed,
And brass eternal slave to mortal rage;
When I have seen the hungry ocean gain
Advantage on the kingdom of the shore,
And the firm soil win of the wat'ry main,
Increasing store with loss, and loss with store;
When I have seen such interchange of state,
Or state itself confounded to decay;
Ruin hath taught me thus to ruminate
That Time will come and take my love away.
    This thought is as a death, which cannot choose
    But weep to have that which it fears to lose.

Note how finely the argument is presented. The three quatrains starting with "When I have seen," the seamless transition into the final couplet. And what a couplet it is. I have an anecdote here. Once as teacher at a comprehensive school in London I recited this poem during a talk on "change." Three years later a girl I had never taught approached me: could she study English for A level? She had remembered the last line and found it in her parents' copy of Shakespeare, and gone on from there on her own. She ended up at Oxford reading English, though I believe she went on to become a full-time musician. Maybe, in four hundred years, it will happen again.

65

Since brass, nor stone, nor earth, nor boundless sea,
But sad mortality o'ersways their power,
How with this rage shall beauty hold a plea,
Whose action is no stronger than a flower?
O how shall summer's honey breath hold out
Against the wreckful siege of battering days,
When rocks impregnable are not so stout,
Nor gates of steel so strong, but Time decays?
O fearful meditation! Where, alack
Shall Time's best jewel from Time's chest lie hid?
Or what strong hand can hold his swift foot back?
Or who his spoil of beauty can forbid?
    O none, unless this miracle have might,
    That in black ink my love may still shine bright.

The same battle, with dread Time, but how differently presented! And here, of course, there is a solution: his love, featured in lines of blank ink, will win through. Another personal note: all his adult life my father would go through the words of this poem to himself when in the

dentist's chair. Maybe it was the idea of "gates of steel, rocks impregnable" that gave him heart, so to speak, as he lay back in the chair and delivered himself up to the terrible rictus we are all forced to in that situation. But I think it was also the wondrously compelling nature of the poem. At line 9, as so often in a sonnet, the author's line of thought takes on something new, gathers force, inner assurance. The volta, the "turn" in a sonnet is recognized as exercising then: "O fearful meditation!" It is tremendous. So much more could be said on these two magnificent, and quite different, poems. And yet would anything be said at all? It is influence at this point. But never has there been such a deepening of awareness as here. "O how shall summer's honey breath hold out /Against the wreckful siege of battering days, /When rocks impregnable are not so stout, /Nor gates of steel so strong, but Time decays?" he has said. And the third, Sonnet 66, stands alone in its shattering vision, and its commandeering of the poetic form to make it yield up its truth.

> Tired with all these, for restful death I cry,
> As to behold desert a beggar born,
> And needy nothing trimmed in jollity,
> And purest faith unhappily forsworn,
> And gilded honour shamefully misplaced,
> And maiden virtue rudely strumpeted,
> And right perfection wrongfully disgraced,
> And strength by limping sway disabled
> And art made tongue-tied by authority,
> And folly, doctor-like, controlling skill,
> And simple truth miscalled simplicity,
> And captive good attending captain ill:
> Tired with all these, from these would I be gone,
> Save that to die I leave my love alone.

I can hardly bring myself to comment on this. The merest detail: was ever the simplest word "and," used so well?

When Shakespeare gives himself to nature, he can find a remarkably gentle tone, for one so much taken up in the cut and thrust of argument. ''That time of year thou mayst in me behold /When yellow leaves, or none, or few do hang/Upon those boughs which shake against the cold, /Bare ruined choirs, where late the sweet birds sang," begins Sonnet 73, and for once he is talking of Time not as a vicious enemy—"with Time's injurious hand crushed and oe'rworn"—but as a gentle force, inexorable it may be, but hard savage. But he rarely allows such a Keatsian foray into descriptive verse. He is intent on the shuddering collision of people. The narrator of the sonnets—his own persona—is the sole protagonist, each poem a soliloquy reflecting the vicissitudes of a drama. At times his character is utterly alone. "Farewell! thou art too dear for my possessing" begins Sonnet 87. And gradually the first series winds towards its climax.

I would like to move to Sonnet 120. This has a most extraordinary depth to it. There has been

a quarrel. The narrator realizes he has been cruel, and he grasps the other's pain only by recalling how he himself was hurt by the other in a previous set-to. There is a searing honesty in the lines. He remembers the other apologized then; but he, the speaker, has not done so this time. It appears to have been a terrible time, a lacerating nightmare, in the aftermath of which our poet outlines the situation simply as a life-or-death one. The poem is his apology. Not merely his voice, his very being seems to speak.

> That you were once unkind befriends me now,
> And for that sorrow, which I then did feel,
> Needs must I under my transgression bow,
> Unless my nerves were brass or hammered steel.
> For if you were by my unkindness shaken,
> As I by yours, y'have passed a hell of time;
> And I, a tyrant, have no leisure taken
> To weigh how once I suffered in your crime.
> O that our night of woe might have remembered
> My deepest sense, how hard true sorrow hits,
> And soon to you, as you to me, then tendered
> The humble salve, which wounded bosoms fits.
> But that your trespass now becomes a fee;
> Mine ransoms yours, and yours must ransom me.

Just a note: I have always been intrigued by the line "My deepest sense, how hard true sorrow hits." Is this not the dramatist's deepest sense? His deepest preoccupation is to do with the nature of authority and power, in the state and in the individual. But the great tragedies tell unerringly of what he is most keenly attuned to. The five words say it perfectly: "how hard true sorrow hits."

After such an episode there is little more to say. The series to the man comes to a close, with a most beautiful *envoi*. Nature has held the young man back from the claim of Time, but must in the end surrender him. It is as if Shakespeare at last discovers his true aim, and embraces the object of his quest, by letting go.

> 126
> O thou, my lovely boy, who in thy power
> Dost hold Time's fickle glass, his sickle, hour;
> Who hast by waning grown, and therein show'st
> Thy lovers withering as thy sweet self grow'st;
> If Nature, sovereign mistress over wrack,
> As thou goest onwards, still will pluck thee back,
> She keeps thee to this purpose, that her skill
> May time disgrace and wretched minutes kill.
> Yet fear her, O thou minion of her pleasure!
> She may detain, but not still keep, her treasure.

Her audit, though delayed, answered must be,
And her quietus is to render thee.

The poet employs the tolling bell of continuous couplets. The passionate friendship of three years or so (as one of the poems tell us) has given birth to one of the deepest, and dearest, explorations of love in Earth's history.

But we are not finished. The second and final series, numbers 127 to 154, takes up love from a different angle. The poet writes of his mistress: with intimate affection, with fury, with life's truth. The Platonic Idea is gone. Time, the enemy has gone. Yet, the second series is knit to the first with hoops of steel.

Shakespeare speaks now of the shock of loving. The first series, the commitment to the form of an ideal love, is balanced by the engagement of the body—he has a sexual relationship with the lady, described openly in one sonnet; whereas he makes it clear in the first series that such a thing with the man is out of the question. And the engagement is of the full range of the emotions. In the first series, whatever the youth has done, the poet cannot show anger. Now he does. And it is for the same reason: the affair between the woman and his friend for which he finds the woman wholly to blame. It is an unlikely scenario: one imagines the young man, almost certainly an aristocrat, exercised a form of *droil du seigneur,* and the pair of them betrayed the wretched poet with responsibility on both sides. Remember that I am assuming, for the sake of convincing, that the characters did exist: it may all have been an invention for the sake of a sonnet drama. Still the same truths hold. And so we have a riveting portrait of a relationship that screams of frustration, hurt, delight, simple love, and ease. Taken with the series to the man, it completes an account of the nature of love and loving that, to my mind, has never been quite comprehended. My book, *Two Loves I Have,* advances a hypothesis of a sort, and leaves the reader to decide.

She is dark. At first, it seems merely that her eyes are black, but the emphasis on the "Blackness" seems to go beyond that. I suggest—tentatively—that she may have been of Moorish or Carribean heritage, in whole or part, and that Shakespeare was revolted at himself for being attracted to her. And yet, there are times when there is not a trace of self-disgust, and we are treated to a picture of an even couple, in love.

One of my favorites is Sonnet 138, where the poet delightfully talks of the lies they both tell.

When my love swears that she is made of the truth
I do believe her, though I know she lies,
That she might think me some untutored youth,
Unlearned in the world's false subtleties.
Thus vainly thinking that she thinks me young,
Although she knows my days are past the best,
Simply I credit her false-speaking tongue;
On both sides thus is simple truth supressed.
But wherefore says she not she is unjust?

And wherefore say not I that I am old?
O, Love's best habit is in seeming trust,
And age in love loves not to have years told.
Therefore I lie with her, and she with me.
And in our fault by lies we flattered be.

He pretends to believe her when she says she's always truthful. Why? So that she will think he is naive—and young. They both know the real situation, yet both let the fiction endure, because "O, Love's best habit is in seeming trust."

That line alone, that admits the necessity of a fiction, has more down-to-earth *reality* in it than all the 126 poems to the man. But the ardent and dear portrayal of a friendship was in its way no less real. The two sides of the equation almost jostle in the extraordinary venture of the poet to find equilibrium. I believe he succeeds in doing this. Both sides are necessary.

There are some fearsome moments in the second series and none more so than when the poet talks of lust.

129
The expense of spirit in a waste of shame
Is lust in action; and till action, lust
Is perjured, murderous, bloody, full of blame,
Savage, extreme, rude, cruel, not to trust,
Enjoyed no sooner but despised straight,
Past reason hunted, and no sooner had,
Past reason hated, as a swallowed bait
On purpose laid to make the taker mad,
Mad in pursuit and in possession so,
Had, having, and in quest to have, extreme,
A bliss in proof, and proved, a very woe,
Before, a joy proposed; behind, a dream.
All this the world well knows, yet none knows well
To shun the heaven that leads men to this hell.

The poet evinces what amounts to a self-hatred at times. His attitude towards the woman is often described as misogynistic, but in truth, the bitterest current is reserved for himself. The second series is chockfull of an almost demonic energy, more negative than positive but with some glorious moments of ease and naturalness together. He is sharp towards his mistress, sharp and scornful. "In Faith I do not love thee with mine eyes, /For they in thee a thousand errors note" begins 141. She is "the worser spirit coloured ill." He ends 147: "For I have sworn thee fair, and thought thee bright, /Who art as black as hell as dark as night." Again and again he reviles her: and his love is always creeping through. He calls her "my music" and says, "I love to hear her speak.""Yet my five wits nor my five senses can / Dissuade one foolish heart from serving thee," he writes, and we believe him. I think he was color-prejudiced. It is noticeable that in *The Merchant of Venice*, the chief character, Portia, otherwise to the

modern eye wholly delightful and praiseworthy, says of the Prince of Morocco, a suitor for her hand who chooses the wrong casket and has to go, "Let all of his complexion choose me so." He has left by then: but it is clear he was a modest, admirable person. Shakespeare withholds and reveals the prejudice in his portrayal of the same character, as he does with Shylock the Jew, as he does with Othello the Moor. He assigns to Shylock a magnificent speech affirming the equality of all humans, and to Othello, a quite remarkable ease and balance of character at the beginning of his play, the very pattern—so it seems— of greatness. Yet they are dismissed. Of course, the so-called Dark Lady of the Sonnets may have had nothing dark about her except her eyes; but I think it possibly went further than that.

It is merely a hypothesis; and it matters little. But I would like to end with three sonnets from the series to the woman which will remind of the remarkable dramatic scope of the writer. In the first of these, Sonnet 143, he is breathtakingly honest about an aspect of his love for the lady. To some small degree—and it may be so, even if to a very small degree, with all heterosexual men—his approach to her is as a small infant's to its mother.

> Lo, as a careful housewife runs to catch
> One of her feathered creatures broke away,
> Sets down her babe and makes all swift dispatch
> In pursuit of the thing she would have stay,
> Whilst her neglected child holds her in chase,
> Cries to catch her whose busy care is bent
> To follow that which flies before her face,
> Not prizing her poor infant's discontent;
> So run'st thou after that which flies from thee,
> Whilst I thy babe chase thee afar behind;
> But if thou catch thy hope, turn back to me,
> And play the mother's part, kiss me, be kind:
> So will I pray that thou mayst have thy 'Will,'
> If thou turn back, and my loud crying still.

Under the guise of a farmyard scene he admits his infantile dependence. There is an interesting wordplay at the end. All editors I have come across take the final word, "still," as a verb: I pray that you will "have thy will,"—Will, also his name—if you turn back to me and quieten my loud wailing. But I see it differently. If "still" is not the verb but the adverb, suddenly the last line, or half-line, is far stronger, and the overall scene surely more accurate in psychological terms. So, as before, I hope you will be with me, if you turn back and you'll not only have your "Will," but his loud crying still, just as a baby will often carry on sobbing after its mother has picked it up to comfort it, when it has felt neglected.

There are a handful of new readings I give here and there in my book. In each case Shakespeare probably meant more than one reading to operate—even when they appear to be mutually exclusive. Such is, or can be, poetry.

I have always been fond of Sonnet 151 where the poet is open about sex. Perhaps the lady has

accused him of insincerity in his affection. It is a magnificent reply:

> Love is too young to know what conscience is;
> Yet who knows not, conscience is born of love?
> Then, gentle cheater, urge not my amiss,
> Lest guilty of my faults thy sweet self prove.
> For thou betraying me, I do betray
> My nobler part to my gross body's treason;
> My soul doth tell my body that he may
> Triumph in love; flesh stays no farther reason,
> But rising at thy name, doth point out thee
> As his triumphant prize. Proud of this pride,
> He is contented thy poor drudge to be,
> To stand in thy affairs, fall by thy side.
> No want of conscience hold it that I call
> Her 'love' for whose dear love I rise and fall.

Here is no hesitation, no querulousness as to her hue, or her interest in another or others. It is an exhilarating defence of his interest, physical and emotional, in an acceptance of the bond of man-woman.

The final poem I shall read is Sonnet 146 where the poet addresses his own soul. There is a famous textual crux where the 1609 printer repeated the last three words of line 1 to start line 2, clearly quite wrongly: "Poor soul, the centre of my sinful earth, /My sinful earth these rebel powers that thee array…" I thought about how the line probably started in Shakespeare's version for some fifty years—off and on I hasten to add—and only when writing the commentary on that poem for my book did it come to me: "Poor soul, the centre of my sinful earth, /Rich in these rebel powers that thee array…." Whether I am right, let us take the poem so:

> Poor soul, the centre of my sinful earth,
> Rich in these rebel powers that thee array?
> Why dost thou pine within, and suffer dearth,
> Painting thy outward walls so costly gay?
> Why so large cost, having so short a lease,
> Dost thou upon thy fading mansion spend?
> Shall worms, inheritors of this excess,
> Eat up thy charge? Is this thy body's end?
> Then soul, live thou upon thy servant's loss,
> And let that pine to aggravate thy store;
> Buy terms divine in selling hours of dross;
> Within be fed, without be rich no more:
> So shalt thou feed on Death, that feeds on men,
> And, Death once dead, there's no more dying then.

In its way, it is the most intimate of all the poems. The presence of the person about whom the series is nominally written is no more than a shadowy one, as with a number of other poems. For instance, the very famous 116: “Let me not to the marriage of true minds / Admit impediments. Love is not love /Which alters when it alteration finds, /Or bends with the remover to remove. ”There the young man is in the background, sharer of a marriage of minds. In this one, “Poor soul,” it is the woman who appears finally perhaps in a reference to the speaker’s shame at sexual excess. “Dying” could mean the act of sexual release. But all that is secondary to the moment of conversation, dialogue even, with his moral self. It is the nearest expression I have found in Shakespeare to a religious acceptance on the part of the author.

We are done. The poems to the woman complement those to the man, round out the exploration of love. I end my book, *Two Loves I Have*, with these words: “The sequence has a fragmentary surface, but an inner tensile strength: over the whole, as if finely welded within, it can seem a balanced hold. It is one man’s statement on the gift of love and the shock of loving; one man’s voice, as if expressed from the marrow of his bones, on longing and belonging and exclusion. It is one poet’s quest that has for a time been a part of us; and made of all these, in air of fourteen lines, it is one craftsman’s music.”

LITERATURE AND CULTURAL STUDIES

Subversion or Subservience? The Remains of the Empire in Nigeria

Farhana Zareen Bashar
Senior Lecturer of English, East West University

Abstract

Postcolonial literature is supposed to be a battleground on which an active pursuit of decolonization should continue in every possible way. African literature written in the language of the Empire does not appear to be completely anticolonial. Ngugi wa Thiong'o feels a need for linguistic decolonization of African literature. According to him, African literature manifests the domination of the Empire by using their language. He classifies the works of Chinua Achebe and Wole Soyinka as Afro-European literature. But is taking up the language the same as accepting the standards of the colonizer? The language question has many implications, especially when it comes to African literature. We see that Achebe attempts to decentralize control over language by extensively modifying it. My paper examines how the Nigerian authors Chinua Achebe and Wole Soyinka have developed their own written English vernacular codes and the way they Nigerianize their texts using pidgin English in their dialogue—the English that is actually used by some Nigerians. My paper also shows that there are other manifestations of imperial domination apart from the linguistic hegemony in African literature. The English of the Empire has been domesticated by Achebe and it has effectively become the language of literary expression, but a preference for the White Man's codes and customs is seen in sociocultural settings. There was cultural domination in the country, which is still at work in present day Nigeria. My paper shows that the domestication of the English language is able to carry the weight of the African culture, but these authors point out that internal indigenous structures are flawed and these deficiencies allow the apparently dead seeds of hegemony to germinate all over again in native soil. So, in Ngugi wa Thiong'o's words, the decolonization of the mind has not yet taken place. In this paper I include my personal experiences of and interactions with the westernized Nigerian and their apparent Afro-European lifestyle. The years I have spent in Nigeria have brought me in contact with the westernized educated Igbos and Yorubas of the South, and my description of their day-to-day tendencies explicitly show that there is a serious imperial effect deeply rooted in the Nigerians.

The question here is very simple: Does African literature written in the English language qualify as authentic African literature? Or can the African experience be accurately sustained by the language of the empire? This is crucial to the understanding of how imperialism still has its claws penetrated through the linguistic compromise reached by the writers. Language was an instrument of culture control in the colonial period and that is why some critics feel

that a decentralization of language control is necessary. They think that the first step to free oneself from the colonial hangover is to forsake their language. The west was the center of the world exerting political, economic, and cultural power. Now this is when they used their language to dominate the locality in every possible way. Ngugi wa Thiong'o in his book *Moving the Centre: The Struggle for Cultural Freedoms* is concerned with shifting the center. Unless a major shift takes place, it will not be possible to remove the colonial stain from the nation. He thinks the nation needs to detach itself from imperial ties. Thiong'o also sees the significance of the culture-power nexus. His title "Writers in Politics" captures the essence of this cultural/imperial domination. Of course we know that the pen is mightier than the sword and somehow the English-language Empire grows stronger than anything else. My question here is, how exactly are they engaged in the act of decolonization? How are they planning to resist imperial domination? Are they writing back to try and beat the white man at his own game? Some writers reject the language of the Empire while others like Chinua Achebe and Wole Soyinka borrow and subvert the English language. They subscribe to the notion that we have to defeat the White man in his own game. But, by using English, these writers fall into the trap of defining African culture inappropriately. The defining moment is distorted in the sense that the African experience, adorned with the language of the Empire, seems to be at a hyper-sophisticated level. In Ngugi wa Thiongo's words, it becomes Afro-European. He writes in his preface to *Decolonising the Mind*:

> I am lamenting a neo-colonial situation … In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries Europe stole art treasures from Africa to decorate their houses; in the twentieth century Europe is stealing the treasures of the mind to enrich their languages and culture. Africa needs back its economy, its politics, its culture, its languages and all its patriotic writers (Thiong'o Preface XII).

If we attend to the nexus between language and power, we see that the writers in power—armed with their pens—shape Africa in an English style. These works are accessible to only a section of the people, that is, the bourgeois, the educated upper class and middle class readers. African literature tends to be in the possession of the westernized educated class. A question springs up again: so what happens in the end? Writers have politicized the act of decolonization. Their works, no matter how much they have modified or Africanized them, are kept on the bookshelves of the petty westernized educated class. Achebe, for example, writes his *Things Fall Apart* in the western mode. He Nigerianizes his narrative by inserting Igbo proverbs and keeping to the orality of the storytelling styles, but it definitely belongs to the educated speaking standard Nigerian English. As Thiong'o notes,

> Its greatest weakness still lay where it has always been, in the audience—the petty-bourgeoisie readership automatically assumed by the very choice of language. Because of its indeterminate economic position between the many contending classes, the petty-bourgeoisie develops a vacillating psychological make-up. Like a chameleon it takes on the color of the main class with which it is in the closest touch and sympathy (22).

It is true that the English language cannot be denied as the language of wider communication. The worldwide domination of English does not allow its abandonment. But the questions of

the African sentiments remain. It is not also wholly certain that, if these writers opted for African languages, the problem of cultural invasion would be eradicated. Since language is closely tied to culture, it is a dangerous pursuit to use the Empire's language. In a way it feeds on the native and slowly transforms them to serve colonial interests.

Another problem is the African situation. The language question has many implications, especially when it comes to African literature. The popularity of the English language in Africa can in part be traced to the fact that due to colonial imposition, it was the language of social mobility in the new order and therefore the language most studied and used formally. The African languages were neglected in terms of formal study and use. In Nigeria, for example, there are many ethnic/tribal languages, where English is more than simply a means of communicating ideas and information. It also serves as a very important means of establishing and maintaining a unifying relationship among people of diverse cultures and mother tongues (westafricareview.com). Chinua Achebe and Wole Soyinka believe that the rigid hegemony of the language can be unmasked through this process of adaptation. As Thiong'o further notes, in *Decolonising the Mind,* "language was the most important vehicle through which that power fascinated and held the soul prisoner. Language was the means of the spiritual subjugation" (9).

Nigeria is a large nation with hundreds of languages. The second edition of an index of Nigerian languages lists over four hundred languages. All the languages except pidgin and English are associated with specific indigenous people and are thus not pan-Nigerian. Only English and Nigerian pidgin can be called pan-Nigerian in the sense that no ethnic group can claim native rights to them. Since in Nigeria ethnic particularism poses a serious threat to national survival, the installation of English is needed. Promoting national literatures was considered necessary to stop the ethnic conflicts in the country. This explains Achebe's motivation for choosing to write in English. Writers like Achebe used it as a weapon since the survival of Nigeria as a nation-state required it. The African writers using English had to think of the question of linguistic hegemony as well, so they engaged themselves in the process of domesticating English. In keeping with the fast pace of "globalization," these writers borrow from and adapt to the new order. They reshape the foreign tongue. The African writers using English tend to deploy the strategy of transliteration. This is a very effective way of conveying the local tendencies in an African manner. But that again has its limits. This was a doctrine originally conceived by the first generation of African Anglophone writers as a second language literary theory. They wanted to use this method to create national literatures in "postcolonial" African countries. Nigerian writers have successfully used it. They succeeded with this strategy because of their sociocultural and sociopolitical predicament. These African countries south of the Sahara emerging from colonial imposition in the late fifties encountered the problem of multiethnicity. Achebe himself feels the tension and this is clear in the following remarks he makes in his collection of essays *Morning Yet on Creation Day*:

> The real question is not whether Africans could write in English but whether they ought to. Is it right that a man should abandon his mother-tongue for someone else's? It looks like a dreadful betrayal and produces a guilty feeling. But for me there is no

> other choice. I have been given this language and I intend to use it. I hope, though, that there always will be men, like the late Chief Fagunwa, who will choose to write in their native tongue and ensure that our ethnic literature will flourish side-by-side with the national one (62)

This explains Achebe's choice of language. Writers like Achebe also realized that if they used the native speaker's English as their model, they could not evade cultural domination in literature. So they created a pan-Nigerian language that unified the constituent ethnic groups. They were sure that it had links with the language of the colonial master. Now there were three possible strategies—the use of a pan-national modified English (i.e., Nigerian English), the use of various ethnic-Nigerian modified Englishes (i.e., Igbo English, Yoruba English, etc.), or the use of pidgin. But only one was considered feasible at the time of Nigerian independence, namely, the use of ethnic-Nigerian modified Englishes. Pidgin could not be used because of the hostility people showed to its English language association. The nation tried to abolish the English language of its colonial master. It was considered corrupt. School children were forbidden to use it and writers could not connect themselves to it. It is proved in Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* (1958). There is no instance of pidgin in it, but his later novel *Anthills of the Savannah* (1987) offers examples of the usage of pidgin. This Nigerian English caused identity problems. It was closely connected to Standard English and the people using it assumed a strong sense of superiority. Only the upper and upper middle class used this English. The English used by educated Nigerians was the Nigerian English and not the ethnic Englishes. There is virtually no difference between Nigerian English and Standard British English. The Nigerian pidgin performs the role of informal English in Nigeria. Here are some quick examples: "You don't go there," "I have seen you well well," "habba o," "it don't happen," etc. This English can be distinguished from Standard English. But the Nigerians speak English the way they write it and that is why it is by and large identical in syntax and spelling with standard British written English. So the only way out was to write in various types of ethnic modified Englishes. This is what came to be known as transliteration. Transliteration does not have the same meaning in African literary theory as in Standard English. The Oxford English Dictionary defines the term as "the rendering of letters or characters of one alphabet in those of another." But in the early sixties, following the political independence of several African countries, the word "transliteration" was introduced in African critical terminology as a blend of translation and literal meaning so that it is glossed as "literal translation"—a meaning that, however, is not listed in any English dictionary. This became an important term in the postcolonial language politics of African literature.

Transliteration is a procedure for introducing tropes and idioms from an African ethnic language into English through a communication of equivalent words. In Achebe's *Arrow of God* we see this equivalent transliteration. Thus, the Igbo idiom, *Were ue gi guo eregi*, which means the same as the English idiom "Read between the lines," can be introduced into an English text as "count your teeth with your tongue" (137). The Igbo words are replaced by equivalent English words, but the idiom remains an Igbo cultural artifact. The same thing happens in Bengali. If we transliterate the Bengali idiom, *chal nai kuttar bagha naam*, for instance, it would be "a

dog without a skin is named a tiger" but the English equivalent is "Cut your coat according to your cloth."

The use of transliteration here instead of translating is curious because thinking in one language and rendering the thought in another sounds like translation. But African writers wanted to distinguish their own brand of translation. Gabriel Okara and Chinua Achebe classify it. Achebe recommends that the African writers try to develop their own varieties of English. These varieties do not coincide with any native-speaker varieties; rather its special features are able to carry an African's "peculiar experience" to the world, an experience that is essentially bilingual and bicultural. In *Morning Yet on Creation Day*, Achebe writes:

> So my answer to the question: Can an African ever learn English well enough to be able to use it effectively in creative writing? Is certainly yes. If on the other hand you ask: Can he ever learn to use it like a native speaker? I should say, I hope not. The African writer should aim to use English in a way that brings out his message best without altering the language to the extent that its value as a medium of international exchange will be lost. He should aim at fashioning out English which is at once universal and able to carry his peculiar experience (61)

So what these writers want is a bilingual variety of English combining native features and foreign elements; the target language expressions cast in the formal mould of source language counterparts. To a British or an American reader, it seems stylistically odd in context, but generally they do not violate the rules of English syntax. There are instances of this in Achebe's *No Longer at Ease* as "a thing of shame" (13), instead of "a shameful thing," and in *Arrow of God*, "a man of riches" (40), instead of "a rich man." These expressions mirror the form of Igbo expressions.

The typical Nigerian Anglophone novel consists of two types of sentences—unadulterated Standard English sentences, which constitute the bulk of the text, and Igbo, Yoruba sentences. The Nigerian Anglophone novel remains largely foreign. To quote Achebe:

> At last the rain came. It was sudden and tremendous. For two or three moons the sun had been gathering strength till it seemed to breathe a breath of fire on the earth. All the grass had long been scorched brown, and the sands felt like live coals to the feet. Evergreen trees wore a dusty coat of brown. The birds were silenced in the forests, and the world lay panting under the live, vibrating heat. And then came the clap of thunder. It was an angry metallic and thirsty clap, unlike the deep and liquid rumbling of the rainy season. A mighty wind arose and filled the air with dust. Palm trees swayed as the wind combed their leaves into flying crests like strange and fantastic coiffure (*Things Fall Apart* 130)

And here is Soyinka:

> The rains of May become in July slit arteries of the sacrificial bull, a million bleeding punctures of the sky-bull hidden in convulsive cloud humps, black, overfed for this one event, nourished on horizon tops of endless choice grazing, distant beyond giraffe reach." (167)

This type of English is hardly different from the English a native would use. Achebe captures folkloric dimensions of the Igbo language. His novels mediate orality and literacy by turning translations of folklore and discourses into a formal literary device.

As culture is closely tied to language, the Nigerians are bound to follow the western value system. They reshape themselves to suit the West. So classes of westernized Nigerians emerge in postcolonial Nigeria. They do not have any interest in their ancestral heritage, customs, traditions, codes of conduct, etc. They have their English/American way of life. I have spent nineteen years in Nigeria, so it will not be a difficult task to portray the texture of my experience in the country. All these years brought me in contact with different types of Nigerians. The status differences as a result of their identification with the West are apparent in Nigeria. The upper class Nigerian is very much in love with the western lifestyle. My Igbo and Yoruba friends were not at all concerned with their customs. The West has entered their blood and they believe it to be the best way of life. This is cultural imperialism and hegemony in full bloom. These educated people have seriously instilled the western values into their mindset. My friend never wore her traditional suit (a wrapper with a headscarf). She was always in skirts, jeans, and tracksuits. She even preferred the straight and soft hair to the Afro ringlets. Some Nigerians bleach their skin to make it appear "white." This is definitely a color complex, which began with the arrival of the Europeans on the Black Continent. I went to a school in a northern state, Kaduna and the recollection of the moments evokes a much anglicized childhood.

African literature in Afro-European style has made the situation worse. Is it the literature of the Nigerian people or the native Empire? Definitely not a literature for the Nigerian populace. It is rather a literature of the people by the educated elite for the external world's consumption. The literature is patronized more outside the country than inside. They do not even realize that they are doing something outlandish. There seems to be a Universalist strain in Nigerian literary thought. In English they found a universal medium of literary expression. In reality these writers have created, as Thiong'o rightly points out, another "hybrid tradition, a tradition in transition, a minority tradition that can only be termed as Afro-European literature; that is, the literature written by Africans in European Languages" (Thiong'o 26).

So there is international English implanted in Nigeria, which does not have a colloquial register. It is understandably inaccessible to ordinary people who do not understand English. Consider the two following passages from Achebe's *Arrow of God:*

> We have come to the end of our present mission. Our duty now is to watch Ezeulu's mouth for a message from Ulu. We have planted our yams in the farm of Anaba-nti. (209)
>
> I can see tomorrow, that is why I can tell Umuaro: *come out of this because there is death there or do this because there is profit in it.* If they listen to me, o-o; if they refuse to listen,o-o. I have passed the stage of dancing to receive presents. (132)

The cultural signs—Anaba-nti and o-o—are buried in contexts where it is hardly accessible to ordinary Igbo people who do not know English. *Things Fall Apart* is created in favor of

non-Igbo readers because there are few ethnic linguistic or folkloric artifacts in it. The work essentially consists of plain Standard English narration. By contrast *Arrow of God* satisfies the Igbo bilingual reader. Now it is quite clear why *Things Fall Apart* is Achebe's literary masterpiece, not *Arrow of God*. It is important for Nigerian writers to reconstitute English to make it accessible to the masses and mirror the texture of Nigerian life. This does not mean that the use of Standard English comes to an end in Nigeria. It will only be used in fields requiring international input and cooperation. It will be valued in higher education, the upper levels of government and administration, and in certain professions.

Africans have tried to retain their uniqueness in many different ways. They have their national anthems and even food recipes for nation building. But some way or the other, they fall short of the ingredients needed to establish a positive sociopolitical overview. Somewhere along the way it cracks down. A section of the people can hardly stick to their traditional essence. I have seen that most Nigerians make fun of the concept of "ancestral spirits." This is an integral part of African culture/beliefs. My friends in school cracked jokes about the medicine man (the diviner). The diviner is a man or a woman whose function is to determine whether a disease or misfortune is due to witchcraft or to a "ghost" and to prescribe treatment. In African culture, it is necessary to accept, as a serious therapeutic hypothesis, the existence of ghosts and witchcraft. But some Africans, especially the educated ones, feel that it is foolish to depend on these medicine men to cure their diseases. The treatment resists the techniques of western medicine. This conflicts with the deep-rooted assumptions of western doctors who prefer to talk in terms of psychosis and neurosis. They eliminate the psychic factors in the external world. Do these Africans reject the spirit-possession because western science excludes psychic factors? Does it go against the rational thinking of the west? In Nigeria, some medicine men are arrested for prescribing remedies. On the other hand, some government hospitals allow diviners into their wards if patients ask for them. Our family doctor used to work with a diviner and sometimes treated his patients according to the diviner's advice. Some Africans believe that a disease originates from witchcraft/black magic. But only the uneducated class entertains this belief. The literate Nigerians do not believe in the power of "spirit possession." In my class a girl was punished for keeping a "voodoo" doll in her desk. She told the authorities that she wanted to stand first in class and that doll contained her soul. The voodoo man was in control of her soul through that doll and he would assist her to do well in her exams. That was too much of a "story" to believe. Our principal seized the doll and warned her not to pursue such impractical means to pass examinations. They thought it was an utterly ridiculous practice. After some days, we had our examination and the brightest girl in our class fell sick the day before her exam. It is true that the voodoo girl could not take her position, but I believe that her magic had something to do with this timely misfortune. No one seemed to take notice of this. This really works in Africa. It may sound a bit bizarre, but I have seen people recovering from incurable conditions when the medicine man set a trap to capture the ghosts that had possessed the bodies. Some Nigerians make "bouncers" (this is a countereffect magic) that is used to ward off the effects of harmful medicines used against them. Our driver had a "bouncer" done since evil spirits once attacked him. Some rich people permanently hire a medicine man to protect them from spells.

My brother in Nigeria has a diviner working for him. I guess he sees the results. Most Nigerians do not believe in the inferior spirits. They pursue the Englishman's knowledge of diseases. The educated Nigerian thinks that it is stupid to make a wax image of someone and stick pins into it. The medicine man claims that man cannot, by rational means, protect himself against the occult. He/she may dream of a danger or maybe a dead ancestor may warn him of a future mishap. Now, how does rational thinking work here? How can a rational man depend on dreams, take it seriously, and act accordingly? It is definitely unworthy of attention by a modern man. Descartes concluded that "I think, therefore I am." It is man's reasoning consciousness that matters the most in the world. This is the attitude of the other world, the world of western scientific man. Somehow he has managed to eliminate God. If thinking is rational, seeing is rational too and this leads to "seeing is believing." This automatically discards the existence of God. Why should we become blind supporters? The mind is conscious, and the rest is machine that can be wholly understood. Freud took these emotions into consideration and analyzed the forces. He integrated these forces into conscious activity. This is in line with the scientific man who sees the universe through his mind. The rational man with his conscious versus unconscious state stands in contrast to the African who has seen the ancestral spirit and dream warnings come true.

The Rise of the Postcolonial Elite in Nigeria

Nigeria gained its independence from Britain in 1960. Ceremonies of independence took place. It was definitely a moment of great joy. It seemed the end of the Empire. Images of heroism were scattered everywhere. People honored the sacrifices of millions to save their land. It was not a defeat, but a resistance. Ngugi wa Thiong'o, the Kenyan writer, pictures the night of independence in his novel *A Grain of Wheat*, observing that this was not just a moment of ecstasy, but also a moment of a thousand expectations. Independence was not just an end to colonialism, but the beginning of an African nation. A new Africa was expected to emerge. They wanted something spectacular to emerge. Ayi Armah has written about the dawning of independence in his novel *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born*. Now has the dream been fulfilled?

The literature of the immediate postcolonial era in Africa says it all. Writers realized that something had gone terribly wrong. Decolonization appeared to be a distant hope. The aftermath was not at all as pleasant as the dreams. This independence seemed to be only for a section of the people. It was for the intellectuals, bankers, and lawyers, and not for the population at large. Writers like Achebe responded to these harsh realities of the apparently independent society. These intellectuals were caught between the masses on their left and the postcolonial elite on their right. These elites were feeding on the nation much like the British rulers. Chinua Achebe in his novel *A Man of the People* exposes the "Nigerian political elite." He portrays the self-interest and corruption of this elite. Achebe can imagine no solution to the growing lawlessness of civil society in postcolonial Nigeria.

This is the stagnation of postcolonial society. The elite in all its nastiness, vulgarity, greed, and corruption rules the land. In *The Wretched of the Earth*, Frantz Fanon blames the failings of

nationalism on the "intellectual laziness of the middle class" (149). The native bourgeoisie rises to power only insofar as it seeks to replicate the bourgeoisie of the "mother country" that sustains colonial rule. In the following passage, Fanon suggests that the opportunist native bourgeoisie mistakenly attempts to survey and control the colonized masses to the same extent as the colonial bourgeoisie it attempts to displace:

> The national middle class which takes over power at the end of the colonial regime is an underdeveloped middle class. It has practically no economic power, and in any case it is in no way commensurate with the bourgeoisie of the mother country which it hopes to replace. In its narcissism, the national middle class is easily convinced that it can advantageously replace the middle class of the mother country. But that same independence which literally drives it into a corner will give rise within its ranks to catastrophic reactions, and will oblige it to send out frenzied appeals for help to the former mother country. (149)

Fanon suggests in *The Wretched of the Earth* the ways in which intellectual leaders often betray the national working class:

> Before Independence, the leader generally embodies the aspirations of the people for independence, political liberty, and national dignity, but as soon as independence is declared, far from embodying in concrete form the needs of the people in what touches bread, land, and the restoration of the country to the sacred hands of the people, the leader will reveal his inner purpose: to become the general president of that company of profiteers impatient for their returns which constitutes the national bourgeoisie. (166)

The atrocity of the postcolonial society will continue to worsen unless a major turnover occurs. Perhaps an African revolution will do. It cannot be sabotaged by its leaders. Leaders have long betrayed their people and it is high time to revolt. These elites turned to power and wealth and ignored social justice. Independence was a hoax for the people. It was an extension of the colonial system, not abolition.

Chinua Achebe reveals this very lack of contact between the leaders and the ordinary people. He also shows that the condition of existence is poor in post-independence Nigeria. Achebe reveals this in his two novels, *A Man of the People* and *Anthills of the Savannah*. In *Anthills of the Savannah*, the military is already in power. They came with the intention of erasing the ills of the previous regime. Now, Sam, the military head of Kanga, starts the same evil as the civilian politicians before him. The end of the novel shows that Sam is overthrown by another military regime. Since 1960, the control of state power in the country has switched between the military and the civilians. So who is caught in the trap? The ordinary people for sure. This is evident when we see a society full of contrasts and unevenness in development. Affluence exists alongside poverty in the urban areas. This is what "independence" has given them.

There is also a contrast between the town and the rural areas. In both *Anthills of the Savannah* and *A Man of the People*, the image of the rural area is a wasteland. The military intervention

is portrayed as flawed. From a broader angle, the military takeover stops the violence that erupted after the elections. The military releases Eunice from prison and pronounces Max the hero of the revolution. In *Anthills of the Savannah* it is clear that Achebe turns bitter towards the military intervention in politics. He reveals that the nation's development does not lie in the hands of the military because its dictatorial form repels the ordinary people. This irresponsible leadership is nothing but another form of colonial domination. The image of the anthill in *Anthills of the Savannah* gives us an insight into the problematic structures in postcolonial Nigeria. The image is first revealed in the title of the novel, and then repeated in three other instances.

> Anthills surviving … (28)
>
> Anthills in the scorched landscape (194)
>
> Gazing out into the empty… (195)

The anthills we are referring to here are the mounds of the termites that are found in the rainforest habitats of the Savannah. It is important to note that a hierarchical order prevails in the nest. Within this order, the queen occupies the center, and life in the nest revolves around her. This shows that there is an internal structure of privilege. It is like the political order in post-independence Nigeria. In fact, the anthill reflects the overall condition/state of the country. Power is at the center, in the hands of the elite social group and everything else is pushed to the margins. A system of hegemony is recreated after the fall of the Empire in Africa. The image of the anthill is like the state's image with its complex internal structures. Achebe makes the empty structure sustain the harsh conditions. These termites abandon their earlier nest to build other mounds just like the individuals who control the state. Now why has Achebe made it survive the harsh conditions? The nation needs to cancel the projects of the preceding governments and start anew. The anthill needs to be broken down which is yet to be done. This can also be an image in the sociocultural situation. Decolonizing the African mind is urgently called for. The "anthill" (the British Empire's remains) needs to disappear.

Today the western educational system serves a similar interest. It is much like the imperialist vision of the colonial period. It further exploits the postcolonial African and captures the African mind. One cannot but notice how serious mental colonization persists in this instance. The southern part of Nigeria came into contact with Europeans first through trans-Atlantic slave traders. Following the abolition of the slave trade, legitimate trade began to flourish. The start of a capitalist economy and consciousness into the indigenous scene had a catastrophic effect on the general psyche and spirit of the Nigerians. The Nigerian cultural values had given way to accommodate the new spirit of "survival of the fittest" and other western values. The consequence was immediate: hunger and starvation. Farmers had to forsake their indigenous systems of food production and become actively engaged in the mass production of cash crops. The western education introduced to Nigeria by the Christian mission schools became a threat to the survival of traditions, especially oral literary performance.

The social life and customs have been steeped in foreign influences since then. British and American influences have continued to enter the traditional arena. Of course this is facilitated

by satellite television, American movies, music, fast food, etc. This is the "global" culture we are talking about here. A present danger is the increasing Americanization of the youths in the areas of fashion, food, and so on. This is a process which can completely destroy Benin culture and replace it with an American system. African cultures/religions have undergone dramatic changes. In Benin there was a traditional religion (the ancestral worship system) in the beginning of the century. Later the Benis abandoned this religion for the two major world religions, that is, Islam and Christianity. The Nigerians tend to prefer a popular culture to an ancestral heritage. They are more inclined towards the so-called "universal" than the "regionals".

It seems that the 21st century "globalization" is here to diminish the importance of the nation-states such as Nigeria. They can hardly raise the profile and identity of nationality groups that make up a nation-state. Ademola Dasylva, in his article *Culture Education and the Challenge of Globalization in Modern Nigeria*, points out that, "Nigeria can be active in preserving important aspects of their culture and incorporate elements in the performing arts (music, dance, drama, traditional games) and project their cultures by satellite broadcasting to the rest of the world. Instead of a ridiculous enacting of other cultures, Nigeria can be actively engaged and committed to the preservation of its national elements" (331).

Dasylva also mentions that,

> Undoubtedly, Nigeria's government has done something laudable in the publication of periodicals such as *Nigeria Magazine* and the various other books and journals that have been commissioned. Universities and academic associations have also held conferences, as often as funds would permit, both at local and international levels, during which cultural experts and oral literature scholars often pooled valuable ideas for the purpose of extending the frontiers of cultural studies, especially oral literature scholarship. (331)

The pursuit of culture conservation, enrichment, and dissemination will certainly ensure a strong identity consciousness. They must make their groups operate in the 21st century, instead of allowing them to wither away with the modern pop culture. The people could break through the mental colonization and develop a positive attitude towards their own cultural values. A new and more spiritually oriented practice of world religions, which is set within the cultural milieu of the people, can be a possible way out of the tensions. A renewed interest in African culture could be encouraged and introduced in schools at the basic levels. The local Government Councils could act responsibly to promote their rich cultural elements, not only internally but also at an international level. The 21st century has heaped opportunities and challenges ahead. The only way to contest is to be well equipped with one's own precious resources. It is high time that the agencies work together in the preservation of the languages and national heritages of Africa. The future of the great continent of Africa can be dazzling only if the people boastfully declare a true African Continent in its purest form.

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Satyajit Ray's *Ganashatru*: An Intersemiotic Translation of Henrik Ibsen's *An Enemy of the People*

Anik Biswas
Senior Lecturer of English, Metropolitan University, Sylhet

Abstract
Roman Jakobson categorizes translation work into three dimensions: intralingual, interlingual, and intersemiotic. The third one includes the idea of film adaptation based on a literary text. But there is no appropriate censor of determining how much liberty one screenwriter can enjoy in converting the source text into film. The discussion deserves particular attention if we consider Satyajit Ray's Ganashatru*, a film based on Henrik Ibsen's* An Enemy of the People*. In the film, Ray has added a lot of new elements and implemented a lot of changes. In particular, the film ends with a realization by Dr. Ashok Gupta that he is not alone at all while* The Enemy of the People *ends with the admiration of loneliness. As Ray changes one of the most striking themes of Ibsen's text, the comparison between the source text and the film becomes significant with regards to translation. The present study throws light on the transformation of Dr. Stockmann to Dr. Ashok Gupta with all his surroundings including culture, time as well as history and an approach on how Ray's* Ganashatru *handles the gap between two distinct cultures and timeframes. It also includes an analysis of how* Ganashatru *with all its changes from the source text has become an excellent intersemiotic translation to the audience of the Indian subcontinent.*

Translation generally establishes the relationship between two particular languages. As it is based on bilingualism, it obviously brings about the issue of foreignness and cultural aspects. Communication between the source language and the target language is a major factor in this regard. From Roman Jakobson's point of view, translation can take place between two particular languages, within the same language and between two systems of signs. Jakobson names the last system of translation as intersemiotic translation and defines it as "an interpretation of verbal signs by means of signs of nonverbal sign systems" (233). It includes the transformation of particular structures of signs into another distinct configuration. It basically relates the conversion of a literary text into film, music, painting, etc. When a film is made based on a literary text, it becomes a finished product and the assessments of the film hardly invite analysis of the transformation process. Unfortunately, we do not have more studies which focus on this process of separating a literary text from its offspring.

Translation is actually a sort of transformation which not only brings two languages, but also two distinct cultural systems closer. The idea of faithfulness in this regard relates to the consciousness of the translator as he must put emphasis on the contents of the source text rather than on the aim of the author. It is, in fact, a relative issue and always determined by

the translator's clever implementation of a particular cultural system in his/her target text. For example, Shakespeare's sonnet "Shall I Compare Thee to a Summer's Day" cannot be semantically translated into a language where summers are unpleasant, just as the concept of God the Father cannot be translated into a language where the deity is female (Bassnett 30). Suresh Ranjan Basak's translation of Shakespeare's sonnet "Shall I Compare Thee to a Summer's Day" can be cited in this regard:

Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?
Thou art more lovely and more temperate

বসন্ত দিনের সাথে মানায় কি তোমার তুলনা?
তার চেয়ে ঢের বেশী সুমধুর, মনোহর তুমি। (১২)

Summer in Bangladesh cannot be matched with the summer in England. Shakespeare uses this pleasant season to show his readers that his friend is more pleasing than the charms of an English summer. Basak must have realized that the literal meaning of summer would not serve the purpose of the poet's thought and eventually, changed "summer" into "spring" for Bangladeshi readers. To determine whether an intersemiotic translation is successful is a very difficult task as it depends on some particular strategies adopted in the target texts. Octavio Paz claims:

> Every text is unique and, at the same time, it is the translation of another text. No text is entirely original because language itself, in its essence, is already a translation: firstly, of the nonverbal world and secondly, since every sign and every phrase is the translation of another sign and another phrase. (qtd. in Bassnett 44)

Interdisciplinary study has been appreciated by scholars for decades. It has emphasized on translation studies which involves new approaches for examining the confusing and conflicting variables emerging from these texts. In this regard, Torop likes to see "translation" as a mixture of cultural, psychological, and ideological activities. He suggests a particular model where he stresses on not only study methods of translation but also the study method of the translator. He conceptualizes "intersemiotic translation" as "total translation" on the ground of textual ontology. He says: "Co-existence of the verbal and the visual and non-coincidence of their border and the border between the verbal and iconic … points to the productivity of a semiotic approach both in textology and in the analysis of texts of culture" (280). It is evident that to Torop, intersemiotic translation is equivalent to the study of cultural communication. On this ground, film adaptation can be seen as intersemiotic translation though its success depends on the skill of the translator regarding the transfer of the particular sign—systems and cultural aspects.

The idea of intersemiotic translation is one of the most problematic issues in translation studies considering the gap between two or more semiotic codes or between linguistic text-signs and nonlinguistic codes. In case of changing the code from the stage to the film or from the book to the screen, there is no censor which determines how loyal one screenwriter or director should be towards the source text. As an intersemiotic translator, one must take care

of the particular cultural system in which he intends to re-create it. S/he must not avoid his or her loyalty towards it including its cultural and political history and timeframe.

> Jakobson claimed that the meaning of a sign is its translation into another sign or sequence of signs in the same language, in another language or in another semiotic (e.g., visual) language. Following Jakobson, Itamar Even-Zohar (1990a, 1997) elaborated a theory of transfer, which applies to all variations of the following phenomenon: a text which was created in a cultural system A is re-created in a cultural system B. Even-Zohar's theory of transfer, rooted in his polysystem theory, has been used in research dealing with transfer within one language (Shavit 1986) and from literature to the cinema (Cattrysse 1992; Remael 2000). (qtd. in Weissbrod 42)

Any discussion of the relationship between the source text and the recreated audiovisual text demands a primary objection: the autonomous sense inherent in each text. A lot of issues work in such a way that the texts are not interchangeable. To establish the concept of intersemiotic translation, the social, cultural, religious, and historical discourses are important to think about. For the target-text readers, cultural aspects should be skillfully handled by the translator.

We find that Ibsen's play originated in the Norwegian cultural system in the 19th century. Naturally he used his own individual thought coupled with contemporary views and complications. In the then Norway, most of the people lived in towns and for each town, the dwellers had a Mayor who led them in different aspects. They also had the print media, and other public services like public baths. In local politics in Norway, as Ibsen shows in his play, the majority always exercised power over the minority. Ibsen observed how the minority struggled to uphold their rights and how the majority ruled them with tyranny. In the then Norwegian society, money and power were the things that never got away from politics as in *An Enemy of the People* the Mayor wants his power; he does not want his brother's discovery to disturb his power in the city. Eventually Dr. Stockmann, the protagonist of the play, becomes an enemy of the people. His patients abandon him and his daughter is fired from her job. His first reaction is to take his wife and children away from the town. But as the mob breaks his windows, he decides to stay and try to re-educate the townspeople with his new found discovery. Ibsen admires this loneliness:

> DR. STOCKMANN: Are you quite mad, Katrina! Drive me out! Now that I am the strongest man in the town?
> MRS. STOCKMANN: The strongest—now?
> DR. STOCKMANN: Yes, I venture to say this: that now I am one of the strongest men in the world.
> MORTENN: I say, what fun!
> DR. STOCKMANN (in a subdued voice): Hush; you mustn't speak about it yet; But I have made a great discovery.
> MRS. STOCKMANN: What, another?
> DR. STOCKMANN: Yes, of course (Gathers them about him, and speaks confidently):

> This is what I have discovered, you see: the strongest man in the world is he who stands most alone.
> MRS. STOCKMANN (shaking her head, smiling): Ah, Thomas dear—!
> PETRA (grasping his hands cheeringly): Father! (77)

Though at the end of the play Dr. Stockmann is at war with society, he feels he is the strongest man in the society despite the fact that he is alone. But Ray has to place the story and theme in Indian culture. He is aware of the demand of the Indian tradition and history linked with it. For him, money, politics and some moral issues are not enough to turn "a friend" into "a public enemy." He sets *Ganashatru* in Chandipur, a small town in Bengal which has recently drawn the visitors' attention for being a health resort. Dr. Stockmann in *An Enemy of the People* has become Dr. Ashok Gupta in *Ganashatru*. Dr. Gupta works as the head of a hospital which is run by a trust founded by a local businessman, Bhargava. Ashok Gupta's brother Nishith Gupta is a powerful man in the town and the chief of the hospital committee. There is a temple in the town which works as the accelerator to turn Ibsen's play into an Indian film. Somehow the temple's water supply gets infected from some substandard pipes and eventually, there is an outbreak of jaundice. The affected people are identified to be frequent visitors to the temple. Laboratory tests in Kolkata verify the doubt of Dr. Gupta as fact. Now, a strong sense of enmity builds up between Dr. Gupta and Bhargava accompanied by Nishith centering round Dr Gupta's find. Bhargava, like many other Hindus, accepts as true that holy water (charanamrita) cannot be impure as it contains Ganges water, tulsi leaves, and sacred basil leaves. The local newspaper editor at first realizes the fact but eventually goes against Dr. Gupta. Dr. Gupta calls for a public meeting at a hall to make the people understand the matter but it also goes against him because of the political strategies engineered by Nishith Gupta. The film, however, ends with a slogan of the young educated people of the area who declare that they are in favor of Dr. Gupta. This optimistic note is one of the most significant changes that Ray brings in *Ganashatru*.

Ray is particularly influenced by his own cultural forces and the role of the youth in the history of Bengal. If Ray presented Dr Ashok Gupta as a man in a desolate state at the end of the day, it would be sheer injustice to the spirited youth in Bengal. The audience of the Indian subcontinent is not ready to see the youth playing a silent role and standing aside for the cultural and religious reformists. Ray keeps faith in the youth to protect his protagonist Dr Gupta. One example can be cited here to understand Ray's view on the youth of his time. At the very beginning of *Pratiwandi* (another of Ray's film, based on a novel by Sunil Gangopadhhay), there is a conversation between Siddharth, the protagonist of the film, and the interviewer in a job interview:

> Interviewer: What is the most significant event in the last decade?
> Siddharth: The war in Vietnam.
> Interviewer: Do you consider this more significant than the moon-landing?
> Siddharth: Yes, I do. (Ray 1972)

The Bengali speaking people must keep in mind the role of the youth in the language movement

of 1952 in Pakistan. Besides, the youth of Bengal played the most significant role in the Liberation War of India and that of Bangladesh. History says that they never remained silent in any religious, cultural or political crisis. Though Ray's movies are enjoyed and applauded by people around the world, the audience is particularly the Bengali speaking people. Edward Sapir opines:

> No two languages are ever sufficiently similar to be considered as representing the same social reality. The worlds in which different societies live are distinct worlds, not merely the same world with different labels attached. (qtd. in Bassnett 21)

The audience of *Ganashatru* finds Dr. Ashok Gupta, the protagonist of the film, in a completely different state, literally far away from the denouement of Ibsen's play. Dr. Gupta says:

> I am not alone, Maya, I am not alone … I have a lot of friends. I will stay here, I have to work here. (Ray 1989) (Author's translation)

In *Ganashatru*, the two other significant features are a little magazine and a theater group. It is important to note here that in the history of any cultural revolution in this region, these two always played a striking role. Ray does not forget about the Young Bengal Movement and its founder Henry Louis Vivian Derozio who spent only 22 years on the earth but during his life time, he constantly persuaded the other young people around him to think freely, to inquire, and not to believe anything blindly. Though he went against the wind, he found a lot of young people at his side. His thoughts and inspiration gave birth to the development of the spirit of freedom and equality among the people. Even in *Charulata*, Bhupati (one of the central characters in the film) is portrayed as the follower of Derozio. Such young people of Hindu College also published *Parthenon*, a revolutionary little magazine inspiring liberalism in thought. These historical truths lead Ray to add a few elements to Ibsen's *An Enemy of the People*. The first one is *Moshal*, a little magazine, and the second one is a theater group consisting of the same group of young people who are involved in the publication of *Moshal*. At the end of the film, all the members of the group come to help Ashok Gupta; they stand beside him and this is how Dr Stockmann transforms into Ashok Gupta to the audience of the Indian subcontinent. He also becomes as firm as Dr. Stockmann but the source of Dr Stockmann's firmness is his realization of the strength of the truth even in the state of isolation. Ashok Gupta does not admire loneliness nor does he ever think of himself as alone.

Moreover, Ray adds another element to identify the role of the youth in this respect and it is the proof of Dr. Gupta's article. Its significance is marked by a young couple, Indrani and Romen, who love each other. They talk to each other just once in the film but their conversation is not confined to the expression of their love for each other or any other familial issue. They discuss the editing of the proof. This is very important to understand the thoughts of the youth or how Ray wants to see them. This symbol again returns in the last scene of *Ganashatru*. When the doctor is at the peak of his crisis, Romen appears with this very proof of the article in his hand. He is slightly relieved when he realizes that it is the editor of a little magazine who dared to publish his essay, not the editor of a renowned daily. This is how the proof has become the symbol of a historical truth about the youth in Bengal.

But as Dr. Gupta is about to sink in to despair, his daughter, her friend, and local students take up the fight. No, all is not lost. One can still live. One can still communicate, one can still be creative. (Roberge 95)

Ray also adds a slogan to his script. As soon as the doctor takes the proof in his hand, he hears the slogan of the theater people supporting him. The slogan has such strength in it that it provides the doctor with a platform and a truth that he is not alone at the end of the day.

Ray is very conscious about the alterations he has brought to the original text:

> I had to bring some changes in the story of the source text due to its time and context. I have added a ray of hope at the very end of *Ganashatru* but regardless, I don't think the script or the film will hamper audience from recognizing Ibsen. (Ray 212) (Author's translation)

If we compare this ending with the denouement of *An Enemy of the People*, the origin of the difference between these two becomes transparent and this is nothing but Ray's awareness about the history, timeframe and culture in which he lives in. Roberge in his *Satyajit Ray* mentions an article of Charles Tesson where he says:

> collusion of politics and poetics in the same voice is really a miracle, and it is beautiful that people whose life is committed to art, to representation, in the end occupy the field of politics. (qtd. in Roberge 96)

The camera of *Ganashatru* moves around some selected places only—the residence of Dr. Ashok Gupta, the premise of the temple, the local newspaper office and a hall, and these places are portrayed as disconnected from the outside world to some extent. So, the audience may have a chance to explore a sense of theatrical flavor in the film but Ray uses three techniques to hold his film upright: (1) the indepth presentation of the characters, (2) the intensity of the story analysis, and (3) the condensed style of preparing scenes and editing.

As the source text is a play, Ray has to take special care of the dialogues. The significant thing is that *Ganashatru* is based on the dialogues but not burdened with them. He uses "close-up" shots during the lengthy dialogues of the characters. The techniques Ray uses here are the slow movement of the camera, presenting the inner significance of the scenes and the long "close-ups." Roberge in his *Satyajit Ray* mentions an interview of Ray's that was reproduced by William Fisher in an issue of *Cahiers du Cinema* where Ray says:

> I totally identify with Dr Gupta, an honest man who does not fear the truth. I understand his motivations, his sufferings and his joy at the end. (97)

The challenge Ray faces is that he has to reshape a Norwegian text with Indian flavor. He solves this problem by introducing "holy water" which is linked with Indian culture and religion at its root:

> The religious argument, put by the temple owner, Mr Bhargava, rests on the premise that "holy water," by definition, cannot be impure, and that the nature of its essential purity "is beyond the understanding of medical science." The purity of this "holy

> water," is ensured by the presence of Ganges water that is regularly added to it along with milk, *bel* leaves, sesame seeds and, most important of all, tulsi leaves. It is the well-known argument between fundamentalist religion and modern science. (Hood 417)

To make the film an Indian one, he has to depend prominently on religious fundamentalism along with other issues. The exchange of dialogue between Dr. Gupta and Nisith in the public meeting clearly shows how religious fanaticism and politics work simultaneously to shape the fact in other essences:

> Nisith : Have you ever been to the temple?
> Dr. Gupta : No, I haven't. Because I don't feel the need to.
> Nisith : Do you have any idea how many people drink the holy water every day?
> Dr. Gupta : I don't have a definite idea but I should imagine about seven or eight thousand.
> Nisith : How many patients have you had so far?
> Dr. Gupta : I am not the only doctor, but I have received 200, 250 patients. (Ray, 1989) (Author's translation)

In *An Enemy of the People*, Ibsen does not bring the issue of religious formation but Ray knows that the degradation India encounters socially, politically, and culturally nowadays originates from religious superstitions:

> It is set in 1981, but it is difficult to see the film now without being reminded of controversies in Indian public life that evolved after its release in 1989. In the same year there was a sensation in the Calcutta press as reports came from here and there avowing that idols of the god Ganesh were actually consuming milk. Although the matter was gently derided by most educated people, it made prominent headlines and occupied the media far more than ought to have been warranted by an outburst of silly superstition and hearsay. (Hood 416)

The inner struggle between traditional and modern values in Indian life has colored several other Ray films. *Devi (*released in 1960) is essentially a story exploring the dangers of religious fanaticism and superstition.

In *An Enemy of the People*, Dr. Stockmann finally finds an option to make the people understand his view. He starts talking about the contamination of the water but also shifts his speech to the big guns of the towns and how they are responsible for what is going on. He mentions education and corruption too. The people of the town feel insulted by such blame. By the end of the meeting, the people of the town rebel as a mob against Dr. Stockmann and term him as "an enemy of the people." But *Ganashatru* brings "hooligans" in almost the same context to bring the Indian essence to the story:

> The film is a dramatized polemic in which the protagonist's case is clearly stated and then the various arguments against it are put, first by the temple owner, then by the Chairman of the Municipality, then by the press and finally by that characteristically Indian phenomenon, the hired hooligans. (Hood 417)

Ray's narratology demands the above mentioned changes and new elements which clear his distinct style of narrative techniques and transmission. Making a film, based on any literary

text, is not just a concern of placing the dialogues and actions from the pages of a text. In case of novels, the screenwriter gets the narration with its techniques through which s/he can make sense of the characters with their thoughts, dialogues and actions. The absence of traditional narration makes the task of a screenwriter more complicated in case of a play though the stage direction sometimes plays a significant role in this regard. Literal translation of a literary work is often unacceptable as there must be some distinct differences between two cultural traits and contexts. In films, the director tries to make a sense of parallelism using some specific tools to recreate the text for his/her audience. In this connection, the screenwriter must fulfill the demand of a different medium. Film and play are two different media and each has its own devices to present and manipulate the text. At times, filmmakers bring changes to set up new arguments, accentuate different traits in a character, or even attempt to get to the bottom of problems they pick out in the source text.

Ray's *Ganashatru* should not be labeled as merely an "adaptation" because "adaptation" is, in fact, a "ubiquitous phenomenon, but it is not well understood, at least if one insists on the myth of fidelity and denigrate adaptations as second-rate representation" (Wu 153). Linda Hutcheon offers an indepth explanation which points out that adaptation is not limited to novels and films but an exploration of our hermeneutical realms. According to Hutcheon's view, long-range inadequacies are involved in adaptation. Hutcheon opines that, in the Victorian age, adaptations included "the stories of poems, novels, plays, operas, paintings, songs, dances, and *tableaux vivants*" (xi), and furthermore, that adaptation has permeated our times: "on the television and movie screen, on the musical and dramatic stage, on the Internet, in novels and comic books, in your nearest theme park and video arcade" (2). It is not that Ray has been inspired by the play; rather what he has done is translated the text into its intersemiotic form. In an interview with the French TV in 1989, Satyajit Ray said:

> (I re-read) *An Enemy of the People* because that had stuck in my mind and I admired the character of Dr. Stockmann when I read it first in my college. I ….decided to bring it up to date. Completely transplanted to Bengal. (Majumdar 322)

As an intersemiotic translator, Ray enjoys the liberty of bringing changes in cultural settings or themes since the process relates two particular languages along with two particular cultures. Without such changes, the change of the sign systems in another language cannot take place.

An Enemy of the People explores the question of morality and organizational corruption. The people concerned turn a deaf ear to the problems as they intend to avoid moral cues. They keep themselves away from any interest in any further involvement and maintain a safe distance from the matter in question. Such ideas conspicuously exist in *Ganashatru*; what Ray shows in addition in his cinematographic version is the explosive issue of religious fanaticism, an issue convincingly relevant in the context of Indian culture. Ray's audience feels an attachment through the images and sounds which are deeply Indian. Dr. Stockmann's isolation has a tragic glorification but Ray's Ashok Gupta is out and out an Indian. As an intersemiotic translation it, in fact, addressed the India of 1989 where religious and nationalist intolerance was high.

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Conflict between the Individual and Society in *The Scarlet Letter*

Leema Sen Gupta
Lecturer, Access Academy, Asian University for Women, Chittagong

Abstract
The Scarlet Letter *can be considered a story of neverending conflict between the individual and society. Here individuality is being downtrodden by the society in the name of Puritanism where religion and law are identical to one another. Hester, Dimmesdale, and Pearl are struggling to find their identities against the harsh Puritan society. The aim of this paper is to show how hypocritical the Puritan society is in applying their ethics when they themselves do not follow it and how the instinctive nature of the soul of the individual has been shattered by the iron grasp of Puritanism. This paper is also an attempt to show that, in spite of all the efforts of the Puritan society, individuals find a way to uphold their mental freedom and thus defeat the society.*

Does the individual truly exist, or is he just a raw product of his society? Some thinkers believe that the individual is a rational creature, who can live fairly independently from the impact of society, while others would argue that humans are mere pawns who are under the constant impact of societal forces that appear incomprehensible to them. The only part of this dilemma that is certain is that these questions were well debated in the past, and will continue to be analyzed for many years to come. In *The Scarlet Letter*, Nathaniel Hawthorne engages in a fascinating analysis of the relationship between the individual and the pressure society exerts, revealing that, while society bears heavily on the individual, the individual can work to change society in such a way that the initial influence of society is marginalized ("Classic Network" 1).

Set in the harsh Puritan community of 17th century Boston, *The Scarlet Letter*, the tale of an adulterous entanglement that results in an illegitimate birth, reveals Nathaniel Hawthorne's concerns about the conflict between society and the private self. *The Scarlet Letter* turns upon two deep-seated, fundamental struggles—that between natural impulse and conscience, and that between the individual and the restraints of society. In the iron cage of Puritanism, people were regarded as incurably corrupt and infractions of social code were avenged by barbarous punishments. People living in that Puritanic society found themselves caught in moral mazes when certain well established laws were broken. Socially disgraced and ostracized Hester Prynne draws on her inner strength and certainty of spirit to emerge as the first true heroine of American fiction. Arthur Dimmesdale stands as a classic study of a self-divided individual, trapped by the rules of society.

Hester Prynne, the young protagonist of *The Scarlet Letter,* can be analyzed as a Transcendentalist heroine and her conflicts with the society be seen as the confrontation of a socially constructed identity with an individual identity. Various symbols and literary devices are used to depict this struggle against a socially determined identity. In this novel, the night and the wilderness create opportunities for the manifestation of individual identity while the day and the city are the oppressive settings of social identity. Even the prison was immediately juxtaposed with

the imagery of a garden to impose a critical atmosphere upon the work. Hester is a modern character who stumbles between vice and virtue, and struggles for individualism and personal identity. According to Michael Bell, "Behind the mask of 'acquired wisdom,' Hester has been nurturing her 'instinct,' nurturing a thoroughly subversive sense of her individuality" (51). She succeeds in keeping her individual identity to a degree that the scarlet letter of shame that has been imposed upon her by society loses its signification and becomes a symbol of fame, respect and even power (Mehran 1)

In *The Scarlet Letter,* society punishes individuals in the name of Puritanism which eventually results in a conflict between the individual and Puritanism. *The Scarlet Letter* can also be considered as a study of the hypocrisy of Puritan society. Throughout the novel we see how the leaders of that society themselves deviate from the values they are supposed to uphold. They have excommunicated Hester for her adulterous act but they do not hesitate to accept the services of Hester who has been branded as a sinner:

> Vanity, it may be, chose to mortify itself, by putting on, for ceremonials of pomp and state, the garments that had been wrought by her sinful hands. Her needlework was seen on the ruff of the governor; military men wore it on their scarf, and the minister on his band; it decked the baby's little cap; it was shut up, to be mildewed and moulder away, in the coffins of the dead. But it is not recorded that, in a single instance, her skill was called in aid to embroider the white veil which was to cover the pure blushes of a bride. (Hawthorne 75)

We can even see the hypocrisy of Puritan society in the description of the Governor's dwellings. It has been described as ''Aladin's Palace'' by Hawthorne himself:

> This was a large wooden house, built in a fashion of which there are specimens still extant in the streets of our elder towns; now moss-grown, crumbling of decay, and melancholy at heart with the many sorrowful or joyful occurrences, remembered or forgotten, that have happened, and passed away, within their dusky chambers. (91)

Through the word "moss-grown," Hawthorne wants to convey the message that Puritan society's humanity has become mossy and devoid of warmth or love. Puritan society was established on the basis of a belief that people will lead a life without availing luxury and entertainment. But the sparkling and gorgeous decoration of the palace represents the leaders' attitude to life that contradict the very values they are supposed to uphold.

Puritanism is also present in the story in various forms. Hawthorne depicts the inner picture of Puritan society and indirectly criticizes the interior hypocrisy in Puritan collective society that "fails to recognize the intention or meaning of the sensuous element in human nature" (Culacurcio 10). Almost all the characters in the story, except Pearl, have something to hide. The eyes of the Puritan fathers are closed to their own sins and ignorance although they are so strict about those of others. The personality of Dimmesdale, among many other things, is the depiction of the internal deficiency of the Puritan system. While he is painfully struggling with his conscience, he has no problem with attending church ceremonies and delivering

vehement sermons: “No man, for any considerable period, can wear one face to himself, and another to the multitude, without finally getting bewildered as to which maybe the true” (Bell 216). Yet it can be inferred that the pain of Dimmesdale has its roots in his uncorrupted soul and conscience rather than his Christian and Puritan education and this adds another aspect to the general critical tone of the work towards Puritanism (Mehran 1).

For centuries, the devoted Catholic has made it a part of his creed to cast disgrace upon human wishes and desire which is not framed by society, and the cold and rigid Puritan with less fervor and consequently, with less beauty, had driven all those wishes and desires as the parents of all sin. When Hester and Dimmesdale responded to a natural passion, the Puritan society labelled their passion as “adultery” and punished Hester. Her punishment illustrates the law’s brutality as it makes no connection with the soul.

Hester and Dimmesdale, in committing adultery, have responded to a natural urge and are therefore not guilty in any absolute sense. Dimmesdale responds to his feelings for Hester and as Hester believes she is a widow, she never thinks her relationship with Dimmesdale is adultery. It is society, who by punishing them, has sinned against them. Man is inherently good but social conventions and attitudes which thwart the promptings of nature are not acceptable. The natural good in Hester and Dimmesdale deteriorates because of the sense of sin which society forces upon them.

Hawthorne’s capacity to read and analyze the mind of a character may first be studied with reference to Hester Prynne. When Hester stands on the scaffold facing the multitudes of citizens, she has a “burning blush and yet a haughty smile” (Hawthorne 50) on her face. The burning blush reveals the sense of shame caused by the public exposure, while the haughty smile shows her defiance of society’s moral code. She typifies romantic individualism which repudiates the doctrine of a supernatural ethical absolute. Hester, violating piety and decorum, lived a life of nature and attempted to rationalize her romantic self-indulgence. Since her love for Dimmesdale is the one sincere passion of her life, she obeys it utterly, though a conventional Puritan judgment would have said that she is stepping out of the moral order. Hawthorne particularly shows the futility of Puritan society’s judgment:

> How strange, indeed! Man has marked this woman’s sin by a scarlet letter, which had such potent and disastrous efficacy that no human sympathy could reach her, save it were sinful like herself. God as a direct consequence of the sin which man thus punished had given her a lovely child, whose place was on that same dishonored bosom, to connect her parent for ever with the race and descent of mortals, and to be finally a blessed soul in heaven. (Hawthorne 80)

In Puritan society, religion and law were almost identical and in such a society, going against the grain meant going against the Bible. According to Biblical law, adultery is a serious crime that should be punished with death (Leviticus 20:10). Society has punished Hester by declaring that she will wear throughout her life a scarlet letter “A” on the bosom of her gown. This is the stigma that Hester has to carry always. Puritan leaders declared that they were merciful as the death sentence had not been imposed considering her age and condition. But they failed to

see the everlasting pang of the token of shame that she is going to wear.

But the irony is that the scarlet letter has failed to create the desired impact on Hester. She does not consider her adulterous action to be a serious sin. She does not experience any sense of guilt even after society has pronounced its judgment upon her. She believes in the sanctity of the human heart, her love towards Dimmesdale. "What we did," she says to Dimmesdale in the forest" had consecration of its own. We felt it so; we said so to each other" (Hawthorne, 170). For Hester, the letter "A" does not reveal adultery, it only stands for "Arthur." When she is given the choice to disclose the name of her fellow sinner and get rid of that shameful token, she cries: "Never! It is too deeply branded. Ye cannot take it off. And would that I might endure his agony as well as mine" (Hawthorne 63).

That is her rebellion against society. Society gives her the title of a "sinner" for her love but she accepts her love as her "life-blood." The name of her lover is so deeply engraved in her mind that nobody can take it away from her.

Hester's punishment does not end in the scaffold. Her freedom is completely violated at every step of her life. In all her intercourse with society there is nothing that can make her feel that she belongs to that society. The clergyman paused in the street to address words of advice which brought a crowd around her. She often finds herself as the subject matter of the discourse when she enters a church. When a newcomer comes to the region and looks with inquisitive eyes at the letter "A," she feels the pain of the letter upon her bosom afresh. She never becomes used to the letter. On the contrary, it grows more sensitive with daily torture.

In spite of all the torture and mental agony, Puritan society fails to make her repent for adultery. On the contrary, Hester, through her charity, starts to win the hearts of the common people. At times of general or individual sorrow, she responds warmly and becomes a "Sister of Mercy." She proves herself so helpful to the people of the Puritan society that the letter "A" on her bosom comes to have a different meaning from its original signification. It now seems to stand for "Able."

> She was self-ordained a Sister of Mercy; or, we may rather say, the world's heavy hand had so ordained her when neither the world nor she looked forward to this result. The letter was the symbol of her calling. Such helpfulness was found in her,—so much power to do, and power to sympathize,—that many people refused to interpret the scarlet A by its original signification. They said that it meant Able; so strong was Hester with a woman's strength. (Hawthorne 141)

Puritans in their private lives have denied calling Hester a "sinner" for her adulterous action. They respond to Hester's natural urge as human beings, not merely as Puritans. Slowly, therefore, by meek submission and unselfish kindness she wins back the respect of even the most rigid Puritans. Strong, passionate and richly pagan, Hester submits to Puritan society but never repents. The author says, "The scarlet letter had not done its office" (Hawthorne 145). After seven years she is ready to run away with Dimmesdale. The consequences of the scarlet letter as penance are thus just the reverse of what the Puritan community intended. A sin of

passion now develops into a sin of purpose. Hester is the one who dares trust herself to believe in the possibility of a new morality in the new world. She achieved mental emancipation in spite of having her own human weakness, in spite of the prejudice of Puritan society. In the forest, she even shows the courage and mental strength to support Dimmesdale to draw him to a new life. She believes in her soul and her individuality, no matter what the society demands:

> … you have deeply and sorely repented. Your sin is left behind you, in the days long past. Your present life is not less holy, in very truth, than it seems in people's eyes. Is there no reality in the penitence thus sealed and witnessed by good works? And wherefore should it not bring you peace? (Hawthorne 167)

In the forest, Hester does not bother to throw away the token of shame from her bosom. She could do so because she never believes that the letter 'A' on her bosom is the symbol of her sin. She can light the heart of Dimmesdale with a new hope, a new dream to unite again with her.

The guilt and punishment that Hester Prynne's society imposes on her for her sin is considered to be too much by Hawthorne, and his most emotional criticism of Hester's over-reaching punishment is presented when Hester's donations of high quality clothes to the poor are rebuffed with rudeness and spite: "Hester bestowed all her superfluous means in charity, on wretches less miserable than herself, and who not unfrequently insulted the hand that fed them" (Hawthorne 75).

These harsh initial reactions toward Hester motivates her greatly and serves as an important reminder of the reforms she needs to instill in her society. The impractical, prejudicial, and disrespect towards a person like Hester infuriates Hawthorne, which is evident through the narrator's denunciation of Puritan society's strict, distasteful, absolute, and constant punishment of Hester's personal sin:

> Dames of elevated rank, likewise, whose doors she entered in the way of her occupation, were accustomed to distil drops of bitterness into her heart; sometimes through that alchemy of quiet malice, by which women can concoct a subtle poison from ordinary trifles. (Hawthorne 76)

Hawthorne's focus is not on the innate character of Hester, but more on the societal forces that govern her. The readers have very limited knowledge of Hester's character before she committed adultery. Hawthorne only hints and lets the readers assume about Hester's past. He tells the reader that Hester married Roger Chillingworth without loving him, and he hints that before her marriage Hester was an impulsive young woman who had to be constrained by her loving parents. Her refusal to name her fellow sinner also demonstrates remnants of Hester's partially stubborn character: "'I will not speak!' answered Hester, turning pale as death" (Hawthorne 63).

For Dimmesdale, the reverse is the case. His punishment comes purely from within. Society does not punish him because society does not know of the sin that he has committed. He is

a greater sinner than Hester because besides the sin of adultery, he has committed the sin of concealment or hypocrisy. He is oppressed by the weight of his crime but lacks the courage to make a public confession of his guilt. He lacked the courage seven years before to stand beside Hester and Pearl on the scaffold. During the seven long years his guilt has been secretly gnawing at his breast. He believes that he is an utter pollution. Sometimes he even admits his sin openly. But he admits it in such superfluous and flowery words that again and again he falls into his own trap. People come to accept him as "The saint on earth" (Hawthorne 126). The more people revere him, the more he feels the throb of pain and anguish in his heart. He hallucinates, sometimes seeing a herd of diabolic shapes and sometimes a group of angels. Constantly sacrificing honesty to respectability, Dimmesdale is gradually broken down and brought to the verge of insanity. One night he even mounts the scaffold as an act of expiation.

His repentance emanates from sorrow of sin and grows out of fear of consequence, but we also learn that his enlightened conscience, rising above the dogmas and catechistic norms of those times, teaches him what obligation has gathered around him. He discovers himself as viler than the vilest sinner. But the fear of losing his name and fame in society chains him so tightly that he cannot respond to his natural urge. Puritan society has made him a puppet, a slave to the hollow rules which destroys his individual spirit. He cannot look directly at anybody or even at any inanimate object out of the fear that people can read what is in his heart. To conceal his sin he always keeps his hands over his heart because the acute pain of sin has formed the letter "A" on the flesh of his breast.

However, Dimmesdale is also a character who symbolically shows his rejection of Puritanical codes and becomes the representative of a self-sufficient individual by responding to the true feeling that arises between him and Hester. His rejection of Puritanical codes and the desire to embrace reality is clear when he rejects Hester's offer of escape and instead reveals his true self by approaching the scaffold on Election Day. Dimmesdale's change of mind is the hatred he shows towards Puritanism. This is obvious when he says to Hester on the scaffold: "Thanks be to Him who hath led me hither!" (Hawthorne 220). This shows Dimmesdale's eagerness to reveal the truth and the reality of his innermost powerful feelings. As a matter of fact, it has been a long time since Dimmesdale had wanted to stand against the Puritanical codes and defy man-made laws: "I should long ago have thrown off these garments of mock holiness, and have shown myself to mankind as they will see me at the judgment-seat" (Hawthorne 192).

Another example of the conflict between the individual and society is to be found in the delineation of Pearl. Pearl has been victimized by the extreme code of Puritan society. She is not directly involved in adultery but society treats her as its product. Her own self is very trivial to society. Without committing any crime she has to suffer for her parents' adultery. Society does not see her apart from her parents' crime. As a result some kinds of abnormality grow within her. She is not amenable to any rules and disciplines. She is an impatient, wayward, and rebellious child. There is something perverse in her character which alienates her from other children. Hawthorne portrays her character as a "born outcast of the infantile world".

> In giving her existence, a great law had been broken; and the result was a being, whose elements were perhaps beautiful and brilliant, but all in disorder; or with an order peculiar to themselves, amidst which the point of variety and arrangement was difficult or impossible to be discovered. (Hawthorne 81)

In this novel Pearl acts as an unconscious agent of Puritan society. She keeps her mother's torture fresh through her childlike questions and games. She never lets her mother forget her adulterous past. Hawthorne shows Pearl's treatment of her mother as a representative of Puritan society through Hester's speech: "She is my happiness!— she is my torture, none the less! Pearl keeps me here in life! Pearl punishes me too!"(Hawthorne 108).

Pearl first questions the minister's habit of keeping his hand on his heart. She also notices the relationship between her mother's shameful token and the minister's habit. Hawthorne creates Pearl as society's weapon to keep her parents' suffering everlasting. Pearl pressurizes her father to confess his guilt several times and to give her recognition as a daughter which keeps Dimmesdale's tortured conscience trembling: "Doth he love us? Will he go back with us, hand in hand, we three together, into the town?" (Hawthorne 185). Each time with a shattered voice Dimmesdale refuses to keep his promise.

Pearl's attitude towards her mother is always a strange mixture of love and torture:

> … by a kind of necessity that always impelled the child to alloy whatever comfort she might chance to give with a throb of anguish—Pearl put up her mouth, and kissed the scarlet letter too.
> "That was not kind!" said Hester. "When thou hast shown me a little love, thou mockest me!" (Hawthorne 185)

Like her parents, Pearl also wants her identity in society as an individual and not just as an outcome of adulterous action. She even denies accepting herself as an embodiment of the shameful symbolic letter "A". In the forest she identifies herself as an independent being, apart from her mother's sin:

> … the sunshine does not love you. It runs away and hides itself, because it is afraid of something on your bosom. Now, see! There it is, playing, a good way off. Stand you here, and let me run and catch it. I am but a child. It will not flee from me; for I wear nothing on my bosom yet. (Hawthorne 160)

In the chapter "The New England Holiday," Pearl reacts when she finds that the old jailor denies her individuality by associating her with letter "A": "'He should not nod and smile at me, for all that,—the black, grim, ugly-eyed old man!' said Pearl. 'He may nod at thee if he will; for thou art clad in gray, and wearest the scarlet letter'" (Hawthorne 199).

Throughout the novel, Pearl wants to make her own identity regardless of her parents. She only accepts Dimmesdale as her father at the end of the novel when he discloses the truth about her birth. She never accepts her existence only as a mere outcome of adulterous action which is what society wants. Rather, at the end of the novel we see her as an independent individual living a happy life.

Throughout the novel we see that Hawthorne is very sympathetic towards Hester, Arthur and Pearl. He believes that if Hester has sinned, she has done so as an affirmation of life. Her sin is the source of her life; she stands for those rights of personality that society is inclined to trample upon. The conflict in the novel is central because it is total. Hester Prynne has been wounded by an unfriendly world, but the society facing her is invested by Hawthorne with assurance and authority. Its opposition is defensible and even valid.

Puritan society, trying its level best to make its members conform, has failed. At the end of the novel Arthur Dimmesdale shows the courage of throwing away the garment of mock holiness. He does not flee with Hester to another region to live a comfortable life. On the contrary, he earns his mental freedom by paying with his own life. He can free himself from the iron grip of Puritan society. Pearl also makes herself free from the token of shame. The moment her father confesses his relation with Hester, she gets her new identity. She eventually finds a home for herself. As for Hester, she finds her real life in New England. She assures other women who are wounded, wasted or wronged by society:

> She assured them, too, of her firm belief, that, at some brighter period, when the world should have grown ripe for it, in Heaven's own time, a new truth would be revealed, in order to establish the whole relation between man and woman on a surer ground of mutual happiness. (Hawthorne 227)

At the end, we see that the characters who are the victims of society do penitence in their own way, not according to social prescription. They are obligated to their own souls and refuse to be dictated by the prevailing social values and dogmas.

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Text and Context: Ginsberg along the Jessore Road in 1971

A. B. M. Monirul Huq
Assistant Professor of English Discipline, Khulna University

Md. Firoz Mahmud Ahsan
Assistant Professor of English Discipline, Khulna University

Abstract
The poor living conditions of the internally displaced people of Bangladesh at the Indian refugee camps during the months of the war of liberation in 1971 struck a deep chord with the philanthropic western minds, a handful of whom came in person to visit these camps. One of these people was the poet Allen Ginsberg, who, unlike a typical social worker, felt compelled within to address the global consciousness in an idiosyncratic way. Ginsberg's "September on Jessore Road" was recited and sung by the poet himself in the tradition of the blues; but it counts more for its detailed account of the shocking ailment of the scared mob haunted by the atrocities of the Pakistani army. This paper is intent on assaying how the backdrop of the war-ridden Bangladesh affected Ginsberg's poetic mind, resulting in a text dipped in a humanitarian appeal, which potently sketches the images of the sufferings of the distressed evacuees.

The emotional space traversed across the body of the poem "September on Jessore Road" (henceforth "Jessore Road") is hardwired into the misery of a nation in feud that coupled with Allen Ginsberg's personal experiences. Depicting the plight of the refugees and the heartfelt compassion of an American observer, this lyric poem has, in fact, become a historical document of the liberation war of Bangladesh. Allen Ginsberg, a precursor of the controversial beat generation poets, at the time of composing the poem, was already famous for his "Howl" (1956), where he bemoaned the suffering of the best minds of his generation. Coming across a host of refugee camps he visited in 1971, the poet tried to gauge the extent of suffering the ailing refugees had to go through. This renewed understanding of human affliction combined with an unceasing protest against the indifferent authorities and institutions reverberates in the picturesque verses of the poem.

The nine month-long liberation war of Bangladesh is consequent upon the political collapse caused by the studied procrastination of the then West Pakistan government. President Yahya Khan dallied in handing over the power to Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman who in the general election of 1970 got the mandate to rule the then East Pakistan. A series of closed door meetings followed and resulted in a betrayal by the West Pakistan authority. Consequently, in the famous March 7 speech Bangabandhu declared a total shutdown while laying out a plan for an imminent war of independence to form a new nation: Bangladesh. On the other hand, as part of the plan to subdue the civil unrest and to suppress the rebellion, Yahya initiated Operation Searchlight in the dead of night on March 25. He had Bangabandhu arrested and deported

to West Pakistan for incarceration. However, before the arrest, Bangabandhu declared the independence of Bangladesh in a brief radio message urging his fellow countrymen to resist Pakistani atrocity: "This may be my last message, from today Bangladesh is independent. I call upon the people of Bangladesh wherever you might be and with whatever you have, to resist the army of occupation to the last" (Rahman 1). A provisional government, formed in Mujibnagar on April 10, 1971, was led by the Vice President (Acting President in absence of Bangabandhu) Syed Nazrul Islam. During the nine months of war until victory, Bangladesh experienced one of the most horrific genocides executed by the Pakistani army, one of the many consequences of which was a large scale immigration from Bangladesh to India.

September 1971. Two different episodes of history ran parallel. The first episode began with the brutality of the Pakistani army. Operation Searchlight set the tone of the impending onslaught on the people of Bangladesh. Starting from Dhaka, the effect of this crackdown was felt quickly in other parts of the country as the Army advanced into the more remote corners with one agenda: to terrorize the masses by butchering as many as they could, irrespective of religion and caste. The result was a nearly uncountable number of people belonging to every sect and class swarming towards India for safe shelter. This was the largest migration of refugees in the latter half of the twentieth century (Grbac *McGill Blogs*). According to the UNHCR (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees), about ten million Bangladeshis crossed the border and sought refuge at the 825 Indian refugee camps located at different places. West Bengal alone had to host over seven million refugees occupying schools, open fields, parks, streets, deserted buildings, footpaths, and any other available place (Rahman 560-572).

Many of the refugees walked long distances of up to 150 miles to be on the other side of the border. Those who could, managed to travel along the usual routes, but those who could not, made a detour along the roads as the borders were sealed by the Pakistani army; they took unusual paths through jungles, rivers, and swamps along the 1300-mile-long border with India. On some occasions, around 50,000 refugees came to different camps in a single day (Singh 462). Due to starvation or sickness or fatal wounds caused during the manhunt by the Pakistanis, a lot of them could not survive the journey. Those who managed to arrive at the camps started vomiting just after finishing their first meal. Ration cards were issued to the refugees with insufficient and irregular supply of relief. Sometimes it was only once a week the ration was distributed, and the refugees had to save their sanction for the next days by eating just one meal a day. Scarcity of proper sanitation system at these camps threatened the minimum healthcare facilities with the increasing risks of cholera epidemic. Medication was also inadequate with only a few physicians and health workers available, though vaccination was a priority to prevent the threat of cholera. These refugees had to leave their ancestral homes behind along with all their belongings, and then at the camps they had to live on the charity of relief workers and volunteers. The local government of the province of West Bengal together with the authorization of the Indian central government tried to manage the situation, which was in effect far beyond its capacity. To avoid an imminent disaster, the Indian government asked international communities to come forward with aid (Singh 463-64).

In his memoir, *Muktijuddhe Bideshi Bondhura* (The Foreign Comrades in the War of Liberation), Fakir Alamgir records the significance of the historical Jessore Road which connects West Bengal's Kolkata (previously Calcutta) to Bangladesh's Jessore, as the most used land route between the two Bengals before the partition in 1947. With the emergence of India and Pakistan and because of the constant political turmoil between the two nations, the road gradually lost its importance as the number of travelers decreased, following which trade also reduced substantially. Eventually, the border along the Jessore Road became almost a deserted highway (186). However, the same highway became the hub of the escape routes for the terrified refugees throughout the riotous days of 1971. "During the war of 1971," says Shalil Tripathi, "it was one of the lifelines that connected refugees from East Pakistan, fleeing war and massacre, to India" (Caravan Magazine.in). The significance of Jessore Road in the minds of people as a guaranteed thoroughfare to life during the liberation war of Bangladesh as well as its symbolic association to humanity in crises, therefore gains momentum and warrants proper attention.

The second episode of this history marks the time when the Lila Company arranged a charity show for Bangladesh titled *People's Shadhana*. Lila Company comprised Rufus Collins, Axel Hyppolite, Leo Treviglio, Diana Van Tosh, Alexander Vanderlinden, and Olivier Boelen. It was an apolitical faction of the famous Living Theatre in New York. They came to India a year before to reaffirm their spirituality, with a quest for setting up a spiritual theater. *People's Shadhana* was their Indian premiere. Olivier Boelen, the producer of the charity show, tried his best to make the show a success, inviting all those concerned with the cause of Bangladesh (Perry, *Rolling Stone*). Being of the Beat generation, Allen Ginsberg shared familiar apolitical and nonconformist views of the Lila troupe, and was one of them, concerned about the distress of Bangladeshi people, especially the refugees living at the Indian camps. Ginsberg's previous visit to India in 1961 was his spiritual quest when he was influenced by a group of young Bengali artists, a few of the *Krittibas*[1] poets belonging to the literary movement called Hungry Generation. It was the time when he befriended Sunil Gangopadhyay, a famous poet and novelist in Bangla literature (Deborah Baker). Unlike the previous tour in India which lasted about two years, this time the poet came here only for two weeks with an invitation from the Lila Company along with his own inquisitiveness to observe the real condition of the refugees.

A precursor and spokesman of the radical American generation called the Beat, Ginsberg himself was an antiestablishment and antimilitary voice of his own time. As was the case during the late 40s and early 50s at the time of emergence of the Beat generation, the fabric of the American social system, as an impact of World War II, was torn apart. This period in American history was a time of subcultures created by junkies, bikers, gays, African-Americans and other immigrants, juvenile delinquents, and so on, who predominantly lived in the poor neighborhoods and ghettos. Frustrated and exhausted with the postwar pro-capitalist society, the Beats created a new lifestyle rejecting mainstream American culture. They were largely fascinated by the restless energy of the underworld, and by "[e]xperimenting with drugs, crimes, sex and jazz, the Beats tried to shatter every taboo that the straight world held" (Russell 10). Among the African-American jazz circles, the word "beat" meant broke

or exhausted, but for intellects like Jack Kerouac, William S. Burroughs and Ginsberg, "beat" meant both exhaustion and empowerment. "If something was beat", says Jamie Russell, "it wasn't simply downtrodden by life in postwar America, it also rejected the oppressive world around it, transforming exhaustion into defiance and reaching towards religious transformation ('beatitude')" (11).

The publication of *Howl and Other Poems* (1956), illustrating the stinging frustration of his generation, garnered immediate response from readers and set the stage for the emergence of an iconoclastic voice in American poetry. Ginsberg, about the context of "Howl", writes, "[I]n publishing 'Howl', I was curious to leave behind after my generation an emotional time bomb that would continue exploding in US consciousness in case our military-industrial-nationalist complex solidified into a repressive police bureaucracy" (qtd. in Charters, *Modern American Poetry*). The event of the San Francisco police seizing the remaining copies of the book followed by the famous obscenity trial officially acknowledged the influence of the poet over the contemporary readers. By 1961, when Ginsberg came to India for the first time, he was already a much-talked-about literary figure torn apart by his personal as well as emotional crises. The quest for a spiritual guidance is evident in his two-year stay in India and frequent visits to temples and shrines across the country during that time.

Ginsberg, as a poet, was much indebted to William Blake and to the hallucination that Blake was reading him one of his (Blake's) poems followed by a vision about "the unity of the universe and his place in it" (Russell 35). A disturbing and threatening feature in his poetic vision is the existence of the enemy figure Moloch who synonymously stands for capitalism and military bureaucracy destroying the soul and forcing the "angel" (true human essence) to find new worlds to reside in. Moloch, according to Allen Grossman "is quite simply the image of the objective world of which the economic culture of America is the demiurgic creator" (107). In "Howl" the poet repeatedly mentions this name and attributes to it all the disasters, both psychic and social. Nonetheless, he concurrently searches for inspiration to fight against it. In addition, the memories of the holocaust influence Ginsberg's poetry to some extent. Though the Second World War did not take place on American soil, and though the poet was too young to experience it as either a soldier or a civilian, Grossman thinks that his Jewish ancestry, bespeaking of a longstanding history of overthrow, loss, and extinction, anticipates the poet to be a potential figure to interpret the horror of the holocaust. But in his poetry, he turns his experience of the holocaust into a collective memory as it is "[t]he tendency of recent American poetry to represent the terrors of history in terms of purely mental agony is almost universal" (Grossman 108).

On September 9, 1971, Allen Ginsberg, accompanied by Sunil Gangopadhyay and John Giorno[2] (fellow American poet and performance artist), travelled along the Jessore Road and came to the border town of Bongaon. The refugee camp of Bongaon was comparatively larger and well-kept as the foreign delegates used to frequent it to have an overall perception of the distress of these unfortunate people. Yet, the rundown camp and its proximity disturbed the poetic mind of Ginsberg. The camp opened at the beginning of April when the influx had just begun, and closed by the end of July, with about 50000 people living there. Ginsberg was surrounded by

people of different ages—each of them with a hollow gape and an anticipatory look. Deborah Baker, in *A Blue Hand: Allen Ginsberg and the Beats in India*, describes Ginsberg's experience in the refugee camp:

> As they went along, Ginsberg recited his immediate impressions into a tape recorder: "Straw shops by the roadside waiting for food all day. Smells of shit and food and bidis. Heavy rain, cholera epidemic. A man standing on the road with a many-pronged spear. Tensions between poor residents and refugees. 'You are behaving like a lord,' the refugees complain to the poor villagers. 'The refugees are shitting on our lawns,' the residents complain." (qtd. in Raghavan 146)

The poet along with the Lila troupe and Charles Perry, former editor of the *Rolling Stone* magazine, after the second day's show, visited another adjoining, even larger, camp hosting about 175,000 refugees. Perry reports on October 28, 1971:

> It seems strange, until you see these people, that cholera, which is just a violent form of dysentery, could be a deadly plague. They are just inches from malnutrition. If their digestion is strained, they have no food reserves in their body. … We looked at each other helplessly. There was nothing more to say. I didn't even have any rupees to give. … A drop in this bucket of 175,000 people. … Ginsberg had disappeared in the depths of the camp with his tape recorder and lost track of the time. The rest of the party waited in the bus for an hour and finally left him to catch a taxi back to town. (*Rolling Stone*)

It seems that the poet drowned in the mass of these helpless faces and was seeking some sort of desperate measures for them. What the poet was up to was known to the world only after he had returned to his country. He wrote "Jessore Road" between November 14-16, 1971, and the poem was published in the *New York Times* in November and December 1971 consecutively. Ashok Shahane[3] published the poem in poster format and sold it in India to raise funds for the refugees. The price of the poster was "[a]s much as you can willingly part with proceeds to go to rehabilitation of Bangladeshi refugees" (Zecchini 47). The poet himself recited the poem at a poetry recitation program at St. George Church in New York. The legendary pop star Bob Dylan, a close friend of Ginsberg's, later gave it a musical form. In 1973 the poem was republished in his book *The Fall of America* under the section named "Bixby Canyon to Jessore Road." The poem was written in thirty eight stanzas, each of which comprised four rhymed lines. In his characteristic style Ginsberg vividly described his personal experience at the refugee camps: the convoy of terrified refugees walking towards Kolkata, the filthy and moribund condition of the camps, weeping mothers with their infants dying of malnutrition and cholera, and the refugees' crying plea for food:

> Millions of babies watching the skies
> Bellies swollen, with big round eyes
> On Jessore Road—long bamboo huts
> No place to shit but sand channel ruts

Millions of fathers in rain
Millions of mothers in pain
Millions of brothers in woe
Millions of sisters nowhere to go

One Million aunts are dying for bread
One Million uncles lamenting the dead
Grandfather millions homeless and sad
Grandmother millions silently mad

Millions of daughters walk in the mud
Millions of children wash in the flood
A Million girls vomit & groan
Millions of families hopeless alone

Millions of souls nineteenseventyone
homeless on Jessore road under grey sun
A million are dead, the million who can
Walk toward Calcutta from East Pakistan (1-20)

"Millions," the recurring catchword of the poem with its hyperbolic undertone, strikes a reader with implications, blended with the poet's memory of the holocaust—the systematic annihilation of about six million Jews at Hitler's command during the Second World War; to his horror Ginsberg confronts innumerable refugees and their life-in-death suffering, agitating his inner self to relive the trauma of the holocaust. When he was strolling inside the refugee camps, the wretched evacuees of Bangladesh described to the poet not only their miseries but also the massacre and the onslaught of the vindictive Pakistani army from whom they somehow saved their skins, but lost their dear ones. The poet came to know about many such instances that stirred his compassion for those poor souls, inciting his anger, which was harbored against his own country's idleness during such cataclysm. In the poem, Ginsberg hones his apoplectic attack to the apathy of his own country in such crisis; it is because rather than advancing towards the aid of the refugees, the USA, at that time, was more interested in the Vietnam War. American involvement in the Vietnam War dearly cost the country, affecting lives of a large number of soldiers and their families, and Ginsberg was one of the poets and writers who heavily protested this. Ideologically, as a Beat, he was against all sorts of military action resulting in death and disaster. Therefore, the spatiotemporal image of Moloch in "Howl" returns in this poem in another oppressive form:

Where are the helicopters of U.S. AID?
Smuggling dope in Bangkok's green shade.
Where is America's Air Force of Light?
Bombing North Laos all day and all night? (89-92)

In his book *American Scream: Allen Ginsberg's* Howl *and the Making of the Beat Generation*, Jonah Raskin notes Ginsberg's disgust given full vent to the backwash of the Second World War,

especially the atomic explosion in Japan and the consecutive Cold War: "… Ginsberg turned the atom bomb into an all-inclusive metaphor. Everywhere he looked he saw apocalypse and atomization. Everything had been blown up" (Raskin XIV). His attack on America's intrusive disposition to warfare across the globe is apparent in this poem as well. After taking the US authority to task, he poses a series of questions to give them a wake-up call while things are falling apart along the Jessore Road. The poet actually prods the consciousness of his own nation alongside the rest of the world. He urges everyone to play one's role in this moment of crisis by supporting Bangladesh and the Bangladeshi refugees:

> Ring O ye tongues of the world for their woe
> Ring out ye voices for Love we don't know
> Ring out ye bells of electrical pain
> Ring in the conscious of America brain (105-108)

Ginsberg does not hesitate to criticize the lavish lifestyle of his fellow Americans when in West Bengal the hungry refugees are yelling in pain, uncertain if they would survive the next day or not. Even the poet does not spare himself from this humanitarian responsibility. He wonders how he may continue his own aspiration and physical demand when humanity in this part of the world groans in such pain:

> Is this what I did to myself in the past?
> What shall I do Sunil Poet I asked?
> Move on and leave them without any coins?
> What should I care for the love of my loins?
>
> What should we care for our cities and cars?
> What shall we buy with our Food Stamps on Mars?
> How many millions sit down in New York
> & sup this night's table on bone & roast pork? (117-124)

Ginsberg's thought on the evilness of capitalism is reiterated here. The postwar frustration of the disparity in American society existed, as he discovered later, almost everywhere he travelled; it made him feel more akin to the downtrodden humanity. In an interview he enlightens his readers with the philosophy of their movement: the Beats "got the bottom-up vision of society" and "saw wealth and power from the point of view of down-and-out people on the street. That's what the Beat Generation was about—being down-and-out, and about having a sense of beatitude, too" (Raskin XIV).

Ginsberg's composition of "Jessore Road" bears on the familiar features of his early poems like "Howl," "Kaddish," "Sunflower Sutra," etc. Like those earlier poems, this one distils the poet's affliction caused by the suffering refugees into meaty resentment. Unlike those poems, "Jessore Road" is written in quatrain, rhyming aabb, which reminds one of Blake's *Songs of Innocence and Experience*. It, in essence, is a lyric poem, and its musical notes are attached in separate pages starting with the tempo "Rubato"—a rhythmic manipulation where a performer stretches as well as compacts certain beats, measures and phrases according to her/

his discretion—commonly used in jazz (britannica.com). Evidently, the poet wanted the poem to be read aloud and to be sung, so that the intensity of passion and emotional vicissitude become more perceptible. Ginsberg acknowledges the influence of Bob Dylan on his poetic composition, because the legendary singer advised him to imitate noticeable song form that ensures "artistic & spiritual transmission" in poetry (XVII). In his apologia of the book on his selected poems, Ginsberg expresses his gratitude both to Dylan and Blake: ''September on Jessore Road' written for Dylan, combines naturalistic detail with Blakean rhymes" (XVIII). His " naturalistic detail" is an imperative propelling the audience into a tortuous visualization of suffering and pain as montaged in various stanzas.

Eminent Bangladeshi poet Nirmalendu Goon, in his book *Ginsberg Er Shonge* (With Ginsberg), records his memories with Ginsberg. To Goon, it was Ginsberg who rose to every crisis of the world, thus making him a poet of universal magnitude, and for that matter, Goon claims that a poem like "Jessore Road" was waiting to be wielded in his nifty hands:

> I wonder how an American poet could capture with such a wonderful affection in an indelible classical illustration an ignored purview of our independence. … When I read the poem I feel, as always, that I am watching the best art film of all time. Even after penetrating twenty years of concealment, in front of me the days of my refugee life becomes alive again. (Our translation; 14)

According to Goon, it was Ginsberg, a true Beat who had his own moral and spiritual firmness to defy the US authority and stand beside the people of Bangladesh. In his writing Goon reproaches Bangladesh as a nation failing to pay tribute to this true friend. Ginsberg died in 1997. However, in 2012, Bangladesh paid homage to seventy five foreign citizens and institutions for their contributions during the war of independence in 1971, and Allen Ginsberg was one of them (*The Daily Star.net*).

After forty four years of the independence of Bangladesh and of the publication of "Jessore Road," a new generation of readers now read the poem with renewed curiosity and try to comprehend the greatness of an American poet who felt so dearly for their wretched ancestors in the days of 1971. Moreover, a musical rendition of the great poem in Bangla was brought out in 2005 by the famous Bengali singer Moushumi Bhoumik, and her group Parapar, reiterating its enduring plea to the contemporary readers (*My Space.com*). The poem has also been included in the American Poetry courses of several English Department syllabi in Bangladesh. His influence as a precursor of the Beat movement in American literature is undeniable; however, his fame in Bangladesh to a great extent is vested in his sympathy for the Bangladeshi refugees as evinced in "Jessore Road."

Notes

1. *Krittibas* was in the leading role of the little magazine movement in Kolkata in the 1950s and the 1960s. It brought out poetry by the young and experimental poets, and was first published in 1953 edited by Ananda Bagchi, Dipak Mazumdar and Sunil Gangopadhyay, though, later, Gangopadhyay became the sole editor.

2. John Giorno went to seek guidance from Ginsberg about spiritual resurgence, and the latter

suggested him to go to India and look for it there. Giorno came to India in 1971 and became one of the first Western students of Tibetan Buddhism.

3. Ashok Shahane, in the 1960s, led the little magazine movement in Marathi. Shahane was one of the so-called "starving poets" who were befriended by Ginsberg during the latter's stay in Bombay in 1961.

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(Re)tracing Resistance from a Culture of Silence: An Alternate Reading of the 'Jele' (fishing) Community

Khandakar Ashraful Islam
PhD Research Scholar in English, Osmania University, Hyderabad, India

Abstract
Bengal—a land of rivers and natural resources—has been the abode of the "jele" community (fishermen) for centuries. But hardly have we come across the life of the fishermen in Bengali literature before Manik Bandopadhyay and Adwaita Mallabarman. In fact, these two noteworthy novelists, in their novels, The Boatman of the Padma *and* A River Called Titash, *poignantly depict the poverty, hunger, suffering, and exploitation of the fishermen. However, both novelists portray this community as passive victims of all socio-economic exploitations and nowhere in their narratives is there any trace of resistance from the side of the afflicted. Therefore, in this paper, focusing on Harishankar Jaladas's* Sons of the Sea *I will re-read the novels of Bandhopadhyay and Mallabarman in search of the forces that dissuaded this community from fighting back. Moreover, shedding light on the life of this subaltern group, in* Sons of the Sea*, I will attempt to trace the root of resistance so that breaking the age old culture of silence may create a new future for them.*

I.

It is necessary that the weakness of the powerless is transformed into a force capable of announcing justice.

–Paulo Freire

The Jele, or fishermen, generally known as Koi-borto, divided into castes like Malo, Rajbongshai, Jaladas in Bangladesh, can also be viewed as religious outcasts, socially marginalized, and an economically exploited people. Being underprivileged and illiterate, they have "no history and cannot speak," (Spivak 83); therefore, the outcry of their agony remains unheard and unnoticed. In fact, it is only in the era of "Kallol,"—the avant-garde of Bengali literature—when the Bengali litterateurs started to focus on themes regarding the life of the common people, like class exploitation, poverty, and deprivation that their plight was noted. In an oblique way, this era has "moved away from Rabindranath … into the worlds of the lower middle classes … into the neighborhoods of those rejected and deceived" (qtd. in Chakrabarty 157). In this era of transition, Manik Bandopadhyay and Adwaita Mallabarman, in their realistic novels, projected the lives of the "marginal people, such as boatmen and fishermen of the riverine delta of Bengal … who were earlier excluded as subjects in Bengali novels" (Biswas 15). Between the two, the name of Manik Bandopadhyay is noteworthy because, for the first time in Bengali literature, he sheds light on the life of the people of such a class—fishermen—who had hardly been presented earlier. In his famous novel *The Boatman of the Padma* (*Padma Nadir Majhi* 1936), he brings the nexus of poverty, hunger, suffering, deprivation, and

helplessness of the fishing community into visibility. It is a pioneer work as well as a landmark for the realistic novel in Bengali literature. After a long pause of two decades in 1956, Adwaita Mallabarman—a man of this very community— portrayed the diversified grandeur of struggle and hardship of the fishing community living along the river Titash. His novel *A River Called Titash* (*Titash Ekti Nadir Naam* 1956) depicts the life of the fishermen in such a way that every socioeconomic and cultural aspect of this community is focused upon. It essentially stands as a microcosm of the life of the fishermen. In fact, in this novel "with an insider's insight he illuminates the soul of the community and its culture—presumably for us, outsiders to the Malo fisherfolk" (Bardhan 1-2). Since 1936—when *The Boatmen of the Padma* was first published—to the present, with the passage of such a long time, significant changes have come to the socioeconomic and political strata of this country and it may be assumed that the same has happened for the fishermen. Therefore, in this paper, focusing on Hrishankar Jaladas's *Sons of the Sea* (*Jalaputra* 2008), I would like to re-evaluate the life of the fishermen from Bandopadhyay's depiction to Jaladas's, to explore whether, with the passage of nearly six decades (1936-2008), any significant change has come to the socio-economic life of the fishermen or are they still entrapped in the same clutch of poverty and the very mechanism of exploitation as depicted in the earlier novels. Moreover, I will examine the causes constituting a negative consciousness whereby these fishermen tolerate all injustice in silence. I will also attempt to trace the apparatuses of resistance that may give them the impetus to fight back.

II.

In his noteworthy work *Prison Notebooks*, written between 1929 and 1935, where Gramsci for the first time used the word "subaltern," he only had in mind "the workers and peasants who were oppressed and discriminated by the leader of the National Fascist Party, Benito Mussolini and his agents"(Louai 5). Later in *Notebook 25* entitled "On the Margins of History (The History of Subaltern Social Groups)," Gramsci identifies, "slaves, peasants, religious groups, women, different races, and the proletariat as subaltern social groups" (Green 2) which actually supports the claim to think of the poverty-stricken, afflicted and marginalized fishing community of Bangladesh—who lives miserably beside the rivers and shores of the Bay of Bengal—as subaltern. Being victims of systematic marginalization the hapless fishing community of Bangladesh has no voice; therefore, they "cannot speak" (Spivak 104). Moreover, the historiographic "representation" of the subaltern class is problematic because, "[i]t is easy to blur the truth with a simple linguistic trick" (Barghouthi 177). In her seminal essay "Can the Subaltern Speak?" criticizing the failure of Foucault and Deleuze to "acknowledge how subaltern critique must be presented within the privileged structures of Western epistemology" (Bignall 21), Spivak, in fact, advocates the need of a dual dimension of "representation": "representation as 'speaking for'… and representation as 're-presentation' (Spivak 70). Taking both of the modes of "representation" into account, in this paper I will review the novels of Bandhopadhyay, Mallabarman, and Jaladas and attempt to portray the fishing community of Bengal from these two representative angles.

Unlike Bandhopadhyay and Mallabarman, Jaladas, in his award winning novel *Sons of the Sea*, brings forth the life of the fishermen whose "life and living … are tied to the sea" (*SS* 13).

Harishankar Jaladas—a member of the fishing (jele) community—taking the life of the marginalized as the inspiration for his writing, in his novel, not only brings forth a distinct insight of the fishing community but also tells an unknown story that we had never come across. These fishermen live in the southern belt of the Bay of Bengal, and are constantly fighting with the forces of nature. In other words, "[t]heir survival depends on the whims of the sea" (*SS* 13). Even in the midst of storms, the fishermen dare to venture into the turbulent sea as their spirits yield to abject poverty. In reality, their life is filled with strange dichotomies. They have "festering sores of deprivation on their faces," (*SS* 10) and in their looks there is helplessness. Their habitats bear the testimony of "poverty of hundreds of centuries" (*SS* 10). They are exploited both in the hands of nature and by the nature of man. Their risk and toil in the sea have no effect on the abject poverty they live in; indeed, "the fishermen are horribly poor and uneducated and most of them live from hand to mouth" (Billah x). The extract from Bandopadhyay's *The Boatmen of the Padma* connects the sea fishermen to the plight of the fishermen who lived by the gigantic Padma in the mid-twentieth century:

> [t]he cries of babies in the fishermen's huts never stopped … On the one hand the Brahmans and the lesser gentlemen kept them pushed back; on the other the destructive forces of Nature were determined to annihilate them; rain water seeped in to their huts and their bones tingled in the biting cold. Diseases came and so did bereavement … here the reception of birth was sullen, non-celebratory and cheerless. Here the flavor of life consisted nearly in the satisfaction of hunger and thirst. (13)

Actually, it was useless to look for God here. God does not even listen to their outcry. They are God-forsaken. While depiction of the fishermen of the Padma is heartrending, in *A River Called Titash,* at first, we are introduced to a self-sufficient fishing community with economic stability and vibrant culture. But the gradual silting of the river (Titash) exposes the fishermen to the exploitation of the moneylenders and landowners and the ensuing "social splintering brought alienation from their own culture" (Bardhan 2). Eventually, the communities of fishermen "lose their livelihood and gradually fall prey to starvation" (Biswas 30). The novel ends with the death of both the river (Titash) and its inhabitants. From the discussion, it is apparent that the lives of the fishermen are unaltered by any change either socio-economic or political and the stroke of poverty is always the same.

In *Sons of the Sea*, we see, for their livelihood the fishermen work as gaur[1], paunna[2] on other men's boats and some make their living by selling fish from door to door. From a Marxist point of view, although we can classify the contemporary socio-economic picture between "the haves and the have nots," (Tyson 54) in fact, from time immemorial a very similar exploiting class stratification is found existing in the community of the fishermen. Hence, in Jaladas's *Sons of the Sea,* we are introduced to the "Bahaddars"—the solvent and the powerful fishermen—who have "boat, nets and hands to work for them" (*SS* 14). Even when there is more demand for labor they can hire gaurs from different villages. During fishing the gaurs, "risking life in rain, storm and thunder … toil in the tumultuous sea but the bahaddars pocket the profit" (*SS* 14). Thus, being the apparatuses of the hegemonic power structure the bahaddars exploit

the labor of the other fishermen. This exploitive treatment of the bahaddars resembles the heartrending events of "Russian serf labour, American slave labour, Irish agricultural labour and the metropolitan labour in London trades" (Linebaugh 374). Although apparently the bahaddars directly exploit the other fishermen, actually, like the Bourgeois—who "control the world's natural, economic, and human resources" (Tyson 54)—the dadondars (moneylenders) are the lord of this fishing community. In the monsoon, to be prepared for fishing and "to buy necessary articles" (*SS* 51) the poor fishermen feel the dire need to borrow money on any condition from the moneylenders and thus they are doubly exploited both by the bahaddars and the dadondars. In *Sons of the Sea*, Jaladas portrays the fishermen who borrow money on two conditions: either they have to "pay ten percent per month on the money [they] took or they … have to sell all the fish they caught at the fixed price by the dadonder" (*SS* 51). In fact, both of the conditions secure the lion's share of profit for the dadonders and the fishermen accept silently what they get. Like the monopoly of the capitalists, in this novel, Shukkur and Sashibhushan—men of two different religions but the same in exploiting the poor—maintain the hegemony of advancing money (dadon). Unfortunately, the fishermen have no other alternative to this hegemonic exploitation because "[i]f other moneylenders tried to lend money to the fishermen on softer terms, they had to retreat in the end because of the wiles of Shukkur and Sashibhushan" (51). Moreover, the advance money is an irony of fate causing the borrower to become a "debtor for generations" (51). In reality, for the fishermen the clutch of exploitation never comes to an end. In both Bandopadhyay's and Mallabarman's depiction we see:

> [t]he class of moneylenders who own the boats and nets exert twin pressure on the fishermen. While on one hand the moneylenders own fishermen's labor power (or time) for a definite money value; on the other hand they take away the fishermen's means of subsistence (for the fishermen no longer produce for themselves). Thus the river centric environment no longer remains the passive backdrop but emerges as a vibrant entity playing a significant role in the struggle for survival. (Biswas 27)

But, in this "struggle for survival," both novelists depict the Malo folk as a passive victim of the natural forces as well as the evil forces of human nature. Moreover, in their narratives, there is no substantial form of collective resistance from the side of the afflicted. Therefore, in the context of the fishing community, focusing on *Sons of the Sea,* I will look for the answers to "[w]hy don't the economically oppressed fight back? And what keeps the lower classes 'in their place' and at the mercy of the wealthy?" (Tyson 56).

III.

Karl Marx, in the Preface of "A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy," asserts that "[it] is not the consciousness of men that determines their being, but, on the contrary, their social being determines their consciousness" (2). The fishermen of Bengal being victims of poverty, hunger, exploitation, deprivation of human rights develop a sense of fatalistic consciousness in them, and "silently put up with the cruelty and injustice believing it was ordained by fate" (*SS* 133). In *The Boatmen of the Padma*, Bandopadhyay's depiction of

Kuber[3] stands as a metaphor for the passivity of the fishermen. Kuber's reluctance to revolt against the false accusations and passivity to stand against "the cruel nexus of corruption and exploitation at the hands of the social elites," (Biswas 29) expose the reality of how creating a suppressed self-image the people of this community live in a "culture of silence."[4]

Moreover, in the context of the subcontinental countries especially Bangladesh, the fishermen usually belong to the lower caste Hindu sect. They are the outsiders of the fourfold Hindu Varna system—better known as the Untouchables—sometimes called Dom. Both the upper caste Hindus and the Muslims treat them brutally. Deliberately, the habitat of the fishermen is also kept "miles away from the village of the gentry" (*SS* 10). In *Sons of the Sea,* the insignificant social position of the fishermen becomes visible in an incident when Gangapado gets engaged in a fight, in Kamalmunshir haat[5], with a Muslim who insults his mother in front of him. In that fray a group stands against Gangapado saying: "[h]ow do you compare between the Muslims and the Doms? A Dom[6] is a Dom. How dare a Dom lays hands on a Muslim?" (*SS* 133). From this incident, it is evident that not only the upper caste Hindus but also the Muslims treat them as outcasts. They are all alone in their distress. There is no one to stand by them. Hence, they develop a sense of haplessness that nothing can alter their misery and eventually they tend to tolerate all sorts of social exclusion silently. In another incident, one day, violating the deal of moneylending by wanting to purchase fish at a lower price than the market value, Shukkur the moneylender physically assaults and forces Kamini to listen to him. In a loud voice, Shukkur says, "Shut up, you son of bitch. You brood of malaun[7]. You will have to sell fish to me at whatever price I offer" (*SS* 66). The way Shukkur treats Kamini and forces him to abide by his desires not only portrays the helplessness of the low caste poor fishermen but also depicts how the dadonders devalue them. In fact, this sort of ill-treatment always dissuades the fishermen from feeling "fully human" and therefore, without resisting the injustices, they silently tolerate them.

Besides ill-treatment of the fishermen by taking advantage of their illiteracy and blind beliefs, the dadonders exploit the fishermen to the extreme. Jaladas in his semi-autobiographical novel, *Sons of the Sea*, poignantly portrays the mechanism of exploitation that entraps the illiterate fishermen. It is an unavoidable fact that the fishing community considers education a luxury. Here, no one thinks of sending their children to school. It is "an unusual choice" (Billah ix) for them. Actually, the turbulent sea is their only destiny so, before or after becoming teenagers, the sons of the fishermen start to accompany their fathers to catch fish in the nearby canals, marshes or in the sea, in case "they can add to the family kitty!" (*SS* 11). Thus, education remains a myth for the fisher folk, and they fall easy prey to the hypocrisy of the dadonders who exploit them year after year keeping the payments of dealings unsettled. In *Sons of the Sea*, we see how they whimsically note down the figures and promise to work out the calculation at the end of the season. Blindly believing the dadonders, the illiterate fishermen keep the accounts in their heads but at the end of every season they find a great mismatch between their claim and the calculation of the dadonders. In fact, "[p]resenting a false calculation" (*SS* 116), the dadonders disregard the claims of the fishermen every time. In the face of such whimsical claims, "[t]he fishermen fall silent. They think that possibly the

dadonders are right. They are unlettered, so they could miscalculate" (*SS* 116). In this way, presenting a false calculation the dadonders not only usurp the fortune of the fishermen but also bankrupt them at the end of every season. Furthermore, through their deceptive words, like "[w]hat's the point of cheating poor folks like you? Aren't I afraid of hell? … God won't forgive me if I cheat you. You must have faith in me. I will never cheat you," (*SS* 116) the dadonders cajole the illiterate fishermen in the name of God. Moreover, with the power of improvisation, the dadonders create such an illusion of honesty that the fishermen find no reason to disbelieve them. Actually, this has been going on for centuries and so the condition of the fishermen remains unaltered. It seems as though they are destined to be exploited unendingly at the hands of the upper class. The temporal and spatial changes do not alter the story of their exploitation. Actually, the upper class, like the colonizers, considering the fishermen outcasts and "less than fully human," justify their right to exploit them. In the face of such dehumanizing exploitations, the illiterate fishermen cannot think alternatively because their ideas are "the reflection of the thought and expression of the director society" (Freire 1). The exploited think in the way they are made to think by their exploiters. Therefore, instead of retrieving their identity they live "under the circumstances existing already, given and transmitted from the past" (Marx 187).

Moreover, the "sons of the sea" (fishermen) are helpless even in the hands of nature because "[t]he deltaic region of lower Bengal is annually affected by floods and often by cyclones. Nowhere is the struggle for survival and resilience, more evident than in this part of the world" (Biswas 20). Like the ebb and flow of the sea, the fishermen live a life of unstable economy. In the seasons, "Falgun, Chaitra and Baisakh the canals, rivers, other water bodies and the sea itself run dry of water-crop" (*SS* 13); hence, hardly any fish can be found in the sea. Therefore, there comes a severe food crisis in their life. In fact, "the scarcity becomes so acute that it won't be wrong to say that they have a famine indeed" (*SS* 13). For the sake of survival, although many fishermen go to sea, practically most of the time they return empty-handed. As the fishermen do not get enough fish, the fish sellers also find no way out to keep their body and soul together. With the inception of Baisakh, although nature turns benevolent and yields fish, unfortunately the mercy of nature cannot redress their misery because, with the end of the dry season begins the season of the bahaddars. The following lines can exactly describe the plight of the fishermen:

> [d]uring monsoon to a large extent relief from poverty, in autumn living from hand to mouth and during spring and summer scourge of poverty. During summer getting ready for fishing with their small savings, and the hapless fishermen sinking up to their neck in debt by borrowing money from dadondars. (*SS* 141)

Apart from all these sufferings, sometimes the sea behaves very violently. The strong currents of the sea not only damage the boats but also wash away the fishermen. For this reason, premature death is very natural in this community. Jaladas, in this novel, depicts that even in stormy weather the fishermen risk their lives because in the high tide of the storm fish can be caught in plenty. For the fishermen, nothing is more intimidating than poverty. Therefore,

the fear of food crisis makes them fearless. In such a stormy expedition, Bhuvoneshwari loses her husband Chandramoni. Like Bhuvoneshwari there are countless widows in this jelepara[8] who have lost their husbands to the sea. For survival "[t]hese widows live by selling fish … in the nearby neighborhood carrying the fish on their heads" (*SS* 15). Here, thinking of the fatherless children, most of the widows refuse remarriage. In the absence of husbands, women hold the helm of the family. With their dauntless spirit, they face all adversities and endure indescribable hardship. The vulnerability of this community is also evident in *A River Called Titash* where Adwaita Mallabarman along with the demise of the vibrant river Titash poignantly depicts the bankruptcy of its dependents (fishermen). Titash, once a source of "livelihood and identity" gradually dries up and with the death of the river "its inhabitants on the banks gradually die out" (Biswas 30). This novel clearly epitomizes how the natural forces are inevitably linked with their cycle of life. Apart from the unavoidable natural forces, their unending struggle for survival, the extreme economic and religious exploitation, affecting simultaneously, never let them feel their worth as human. Therefore, developing a sense of self-abnegation and passivity to resistance they live in a "culture of silence."

IV.

According to Foucault, true sense of identity is "not to discover what we are but to refuse what we are … to promote new forms of subjectivity through the refusal of this kind of individuality which has been imposed on us for several centuries" (216). But the community of fishermen who are the focus of this paper never got the chance to realize their true sense of identity. From time immemorial, they were not only cruelly exploited in the name of caste system but also awfully deprived of their rights as humans. The consequences of these psychosocial deprivation and dehumanization create such a sense of "self-denial" in their psyche that without a second thought they accept every adversity as their destiny and dare not fight against their fate. In the narratives of Bandopadhyay and Mallabarman, it is evident how, without attempting to "recover their lost humanity" (Freire 44) for centuries, they have been living with "their belief in ghosts-specters, incantation, superstition and prejudices" (*SS* 141). Although it is assumed "[w]hen people have been thoroughly beaten and have their backs at the wall, they turn around" (*SS* 143) deplorably for the fishermen it has seldom happened. These fishermen must rise to the consciousness that being victims of a systematic marginalization, "they can reject the powerful's definition of their reality—that they can do so even if they are poor, exploited, or trapped in oppressive circumstances" (hooks 92). What they "need is courage and cooperation" (*SS* 142).

Paulo Freire in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* says, "Without a sense of identity, there can be no real struggle" (178). Hence for the fishing community, the quintessential element of resistance is the rediscovery of their identity as humans. Unlike the depiction of Bandopadhyay and Mallabarman, in Jaladas's *Sons of the Sea*, we can trace the spirit of resistance in Gangapado who, defying the age-old exploitive practices, emerged as a guiding spirit for his own community. He as a catalyst of change unites the other fishermen with the vision that "[h]umans can change their fate" (*SS* 142). Emphasizing the transforming power of education, Richard Shaull in the Foreword of Paulo Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* says:

> Education either functions as an instrument which is used to facilitate integration of the younger generation into the logic of the present system and bring about conformity or it becomes the practice of freedom, the means by which men and women deal critically and creatively with reality and discover how to participate in the transformation of their world. (34)

Thus, Shaull identifies education as an instrument of freedom. Bhuvoneshwari believed in that transforming power of education and wanted to alter the fate of her family by educating Ganga. However, Bhuvon's dream was not fulfilled. To escape the ever-increasing embarrassment in school and to alleviate the suffering of his mother, in his ninth grade, Ganga decided to drop out. Though Ganga failed to complete his education, with the dim light of education, he could raise himself to the level of consciousness to discover the hypocrisy of the dadonders. So, half-educated Ganga, with the help of Dindayal, starts to keep an exact calculation of the dealings. One day, while settling Kamini's payment, the age-old trick of exploitation—the crooked calculations—of the dadonders come to light. The other fishermen realized the cause of their never-ending poverty. For this community, Ganga emerges as an "organic intellectual." He, with his "active participation in practical life, as constructor, as organizer, 'permanent persuader' and not just a simple orator (but superior at the same time to the abstract mathematical spirit)" (Gramsci 10), unites the afflicted fishermen.

After the discovery of the machinations of the crooked calculations of the dadonders, Ganga in a gathering tries to awaken the other fishermen saying, "Should we be exploited all our life? The pirates plunder your fish. On the shore, there is another type of plundering. In the name of dadon, butcher Shukkur and Sashibhushan take away all our fish paying almost nothing" (*SS* 127). Actually, from the point of his own awareness, Ganga attempts to inject the spirit of resistance in the vein of other fishermen. To look at this humanely, the resistance of Ganga is justified because at a certain level of oppression "[t]he rebellious reaction of the working class … half conscious or conscious—at recovering their status as human beings" (Engels 39-40) becomes necessary for survival. Education as a catalyst, thus, gave Ganga the impetus to recreate his identity with a distinct sense of "self-image." Breaking the "culture of silence," he started to believe in the power of the oppressed. Unlike the other fishermen, Ganga could realize "[i]f they wanted to live as humans, they must protest" (*SS* 134).

Therefore, to break all the shackles of exploitation and injustices, as a protest, he proposes to the other fishermen not to take advances from the moneylenders. He tries to convince some of the considerate bahaddars—solvent fishermen—to help the poor folk by lending them money at a low interest, and assist the other fishermen who do not have nets and boats and "[a]fter much consultation, it was decided that they won't take any advance next year from the moneylenders" (*SS* 128). In *Sons of the Sea*, we find Gangapado as the river Ganga which, dissolving all sins and dirt, purifies the human soul because he, along with other fishermen, attempts to end the mechanism of exploitation with solidarity and intelligence. According to the decision, in the next fishing season, the fishermen did not take an advance from the dadonders. Instead, they took assistance from their fellow bahaddars. The fishermen with the promise of cooperation with each other developed a model of self-sufficiency which enraged

the dadonders because they found their "easy source of huge income … dried up" (*SS* 154). In fact, for the dadonders, the stroke was very heavy. So they took the hard line approach to silence the resistance and eventually killed Ganga to restore their hold on the fishermen. By killing Ganga, they tried to stop the voices that could be a threat to their dominance. But the dadonders failed to dissuade the oppressed. The brutal killing of Ganga, instead of intimidating the fishermen, spreads a new spirit of revolt in them. The agitated fishermen set Shukkur's farm house on fire in a body. The fire could, on the one hand, stand as a metaphor for resistance and, on the other, the birth of a conscious class. This had been Ganga's aim from the beginning: to unite the fishermen and resist all the injustices perpetrated against them. The killing of Ganga does not signify the supremacy of evil over the weak; rather the death beckons the beginning of a new day. In his novel, Jaladas, unlike Bandopadhyay and Mallabarman, portrays the birth of an illiterate but a conscious class who will blow a new wind of change and create a hard line of resistance.

In Jaladas's novel, we can see that, along with Ganga's call to awaken, the afflicted fishermen started to unite against the injustices. Although the picture of exploitation in the hands of the dadonder is very common, there are exceptions such as when Shukkur inhumanly assaults Kamini for not allowing him to take an undue privilege, the other fishermen did not let the incident go unsettled. They resisted Shukkur in a body "[b]e careful, if you ever dare to lay your hands on … any of the fishermen, then we in a body will crush your hand" (*SS* 66). This incident intimidated the moneylenders and the fishermen discover the strength of their unity. Eventually, they decide not to "[s]ell fish at the price offered by the moneylenders. If anything untoward happened because of their decision, they would resist in a body" (*SS* 68). They arrive at the uniform conclusion to return the advance money as early as possible. Facing all odds they realize, there is no law or justice for them unless they resist unitedly. Apart from depicting such a resistance, Jaladas, in *Sons of the Sea*, even gives voice to his female characters who also rise against their humiliation. When Jonab Ali's Bap (father) assaulted Bongshi's Maa (Mother) by knocking her to the ground, "[t]he three other fisherwomen didn't stand by idly … slapping him, they knocked him on the ground" (*SS* 88). Saving his life, Jonab Ali's Bap escapes from the hands of these fisherwomen. It is a big blow for the Muslims who in the name of cast frequently humiliate and abuse the fishermen. In this way, Jaladas's novel is vibrant with the voices of the voiceless.

In tracing the multiple layers of resistances of this subaltern group in *Sons of the Sea*, it can be argued that especially for the jele (fishing) community, the shackles of the age-old silence is broken. The sparkling flame in Shukkur's farm is the spark of the wrath of the oppressed class that will burn all the hegemonic exploitations into ashes. A closer look reveals a shadow of Jaladas's personal life in this novel. Having been born into the fishing community, fighting against all economic and social adversities, Jaladas's endeavor—to be educated—is itself a revolt. In fact, Jaladas in his novel, *Sons of the Sea,* voicing the voiceless not only became a mouthpiece of his community but also portrayed this subaltern group with the dormant power of resistance, which explicitly reintroduces the fishing community to us from a different vantage point. Although the novel ends with the death of Ganga, it also anticipates Ganga's

yet to be born son, Banamali. It can be predicted that Ganga's son may continue the legacy of the struggle of his father and add a new dimension to the subaltern resistance. While one half-educated Ganga brought the wind of change, many educated Gangas will hopefully transform the picture of the fishing community one day.

Notes

1. A hired boatman who helps in fishing.
2. Someone allowed to cast a net in the sea riding a boat owned by another person.
3. The protagonist of *The Boatmen of the Padma.*
4. A state of submissiveness which is opposed to the development of the critical awareness necessary to break the pattern of oppression.
5. A big market that meets on fixed days of the week.
6. Someone of low birth especially untouchable.
7. A derogatory term for a Bengali Hindu used in Bangladesh.
8. The neighborhood of the fishing community.

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Madness and Lack of Autonomy: A Close Reading of Mary's Gradual Mental Disorientation in Doris Lessing's *The Grass is Singing*

Sonika Islam
Lecturer of English, Eastern University, Dhaka

Abstract
Madness in woman is explored in this article through a close reading of Doris Lessing's The Grass is Singing *(1950). The protagonist of the text, Mary, longs for an autonomous identity. Failing to achieve autonomy makes her vulnerable in conforming to the social expectation and destroys her self-esteem. This article has explored three phases of Mary's life—spinsterhood, unhappy married life, and her journey to sexual awakening which only gets repressed again by the racial oppression she faces as a white woman being in love with a colored man. This article has discussed the destructive influence of racism and class distinction on a woman's sexuality, as a way to oppress the psyche of a woman. I have come to the conclusion that a woman's failure to gain autonomous sexual identity is one of the main reasons behind her neurosis.*

If the individual does not feel himself to be autonomous this means that he can experience neither his separateness from, nor his relatedness to the other in the usual way.

—Laing 52

In the novel *The Grass is Singing*, Doris Lessing shows how Mary, having been independent for a long time, becomes confused about what to do when she finds that the role she has played is not what society considers suitable for women. The idea that she is not what she should be keeps haunting her till she is killed by Moses, her native servant, with whom she was almost as intimate as a lover. In fact, she is simultaneously oppressed in two ways: by her race and her gender. Moses's power over Mary is generated not only because of Mary's vulnerability or weakness, but also because she is a white woman and Moses, a black man. The lack of autonomy in Mary, the middle-aged woman in Lessing's *The Grass Is Singing*, makes her vulnerable and she gradually becomes psychologically unable to control her life. To understand the gradual mental disintegration of Mary we need to analyze the three phases of Mary's life—spinsterhood, married life, and sexual awakening.

Spinsterhood, the happiest time of her life

For Mary, the happiest time of her life was her unmarried and independent life. Lessing shows it to be the only time in Mary's life that is unaffected by childhood memories, free from all the traces of her past. She is a woman with a good job and a reputation for being a "comfortable maiden aunt" (Lessing 43) who was always there to listen to other people's problems.

She has created a substitute for everything that she wants to reject from her childhood. She could have lived in a separate house, but she preferred to live in an unmarried girls' hostel. Living in a hostel saves her from the depressive memory of her childhood home, but on the other hand, by living among others like her and listening to all their troubles, she never gets

the chance to know about any stories of married life other than that of her parents. Therefore, her ideas about marriage remains fixed. In this way she is like Pecola in Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye* (1970), who is similarly protected from outside knowledge. The only difference is Pecola is not a part of the southern social life whereas Mary is never alone for a moment. Despite this, she is not aware of the social gaze. She goes out with boys but never gets involved in any sexual relationship, the way Esther in Sylvia Plath's *The Bell Jar* (1963) wanted to. For her, men were like her good friends and never more than that. She is feminine but she prefers to portray herself as a "childish-looking" (Lessing 45) heroine as if subconsciously trying to repress her sexuality to save herself from the male gaze. Her opinion of men is that "They get all the fun" (Lessing 46). Her memory of her father laughing at her panic is related to her generalized notions about men. So, she avoids men as sexual beings and regards them only as friends. She is physically very active, playing tennis, hockey or swimming, and watching movies almost daily. In spite of being an independent woman, however, we cannot say she is autonomous as she cannot see her own independence nor can she compare herself with other women of her age.

Unfortunately, Mary's "free life" is interrupted by society, and the criticism levels against her for being what she is. Ann Barr Snitow, in her essay "Mass Market Romance: Pornography for Women is Different," says:

> When women try to picture excitement, the society offers them one vision, romance. When women try to imagine companionship, the society offers them one vision, male, sexual companionship, the power to attract a man. … When women try to project a unique self, the society offers them very few attractive images. True completion for women is nearly always presented as social, domestic, sexual.
>
> One of our culture's most intense myths, the ideal of an individual who is brave and complete in isolation, is for men only. Women are grounded, enmeshed in civilization, in social connection, in family and in love … while all our culture's rich myths of individualism are essentials closed to them. Their one socially acceptable moment of transcendence is romantic. (197)

Snitow explains Mary's helpless situation. Mary, just because she is a woman, fails to remain free. All her trust and dependence on the friendliness of her acquaintances is shattered when she overhears two of her friends discussing her: "[S]he will never marry. She just isn't like that, isn't like that at all. Something missing somewhere" (Lessing 48). Thus, Snitow's explanation fits here. Her friends ridicule her for not conforming to social expectations. Mary's problem is she lacks self-consciousness. According to R.D. Laing, self-consciousness "implies two things: an awareness of oneself by oneself, and an awareness of oneself as an object of someone else's observation" (206). Mary was not aware of what she really wanted and at the same time she was not sure how much she wanted to comply with others' wishes or expectations. Therefore, when the "idea of herself was destroyed … she was not fitted to recreate herself" (Lessing 52). Mary felt that somehow she has misunderstood her own self and the people surrounding her. She was more troubled and disturbed because her friends never said anything directly

and openly to her. This contradictory attitude sows the seeds of paranoia in Mary. She starts suspecting everyone's affection for her. Thus, Mary's state of spinsterhood is disturbed when she can no longer trust anyone. Simultaneously, she tries to be attractive to men even while feeling uncomfortable around them. While Mary is in this miserable state, Dick comes into her life. Dick and Mary, with complete opposite views, marry each other because both of them were badly in need of love. However, Mary still fails to understand her own self which, together with Dick's stubbornness, makes the marriage a failure and accelerates her mental disorientation.

Married life, a period of reliving the childhood trauma

Unfortunately, her fear of an unhappy married life comes true when she marries Dick. Her marriage with Dick brings back her memories of her own dysfunctional family. The very day she comes to Dick's home, she

> [begins] to feel slowly, that it was not in this house she was sitting, with her husband, but back with her mother, watching her endlessly contrive and patch and mend—till suddenly she got to her feet with an awkward scrambling movement, unable to bear it; possessed with the thought that her father, from his grave, had sent out his will and forced her back into the kind of life he had made her mother lead. (Lessing 66)

Thus, from the very first day the memory of childhood paternal oppression keeps haunting her and takes reign over her life. Again her lack of autonomy leads her to dwell in the memory of her parents. She herself becomes her own mother. Furthermore, memory of her "father, menacing and horrible, who touched her in desire" (Lessing 204) keeps haunting her to such an extent that she becomes sexually frigid. When Dick tries to consummate their marriage, she felt

> [it] was not so bad, … when it was all over: not as bad as *that*. It meant nothing to her, nothing at all. Expecting outrage and imposition, she was relieved to find she felt nothing. She was able maternally to bestow the gift of herself on this humble stranger, and remain untouched. (Lessing 66)

As a consequence, memories of incestuous sexuality make Mary sexually frigid. Her sexual frigidity becomes the crucial reason for the failure of their marriage. Judith Herman and Lisa Hirschman report in their article "Father-Daughter Incest" that a girl usually suppresses her feelings when the incest is actually occurring because "passive resistance and dissociation of feeling [seems] to be among the few defenses available in an overwhelming situation. Later, this [carries] over into relations with others" (750). Therefore, it can be said that Mary's emotional distance from Dick is the unconscious continuation of the process of protecting herself from the trauma. As a consequence, Mary is relieved when they cannot go for their honeymoon, and she is disinterested in having children. Dick's touch makes her recoil. Moreover, Margaret W. Matlin reports in her book, *Psychology of Women*, that

> A disorder of low sexual desire may be caused by a variety of psychological factors, including a more general problem such as depression or anxiety. A woman, who is not

> satisfied with her romantic partner or their relationships may also experience little sexual desire. (30)

In Mary's case, her depression arose from the traumatic resemblance of her marital home with that of her parents' home.

Though Mary is reluctant, Dick feels the need for children to work as a bridge between him and Mary:

> Children were what he wanted now that his marriage was a failure and seemed impossible to right. Children would bring them close together and break down this invisible barrier. But they simply could not afford to have children. When he had said to Mary (thinking she might be longing for them) that they would have to wait, she had assented with a look of relief. He had not missed that look, but perhaps when he got out of the wood, she would be pleased to have children. (Lessing 100)

The above passage shows the distance between Mary and Dick. Later, when out of loneliness and without any true longing for children, Mary begs Dick for a child, Dick is unwilling to have children because of poverty. Mary, who never thought of her age earlier, now becomes aware of the fact that very soon menopause will bring an end to all the expectations of children. Dick's reaction to Mary's pleading seems almost indifferent, though the novel does not really show Dick's negligence towards her. It can be said that Dick's inability to realize the importance of fertility in his wife closes the chapter regarding children forever. Since Mary has never been an assertive woman, the issue of children is dropped. Once more, we see Mary's dilemma about what she wants and her failure to be an assertive woman. When her distaste of sex makes her disinterested in having children, it is her loneliness that makes her worry about menopause, the end of her fertility to bear a child. So, here we see that for a mature woman the end of a woman's fertility can be a reason to be worried too.

Mary's married life is further doomed by poverty. She tries to make up for the frigidity of her marriage by decorating her home. She spends all her savings on it and therefore "[t]he house gradually lost its air of bleak poverty, and put on an inexpensive prettiness, with bright hangings and some pictures" (Lessing 73). However, though she tries to erase the appearance of poverty, she can do nothing to increase family income. She repeatedly refuses Dick's appeal to help him with the farm as she is paranoid, feeling that, in her absence from the house, the native houseboy would either be stealing or "looking through her personal things" (Lessing 84). She also prefers not to advise Dick over farm affairs because secretly she feels the need to see Dick more capable than herself, someone stronger than her to take care of her. At the same time, she keeps dreaming that one day she will go back to her old job. She even tries to go back once, but unfortunately finds that she is no longer accepted there. She loses her capacity to day-dream. Dick refuses to put a ceiling, bringing in the factor of heat very strongly into the text. She thinks with frustration that "these rooms added to the house would have made their life comfortable: the money spent on the store, the turkey runs, the pigsties, the beehives, would have put ceilings into the house, would have taken the terror out of the thought of the approaching hot season" (Lessing 114). The ceiling which seems absolutely unimportant to Dick becomes the cause of Mary's dwindling sanity.

This progress towards the loss of sanity causes Mary to go beyond reality and have hallucinations about the power of nature. Nature works as a supernatural force on Mary. Before her marriage, nature had nothing to do with her inner self, but the constant extremely torturing heat in Dick's house gradually makes itself an overpowering force on Mary's body and mind. The cold and rainy seasons become her driving forces. Nature even starts to influence the relationship between Dick and her. Once, after a quarrel over the houseboy, "the tension between them lasted for an intolerable week, until at last the rains fell, and the air grew cool and relaxed" (Lessing 97). But she cannot enjoy the winter which she felt "had been sent especially for her, to send a tinge of vitality into her, to save her from her helpless dullness" (Lessing 128) without remembering the dreadful return of the hot season. She is so much under the control of the seasons that when she realizes the fatal emptiness in her, she decides "When the next cold season came, and stung her into life again, she would do something" (Lessing 163). Thus, it can be said that nature becomes an oppressive force for Mary. Even when she was about to die, Mary feels that the "trees [are advancing] in a rush, like beasts, and the thunder [is] the noise of their coming" (Lessing 254). Laing says "the 'self' whose relatedness to reality is already tenuous becomes less and less a reality-self, and more and more fantasized as it becomes engaged in fantastic relationships with its own phantoms" (85). So, with each passing day, she loses more of her connection with reality and becomes a prey of nature. Now, at this moment when she is losing touch with reality, her sexual awakening brings an end to the little rationality which she still held in herself, leading to her relationship with Moses.

Confrontation between sexual awakening and social restrictions

Female sexuality is always under the social gaze and the double standard in attitude towards male and female sexuality restrains a woman from exercising her sexual rights. If a woman does break the "love law," a term used by Arundhuti Roy in her book *The God of Small Things*, for social rules of who can love whom and how much (33), then she has to pay a high price, often even with her mental wellbeing. In *The God of Small Things*, Roy shows how Ammu's desire for an Untouchable is equally scorned by the society and her family, while her brother Cholly's relationship with servant girls is accepted easily by Mammachi's consideration that "[h]e can't help having a Man's Needs" (128). In the same way, white men were allowed to take black women as sexual partners. Ammu's life is a picture of what Mary's life would have been if she had accepted Moses. When the family learnt that Ammu has had sex with an Untouchable, she was kept locked in her room "like the family lunatic in a medieval household" (Roy 252). Like Ammu, Mary's sexual awakening also becomes destructive for her as it is caused by the entrance of a black man into her life, a man who is not from her class and who must be treated like an animal. Mary's need for someone stronger than her takes the shape of her attraction for that "powerful, broad-built body" (Lessing 175). Had it not been a black body, she would have been saved from the humiliation of social ostracism. In D.H. Lawrence's *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, we see that, like Mary, Connie happens to be present when Mellors, her servant was bathing and, in the same way, was attracted by his strong body. But the difference between Connie and Mary is that Connie is attracted to someone, who though her subordinate, is considered as a human by her society since he is white. But Mary is attracted

to a black man "who is no better than a dog" (Lessing 176). The intermingling feelings of guilt and hatred make her vulnerable, while Connie could remain in a stable relationship with Mellors who is at least physically healthier than her handicapped husband. The omniscient narrator tries to explain Mary's sense of repulsion, "what had happened was that the formal pattern of black-white, mistress-and-servant, had been broken by the present relation. She felt that she must do something, and at once, to restore her poise "(Lessing 178). To restore that "poise" she becomes harsher to Moses. She becomes delirious and "rigid with a hysterical emotion" (Lessing 177) and she verbally abuses Moses. After one such outburst Moses wants to resign. But even when Moses tries to leave, Mary does not let him go. In fact, she panics, dreading Dick's anger. Her panic reaches such a height that it turns into convulsions and "she wept on, repeating over and over again, 'You must stay! You must stay!' And all the time she was filled with shame and mortification because he was seeing her cry" (Lessing 186). This breakdown in front of Moses becomes a turning point for Mary, bringing an end to the last trace of rational individuality in her.

This mixture of repulsion and attraction puts her in a dilemma. Moses's caring touch makes her feel as if she has "been touched by excrement" (Lessing 187). Again when Moses speaks to her "easily, almost familiarly, good-humouredly as if he was humouring a child … [s]he [feels] the usual anger within her, at the tone he used to her, at the same time she was fascinated, and out of her depth; she did not know what to do with this personal relation" (Lessing 189). Thus, Moses starts looking after her meals, bringing gifts. Because of the racial and class differences Mary cannot see and accept her heart's desire—Moses's tenderness.

However, while there is pure love in the affair between Velutha and Ammu in Arundhuti Roy's *The God of Small Things*, the relationship between Mary and Moses is unable to reach a culmination because of Mary's learned hatred for the Black servant, Moses, and in return, his manipulative attitude with Mary, a white mistress. He compels Mary

> to treat him as a human being; it is impossible for her to thrust him out of her mind like something unclean, as she had done with all the others in the past. She was being forced into contact, and she never ceased to be aware of him. She realized, daily, that there was something in it that was dangerous but what it was she was unable to define. (Lessing 192)

The domination of a white woman by a black man reminds us of Frantz Fanon's insight into the black men's desire in his book, *Black Skin, White Masks*,

> I wish to be acknowledged not as *black* but as *white*. …
>
> By loving me she proves that I am worthy of white love. I am loved like a white man. … When my restless hands caress those white breasts, they grasp white civilization and dignity and make them mine. (Fanon 63)

If Mary complies with Moses's wishes and caring, it is not because she wants them wholeheartedly; it is more because she is completely helpless in front of Moses's concerns. The omniscient narrator informs us that "she [watches] her actions from one point of view

only; would they allow Moses to strengthen that new human relationship between them, in a way she could not counter, and which she could only try to avoid" (Lessing 193). So, even when Mary consents to Moses's offer of help, she does it out of fear. Her inability to take care of her clothes and her hair shows the fatal destruction of Mary's self-control. Moses, by nurturing Mary as if she is not an adult woman but a child, is also destroying Mary's individuality in the same way that white people have done to the black people. In fact, Moses admits that by his manipulating power he has defeated Dick a long time ago and now by killing Mary he has defeated Tony Marston, another white man, who tried to save Mary from his power.

However, it is not only racial issues but the childhood memory of her sexually abusive father that makes Mary a prey to Moses. The more she gives in to Moses's commands, the more she remembers the suffocating moments with her father. She starts having nightmares about her father and Moses. Linda Schierse Leonard reports in her experimental book, *The Wounded Woman: Healing the Father-Daughter Relationship*, that women with "injured relationships to their fathers" dream about a "perverted old man" (85). This "perverted" image in Mary's dreams controls her emotions more than what is inspired by Moses' direct presence. Leonard explains this as follows:

> The perverted man was able to control her and keep her out of meaningful relationship only because she gave him the power through her innocence and lack of feminine assertion, through the fact that she remained passive and dependent, enacting the girl rather than the self-confident woman … Women who as young girls have been subjected to sexual abuse or even rape by older men have experienced this perversion … in a most severe way. As a result their self-confidence has usually been severely damaged, and if one looks deep within one can find the perverted old man, a torturing, negative animus continuing that abuse. (91)

This finding by Leonard clarifies the relation between Mary's dream images with Moses as a real person. She has always remained a girl and never could be a self-dependent woman and thereby the weakness of her heart develops this terrible father image like a Frankenstein killing the owner day by day. During Dick's illness, when Moses was sleeping in Dick's room and Mary in the next room, for the first time she is sleeping too close to a native and she imagines that she can smell the scent of natives, which she associated with the traumatic memory of her father's "unwashed masculine smell" (Lessing 201). She also has recurring nightmares where her father and Moses becomes one single person. According to Freud, dreams are the reflection of the unconscious. So, from the above passage, it may be understood that Mary finds consolation in the way Moses takes care of her. But failing to resolve the dilemma, Mary becomes more vulnerable. She realizes that

> Dick became to her, as time went by, more and more unreal; while the thought of the African grew obsessive. It was a nightmare, the powerful black man always in the house with her, so that there was no escape from his presence. She was possessed by it, and Dick was hardly there for her. (Lessing 206)

She becomes more and more confused about Moses. With the help of Tony Marston, the

Englishman who comes to take on the responsibility of Dick's farm, she even fires the boy. Again guilty feelings keep haunting her and she becomes sure that Moses will come to kill her. Pathetically, she understands her strong feelings for him only at the last moment. She was about to apologize and explain it to Moses but at that very moment Moses kills her. This sudden self-realization can be compared with Anna Karenina's feelings. When out of her confusion and frustration she wants to commit suicide, at the very last moment, she comes to her senses and feels the urge to save herself. But she could not save herself from the coming train. Anna and Mary's dilemma appears to imply that since a woman cannot assert her decisions in her life due to social restrictions, it becomes really difficult for her to resolve the most important questions in her life. A woman throughout her life is taught to live according to social or patriarchal rules and is rarely allowed to choose her own path. So, both consciously and unconsciously, she thinks about how others will judge her actions and thereby often refrains from accepting her inner wishes.

Conclusion

Lack of autonomy can make a woman vulnerable to the social gaze which can destroy her inner strength. In spite of leading a free life for fifteen years, Mary cannot continue with it. Her loneliness, sexuality, poverty-stricken married life and her attraction towards a black man make her life so complicated that she does not find a way out of it. It can be concluded that when an adult woman lacks autonomy like Mary in Lessing's *The Grass is Singing* she becomes doomed to lose her rationality. It can be concluded, therefore, that a woman's sexuality is one of the main reasons for her neurosis. If Mary were an unmarried man, she would never be subjected to social criticism about being someone less for remaining unmarried. Thus, reading the gradual disintegration of Mary's mental sanity shows that sometimes it is sexual abuse that makes a woman mad and sometimes it is both her sexual abuse and repression of sexual desires that result in a mental imbalance.

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Trauma, Resistance, Survival: Linda Hogan's *Mean Spirit*

Munasir Kamal
Assistant Professor of English, University of Dhaka

Abstract

Violence is pervasive in Linda Hogan's first novel, Mean Sprit *(1990). The Native American characters in the novel are traumatized by historical processes of injustice imposed upon them, such as uprooting from land, relocation, religious and cultural conversion, separation of children from parents, murder, and so on. Nola, a representative indigenous character, develops negative coping strategies—eventually killing her white husband as a consequence of her generalized anxiety disorder and phobia of white people. Hogan's second novel* Solar Storms *(1995) is considered significant for its representation of the journey from trauma to healing. Though the protagonist, Angel, is severely traumatized at the beginning of the novel, she experiences healing on returning to her indigenous community and participating with her people in a movement to protect their land and rivers. In this paper, I point to the connection between environmental injustice and trauma, and the reverse correlation of restoration of justice and healing. I further reveal that despite the widespread trauma depicted in* Mean Spirit*, it is in this novel that Hogan introduces her model of healing—a pattern replicated in her later work. This model comprises reconnecting with ancestors and ancestral practices, and participation in grassroots movements to ensure environmental justice.*

Extreme environmental injustice and trauma are at the center of Linda Hogan's first novel, *Mean Spirit* (1990)—a Pulitzer Prize finalist. This novel, set in Oklahoma in the early 1920s, focuses on the historical and cultural factors that, over centuries, have generated trauma among Native Americans. Among these factors are the destruction of the natural environment, assimilation, forced dislocation, and crimes amounting to ethnic cleansing in attempts to gain control over Native peoples' land. Hogan is ambiguous about the specific nation to which the Native American characters in *Mean Spirit* belong. She speaks of the indigenous people who isolate themselves, physically and culturally, from the Euro-Americans as "Hill Indians" throughout her book. Again, she refers to the Native American inhabitants of the town of Watona as Osage. Among them, Belle Graycloud—an influential character in the novel—is the daughter of a Chickasaw woman torn from their "beautiful, rich woodlands" in Mississippi, "herded" by the United States army, and forced to march to Oklahoma during the Trail of Tears (81). The Chickasaw—along with other nations including the Cherokee, Choctaw, Creek, and Seminole—were violently uprooted at the time. In leaving the nation ambiguous, and refusing to make *Mean Spirit* the story of one particular nation, Hogan allows the novel to take up the trauma of Native Americans as a whole. Therefore, this story also represents their collective resistance and survival.

Mean Spirit opens with the murder of Belle's foster daughter, Grace Blanket, a Native woman. Grace's "barren, useless land" turns into "Baron Land" after the discovery of oil on her property,

making her one of the wealthiest inhabitants of the region and prey to those hungry for profit from the oil boom (8). Hogan informs us that not all the indigenous Watona residents had come to the area by choice. Belle's mother had been forcefully removed from their original fertile lands in Mississippi and resettled in Oklahoma. However, finding oil on their property leads to brutal attempts to sever the indigenous peoples from their land once again, making them victims of repeated trauma. The Grayclouds in the novel begin to receive several threats to their life when they take in Nola Blanket, Grace's daughter, who witnessed her mother's murder and is heir to Grace's oil-rich land. *Mean Spirit* is a deeply troubling novel packed with images of corruption and crime, violence and murder. With the drilling of oil on their land and the devastation it brings to their community, the members at a communal prayer session remark, "some of us have broken all apart, like the earth" (75). This sentiment is repeated by a number of indigenous characters throughout the novel. The book begins with Grace's murder and ends with Moses Graycloud's killing of Tate after Tate murders his wife—Moses's twin sister Ruth. In between are the unnatural deaths of a number of significant characters, and attempts on the lives of others. In the absence of an organized environmental justice movement in the period of the novel's setting, *Mean Spirit* portrays trauma that is almost constant and all encompassing. However, there are brief interludes of respite as the Native people ultimately gather strength with more and more characters converting to indigenity, and in moments of solidarity between the town and Hill Indians.

The movement to secure environmental justice for all peoples officially began in the 1980s. *Mean Spirit* is set approximately six decades prior to the launching of the environmental justice movement—at a time when efforts to attain a safe living, working, and school environment for dominated populations could be no more than sporadic. In the absence of an organized environmental justice movement in the 1920s, a movement that has recently helped oppressed populations in North America to establish their right to a safe and healthy environment, *Mean Spirit* represents almost continuous trauma, spanning from Belle's mother's generation to Nola's child's generation. The Native town dwellers in the novel are survivors from uprooted communities who struggle to hold on to the land on which they have been resettled. They constantly suffer from insecurity since they are in danger even in their own homes. Sara, Grace's sister and safekeeper of her property after her death, is killed in a fire maliciously set to her home. Her husband in the Christian tradition, Benoit—framed for Sara's murder—then dies mysteriously in prison. In their absence, Nola becomes the target of the threats to take over Grace's property. The only moments of relief in the novel are when the Native Watona inhabitants seek refuge with their traditional counterparts in the hills, and when these characters take up environmental justice causes—their right to make their own choices regarding their land and culture, and to protect their human and nonhuman relations. Examples of this are when Moses protests a new law allowing full-blood indigenous Americans to be paid less because of their perceived incompetence, by demanding to know, "Who made this regulation?" (61); or when Belle tries to remove the bodies of the sacred eagles—resembling "a tribe of small, gone people"—from the white hunters' truck (110); or when the Hill Indians and the town Indians unite to prevent the annihilation of the bats at Sorrow Cave. These moments, though infrequent and short-lived, provide a vision of hope in otherwise extremely bleak and traumatic circumstances.

Hogan exhibits her awareness of historical/cultural trauma in *Mean Spirit* by linking her main characters to historical processes that have been known to cause widespread trauma in Native Americans. Among these, she focuses on forced displacement and the system of assimilation through boarding schools. Scholars studying trauma in indigenous Americans (Eduardo Duran, Bonnie Duran and team; Nadine Tafoya and Ann Del Vecchio; Shelly A. Wiechelt and Jan Gryczynski) have identified dislocation in multiple phases since colonization as a primary source of trauma. Among these incidents of displacement, the Trail of Tears—a trope throughout much of Hogan's work as well as in *Mean Spirit*—seems to hold a particularly painful position in Native American collective memory. The Trail of Tears was among a number of forced Westward marches between 1831 and 1838 that Native Americans of various nations had to endure following the Indian Removal Act of 1830. Wiechelt and Gryczynski point out that though the United States policy governing the Act was "one of relocation, in actual practice the result was too often annihilation," since those who refused to leave their homes were routinely massacred (200). In *Dwellings* (1995), published not long after *Mean Spirit*, Hogan alludes to the Hmong men, who "forced to leave their country and rootless in America, die of no apparent cause while they are sleeping" (89). Here she highlights the deep connection between Native peoples and their land. So strong was this attachment that separation from their land alone was enough to cause death. However, Hogan—as a member of the Chickasaw nation—is also acutely aware of the deliberate extermination that accompanied the dislocation which Wiechelt and Gryczynski describe.

Hogan locates the more recent suffering of Native Americans within the context of the trauma they have historically endured and accumulated. She portrays Belle and her daughter Leticia (Lettie) as remembering their peoples' forced march along the Trail of Tears particularly at times of danger and/or sorrow. After Benoit's apparent suicide (unmistakably murder since he is the guardian of Grace's property after Sara's death), Lettie—Belle's daughter, and Benoit's wife in the Native tradition—thinks of her grandmother who, along with their people, was driven out of her home and forced to march a great distance to Oklahoma. The people had felt "beaten and lost" (210). Parted from the land that was interwoven with their lives, they were devastated and could only wonder how they would "preserve their wounded race, their broken tribe" (210). Lettie compares her hands with her grandmother's, indicating their common suffering. Yet Hogan chooses this inopportune moment to present a message of hope—if it can indeed be called hope. She notes that whenever a woman would fall to the ground grieving for a child killed by the soldiers, her fellow marchers would pick her up and say, "We have to continue. Step on. Walk farther along with us, sister" (210). Despite the numerous attempts to eradicate her people, this resilience—according to Hogan—is what accounts for Native American survival today.

The Indian Removal Act of 1830 contradicts the ideals of environmental justice in every conceivable way, and hence it was the root cause of massive trauma among Native Americans. This Act mandated actions that were quite the reverse of the "respect and justice for all peoples" in public policy that environmental justice demands (Principle two). The very act of colonization, and later, the hegemonic and oppressive practices of successive governments

denied "the fundamental right to political, economic, cultural and environmental self-determination of all peoples" that environmental justice so strongly upholds (Principle five). Moreover, environmental justice is firmly against the "military occupation, repression and exploitation of lands, peoples and cultures, and other life forms" which we see recurring in *Mean Spirit* (Principle fifteen). Sadly, an effective movement against such injustices was absent in the period depicted in the novel. As a result, trauma is pervasive in *Mean Spirit*. It is through the Native peoples' eventual organizing around environmental justice issues and their resistance, the early forms of which we see in this novel, that the United States government was finally compelled to grant indigenous citizens certain rights which are reflected in the Principles of Environmental Justice.

Wiechelt and Gryczynski, in their article on trauma among Native Americans, further mention that while those who refused to move from their homes after the Indian Removal Act underwent physical annihilation, those who were relocated in reservations by the United States government faced cultural annihilation in the form of forced assimilation practices (200). One of the main techniques used to assimilate indigenous peoples with the dominant culture was to indoctrinate their children in boarding schools far from their homes. Children as young as five years were forcibly transported to boarding schools, and their parents had no say in the matter (Tafoya and Vecchio 60). In *Mean Spirit*, Belle recalls the law stating that if families refused to send their children to the boarding schools, "the children would be made wards of the state and removed permanently from their homes" (35). Once at school, parents hardly saw their children anymore. Tafoya and Vecchio observe that these schools were often located so far from the children's homes that their parents, struggling with poverty, were rarely able to visit them (60). Hogan expresses concern about the impact of the American education system on Native children in multiple novels. Dora-Rouge, the protagonist's great-great grandmother in *Solar Storms* (1995), as a child, tries to escape from the white people who come to take her away to school. Since *Power* (1998) is set in recent times, the protagonist of the novel, Omishto, attends a modern school. Outside school, she is guided by her Native mentor, Ama, but finds herself critical of Ama after returning from school. Schools in the United States, Hogan fears, functioned and continue to function on the assumption that Euro-American culture is superior to indigenous culture. Both Wiechelt and Gryczynski, and Hogan in *Mean Spirit*, allude to Richard Pratt's infamous slogan, "Kill the Indian, and save the man." Pratt founded the Carlisle Industrial Indian School in 1879, on which many boarding schools for Native American children were modeled. Tafoya and Vecchio relate that these institutions would isolate children from their family and community by destroying their knowledge of indigenous language, customs, and beliefs. They identify the process through which this was achieved:

- English language immersion with punishment for speaking tribal languages.
- Destruction of traditional garments and replacement with alien, Western clothing.
- Braids and traditional hairstyles shaved and replaced with Western-style haircuts.
- Buildings, dormitories, campuses, and furnishings of Western design.
- Forced physical labor in the kitchens, stables, gardens, and shops, necessary to run the schools.
- Corporal punishment for the infraction of rules or for not following the work and school schedules.

- Immersion in a Western educational curriculum with associated alien goals and philosophy.
- Regimented, time-bound schedules. (Tafoya and Vecchio 60-61)

Moreover, the authors observe that boarding school authorities were ill-equipped, or lacked the willingness, to deal with the children in a culturally sensitive manner. The children were, more often than not, brutally punished. We learn of Calvin Severance, a minor character in *Mean Spirit*, who loses his thumbs at the Carlisle Indian School founded by Pratt. The scholars on historical and cultural trauma also allude to the sexual abuse that Native children often faced at boarding schools. Tafoya and Vecchio suggest that remaining in such environments, devoid of affection or family connection for prolonged periods and through generations, has caused Native Americans to adopt negative coping strategies, such as alcoholism, drug abuse, and even suicide in attempts to deal with trauma (61). Hogan's characters, however, are able to resist the influence of Euro-American schooling to an extent. In *Solar Storms*, Dora-Rouge is represented as a matriarch educating later generations in an indigenous worldview. Hogan does not specify how she bypassed the Euro-American indoctrination that traumatized so many children of her generation. In *Power*, Omishto eventually learns to use her lessons from school in combination with the Native knowledge acquired from Ama in a helpful manner. *Mean Spirit* is the novel in which Hogan most explicitly articulates her anxiety regarding the cultural trauma caused by the Euro-American education system. Though Nola is able to resist many of the culturally repressive regulations that her boarding school imposes on her, the author shows that these regulations have a definite psychological impact.

Nola serves as a classic example of an individual suffering from complex PTSD. Wiechelt and Gryczynski allude to J.L. Herman's definition of complex PTSD in their study of historical and cultural trauma among Native Americans. They regard complex PTSD as the "alterations in affect regulation, consciousness, self-perception, perception of the perpetrator, relations with others, and systems of meaning" that victims of prolonged and repeated trauma experience (193). Nola, as a witness to her mother's murder and an inhabitant of an environment where danger is constant, has symptoms that are not fully commensurate with the symptom-clusters of PTSD: re-experiencing, avoidance/numbing, and arousal (Wiechelt and Gryczynski 193). After her mother's murder, Nola sleeps "with her eyes wide open, not letting her guard down" despite the Native "watchers" stationed outside the Graycloud residence, and the Graycloud women taking turns beside her bed "like silent sentries" (44). In spite of her open eyes, she still has nightmares. She also becomes speechless and has frequent fainting spells. Months pass before Nola is able to speak again, and when she does, she is given to constant bickering in contrast to her previous sweet disposition. Moreover, Nola undergoes a drastic transformation in her perception of non-Native people. Not all of Nola's symptoms can be explained by PTSD alone. Robert W. Robin and his co-authors cite B.L. Green in marking that for victims of severe and long-term trauma, PTSD rarely occurs in isolation, but is "most often comorbid with substance abuse, major depression, phobia, and generalized anxiety disorder" (243). According to a theory of historical trauma, the white world held negative connotations for Nola, even before her mother's death, by dint of her membership in an indigenous

community. Yet, Nola had been raised in Watona—a town with both Native and non-Native inhabitants—and as a child at least, the white world had not seemed to pose immediate danger to her. However, traumatized by her mother and her aunt Sara's unnatural deaths (followed by her uncle Benoit's imprisonment and "suicide"), and culturally assaulted by the authorities at her boarding school, Nola starts to generalize the threat posed by the white world. She develops a phobia of non-Native people, which is not reduced by her marriage to a white man who loves her or, at least, is enamored with her "exotic" appearance—"There was something wild about her. He thought he could love her" (134).

Hogan indicates that Nola's trauma exacerbates when, against Belle's wishes, she is removed from the Graycloud residence to a boarding school for Native children. In its broader definition in the environmental justice movement, environment connotes "the places in which we live, work, play, and worship;" this includes the school environment (Adamson, Evans, and Stein 4). The Principles of Environmental Justice call for public policy to be "based on mutual respect and justice for all peoples, free from any form of discrimination or bias" (Principle two). However, the boarding schools depicted in Hogan's novels were established to undermine the pupils' cultures of origin, and to replace their Native cultures with a foreign culture. Wiechelt and Gryczynski refer to M.W. deVries's recommendations on cultural healing, which can be applied to Nola's condition. deVries proposes utilizing still existing "cultural structures to help victims manage horror" after a traumatic event, and restoring "traditional social relationships" to promote healing (204). While staying with the Grayclouds, with whom she shared a common culture, would have helped Nola to regain psychological stability after her mother's violent death, she is taken to an alien environment that tries to divest her of her culture. Therefore, instead of subsiding, with time, Nola's trauma intensifies. Her terror of the white killers of her mother, and her revulsion against the white authorities of her school is extended to her white "guardian," later father-in-law, and to her husband—not realizing that they do not pose identical danger to her.

The traumatic experience at boarding school is a key factor behind Nola's gradual loss of sanity and its tragic consequences, even though she is able to withstand some of the school's oppressive policies. On her first day at school, Nola is given a European-style uniform to wear, but she enters the classroom dressed in "an Osage skirt with ribbons and a pair of moccasins" (128). When the teacher orders her to go to the dormitory and take off the clothes, Nola returns to the classroom wearing only her slip. However, while Hogan highlights such acts of resistance against the school's authority, Duran et al. observe that boarding schools were "operated like prison camps, with Indian children being starved, chained, and beaten" (344). Moreover, the living accommodations were overcrowded and the schools neglected the health needs of its pupils, often resulting in sickness and even deaths. Thus, despite her open defiance of the school's regulations, the impositions of the institution must have aggravated Nola's suffering and depression, eventually causing her to break down.

While in her psychological condition, Nola required sympathy and security, the school authorities express further indifference to her precarious state as the heir to Grace's property by delivering her to Forrest, her court-appointed guardian. Nola distrusts her "guardian," who

is also Benoit's defense lawyer, from their first meeting. As Nola's guardian, he is in a position to benefit if Benoit is found guilty of Sara's murder. When her guardians in the Native tradition—the watchers from the hills—intercept Forrest's car, she speaks to them in her own language. She tells them that Forrest and his son, Will, are "lightening crooked" and would probably steal her land, but they would not harm her "until after they'd had a chance to swindle her" (133). Later, Nola marries Will in hopes of sparing the Grayclouds from the threats that may ensue if she rejects his proposal. She is thirteen years old at the time of the marriage. Nola seems to love Will, but she is also aware of white men marrying Native women "to possess their wife's and children's allotments of land," and that her husband will inherit her land in the event of her death (165). Moreover, Will makes a profit from collecting and selling Native artifacts—artifacts stolen from graves similar to Grace's, which is robbed in the novel. Nola soon conceives, and her depression worsens with her pregnancy. As her pregnancy advances, she constantly speaks to her unborn child—"Look at this world. Look out from my eyes. You see the way the very sky is on fire?" (292). She feels sad for her child who will be born into a cruel and callous world—"Oh, poor child, you don't even know if you can trust your own daddy," she laments (293). Then one day, without particular provocation, Nola shoots and kills Will. On the night before the killing, she wraps her Osage skirt around her large belly and puts on her moccasins. Her identification with her own community at the time of the killing suggests that, in Nola's traumatized mind, Will had represented not her loving husband, but the white men whom she saw exploiting her people.

After Will's death, Nola's genuine guardians—the watchers—swiftly transfer her out of Watona to their hideout in the hills. In the hills with her own people, if anywhere, Nola has a chance at survival and healing. The hills represent security and refuge not only for Nola, but also for the Native American inhabitants at Watona struggling to hold on to their land and traditions. The Hill Indians, we learn, had removed themselves from "civilization" in the 1860s, sixty years prior to the opening of the novel. Leaving Watona, they had succeeded in returning to "a simpler way of life" (5). They had learned "the secrets of invisibility" essential to their survival, only revealing themselves to those whom they deemed fit (258). In *Mean Spirit*, the Hill Indians' dwelling represents a sanctuary uncorrupted by white influence. It is where the Native American Watona inhabitants seek refuge when under physical and/or cultural threat. Historical/cultural trauma scholars Tafoya and Vecchio identify conversion to Christianity as one of the primary sources of trauma that Native Americans faced after their initial contact with the Europeans. They reveal the settlers' understanding that the Native American population could be better controlled "if they practiced 'real' religion and gave up their savage religious customs" (59). However, in *Mean Spirit*, the hills around Watona represent centers where counter-conversion takes place without any form of coercion. While forced conversion to Christianity had led to trauma, Hogan portrays Christian characters, and indigenous characters assimilated with Euro-American culture, finding inner peace in turning to indigenous values. Among them are Michael Horse, Joe and Martha Billy, Stace Red Hawk, Deputy Willis, and notably, Father Dunne—a Catholic priest, who "discovers" and announces to the Hill Indians that "the snake is our sister" (262). This information, however, is not new to the traditional Native people, who are shown to live in harmony with nature. One of the

most uplifting moments in the novel occurs when the Hill Indians (original and converted) and the Watona Indians establish the efficacy of united action by defending the bats at Sorrow Cave against shooting by the non-Native Watona inhabitants. The incident at Sorrow Cave, towards the end of the book, suggests a model on which the indigenous characters in *Mean Spirit* can base their future resistance. In her insightful article, "Showdown at Sorrow Cave: Bat Medicine and the Spirit of Resistance in *Mean Spirit*," Andrea Musher asserts that the indigenous characters' success at Sorrow Cave subverts the "automatic privileging of human life over other life forms" in Euro-American tradition (24). In presenting this episode, Hogan undermines "the biblical concept of human dominion," and supplants it with the Native American worldview, where every living being has a status equal to that of human beings (Musher 24). The "showdown" begins with Belle's discovery of a group of white Watona dwellers set to attack the bats at Sorrow Cave, mistaking them to be a source of rabies. Of course, the cash award for each "flying rat" killed adds to their interest in massacring the bats (277). Belle immediately sends for reinforcements and places herself at the mouth of the cave, threatening to shoot the bat exterminators. Soon her "reinforcements" arrive—the Watona Indians, the Hill Indians and those converted to Indian values—looming "out of the land itself" (280). Together they form a barricade between the bats and their predators, forcing the trigger-happy white men to momentarily retreat. Musher emphasizes the events after the white men depart, for the bats then direct their defenders to a hidden escape route through the inner wall of the cave. Within the inner caverns of Sorrow, the Native characters come across the mummified remains of a fellow Native human and a vanished bear species, along with several pots, preserved corn kernels, and paintings of red bats, blue fish and black buffalo on the walls (284). During this journey through the passage from the inner wall of Sorrow to the river, a member of the resistance exclaims, "Sorrow runs deeper than we knew or could have guessed" (284). Here, "Sorrow" is a pun indicating both the cave inhabited by the bats, as well as the historical trauma that the indigenous peoples have undergone. The inner chambers of Sorrow represent both a "sacred world" protected within the cave, and a past that must be recalled in order that healing may take place (284). According to Musher, "the saving power evoked in this ritual journey comes from the creation and preservation of a community that 're-members' the past—thus filling the present and future with members who share memories that link them together" (35). Coming to terms with the past is an important element of healing both for scholars analyzing PTSD and historical/cultural trauma, and in Linda Hogan's artistic vision. Refuting Gaston Bachelard's characterization of memory as a field of "psychological ruins," in *The Woman Who Watches over the World* (2001), Hogan redefines memory as a "field of healing that has the capacity to restore the world" (15). "When a person says 'I remember,' all things are possible," she goes on to proclaim (15). The indigenous characters in *Mean Spirit* take part in this vital act of remembering, and therefore healing, within the walls of Sorrow Cave.

In addition to the inner strength the Native characters gain from their experience within the recesses of Sorrow Cave, their successful defense of their relatives—the bats—initiates a pattern for future resistance. As the sheriff retreats unable to withstand the Native opposition, one of the bat exterminators protests, "You're setting a precedent here … Now they'll resist

everything" (281). The showdown at Sorrow Cave, where the Native inhabitants of the hills and the town unite to uphold the "ecological unity and the interdependence of all species, and the right to be free from ecological destruction" (Principle one), contains the seeds of a larger movement to be organized around environmental rights.

Hogan elaborates on the theme of resistance and healing in her second novel, *Solar Storms*. The indigenous characters in *Solar Storms* organize against a megadam project threatening their community. Besides resisting at the site of injustice as in *Mean Spirit*, the activists in *Solar Storms* carry out a lengthy legal battle in non-Native courts of justice situated far from the land they defend. This process is extremely strenuous for the indigenous members since they are maltreated in a system that looks down upon their values. Yet their struggle eventually yields positive results. After causing widespread devastation to the land, with its human and nonhuman inhabitants, further construction of the dams is prevented. The protagonist, Angel, ruminates near the end of the novel—"one fracture was healed, one crack mended, one piece back in place" (344). Such a movement is inconceivable in *Mean Spirit* because of the dominant society's complete disregard toward indigenous environmental rights and the indigenous peoples' unfamiliarity with the Euro-American legal system at the time of the novel's setting. Therefore, it was not until her second novel, set in the 1970s, that Hogan could present her philosophy of healing in detail. *Mean Spirit*, however, contains the beginnings of resistance—coming together against the perpetrators of wrong—which, in Hogan's view, is the first step toward healing from environmental injustice induced trauma.

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Magic for Medical Healing in Igbo Society: *Ogwugwo* in Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*

Hossain Al Mamun, PhD
Associate Professor of English, Shahjalal University of Science & Technology, Sylhet

Abstract

In Things Fall Apart*, Okonkwo's daughter Ezinma falls sick and is treated according to the local religious belief of the Igbo that relies on magical power. Ezinma's treatment presents dual magical acts performed by a regular medicine man and the medicine man or* agadi-muayi *or Chielo, the high priestess of the Cave of Oracles that houses Agbala, the unseen deity. This magical power provided by the gods and goddesses supposedly brought into light by the priests and priestesses and the medicine men puts the Igbo men and women in awe and makes them respect their deities. The presumed magical power of the deities not only heals the illness but it can also cause good or bad harvest. The way the high priestess of Agbala and a local medicine man treat Ezinma who has been a sickly child since birth shows that it is the fear of magic that works as the main factor of healing, not the magic's actual manifestation, as there is no concrete indication of any magical event in the text other than some remote references to magical occurrences, which cannot be substantiated. Therefore, the magical power of gods and goddesses is mainly a presumed or anticipated power. It is, in fact, the Igbo people's faith in magical power that has founded the basic religious constructs in Igbo society while the practitioners of magic or the presumed magical power attributed on them treat the sickly and explain the bodily-hitch behind illnesses or the reason for premature death. This paper focuses on the performance of this alleged magical healing and the very faith in it that has been a part of the Igbo tradition to project that the fear of magical power is the main facilitator, not its actual manifestation. This paper examines Okonkwo's daughter Ezinma's birth and sickness and demonstrates the treatment she gets by the different medicine men in Chinua Achebe's* Things Fall Apart*. This paper also explores the underlying issues of Ezinma's treatment as to whether it is a "magical practice" or the "fear of magic" that actually works.*

Nigerian Igbo society is replete with ancestral gods and other mystical entities, which adheres to the belief of deities and spirits as the sources of magical power. These spirits seem to demand a wide variety of magical practices, which are generally of a practical nature meant to address the common ills of the community like healing the sick, bringing good harvest, and so on by using materials like plants, coins, nails, wood, eggshells, twine, stones, animals, feathers, etc. In Igbo, "*ogwugwo* means healing, and it is the totality of the process followed in order to cure any ailment or pain, be it physical, spiritual, emotional and social" (Mbiere "Health and Healing"). While commenting on Igbo medical treatment procedure, Ugwu, an

Igbo author, remarks that there are two types of "healing process in Igbo culture, [the first one is] the folk or the self medication, which is normally undertaken on a personal level. The second one involves the expert healing and consultation with the *dibia*, the traditional medicine men or the medicine experts" (69). The Igbo healthcare practice, therefore, "finds its identity in the life of the community [,] which influences every aspect of his/her life, including the understanding of health/healing and the integral care of the sick" (Mbiere "Health and Healing"). Thus, a resolution is sought after this state of life or health by way of healing.

At the very beginning of *Things Fall Apart* (1958), we come across the towncrier who beats his drum at night and calls the villagers to gather in the marketplace the following morning. For the first time, we come to know that the villagers are afraid of darkness, as they think that evil spirits lurk in the dark, which are analogous to dangerous animals: "Darkness held a vague terror for these people, even the bravest among them. Children were warned not to whistle at night for fear of evil spirits. Dangerous animals became even more sinister and uncanny in the dark" (Achebe 9). The meeting in the marketplace is about the killing of Ogbuefi Udo's (a village elder) wife in a market at Mbaino, a neighboring village. It is stated that Umuofia is feared by the neighboring villages for its power of magic, priests, and medicine men: "Umuofia was feared by all its neighbors. It was powerful in war and in magic, and its priests and medicine men were feared in all the surrounding country" (11). The medicine man of Umuofia, called "war-medicine," is, in fact, a one-legged woman as old as stone. This old woman is also called "agadi-muayi" whose shrine stands in the middle of Umuofia on an empty ground, which the villagers are afraid of visiting at night: "And if anybody was so foolhardy as to pass by the shrine after dusk he was sure to see the old woman hopping about" (11).

The mystery ingrained in the shrine is the biggest fear generator that impedes the neighboring villages from going into a head-on collision with Umuofia inhabitants. Umuofia has strong men; yet, no matter how powerful Umuofia is, the village elders cannot embark on a war against Mbaino unless the Oracle of the "Hills and the Caves" is consulted:

> And so the neighboring clans who naturally knew of these things feared Umuofia, and would not go to war against it without first trying a peaceful settlement. And in fairness to Umuofia it should be recorded that it never went to war unless its case was clear and just and was accepted as such by its Oracle—the Oracle of the Hills and the Caves. And there were indeed occasions when the Oracle had forbidden Umuofia to wage a war. If the clan had disobeyed the Oracle they would surely have been beaten, because their dreaded *agadi-nwayi* would never fight what the Ibo call *a fight of blame*. (11-12)

The holiest site in the shrine is located inside a cave with a very narrow opening that requires the visitors to crawl on their bellies in order to get in. Crawling on bellies is metaphorically the first act of unquestionable submission to the gods; the psychological impact of crawling falls heavily on the visitor's ego or confidence. Once the visitors are in, the high priestess, spokeswoman for Agbala, receives them in an expansive dark space, as Agbala is an invisible entity. The priestess stands by a sacred flameless glowing fire and proclaims Agbala's will.

Visitors willing to communicate with their ancestors' spirits, who have been reported to appear in blurry shapes by many, can do so only via the high priestess. The god does not directly communicate with the visitors; the communication, in case any communication occurs, only happens through the priestess, which shows that it is the priestess, who, in fact, orchestrates the presumed communication with the god or his or her appearance in front of the visitor. The god does not magically appear nor does he or she directly hold a conversation.

In Chapters Nine and Eleven, Okonkwo and Ekwefi's daughter Ezinma, "an only child and the center of her mother's world" (69), who is the last of her nine brothers and sisters that have died in infancy, falls sick, driving Okonkwo and Ekwefi out of their minds. Okonkwo and Ekwefi then take recourse to a series of treatments or supernaturally charged measures that may heal Ezinma's sickness or prevent her from dying prematurely. Ezinma's sickness turns her parents' world around, which imparts an image of the family bond and cultural heritage among the Igbo.

Nwoye opines that in Igbo society "worry and tribulations arise when the values of children, marriage, health, prosperity, and harmony are threatened" and this follows "from the fact that Igbo people believe that misfortunes can be caused by spirit agents whom we cannot see, and human ones, whose hearts we cannot know" (315). In Igbo "traditional psychiatric healing, there were healing techniques which were peculiar to the different traditional healers" (Chukwuemeka 41). Among the Igbos, "native or traditional healers are further distinguished in accordance with areas of specialization: 'Dibia Afa' (diviner) and 'Dibia-Ogwu' (medicine man)" (Uche 179).

It appears that Okonkwo has investigated the cause of his children's death by consulting with a medicine man of the Afa Oracle. As per the medicine man, the first child was an *ogbanje* or a bad child whose sole aim is to be born, die, and then be reborn to torment the parents. The Afa Oracle gave a solution to the problem asking Okonkwo to send Ekwefi off to her father's place during the time of her next pregnancy: "When your wife becomes pregnant again," he said, "let her not sleep in her hut. Let her go and stay with her people. In that way she will elude her wicked tormentor and break its evil cycle of birth and death" (70). Ekwefi did all these but the result remained the same.

Desperate Okonkwo then consulted another medicine man named Okagbue Uyanwa, whose expertise in resolving *ogbanje*-related issues is unquestionable:

> Okagbue was a very striking figure, tall, with a full beard and a bald head. He was light in complexion and his eyes were red and fiery. He always gnashed his teeth as he listened to those who came to consult him. (71)

Uyanwa prescribed that Ekwefi should sleep in Okonkwo's shack instead of sleeping in her own *obi*; he then mutilated the dead child's body, dragged it all the way to the Evil Forest, and buried it, stating that the *ogbanje* would find it hard to get back from the forest:

> After such treatment it would think twice before coming again, unless it was one of the stubborn ones who returned, carrying the stamp of their mutilation—a missing

> finger or perhaps a dark line where the medicine man's razor had cut them. (71)

Yet it seems that the *ogbanje* kept coming back until Ezinma was born. This child, too, was also labelled as an *ogbanje* and expected to die at any time until one day Uyanwa showed up and Ezinma's *iyi-uwa* broke off Ezinma's tie with the *ogbanje*.

It appears that the *iyi-uwa* is a landmark planted by *ogbanje* to identify the niche to return to. Once the landmark is dug up, the *ogbanje* would fail to locate the place and repeat its habitual act. Uyanwa asked Ezinma to help him find the *iyi-uwa.*After leading the crowd on for some time, Ezinma, in a trance, points out the location and digging ensues. Finally a stone wrapped in a cloth is found and the child is saved. The whole show of locating the *iyi-uwa* and digging it up seems to be very magical to the local audience, "Everybody knew she was an *ogbanje*" (72) although there is no real magical manifestation. Ezinma's helping Uyanwa to find out the *iyi-uwa* seems to be a collaborated performance to bring her parents and others to believe that the evil spirit is finally cast away. Ezinma loved the fact that she became the center of attention, and, as the author says, her "feeling of importance was manifest in her sprightly walk" (74). This explains her taking part in the orchestrated show. The author's remarks on Ekwefi's belief:

> Ekwefi believed deep inside her that Ezinma had come to stay. She believed because it was that faith alone that gave her own life any kind of meaning. And this faith had been strengthened when a year or so ago a medicine man had dug up Ezinma's *iyi-uwa*. Everyone knew then that she would live because her bond with the world of *ogbanje* had been broken. Ekwefi was reassured. (72-73)

Ezinma's new sickness has succeeded all these dramas and she lies in the bed with Ekwefi telling her stories to lessen her pain in the middle of a dark night: "The night was impenetrably dark. The moon had been rising later and later every night until now it was seen only at dawn. And whenever the moon forsook evening and rose at cockcrow the nights were as black as charcoal" (86). At this point, Agbala's priestess Chielo's shrill voice is heard. Although Chielo prophesizes recurrently, yet this time she specifically mentions Okonkwo's name: "Agbala do-o-o-o! Agbala ekeneo-o-o-o-o," came the voice like a sharp knife cutting through the night. "Okonkwo! Agbala ekme gioo-o-o! Agbala cholu ifu ada ya Ezinmao-o-o-oi" (91). Highly intimidated, Ekwefi presumes that Ezinma's death is imminent, "At the mention of Ezinma's name Ekwefi jerked her head sharply like an animal that had sniffed death in the air. Her heart jumped painfully within her" (91). Chielo arrives at Okonkwo's *obi* and demands to see Ezinma and takes her away paying no heed to Okonkwo and Ekwefi's joint entreaties asking her to come back the following morning. Once again the primordial fear of Okonkwo's clan for the darkness of night is highlighted here. Chielo's appearance at night but not during the day further underscores that people's fear is the chief factor that the clan's representatives of religion and medicine capitalize on.

To create a supernatural or magical ambience, arcane activities are done in secret in the absence of an audience. This is exactly what happens when Chielo picks up Ezinma from Ekwefi's *obi* in the middle of the night and runs away. Alienating Ezinma from her parents

not only impacts the parents but it also heavily influences Ezinma's psychic profile. Ekwefi's plea to escort Ezinma falls onto deaf ears, as the priestess refers to Agbala stating that no one should interfere in the god's will: "Tufia-al" the priestess cursed, her voice cracking like the angry bark of thunder in the dry season. "How dare you, woman, to go before the mighty Agbala of your own accord? Beware, woman, lest he strike you in his anger. Bring me my daughter" (92). Nevertheless, Ekwefi's motherly instinct forces her to follow Chielo from a distance. For Ekwefi, it's like an epical journey to the netherworld in the sheer darkness of night. She recollects seeing Ogbu-agadi-odu, the evil essence manifesting itself as glimpses of light in the long past and hears Chielo console her daughter with comforting words, "Come, my daughter," said the priestess. "I shall carry you on my back. A baby on its mother's back does not know that the way is long" (92). Chielo runs to Umuachi, the farthest village then gets back to another village called Ilo with Ekwefi hanging on her heels. She eventually detects Ekwefi and asks her to dissuade but Ekwefi remains relentless:

> The priestess' voice was already growing faint in the distance. Ekwefi hurried to the main footpath and turned left in the direction of the voice. Her eyes were useless to her in the darkness …. There were no stars in the sky because there was a rain-cloud. Fireflies went about with their tiny green lamps, which only made the darkness more profound. Between Chielo's outbursts the night was alive with the shrill tremor of forest insects woven into the darkness. (93-94)

In the murky light of an "incipient moon," Ekwefi sees strange figures and shapes, especially the shape of a man climbing a palm tree with his head pointing to the earth. Ekwefi, on the verge of losing her consciousness, recalls that Chielo is not the regular woman she knows from the marketplace, she is a part of the god Agbala who can help her face any challenge. As Chielo disappears into the cave of Agbala through a narrow pass, Ekwefi stands nearby munching on the futility of the trouble she has taken following her overhearing of the echo of Chielo's invocation of the god in the holy of holies. And then Okonkwo arrives. Ekwefi looks upon the face of Okonkwo, sees an assuring smile, and it dawns on her that Ezinma is safe. Ekwefi passes the ordeal, which the god Agabla has put on her to test her love for Ezinma; she has proved that she would jeopardize her own life to save Ezinma's, as the author narrates: "she swore … that if she heard Ezinma cry she would rush into the cave to defend her against all the gods in the world. She would die with her" (98). Magic or the very thought of a magical happening is a confidence builder. There is no denying that the arcane ambience of the cave and baffling ritualistic practice of the Igbo religion have instilled a strapping confidence in the combined psyche of Ezinma, Ekwefi, and Okonkwo to put an end to Ezinma's sickness for good.

The magical beliefs of the Igbo in *Things Fall Apart* are embedded in the incident of Ezinma's illness. In the whole treatment process of Ezinma, which has run for years, there appears to be no *ipsum magicis sanitas*; instead it is all mere cogitatio that remains vital while the *metum de magicae* does the acutal healing. Given the fact that there are references to many magical happenings of the past and present and there is a current evidence of so called magical healing of Ezinma at hand, it is hard to find concrete proof of actual magical occurrences anywhere in the text. All magical or supernatural incidents are either second or third hand reports,

which do not prove beyond reasonable doubt that any of those incidents actually occurred. All medicine men, priests, and priestesses are prone to creating an arcane atmosphere that ushers in fear for the supernatural or the magical power of gods and goddesses. These are votaries of gods who claim that they can invoke gods and goddesses and have them use their magical/supernatural power to heal, resolve crisis, or yield good harvest. Although the supernatural never occurs, the very fear of it does, which, in fact, does the job.

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Do I Dare … Disturb the Fan(atic)?
A Sociopsychological Study on Sports Fanaticism, Identity Formation, and the Making of a Fan

Mohammed Mizanur Rashid
Lecturer of English, East West University, Dhaka

Abstract
The ability to intuitively focus on ideas of sports and the fandom that it entails has not been the strongest subject of research throughout the countries of South Asia, and to understand the psychology that comes with it has been an even more farfetched notion. There is no denying that a gap subsists in the current literature that is accessible on matters such as sports fandom or identity formation apropos sports entities, teams or even franchises. Obviously, it is better to have an understanding of what sports fanaticism is, how it is related to individual identity and, more importantly, how it creates fan identity and also, to what extent the influences of such fandom operate in the context of our country. My paper, therefore, will primarily provide an account of sports fandom and fanaticism which will lead to the discussion of the present condition of sports fanaticism in Bangladesh focusing on the most popular sports of football. The paper will also put forward a theory about how sports fandom can accommodate itself as a perfect venue for identity creation and at the same time depict that, personal and psychological characteristics, contributing to the most basic determining factors of human psychology, have an immense part to play in the making of a sports fan. Finally, the paper will discuss the sociocultural effects and consumerist attitudes of sports fandom in our country. The research is based both on qualitative and quantitative approaches and is discussed in terms of social factors.

Fandom—The Current State: It has been just less than two centuries since the sport of football was introduced in Asia and ever since, it has been subject to compound repercussions in relation to our societies. From modern innovations to a tool of imperial regulation, the sport of football did not cease to be a mechanism for creating national, international, and beyond-border identities by becoming the most celebrated game and a forerunner of today's globalized consumerist society. The people of South Asia and, to be more specific, the people of Bangladesh, have always been great admirers and lovers of sports. Their great enthusiasm can be seen not only during the time of world cups but also the friendly matches between two fierce rivals of any given sport. Despite having the luxury of being exposed to so many different types of sports and although the national game is Hadudu, the general people are very enthusiastic about the game of football if we take the present condition into consideration. Geographically, the country itself, along with the entire Asian continent, has become very

important for the sport as well. The people of these parts are related to the game in three ways—as practitioners, as audience/fans, and as organizers. Therefore, the markets for both televising games and selling football related goods have been rejuvenated. Many national and international tournaments have also been arranged and these have been the subjects of vast investments as well. With the rise of fandom among the people and their entanglement with these games, there is a need for explanation on how fan identity is formed in these parts of the world and also what effect it has when considered from national, social, and economical perspectives. Now, the fan identity itself can be identified along with the leader-follower[1] identity praxis in terms of psychology and the idea of supporting or becoming a fan is a very natural phenomenon. The identity of a fan is very similar to the identity of a group. It is positive for the individual because it provides a sense of togetherness, a sense of community, and collectiveness. Zillman, Bryant and Sapolsky put forth many other optimistic notes on fandom including the inception of diverse interests and participation of the individual, who otherwise would not have had any other way to attach to what they hold dear. Fanship does not require any special skills either and that makes it a lucrative action for the ones who cannot perform in an athletic manner. The question is, however, not what sports fandom entails but among the various numbers of teams—international and national, foreign and domestic—how does a fan decide (or does one decide at all?) which teams, clubs or franchises to support?

Before we move on to even begin answering that question, let us first understand the multifaceted nature of the individual fan in our country. The "fan" of which we speak is not a linear entity but a sort of hybrid when it comes to supporting sport teams or athletes. The multifacetedness is a result of the amalgamation of quite a few factors which play crucial parts in crafting the psychology of the fan. This many-sided complex edifice within the consciousness of the fan is a result of not being able to directly identify himself or herself from stronger pledges. From a xenophobic point of view, our "fan" has very little to choose from since the majority of South Asian countries is not too well-known in the world for athleticism. So he or she must look elsewhere—towards other countries and their teams and athletes to find a more apposite and desirable taste. The sentiments of the "fan," however, are more reclusively wandering and thus, are harder to explain. There is always an existing tension between the fan's adopted taste and the innate one, thus, the "fan" that we are trying to explicate becomes remarkably different and unique.

For the sake of the scope of this paper, let us focus on the current state of fandom regarding football in our country. The people of our country support other foreign nations with more enthusiasm and vigor than their own countries which are inferior in sport skills and technical prowess. For most people who love this sport, it is no less than a religious conviction, a creed and therefore, people tend to support the ones which they feel are the strongest, the ones that can conquer and "protect," and the one that can bring dominance and establish peace (of mind). Therefore, it is painfully natural in our country that a contingent of fans assembling to see Lionel Messi's Argentina play against Nigeria would easily surpass the number of fans in a stadium watching their own country play against one of their regional rivals.

From Fandom to Fanaticism—Formation of a Fan(atic): A fan does not simply support a team or a club all of a sudden and, for every individual, there is a specific story behind their fandom. At this point there is a need to explain the relationship between the fan and the fanatic or likewise, between fandom and fanaticism. Fandom is merely the situation or status of being a fan of a particular team or an individual athlete. When an individual develops an attraction towards a particular team or athlete, we call the individual a fan of that exact team or athlete. According to the Cambridge Dictionary, a fan is "a person who is very much interested in and spends a lot of time watching or reading about esp. an entertainer or sports team." Now, the idea of fanaticism traditionally refers to the act of irrational dedication or zeal. It is comprehended to be wild and dangerous in nature and passionately committing. But, in this paper, we are not going to have the traditional impression of fanaticism. For this paper, fanaticism will denote an idea of excessiveness regarding the characteristics of a fan. Also, since it has been previously stated that the characteristics of the particular fan which we speak of is nonlinear and multifaceted as it enthusiastically supports other countries rather than its own, we will categorize this fan as a fanatic for the "irrational dedication" and therefore, in further discussion, the terminologies of fan and fanatic may overlap one another as they signify the same individual and the characteristics that follow.

In recent years, the football loving people of our country have not only become followers of International football but also commenced supporting teams at the club level and a good number of people who love the sport are fans of club teams like Chelsea, Arsenal, Manchester United, Barcelona, Real Madrid, AC Milan, Juventus, Bayern Munich, and so on. The reason is also not very difficult to fathom. To quote from Younghan Cho's significant document, *Football in Asia,* where he perennially describes the game of football as a global commodity:

> As one of the pop cultures, global sports came to replace the role of Hollywood in the process of cultural globalization. Given the central roles of the USA or American power in global sports, it is only football that is exceptionally unpopular with the USA. Contrarily, several European countries and Latin-American ones emerge as the powerhouses in football, and the Federation Internationale de Football Association (FIFA), which controls the FIFA World Cup, plays central roles in its organizational and institutional managements. As a result, a "soccerscape" in the globe portrays very different dimensions and dynamics, which have multiple centers and peripheries, and diversified trajectories. (3)

The diverse nature of football ensures an exposure of club level football in the country through cable network with channels like ESPN, Star Sports, Ten Action, etc. telecasting the most celebrated games live. I will reiterate the idea of most "celebrated" because many people think that the Champions League games, which resemble the World Cup of club teams, are more popular than the Olympic games themselves, which is considered to be "the greatest show on earth" and obviously far below the popularity of World Cup football. This may have opened the way for an individual to be exposed to both international and national level games but the process of creating the fan identity needs further narratives.

To explain how an individual goes through the process of creating a fan identity and identifies him or herself with a certain group, there is a need to understand the existing sociopsychological identity theories. Basically, there are two such theories that could be traced back to our own fan theory that we are trying to shape. One of them is Stryker and Burke's identity theory (1980) and the other one is Tajfel and Turner's social identity theory (1979). According to identity theory, which was based on McCall and Simmons, role identity theory, the individuals supposedly carry out actions based on where they want to see themselves and how they like to be seen by others. On the other hand, the social identity theory, which was a derivation from Festinger's social comparison theory, claims that individuals will somehow attach and/or identify themselves with entities or other individuals who are characteristically similar or slightly better than the individuals themselves. In this case, the way individuals categorize themselves is based on their social and personal identities. Generally speaking, identity theorists believe that social identity "refers to the ways in which individuals and collectives are distinguished in their social relations with other individuals and collectives" (Jenkins 4). As far as identity is concerned, it is nothing less than a group of mechanisms taking form on the "self" either knowingly or unknowingly and this defines what the "self" is yet to become. Once the formations have taken place, there, however, rises a concern of commitment. The concern is whether the individual is going to hang on to the principles or characteristics that have taken shape in him or her rather than completely denying the effects after a considerable amount of time. The bigger the impact of commitment on an individual, it could be safe to say, the stronger the attachment becomes. The level of commitment, however, does not remain in the same domain for eternity. For a fan, there comes a time when the commitment is questioned. The very existences of the ingredients that have turned a person into a fan come into question when the particular teams or clubs go through a rough patch. When the team is losing or is going through a losing streak, it is very hard for a fan to not question his or her level of commitment. Keeping all of these primary ideas in mind, we will further focus on the mechanism of how a fan is formed.

The process that an individual must go through in order to become a fan includes either one of the previously stated identity theories. But independently, neither of them is enough to explain the hows and whys that turn an individual into a fan. They are enough to explain how the identity of an individual takes shape; however, to explain the status quo of fandom, various other factors must be brought into play. At the inception of the primary stage, the fans associate themselves with specific teams by following one of three possible mechanisms. These mechanisms, which we will henceforth identify as "inceptors," reside as the very first stage of the complex process of becoming a fan. The three inceptors are known as the hereditary inceptor, the empiricist inceptor, and the rationalist inceptor. The hereditary inceptor takes effect mostly on the individual's emotional attachments with other individuals of the society to which the individual belongs. The individual becomes a fan of a team, athlete or club not because he or she has firsthand experience of the ability or prowess of the team but because most of the individuals in his or her community support that particular team. The individual, when becoming a fan, is unknowingly pressurized by the ones around him or her and the individual ends up not having much of a choice to decide otherwise. Sometimes, tradition

suppresses any other fluttering feelings and one is almost forced (again unknowingly) to become a fan of a certain team without fully realizing why the individual is doing so. Examples could be drawn from many of the football fans of Brazil and Argentina national teams and strikingly similarly, the cricket fans of India and Pakistan national teams who belong to Bangladesh.

The second inceptor is the empiricist inceptor. According to John Locke's empiricist theory, knowledge is nothing but "sense perception." The second inceptor is a direct derivation from this theory. At a young age, when the potential fans come across certain games for the very first time, there are certain sports they like, and then there are those which they despise. The idea of liking a certain type of sport and despising others could be innate, but the process of experiencing an attachment for certain teams, clubs or athletes and having a feeling of fondness for them is a work of the senses. This is also regarded as the strongest of the three inceptors since an individual experiences the process firsthand. For this particular inceptor, the level of commitment is also undoubtedly the highest. For the empiricist inceptor, there are further steps that the individual must complete in order to perfect the process. This will be discussed in the following portions of the paper.

The third inceptor is the rationalist inceptor. This type of inceptor is based on the innate knowledge thesis which proposes that we have the knowledge of some ideas in a particular subject area as part of our rational nature and this *a priori* knowledge is completely independent of sensory experiences. In this case, the potential fan is neither influenced by sense perception and/or experience, nor the effects of peer pressure. This particular individual creates a sort of attachment with particular teams or clubs for no explainable reason at all. There is a sense of innate attachment and sometimes the fans themselves cannot provide plausible answers when asked why they support the team they ended up supporting. As partially mentioned before, the levels of commitment for the three types of inceptors also differ from one another. Through a survey on fifty random individuals, we arrived at the conclusion that the empiricist inceptor shows signs of having the strongest level of commitment where the hereditary inceptor comes second and the weakest level of commitment was shown by the rationalist inceptors.

There is not much to explain regarding the later stages of fan formation in terms of the hereditary and rationalist inceptors due to their very natures. However, for the empiricist inceptor, the next stages become more and more entertaining. Since the formation of fandom under the empiricist inceptor depends a lot on sense perception, this one is also the kind that takes the most time for the construction to be complete. Here, the potential fan experiences the game-play of different teams or clubs and one day, a considerable amount of time later, begins to grow an attachment to one of the teams he or she has been watching all this time. Meanwhile, the magic has occurred and this instantly calls Žižek and his ideas of "fantasy" to mind. Slavoj Žižek wonderfully explains how the external materialization of ideology is bound to reveal latent characteristics which perhaps explicitly we fail to comprehend. The fast growing fame of what we know as the "fantasy games" available online, where individual players become managers backed up with "money" in cyberspace where they assemble their teams

and compete with other similar teams to win "prizes," is yet another very similar example of where the excess of the want of fantasmic pleasure could lead us. What the individuals fail to comprehend while being so busy in creating their own teams and franchises online is that these "fantasy games" which become the source of so much pleasure can never be real and therefore, it conceals the feeling of reality by recreating the very feeling that it wishes to conceal. Now, the relation of the potential fan and the fantasy is a matter of real importance in the case of the second inceptor. Although hard to realize, each individual and potential fan has his or her mindset regarding what style of play or players or teams they like which remain latent and hidden. Developing the taste for a certain type of game-play or style is, however, deeply connected with one's own personal characteristics. When the potential fan comes into contact with the games of certain teams and experiences the characteristics of the game-play, the style, the history, the potential, and the players of that team, which correspond with the already existing latent personal characteristics of the individual, the person develops a certain attachment towards that particular team. For this to happen, the two characteristics—one of the team and the other of the potential fan must correlate and must behave as an imperium in imperio. A certain fan, for example, who is characteristically self assured and to some extent dominating over other individuals would, under every circumstance, end up cheering for a club or team which has dominated in its respective sport for at least a considerable amount of recent time. This is but just one example among a flurry of probable prospects.

A second survey, which was carried out on a different group of fifty individuals (other than the ones who participated in the previous survey, Survey 1) who are ardent followers of different teams of the Barclays Premier League (the top tier football club competition of England), led to an amazing discovery. The survey assisted in concluding that there were five different categories of fans existing in the capital of Bangladesh, based on the five different traits and/or characteristics of different clubs in the BPL. The five traits are the following—the juggernaut, the magician, the pragmatic, the compassionate, and the historian. The juggernaut relates to those fans who answered the open-ended questions with a dominating tone. They prefer to lead and have a strong self belief in their abilities. They also possess a rich sense of heritage and, amazingly, most of them came out as supporters of the team known as Manchester United FC (the most decorated club in the BPL that boasts the most number of BPL trophies). Second, the magicians. These individuals are the advocates of style and beauty. Even in real life, they embellish and adorn themselves for the best of presentations. The matter of importance here is that the majority among them sided with the team known as Arsenal FC and also explained that they love this particular club because of its beautiful style of play. Next in line is the pragmatic. A certain number of the people chosen for the survey was accounted to be realistic in their decision making. These people always opted for the best possible outcome. They always remained with a positive outlook and they believed that no matter how ugly affairs get, they would like to come out with some sort of business done. They vouched for the team that goes by the name of Chelsea FC, which is known for its pragmatic approach to play. The next two are the compassionate and the historian. The compassionate comprise individuals who always tend to have a soft feeling for the underprivileged and the destitute. The majority having these personal traits happen to be the fans of Tottenham Hotspur FC, who regularly cut

a sorry figure in the BPL and very narrowly lose to their rivals. The historian is the last group of fans who characterize themselves as not being resilient enough when it comes to leaving the past and moving on. They prefer to cling on to the grand past and do not entertain the idea of embracing the future because the future, compared to the past, is a tad bit shabby. Not so surprisingly this time, they identified themselves as supporters of Liverpool FC, another club of the BPL franchise who was once a great team and who used to win a lot of trophies but recently have only managed to chase the shadows of their former selves. Holistically, there is no denying that a connection between a fan's personal traits, and the team or club he or she supports, is existent. This existence is perhaps even unknown to the supporter himself but what other reason could there be for an individual to support one particular team among many, and not the others.

Sometimes, one individual is found to identify him or herself with multiple teams as well. In that case, it is safe to say that those multiple teams share some similarities that enabled the individual to attach himself or herself to all of them. And when the teams do not seem to share similarities in traits, it could be said that the individual is going through some form of identity crisis. When it comes to the national teams at the international level, all these factors seldom come into play because then, a sense of national pride and patriotism prevails over all the previously explained factors. Even then, rarely some individuals are found who support rival nations and/or teams when teams representing their own countries feature in the same tournament. This, again, is an example of distorted identity for the individual concerned who also happens to be unsure about his or her own personal characteristics. The formation of a fan is a very diverse and critical process although there is no denying that the effect and relation of personal traits with experiencing and being able to identify oneself with the traits of the team or club, is of paramount importance.

Fandom, Sports Commodity and the Consumerist Society: Roy Krøvel and Thore Roksvold's edited collection, *We Love to Hate Each Other: Mediated Football Fan Culture*, investigates the centrality of media to contemporary sports fandom. The anthology includes theorizations and case studies of mediated football fan culture that engage a variety of national contexts, including Norway, Australia, England, Israel, Scotland, South Africa, and Sweden. The subject matter's diversity attests to the degree to which media have fostered increasingly globalized football fan cultures. Furthermore, it illustrates how the wealthiest and most powerful sports organizations, such as the English Premier League, have used media to cultivate communities of fans across the world. In addition to examining how media have facilitated and commodified football fandom, the collection's chapters usefully explore how media provide vehicles for fans to build, articulate, negotiate, and contest identities along national, gender, and ethnic lines. Further comprehension of their studies represents similar references between the footballing art/business relationship and what was echoed in Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer's essay, "The Culture Industry—Enlightenment as Mass Deception" where the authors brilliantly wrote:

> The man with leisure has to accept what the culture manufacturers offer him. Kant's formalism still expected a contribution from the individual, who was thought to relate the varied experiences of the senses to fundamental concepts; but industry robs the individual of his function.

We experience these games through the passive medium of television and the idea of "forced acceptance" is a materialization of negative industrial and cultural hegemony. Although these words are true for a one sided passive medium such as the television, the introduction of cyberspace changes the interactivity of the sphere to an extent. Now, the receivers not only "accept" what they are offered by the industry but "reply" and portray their views clearly as well through the many tools of cyberspace. Then again, throughout the internet, there are many social networking sites which have dedicated their existence in trying to make this world even smaller for its inhabitants than it already is. There are certain groups in these social networking sites that welcome people to be a part of that group because they feel that they share the same ideas, values and standards and by doing that, engage in debate, dispute, contest, and acknowledgment in certain subjects all related to the issue for which the group was created in the first place. There are two different categories of groups in these networks. One is the broad-minded, sports-oriented general groups where people who support different teams and clubs join and engage in debate or constructive discourse. And the other category comprises people who support individual teams or clubs, the latter being much more noiseless than the first since all of its members support the same team and so there is very little to debate about. These groups are more constructive and focus on how their favorite team could fare well in its competitive games. The first category, on the other hand, is more violent as fans from different rival teams gather here but to some extent, the debates they have are often constructive, giving it the essence of "constructive violence." These groups throughout cyberspace have created room for people who have access to it, for sharing their views and ideas. A lot of young people are seen giving case studies from the games held in the early 60s or 70s and this proves that these young individuals have done a lot of research on the games not only based on present tournaments but also from the past. The most interesting factor about the existence of these groups, however, is that it cultivates a grave consumerist attitude as well. Every month, there is at least one or two assemblies or gatherings hosted and entertained by the members of their respective groups in the name of watching the matches together, live on television. These gatherings are carried out in restaurants which are moderately expensive. Not only hangouts but every now and then, apparel, utilities, electronic gadgets, and other products carrying the emblem of the teams which individuals support, are sold at a hefty fee to their supporters. Sports fanatics are constantly being subjected to harassment by the consumerist society and it goes without saying that the fans and supporters make themselves easier targets because of the passion and love they embody for their respective teams.

No other idea, institution, or object brings so many people together and is so united in diversity compared to the various sports organizations existing around us. Fans and fanatics alike sometimes draw the line too narrowly and become overzealous, ending up committing

unruly and destructive behavior which has become a very regular incident all over the world and that includes our South Asian subcontinent as well. In 2010, Dean Nelson of *The Telegraph* reported that the police were forced to use crown control measures when riots broke out after two nearby villages in India fought over the famous South American footballing rivalry of Brazil and Argentina, three weeks before the beginning of the 2010 World Cup. Four years later, the same incident, concerning the same rivalry of Brazil and Argentina, happened, but this time in a different setting. The recent edition of the riots breaking out was not in the streets of Rio or the markets of Buenos Aires but the unlikeliest setting of Barisal, a district in the southern part of Bangladesh, some ten thousand miles from where the World Cup was commencing for the fifth time in South America. In some countries of Europe and the Americas, however, sports fandom becomes synonymous with hooliganism and terrorism as well, but that is not yet the scenario in the South Asian countries. Despite all the negativity, the future of the sport of football in our country and, on a larger scale, in Asia, looks bright. It goes without saying that many Asian club leagues are turning into successful organizations and the local footballing events are gaining international reputation. However, it is still regrettably true that the majority of Asian football fans are orienting their concentration towards Latin American or European leagues even though many Asian countries have their own professional football leagues and clubs. Predominantly in Asia, Korea initiated the K-League in 1983, Japan began their version of the J-League ten years later in 1993, and China did something similar with the Chinese Super League in 2004. Most recently in 2013, India launched their version of the professional football league known as the Indian Super League and carried on for two years with immense success. Bangladesh must look forward to emulating similar accomplishments so that the ascendance of professional football remains integral to our local, national, and international progress.

Notes

1. Four distinct identity types: the leader, the follower, the independent, and the drifter.

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Survey 1

A survey on the level of commitment of the three different inceptors based on personal choices and actions.

*Personal information will not be published.

1. Name:
2. Age:
3. Favorite Sport:
4. I am a fan of the following national team(s): i.
   ii.
   iii.
5. I am a fan of the following domestic/club team(s): i.
   ii.
   iii.
6. I first realized I was becoming a fan at the age of:
7. How did you first begin supporting your favorite team?
8. Did anyone (family, friends, associates) influence you to support the team?
9. Why did you become a fan of this particular team? What persuaded you the most?
10. Any comment that you would like to put into words:

Thank you for your kind support.

Survey 2

A survey on individual traits, likes/dislikes, and personal characteristics of the followers of different teams of The Barclays Premier League.

*Personal information will not be published.

1. Name: 2. Age:

3. Mark the team you support from the Barclays Premier League:

Arsenal	Chelsea	Manchester United	Liverpool	Tottenham Hotspur
Everton	Leicester	Manchester City	Newcastle	Watford

4. Do you think that your support to the team you have marked in the previous point has anything to do with your personality and/or personal characteristics? Explain in no more than 100 words. (Feel free to use the opposite side of the page if necessary).

Thank you for your kind support.

Reading the Language of Children in Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things*

Zakiyah Tasnim
Assistant Professor of English, University of Chittagong

Abstract
Language is considered to be more than a mere means of communication by the postcolonial critics. Language holds a person's understanding of the world as well as reveals the inner workings of that person. This paper takes Arundhati Roy's The God of Small Things *as a sample of this postcolonial trait of language. Roy uses language to open the windows of her child protagonists' minds. A close reading of the text enables the researcher to appreciate the use of children's language in this text to understand their innocent world and also how they see the experienced world of the adults.*

The use of language and the nonlinear narrative are among the most striking features of Arundhati Roy's Booker winning novel *The God of Small Things*. The unmistakably innocent, yet deceptively simple, language accompanied by the fragmented structure, continual use of flashback and flashforward make this debut novel of Roy's an unconventional one. As the Booker prize Selection Board chairperson, Gillian Beer, stated: "With extraordinary linguistic inventiveness, Arundhati Roy funnels the history of south India through the eyes of seven-year-old twins. The story she tells is fundamental as well as local: it is about love and death, about lies and laws. Her narrative crackles with riddles and yet tells its tale quite clearly. We were all engrossed by this moving novel" (qtd. in Glaister).

The tale tells the personal tragedy of the protagonists, Rahel and Estha, and their loved ones, that took place twenty three years ago. While the very first chapter maps out the major events of the story, the rest of the book unfolds the backdrops that led to these occurrences. A close reading of *The God of Small Things* reveals two trails of narratives in the story: one of the child protagonists' simple style—the childish narrative, and the other of the omniscient narrator's. In other words, Roy employs two perspectives to tell the same story in alternating narrative threads. In fixed, unmarked English, the narrator reports some events, whereas the story mainly proceeds through the twins, especially Rahel's, playful, spontaneous, innocent telling of experiences. Of these two linguistic worlds, this essay focuses on the language of the twins to explore their ideas of the outside adult world. How Roy explores children's perception and response to the world through their use of language is the main concern here.

The God of Small Things is a story of innocent childhood and the disruption of that innocence when it comes in contact with the adult world of experience. Ritu Menon, in her book review, states that Roy depicts "The fear of it, the terror and love of it, the deep scars it leaves … the gradual contamination of relationships by the perfidy of the adult world is exquisitely presented through a series of vignettes and revelations" (1). All the windows of the children's world are opened through the use of their playful language, choice of words, linguistic features like neologism, similes, metaphors, irony, imagery, personification, symbolism, etc, or sudden

unusual capitalization of letters. They are found to read and speak backwards. Their words run into each other or sometimes are broken apart. In their distinct linguistic world single words are sometimes important enough to make a paragraph. As Anna Clarke explains, "The twins, like most children, play with language; they enjoy making up words and breaking rules of grammar, and they cherish the sound of words without even knowing their meaning" (134).

Like most children, Rahel and Estha, the seven year old twins, look into the world from a rational point of view. And the language is no exception in this process of rational filtering. They like to have reason and logic in language as well. For example, when they come to know of "cuff-links," they like the logic of its structure. "When the twin asked what cufflinks were for—'To link cuffs together,' Ammu told them—they were thrilled by this morsel of logic in what had so far seemed an illogical language. Cuff + link = Cuff-link"(Roy 51). But it is not what they always find in adult language. For instance, the "bellboy" in an adult language is not necessarily a boy, nor is it mandatory for him to have a bell. Once they observe an ambulance named Sacred Heart Hospital. The irony lies in the fact that it is full of a party of people on their way to a wedding! (60).

The use of different figures of speech serves multiple purposes in the twins' language. Sometimes similes are applied to reveal the children's attitude towards others, sometimes they tell us the inner agonies of a neglected child, or at times they are only meant to poke fun. The description of dead Sophie Mol by Rahel lets us know of her incapability to grasp the gravity of the tragedy: "Her face was pale and as wrinkled as a dhobi's thumb from being in water for too long" (4). She reveals her belief that Sophie Mol is not really dead and also she is showing "a small black bat" baby to Rahel. Estha's portrayal of the "Orangedrink Lemondrink Man," even before this man abuses Estha, makes his disgust known to the reader: "His gold wristwatch was almost hidden by his curly forearm hair. His gold chain was almost hidden by his chest hair …. He looked like an unfriendly jewelled bear"(102). The discrimination practiced by the adults in dealing with the children affects their psychology. They can sense the negligence even if it is not stated. Rahel smells the carelessness for her in the atmosphere when the full family greets Sophie Mol: "Rahel … saw that she was in a Play. But she had only a small part. She was just the landscape. A flower perhaps. Or a tree. A face in the crowd. A townspeople. Nobody said Hello to Rahel" (172). Unlike adults, the preferred kid also dislikes the unnecessary show of affection. And this similitude brings them on the same platform in no time. Sophie Mol refuses to be the replacement of Estha and Rahel in Mammachi's service. She also "not just rejected, but rejected outright and extremely rudely, all of Baby Kochamma's advances and small seductions" (189). Her tears to be allowed within the twins' world made her "human" in their eyes. This feeling of the twins indicates that the adults' extraordinary treatment of Sophie almost turned her into a superhuman in the eyes of the other kids and made her lonely for the time being.

The text also brings to light the children's quality to find fun in things that adults do not ever think of. The "orangedrink" man's teeth are like "yellow piano keys" (188), Kochu Maria is "vinegar-hearted" (185) and "Baby Kochamma rose between them like a hill" (62). The manner in which the beauty conscious Baby Kochamma is described also reveals the children's ability

to poke fun: "Baby Kochamma was holding on to the back of the front seat with her arms. When the car moved, her armfat swung like heavy washing in the wind. Now it hung down like a fleshy curtain, blocking Estha from Rahel" (62).

The way the kids twist language also becomes a source of irony for the serious adult world. Pappachi's moth, that could have been the source of his extreme success, becomes associated with Rahel's bad and ominous feelings: "On Rahel's heart Pappachi's moth snapped open its somber wings. Out. In. And lifted its legs. Up. Down" (293). Another irony is that the lists of things important and unimportant are largely different in children's and adults' worlds. The maltreatment of a kid, separation of siblings, or detachment of a child from his mother "are only the small things" (3) in adult realization. On the other hand, these are events important enough to ruin the total course of the children's lives. Sharma and Talwar write that:

> a sensitive and thoughtful re-reading of the text will reveal that the deceptive statement has a profound significance. What are almost insignificant things from the larger point of view - a child's sexual abuse and his separation from his mother—are in fact, cataclysmic; …. (21)

Roy's mastery lies in the fact that she can comprehend things from a child's perspective. The children's language she uses enables her readers to grasp that perception as well. The visual images that her child protagonists refer to, on many occasions, bring to light the unpleasantness of the adult world. The unhealthy fights between parents have a universally acknowledged effect on children: "they remembered being pushed around a room once, from Ammu to Baba to Ammu to Baba like billiard balls" (84). Rahel is pleased when Chacko is mistakenly thought to be her father. She wants to be a part of a normal family (79). Their longing to have a father figure in their lives is also evident when they pretend like "clerks."

At times their imagery is only to assert their innocence: "A pale daymoon hung hugely in the sky and went where they went" (87).

Society, religion, and humanity—all heavyweight sectors are lifeless, valueless, or meaningless to the child's innocent mind when Rahel finds their cruelty after her mother's death. Ammu and her twins are already abandoned by society: "Though Ammu, Estha and Rahel were allowed to attend the funeral, they were made to stand separately, not with the rest of the family. Nobody would look at them" (5). After Ammu's death, the church refuses to bury her and so her body has to be cremated. The description of the cremation of Ammu by her left alone daughter, Rahel, is one of the most violent blows on the face of the pretentious society:

> The heat lunged out at them like a famished beast. Then Rahel's Ammu was fed to it. Her hair, her skin, her smile. Her voice. The way she used Kipling to love her children before putting them to bed: We be of one blood, ye and I. Her goodnight kiss. … All this was fed to the beast, and it was satisfied. She was their Ammu and their Baba and she had loved them Double. (163)

The outside world, people living in it—everything becomes insensible or worthless in the child's mind when it encounters such unkindness from them. The evil and corruption of the social institutions are brought to light by the seemingly innocent languages of the

child protagonists of Roy. Rahel's imagery opens the mask of fake humanity around her: "Outside the van windows, people, like cut-out paper puppets, went on with their paper puppet lives" (162).

One striking feature of the children's language is their habit of reading or speaking backwards. In their own world they frequently use this reversed style. In this childish game they have discovered different palindromes. For instance, "Malayalam" and "Madam I'm Adam" can be read both backwards as well as forwards. However, this playfulness does not touch a representative of the adults, Miss Mitten. She thinks she has seen Satan in their eyes: "nataS in their seye" (60). This habit of the twins may indicate their unconscious longing to reverse the events of their lives. Their reading backwards in the police station hints at the backward moving condition of this authority of justice. Politeness, Obedience, Loyalty, Intelligence, Courtesy, and Efficiency are all the qualities to be assembled by the police. But in reality, the police have "broken" a "technically innocent man."

The child protagonists' naive reporting of some adult language or behavior is actually the irrationalities of the adults that the innocent mind cannot grasp. While greeting Margaret and Sophie, Baby Kochamma uses a "strange new British accent" and gives references to Shakespeare. Rahel thinks that "All this was of course primarily to announce her credentials to Margaret Kochamma. To set herself apart from the Sweeper Class" (144). Class and caste are again some unfathomable factors of the adult world that the children can neither understand nor bother to abide by. They are forbidden to go to Velutha's house as he is an "untouchable." Nevertheless, it is Velutha that the children take as a friend, dream of as their father figure. In this regard, Arundhati Roy's perception of the superior privileged class people can be seen. In an interview with Amitava Kumar, Roy said: "There is something clerky and calculating about our privileged classes. They see themselves as the State or as advisors to the State, rarely as subjects."

The apparently childlike reports of different events by the twins are at times food for some deeper thought. Six policemen's approach to arrest Velutha is immediately followed by an innocent remark that they are the "servants of the State" since the children can sense the "dark of (their) Heart" (304).

Roy uses the kids' judgment to bring out the social discrepancy between a son and a daughter in the questions of inheritance. The social and economic insecurity of daughters are the results of indigenous patriarchy. Though Ammu did as much work in the factory as Chacko, whenever he was dealing with food inspectors or sanitary engineers, he always referred to it as my factory, my pineapples, my pickles. Legally, this was the case because Ammu, as a daughter, had no claim to the property. Chacko said, "What's yours is mine and what's mine is also mine" (57).

Through the perception of the twins, this text of Roy's also brings into focus a big issue of the field—the Anglophiles. Pappachi, the Imperial Entomologist, is an "incurable British CCP, which was short for chhi-chhi poach and in Hindi meant shit-wiper" (51) and "Until the day he dies, even in the stifling Ayemenem heat, every single day, Pappachi wore a well pressed three piece suit and his gold pocket watch" (49). Pappachi is the perfect example of the "class of interpreters" of T.B. Macaulay. Macaulay said: "We must form a class of interpreters—Indian in blood and colour, but English in taste, in opinions, in morals, and in intellect."

After Ammu's separation, Pappachi does not believe Ammu's story—"not because he thought well of her husband, but simply because he didn't believe that an Englishman, any Englishman would covet another man's wife" (42). Chacko's proclamation that they are a family of Anglophiles is confirmed with the arrival of Margaret and Sophie. Mammachi, Baby Kochamma and Kochu Maria—all are overexcited to welcome the British guests. To the kids it is termed as the "'Welcome Home our Sophie Mol 'Play'." The week before their arrival is also equally irritating as it is "What Will Sophie Mol Think? Week." A naked exposure of the Anglophiles is found in Baby Kochamma's attitude too:

> The whole week Baby Kochamma eavesdropped relentlessly on the twins' private conversations and whenever she caught them speaking in Malayalam, she levied a small fine which was deducted at source. From their pocket money. She made them write lines—'impositions' she called them—I will always speak in English, I will always speak in English. A hundred times each. (36)

Sometimes the twins are found to be making efforts to understand adult standards and ways of language. Chacko says that Ammu and Estha and Rahel are "millstones around his neck" (85). They know about "millstones" that are put around the necks of corpses before throwing them to water when people die at sea. The adult world confuses the kids with their understanding of some basic words like "love" and "duty." In her list Rahel feels obliged to put Mammachi before Velutha; and include Sophie Mol only because she is her cousin and needs to be loved. But Rahel is continually torn "between love and duty." "Fountain-haired" Rahel tries hard to cope with the idea of "infinite joy" that can even make her Ammu love Sophie Mol more than her. But that "infinnate joy" sounds like "a sad fish with fins all over" to her (118). They are really unable to grasp the adult world that transforms their Ammu into ashes, bearing a receipt no. Q498673. Finally, when Estha speaks the adult language, "yes," that becomes the closing word for his soul—"Not death. Just the end of living" (321). With that single adult word, Estha's "childhood tiptoed out. Silence slid in like a bolt" (320).

The children themselves sort different ways out of these adult language problems. They recreate their own linguistic world to overcome the inadequacies of the adult world. Estha and Rahel are pretty good in creating words of their own, when necessary. Restructuring of regular words and sudden unusual capitalizations are also common among these kids. Sometimes they take shelter under linguistic devices like personification or symbolism. They also frequently change their identities with different peculiar meaningless names according to their circumstances.

In spite of Ammu's corrections about "irregular space between words," portmanteau or adjoining words seem to be a common passion for the children. "Bluegreyblue eyes, Orangedrink Lemondrink Man" (136), "CocaColaFantaicecreamrosemilk, Ofcourseofcourse, longago, Deadlypurposed" (142), "Whatisit" (4), "Whathappened" (4), "furrywhirring" (4), "sariflapping" (4), "Finethankyou" (69), "dearohdear" (73)—all are unusually combined words by the children.

The children have their own matters of importance which are not necessarily the same as adults. And many a time they use capital letters to indicate these important episodes of their own. "Outside, the Air was Alert and Bright and Hot" (201); "Ammu explained later that Too Briefly meant For Too Short a while" (7); "The History House"; "A Far More Angry Than Necessary feeling"; "Is. That. Clear? Ammu said again"; "it was best to just Let Her Be"; "The Audience was a Big Man. Estha was a Little Man, with the tickets"; "A Free Cold Drink"—all these expressions allow us to have a few glimpses into the twins' secret world.

The kids take help of personification in different incidents. Estha thinks it is his "mouth" that uttered the word "yes." Again, it is Ammu's mouth, "trying-not-to-cry mouth," that bade "bye" to Estha, he thinks. Their mother's love is expressed through her eyes and they long to see those "Ammu-eyes." At times it is only the depth of the situation that is portrayed through personification: "A silence sat between grand-niece and baby grand aunt like a third person. A stranger. Swollen. Noxious" (21).

Rahel's watch is a remarkable symbol in this text. She is found to look at her watch repeatedly though it has only one painted time: ten to two. Her watch is left behind in the history house when life actually stopped for them. Rahel always longs to have a real watch where the time can be changed. And it is the time of their real world that the siblings want to change.

The twins' repeated shifting of identities, their own and others as well, show their constant effort to fit in an adult world. They are sometimes the "Frightened eyes and a fountain." Or have the heavy duty of being the "Ambassadors of India. Their Excellencies Ambassador E(lvis). Pelvis, and Ambassador S(tick). Insect." Estha is often "Elvis Presley" or "Esthappen Un-known." In his own story, Estha writes: "Rahel was a maharani and I was Little Nehru." To his beloved Velutha Estha has a different entity: "Esthappappychachen Kuttappen Peter Mon" (152). With Sophie Mol they visit Velutha's house and pretend to be Mrs Pillai, Mrs Eapen and Mrs Rajagopalan. Their secret missions to the hideout place make the twins "Comrade Rahel" and "Comrade Estha." Their frustrated defeated condition is expressed through their titles again: "Bewildered Twin Ambassadors of God-knows-what." It is not only for them that they create new identities. They do it for others as well. Velutha's tragedy make the helpless kids take shelter in the world of fiction where they allot a new identity for him: "It's his twin brother. Urumban. From Kochi," says Rahel. (311) And Estha confirms her hours later:

> "You were right. It wasn't him. It was Urumban."
> "Thank god," Rahel whispered back.
> "Where d'you think he is?"
> "Escaped to Africa." (320)

The children's musical language brings a light tone to the tragedy. Estha sings from the popular Popeye the Sailor cartoon:

> I'm Popeye the sailor man dum dum
> I live in a cara-van dum dum
> I op-en the door
> And fall- on the floor
> I'm Popeye the sailor man dum dum (98)

Rahel is also spontaneous with her music: "There was/ A girl/ Tall and/ Thin and/ Fair/ Her hair/ Her hair/ Was the delicate colourov/ Gin-nnn-ger (leftleft, right)/ There was/ A girl-" (141). Sometimes they simply describe their surroundings in rhythms: "Scurrying hurrying buying selling luggage trundling porter paying children shitting people spitting coming going begging bargaining reservation-checking" (300).

The children have reported the surrounding adult world in their own ways. At times they are found to try to cope in that world where language does not speak of the reality or expose the ugly face of society. Nevertheless, after twenty three years they are in the same state, only seeking rationality from the so-called rational civilized adult world: "They didn't ask to be left off lightly. They only asked for punishments that fitted their crimes" (326).

Estha and Rahel try to understand adult values. But the irony of their fate is that when they become adults themselves, they cannot understand it. They remain the victims of the adult world:

> A pair of actors trapped in a recondite play with no hint of plot or narrative. Stumbling through their parts, nursing someone else's sorrow. Grieving someone else's grief. Unable, somehow, to change plays. Or purchase, for a fee, some cheap brand of exorcism from a counselor with a fancy degree, who would sit them down and say, in one of many ways: 'You're not the Sinners. You're the Sinned Against. You were only children. You had no control. You are the victims, not the perpetrators.' (191)

The God of Small Things takes us on a tour inside a child's kingdom, a dream world that all of us have left behind years ago. Through their unprejudiced judgment, the children point out the treachery and duplicity of the adult world. They also decide their own ways to cope with these deceits and betrayals of adults. In the easy and fitting language of children, Roy shows her mastery over language that she skillfully uses to express her thoughts.

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The Effects of Inescapable Memories in Jhumpa Lahiri's *The Lowland*

Sharjita Yeasmin
Lecturer of English, University of Chittagong

Abstract
The paper discusses the effects of disruptive memories in Jhumpa Lahiri's The Lowland. *The death of Udayan and the memories of it make the existence of three characters dysfunctional: Bijoli, Gauri, and Bela. Of them, the former two have witnessed the killing while the latter has vicariously felt its everlasting impact on her psychological upbringing. Bijoli, who is the mother of Udayan, is rooted to the time and place of her son's killing, and Gauri, the wife of Udayan, is crushed in between the remembering and the forgetting of her husband's existence. Gauri wants to but cannot forget the past she left behind; her attempts to forget, on the other hand, largely affect her daughter, Bela's life. The article focuses on the overwhelming and all-consuming power of unpleasant memories and concomitant psychosocial crisis of them.*

Jhumpa Lahiri's recent novel *The Lowland* (2013) reverberates with memories of Udayan whose unexpected death brings a lasting effect upon his near ones. Throughout the novel, memory, accompanied by its perennial effects, seems impossible to escape. Memories, with their multifaceted form of happiness and sadness, are the essential keys for any human identity. It is the mental stimuli that reappear on the human mind even after the original consequences and images have ceased to exist. Sometimes the memories of unpleasant events disrupt the human lives. Lahiri sheds light on these dimensions of dark memories and their haunting aftermath. The characters—Bijoli, Gauri and Bela— who are directly and indirectly related to Udayan's life obviously suffer from the wound of losing him. In fact, the burden of his memories is ineluctable—so much so that it lingers and affects them for the rest of their lives.

Udayan Mitra's absence has an all-consuming power in his family. His convivial presence, interest, and enthusiastic involvement in politics are such that they make his personality much more charismatic than his brother, Subhash. The lively presence of Udayan at home is so powerful that even his brother's successful and safer career abroad cannot sound that impressive beside his nonconformist lifestyle. The Naxalite activism leads him to his untimely death. He became a revolutionary member of the Naxal movement and was trapped in the murder of a policeman. Even his wife, Gauri, not sure of his exact motives, assists him in that murder. Later, he was killed in a police encounter near his own house in Tollygunge. And the shocking part is that his family members witness the murder. After such a terrible experience, the family eventually faces a kind of adverse attitude from the society which also leads to an intra-family crisis. Udayan's mother and wife can neither nurture the memories of Udayan nor afford to remember the experience of such a terrifying death scene. It is an experience that is not translatable, so his family consciously avoids talking about his existence and death. However, the readers receive detailed information about the murder scene from the following narrative:

> They saw one of the soldiers undoing the rope around his wrists. They saw Udayan walking across the field, away from the paramilitary. He was walking toward the lowland, back toward the house, arms raised over his head … For a moment it was as if they were letting him go. But then a gun was fired, the bullet aimed at his back. The sound of the shot was brief, unambiguous … She watched his arms flapping, his body leaping forward, seizing up before falling to the ground. (105)

Udayan's tragic end turns the family dysfunctional; nothing can possibly be rectified further. It magnifies the rift of mutual understanding between Gauri, Udayan's wife, and Bijoli, his mother. Then arise the questions of how they would come to terms with the death or what their approach would be in case Udayan's memory surfaces. In case of Bijoli, the mourning for her dead son is the only way she can find to cope, but for Gauri, the response is much more suppressed. Later on, this suppression leads to her inability to cope with the absence of Udayan. Larry Ray's comment is relevant regarding this situation: "death … evoke[s] powerful responses and it is crucial whether these take the form of reconciliation with the past (mourning) or melancholic repression of grief followed by the repetition of trauma that cannot be expurgated" (145). The death of Udayan might be a form of mourning or a form of repressed trauma. There are twofold expressions in the novel: one is the integration of mourning in present life, which endures the tragic death, while the other rejects the dark memories through an evasive tendency, through the series of departure. The manifestation of grief here is psychosociological; for example, Bijoli's form of reconciliation is to mourn, to be attached to the wasteland of Tollygunge, while Gauri's apparently suppressed emotion is only to get a sort of temporal relief from her current identity crisis. The firsthand experience of watching Udayan die at the hands of the police has already created a deep scar on the psyche of both Gauri and Bijoli, and this image is inscribed permanently on their memories in a way that it goes with them wherever they choose to live, be it Tollygunge or Rhode Island.

The lowland which could be a safeguard for Udayan is cluttered up with filth and unwanted things. The neighborhood often uses it as a place for wastage. It is so unproductive a land, a "muddle" of mourning that nobody cares to clean it except Bijoli. There is a memorial stone of Udayan's inside that marshland, and Bijoli loves to clean the place because this is how she actually keeps her son's memory intact. Perhaps, by doing so, Bijoli comes to terms with the intensity of her pain, and in one way or another, it gives her the strength to survive. Staying in Tollygunge and never thinking of leaving it, she always cherishes the idea of being attached to the lowland which might help her live and relive the past. For her, the memories of the lost son are not traumatic ones, rather she fixates herself on that particular past event because she finds it more bearable to accept and to live with. In a way, it reduces the burden of remembrance: "Remembering is thus conceived as an activity which takes place in and is fundamentally shaped by the present" (Whitehead 91). Throughout her life, she always expects to see her son Udayan again, coming out from the hyacinth, safe and sound: "She waits, certain that he is there, that he hears what she tells him. She talks to herself, to no one" (190-191). Grappling with that past event, she begins with a solitary journey that seems to deny even the existence of her other son. She feels the shame of "not only surviving one child

but losing another, still living" (186), and the reason of which, perhaps, is Gauri-Subhash's marriage. Udayan's death creates a void, an obvious "family of solitariness." It becomes an unspoken convention in the family that no one will mention anything consciously about Udayan or his death, and this single death disperses the previous relationship pattern in the family, breaking strings of harmony and drastically shifting the status quo. Everything that is related to this death has been thereafter silenced.

However, Gauri's situation is differently excruciating. Unlike Bijoli, she needs an escape from the lowland: an escape from the eternal dilemma of forgetting and remembering. The act of remembrance has, then, hinged her to the burden of past and present. And it is unbearable for Gauri in whatever status she belongs to: a widow or a remarried one. After Udayan's death, therefore, she has neither any secure roots in Tollygunge nor the bondage of love, care and happiness. The "memory of past emotions," in this regard, appears as a deadlock for her. If she stays in Tollygunge further along with the memories of Udayan, she would be a common and neglected widow in an unfavorable setting. What aggravates her crisis more is that "a piece of Udayan in her womb" (186) is growing inside her body; significantly, it forces her to take the responsibility of her child even though her unexpected pregnancy has been discovered after Udayan's death:

> She wished the days and months ahead of her would end. But the rest of her life continued to present itself, time ceaselessly proliferating. She was made to anticipate it against her will. There was the anxiety that one day would not follow the next, combined with the certainty it would. It was like holding her breath, as Udayan had tried to do in the lowland. (111)

So Gauri's decision to accept Subhash's marriage proposal is just a way to evade the coexistence with trauma she confronts in Tollygunge. Milan Kundera, in his novel, *The Unbearable Lightness of Being*, states that "the heavier the burden, the closer our lives come to the earth, the more real and truthful they become" (5). In one way, it can be said that accepting burdens is a compromising survival which is somehow real and bearable in the present. On the other hand, the denial of past memories or any crisis might aggravate the pain even more. In this way, the concept of existential heaviness and lightness can be observed here, in this novel, in two ways of survival: Bijoli is assimilated into her present existence where she seems to be much more expressive with her pain whereas Gauri tries to be evasive by not clinging to her remembrance. The act of accepting burdens makes one's existence lighter, and the rejection of it might bring an overwhelming heaviness onto life. Whitehead says, "to remember may be a crushing and painful activity but it is also a 'responsibility'" (88). Gauri's remembrance is a kind of responsibility that she tries to escape in several ways. She attempts to merge her Indian identity with an American one when she cuts her long hair off and tears up "all of her saris, … throwing the old things into garbage bags" (141). Gauri even tries to cross the cultural barrier of her Indian self, but it seems an apparently futile attempt to remove that particular part of life from the whole memory block. As a result, this tendency to hide past identities could not help abate her psychic wounds. Even the displacement could not alleviate the burden inside her mind. Kaul's comment regarding this issue is illuminating: "Memory is, above all, a

restless, energetic, troubling power, the price, and the limitation, of freedom; the abettor, and the interrogator" (269). It has a sort of "troubling power" to remind her of the roots she has left behind. Gauri does not return to Tollygunge after she leaves the place, but its memories always coexist within her, vacillating in the paradox of remembering and forgetting the past. Thus, the dispossession of culture or dislocation might give her a transitory relief from this crisis, but it draws a parallel line with her reality as well.

Eventually the reenactment of the past in Gauri's life is more visible with the presence of her daughter, Bela. In terms of the Proustian memory concept, Bela's role may be served as an "involuntary memory." Udayan appears through Bela, causing a new crisis in Gauri's American life. Actually, the involuntary memory is what takes out the "buried memories" in reality, and it is Bela who becomes a reminder of that buried reality. According to *The Penguin Dictionary of Psychology* involuntary memory "emerges unanticipated, unplanned, and unintended." It is unintentional, but the presence of Bela also ensures the absence of Udayan in Rhode Island. Gauri's relentless efforts to forget the past and Bela's appearance are opposing factors. Gauri seems to be oblivious of her past, but the moments she is accompanied by Bela turns into "the madeleine moment" recapturing Tollygunge and Udayan. In this way, the recurrence of the past has such an enervating force that it causes discomfiture in Gauri's life again. The consequence is no less severe: "The past is no longer inert and passive, but is powerfully reshaped in and through the concerns of the present. The delayed action of remembering, in other words, allows the past to develop, to evolve along with changing circumstances over time" (Whitehead 91). Although there is a possibility that Subhash and Bela might naturally develop a filial attachment in the USA, the missing role of Udayan comes forth strongly because of Bela's presence. And it points out the fact that Udayan's due responsibility is now performed by his own brother. In Rhode Island, just before the birth of Bela, Gauri even mentions it to Subhash: "'Your brother was supposed to be here,' she added. 'This child should have been his responsibility, whether he wanted it or not'" (137). Rhode Island is far away from Tollygunge, but it stores an "essence of past" for Gauri. It seems to be a ceaseless traumatic time: "with Bela she [is] aware of time not passing … of perfect silence in the apartment, replete with the isolation she and Bela shared" (163). She discovers gradually the dysfunctional relationship with Subhash, a relation that is more based on gratitude than on love. As a matter of fact, she is unable to form a perfect family without Udayan who holds the strings to love, and with his death, it falls apart. Then what remains with Gauri, at the end of the day, is Bela, along with involuntary, scattered and intermittent memories of her past. The family concept starts to disperse again in the USA just because of the haunting past, because of the shared memories. For this reason, Gauri starts to spend less time with her daughter and engrosses herself in her PhD dissertation. She feels like engaging herself in something where she does not have to feel the burden of the secrets of her previous life; she will be free from Subhash's false parenthood too. However, Bela, unaware of her paternal origin, in her childhood, lacks the warmth of parental bondage. Upon her ignorance, she becomes an alter image of Udayan who has been dead for long, but his alter image such as Bela proliferates the present and justifies an essence of the past. This transformation clearly echoes what Maja Zefuss in one of

his articles comments: "the past happens before the present, whilst memory is situated firmly within the present" (178).

Another disruption of memory happens when Gauri abandons her daughter. She decides to enter "a new dimension, a place where a fresh life was given to her" (232). While Subhash, along with Bela, is away for a few days in Tollygunge to attend his father's funeral, Gauri leaves Rhode Island for good. The sudden desertion of Gauri would be inexplicable and unforgivable to Bela. Such an incident in her adolescent age has indelibly been etched on her mind. Bela has to even consult a psychiatrist since she suffers from a psychic disorder and irregularity in her behavior. Bela takes the "periphery" of her mother's memories, and it never fades away. And Gauri's apparent plan of running away can be called self-denial. If she accepted the weight of responsibility, it would rather give her a sense of comfort, and Bela would not grow up as a mother-abandoned-child. That means Bela is the indirect sufferer of Udayan's death. At the same time she forms an image of the past which sounds contradictory, and she unwittingly appears as the future form of Udayan, embellishing the memories of her father to Gauri, accelerating the scope of sufferings to others in the present. The more pathetic part is that Bela is not aware of this fact. She does not have any memories with Udayan; she does not know who her father is and what crime he has committed in the past. Her memory is only with Subhash, the apparent responsible father figure, and with the mother who betrays her by her sudden departure. There is no dead person's memory in Bela's life. For Bela, the living images of her mother are a matter of great heaviness, the cause behind the changes in her life, and the fixed portrayal of a betrayal she hates most. Memory has its retentive force which denies spatiality as it is "knowledge from the past … not necessarily knowledge about the past" (Margalit 14). It is not the place, the lowland, which generates the crisis among Subhash-Bela-Gauri; rather, it is the all-consuming power of their memories that connects them to the past. As long as consciousness prevails in the human mind, it has to come across with memories—it is not an oblivious or forgiving matter.

It is a perennial truth that the past seems permanent, the future remains altogether uncertain, and the present goes parallel with inevitable memories. In *The Lowland,* the concurrence of similar existences has resulted in the tripartite relation of Bijoli-Gauri-Bela whose haunting memories remain ever inescapable. Even physical and psychological distances will not reduce the effects of such painful experiences. Memory is something which cannot be eluded so easily by leaving people and places repeatedly. If it were so, then Bijoli would not hold on to the past, and her survival would not depend on the burden of grief from which Gauri escapes. Gauri has a cathartic feeling when she meets Bela after many years in Rhode Island. The realization forces her to revisit Kolkata, the old abandoned place in Tollygunge. While struggling with her ineluctable memories, she discovers that Tollygunge itself has changed drastically, and "she is [was] unprepared for the landscape to be so altered" (320) but she still can remember it or how it looked even "forty autumns" ago. She is alone in her old city with her own formed past identity, with Udayan's memories. To compromise with such a rush of feeling, she attempts to commit suicide:

> She recalled the thrill of meeting him [Udayan], of being adored by him. The moment of losing him. The fury of learning how he'd implicated her. The ache of bringing Bela into world, after he was gone. She opened her eyes. He was not there. (323)

It is the revival of her old self, a revival of memories she abandons long ago, a joy of meeting Udayan. And the disappearance of the lowland is a kind of half-truth for Gauri because she cannot dispose of its mark from her memory. It is alive in the same way it was years ago in Kolkata. So the physical detachment from the lowland or displacement could not heal the loss of person and place. Gauri's mind is still adorned with Udayan's memories, with the injustice and negligence she has imposed on Bela as a mother. Her evasiveness ultimately increases the "heaviness" of the irresponsibility. By accepting this heaviness, the burden of memories that occupy an inevitable space in the mind, she comes to terms with "no home but memory."

The cause of all dispersed lives in the novel is not only the death incident, but also the decisions of the characters which ultimately take them down memory lane. They do not realize and accept the inevitability of unpleasant memories that are "the cement that holds thick relations together, and communities of memory are the obvious habitat for thick relations and thus for ethics" (Margalit 8). *The Lowland* generates the fact that living in the past and living totally without it are consequentially the same. When the characters accept grief and acculturate it into their current existence, it would reduce the pain of carrying it for long, less severe to bear and more compromising in the state of being. Therefore, to compromise is to reduce the pain and to attain a kind of normality essential for existence. And like Whitehead said, "the weight of memory … may embroil us but it also connects us both to others and to reality itself." The tragic lives of Bijoli-Gauri-Bela are interwoven with some everlasting effects of memories which are not to be relinquished in this novel; rather, the weight of them needs to be fully understood and located.

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Reading Baraka against the Grain

Hasan Al Zayed
Assistant Professor of English and Humanities, University of Liberal Arts Bangladesh

Abstract
Discussions about African-American poet and playwright Amiri Baraka's work often center on his relation to the American nation and its literary canon. There seem to be deliberate efforts from Baraka critics to inscribe him within the homogeneous landscape of the nation, although Baraka has been one of the staunchest critics of the American nation and confronted its imperialist ambition through politics and work. This paper proposes to read Amiri Baraka through a different set of aesthetic and political relations: through his proximity to the Third World's oppositional literary traditions. Placing Baraka within the vicinity of canonical American writers is certainly productive and important but, as this paper argues, reading the African American poet through his Third World oppositional lineage allows for a more dialectical understanding of his work.

Introduction

On November 24, 2011, renowned literary critic and Harvard University professor Helen Vendler published in the *New York Review of Books* a bitter review of the Rita Dove edited *The Penguin Anthology of American Poetry*. Questioning Dove's skill and literary taste, Vendler mentioned how Dove has allowed quantity to override quality, thus committing the crime of placing less important poets alongside the best of the twentieth century. Particularly vitriolic was her paragraph on Amiri Baraka who she sweepingly dismissed by gesticulating towards his poetic (in)ability. Quoting a stanza from Baraka's representative poem "Black Arts," she argued that this poem does not have the caliber to be anthologized in the same volume where so many great poets do not get proper attention. The poem's "showy violence" and adherence to oral language do not register true poetic excellence. Reproaching Dove for failing to understand this poem's banality, Vendler goes on to discredit Baraka in the following fashion:

> Dove must realize that the new "literary standards" behind this example of Baraka's verse don't immediately declare themselves. Printing something in short lines doesn't make the writer a poet; it only makes him a person with a book of short lines. Nor is mere presence in the scene at a given moment enough to pronounce a person a poet. Although Dove mentions oral literature, orality has its own high standards (and we recognize them in action in everything from oral epic to Walt Whitman to black spirituals to Langston Hughes). If one wants evidence of black anger against "whites" and "jewladies" and "mulatto bitches," here it is. But a theme is not enough to make a poem. ("Are These the Poems to Remember?")

Despite her plain dualistic logic and limited understanding of resistance poetry put on display here, what is of significance is the way the tropological figure of "theme" has been erected

to dismiss not only Amiri Baraka but also the whole generation of Black Arts poets who used their verse not only to challenge what they saw as the thematic insipidity of American poetry but also the formal Eurocentrism inherent in what gets christened as "good poetry." On the one hand, a line of descent beginning from oral epics to Whitman and Hughes has been established through a sweeping generalization and, on the other, the rhetoric of empty form has been played out by gesticulating towards Baraka's poem's reliance on theme only. Both ideas, I would argue, are pathological in that they stage a well rehearsed misunderstanding of not only Baraka's poetic ability but also the complicated relation between his poetic form and thematic content. This misunderstanding, although often clad in other forms of understanding and logic as well, is pervasive. My arguments, therefore, will zero in on three issues arising out of the general paradigm of American academia's reading of Baraka. First of all, I argue that various approaches towards Baraka's poetry, especially recent evaluations of his poetic productions, constitute a particular paradigm which seeks to situate him within the American canon he deliberately distances himself from. Secondly, as I will try to show in my essay, there is a general tendency among critics to overlook the deep tension between form and content in Baraka's poetry. Baraka's provocative and acutely political thematic content often draws attention away from the inner dialectical tension between the Euro-American formal structure and the improvisational openness of jazz and blues forms that Baraka deliberately embraces so as to dig himself out of his early immersion in avant-garde urban tradition popularized by the Beat generation poets in the 1950s. Finally, I emphasize on the importance of situating Baraka within the broader constellation of oppositional poets whose works have been aptly described as "resistance poetry" by literary critic Barbara Harlow. The objective is to make visible the structural/thematic semblance corresponding to a broader homology that is discontinuous with the kind of aesthetic normativity Helen Vendler subscribes to, of which she is also a symptom.

The Problem of Reading Baraka

One of the recurring themes of critical judgments on Baraka's literary production has been his relation to the American canon—a debate to which Helen Vendler's is just another addition. Long before Vendler's brash dismissal of Baraka's work, Ralph Ellison declined to endorse Baraka for MacArthur Grants saying "[he is] more interested in ideology than in art, and thus I suspect he has little attraction for those whose interest lies in advancing the arts of the country" (Muyumba 125). Both Vendler and Ellison view Baraka to be hostile to American literary tradition. While Vendler seeks to read Baraka's "Black Arts" as an "evidence" of "black anger" against "whites," "jewladies," and "mulatto bitches," thus elevating Baraka to the symptom of the *ressentiment* of the whole black race, Ellison notices in Baraka's literary works dangerous infusion of political agency—"more" investments in "ideology" than Ellison would like to see. However, there is a strange semblance that runs like an invisible thread and binds these two social conservatives together. The literary standards Vendler invokes to foreclose Baraka's claim to poetry is indeed the other name for the American canon which Ellison refers to when he talks about "the arts of our country." Yet, Ellison's denunciation of Baraka is more a case of disapproval of Baraka's politicization of literature than of a casual rejection of his entire body of work; by suggesting that Baraka should immerse himself in the "experimental

theater," Ellison at least acknowledges that Baraka has some literary potential.

Against such biased dismissals of Baraka, there are also numerous examples of carefully carved out critiques and productive readings. In his "Foreword" to Baraka's *Transbluesency*, the editor of the volume, Paul Vangelisti, draws an analogy between Baraka and Pound. He claims that the selections of the edition trace "the … career of a writer who, along with Ezra Pound, may be one of the most significant and least understood American poets of our century" (xi). Although the analogy between Pound and Baraka is deeply suggestive and requires attention, the second part of Vangelisti's opinion needs to be looked at carefully because it also seeks to read Baraka in terms of his ability to fit in within the American canon. Notwithstanding the banality of the homology erected by his comment, Vangelisti needs to be credited for drawing our attention to academia's failure to grasp the politics of Baraka's constantly evolving artistic insight. His critique of the literary establishment in the later part of his foreword is a productive articulation of Baraka's reluctance to be fully subsumed within the canon. That Baraka still remains "difficult to approach" needs to be seen as an outcome of his resistance to the totalizing desire of the neoliberal literary production industry; it is in this context that one has to make sense of the improvisational character of his poetry.

Both Paul Vangelisti and Walton Muyumba have tried to draw our attention to the evolutionary aspect of Baraka's poetry. While Vangelisti has done so by suggesting how Baraka's personal and political transformations have made him inaccessible to the literary establishment, Muyumba has shed light on Baraka's evolution by putting it within a specific narrative frame and by focusing on the technical/aesthetic process that allows for this improvisational character. Muyumba too notices a pattern of purposeful (mis)reading of Baraka. Pointing at the characterization of Baraka by Ellison and the popular press as an "ideologue" devoid of depth and content, Muyumba attentively notes:

> What all of this makes me think about is the general misunderstanding of black intellectuals or the tenets of black intellectual performance. What was missing from the talk around Jones/Baraka's oeuvre was an understanding of how to read his poems, his essays, his ideological changes, or how to reconcile the motivations for his changes and metamorphoses. Jones/Baraka's critical reception has become more about the collective weak misreading than about the writing itself. (126)

Muyumba correctly points out that discussions about Baraka seem to move more around his performance as an African American intellectual than around the body of work he has produced. However, having figured out the tendentious misreading of critics so adeptly, Muyumba surprisingly gets trapped in the same superficiality he critiques. Instead of engaging deeply with Baraka's aesthetic transformation and looking deeply into various ideological, historical and aesthetic elements that mediate his transformation, Muyumba seeks to valorize a single source—techniques of jazz improvisation—as the worthy site of transgression/transformation. He fails to note how Baraka's political transformations, especially his gradual move towards third world Marxism, inform and influence the formal features of his aesthetic works.

There is another form of evaluation that has asserted its voice strongly in the *agora* of Baraka criticism. Micropolitical textual readings focusing on ethnic, gender and sexual politics have been productive ways of looking at specific aspects of Baraka's work, though such readings often fail to account for the broader macropolitical horizon that not only informs but is also resisted by Baraka's work. Consider Patrick Roney's essay "The Paradox of Experience," for instance. While this essay is important in foregrounding an understanding of why and how Baraka's nationalist phase is significant, its stress on "the singular *experience* of African American ethnicity" is deeply problematic in the broader framework of the writer's evolutionary transformation. Whether or not Baraka has articulated a singular African American experience is questionable and can be contested in terms of various assertions made in his work. Let us consider his famous call to all black people in "SOS":

> Calling black people
> Calling all black people, man woman child
> Wherever you are, calling you, urgent, come in
> Black People, come in, wherever you are, urgent, calling
> You, calling all black people
> Calling all black people, come in, black people, come
> on in. (*The Baraka Reader* 218)

Baraka's telegraphic call to all black people can be, of course, read as an expression of his desire for a separate African American nation, confirming his quest for a singular African American ethnic identity. Such an interpretation is also backed up by historical accounts and Baraka's own affirmation of this period as being overtly nationalistic. Yet, one cannot fully shrug away the idea that this call is not directed to an African American audience only; there is a broader community imagined through the figure of the dispersed people who have been urged to gather together. The figure of the "all black people" transcends nationalist boundaries and attests its solidarity with people of color across the border. If one is willing to stretch the interpretation farther one will get to see the shadow of oppressed masses—"the wretched of the earth" as Fanon famously phrased it in his eponymous book—within Baraka's formulation, for Baraka himself traced out a direct relation between his nationalist thought and Fanon, Cabral and Aimé Césire's critical nationalist-socialist Thirdworldism/Tricontinentalism. Speaking of his conversion to nationalism and move to Harlem, Baraka writes in his autobiography:

> The arrival uptown, Harlem, can only be summed up by the feelings jumping out of Césire's *Return to My Native Land* or Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth* or Cabral's *Return to the Source*. The middle-class intellectual, having outintegrated the most integrated, now plunges headlong back into what he perceives as blackest, native-est. Having dug, finally, how white he has become, now, classically, comes back to his countrymen charged up with the desire to be black, uphold black, etc. … a fanatical patriot. (295)

The "blackness" of Baraka's imagination, then, is not a pure "singular ethnicity of African American existence" but the blackness of a transnational, anti-colonial community whose

embodied racial identity is also the trace of their oppression and marginalization. True, Baraka's nationalism is deeply informed by both Malcolm X and Maulana Karenga; but, as Baraka himself explains, his nationalism is also a consequence of his interlocution with transnational anti-colonial thinkers such as Fanon and Césire. Critics who seek to read Baraka's nationalist period merely as an expression of a singular ethnic imagination fail to perceive the transnational composition of categories such as "black people" and "black experience." Indeed, the poet's association with third world radicalism predates his formal conversion to nationalism, shaping his poetic imagination and giving direction to his work. The spirit of colonial experience of the global south so deeply permeates his thematic structure that thematic exploration of colonial relations and racial oppression return as recurring themes in his late works as well, especially in his much discussed work "Somebody Blew up America," in which Baraka establishes a line of continuity between America's internal exploitation of its own population and its oppression of nations outside its geographical boundary.

Albeit central to Baraka's intellectual and poetic project, the idea of transnational radicalism has not been fully explored by his critics. The body of text analyzing his relevance in American literary tradition is certainly important, pertinent too. However, equally pertinent—if not more—are micropolitical readings exposing the gaps within Baraka's thought, bringing into attention his misogyny or homophobia, even his compromises and academic complicity. Although many of these readings do not take into account Baraka's evolution as an aesthete and a political being and show how Baraka attempted to come to terms with these limits in his later works, these interventions are nonetheless relevant for bringing into purview specific aesthetic and performative disjunctures within Baraka's literary output. However, what gets drowned out in micropolitical textual readings of the kind attempted by Michael Davidson and Jerry Gafio Watts is Baraka's own voice itself.

In his well-written reflection on Baraka's and the Black Arts movements' homophobic and acutely masculinist literary production, Michael Davidson explains how the works produced by Black Arts poets and writers exhibit a deep anxiety about homosexuality and feminization of male sexuality. Davidson argues that Baraka's relationship to homosexuality is more complex than that of many of his Black Arts comrades in that he shared both social and intellectual relation with the Beat poets—a group dominated by a number of prominent literary figures who were outspoken about their sexuality. At the beginning of the section in which he discusses Amiri Baraka's work he notes: "The gender politics of Amiri Baraka is a far more complex issue than that of Haki Madhubuti since the former has occupied multiple relationships both to white and black culture throughout his career" (136) thus suggesting that Baraka's outburst against the white male homosexual intellectual on the one hand and his violent rage against white middle class women and the Jew on the other is an outcome of both personal and political experiences which cannot be reduced to simple reductive reading of Baraka's anti-women, anti-homosexual and anti-Jew position.

In the tenth chapter of his voluminous work on Baraka, Jerry Gafio Watts seeks to critique Baraka's position on women during his nationalist phase. For Watts, Baraka's position on women during the Black Arts era is a simplistic tale of the nationalist patriarch's dismissal

of his female comrades and an expression of his misogyny. While Watts pays attention to Baraka's changing perception about women, his notion about Baraka does not change much even at the end of the section. His attempts to reconcile Baraka's misogynic nationalist period with his anti-sexist Marxian phase allow for a more confused view unable to forget the past and unwilling to fully embrace the present. His view is symptomatically present in the last paragraph of this chapter on Baraka's relation to femininity where he claims:

> It would be more precise to say that Baraka abandoned a vehemently sexist, crude black nationalism for an antisexist, vulgar Marxism. Yet the memories of Baraka's sexism linger … Regardless of the various arguments that Baraka now invokes to explain his vulgar sexism, the black community suffered at the hands of black activists who advocated the subservience of black women. (346-347)

In the next section, I will attempt to weigh in on Watts's claim about Baraka in relation to the poet's own reflections on his political and personal transformations, so we can understand better how the poet's understanding of the world changed over the years.

Baraka and Transnationalism

The first sentence of Baraka's autobiography burdens the reader with the weight of travail and transformation almost in a counterintuitive way, explaining nothing yet expecting the reader to understand a change that had to come, that was inevitable. Yet, there is something mutual, something communal about this transformation that leaves his readers with no doubt that it was a mutual and collective change experienced not only by him and his wife but also a number of other African American writers of that generation. "The last writing of this stopped somewhere in 1974, when we had become Communists finally, Amina and I" (xi), writes Baraka on the first page of his autobiography. If we take his emphasis on the word "finally" literally, we realize how becoming a "Communist" was pivotal for him; he was, in his own account, always heading towards that direction. "The fact that I became a Communist is not startling to me," he writes, making apparent how his early days of cultural nationalism led him towards the later transformation. While it is more or less clear how this transformation led him to adopt a particular political line, dispersed as his reflections are, it is not easy to cognize how this political transformation catapults into a radical aesthetic transformation in his literary productions, especially in his poetry. To find a trace of this meaningful transformation one has to move to Chapter Seven of his autobiography where he begins to trace out the trajectory of a long and slow metamorphosis.

"The Cuban trip was a turning point of my life," he writes in Chapter Seven. The full import of his Cuban trip does not become visible until we come across the pivotal moment when he is hounded by Rubi Betancourt, Jamie Shelly and other young poets from different parts of Latin America and is forced to rethink his existence as an apolitical poet (244). Speaking of his experience in Cuba he writes: "But I carried so much back with me that I was never the same again. The dynamic of the revolution had touched me" (246). Indeed, the experience of having to account for his political stance and position on race had a far deeper implication in his life than he had thought of at that moment. Equally significant was his transaction with

other writers from Latin America whose experiences of struggle with imperialism and racial domination he had to listen to.

The echo of his transnational radicalism can be noticed in his long, three-part poem dedicated to Rubi Betancourt. Titled "Betancourt" and written on 30 July 1960 in Havana during his Cuba trip, this poem revisits his memories of Betancourt, a graduate student he met on the train. In his essay "Cuba Libre," Baraka recalls meeting Betancourt in the following manner: "She was very short, very blond and very pretty, and had a weird accent that never ceased to fascinate me. For about thirty minutes we stood in the middle isle talking to each other" (*The LeRoi Jones/Amiri Baraka Reader* 146). The poem embodies the drama and the tension of the meeting between these two people in terms of sexualized and fetishistic images. The fragments capture the force of the desire. While the first part of the poem produces in fractured frames the images of their meeting near the seaside, where they are sitting against each other and are gradually advancing towards sexual contact, the second part revisits the same memory, speaking of their last night's union. The exhaustion of lovemaking is captured through the image of "the cock/ flat/ on skin/ like/ a dead/ insect" (*Transbluesency* 39). There is a subtle insinuation of the union of the two opposing worlds in the second section:

> And last night, talking to ourselves, except
> when some wildness
> cut us, ripped impossibly
> deep beneath black
> flesh
> to black bone. Then
> we loved each other. Understood
> the miles of dead air
> between our
> softest parts … (39)

What we encounter in these lines is an internalization of the external. The fetishized body of the woman has been internalized through sexual contact. If we look at it closely, we will also notice how the intellectual encounter between the radical woman activist and the apolitical poet has been battered into a physical contact between the two. Yet, the significance of the union can hardly be ignored. The desire to unite with the other (Revolutionary-Mexican-blond-woman) certainly embodies Baraka's desire to bridge the gap between him and the person who the poem is about—a revolutionary who wants him to join the community of poets/writers engaged in the task of resisting imperialism/capitalism. The thematic branching off from nationalism to the broader horizon of transnational struggle against imperialism and capitalism is what remains unique about Baraka. Very few other American poets have ventured out, as he has, to traverse the transnational, anti-imperialist thematic plain.

Within the Baraka oeuvre, "Betancourt" does stand in isolation. The theme of transnational struggle is also explored in a number of other poems, especially his long poem "Reggae or Not!" published in 1981. The title itself is suggestive of a transnational transaction through the

medium of music. What is also explored is the theme of collective resistance against capitalism and imperialism. Meant to be accompanied by reggae music, the final section of the poem blurts out the desire for a global proletarian unity and the rise of a Black Nation almost in the manner reggae chants are tossed up in the air. The alternative lines "Self Determination/ Revolution" is meant to work as leitmotif to be sung by a chorus. The repetitive lines are then followed up with a repetition of the thematic evocation of a transnational call for freedom and unity: "I be black angry communist/ I be part of rising black nation/ I be together with all fighters who fight imperialism …" (*Transbluesency* 184). What is more or less evident in these articulations is that, by 1981, Baraka's nationalism found its full expression in anti-capitalism, racial and ethnic equity and anti-imperialism. In other words, Baraka finally reached his political-ideological stasis in the 1980s through third world Marxism—a position he continued to strongly assert, both through his works and spoken words, until his death on January 9, 2014.

Baraka and the Revolutionary Aesthetics

In her commendable work on comparative literature titled *Resistance Literature* (1987), Barbara Harlow proposes to read a host of Third World literary texts through Palestinian novelist and prose writer Ghassan Kanafani's formulation of "resistance literature." According to Harlow, Kanafani's theorization of Palestinian literature allows for a much broader conceptualization of the idea; the same concept, she suggests, can be employed to frame literary works engaged in the task of challenging occupation and domination elsewhere. For instance, the same category can be employed to productively understand literary works produced from Asia, Africa, and South and Central America—works whose conscious ambition is to collapse the boundary between aesthetics and politics and employ literature in the task of whipping up resistance. Harlow thus draws on Ghassan Kanafani's concept to distinguish between literary works produced in ordinary circumstances and works originating in politically charged historical moments, between literature as such and resistance literature. She does acknowledge the spatial/locational and historical uniqueness that inform Kanafani's theorization: it is indeed the politically charged history of Palestine that gives impetus to his idealization of the Palestinian literature of his era as resistance literature. Nevertheless, Harlow also notes that despite its locational and historical limits, the Palestinian writer's conceptual category can provide us with a powerful theoretical tool to come to terms with a whole array of Third World literary texts whose ideological premise coheres with the kind Kanafani finds in Palestinian writing of the 1970s. To put it plainly, Harlow notices within the dispersed field of Third World literature a broader homology and seeks to frame this difference as resistance literature because much of Third World literature is shaped by the experience of struggle against "western" imperialism. As Harlow puts it:

> Ghassan Kanafani, in referring to Palestinian literature as "resistance literature," is writing within a specific historical context, a context which may be most immediately situated within the contemporary national liberation struggles and resistance movements against Western imperialist domination of Africa, Central and South America, and the Middle and Far East. The very immediacy and specificity of the

> historical context reveal, however, the broader role to be played by resistance literature in particular, but more generally too by what has come to be referred to as "Third World literature." (4)

Behind Harlow's attempt to conceptualize resistance literature as a specific category within literature in general lies an intent to cognitively apprehend the political content that separates Third World literature from that of the first world. Although similar attempts to theorize the political saturation of Third World literature have been made in other circumstances, notably Fredric Jameson in his insightful essay "Third World Literature in the Era of Multinational Capitalism" in which he advances the idea that all third world literary texts can be read and conceptualized as allegories of the Third World's struggle against capitalism and imperialism, Harlow's deployment of the term "resistance literature" seeks to cast political struggle within the frame of conscious attempts to articulate an ideological position. Whereas Jameson's categorization is more of an attempt to bring into purview the unconscious structures that permeate through the political content of literature, Harlow's is to restore agency to those literary texts for which politics is a conscious attempt to assert an ideological preference. The question, therefore, is not so much of how the political unconscious shapes both the form and the content of literary works, but, rather, how, for particular authors, ideology becomes the primary conduit for mediating and expressing aesthetic concerns.

As to the question of whether or not it is possible to read Amiri Baraka's poetry through Kanafani's typology of resistance literature, we must be ready to stretch the theory of the Palestinian critic beyond his intended reach. Like many of the Third World poets, Baraka's strength has been his ability to articulate the collective struggle of the black urban populace, thus giving voice not only to his own individual marginalization within the American society but also to many others who shared his experience. The deep tension between his predominantly hybrid Blues oriented improvisational form and distinctly anti-authoritarian content has led critics like Helen Vendler to conjecture that Baraka's poetic form is indistinct and inferior. One of Vendler's reservations against Baraka originates from her conviction that Baraka's thematic content is not complemented by equally radical formal experimentations. When she claims, for instance, that "a theme is not enough to make a poem," she is gesturing towards what she construes as Baraka's formal superficiality. Unlike Robert Hayden—who, in my reckoning, is one of the most challenging and profound American poets of the twentieth century—Baraka's soundscapes and stanzaic movements do not immediately strike one as carefully crafted motions; far from structured and schematized, Baraka's poetry often follows erratic pace and cadence, as if searching for coherence in a world of chaos and confusion. The movement of the poet's words and sounds, as Muyumba has brilliantly demonstrated in his book *The Shadow and the Act*, is that of free jazz—tentative and experimental yet distinctively African American. What Vendler is unable to take into consideration, however, is that the very nature of Baraka's thematic content—articulation of the black urban struggle—makes it necessary for him to find a formal expression which lies outside the dominant forms which other poets of his generation found useful. Although she casually dismisses the innovativeness of Baraka's short lines, it is in his short, broken lines that the musicality of his poetry gathers its distinctive

echo[1]; it is here that the spirit of urban free jazz meets its aesthetic counterpart, rural blues. The confluence of jazz and blues forms in Baraka's poetry does not merely shape the poet's formal expressions; it also symptomatically represents the dialectical tension between African and European formal structures mediating a manifestly rebellious thematic content.

An excellent example of Baraka's formal experimentation is "Wise I"—a deeply meditative poem written in short lines. The first poem of *Wise, Why's, Y's* (1995), "Wise I" delves deep inside the history of trans-Atlantic slave trade to recuperate the bafflement and trauma of being dragged into an alien land. The general theme of a traumatic return to the past—the visceral feeling of being trapped and humiliated, and not being able to fully comprehend the loss—echoes in the formal arrangement as well; the irregular stanzaic movement embodies the collective bafflement and incomprehensibility of the African diaspora in the eighteenth and the nineteenth century. The terminal crisis—the apex of entrapment—is arrested here through the metaphor of the banning of the "boom ba boom," an indistinct African musical instrument which metaphorically represents all musical instruments brought to America by the captured slaves. It is in the sophisticated arrangement and the repetition of the onomatopoeia, "boom ba boom," that the formal internalization of jazz is materialized. The lyricism as well as the simplicity of these lines is rarely matched. Baraka writes:

> If you ever find
> Yourself, some where
> Lost and surrounded
> by enemies
> who won't let you
> speak in your own language
> who destroy your statues
> & instruments, who ban
> your omm bomm ba boom
> then you are in trouble
> deep trouble
> they ban your
> own boom ba boom
> you in deep deep trouble
>
> humph!
>
> probably take you several hundred years
> to get
> out! (*Transbluesency* 219)

The colloquial diction stands on a meticulous improvisational structure. "Omm bomm ba boom" in line 9 gets improvised in line 13 after being replaced by "own boom ba boom" and the same improvisation also takes place in lines 10 and 14. Notwithstanding this experimentation with diction and structural improvisation, the most significant aspect of this poem is its rewriting of history which is explored not from individualistic meditation but from

the standpoint of its collective appearance.[2] It captures history in an abbreviated form—in its absolute conciseness—without losing sight of the specific sites in which struggle appears in its concrete forms: language, religion and culture all appear lost to North America bound slaves. An enemy, referred to in the third person, is one who not only takes away the language but also destroys statues and confiscates musical instruments. What is attempted here is not an apprehension of history in its specific and local form but the collective history imagined through the trope of the banned musical instrument. The economy of the final utterance exemplifies Baraka's ability to capture a vast canvas within the expanse of a short line: the recuperation process may take several hundred years.

Conclusion

From his telegraphic call to "all black people" to his abbreviation of the history of slave trade in North America, Baraka remains acutely sensitive to the collective struggles and aspirations not only of those located in geographical proximity but also of those located at a distance. It is in this gesture that one finds an echo of the collective aesthetic resistance of major Third World writers in Baraka's work. One also notices, in his intent to turn poetry into a "weapon in the struggle of ideas," the willingness to employ works of art in the service of "class struggle" ("Art is a Weapon in the Struggle of Ideas"). Baraka's aesthetic production, thus, becomes the embodiment of the radical aesthetic perception he subscribes to. True, his location shapes the substance of his overall aesthetic experience: Amiri Baraka is unimaginable outside the geographical boundary of the United States. His experience as an African American in the racially divided nation features heavily in the thematic architecture of his poetry. Nevertheless, as his aesthetic trajectory spanning almost three decades amply exemplifies, to place him in the vicinity of other American poets whose aesthetic perceptions Baraka consciously challenges is to put him in a straitjacket he consciously seeks to pass up. Such aesthetic pigeonholing also undermines Baraka's conscious self-remaking since the 1960s which took him further and farther away from the dominant forms and themes of American literature.

Vendler's enumeration of Baraka's work thus repeats the two common fallacies of canonical criticism: metanormativization and totalization. She fails to locate within the radical African American poet's work traces of aesthetic innovations not because her normative standards fail to map aesthetic innovations but because she imposes on aesthetic normativization itself another scale—one that pretends to be universal but fails to perform as such. Although traces of formal as well as thematic outsidedness are clearly visible in Baraka's works, in her quick evaluation of the poet's work, Helen Vendler employs vectors that are not only Euro-American but also distinctively elitist, to some degree reactionary as well. In her efforts to dismiss Baraka on the grounds that his poetry does not measure up to the canonical works of "Twentieth-century American poetry," one is able to notice the deployment of a normative category that only partially captures the full gamut of the African American poet's work. It is not that Vendler is unaware of the peril of totalization. One of the finest living critics of poetry, Vendler is quietly aware of the dialectical vision that shapes not only good criticism but also good poetry. The antinomies of her dialectical vision express themselves through the figure of Yeats's meditative verse in which he imagines a poem to be "cold/ And passionate

as the dawn" (Vendler 22). Her critique of Baraka's poem "Black Art" owes its spirit to the Yeatsian paradox that suggests a poem needs to be both "cold" and "passionate." Between the demand she makes from Baraka's poem—that it should be both cold and passionate—and what Baraka expects his own poem to be able to do—to be actional and concrete, to be able to engage in violence—lies a parallax gap. The Yeatsian normative category cannot be effectively applied to appraise a poem whose primary objective is to incite action. These two domains of expectations remain opposed to each other, forming two axes of the dialectical tension that does not get resolved here. Vendler elevates Yeat's meditation on internal dialectic of poetry to a metatheory, applicable to all poems, all aesthetic visions. It is here that her metanormative vision attains its totalizing effect. By positing the Yeatsian category as a universal normative frame and by forcing on Baraka and other African American poets a homogeneous category—"American poetry"—she fails to live up to the dialectical promise opened up by Yeat's poetic imagination. Helen Vendler's reading of Baraka and twentieth-century African American poets thus exemplifies a quotidian normativization unable to enact true dialectical criticism.

I would like to conclude by repeating William J. Harris's comments on Baraka. Reflecting on Baraka's thematic and stylistic uniqueness that poses a serious challenge to the critic's taste and understanding, Harris writes: "Baraka offers nothing so easy to take away. He is indigestible, or at least hard to digest. To come to terms with him—his in-your-face language, strong feelings, and radical ideas—is not easy; that is part of his greatness." I am of the opinion that Harris's conjecture on Baraka's aesthetic relevance is perhaps more accurate. Baraka remains unique not because he is located outside the canon but because his fearless confrontational style and thematic content confront us directly, bluntly.

Notes

1. Many critics and readers of Baraka's works have written about the relation between music and Baraka's poetry. Eminent playwright and poet Ntozake Shange highlights the lyricism of Baraka's poetry claiming: "There is such lyricism in Amiri Baraka's work that it makes one swoon" (486). Woodward writes in his book titled *A Nation within a Nation* that Baraka is a lyrical poet "whose work … reveals a special gift of 'emotive music' with a passionate and incantatory beauty" (xi). Many Baraka critics fail to take account of his distinctively African American lyricism and deployment of music in poetry.
2. Kathy Lou Schultz's essay "Amiri Baraka's *Wise, Why's, Y's*: Lineages of the Afro-Modernist Epic" explores the theme of collectivization in Baraka's *Wise Why's Y's* elaborately. In Schultz's reckoning, the fundamental distinction between Baraka's epic poem and those written by American modernists at the beginning of the twentieth century lies in the way nation has been imagined and treated in these epics. The thematic uniqueness of Baraka's epic lies in the way he is able to represent the history of a "diasporic," as well as "multi-racial" collective nation and identity.

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LANGUAGE AND APPLIED LINGUISTICS

ELT: An Overall Insight into the Paradigm Shift in the Teaching-Learning Condition in Bangladesh

Rumana Amin
PhD Research Fellow, Assumption University of Thailand (ABAC)

Abstract
English language, the language of development, scientific advancement, information, opportunity, employment, power, and prestige in Bangladesh, has become the synonym of all progresses in recent years. English language teaching has acquired new dimensions in as much as it has crept into diverse methods of ELT at various levels of education. The Western paradigm of English teaching has occupied a prestigious position in the educational system of Bangladesh for decades. It is a well-known fact to all that language teaching and learning is affected by a host of factors ranging from the macro political and cultural environments of a country or region to the micro perceptions and practices of individual teachers or learners. Hence, the demand for different methodologies for different learners or learning situations arises gradually. The changes in the classrooms, ruled by traditional methodologies for years, regarding the adaptation of communicative language teaching, can be seen to be a direct result of the paradigm shift in the realm of English language teaching and learning. This article attempts to explain the shift in practice and reality of English language teaching by taking a close look at various features that affected the choice of the varieties of English taught and learned.

Introduction

The field of English Language Teaching (ELT) has experienced manifold levels of changes to respond to the needs of the learners at different stages. A widespread dissatisfaction with the conventional method has led to the development of new styles of classroom practices for teaching English as a foreign or a second language. This development takes place based on contextual realities and teachers' experience and knowledge about ELT. As for ELT in Bangladesh, English language teaching-learning practices are still revolving around the concept of "method." Bangladesh, like many other countries of the world, has not been able to come out of the method paradigm. Before the introduction of CLT (Communicative Language Teaching), it was the Grammar Translation Method (GTM) that was traditionally followed for teaching English in the country. As with other methods, dissatisfaction was also there due to their "failure" to ensure communicative competence among learners. Therefore, the shift from this method (i.e., GMT) to the CLT approach was made on the expectation that this change would improve the quality of English teaching and learning in the country as a whole. Resultantly, new textbooks compatible with the principles of CLT were written for the students of the primary to the higher secondary levels of education, and training on this new approach was given to the English teachers so that they could properly apply the principles of this approach in classroom teaching. But in spite of all these efforts, the desired result is

still a far cry. Even after fourteen years of the introduction of CLT in the country, the quality of English education here has not improved much. Several attempts have been taken to prove the justification of the inclusion of the CLT approach in the curriculum in our country. However, though the CLT approach was not imposed suddenly on our curriculum, the implementation of CLT in the present context in Bangladesh is still questionable.

ELT: A Need for Transformation

Along with globalization, English has established itself as the world's common language for academic and business interaction, becoming the international language of choice or *lingua franca* (Bamgbose, 2001; Graddol, 2006; Murata & Jenkins, 2009). English is now the most commonly used language in the world as many western nations have adopted it as their first language. British colonization has helped the spread of English throughout the globe, making it one of the most influential languages, even in nations where English is not the first language. English is used as the official language in many countries where the first language is not necessarily English, making it almost mandatory to learn the language for administrative purposes.

For decades, English language teaching (ELT) professionals in Asia have embraced the paradigm of teaching developed in Western countries. Recent research in second language acquisition suggests that certain traditional practices in Asia, such as memorization and form-focused learning, which were believed to be ineffective, may have an important role to play in teaching and learning. Hence, for English language teaching in Asia, we need to take a more realistic look at what is being taught and learned, where the teaching and learning is taking place, and who is involved in the teaching and learning. Teaching and learning of English in educational institutions in our country especially in the small towns and rural areas is rather "inadequate" and "unproductive."

Of late, we the Bangladeshi teachers of English at the undergraduate level have become aware of the sad but real fact that most students in the college easily manage to pass the examination without making much effort to either pick up the language or learn to appreciate the utility of language. The domination of the traditional methods like GTM has compelled the students to develop the habit of cramming everything without putting much effort. Therefore, the "creativity" is lost somewhere. Even capable students who can express themselves in writing do so in their native language, but not in English. The teacher is mostly expected to translate each and every phrase so that at least the literary texts are somehow driven home.

When we, the teachers of English, address ourselves to the problem of how to meet the needs of Bangladeshi students because of their deficiency in English, we are confronted with the fact that more than the students, it is the teacher of English who is guilty of leaving the students in a quandary. This is because we refuse to give in to the changing demands of the English learning situation in the wake of globalization where it is the functional aspect of the language that matters more than achieving the perfection of the form. A radical change in our perception is all we need if we want our students to meet the challenges of an increasingly *Englishized* world.

The Overall Status of ELT in Bangladesh

In the history of Bangladeshi ELT, the English language teaching improvement project, which was launched in 1997, has been a breakthrough in two senses. Firstly, it recognized the need for a coherent institutional structure of ELT in Bangladesh. At present there is no institute or center at the national level to monitor and improve the English language teaching and learning situation. Secondly, the improvement project has helped the promotion of CLT. The project is jointly funded by the Government of Bangladesh and the Government of the UK and a number of local and UK scholars have contributed to it. The National Curriculum and Textbook Board and the British Council are the administrative bodies of this project. To ensure a better ELT situation at secondary level, this countrywide project has focused on 3 main areas: teaching materials, teachers' training, and the reformation of the examination system. In order to train English language teachers, as part of original plan, the project has established four regional resource centers in teacher training colleges and ten satellite resource centers in government high schools. It is almost 15 years since this project started but it has passed only its initial stages, while its future impact depends on the level of its continuation and future activities (Yasmin, 2006).

ELT in Bangladesh faces three main challenges. The first challenge is the lack of sufficient awareness about the significant difference between language and literature teaching. The general view is that majority of educators, policy makers, and English language teachers in Bangladesh have inadequate knowledge about this difference, and this has resulted in a complicated situation of Bangladeshi English language teaching. It appears that the national curriculum and the text books of ELT have focused for a long period on English literature rather than the English language; they did not even adopt the approach of teaching language through literature.

Another challenge to teaching English is the lack of focus on modern English. Generally, the English language that has been taught in Bangladesh is rather old fashioned. English was formally introduced in the Bangladesh education system approximately two hundred years ago. Over the years, though, the English language has changed, whereas in Bangladesh, in many situations the two hundred year old forms of English are still in domination. There is, however, a growing concern to introduce the communicative approach of English in the country, which has also been reflected in new textbooks. Many English teachers in the rural areas, however, are still having problems teaching the new textbooks which have highlighted the communicative use of English.

Bangladesh is a developing country with Banglaas the first language, and English as a second language as it is needed to keep pace with the global world. No country can be isolated in a fast growing multicultural world with ever changing communication technologies. For advancement in life, it is no longer desirable to be monolingual, particularly in developing countries. As English is widely used all over the world, Bangladesh is now responding to this challenge through programs such as CLT. Therefore, the present discussion began with reporting students' perspectives on their learning and the effects of the CLT program, as well as the challenges students face and the supports they have, or would like to have, to make ESL

learning effective in school life and beyond. While many factors are responsible for students' underachievement in learning English, evidence is there to argue that with the cooperation of students, teachers, parents, and teacher educators, it is possible to improve the levels of achievement (Fletcher & Parkhill, 2007; Franken & Haslett, 1999; Hite & Evans, 2006; Safford & Costley, 2008; Sirota & Bailey, 2009).

Though the CLT approach is used widely and effectively in non-English speaking countries to teach English as a foreign or a second language and for developing communication skills (Sakura, 2001; Savignon, 2003; Thompson, 1996), it fails to generate critical thinking that is also needed to comprehend and explain the current international context. CLT instigates creativity, but creativity in itself is not enough to equip students to deal with issues of distinctiveness and to look at their world "differently." We also need to help students value their own culture, language, and history at the same time as they learn the language and values of others.

In Bangladesh, the situation is shifting very rapidly. Now the status of English has changed from being a foreign language to a second language. But is the change enough to deal with changing global circumstances? In this time of change, attitudes towards English language need to be altered to keep pace with the world. A CLT approach in classrooms could begin to bring about desired outcomes if it is blended with critical literacy. Communicative approaches to language learning can be developed to encourage the growth of citizens who will be globally accepted at the same time as they uphold their own identity, and will also be able to negotiate power relationships while they respect others' positions. So it is high time to change the focus of learning English language in Bangladesh to survive efficiently in this modern world.

There are many challenges to both learners and teachers in Bangladeshi mainstream classrooms because of the structural irregularities within English, the words borrowed from other languages, and the consequent different phonological representations. These constraints make the learning of English as a Second Language (ESL) more challenging. However, support has been developed to facilitate more successful learning (Anderson, 2008; Lu & Berg, 2008; May, 2002; Safford & Costley, 2008; Sirota & Bailey, 2009).

There is a need for teachers to pay attention to students' existing experiences both inside and outside the classroom in order to reduce the fear about communication. EAL (English as an Additional Language) students are very often underestimated by teachers and other students as their level of English is much below others, although they are well experienced and educated in their native language and culture. Underestimating their worth silences or slows, and even brings forth a negative outcome in, learners' performances. Teachers need to imagine what the classroom looks and sounds like from the student's point of view in order to select appropriate methodology for teaching (Safford & Costley, 2008). This includes a careful consideration of the different linguistic and cultural starting points for different learners so that "creativity and difference [in language production] are seen as normal and as productive" (Kress, 2003, p. 120), "rather than [as] barriers to academic successes" (Safford & Costley, 2008, p. 149).

The Changing Trend of ELT Methodology in the Bangladeshi Classroom

The methodology of teaching is a key factor in ELT classrooms, and the real power has always been in the hands of the teacher. English is still treated as a subject to be taught, not a skill to be mastered. The traditional ELT methods like Grammar Translation Method, Direct Method, and Situational Language Teaching are in no way beneficial to the students in the changed scenario where the majority of students are desperate to learn English only to be communicatively competent. We can see that in the 1950s, the classroom was dominatedby traditional methods, the most popular ones being the Grammar Translation Method, Direct Method, and Audio-mLingual Method. At that time, careful analyses were made based on the grammar of the target language. Then in the 1980s, the communicative approach made its entry with the evolution of more interactive views of language teaching where the principle was to learn a language by using it. This changing trend in the methodology of teaching can be seen as a positive response to the changing needs of the learners.

Communicative Language Teaching

In the late 1970s education, it is observed that students could produce sentences accurately but could not use them appropriately (Widdowson, 1978). During the 1980s and 1990s, approaches emerged which concentrated on the fundamentally communicative functions of language and language classrooms were characterized by attempts to ensure the authenticity of materials and comprehend the pragmatic aspects of language tasks. In fact, CLT came into existenceas a result of dissatisfaction with the Grammar Translation and Audio Lingual methods (Hossen, 2008).

Communicative competence was a concept introduced by Dell Hymes (1966) which had been redefined later by many others. Hymes's original idea was that speakers of a language must have more than grammatical competence to communicate effectively in a language. The proponent of Systemic Functional Grammar, Michael Halliday, has also contributed to the development of CLT (Celce-Murcia, 1991).

The prominent features of CLT can be laid out as below:

a) CLT is learner-centered.
b) CLT emphasizes learning communication rather than grammar.
c) CLT encourages "fluency and appropriateness" rather than "accuracy."
d) CLT's objective is the development of communicative competence and not linguistic competence.
e) CLT concentrates more on the message than meaning.
f) CLT is task-based.
g) CLT encourages individualized learning.

The Introduction of CLT in Bangladesh

CLT (Communicative Language Teaching) replaced GTM (Grammar Translation Method) at the higher secondary level in Bangladesh in 2001. This replacement of the ELT method was a significant change in the English curriculum. The key purpose of learning English at this level has been defined as to become proficient in communication for different purposes. One

of these, for example, is to interact with native or nonnative speakers for accessing higher education sectors. Besides, English proficiency is a vital issue in terms of higher studies abroad as well as for working in multinational, foreign, and even national companies. In job recruitments, priority is given to those who have excellent command in English. In order to meet these purposes of learning English, the Ministry of Education in Bangladesh has included English as a core and compulsory subject in the curriculum from years 1-12.

The government's expectation in replacing GTM with CLT was that students would become more proficient in communicative English. In other words, the desire to make students competent in communication provided further impetus for the change in the teaching method. Nevertheless, this replacement of GTM is a significant change in English curriculum in higher secondary education. The English Language Teaching Improvement Project (ELTIP) – supported by both the Bangladeshi Government and the UK Department for International Development (UKDFID) – embedded the CLT approach in the English curriculum. The National Textbook Curriculum Board Bangladesh also worked in collaboration with ELTIP to incorporate CLT in the higher secondary English curriculum in Bangladesh.

The Current Situation of CLT in Bangladesh

CLT as a new English curriculum in Bangladesh does not seem to be successful since students cannot communicate efficiently in English. The general view is that the use of CLT in Bangladesh is only written in the curriculum while no practical use of it is obvious either inside or outside the classroom. It appears that the teachers have not coped with the CLT approach as they still employ the traditional GTM for teaching. At the same time, there has been a mushroom growth of private institutions offering courses for English proficiency for multiple purposes from clearing the IELTS to speaking fluently. The Internet has also played a major role in creating a resource-rich environment by giving a wide range of exposure to English. All these contextual changes in Bangladesh have affected the teaching of English language in the country, perhaps positively, showing hopeful signs of modification in the curriculum.

In spite of all these developments in the teaching of English language and the popularity of CLT as a comprehensive approach in many parts of the country, there are many regions in Bangladesh where English language still faces a precarious situation. It is the need of the hour to change the existing syllabi and reframe the new ones by following the CLT approach on a pan-Bangladesh level.

The literature also suggests that teachers must be familiar with the different strategies used by different students. Schools should adjust their curriculum to fit the needs of both male and female students as well as students from different geographical backgrounds, and support them to use different learning strategies when learning English. Although in Bangladesh classrooms are not packed with multicultural students, there are differences in socio-economic levels and cultural background across Bangladesh. So it is equally important for Bangladeshi teachers to be aware of the different learning strategies depending on students' gender and cultural backgrounds.

Conclusion

In the area of ELT in Bangladesh, as discussed above, though CLT faces a lot of impediments to its successful implementation, the road to success is still open. The whole process of curriculum change is riddled with time-consuming procedures in Bangladesh which has resulted in CLT's limited success, yet it has not been removed from courses. This, in the long run, has been for the better. This is because while on the one hand, the teachers have been able to familiarize themselves with its approach and methodology, the changed and changing context has encouraged its growing success today. However, the most significant impact of this approach can be felt when its sensitivity to learners' needs and responses is acknowledged fully. This sensitivity appears often to be absent in the ELT practices in Bangladesh. Therefore, it is essential to reconstruct the ELT methodology of the country with a view to making it effective by taking the local and contextual features into account.

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Impact of Studying Abroad on English Language Teachers at University Level in Bangladesh

Rumana Hossain
Associate Professor of English, Jahangirnagar University

Abstract
The study addresses an issue regarding the English language teachers who have studied abroad and are teaching at the tertiary level of education in Bangladesh. The idea of this study comes out of my professional experience and my encounter with fellow ELT practitioners. I have been in the field of language teaching for the past fourteen years and at Jahangirnagar University, Dhaka, Bangladesh for the last seven years where I watch my students turning into my colleagues. I noticed that the increasing demand for competent users of English in this era of globalization has also made my colleagues interested in getting education from Western developed countries like their predecessors. Equally has grown the demand for English Language Teaching (ELT) and related studies like Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL). Much investigation has been carried out on the experiences of the teachers while they were studying abroad but no studies have been carried out on the returning teachers and the episode after. This study, thus, is an attempt to explore what prompted these teachers to study abroad, whether these Western trained teachers on their return have made changes to their teaching approaches, how or in what ways have they done it, what sort of obstacles did they face or are they facing and what measures can be taken to overcome these barriers. These issues are central in connection to the future of English language teaching at the university level and based on the opinions of the teachers, the study provides recommendations to bridge the gap between the existing language teaching policy and practice.

Introduction

Bangladesh is a developing country belonging to the outer circle of English users (Kachru, 1992). Though English holds the position of being somewhere between a foreign language and second language here, it is a *de facto* second language in this country. Following the language movement in 1952, Bengali has since been the native language and also the primary medium of instruction and communication in almost all spheres of life. Bangladesh gained its independence in 1971 and English, being the language of international correspondence, became a compulsory subject from primary to the tertiary level of education in most academic institutions. The country follows the traditional British system for education and ever since, there has always been a drift towards studying in Britain,especially by university teachers. In the years following independence, academics studied mainly English literature. In 1990, the Government of Bangladesh passed the Private University Act that prompted the growth of universities in the private sector. These universities offered subjects in demand like

Information Technology and Business Administration but the demand for English was strong as the medium of instruction in these universities is English. Thus, all these universities have English departments to cater to the English language needs of the students (Chowdhury & Ha, 2014). This created fulltime employment opportunities for the outgoing students of English and part time offers for teachers teaching at various public universities. Though most of these teachers and students had majored in English literature, they had to teach English language courses at the university.

Moreover, the teachers who had studied abroad mainly in North America or UK got preference in employment and received higher salaries. Some top ranking public universities made a North American (preferably) postgraduate degree mandatory for teachers interested in joining their universities. Thus, more students and teachers started to look for opportunities to study abroad and till now many have come back and joined different institutions teaching English language and linguistics. As a third world country, every year a number of foreign language teachers from different universities receive scholarships or funding to study abroad from different government as well as UK, USA and Australia government-funded sources like Hornby, Chevening, Commonwealth, Erasmus, Fulbright, ALA, Endeavour and other scholarship programs. Some people also study by self-funding and also because it is imperative for university teachers to update and upgrade. When these teachers receive scholarships, they sign a bond to return and serve their institutions but there are no guidelines or directives about what exactly they should be doing on their return.

Teaching Approaches

Despite the introduction of CLTA (Communicative Language Teaching Approach) back in the 1990s, the gap between policy-level expectations and actual practice is still felt by the practitioners, reports Chowdhury and Ha (2008). For instance, classes at the primary level still follow the traditional way of teaching like giving one-sided instructions though CLTA is the prescribed teaching methodology. At the university level, most of the public universities still follow teacher-directed lecture-based methods of instruction where theories are taught without any sense of application. Huge class size and ill-equipped classrooms especially in the public sector are the reasons behind this setback. The private sectors offer better facilities in this regard with technology enhanced classrooms and smaller class sizes. Yet, my own observations suggest that teacher-directed approach instead of a learner-centered one is still the norm in classrooms.

Literature Review

The following is an attempt to discuss relevant background literature in order to place this research within the current theoretical framework. An attempt has been made to include theories and research works carried out on the issues of teachers studying abroad, appropriate methodology, and other related issues both globally and in the context of Bangladesh.

Study Abroad

Chowdhury and Ha (2014) report that Western education is chosen by university teachers because they want to visualize themselves as competent users (possessing “power” and

"prestige") of English. Other reasons to choose Western education, known as "foreign degree" locally, included the passing of 1990 Private Universities Act by the Government of Bangladesh, which, by and large, promoted a sudden growth of private universities where the medium of instruction is English. Thus, there was an increasing demand for English, and recruited teachers needed to provide English language support to other departments. Moreover, some of these universities made it mandatory for teachers to have "Western" exposure, preferably a PhD, or an MA at least. So when teachers return home on completion of their study it becomes a general assumption that they would disseminate their acquired knowledge and bring changes to their previous teaching, learning, and research approaches.

In this regard, Wong (2013) in her study acknowledges that teachers who have taken up an overseas professional development course reiterated that the overseas course and exposure brought considerable amount of change in the teachers' own culture, beliefs, and practices as these are constantly being challenged over there. In fact, the prime objective of taking up overseas courses remain "a shift of perspective of a primary teaching philosophy, a change of focus on bridging the gap between theory and practice, or provide a focus on the cultivation and the refinement of teaching practice and pedagogy" (Wong, p. 153). Vall and Tennison (1991) affirm that international teaching and learning nurtures critical thinking, which enable teachers to ponder on issues of teaching and learning in their relevant contexts. Also student-centered instruction where learners are placed at the center of the learning process is a well-established and effective norm in Western educational discourse (Michael, 2006). Mahan and Stachowski (1990) add a positive note from their study that teachers do try to apply their new teaching techniques (e.g., "communicative" or "interactive") learnt from studying abroad in their home countries.

Appropriate Methodology and Barriers in Implementation

Breen (1986) argues classroom methodology of a community should be decided based on their distinct culture surrounding classroom interaction. The learning process is a situation-specific matter and cannot be based on "learning group ideal." Phillipson's (1992, p. 47) highly debated position of "English Linguistic Imperialism" claims that "the dominance of English is asserted and maintained" by the native speaking countries, particularly UK and USA and was exported to the periphery or the nonnative speaker countries. Following this trend, Holliday (1994) refers to the Western countries as "BANA" (for Britain, Australia, and North America) and questions the feasibility of applying their developed methodology, designed for ideal classroom situations in the ill-resourced developing countries where attitudes towards learning English is "different." Moreover, these methodologies were developed for adult learners who seek to learn English for a specific purpose, which is quite dissimilar from the need of the different levels of state education in developing countries. He addresses the developing countries as "TESEP" derived from "tertiary, secondary, primary." Since this TESEP sector failed to develop any "high-status methodologies" they became receivers of the BANA developed methodology and were forced to make adaptations, which were not appropriate for their situations (Holliday, 1994, pp. 12-13). Bangladesh belongs to these TESEP countries.

Canagarajah (1999, p. 122) adds that the "imported methods" from native speaker countries are at times so different from the methods in the periphery countries "that local teachers have to negotiate the influences they would permit into their classrooms in a highly reflective and informed manner." Teachers bring their own beliefs and practices to their everyday teaching and to introduce something new these beliefs need to be changed gradually informs Kumaravedivelu (2014).

Schweisfurth (2011) also questions the feasibility of engaging learner-centered education (LCE), a Western concept, to all societies and classrooms. In his study, he breaks down the findings of 72 articles published by the *International Journal of Educational Development* (IJED) on how LCE has been perceived in developing country contexts. He identifies the different barriers brought out by the researchers in their contexts where LCE has been proposed as teaching methodology. The problems include teachers' professional learning and beliefs, change in teacher-learner power relations, and practical and material constraints which are expected in LCE. Unrealistic expectation regarding implementation and the unsupportive local policy also act as major barriers in successfully implementing LCE. Schweisfurth (2011) further adds a cause of persistent failure in educational innovation: the system is driven by people who are not responsible for implementing it. This situation is identical to Bangladesh where policies are developed without active participation of institutional heads, teachers, parents and learners.

Chinese classrooms also follow a teacher-centered pedagogical approach to teaching and teacher-student relationship informs Hu (2005). A teacher is held as an authority and should act as the source of knowledge to the students. The students should be respecting this knowledge provider and expect only him/her to initiate interaction in class. The same is echoed in Shamim's (1996) study of learner resistance to innovative classroom teaching methodology in Pakistan. Shamim conducted an experiment on her students trying to introduce interaction, discussion, and groupwork in her classes. But the learners, unaccustomed to the radical changes in behavior and style of teaching, showed resistance towards this innovation. "Teachers teach as they were taught," remarks Shamim, and "in the process they socialize learners into well-established patterns of classroom behavior" (1996, p. 114). With this cultural orientation of teacher as an authoritative figure and "repository of knowledge" (Shamim, p. 117), learners witnessed a "value conflict" (Shamim, p. 119) with the introduction of innovative teaching. Bangladesh, also a South Asian and neighboring country, might be a witness to the same situation.

Turning a traditional classroom into a learner-centered one is not free of challenges. Thompson (2013) identifies a range of material constraints like limited resources, poor teacher training and the "backwash" effect as prime difficulties in implementing learner-centered education in developing countries. Yet another challenge for the returning teachers from abroad which might contribute to failure, according to Schweisfurth (2011), is these teachers may encounter resistance from other teachers who feel that new pedagogical behavior does not fit with locally accepted classroom norms. Hayes (1996) illustrates this kind of impact with the example of a Thai teacher who was keen to put into practice the CLT approach she had learnt on training

courses, but whose classes were criticized by her colleagues for being too noisy, contrary to the local cultural norm of passive, obedient students listening intently as the teacher transmitted knowledge which might be the case of Bangladesh as well.

The implications mentioned by Schweisfurth (2011) regarding the implementation of LCE greatly matches with the condition in Bangladesh. Though CLTA is the methodology to be followed in class but there is no monitoring on the part of the policymakers which makes it difficult for interactive classes to be sustainedespecially at the university level. Since there is no directive, the returning teachers from abroad find themselves in an awkward situation as their classroom and learners are not ready for the modern teaching approaches. This, in course of time, might turn into a demotivating factor for the teachers.

Research Questions

This study is unique because several research studies have been carried out on beliefs and motivation while teachers were studying abroad, but very few attempts have been made to investigate what use these learners/teachers made of their acquired knowledge after they returned to their home country on completion of their studies (Edwards & Li, 2013).

For this purpose, the current study attempts to address the following questions:

- What was the motivating factor for the teachers to study abroad?
- What difference did the teachers find regarding the teaching approach at home and abroad?
- What sort of obstacles have they faced or are they facing while implementing modern/ innovative teaching techniques?
- What measures can be taken to overcome these barriers (if any)?

Data Collection Instruments

A qualitative approach and a case study methodology with interviews have been adopted for this study because an in-depth enquiry into the existing teaching-learning situation at the university level was required. I wanted the teachers to speak about their experience in detail and gather as much information as possible about the existing teaching-learning situation and also how these teachers feel regarding the barriers to employ modern teaching techniques in this country and related suggestions.

Participants

The study involves ELT professionals from 4 universities from Bangladesh who have studied in Western universities. Since it was evident that private institutions provided more facilities than public universities, participants were selected at random from one public and three different private institutions from different parts of the country. Because of the geographical distance, as I was in Leeds at the time and the participants were in Bangladesh, it was difficult to contact teachers from different universities who have studied abroad. Hence, the snowball technique has been applied to select participants for this case study.

The interviews have been taken through Skype software and recorded so that I could get back to them for further information or reflection. I took consent from the participants beforehand,

informing them of the ethical issues and that the interviews would be recorded. Depending on the participants' preferences, the interviews have been mostly conducted in Bengali, sample parts of which have been translated and transcribed into English and included in Appendix B. Although all the language teachers have had training abroad and are proficient users of English, they felt more comfortable using their mother tongue. In addition, the use of native language for the interviews helped in developing trust and rapport and to establish relationships with the participants.

Planning the Interview

The interview schedule was designed according to the research questions. Since the whole study is about the teachers' experience of studying abroad, making changes to teaching methodology, barriers in implementing teaching techniques learnt from abroad, and possible solutions to remove these barriers, all sixteen questions in the schedule were introduced to clarify these issues (Appendix A).

Justification of the Plan

I began the data collection procedure with a pilot study by interviewing a colleague who has studied abroad. The conversation with him through Skype pointed towards issues that I had not thought of while designing my research questions. Taking the pilot study into account, I made changes to my interview schedule, which indicates that the pilot study has served its purpose in pointing out "some of the inevitable problems in converting the design into reality" (Robson, 2011, p. 405). Risks were quite negligible for this study. The only risk is that, despite pseudonyms being used, there remains a chance to be identified as all the teachers in an institution have not received education from abroad.

Limitations of the Study

The limitation of this study, of course, included the need to compromise on some aspects of the original research design, and the limited time available for reflection and follow-up, reduced still further by the unavailability of the participants at the set time. Intermittent internet connection at times became a source of distraction as well.

Findings

This section will present an account of the responses of the four teachers interviewed. The findings are arranged under five main themes related to the research questions.

Motivating Factor for the Teachers to Study Abroad

Hasan:

Hasan, a public university teacher of Bangladesh, has done an MA TESOL from the Institute of Education, University of London and is currently teaching different language courses to students of both undergraduate and graduate level. Hasan received a Centenary Scholarship for pursuing his MA at UK. Earlier, he participated in a cultural exchange program under the FLTA (Fulbright Foreign Teaching Assistant Program) from USA. He wanted to be a teacher from his university days and, like the rest of the teachers who join the University, had hopes

of studying abroad. In his words,

> My motivation to study abroad, like many, was primarily instrumental: rise in salary, quick promotion, and so on. I felt very lucky when I got the chance to go to USA for this FLTA program for 9 months at the University of North Carolina which ultimately changed my world.

At the end of the program Hasan knew that he was coming back—for further studies. Also to his surprise, Hasan found that non-degree programs were not recognized in Bangladesh. He was not getting any facility or recognition for his training in USA. So, I found that Hasan's intention to do an MA from the Western countries was influenced by three factors: professional attainment, thirst of knowledge, and recognition of his achievement.

Jahan:

My second participant, Jahan, is a teacher from a private university who has also studied MA TESOL from the University of Lancaster, UK. Jahan had years of language teaching experience at two private universities and also worked with the British Council English Team for four years before she received the Hornby Scholarship to study at UK. While speaking about her motivation to study abroad, Jahan informs,

> I studied Linguistics and ELT for MA at a public university and then joined as an English language teacher at a private university where I realized that I didn't have the experience of research at all as we didn't work on a dissertation at the MA level. Moreover, I always had a mind to study in a native-speaker country to witness their educational system and update myself.
>
> After joining the profession, I felt that it is absolutely necessary to update and upgrade myself as I was working as a materials developer and a teacher trainer. I also wanted to study further and do a PhD without which I cannot rise professionally.

Based on her narrative, it appears that Jahan's motivation was mainly intrinsic.

Mohsin:

Participant three, Mohsin, is the youngest of the four teachers interviewed. Mohsin is a teacher of the same leading private university in Chittagong, Bangladesh from where he graduated in English literature and language in 2010. His second MA was from the University of Essex, UK. Now he teaches different English language courses at both graduate and undergraduate level.

"What was your motivation to study abroad?" was my question to Mohsin to which he replied,

> My MA degree was on an integrated syllabus of English language and literature. But to my amazement, some of the courses that I had to study for MA were repetitions of the same courses studied at the Undergraduate level.
>
> After I entered my profession I found that in real life there were no practical applications of the subjects that I had studied. Out of curiosity I started looking for syllabuses of different countries and saw they were very practical, updated, and professionally useful. I chose Essex among them to update myself.

To me, Mohsin's motivation to study abroad also stands in line with Jahan's motivation, which is intrinsic.

Rahman:

Rahman, the last and the most experienced of the participants, is the chair of the Department of English at a leading private university in Dhaka. He graduated from a public university in English literature and joined a college (sixth form). After working in two colleges he got the chance to go to Australia for a Postgraduate Diploma in Education. In Rahman's words,

> I began my teaching career as a lecturer at a rural college and later shifted to another college which was in a better condition than the first. But while working there, I felt I couldn't survive by working in those poor institutions. What I had studied at my university was coming of no use to improve the conditions of the students studying in those institutions. So, when I got the chance to do a Postgraduate Diploma in Australia, I jumped for it though it cost me a fortune. I was frustrated and did not want to teach at a college anymore. So the thought of this Diploma served a dual purpose for me: To upgrade and learn about some practical knowledge and secondly, upon completion, I might start working in a university.

Rahman was proved wrong when he got back because a postgraduate diploma is not recognized as an academic qualification in Bangladesh and despite spending months and a large amount of money he received no benefits in terms of financial or professional achievements. So he started searching again for an MA program to study and finally received a scholarship from the University of Canterbury, New Zealand to study MA TESOL. This time, on completion of his degree, he joined a leading private university in Dhaka where he worked for sixteen years and then joined his current university.

I find that Rahman's motivation is similar to Hasan's where the reasons were related to financial and professional successes.

How do They Feel about their Studies/Teaching Approach Earlier at Home and Abroad?

In this section I have included my four participants' experiences regarding their classroom situation at the tertiary level and how they found their classroom at a Western country.

1st Degree Classroom Situation

Hasan's study background is from a public university of Bangladesh where he studied Applied Linguistics and ELT at both undergraduate and graduate levels. While talking to him, I found that he had graduated in the year 2005 which was a year CLTA was supposed to be the dominantly used language teaching method. Hasan's words presented a very traditional scenario of his classroom situation. His first degree classroom is the emblem of a traditional and typical Bangladeshi public university classroom.

A large class size of 120 students crammed in a classroom where the sitting arrangement is hardly for 80-90 students. Hasan says, "We used to squeeze ourselves on the benches to accommodate all the students in the class." The sitting arrangement was long fixed benches and thus students had to attend classes in a rather uncomfortable situation. The classes were mostly in the form of lectures and, most of the time, the learners were clueless about what

they were going to learn that day. Though there were multimedia facilities at the department but they were used in only 1% classes. The classes were based on traditional textbooks prescribed every year. Hasan commented, "We were mere passive receivers of instructions" as these teacher-dominated classrooms promoted very little or no teacher-student interaction, let alone student-student interaction. Though many of these teachers were knowledgeable and good orators, and the topic interesting, the provided knowledge often proved to be futile because of the one way transmission process. It is a well-known fact that interaction paves ways to better understanding of a topic, but most of his teachers were reluctant to employ any innovation or communicative techniques in class. On the contrary, many of the teachers were not even quite prepared for the class most of the time; some even came without any preparation at all.

Following the tradition of rote-learning, theories were introduced to the learners which they were expected to memorize and write answers based on them in their exams without any sense of practical application, informed Hasan. Since the learners were not getting any updated information or knowledge from either the teachers or from any other source, just like students of previous years, Hasan and his friends collected notes or ready answers prepared by former good students, made some changes and regurgitated the same answers in the exams. So, group study was basically result-oriented without any scope of critical thinking on the part of the learners.

The experience of the other three participants bears similar evidences of a traditional classroom. Jahan's experience was the same as Hasan's as she studied at the same institution a year later. She added that there were no presentation sessions and they had no idea of a dissertation let alone a research proposal.

In comparison to Hasan and Jahan, Mohsin was more fortunate to have a class size of forty students as he studied in a private university. Yet I was surprised to learn that his classes were also teacher-dominated and lacked updated knowledge and information because the same sources (i.e., textbooks prescribed several years back) were being used. Multimedia was rarely used in class. He even had teachers who came to the class and made the students read out from the books throughout the class. There were some classes where he had to do presentations, but the teacher-student interaction and the student-student interaction was limited to that. Thus, what is obvious in a modern (2010) classroom like Mohsin's is that the same traditional classroom teaching methodology was being used. Result-oriented study, theory based learning without practical application, and so on, were still the features of a twenty-first century university classroom.

The difference between Mohsin's, and Hasan and Jahan's assessment system was that Mohsin's university followed the semester system. There were two summative exams: a mid-term and a semester final. Within semester 2, more class tests were taken and for the semester final exam, they had to do a presentation of 5 marks, which at times turned out to be a reading of a prepared script. Like Jahan, Mohsin never received feedback on the tutorials (class tests) taken. However, if the teacher did return the scripts, in place of comments or remarks, there

was only a number or a figure like 14/20 or an A/B/C. The silent learners under the dominance of an authoritative teacher remained silent about not receiving feedback.

By now I had enough reasons to believe that Rahman's class could not be an exception because his first degree was in the year 1986 that was before CLTA was introduced in Bangladesh. As mentioned earlier, it was only after Rahman joined his profession that he realized he had learned nothing practical about language teaching at the university with which he could help out his students in the rural areas.

Classroom Situation Abroad

My first participant Hasan's expression regarding his experience of studying abroad was,

> A completely new world: teaching-learning pedagogy, resource, updated knowledge, teachers who are writing the books are teaching you: very inspiring and motivating.

Just in line with his first experience of observing classes at the University of North Carolina, his classes at IOE was tremendously different from the traditional classes that Hasan attended for his first degree. An optimal class size of 20, interactive and intensive seminar-based classroom, task-based learning, materials/articles given in advance to study and then discussed in class, and a critical approach towards reading and thinking were some of the salient features of his Western classroom. Moreover, the classes were all based on application of theories whereas he had only studied the theories in his first degree classes. Alongside, a vast resource, a 24-hour library facility with availability of any book on demand, was the most precious attraction for him. Unlike his classes in Bangladesh, there was no residue of the former grammar-translation methodology in these classes.

Unfortunately, among all these positives, Hasan did not realize that he belonged to a very different academic culture. Students in Bangladesh usually continued to write the same way at the tertiary level as they used to write at the SSC/HSC (GCSE/Sixth Form) level. He had very little knowledge of the format of academic writing in Western countries. For instance, literature review, summarizing, paraphrasing, referencing, and handling plagiarism were quite new to him. He had to take non-credit courses at the beginning of his first semester to learn these academic writing features.

Both Jahan and Mohsin speak of similar interactive classes as both studied in different institutions in the UK. Jahan informs that she found classroom task-based learning to be the best method because it required successful completion of a given work done through participation of the entire class. Cooperation or collaboration was highly encouraged in her classes abroad. The assignments too were like small research projects and to assist in their learning, research workshops or skill-based workshops were arranged for the learners from time to time.

> Classes at my university in UK were very technologically advanced. We needed to adapt to everything.We needed to know about the program/courses there. Another fresh addition was we received feedback for all the assignments provided.

Like Jahan, Mohsin mentions Turnitin to be a totally new concept. He acknowledges that he

also had not any idea of doing literature review, referencing, note taking, and all of these to him was an introduction of a completely new academic culture. Still he was happy that at the beginning of the program all the course outlines were given and everything clearly explained. But he did face difficulty like Hasan and Jahan in adapting to the academic culture. His teacher motivated him and he also worked hard to adapt to the UK style of academic writing.

Rahman expressed similar views like Hasan, Mohsin, and Jahan. To him the classroom situation abroad is very encouraging and sets the backdrop for interaction. "Critical thinking was highly promoted in my classes," informs Rahman.

Obstacles to Implementation of Modern/Innovative Teaching Techniques

I asked the participants about the kinds of obstacles they have faced or are facing in their home institutions if and when they tried to implement the modern/innovative teaching techniques they had learned abroad. According to Hasan, the challenges in employing modern teaching techniques/approaches are many: "In our country, students are still under the trance of Grammar Translation Method and expect the teachers to speak. They are not ready for interactive classes or autonomous learning as they are not familiar with the concept." He cites the example of a teacher who makes her students present in class which should be a good thing but students complain that it is a kind of cheating on the part of the teacher by not teaching and making the learners do his/her (the teacher's) part of the work which is to teach them or deliver lectures. Hasan finds the main problem to be lack of resources:

> I am writing a book chapter now, so I need books which I know of but can't get hold of them because they are not available in our library, and ordering online is at times very difficult here because of government policy. So I have to request someone abroad to download an article or supply pages of the book for me. This is extremely difficult and demotivates a teacher to research further.

Poor pay-scale is another big problem, informs Hasan. Many of the teachers are not motivated to travel the extra mile to update or bring changes in their teaching techniques as this requires hard work. They involve themselves in other work like teaching at a private university or consultancy that is more financially rewarding. As it is a well known fact that teachers working in the public sector in Bangladesh have the lowest salary scale in Asia, teachers hanker after extra money to bear the ever-increasing living costs and their attention is diverted work other than their teaching. Teachers do know that they need to update themselves as well as the students, as there is no room for gathering students' feedback and evaluation; teachers get demotivated to work hard or try innovative techniques. But the same teacher, while working in a private university, at least tries to employ some modern techniques as they get a higher salary there.

Apart from the economic factor, teachers also lose their interest and become demotivated because the same course is assigned to them every year, leaving them no room to update informs Hasan. They also do not face any challenges. Nor are they asked or instructed to share their experiences abroad. In line with Hasan's remarks, my experience was rather amusing as I came to know that in my institution two teachers had expressed contradictory feelings

about sharing their experiences after returning from their studies abroad. One felt threatened because he was asked to share his ideas and experience of studying abroad by his department while the other expressed his dissatisfaction that no one wished to learn about his research and experience.

Alongside these obstacles, Hasan points to some other important factors that I think should be valuable to policymakers. According to him, when teachers join the University they are aware of the universal motto of "Publish or Perish," but these words are not emphasized on like in Western countries. A good publication does not carry any value or receive recognition. The quantity of publications is measured in place of quality, and whether the publication is from a reputed, refereed journal or not carries no meaning. So, teachers lose interest or motivation to work hard for a publication in an international or quality journal as they do not reap any benefit of being updated or working hard. Furthermore, there is no academic forum or platform for the teachers to discuss new ideas or to introduce one's work to the community. To add fuel to the fire, a teacher is judged by his political affiliation, link with media or social stance rather than his academic qualities that is quite depressing informs Hasan.

In addition to many of the factors that Hasan mentioned, Jahan talked about the imposition on the part of the institution as a barrier to implementing modern teaching approaches. "In the institution that I worked earlier, there was a constant pressure on the teachers from the part of the authority that all the students have to pass as they are paying heavy fees for their studies. Somehow students smell this and many of them just wanted to pass," informed Jahan. "So, when I wanted to involve them in collaborative activities, they were less interested and were only concerned with the questions they would face in the exams."

Mohsin added, "Our syllabus is designed in a traditional system which does not support interaction. Moreover, there are cultural barriers involved and our students are not ready for the modern teaching approaches." I found this comment of Mohsin's to be the opinion of all four participants as, apart from commenting on classroom methodology developing teachers, all of them spoke of preparing the learners for modern teaching techniques like task-based learning, pairwork, groupwork, presentations, and so on.

This is a cultural barrier I find as learners are used to seeing the teacher as an authoritative figure watching over them while they work. Mohsin added some more information regarding the mindset of the senior faculty members that act as a barrier in innovative teaching. He found that the senior faculty and visiting faculty members were totally against communicative and modern methodology. They tried to resist change and spoke against it in class and in public as they thought modern methodology to be unnecessarily laborious on the part of the teachers. He spoke of an experience of presenting a paper at a local conference where he had a renowned academician as his moderator. He was completely taken aback when this person started addressing modern teaching techniques, ELT, technology in teaching English to be absolutely "rubbish" in the context of Bangladesh.

Rahman also possessed similar views to Mohsin that our learners are not ready for interactive classes. He feels as he is teaching at a well organized private university setting, things are not

often a big problem for him. His logistic support is adequate to make his teaching effective, keeping pace with modern teaching methodologies. However, from his experience, he knows very well that this cannot be generalized. He also points out, regarding recruitment of teachers, that a fresh graduate can hardly develop a sense of how to teach after receiving the first degree. There is absolutely no practical application for him/her to go through first before starting their role as a teacher.This system can be altered by the Education Ministry, but would be a lengthy and time-consuming affair. Before reaching that level, a proposal has to be approved by the relevant Joint Secretary. Before that, it has to be granted by UGC. If all these authorities attest a proposal to be viable or sustainable, only then the Education Ministry would present in favor of it in the parliament. Thus, it has become imperative to develop a faster way to make necessary amendments to education policy involving teachers, learners, researchers, and policy makers.

Measures to Overcome these Barriers

"So how do we look for the solutions?" was my last question to Hasan for which he offered a couple of ideas. The first one was that teaching practice has to be contextualized or localized. He feels there is no point in telling the students only about an ideal situation. Rather, they should be informed about what could work best for their situation or context. In order to make the classes interactive, he usually copies and supplies the reading materials to his students prior to his classes and the class starts with a discussion on the same involving pairwork and groupwork followed by a lecture. "The university authority needs to be constantly reminded of the necessity of subscribing to a couple of mainstream journals," said Hasan.

Hasan's next suggestion was to cascade the learning to the community or at least to other teachers of the institution. When a teacher comes back after completing his/her study abroad, there should be some sort of accountability of presenting and sharing their experiences to the teaching community he belongs to. If the Education Ministry promotes this cascade learning in terms of promotion or if student evaluation is introduced and made mandatory, then there can be a positive effect on the teaching-learning situation in the long run. "Otherwise, you go abroad, study, come back, and again merge with the same depressing academic scenario which doesn't seem to work. The scenario needs to be changed through combined effort on the part of the stakeholders as well as teachers," said Hasan.

Speaking of solutions, Jahan suggested that online courses/PhD or even postgraduate diplomas should be professionally recognized and encouraged from the policy level. Split-site courses can also be an option in the case of teachers who cannot go to study abroad for various reasons. Institutional support is a big factor for aspiring teachers.

Mohsin adds, **"**A teacher needs to be reflective if they want to promote interactive classrooms. He or she must think of his/her lessons after every class to decide what went well and what did not." The infrastructure as well as the teaching-learning situation needs to be developed both for teachers and students. If the classroom is beside the road and the class is being disturbed by its sound all the time this cannot be a desirable teaching-learning situation. Again, in a large classroom, if the teacher needs to project his/her voice throughout the class, the teacher

would be exhausted but the availability of a microphone could have alleviated the problem. Mohsin too emphasizes on the necessity of teacher training both pre-service and in service. While training, the teachers need to be informed properly of the course objectives and also that this training should be followed up on from time to time. In other words, Continuous Professional Development (CPD) has to be ensured for all language teaching professionals. Like Hasan, he too mentions that there should be some kind of monitoring from the part of the policymakers after a teacher returns from his/her studies. At the same time, the teacher needs a proper teaching-learning situation to make use of the training abroad. From his experience, he feels that learners enjoy interactive classes but they need to be informed of these concepts beforehand.

Rahman describes his situation while talking about solutions. He too feels a teacher should be a reflective practitioner.

> I did face problems in many cases in implementing modern teaching approaches but I could overcome them because of my true commitment and conscious effort. Here I should mention my pro-active involvement in an ELT forum called BELTA which helped me a lot. As I feel I need to help other teachers to overcome their problems, I myself need to try it out first.

His suggestions in this regard were: all foreign degree/qualifications in ELT need to be generally tailored for particular candidates of a country or region. Echoing Hasan's words he too suggested that all foreign ELT qualifications, both degree and non-degree, should be professionally recognized by local universities/institutions and there should be a judgment criteria in promotion or increment purposes. Alongside, the authority should ensure that any foreign qualifications include some field work or special course on ELT policy, methodology, assessment, and related issues.

Recommendations

My recommendations stand in line with my participants' comments and suggestions as I belong to the same community, and am aware of many of the situations they have faced and are still facing.

At the same time, if the teachers are not given space and encouragement, and are treated as mere puppets to implement the authority's directives, the initiative would produce no result.

- Firstly, since teachers who join the university as lecturers are usually fresh graduates, it is imperative that they receive both pre-service as well as in-service training. The freshman lecturers depend heavily on their perception of classroom teaching, following the style of the teacher they liked during their class. Thus mentoring can be introduced for these teachers to scaffold them into the teaching-learning process with proper mentor training.
- Some major incentives for teachers should be taken, including a better salary structure for the teachers at the primary, secondary, and tertiary levels. These incentives need not be only in terms of promotion or study leave (Appendix C) but in terms of

professional attainment.

- Research publications have to be made mandatory for the teachers and judged equally by their quality and not just in terms of quantity.
- For updated knowledge and research purposes, it is necessary to subscribe to some major journals related to the concerned subjects/areas.
- Teacher forums, professional bodies, and individual institutions can immensely help us to implement better teaching, learning, and research in ELT which is an ongoing process involving all professionally motivated teachers, parents, administrators, students, policy makers, publishers and many more. BELTA (Bangladesh English language Teachers Association) can play a pivotal role in this regard by extending teacher development/training programs to different parts of the country. In the training programs or professional development courses, teachers can be introduced to new trends in English language teaching and they can also share with each other what suits their teaching context better. As Thompson (2013, p. 50) suggests, to increase the chances of success of learner-centered classes, it is imperative that its professional language has first been "culturally translated, from source to target setting."
- Reflective practice should also be promoted as the literature shows. The participants also acknowledged that without the teacher being reflective, it is difficult for any modern teaching approach to sustain. Baffoka (2012) asserts that at the tertiary level, it is imperative to change the teachers' view about teaching-learning and classroom practices which requires rigorous training. If the teachers do not have similar learning experiences it is unlikely that they would be able to create such learning conditions for the students. Baffoka proposes awareness-raising of the weakness of didactic pedagogy, extensive reading, peer observation, reflective practice, and in-service training for the teachers to successfully implement interactive learner-centered instruction.
- Cascade learning/training, especially on the part of the returning teachers from abroad, should be made mandatory to pass on the acquired knowledge to the community or at least to other teachers of the institution (Edward and Li, 2013). When a teacher comes back after completing his/her study abroad there should be some sort of accountability of presenting and sharing their experiences to the teaching community he belongs to. If the Education Ministry promotes this cascade learning in terms of promotion or if student evaluation is introduced, then there can be a positive effect on the teaching-learning situation in the long run.
- For updated knowledge and training purposes, online courses could be an option. There are already E-Teacher Scholarship programs run by the State Department of USA and administered by the University of Oregon and University of Maryland that the teachers can benefit from. There are teacher training courses held by the British Council as well as both free and fee paid but these courses need to be publicized to the teachers.
- These are all directives for the development of the teachers but we need to prepare our learners to take advantage of this modern teaching methodology. But for this,

they need to start early. If collaborative learning (group work and pairwork) and task-based learning is introduced at the secondary school level and continued through college, then it would be much easier for teachers to involve the learners in an interactive class at the tertiary level.

- Classrooms need a proper learning environment free of noise pollution and other disturbances. Large classrooms should have microphones.

Conclusion and Directions for Further Research

The current paper was a small-scale study using a small number of participants, i.e., 4 teachers, who have studied abroad. However, the information received opens the gate to a huge unexplored area regarding teacher development in Bangladesh. There were certain constraints, for instance, unavailability of contacted teachers, time difference between UK and Bangladesh (GMT +6) and poor internet connection in Bangladesh, which, at times, disrupted the interviews. Fortunately, due to the relentless cooperation of the participants, the quality of data was adequate. One glaring limitation was that stakeholders' or policymakers' views could not be gathered due to time constraints. The study highlights the fact that the ongoing classroom practice demands change both on the part of the teachers as well as the learners and it is also crucial to bring changes to the existing policy for the advancement of the education system in Bangladesh.

For further research, ethnographic studies can be conducted as condition of the classes could vary across different parts of the country (i.e., Dhaka and Chittagong). Also separate studies can be carried out on private and public institutions because apparently it seems that private institutions are in a better state than public universities in terms of modern teaching approaches, logistics, and support. Thus, larger-scale research needs to be carried out involving more participants and different levels of study to support teacher development, bridge the gap between policy and practice, and bring potential improvements to the education system in this developing country.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A

Interview Questions:

1. Where are you teaching now?
2. Where have you taken your first degree from?
3. Which year was that? (To judge introduction of CLTA)
4. Tell me about your classroom situation? How big is the class, facilities you have, etc.
5. Where did you study for your postgraduate?
6. What prompted/motivated you to study abroad?
7. Let's talk about your experience there.
8. Did you feel any difference between the ways you studied for your first degree and for the postgraduate degree?
9. In what ways? Class size and facilities, teachers' way (mode) of teaching, pair work, group work, syllabus, blend of theory and application, etc.
10. How do you feel about the approach at home and abroad?
11. Do you think they are appropriate for our context?
12. Have you tried applying any of these approaches in your own classroom situation after you got back?
13. What approaches have you tried out?
14. Did you get support from your institution in making changes to your classroom practice?
15. Did you face any problems while trying out/applying these techniques?
16. Can you find any solutions for these problems?

APPENDIX B

Sample Service Policy Guide (Translation)
Promotion Policies

Approved/Granted in the 138th Syndicate Meeting on 21-01-1989

1. The following proposals are being suggested after reviewing the policies of promotions for the teachers of Jahangirnagar University through upgrading.

    1) **The Required Qualifications for Promotion to the Position of Assistant Professor from Lecturer**

    a. Minimum 3 (three) years of experience in teaching/research in any university or approved equivalent institutions with at least 2 (two) years as a lecturer in this university.
    Or
    b. For lecturers with higher educational degrees, including MS, MPhil, Honors degree

or MA/ MSc from foreign institutions, minimum 2 (two) years of active service experience in this university will be required.
Or
c. For lecturers with PhD/equivalent degrees, no teaching experience will be required. For lecturers with PhD/equivalent degrees, the apprenticeship should be of at least 1 (one) year. For all applicants within all three divisions, (a), (b), and (c), at least 1 (one) publication will be mandatory.

2) **The Required Qualifications for Promotion to the Position of Associate Professor from Assistant Professor**

a. For teachers with PhD or equivalent degrees:
Minimum 4 (four) years of experience as an Assistant Professor with at least 1 (one) year of active service experience in this university and at least 3 (three) publications as an Assistant Professor.
Or
A total of 7 years of teaching/research experience in any university or approved equivalent institutions with minimum 1 year of active service experience in this university and at least 3 publications as an Assistant Professor.

b. For teachers with MPhil/MS or Foreign MA or equivalent degrees:

A total of 5 (five) years of teaching experience with minimum 3 (three) years of active service experience as an Assistant Professor in this university, and at least 3 (three) publications as an Assistant Professor.
Or
3 (three) years of active service experience as an Assistant Professor in this university with a total of 7 (seven) years of teaching/research experience in any university or approved equivalent institutions, and at least 3 (three) publications as an Assistant Professor.

c. For teachers with qualifications other than the ones mentioned in (a) and (b):

Minimum 8 (eight) years of experience as an Assistant Professor (among which at least 5 years of active service experience should be from this university will be required) and at least 3 (three) publications as an Assistant Professor.
Or
Minimum 5 (five) years of active service experience as an Assistant Professor in this university with a total of 11 (eleven) years of teaching/research experience in any university or approved equivalent institutions and at least 3 (three) publications as an Assistant Professor.

Preferences and Problems in Feedback Techniques of Bangladeshi Tertiary Level Students

Munzerin Mohiuddin
Student of English and Humanities, BRAC University

Asifa Sultana
Assistant Professor of English and Humanities, BRAC University

Abstract

The study attempts to find out the preferences of students for different feedback strategies in writing, their views about the implementation and usefulness of the existing feedback practice, and their problems and expectations from it. Feedback in writing is a vital act for its development where the perception of the students is important. It is hypothesized that students have certain preferences, problems, and suggestions for the improvement of feedback. A group of 50 students of tertiary level from one institution who experiences the same feedback strategies were surveyed online for the research. The hypothesis is found to be strongly supported by the findings and discussion with a number of implications. The research concludes by indicating its benefits and giving directions for further study.

Introduction

Feedback is the general name for various procedures that are currently used in many L2 courses to react to students' writing and it is defined as a way to inform learners of whether an instructional performance is right or wrong (Lalande, 1982). According to Harmer (2007), both positive and negative feedback are necessary. Often the comfort and outlook of the students are not paid heed to, as a result of which the practice lags behind as a teaching technique. In exploration of the nature and effectiveness of feedback on students' writing, a set of questions are of primary importance: how and from whom do the students want to receive feedback; are there any specific styles preferred over others; what are the students' problems and expectations from feedback? These are crucial points to identify for the researchers and practitioners since development of skills is likely to be hindered if the learners are not satisfied with the feedback.

Purpose and Hypothesis

This study examines the students' expectations from feedback and how they want it to be shaped by the feedback providers. It is hypothesized that the students of tertiary level in Bangladesh have distinct likes and dislikes regarding feedback along with a number of problems and expectations from the practice. Preference of students for the different strategies of feedback (e.g., source, style, aspects, and type) and the steps to fulfill those, their perceptions regarding its different implementations and usefulness, and their problems and suggestions for improving the procedure are the concerns of the paper.

Literature Review

Language researchers consider feedback as an important part to be considered for development of the second language of learners. Feedback is responsible for improving the performance of the students by giving information to the learner about his or her performance on a learning task (Ur, 1996). According to Kulhavy and Wager (1993), in the context of writing, three broad meanings of feedback can be explored; first, feedback is a motivator when provided as a praise; second, it can reinforce learning by rewarding and punishing on prior behavior; and third, it gives information to change behavior on a particular direction. According to Hyland and Hyland (2001), the role of written feedback has mostly been seen as informational, a means of guiding reactions and recommendation to facilitate improvements.

Strategies of Feedback. Ravand and Rasekh (2011) discussed all feedback variables where the mode, source, style, focus, complexity, and specificity can be considered as the basis of feedback strategies. The mode refers to whether the feedback is written or oral, provided in physical presence, or through the internet. The sources of feedback are mainly feedback from teacher and feedback from peer. "Feedback style refers to the linguistic and pragmatic characteristics of the feedback, including the illocutionary force of feedback (e.g., whether teacher uses questions, suggestions, or commands) and the explicitness of the feedback (e.g. whether codes or explicit corrections are provided)," say Ravand and Rasekh (2011, p. 1140). Here, directness or indirectness is also considered as a feedback providing style. The two focuses in providing feedback are form and content based. The authors also talk about feedback in relation to complexity and specificity. Their study mentions that the least complex feedback (i.e., correct answer) revealed greater learner benefits in terms of efficiency and result than complex feedback. About specificity in providing feedback, they pointed out that several researchers have stated that feedback is considerably more effective when it delivers details of how to improve the writing rather than just specifying whether the student's work is correct or not.

Feedback Process for Writing. Often feedback strategies for writing include responding, correcting, training and involving students, and finishing the feedback process (Harmer, 2007). Responding was observed during the writing process (i.e., the teacher says how the work appears to him or her and how successful it is before suggesting how it could be improved, by giving helpful comments). Correcting the written work was observed using correction codes (e.g., 'ww'- wrong word) or through summarizing comments saying what needed to be corrected. Harmer (2007) emphasized on training the students and finishing the feedback process which is only really finished when the students make the directed changes in their writing, tending to be autonomous.

Some of the strategies are known to foster learner autonomy. Self-assessment, self-repair, and portfolio assessment are all evaluation processes that are associated with developing writing (Ekbatani, 2000). Self-assessment can act as an enhancement to teacher assessment and provide one of the most effective means of developing critical self-awareness to achieve the

required skills. Self-assessment heading for self-repair lets learners judge their performance in short sections and improve on their own creativity when they find deviances from the standard forms.

Corrective Feedback (CF). Corrective Feedback is a suggestion to a learner in second language teaching, asserting that his or her use of the target language is incorrect (Ferreira et al., 2007). Lyster and Panova (2002) illustrated the significance of corrective feedback (CF) as it provides feedback on error which the students are unable to discover on their own. Ellis's (2008) typology can be considered useful as it outlined all the styles of CF. His typology of corrective feedback stretched a basis for scrutinizing the options to the teachers and for thoroughly experimenting with them in their own teaching. The typology is briefly presented below:

- Direct CF: The teacher provides the correct form.
- Indirect CF: The teacher indicates the error but does not provide the correct form by giving the indication only or giving the indication by locating it.
- Metalinguistic CF: Some metalinguistic clue is provided as to the nature of the error by using error codes (e.g., art- article) or by giving a brief grammatical description.
- Focused (intensive) or unfocused (extensive) CF: This concerns whether the teacher chooses to correct all (or most) of the errors or only one or two specific types of errors.
- Electronic feedback: Teacher provides a hyperlink which contains correction of the error.
- Reformulation: A native speaker's reworking to make the students' writing seem like native language, keeping the original intact.

Studies on Students' Perception on Feedback. Students' perspectives in research on teaching and learning are not emphasized enough in studies examining feedback in writing. The following sections discuss the available research on different aspects of perceptions.

Perceptions on Source of Feedback. Hyland and Hyland (2006) pointed out that surveys of students' feedback preferences commonly indicate that ESL students value teacher written feedback more highly than other forms like peer and oral feedback (e.g., Radecki & Swales 1988; Leki 1991; Enginarlar 1993; Saito 1994; Ferris 1995). Students often disfavor non-teacher feedback like that of peer evaluation and self-assessment teachers grading (Saito, 1994). However, there were also studies that revealed students' preferences towards peer review or combined participation of both teachers and peers in the feedback process (Best, et al., 2015; Chaudron, 1984; Mendonca & Johnson, 1994). An analysis of Chinese and Spanish-speaking students pointed out that both groups preferred constructive criticism and teachers' comments over those of other students (Nelson & Garson, 1998). In addition, when students

were asked about their preference towards e-feedback, they favored peer feedback over e-feedback due to computer-anxiety (Lai, 2010).

Perceptions on Style (Comment/Grades/Correction/Reformulation). Lee (2008) in her research identified that 72.2% high-proficiency students and 40.9% low-proficiency students prefer "comments+marks/grades+error feedback." The students expressed that it is important to know the desired level of performance indicated through grades as well as why their writing is good or bad which can be expressed through comments. The need for positive feedback was identified in studies by several researchers where students expressed that approval of their performance often motivated them (e.g., Best, et al., 2015; Mahfoodh, 2011). They also pointed out that teachers' comments are helpful when they are "specific,""understandable," and "manageable" (Best, et al., 2015). Students' preferences towards reformulation of the language items were identified from studies on L2 graduates where they expressed their desire to know how the same ideas would be expressed by native speakers (Leki, 2006, as cited in Hyland & Hyland, 2006).

Perceptions on Focus/Aspects for Providing Feedback. In a review of the current practices of corrective feedback on writing, Bitchener and Ferris (2012) noted that the students felt that the teacher gave more feedback on grammar in comparison with any other aspects of writing. However, the students were reported to assign equal importance to both grammar and ideas. This view was reiterated in other studies where the significance of having feedback on both meaning and structure was emphasized by all students, as they believed that one is a failure without the other (e.g., Mustafa, 2012). However, findings from L2 studies were not completely uniform where some students were reported to prefer feedback on both content and grammar, and some preferred grammar over content (Hyland & Hyland, 2006).

Perceptions on Types of Feedback (Indirect/Direct/Metalinguistic Cues). Investigations of students' preferences towards direct and indirect feedback also produced diverse findings. Hyland and Hyland (2006) identified that students favored indirect clues rather than direct corrections. On the other hand, Bitchener and Ferris (2012) explored that students preferred direct feedback on their errors as it involved less effort for them in correcting. However, they believed that indirect feedback where errors are located and labeled with some kind of clarification or at least with error codes would help them to improve their writing in future.

Perceptions on Other Aspects of Feedback. Lee (2008) found that many researchers claim that L2 students desired a high quality on accuracy in writing, they were keen to have all their errors located by the teacher, and also wanted overt correction of errors (i.e., direct error feedback) from teachers (e.g. Komura, 1999; Lee, 2005; Leki, 1991; Rennie, 2000; Radecki & Swales, 1988, and Lee, 2005). Similar perceptions were found in Grami's (2005) study on students in Saudi Arabia which claimed that the students "want,""expect," and "appreciate" teachers' written feedback about their surface-level errors. The study of Norouzian and Farahani (2012) discovered a huge difference between the perception of teachers and students preferring focused and unfocused feedback where the students wanted to have more focused feedback. Studies conducted on the students' responses towards feedback revealed that the high-proficiency students were more positive than their low-proficiency peers in terms of their

understanding, their view of the usefulness of teacher feedback, and their aptitude to correct their errors (Lee, 2008). Moreover, specific types of feedback were reported to obstruct the efficacy of the feedback (Mustafa, 2012).

The Present Study

The existing studies on feedback on students' writing exhibit a varied range of findings on the current practices with regard to feedback, and students' preferences towards these practices. Therefore, the present study explores the most preferred feedback strategies in writing by Bangladeshi L2 learners at the tertiary level who are currently doing or have recently done English language foundation courses, and identifies their problems and expectations from the existing feedback processes. The specific research questions are:

- What are the feedback strategies for writing?
- What are the most preferred feedback techniques by the students?
- Why do the students prefer one technique/strategy over the other?
- What are their problems in the provided feedback?
- What are their expectations from feedback providers?

Methodology

The methodology section describes the research design, the procedure for data collection and means of data analysis including instruments for research and participants.

Research Design.This research has employed both the quantitative and qualitative methods. The quantitative method has been exemplified through the use of a questionnaire to investigate which feedback strategies are preferred most. The problems and expectations of the students regarding the existing feedback processes are identified through a qualitative approach.

Data Collection. Since the study is based on the perceptions of the tertiary level students, the researcher selected the students who were doing and recently did the English language courses (ENG 091, ENG101, ENG102, ENG 201) of a university, namely BRAC University. Only one University was taken into account to have a stable data from the students of different perceptions experiencing the same or similar feedback processes. The process of the data collection was held by questionnaire using an online survey.

Instrument of the Research. The questionnaire consisted of 14 items in total. The question categories included: two small text-type items, five multiple choice questions, five five-point Likert-scale questions, and two open-ended questions where students had to answer on their own.

Participants. A total of 50 participants took part in the survey for the research. All the respondents were tertiary level students of different departments, doing or recently completed the English language courses from the same university. The study included both male and female (1:2) and the age range was 20-24 years, irrespective of cultural background.

Data Analysis

The multiple choice questions are presented in piecharts to show the percentage of each preference level. To analyze the Likert scale (Likert, 1932) five-point items, the following range of points and interpretation key for finding results are used: Strongly agree - 5, agree - 4, neutral - 3, disagree - 2, strongly disagree - 1. The interpretation key for finding the results as seen in several other quantitative researches arestrongly disagree: 1.00 – 2.25, disagree: 2.26 – 3.00, agree: 3.01 – 3.75, strongly agree: 3.76 – 5.0.

The final results of each question were given by the mean score which refers to the sum of all scores of the respondents in a group divided by the number of respondents, [X = ΣX/n]. The mean score provided the average score of each item that helped to get information by shortening large amounts of data (Seliger & Shohamy, 1989). Qualitative data from open-ended questions are summarized, and later, analysis with proper insights are done with references to earlier studies from the literature review.

Findings

For each question, 50 responses are calculated to collect the data. The sample consists of different respondents with around 10-20 years of learning experience of English as a second language, which provides a chance to survey students from different proficiency levels.

Findings Related to Feedback Strategies (Source, Style, Aspects, Types, and Steps of Feedback Process). Question no. 1-5 in the questionnaire is to investigate the preferences for the feedback strategies.

Perception on source of feedback. The demonstration of data about the students' preference of the source of feedback is presented below (Fig. 1). Evidently, it showed that 40% (20 out of 50) of the respondents preferred feedback from the teacher; this represented the highest number of participants.

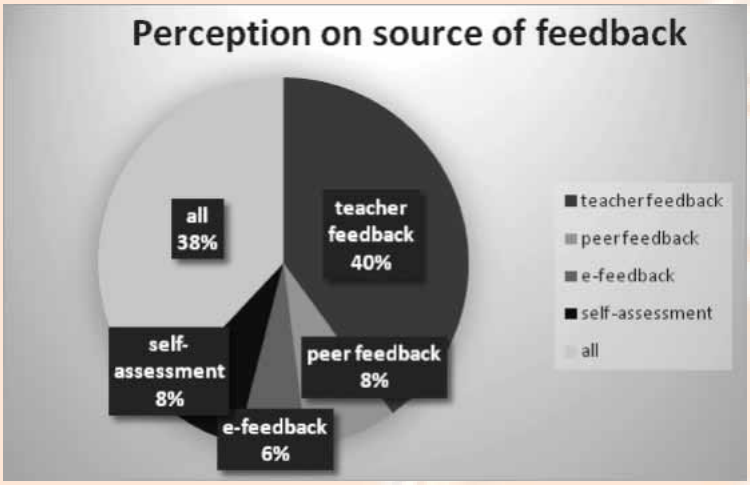

Fig. 1. Percentages of preference for different sources of feedback

Perception on styles of feedback. The following distribution showed the percentages of preferences for the different styles of feedback (Fig. 2). The findings show that 30% (15 out of 50) subjects liked to get comments, 28% (14 out of 50) preferred grades, 30% (15 out of 50) preferred to have an implementation of all the styles.

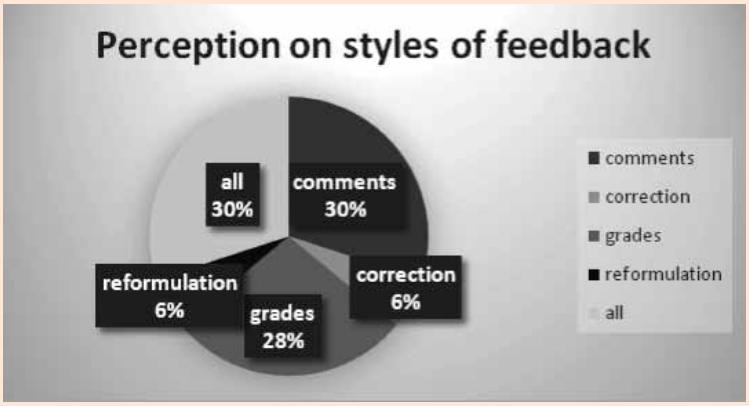

Fig. 2. Percentages of preferences for different styles of feedback

Percentages showing preferences for different types of feedback. Fig. 3 displays the response regarding the preference for the types of feedback. A remarkable percentage of students preferred explicit corrective feedback or direct feedback – 54% (27 out of 50) of participants.

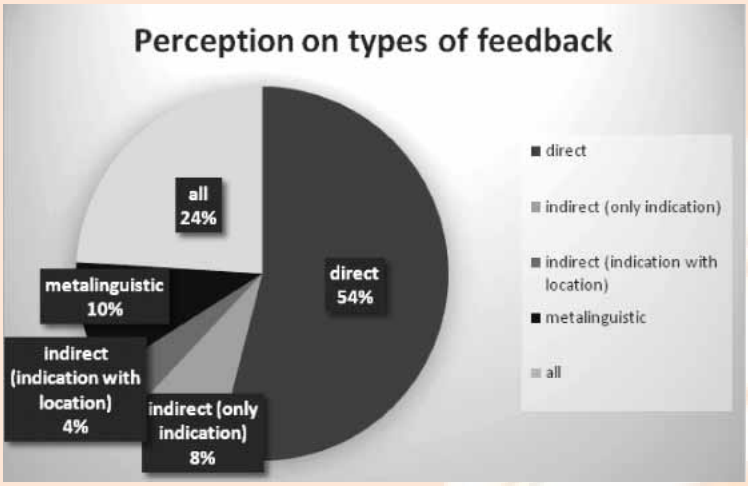

Fig. 3. Percentages showing preferences for different types of feedback

Perception on steps of feedback process. The steps of the feedback process in Fig. 4 are adapted from Harmer's (2007) steps of feedback process for writing tasks. The highest number of respondents, which is about 30% (15 out of 50) of the total, recognizes that all the steps are equally necessary for the process of feedback.

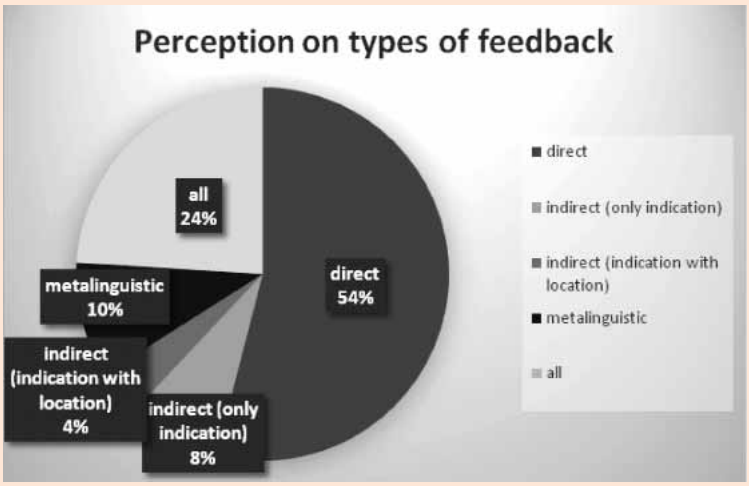

Fig. 4. Percentage of preferences for different steps of feedback process

Findings from perceptions of feedback practice (implementations and usefulness). Questions 6-10 in the questionnaire are designed to investigate the perception related to implementation (necessity for feedback, praise/criticism, focused/unfocused, form/meaning, usefulness, and understanding) and usefulness of the existing feedback practices. 50 responses are surveyed for each question in Table 1. The Likert scale was used to measure these question.

Table 1: Calculation of opinions on feedback implementation and usefulness*

Sl. no. of questions	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Mean score
1. Feedback is a must to develop writing	34 170	12 48	3 9	1 2	0 0	4.58 (Strongly agreed)
2. Positive feedback (praise) is more useful than negative feedback (criticism)	15 75	20 80	8 24	6 12	1 1	3.84 (Strongly agreed)
3. Teacher should correct all types of errors (unfocused) rather than just specific one or two types of errors (focused)	14 70	20 80	13 39	3 6	0 0	3.9 (Agreed)
4. Form/structure is more important than meaning to consider for providing feedback on writing	3 15	6 24	16 48	19 38	6 6	2.62 (Disagree)

5. The existing feedback practices (underlining/ circling errors, corrections in the margin, etc.) in language classrooms are helpful	8 40	26 104	12 36	4 8	0 0	3.76 (Strongly agreed marginally)

*Note** In each box in the table the number on top signifies the number of responses and the number at the bottom signifies the score after conversion into mathematical figures. The bottom ones are calculated for mean scores.

The results of the Table 1 show how the students accepted or rejected some facts regarding the usefulness and implementation of feedback practice. It showed that most agreed on the importance of feedback and mostly the positive ones. They agreed on both focused and unfocused feedback but disagreed that form is more important than meaning. It is also found that they feel the existing feedback practices to be helpful.

Findings Related to Problems and Expectations from Feedback

The following sections discuss the problems and expectations in relation to various feedback practices.

Problems in existing feedback practices. The students' satisfaction in case of both progress and comprehending the feedback given are examined by the question "Are you happy with the feedback you get? Are there any difficulties in understanding the feedback you get on your writing?" The participants are more or less satisfied with the feedback they get as they feel the feedback varies with the varying performance.

However, they complained that feedback with detailed reasoning is missing in their scripts. One of the participants demanded constructive criticism and claimed, "Mere pointing out of errors without adequate reasoning and explanation is not useful." Some teachers mention a problem and provide no correction; on the other hand, some only correct without mentioning what is exactly wrong or why it is an error. Another mentioned, "I want more intensive feedback like formation of a sentence in a different way than I do, different vocabulary, more structural directions, and providing ideas can be very helpful."

The causes of dissatisfaction found out is regarding the communication gap between students and feedback providers which in many cases leads in providing feedback without understanding what the studentshas tried to express in the writings. A number of students pointed out the problem of communication gap as a difficulty.

Another problem pointed out by the student is that the teachers only provide negative feedback which is a reason for getting demotivated in the absence of any positive feedback. "What does it take just to write 'good!' at the end of my answer? It is able to create great enthusiasm," remarked one of the respondents.

Expectations from feedback process. A number of expectations and suggestions from students are categorized and are presented accordingly in the points below:

- **Additional slots**: The respondents proposed extra classes to explain the provided feedback besides the consultation hours for more communication. In the classes they can learn more from others' mistakes where the teachers will explain the errors.
- **Extra care for weaker ones**: "Be polite while giving feedback and need to encourage students," a respondent suggested, claiming that they should be encouraged to ask for help. The consultation hours can have separate time allocation for the weaker ones, low proficient ones, and introvert ones while time is allocated properly for all students having different learning styles.
- **Pre-writing and pre-feedback tasks**: Teachers can give a sample write-up having feedback on it, from which the students can learn common errors, feedback styles of the teacher, etc. before they write and submit their own writing. "Peer feedback should be mandatory before teacher feedback," a student demanded. This can be a practice of self-correction and also save time and hard work of the teachers.
- **Post-writing and post-feedback tasks:** Students demanded scope for self-correction in class before submitting a work which they miss out due to short time span. One of them proposed, "After giving feedback, if teachers check whether students are making corrections and improving or not, and then take necessary steps, that can help a lot."
- **New supplements in the process**: The respondents claim that it is not necessary that writing must always have written feedback; oral feedback procedures can bring a variation sometimes. A teacher can provide an example in the feedback to show a correction without directly correcting the students' writing. A friendly conversation developing communication between a teacher and a studentis considered useful more than a formal appointed consultation. A student claiming to be highly proficient expected that sometimes a native English teacher can provide feedback which is of better help.

Data Analysis

This section presents the analysis of the data described in the previous section, with references to the earlier studies presented in the literature review. The discussion will scrutinize the perceptions from the findings of the current study and that of the other researches and distinguish to what extent they match or differ.

Discussion on perception of source of feedback. The study shows that 40% of participants prefer teacher feedback, 8% prefer peer feedback, and 6% prefer computer assisted e-feedback. The data provides similar views from the earlier studies where the students prefer teacher feedback from more than any other sources and chose peer feedback over e-feedback which might be due to computer anxiety as drafted in those studies (Hyland & Hyland, 2006; Nelson & Garson, 1998; Lai, 2008). The study shows that only 6% students preferred self-assessment which is equal to that of the peer feedback. It can be stated that both the sources are equally preferable by the respondents. Saito (1994) also found out teacher feedback is preferred more than peer and self-correction. Hence, the feedback from the teacher is accepted the most. However, it cannot be denied that 38% of respondents wanted a process that uses all the sources equally. The strategies can be undertaken by prioritizing teacher-feedback and

balancing it with a mixture of all the other sources of feedback. The popularity of teacher feedback in the entire context indicates that the teachers are the most reliable source of feedback to the students.

Discussion on perception on styles of feedback. Most research shows that the students prefer comments over grades and they prefer grades only along with comments (e.g., Lee, 2008; Best, et al., 2015; Mahfoodh, 2011). The present study shows 6% of the participants preferred reformulation while it is noted in Leki's (2006) research that the style is desired by graduates mostly, although the study shows the preference percentage of comments and grades are not very different. The study showing 30% of the participants preferring all the styles equally disagrees with research like that of Lee's (2008), which finds 72.2% of HP students and 40.9% of LP students want "comments+marks/grades+error feedback." The possible reason for the dissimilarity can be the difference of comfort of having all the styles together. The 6% of students preferring reformulation is apparently the high proficient ones who want the advanced evaluation more. The comparisons show that comments and grades are preferred more than corrections or error feedback in earlier studies and the present research too.

Discussion on perception on aspects of feedback. Writing skill demands that all aspects of writing (content, organization, vocabulary, and mechanics) be developed. The research shows that 24% of students prefer feedback mostly on content, 14% on organization, 12% on vocabulary, 28% on mechanics or grammar, and 22% prefer all to be considered with equal importance. The studies also show similar views about students preferring more feedback on mechanics rather than content and other aspects (e.g., Bitchener & Ferris, 2012; Hyland & Hyland, 2006). 22% of students preferring all the aspects which is not remarkably less than the 28% preference for mechanics, justifies that a sustainable number of students feel the importance of all the aspects to be considered equally in their writing. It can be predicted that grammar or syntax is comparatively a more complex aspect of writing than the other ones; hence, it requires more care to bring proficiency in it.

Discussion on perception on types of feedback. The high popularity of direct feedback is also seen in the study of Bitchener and Ferris (2012). As a whole, the preference for mostly the direct feedback (54% of students) can be interpreted as a demand to know the errors clearly by the students and work out those easily. The studies show that students choose feedback mostly with metalinguistic cues as they want to reorganize the writing (e.g., Hyland & Hyland, 2006). 8% selected indirect feedback without locating errors and 4% preferred locating errors that differentiatedtheir work with the earlier studies. The students criticize the practice of only indicating the error (Mustafa, 2012). It might have appeared because more subjects selected the indirect feedback without locating errors to try harder to improve. However, the large section of subjects preferring direct feedback and that which preferred all the types simultaneously, are the ones to be given more attention.

Discussion on perception on steps of feedback process. Specific research on Harmer's (2007) steps of feedback process was not found. So, the present study explores the approach by

investigating students' preference for each of the steps. The study claims that 24% thinks students should be trained about reading and comprehending the feedback styles and types which denotes that many students are having problems in understanding the feedback and 30% favored all the steps to be followed with equal importance. The largest percentage at the end show that a greater number of students want all the proposed steps of the feedback processes to be observed for their writing. The other steps are voted by a small percentage but the distribution can help the teachers to understand the desire and need of the students for a systematic feedback process.

Discussion on perceptions on positive/negative, focused/unfocused, precise/detailed feedback. The development of writing depends on the implementation of feedback on students which can be positive and negative feedback, focused and unfocused feedback, and precise and detailed feedback. The participants "strongly agreed" that positive feedback is more useful than negative feedback. In the earlier studies, it is found that both are equally preferred by the students (e.g., Mahfoodh, 2011). Positive feedback inspires students and cheers them up, while Lee's (2008) research reveals that students want more comments and that includes both positive and negative feedback. The present study finds the participants more inclined to positive feedback; receiving negative feedback appears demotivating and monotonous to them.

It is "agreed" by the respondents that the teachers should focus on all types of errors rather than one or two specific ones. This view differs with some studies and agrees with others. Research reveals that students want overt correction in their writings including the surface level errors (e.g., Lee, 2008; Grami, 2005). However, Norouzian and Farahani (2012) found that only the teacher feels they should correct all the errors, not the students. Often the focused feedback helps the student to concentrate on specific errors which is not easy in case of unfocused ones. The fact is a bit controversial among the students for which the present study found them "agreed" but not "strongly agreed" on it.

The open-ended answers discovered that the students desire detailed feedback; they prefer "precise comments" but detailed feedback. The study of Best, et al. (2015) also says students are against grading as it is not a detailed evaluation and, in case of comments, they want specific and manageable comments. It suggests that students want explanation of their faults and clear-cut comments which are easy to decipher.

Discussion on problems and expectations from feedback. The three main problems spotted are: absence of detailed feedback and reasoning errors, communication gap between student and teacher causing misinterpretation in writing, and excess negative feedback which is demotivating. Often the students do not understand why their mistakes are considered as "errors," and it is the teacher's duty to give exact reasoning behind each of those which will help them understand both the nature and importance of those for development. The distance or communication gap between the teacher and student does not let the teachers understand what the students tried to express in their writing. For this, a face to face conversation or conference is necessary sometimes, and is recommended by the students

as well.The teachers mainly focus on negative feedback due to their own necessity and time constraints. The students thoughtfully pointed out this practice to be a problem in feedback. Providing only negative feedback discourages students and thereby the purpose of positive feedback remains unfulfilled.

The expectations of the students are to resolve the issues by adding extra slots to mitigate the communication gap through training and conferencing. The need for extra slots has been suggested since it is possible to feel that the regular class schedule makes it difficult for both students and teachers to work with feedback. They wished for proper allocation and distribution of time for each type of students since not all are equally proficient. They also mentioned pre-feedback and post-feedback tasks for detailed feedback and reasoning. Tasks like peer checking before teacher feedback, self-correction, and so on would make the process easier and efficient which the students fairly mentioned as their needs. To add flavor and bring variety to the feedback strategies, the respondents asked for some supplements in the feedback process for adapting it for all types of students including weaker ones, introverts, and advanced learners. Providing the students with examples of feedback may help them to comprehend the teachers' adopted styles, focus, and types of feedback. The suggestion of involving a native feedback provider once in a while for the advanced students might add an additional level by enriching the feedback process for their further development in writing.

Conclusion

To conclude it can be said that students have their own perspectives including preferences, problems, and expectations regarding the feedback process which does not necessarily agree with all the aspects of the practice. Their views and attitudes should concern the feedback providers, researchers, and experts planning ESL and EFL classroom needs, not being solely dependent on the existing tradition and language theories. Due to time constraints, the selection of the students for the research is very random which would have been richer if the students are categorized into high and low proficient ones. Further studies can be done in a larger scale by comparing the students' views with their teachers, two or more contexts or institutions, and cultural backgrounds. The same research might bring new results by conducting it in a large scale. In brief, this research can be helpful in adding a new dimension to feedback in writing or can be adapted by researchers in future for further studies.

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Speaking Anxiety and Learner's Own Variety of English

Shafinaz Sikder
Course Instructor, United International University
Mohammad Mahmudul Haque
Senior Lecturer of English and Humanities, BRAC University

Abstract
In this increasingly globalized world, English is the most widely used international contact language as it has spread to different parts of the world. Due to its wide use by speakers of many different languages, English has been influenced by many different factors including diverse ways of pronunciation. Therefore, it is not surprising that such pronunciation varieties have obvious classroom implications, especially among the nonnative teaching-learning communities. In most contexts, the nonnative teacher-learners are under pressure to conform to any of the native varieties, which, this paper argues, isresponsible for creating language anxiety among the learners. Reviewing selected works by Crystal, Bolton, Canagarajah, Farooqui, Jenkins, and Sharifian's that address the way "power,""hegemony," and "politics" operate behind the promotion of such native varieties, the present paper probes into the relationship between speaking anxiety and the enforced native varieties on the nonnative ones of English. It concludes that there is little rationale behind such enforcement as English is increasingly becoming a contact language, which enables the nonnative speakers of English to equally own the language as their native counterparts. It also suggests that promotion of the nonnative varieties in language classes will encourage the learners to use the language from their own comfort zone, and will eventually decrease their speaking anxiety.

Introduction

English is no longer the language of the UK and US only, but has become the most widely used language of the world. It is now the language most widely taught as a foreign language – in over 100 countries, such as China, Russia, Germany, Spain, Egypt, and Brazil – and in most of these countries it is emerging as the chief foreign language (Crystal, 2003, p. 4). In other words, English is no longer limited to its origin due to its increasing heterogeneity, and thereby its use is not confined to any particular speech community (Canagarajah, 1999, p. 211). The fact is, "for better or worse, by choice or force, English has 'traveled' to many parts of the world and has been used to serve various purposes" (Sharifian, 2009, p.1). This expansion of English language has resulted in a popular demand to acquire "proper" English that regulates the status of the language with serious linguistic, ideological, sociocultural, political, and pedagogical implications among the nonnatives (Karunakaran, Rana & Haq, 2013, p. 555).

Therefore, as far as teaching English, especially the spoken variety, is concerned, a native standard of pronunciation has become quite trendy, but, quite logically, it could not escape

criticism, especially for the last few decades (Ferdous, 2012, p. 1). That the practice of prioritizing a native variety of the target language over making successful communication in it (Barman, 2009, p. 19) has developed into a moot point, which, arguably, leads to speaking anxiety in the language classrooms (Farooqui, 2007, p. 106).

According to Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope (1986), speaking anxiety among international students has three main reasons: a) communication comprehension: the feeling of uneasiness of communicating in a second language b) fear of negative evaluation: the unacceptability of the language mistakes as a part of the very process of learning and considering them as a threat to successful communication, c) viewing oral production more as a testing than learning situation (as cited in Zhiping & Paramasivam, 2013, p. 3).

As far as teaching spoken English is concerned, Jenkins (2010) believes that the primary reason should be to enable learners to function in it; imitating the natives or conforming to what people call a "standard variety" can never be the purpose. In other words, an ESL or EFL learner does not necessarily have to adapt their ways of speaking according to the so-called native speaker (NS) norms; what they need to do instead is to make adjustments to suit an audience of primarily nonnative speakers (NNSs) (p. 308).

In other words, an absolute conformity to a particular standard of speaking is neither possible nor necessary (Sparkman, 1926, p.228). For example, a given community of speakers may have their own way(s) of speaking English including but not limited to a slow pace of production, accented pronunciations, use of a different set of everyday vocabulary not commonly used in a native context, inconsistent use of fillers, pauses, hesitations, repetitions, etc. (Ferdous, 2012, p. 3). In fact, these may be the characteristics that could be associated with the identity of the nonnative speakers, which they do not need to change until and unless those impede communication in a given context. This leads to the argument that teaching speaking should focus only on mutual intelligibility and nothing else (Jenkins, 2010, p.308).

The Myth of Standardization: Do We Need to Follow One Single Standard?

Lippi-Green's Arguments: It's All About "Power." The fact that there are different varieties of speaking due to their unique features and embedded contexts is not always accepted by many. In fact, there is a tendency to define "Standard English" in a way that dismisses the existence of different standards for speaking and using it. There can be at least some truth in the statement that people are very comfortable with the idea of having one single standard language, so that they have no trouble in defining and describing its features in one single way as Lippi-Green (1997) referred to Merriam Webster's Collegiate Dictionary (tenth edition, 1993) for the definition of standard English, which is,

> That English, with respect to spelling, grammar, pronunciation and vocabulary (being) substantially uniform though not devoid of the regional differences is well established by the usage in the formal and informal speech and writing of the educated, and (it) is widely recognized as acceptable wherever English is spoken and understood. (p. 53)

The above definition itself sets the "spelling,""pronunciation," and "ways of speaking" on a

common footing which makes the generalization that "Standard English" is the language of just the "educated," which does not recognize the variants of the "uneducated" (Lippi-Green, 1997, p. 55). In other words, the definition clearly reveals that it has been set by a privileged group or authority which assumes the power to decide who are "educated" and who are not and are therefore in a position to distinguish "standard" from "non-standard" (Lippi-Green, 1997, p.55). In this connection, Matsuda (1991) said that like the "feminist" and "race" theorists, the issue of speaking and its accents can also be seen within a relation of power as he said, "People in power are perceived as speaking normal, unaccented English. Any speech that is different from that constructed norm is called an 'accent'" (as cited in Lippi-Green, 1997, p. 59).

The truth is, every variety has its own system and, therefore, its own unique features, which lead to unique speaking styles and ways. To be more specific, a variety might share some features with other varieties, but no two varieties have the same sort of speaking styles (Imam, 2005, p. 471). Therefore, it can be said that there exists no one single variety of the so called "standard" English to be taught to the nonnative learners of the world as, for the latter, their so-called "accented" variety is a part of their identity. This particular argument has drawn people to each opposing side: in favor and against it. Such differences of opinion lead to the next point.

Native Standard of Speaking: The Advocates and the Critiques

According to Crystal (2003), if English is one's mother tongue, s/he will have mixed feelings about the way English is spreading around the world; s/he may feel pride but his/her pride may be tinged with concern when s/he realizes that people in other countries may not want to use the language in the same way that s/he does. On the other hand, Crystal also added that if English is not one's mother tongue, s/he may be strongly motivated to learn it but at the same time s/he knows it will take a great deal of effort to master it (p. 3). Therefore, the fact is that no matter what ESL learners feel at heart, they have the mindset that learning "good" and "proper" English is very important. In this regard, Sparkman (1926) said that a good speaker of any language is similar to being well-dressed; it is the outward semblance of culture and refinement in matters of speech, and it should be a thing of pride to any one because it is one's principal badge of honor and recommendation to the natives of that speech (p. 227). In a similar vein, Kreidler (1972) opined that the teaching of English to speakers of other languages has, in recent years, rightly given emphasis on student's mastery of the natives' system of the language, and therefore, we must learn to attach great importance to the student's systematic listening while teaching them speaking (p. 3). Researchers like Gorun (1958) also talked about the importance of teaching English systematically following either the British or the American standard. Gorun (1958) said that it is important to do so because the rapid influx of the North Americans and other English speaking people have consolidated the status of English as an official language throughout the world (p. 513) and echoing this view, Hamid, Sussex and Khan (2009) made the point that since English continues to spread across the globe, governments in "low proficiency" countries should reappraise its importance and respond to the changing global order of English by emphasizing the teaching of speaking according to the dominant system (p. 281).

However, researchers like Baldwin (1927) said something different regarding teaching the native variety of speaking that may have phrases like "Now say it in this way – now notice!" However, this can never be the ideal way of teaching speaking. That is to say, to provide the learners with only the correct way of speaking the language is not likely to get far enough. No one can be made to learn the others' way of speaking since everyone has their own ways. As a matter of fact, in some nonnative contexts, having English proficiency is like possessing an Aladdin's lamp, as it can bring material prosperity by ensuring access to education, international business, science, and technology (Tran, Moni & Baldauf, 2012, p. 3). They also added that although this high degree of importance accorded to English is creating a strong motivation for students to learn English but whether this motivation is strong enough to help students to regulate themselves in managing their anxiety, or whether it is negated by their anxiety is worth considering (p. 3).

What Tran, Moni, and Baldauf meant was imitating the natives to learn their ways can be of little help since learners have their own ways of making utterances in their respective contexts. Therefore, L2 learners all over the world should learn speaking in their very own ways considering their varieties of speaking as the ideal or the standard. In this regard, Canagarajah (2006a) said that since English has now become a contact language for a wider range of communities (outside the former British Empire), the priority should be given to the use of the local varieties to recognize the new role of English as a global contact language (p.197). Practicing their own variety may help the ESL and EFL students overcome their speaking anxiety in foreign language classrooms. The learners may be encouraged to think that English is as much as their language as the natives'. This leads to the issue of linguistic ownership.

Ownership of Varieties of the Language and its Speaking Styles

According to Crystal (2003), English as a global language has traditionally become an international language for one chief reason: the power of its people – especially their political and military power (p. 9). However, as to the ownership of English, Widdowson (1994) said that today the situation is such that both NSs and NNSs have the right to claim the ownership ofEnglish language (as cited in Sharifian, 2009, p. 102). Over the last 25 years, the terms "world Englishes" and "new Englishes" have come into play to refer to the localized forms of English as found throughout the world, particularly with reference to the Caribbean, West and East Africa, and parts of Asia (Bolton, 2005, p. 69). That is why the vast majority of the teachers of English of today's world do not belong to the so-called native speaking lands, and, therefore, the teaching of speaking should not only be based on the native-speaking ideology (Bolton, 2005, p. 78). The truth is when English is learned by millions of bilingual speakers as an additional language for international communication, it is necessarily denationalized and thereby acculturated to specific local needs (Sharifian, 2009, p. 82). Hence, it is quite unacceptable that only NS-based norms would prevail and serve as the yardstick for measuring NNSs' speaking accuracy/fluency (Sharifian, 2009, p. 82). In other words, when the ownership of English has been divided up among its users, the hegemony of the native ways of speaking is seriously challenged. Therefore, in real classrooms, teachers can raise awareness of different varieties of speaking for diverse settings without presupposing that AmE (American English)

and BrE (British English) are the sole benchmarks against which the rest of the varieties should be measured (Sharifian, 2009, p. 67). Creating such awareness could be one possible way of overcoming speaking anxiety in foreign classrooms.

Therefore, the promotion of different varieties can start from the ESL and EFL classrooms where the ultimate motive will be to equip students with their own varieties of speaking. This is again because through this, they will not only be able to promote their own identities but will also be able to make successful confident communication within their particular contexts. This will be elaborated further in the following section.

Appropriating English to Promote Identity: Can it be a Trend to Overcome Speaking Anxiety?

Unlike reading or writing skills, speaking has always been a neglected skill to be taught in a nonnative speaking context like Bangladesh. However, whenever speaking is taught, there is pressure on the students to follow a native standard. As a result, whenever it has been taught, students face various problems due to the anxieties that arise at the time of learning (Bhattacharjee, 2008, p. 15). Different problems pertaining to speaking anxieties have been discussed briefly by Bhattacharjee (2008) in her paper. One type of problem is saying out something in front of the fellow students. This is directly related to high anxiety; students are quite embarrassed and feel inhibited when opportunities arise for them to speak (Bhattacharjee, 2008, p. 15). Similarly, if learners find their peers are more proficient in speaking compared to them, they tend to become anxious, and it results in remaining silent and having "nothing to say" (p. 15). Besides, some students are very conscious about their limited proficiency and feel very insecure. They prefer not to talk so that they can avoid being ridiculed or corrected in front of the whole class (p. 16). Bhattacharjee (2008) said that first and foremost, the problem of speaking on the part of the students is fear and lack of confidence (p. 16). The fear is most acute, especially in rural areas of Bangladesh, where 70% of the total population live and, to the students of this area, English is an alien subject to study. Their fear of English is so deep rooted that if you ask them a very simple question like "what is your name?" they become embarrassed and stop talking (p. 16).

Islam & Ahsan (2011) also said that the students get nervous because they feel that other students know better English than them; and finally, they feel that the other students will laugh at them if and when they speak English (p. 217). Therefore, to help the learners learn the class instructions properly and more effectively, the teacher must try to reduce the anxiety level to an acceptable level (p. 217). Similar conclusions have been stated by Frieberger (2010) where he said that ESL classrooms are potential factors in case of increasing speaking anxiety because learners do not feel safe to make mistakes, they cannot learn the language in comfort (p. 10).

According to Canagarajah (2006b), since the classroom is a powerful site of policy negotiation, the pedagogies practiced and texts produced in the classroom can reconstruct policies grounded up (p. 587). However, the truth is, teachers and learners are helping to reproduce monolingual ideologies and linguistic hierarchies within the classrooms (Canagarajah, 2006b,

p. 587). What he means is that the classroom policies in most of the ESL and EFL countries are such that they promote the establishment of the dominant standard of teaching and learning, and thereby establish the natives' models as the ideal. He also discussed how teaching is done without taking the local varieties into account and how the entire school system helps maintain and sustain the social hierarchy between the natives and the nonnatives by following the mainstream pedagogy (Canagarajah, 1999, p. 24). Thus, as stated by Canagarajah (2006b), students do not seem to develop "communicative competence" for "real world" needs because classes based on monolingual pedagogies disable them in the contexts of linguistic pluralism (p. 588). Similarly, Karunakaran, Rana & Haq (2013) stated that

> Classrooms of EFL and ESL learners experience anxiety that results in stuttering and fast heart beating. The widespread use of English language and the use of communicative language teaching have increased the demand to have a good command over English but existence of such anxiety prevent, most of the time, them from achieving the expected goal. To achieve the desired goal, the responsibility of a language teacher is deemed highly important in order to assist the learners. As a result, learning English as a foreign language has always been a difficult job for many countries like Bangladesh. Here students try to expose themselves in English only in a language class. Most of the students express their tension, anxiety, fear, feeling of uneasiness etc. against learning English as a foreign language. (p. 554)

Hence, Canagarajah (2006b) advocated for English to be appropriated according to the preferred interests and identities of the speaker through classrooms because this is not only a condition for gaining voice but also the most effective way of developing proficiency (p. 588). A similar view has been expressed by Sharifian (2009) who said that a strong emphasis should be given on envisioning English in its multiplicity, on recognizing the utility of local varieties and on the formation of identity in the use of English as an L2 (p. 58).

In a similar vein, Canagarajah (2006b) believed that appropriating the speaking by confidently using it to serve one's own interests according to one's own values, helps develop fluency in English (p. 589). He also believed that this can be done within the classrooms if multilingual people make adjustments to each other as they modify their pronunciation to facilitate communication to serve their own purposes (Canagarajah, 2006b, p. 593). In this regard, it is important to note that it is generally believed that NNSs are naturally inclined to diverge from NS-based norms to be in favor of localized linguistic features (Sharifian, 2009, p.82).

However, the truth is, though the stigma attached to world Englishes is changing, yet these varieties are still treated as unsuitable for classroom purposes. The L2 teachers are in a dilemma in choosing the identity they should be projecting in the classroom. In case of the nonnative English teachers, such dilemmas are really complex given the wider range of identification and self-representation options (Sharifian, 2009, p.139). This is again because both L2 teachers and learners are facing a lot of challenges in their way to appropriate English to serve their own interests and also to promote their own identity to the rest of the world (Canagarajah, 2006b, p. 598) which is an obvious obstacle to overcome the speaking anxiety of the learners.

Conclusion

In conclusion, it can be said that with English having different varieties in different parts of the world affecting its speaker's pace of speech, use of grammar, and choice of vocabulary, etc. There is little rationale for the native varieties to be the only acceptable benchmarks as far as language proficiency in English in general, and speaking proficiency in particular, are concerned. In the changing reality, English has become more of a contact language than a language that one can claim ownership of. Therefore, the issue of linguistic ownership gets problematized, and both native and nonnative users can declare English to be their own language. This has obvious implications on the ESL/EFL learners all over the world with specific reference to their language anxiety. Due to the pressure to conform to a native variety of English, learners' level of anxiety or affective filters become high, which has a very negative impact on their learning. On the contrary, when these learners are encouraged to practice their own varieties to meet their different communication needs focusing on mutual intelligibility, their language anxiety reduces, and they become more confident speakers. However, many a time, the nonnative teachers of English suffer from a strange identity issue, i.e., they are yet to decide on their linguistic identity to be playing out in classrooms. This can be lessened by a significant amount by recognizing the different varieties of English internationally, and by creating a more inclusive ambience for the teachers, learners, and the users of English.

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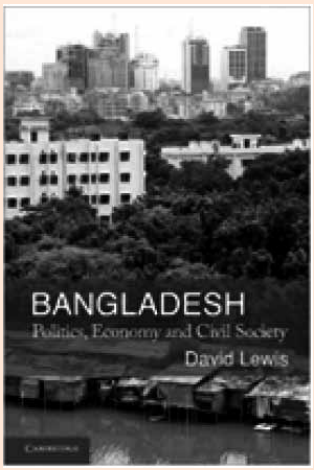
BOOK REVIEWS

An Epistemological Paradox: How Best to Understand Bangladesh?

Manzoorul Abedin
Research Fellow in Education, University of Reading, UK



Bangladesh: Politics, Economy and Civil Society
David Lewis
Cambridge, UK: Cambridge UP, 2012. 233 pp.
ISBN 9780521713771

David Lewis, the author of *Bangladesh: Politics, Economy and Civil Society* (2012), and LSE Professor of Social Policy and Development, is quite right when he says Bangladesh is little known to the western world except for its pervasive image of a disaster-prone, poverty-stricken and donor-reliant country. The book, in this respect, serves the purpose well as it highlights the considerable progress Bangladesh has made since its independence in 1971, challenging prophecies that the new state would be unviable (12-13). There is acknowledgement that Bangladesh has expanded its food production, developed important new export industries such as readymade garments, improved areas of its healthcare and education, for which Lewis has generally applauded concerted government action and innovative work of some of its NGOs in partnership with donor agencies. By doing so, however, Lewis has opened up the reader to question his authorial stance of the book and his methodology relative to the investigation.

Lewis has worked on Bangladesh for long in various capacities in NGOs and for research, but personal, professional, and political interests, although external to research, are not always "epistemologically irrelevant values" (Phillips and Burbules 52-55). This is more so because the book is not based on any empirical research, but a narrative review of literature, many of which are commissioned research by international agencies and the government, and locally-produced, unverified media reports. A narrative review, contrary to a systematic review, is susceptible to the subjectivity of the author although personal and professional interests do not automatically damage the internal validity of any research. Talking about methodological decisions, Lewis argues that applying a political economy approach (10), mixing economic,

social, and political dimensions together, is a methodologically solid approach to capture various forms of power and its negotiation in the policymaking of Bangladesh. This approach, despite being a commendable effort, is a particularly big challenge for Lewis' book to paint a rounded picture because of scanty available research, centralized bureaucracy and its thin connection to local government offices (Sabharwal and Berman 203), and the complicated and evolving policy network that is currently prevalent in Bangladesh. Lewis' eight chapters have four consecrated foci—Bangladesh's economic success and its sustainability in the global economy, its development industry with a huge number of NGOs, the country's tryst with democracy with its claim of being"moderate Muslim," and its environmental challenges with increasing threats of global warming and the country's large population.

In his bid to offer a sociopolitical background of Bangladesh, in chapters two, three and four, it becomes progressively clear that Lewis fast forwards the political events of the 1970s and its differential impact on Bangladesh's foreign policy and reliance on aid money. Therefore, his explanations on the deep-rooted religious tension in society, its politicization and connection to the formation of a "new middle-class and its uneasy relationship with 'old elite'" remain broad-brush and superficial (16-19). This is, for instance, evidenced in his comment that "(r)eligion and politics were only weakly linked together in the public sphere during the years before and immediately after liberation" (28). Similarly, the era of electoral democracy since 1991 in Bangladesh demands a more careful analysis on the nature of politicization in the bureaucracy and its subservient and "cover-my-back" philosophy, the achievement in enrolment in primary education amidst widespread speculation of declining standards, the corruption and "mastanisation" behind the rhetoric and discourse of development and their various manifestations in both city and rural areas and so on. Lewis mentions the confrontational politics of the two mutually-loathing political parties of Bangladesh and their binary effect on people, economy, and democracy, but downplays the impact of "conservative Islamisation" in the society because "the complex blend of culture, language and religion developed through the centuries … challenge(s) the binary notion of religious ideology and practice" (204).

The book would have required a more thorough analysis on this had it been published following the political events of 2013 and its aftermath in Bangladesh. Lewis' definition of civil society (chapter five) and its composition with NGO leaders, their political affiliations (and tension with government), trade unions, student organizations, and other civil society organizations, appears to have excluded the rising presence of media and corporations in Bangladesh, and societies outside the metropole at large. Lewis briefly mentions Nobel Laureate Professor Yunus and his bitter relationship with the current government (124) to exemplify the tension between the civil society and the lawmakers, and also to emphasize the absence of a powerful civil society to critique the government, but in the process overlooks the role of the pro-government civil society which consolidates the authority of governmental and executive power. He did a commendable job in highlighting the various sites of policy production, its interpretation and implementation in Bangladesh within different logics of practice, but the complex manifestations of the power relationships across the local, regional, national and the global policy players have not been covered adequately, particularly in the spirit

of what Lingard and Ozga term "policy creation community" where various sets of policy agents and agencies, located at bureaucracy, civil society and donor-agency levels, actively take part in the dynamic. Chapter seven of the book, the penultimate chapter before conclusion, is a powerful manifesto of Bangladesh's economic success on the back of liberalization, cheap labor and labor migration, indeed so much so that Bangladesh's developmental paradox, that the country remains developed and underdeveloped, rural and urban, and its people both literate and illiterate, is swept under the carpet. In sum, Lewis succeeds, adopting a fine-grained political economy approach, in his assessment of Bangladesh's economic success and debunks the negative image of the country to the outside world. But his interpretations to fathom the country's deep-rooted problems of malgovernance, its position in the regional and global policy network, its location in its power relationship withaid agencies and the sustainability of the economic progress require further analysis in order recognize thechange, with positive and negative consequences in different sections of society, that has taken place in Bangladesh.

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New Lines in Bangladeshi Writing in English: The Poetry of Shamsad Mortuza

Subir Dhar
Professor of English and Director of School of Languages and Culture, Rabindra Bharati University, Kolkata India

Tapu Biswas
Assistant Professor of English and Other Modern European Languages, Visva-Bharati, Shantiniketan, West Bengal

Barkode
Shamsad Mortuza
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For a country like Bangladesh, which emerged as an independent nation only in 1971, the coming into being of a fully definable national literature in English may understandably take a little more time. Nevertheless, Bangladesh does have a significant number of new writers even in the field of poetry written in English. The first Bangladeshi English poetic voices began to be heard in the mid-1970s with Feroz Ahmeduddin's *Handful of Dust* (1975), Razia Khan's *Argus Under Anaesthesia* (1976) and *Cruel April* (1977), and Kaiser Haq's *Collected Poems: 1966-2006* being early productions (Askari). Other poets who published their poetry in English were Nadeem Rahman (with *Politically Incorrect Poems*, 2004), Rumana Siddique (*Five Faces of Eve:Poems*, 2007), and Syed Najmuddin Hashim (*Hopefully the Pomegranate*, 2007) (Shook). Monica Ali, with her 2003 debut novel *Brick Lane*, put Bangladeshi writing in English on the map of the New English Literatures, and, in this light, it may be appropriate to read and appreciate the output of Shamsad Mortuza who is a comparatively new talent in the field of Bangladeshi English poetry.

Born in 1970, Mortuza published his first volume of poems in a print edition in November 2013. Not insignificantly titled *Barkode*, the poems in this collection are largely short lyrics on a wide range of subjects and topics, from acute observations of life and lived reality to

more reflective observations on individuals, attitudes and cultures. Nevertheless, more than the content, it is the title of this book of poems that first catches the attention. The white on black cover design featuring vertical lines or strips are clearly meant to be evocative of the ubiquitous barcodes that adorn almost all the products we buy today. In a footnote to a poem called "Barcode or on a Zebra Crossing," which happens to be the last poem in the book, Mortuza himself explains that he:

> discovered a new meaning of being checked out while in London. It seemed that I didn't have the cultural code to access the grand narrative (ode) that I was planning to study. My skin color barred me from decoding the message. The innocent black-and-white bars at a mall were no different from the stripes on the streets. (135n.)

But the name "Barkode" may also be more playfully (and meaningfully) read as "bark" and "ode," with, that is, all the paronomasia involved in the word "bark" (the explosive cry of a dog, or an emphatic command or assertion, a boat, or the bark of a tree, for instance) combined with the resonances of the poetic form of "ode" which is, at its most basic, a poetic song or an address or exclamation in verse. Interestingly, these implications are often woven into the literary text composed by the poet. The dog image, for example, figures in quite a straightforward way in the epigraph lines that introduce the first section: "toothing bones/ while eyeing the butcher/the dog in me becoming u-in-verse." Somewhat similarly, though a little more obliquely, the image of the bark of a tree is evoked in the line: "A poem that will not nail any tree…" ("A Dead Poem" 19).

Pun-ny and funny, but not the less serious for all that, the poems in *Barkode* encompass a wide range of moods. Eighty nine poems are spread out over six sections in this volume, each section labeled with such descriptive headings as*u-in-verse*, *eye*, *For You*, *m.eye*, *A Thin Line*, and *Silence*. The poems in the first section are about the art and craft of writing. The initial poem in the collection is, appropriately enough for a conscious writer and poet, about punctuation—and about a poet's punctuated (punctured?) thoughts. "Does a sentence die with a full stop?" is a line in this poem named "Punctuated Thought." "Does a sentence come to life when it is read without the punctuation mark—the dead stop?" reads another line. But it is the last two verses that drive home the real point of the poem's "thought":

> My ghost reader reads a decomposed document
> As I look out for the field where my poem ought to be. (Mortuza 15)

What is distinctive about these verses is their highly compressed expressivity. There are at least four major cruxes in these brief lines, the first being the poet as reader/ghost reader, the second the dead (and so decaying) textually bodied document of the already-written poem, the third being the poet as the writer-creator, and the fourth the conceptual field in the mind of the poet where the poem ought to be but is not as yet, despite having being written. In fact, "Punctuated Thought" is evidently a poem about the composition of a poem, a lyric reflecting upon how a finished poem may appear to remain unfinished to the poet who has written or drafted it. The poet's "look[ing] out for the field where my poem ought to be" represents the expected zone of realization or accomplishment desired by a poet. That few poems ever

actually perfectly express what the poet wants to say is indicated by the infinitive "ought to be." In the meantime, the words on the page (or computer screen) written out by the poet as the "finished" poem exists only as a "decomposed" document, decomposed in the double sense of not as yet fully composed or completed, and simultaneously as dead and decayed since words written down inevitably become a recorded text, a finite artifact that has passed away beyond the spasm of the creative process that gave birth to it. The "ghost" reader in all probability is the first reader of the poem, that is the poet him/herself, and s/he is referred to as "ghost" since being a reader involves only his/her readerly consciousness which is a fragmentary aspect of the poet's complete persona and personality as a creator. The paradox this poem celebrates, its originary germ, is the thought of life and death, the beginning and the end of creativity. A completed poem is like the full-stopped end of a sentence. Once published, it cannot be changed even by its writer. But creativity is an endless process, like a sentence without a stop. The poem in creation is thus never completed, at least in the mind of the poet, even when it has been written down.

A conceit about the writing of poetry being a performance and perhaps a performative is the soul of "A Poet Performer." The first two stanzas of this poem run:

> Words are but costumed actors on the pages;
> A poet is but the director of the stage
> While the readers remain the real producers who never age.
> A poet is a word player who empties out her self
> To empower the readers to become the producers
> Of a world full of meandering meanings. (Mortuza 21)

In a sense, these lines are highly literary, and even school-ish, for their inspiration seems to have come from Barthes' "Death of the Author" and from the theories of the Reader Response theorists. But certainly less scholarly and more tellingly intelligent is "A Box of Intravenous Saline" in which a familiar image is taken up and given a number of surprisingly appropriate turns. The image is that of a saline container, the transparent fullness of which is evocatively referred to as "transparency/Measured tranquility." Mortuza's observant eye is equally evidenced in the description of the saline container as "Spiked in one end/Needled in another." The valve in the drip-tube is a "Regulated … Geared wheel" through which "Fluids change bodies"—from the container to a patient's body obviously. But if the refrain of "Drip drop/Drip drop/Drip drop" reminds the reader of a few well-known lines in Eliot's *The Waste Land*, the infusion of the liquid into a patient's bloodstream is quite innovatively likened to:

> … how a story
> Flows into the veins
> drop
> drop
> drop
> And signals an end
> Like a thrown plastic bag
> Dropped in a bin (Mortuza 25)

Only if one notices the missing period at the end of the poem does one realize that the poet is cleverly de-registering the fact that an inspiration which is left empty after an act of creation is like an empty plastic saline bottle thrown into a waste-bin.

The poems in the section titled *eye* are of a different flavor altogether, sparked off as they are by what may be called minor epiphanies, momentary realizations of the significance of quotidian experiences, or end results even of stray thoughts that wander into the mind. "Winged Feet," for instance,is about a commonplace sighting—about the poet's observation of his own "feet … resting on the windowsill." As the poet looks at his toes, he wonders "why can't they have fancy names like fingers/thumb, grooming, middle, ring, little/thumb, grooming, middle, ring, little." Seeing his toes outlined against the sky, he notices too that "They branch out like wild mushrooms/They spread out like cobra hoods." He flinches his toes as if he needs to "grab a piece of the sky," even though a "jacaranda tree has already taken up a large share of the sky" framed by the window. But the tree brings to his mind the image of a perching bird and he muses:

> Maybe I can use the tree as my bar to put my feet on
> Before I can spread my wings. (Mortuza 31).

If there is a touch of Robert Frost in these lines, memories of Ted Hughes, Eliot, and perhaps even Baudelaire, surface upon reading the first lines of "Para Diced for the Cents of a Woman":

> Eve
> snakes through the city,
> the ant colony,
> the termite colony,
> the concrete jungle, (Mortuza 36)

What is significant, however, is that these intertexts are given a completely local habitation and implication as the poem turns out to be about the plight of women who slave for long hours stitching clothes for paltry wages in garment sweatshops in Dhaka, Bangladesh. The "Cents" in the title of the poem refer, of course, to the small amounts of money (literally cents, and not American dollars) earned by the women laborers, and so the allusion draws attention to the exploitative practice of labor outsourcing, while at the same time ironically reflecting on the Western notion of female sensuality as exemplified by the film *The Scent of a Woman*. "Para Diced" is quite self-evidently "Paradised" as in the Miltonian sense of "Adam [and Eve] unparadised"; but "Diced" can also mean cut into small pieces, which is a most effective way of indicating the subjugation of the poor working class Bangladeshi women who have to sacrifice their lives at the altar of capitalism. Hence the lines:

> Eve weaves. Eve weeps
> Cents sent
> Saints sent
> To check on compliance
> To check on corp. finance

St. aah, St. uhh, St. ouch

St.ich! St.arch! St.one-
Wash and dye

There are poems of many moods in *Barkode.* "I Don't Feel Anything Anymore" is a lament and a protest against the benumbing de-humanization of consciousness that is a fallout of a submission by video-gamers, internet addicts, and virtual reality aficionados the world over to the realm of simulation and cyber reality. Beginning with the lines:

I don't feel anything anymore
Anger, frustration, hatred
Love, fear, jealousy —
Nothing touches me anymore!
Maybe it does touch my cyber avatar,
But the human me is comfortably numb!
Children gunned down or droned; I don't care!
For me it is but the size of the guns that matters.
Women flogged or raped; I don't care!
For me it is the media coverage that matters.
The innocent hacked or chopped; I don't care!
For me it is the video footage on You Tube that matters …, (Mortuza 85)

the poem moves on to approximating the language of God to "cyber tongue" ("God speaks in a distant language, so is my cyber tongue"), before concluding with a compelling reference to the first element in the digital binary—the zero—to which "you can both come to… or start from…." Among the other of Mortuza's poems expressive of social concern and consciousness are "4891, or 1984 Revisited," which is on "the whistleblower Mr. Edward Snowden," and "Even Hydra Headed Monster Has But One Shoulder," which is about the salespersons in television advertisements persuading viewers to buy and to keep on buying. The latter poem ends wittily however as the poet realizes that the TV remote with which he had invoked these "spirits" to appear before his eyes can just as easily be exorcised by the pressing of another button on the same gadget. More explicitly indicative of a political consciousness—of one about the cause of the Gulf War—is the brief three-line poem "How the Rest was Won" which deserves to be quoted in full:

Sitting by the big pond
Big B brays 'ee' and little b brays 'or'
And there was War (Mortuza 92)

Apart from calling attention to its specific political content (the "big pond" being the Atlantic Ocean, Big B or Big Brother being the United States, and "little b" being not-so-Great Britain), it may be indicated that this poem invokes through its title a concept of a far greater significance. And this is the idea that the aggressiveness of contemporary America is a residue of the much older heritage of the sociologically aggressive spirit that won the Americans the Wild West.

Political also is "To Daddy on 9/11" in which the Daddy is President Bush post-9/11 and the war on Iraq has Americans "Paddle in pyre" with the "Plane truth struck" being "Bom-baba Bag-Dad!!" (Mortuza 93). Equally imbued with a political consciousness is "March on Europa," a poem about the Statue of Liberty—and Guantanamo Bay.

There are evidently several sides to Shamsad Mortuza's craft as a poet. The writer's professional side and knowledge of British and American literature as Professor of English at Dhaka University and the University of Liberal Arts Bangladesh surfaces every so often in casual allusions, the employment of forms and styles reminiscent of canonical British and American poets, the use of sub-genres such as Concrete Poetry (used in "The Barometer," "Animal," "Through the Pores," etc.), and in direct intertextual echoes. Not only are readers referred back to original English poems like Coleridge's *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* (which becomes *The Rime of the Modern Mariner*) and Spenser's famous *Amoretti* sonnet "One day I wrote her name …" which becomes an unrhymed sestet beginning: "I tried to write your name on the beach/But waves kept on wiping the first part off" ("On the Beach" 51), there are also instances of direct name-dropping like the reference to Tom Stoppard in "Peeling the Onion" or the poem entitled "A Letter for Mr. Kurtz." A largely selfconscious creative play with words like puns and not-so-unoften paradoxes (as in the lyric "Paradoxes") seems to be typical features of Mortuza's art. And then there is his love for surprise endings as displayed in the poem "The Fire" which runs:

> I might just as well as make the best use of the time and
> Bow-drill a piece of wood and light a fire.
> Join glasses and trap sunlight and add kindling to the bundling tinder;
> Ask the dragon to teach me how to fire out heart's anger;
> Learn the Chinese magician's trick with magnesium and start fireworks;
> Find Prometheus and ask him to help me start a civilization — Then again,
> I might just as well make the best use of time,
> While waiting for a spark from you —
> my match! (Mortuza 49)

Witty in a neo-Metaphysical kind of way, Shamsad Mortuza seems to have been inspired by such contemporary British poets as Carol Ann Duffy amongst others. Nevertheless, both the mind and the voice of the poet are distinctively South Asian and specifically Bengali/Bangladeshi. The one poem that most unambiguously declares this is "Sheuli," which is an ode on a flower probably indigenous to Bengal alone. This, and the other poems in Mortuza's volume, may be described as experimental, tentative, exploratory, and as yet unfinished in the entirely positive sense of possessing new possibilities for development. *Barkode* barks back at the English speaking western world in the voice of a Third World South Asian English language poet. It asserts the poet's—and his postcolonial reader's—ownership of a tongue that was two centuries and more back an alien imposition, but which gradually became an inalienable part of him like donated blood transfused into living human flesh.

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Go Set a Watchman: A Reflection of the Present

Sohana Manzoor
Assistant Professor of English, University of Liberal Arts Bangladesh

Go Set a Watchman
Harper Lee
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The publication of Harper Lee's *Go Set a Watchman* caused a huge uproar in 2015. The critics and readers alike debated whether the author was coerced into publishing the novel which should not have seen the light at all. Some wailed over the loss of their hero Atticus Finch from *To Kill a Mockingbird* (hereafter, *TKAM*) who, from a cultural hero, seems to have turned into a bigot at old age. When I took up my pen to compose this review, I kept on wondering if it was necessary to write another one. But then I am reading it from a different world with this gnawing feeling that it could not have been published at a more perfect time, when the entire world is engulfed in meaningless terrorist activities, in bigotry.

The manuscript of *Go Set a Watchman* was discovered in late 2014, and Lee correctly called it a parent book of her award winning novel. This was the manuscript originally received by Harper Lee's editor Tay Hoholf in 1957 who identified the brilliant strokes, but suggested revisions. Now more than half a century later, the original has come out and any reader would agree that Hoholf's suggestion was absolutely right. I started reading it this summer and before long I realized that I had forgotten a lot about the Maycomb community and their eccentricities and had to revert to the original Harper Lee book to understand this one better. To be honest, as a novel, *Go Set a Watchman* does not come close to *TKAM*. It could not have stood on its own and I would have stopped reading after the first ten pages if I had not wanted to see what happened with my childhood favorites, and why there was such a controversy surrounding it. And then when I started rereading, I found that there were chunks of prose taken directly from *To Kill a Mockingbird*. I laughed at myself—I am an English teacher alright, one who has had years of experience in teaching composition courses.

Go Set a Watchman can be called a coming of age book, even though the central character Jean Louis is 26. She is the adult version of the much loved "Scout" of *TKAM*. And most of the time I felt that she has not changed much—still an emotionally volatile young woman who looks at the world as a great place where "papa" is still a hero. She does not realize, as both her childhood friend Henry and Uncle Jack suggest, that she belongs to a privileged class. She observes and judges her neighbors, old acquaintances, and even her father from this superior height that she takes for granted. And naturally, her world crashes when she finds it to be very different from the one etched in her memory. Much of the novel deals with her disillusionment about her Maycomb community. She is not willing to accept the changes as her Uncle Jack offers: "Human birth is most unpleasant. It's messy, it's extremely painful, sometimes it's a risky thing. It is always bloody. So is it with civilization" (199-200). She cannot concede that when a new world is about to be born from the older one, the older heroes become the villains, or the ones who resist the new heroes. She also believes that hers is the only correct way to look at the world, for which, while her stance is admirable, she also appears immature.

Yet I would also say that the book is strangely reflecting of the time it came out. Fanatics of different kinds have taken hold of not just the US but the rest of the world as well. It is a world when lifelong friends suddenly change color and appear as strangers. There are so many extremist activities and Lee almost suggests that the difference is always there; it just awaits the right time to reveal itself. Scout saw her father as a hero championing a wronged black man. As a grown woman she sees that he is still willing to fight for a black man; this time however, the black man has become a "nigger" and he is doing it because he is afraid that the case will be taken up by another group who will use it against the southerners. The adult Scout, who now lives in New York and is used to sitting with colored people at the next table, is horrified at the change. But during the heated argument between the father and daughter, it becomes quite clear that the kind of racial rhetoric that both the Finches believe in is complex in itself. Both of them carefully distinguish it from the white-trash bigotry. Atticus is one belonging to older generation of Southerners that want to preserve the old ways of life that would protect the black people, but would not allow them to rise over their white brethren. The Southern agrarians did and still believe in a certain way of life that make them hospitable, earnest, neighborly, and by the same token, suspicious of anything that does not follow their line of tradition. Harper Lee's novel certainly projects that tension when black people were fighting to establish their rights as equal human beings, and the white people were exhibiting a "paternal concern" saying that they were not ready. Neither of them was wrong, and that was the root of all the conflicts.

In some fundamental ways, *Go Set a Watchman* also reflects the conflict between the old and the new. But then the racists would never see themselves as racists. Scout probably accepts it in the end as a difference between two generations. The questions, however, remain. What makes human beings who they are? Who was Atticus? Did he ever believe in championing the black people? Or did he fight the case because it was filed by a member of the white-trash class, and not people of his own class? Or maybe because he knew that Tom Robinson

would lose anyway? Or maybe the gradually changing surroundings make him question the civil rights and the place of his own world in it? It is difficult to tell, but at the same time, *Go Set a Watchman* makes him more human and credible with all his prejudices.

The novel is not an easy read and I could not finish it in one sitting. Obviously, it is not as witty and polished as *TKAM*. But it did make me think of the present world. One last thing, it would be an excellent idea not to compare it too much with the other book. It does have its merits, and it would be good to remember that reality is never as good as the ideal.

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Editor, *Crossings: A Journal of English Studies*
Department of English and Humanities
University of Liberal Arts Bangladesh
House #56, Road #4A
Dhanmondi R/A, Dhaka-1209
Bangladesh


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