



Crossing

A Journal of English Studies

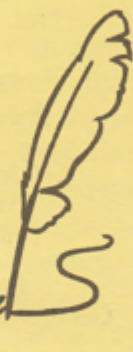
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Crossing 



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Transitions, more often than not, prove to be difficult, and so it has been with *Crossings* in its passage to our new editorial team. We wish to take this opportunity to express our appreciation of Professor Mohit-ul-Alam, who for a number of years ably edited the journal while he was Head of the Department of English and Humanities at ULAB. His sudden departure to take up the position of Vice Chancellor at a public university left his successor with a motley pile of articles, only a few of which had been reviewed. We completed the process, considered a number of new submissions, and finally decided to bring out a double issue. We apologize for the inordinately long time lag since the previous issue, and assure our readers that the journal will henceforth appear with regularity.

We have decided to structure each issue with contributions appearing under three main sections: first, Essays and Papers on Literary Topics; second, Essays and Papers on Linguistics and Language Teaching; and third, Review Articles and Book Reviews. In addition, readers of this issue will find a section classified as Special Feature which includes a public lecture delivered at ULAB by the French philosopher Bernard-Henri Levy. We are grateful to M. Levy for allowing us to publish the transcript of his stimulating lecture. We hope that such special features will appear occasionally if not regularly in the journal.

We are delighted to be able to welcome a number of distinguished academics from various countries to our newly formed Advisory Board. Their presence in the *Crossings* team will be an inspiration to us all.

From this double issue onwards, *Crossings* will also be available online at www.ulab.edu.bd/crossings-of-DEH. We are confident that this will ensure that the journal reaches a wider audience.



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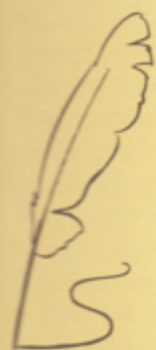
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On Philosophy and Commitment: For a Philosophy of Action

Bernard-Henri Levy

(The French philosopher Bernard-Henri Levy, who recently revisited Bangladesh after forty-three years, delivered a public lecture at ULAB on 26 April, 2014. The text here is reproduced from the transcript of the lecture, with his kind permission. M. Levy was welcomed by Dr. Kazi Anis Ahmed, Vice-Chairman of the ULAB Board of Trustees, and introduced by M. Olivier Litvine, Director of the Alliance Francaise in Dhaka.)

Thank you, Olivier, and thank you very much, sir, for your kind words of introduction. I must tell you that after my second day in Dhaka, I am, number one, absolutely exhausted; and number two, I am deeply moved by the quality of the welcome I got in this city. I was not sure that I would ever come back to Bangladesh in my lifetime. I am not so old but I am not so young either. And for me, it has been a very emotional experience. Since yesterday, I have been going from emotion to emotion, emotions evoked by places, faces, and images, photos of the Father of the Nation Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. Former freedom fighters who met me this morning told me that I might be on the very prestigious list of the people who they think might have to come back to receive an honor from this country. Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina met me this morning. It was a moving moment, meeting the daughter of Mujib, who was in Dhaka when I came the first time, who spoke of her father, the liberation war, and the building of the state. It is so extraordinary, so rare for a man—or for a woman—after 43 years to come back on his own traces, to feel that he is the same and yet completely different; that he is another man, and that he is the same man; and at every step of this pilgrimage to wonder what is the part of him that died, what is the part of him which is still alive? It is not an experience that occurs frequently. Most of you in the audience are too young to understand. You will see when you are my age. You will see that this sort of experience is really extraordinary, disturbing, and memorable.

Very few occasions—destiny or God or whoever you want—give you, and very seldom, very rarely, this possibility of making this psychic journey yourself. “*Je est un autre*”—I is another, said one of the greatest French poets. I experience during this hour in Dhaka which part of the quote is true, and which part of the quote is false—how the two mix with each other. So this is the first thing I wanted to say, I wanted to say thank you, all of you, all those whom I have met in Dhaka—especially, Kaiser Haq, my friend, and Olivier Litvine, the Director of the Alliance Française, and all the men and women I have met since yesterday. Thank you all for being a part of this great moment, this great achievement of my lifetime of having these two days in Dhaka. You have asked me to reflect on this topic: Philosophy and Commitment. Not a bad topic. It is probably what I had in mind 43 years ago when I first came to Bangladesh.

What was happening in the mind of a young Frenchman who at the end of his studies wanted to come to the end of the world—to a country which did not exist yet, though it existed as a nation, which in any case seemed already in the process of dying? What happened in the head of the young student in order to take this decision? What was in command in the brain of the young intellectual? I had not written a book yet—just a few

articles. I was really a beginner, an absolute beginner in life, in studies, in commitment, and even in philosophy. And the first act of my life as a man was just to take a plane to New Delhi, to Calcutta, and to come to Jessore, to Khulna, and to Dhaka. Why? What happened in the mind of a very young Bernard-Henri Levy?

Of course, I would do such things many times later in my life. I would not only cover but film the war in Bosnia. I would make a movie called 'Bosna' with the help of my friend Alain Ferrari, who is not here, and my friend Gilles Hertzog, who is here. I spent a month of my life trying to report, trying to bear testimony to this slaughter at the heart of Europe, which happened in Bosnia. I would do it again of course, with my friend Gilles Hertzog and my friend Marc Roussel, who is also here today, when we made a movie about Libya, "The Oath of Tobruk", three years ago. It was a very strange adventure; it is a very odd enterprise for a philosopher to comment about this terrible bloodbath himself during one year in the battlefield of Ajdabiya and the bombed city of Misrata and to make a movie out of it. While I was shooting these two films, the dice were rolling already, and my life was made out of two threads—on the one side, philosophical reflection while I shut myself off from time to time during long periods in the Ivory Tower of my books; and on the other side, from time to time, as if it were in another time, the war of Libya and forgotten wars covered for newspapers like *Le Monde*, etc.

But Bangladesh was the first time. I did not even have the idea of writing a book. The book came long after, not on the spot. When I went back to France I thought that I knew enough, I had experience enough for it; in fact I knew too much not to bear testimony to what I had seen and felt. There were a few other books about the Bangladesh war, even in French. But I thought what I saw, the reflections that came out of that, needed to be put in a book. But all this was not in my mind when I responded to the call of Andre Malraux to fight for Bangladesh, when I went to see Malraux or wrote to him. A researcher recently found the letter which I wrote to Malraux in the Malraux archive. And he also found the handwritten remarks of Malraux on my letter, saying that I should be given an appointment. I will give it to Olivier Litvine to publish in the Newsletter of the Alliance Francaise.

I was just a young student without any project of writing a book, or of going on TV or delivering a speech. And when I replied to Malraux's reply and when I came to Bangladesh, what was at work, what was at stake in my mind? I ask this question, first of all because you have asked me, but also because what I am going to tell you goes far beyond myself, goes far beyond my case. I think this is how I will reply to your question. I will draw a picture of a generation of French intellectuals and French philosophers. At this time, the beginning of the 70s, you had a choice, if you were a young philosopher, between a few possible attitudes. The first attitude was the attitude of the famous philosopher Louis Althusser.

Althusser was my master. He taught me most of the philosophy I know. He taught me how to read a text, how to enter into a philosophical text. And the theory of Althusser was that in order to commit you have to "discommit", in order to get involved you have to retire, in order to have an effect in the world you have to take yourself out of the world. Althusser used to say, quoting Spinoza, that the concept of dog does not bark, that if you want to think about the dog, you have to abandon the real dog, the barking dog—with his body, his flesh, his wounds perhaps, his life and his death. You had to go to the world of pure idea in which the concept of dog had nothing

to do with a real dog—but had to do with the concept of cat, man, pet animal, and whatsoever. Althusser taught us what to do in order to be real committed intellectuals because he was a communist. And when I came to Bangladesh he was extremely influential. Then there was also Charles Bettelheim, the specialist in France on the Chinese revolution and all the other Asiatic political tempests. I was sent to Bettelheim by Louis Althusser. The first commandment of Althusser was to discover the thing, to discover the world in order to understand it, in order to act on it. It was not the Platonic attitude. Plato would say, forget the real world, just look at the idea. Althusser and Bettelheim would say, don't forget the real world, but in order to remember it, in order to intervene in it, you have to look somewhere else, you have to stay in the pure area of your concept. This was an attitude and it was a temptation.

You have another temptation which was very strong in my epoch—maybe still is today: these temptations are there forever. It was the temptation, I would say, of Mallarmé. It was a sort of cult of purity. It was a practice of literature as completely transformed into a sort of religion—a cult of the letter (*unculte de la lettre*). And Mallarmé, the post-Baudelairean and modern poet—the author of an impossible book that he never really wrote, as you know, Mallarmé used to say that he knew no other real bomb—the most real bomb is the pure and perfect word. The pure rhyme in a poem is a bomb. It is stronger than a pistol shot. This was his attitude. Then a few years before I came here, there was a book published in France by a great man called Roger Stéphane who, I am sure, is not well-known here and perhaps not even in France. But he had a great effect on the intelligentsia of the time. Stéphane's book, *Portrait de l'aventurier (Portrait of the Adventurer)*, appeared with a great preface by Jean-Paul Sartre. Sartre and Stéphane opposed the ordinary view of commitment to put forward what was a sort of aesthetics of commitment. They saw real history as a sort of stage for the exposure of the mind, of the ego, of the feelings of the philosopher or the writer. The adventurer according to Sartre was, for example, Lawrence of Arabia. It was Byron at Missolonghi at the time of the fight for independence of the Greeks against the Turks. Byron sincerely thought of creating a unit of the Greek Freedom Fighters in order to liberate Greece. But according to Stéphane and Sartre, what was at stake in the case of Byron was probably less the fate of Greece and the Greeks and the freedom of the Greeks than war as a big theatre in order to deploy or unravel literature, concepts, ideas, and so on. For a committed writer, that is a temptation. It still exists.

There was another temptation. A few years before I first came here I read a great book—not philosophy but literature, but in a way also philosophy. It is probably the best book about war since the *Iliad*. It's a novel by an Italian writer called Curzio Malaparte. The title of the book is *Kaputt*. Malaparte took huge personal risks; he was a great reporter. He was really committed. But when you read the novel, when you know the life of Malaparte, you discover very quickly that he was, first of all, a dandy. The temptation of Malaparte was the temptation of looking in a very cold way at war as a sort of aesthetic show—the war as a show of which Malaparte was an accurate observer. If I am sincere with myself I have to admit that I probably have a little of each of these attitudes in myself. And I was deeply disgusted by each of them too. None of them was convenient for me. I was uncomfortable with all these attitudes, which the literary or philosophical western tradition transmitted to me and to us.

There was a fifth attitude which perhaps was the worst, the most deadly—which was the attitude of those philosophers whose commitment consisted in making

revolution. This was the dream of changing the world in its death, the dream of targeting man right in his soul, the dream of breaking history into two. This was the dream of those philosophers who took off from a particular strand of Marxist philosophy. And you have some specimens of this tradition here in Bengal—Indian Bengal and here in Bangladesh. They were Naxalites and Maoists and so on. And again I very quickly understood that this attitude was not only embarrassing but that it brought along the possibility and even the inevitability of pure nightmare. I understood this in Bangladesh, interviewing one of the Naxalites—Mohammad Toha. I understood that this project consists in breaking history into two; and that one had to get rid of it too. I arrived here at the beginning of my life, at the moment of Western history, of the history of Western thought where all the available possibilities were dead ends that had to be avoided.

When I came here I thought against these five temptations. And it is sometimes useful to ask yourself, to wonder what you were reacting against when you did what you did, what you tried to avoid, or to escape when you embraced a certain choice. Then what did I do and how did all these negativities, all these refusals turn out in myself? But it will soon appear that what happened in me happened broadly in the whole philosophical moment of the time.

Two things appeared to me, not clearly, but in a confused way at the beginning. Sometimes again, you know things which you don't really know. You are moved by motives of which you are not aware. Nevertheless, they move you. First of all, I remembered, I recalled the real philosophical tradition which was like a vivid fountain, which my generation had in a big mistake set aside, the tradition of the German philosopher Husserl. German philosophy is embodied by two great names—Heidegger and Husserl. Derrida, Althusser, Michel Foucault, all of them took the Heideggerian path. And probably a little voice in me wondered, what about Husserl? What does Husserl mean? It meant a sort of oxymoron, an apparent paradox, a living paradox. The pure thought, the logical, quasi mathematical conception of thought is married with, combined with, concerned with what a great Husserlian has called the big anger of things, the encounter with things, with real things, the idea that the man does not go to the things, but the things go to the man, come to his face like a savage beast. There is a savagery of things, of the events which come at your throat. And the idea, at the same time, that the climax of thought is the quasi mathematical development of ideas. These two contradictory positions were in Husserl. And the first thing I wondered about was probably: what about really returning to Husserl.

Number two, I remembered that I was a Jew. But I was not educated as a Jew. I am not a religious Jew at all. I am not a believer. I am not a worshipper. But I rediscovered, even if I did not know clearly, the conception of history which comes from the books of Jewish thought, in particular, Emanuel Levinas. The deepest idea of this tradition was that history was an interminable process, that history was a chaos with hope, but with no end, that a man in history may be inhabited by a desire to change history—constant desire, will, determination, knowing that this will to change will never have an end. This will to change the world without the idea that you could remove the evil, or that you could reach the dead end of history. And then there probably took shape in my mind the idea that there was a possible commitment, which was at the same time pessimistic and optimistic, which was at the same time with no illusion like the idea of paradise on earth, ideal government and so on, but nevertheless involved trying, and

trying with hope, though this hope was not the hope of creating a perfect society and so on. This took place in my ideas and my works—a concept of commitment which grew from book to book after that, but which probably has its roots in my experiences here in Bangladesh.

I understood so many things in Bangladesh. I understood, for example, how the horror of the war, the tragedy of war might be not the deaths, but the wounded casualties. The tragedy is the wound. I understood how the intellectuals could be the target of a fascist regime. I understood how the women were in the frontline facing the barbarity and the fascism of Pakistan. I got this idea of commitment which is a process, an endless process which has to be pursued even if you know it to be endless. For me, this idea is the exact opposite, the best reply to what was so bad, so false, so disgusting — Mallarme, Althusser, Malaparte and "*L'aventurier*" and the revolutionary temptation of the West, "*la tentation de l'occident*", to quote Malraux. So this is the idea of commitment that became a part of the philosophy which has led me all my life. Now the last words before I give the floor to the audience. I cannot finish without telling you also that I am not only moved by this return to Bangladesh but I will go back tomorrow with some fresh committed ideas.

When I go somewhere, I cannot but nourish some new commitments and some concrete projects. I've had one or two feelings since I have been here. These feelings spring, more or less, from the fact that Bangladesh, thanks to its tradition, thanks to the Mukti Bahini, thanks to the Father of the Nation Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, had achieved independence in such a short time. Bangladesh had achieved it in such a short time that I would like to impress upon the young people of the country an awareness of how rare it is. There is no other example in modern history—or very few—of a state built out of nothing in two years by Mujibur Rahman, out of ground zero. So this battle was won. But my feeling is that there are a few more battles which remain, a few wounds which are still open in this country, which I love so much, with all my heart, with the heart of my youth, and with my heart of today. There is a battle of the memory. I am so struck by the fact that Bangladesh had to receive the shock of a genocide. There are not so many genocides in the 20th century. But nobody knows exactly how many fell victim to the Pakistani barbarity from March '71 to December '71. Was it one million, two millions, three millions? Nobody knows. In my opinion, such a situation is unbearable for the young generation. This was the case for the French people, for the Jews after the Holocaust, for the Armenian, a case for Rwanda. Genocide, the deaths which are not numbered, not named, is an unbearable situation. It is very difficult to build up a country, to pursue adventures, if you have such a big hole in the memory. I know there is a big memorial in Dhaka. But it is probably not enough. That is why I proposed this morning to the Prime Minister that the international community should support a really deep investigation in the hearts of all the districts of Bangladesh, covering all the families of this country. I appeal to them to witness, in order to know, name by name if possible, face by face if possible, what this genocide was precisely. Death without a face, death without a name, death without a number—this is the worst. And the international community has a duty to help this country to get out of this situation. And I think that I have a few ideas in order to help the international community to take cognizance of their own duty.

Number two, I had yesterday night a conversation with two great intellectuals of this country, two young intellectuals who are of the age that was mine when I first

demand, who are ready for that. I told of Bosnia-Herzegovina before. Both Bosnia and Bangladesh are ready for this endorsement of the anti-obscurantist position. Bangladesh is in a very natural way, by its own DNA, the champion of this new non-alignment. What I am telling you now I told it this morning to your prime minister. I will tell this the following days in my country France and beyond France to those who shape the international game. I will speak of Bangladesh in these terms. I will tell them, first of all, the responsibility of my country to encourage the true spirit of this country, which is thought of nowadays in connection with the terrible drama of Rana Plaza. I went to Rana Plaza this morning and I saw the traces of the disaster, the nightmare, the hell that the victims went through, and the tragedy of the unburied corpses. In the genocide of '71, you had millions of nameless victims. Today by a sort of terrible twist of destiny, you have eight corpses which are unburied. So this country Bangladesh is frequently mentioned as the sweat factory of the world, the capital of cheap textiles, the place that is the Hall of Shame of the big companies of Europe who come and take part of their profit. Bangladesh is much more than that. There is the spirit of Bangladesh, the philosophy of Bangladesh. There are the special values of Bangladesh, which I will convey to those in my country when I return. This will be my way to continue to be faithful to my idea of commitment which I invented for myself in '71 and '72 when I first came to this country. Thank you very much.



came to Bangladesh. They were so melancholic. They asked me: at the end of the day what is our place in this world? What is our big card in modern international politics? What should be our foreign policy? Why should we stand and accept that even our supposed allies, even those who helped us to liberate our country consider us as a sort of appendage to the subcontinent and so on. Look at Pakistan, a rogue state, the house of the devil in so many respects—the country where you can kidnap and decapitate an American journalist. But they continue to be helped, to be supported, and to be fueled with money by their American brothers. We wonder why the sweetness of Bangladesh, why the innocence of Bangladesh, why the martyrdom of Bangladesh could give us less of a claim before the international community than the barbarity of Pakistan. I spoke of that with your prime minister today. I thought that if you try to think in these terms, it is clear each country has its own card in this game. Each country has a card. There are bad cards, nasty dirty cards. Pakistan has a dirty card, the fact that it has nuclear weapons. From time to time they use it when they want their allies to freak out: they leak the idea that the weapons are not so well controlled. Then America freaks out. They come up with big help or the delivery of F-16s. That is the card of Pakistan—let's be realistic, let's be cynical, let's see the card or the map of the world in the cold way in which Malaparte saw war.

What is the card of Bangladesh in this game? My feeling is that Bangladesh has a huge card in its hand: it can help Bangladesh to take its place in the comity of nations if Bangladesh uses it properly. This card is precisely the lesson of Mujibur Rahman. This is precisely the spirit of the Mukti Bahini (Freedom Fighters). It is the spirit of tolerance which blows in this area. The West is obsessed, as you know, and so is the world in general, with radical Islam. It is reasonable to have this obsession. Radical Islam is considered as the big threat all over the world, by the West and also, by the way, by the Muslim societies. Radical Islam is a threat for Muslim societies much more than for Europe and for America. And the world is in search, in desperate search of the antidote to this radical Islam. The world is desperately seeking for an Islam faithful to its values, with worshippers deeply involved in their faith but also at the same time accepting the beautiful faces that can be admired, accepting the rule of law and so on. The world is seeking for this liberal or secular Islam. And how could one not think in this connection of the first constitution of Sheikh Mujib based on four pillars—nationalism, secularism, democracy, and socialism? There are people of all origins, of all confessions—Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists, and Christians—in this country. And how could one not think that there is a real chance for Bangladesh which could take a stand strongly, firmly on its history and its values, to be faithful to the best of its heritage, and therefore to be the champion of this liberal and secular Islam, whereby this state could make a momentous contribution to civilization in the 21st century. Bangladesh can be tomorrow, the champion, the leading country, the spirit of a New International; you had the Communist Internationals—First, Second, Third, Fourth. You can have an International of the secular Islam for which Bangladesh is completely equipped, armed by its heroism, by its past history to take the leadership. These thoughts occurred to me yesterday in the house of Mujibur Rahman where I saw so many photos of him with leaders of what used to be called the Non-aligned Movement. He was with Tito; he was with Nasser; he was with Anwar Sadat.

Today there is a new non-alignment which consists in refusing all the forms of obscurantism, all the forms of fundamentalism. There are a lot of countries who

5

Exile, Cosmopolitanism and the Diasporic Intellectual: The Example of Edward Said

Fakrul Alam*

Abstract: *This paper is an attempt to study Said's career as a literary critic and theorist stimulated by creativity by not being "quite right" and inspirational because "out of place." It will range throughout his works, taking in everything from his first work, Joseph Conrad and the Fictions of Autobiography (1967) to his posthumously published final books, Humanism and Democratic Criticism (2005) and On Late Style (2006) to demonstrate how he has made out of his uprooted condition and diasporic imaginings a contrapuntal mode of criticism, a skeptical engagement with the western world, and a constant, restless quest for the right to be engaged with the world because he finds it out of place and because he would like to intervene in it to draw attention to at least some of the places where he finds it is askew if only to change it.*

I

A key essay in Edward Said's oeuvre is "Reflections on Exile." Originally published in *Grand* in 1984, it was made the titular work of his 2001 collection, *Reflections on Exile and Other Cultural and Literary Essays*. In this sustained meditation on the anxieties and achievements as well as the fate and condition of exilic individuals, Said shows us how it is both an enabling and an alienating experience. He points out how much of twentieth century literature is the work of "extraterritorial intellectuals," a phrase he picks up from one of them, George Steiner. More than any other age, Said stresses, the modern one is full of "exiles, émigrés, refugees" (RE174), for the politics of the twentieth century has led again and again to refugees, displaced intellectuals, and gifted men and women forcibly removed from their homelands who have meditated on their situations and ended up with work of lasting importance. Forced to relocate, permanently estranged, exilic intellectuals are compelled into creativity and made to reinvent themselves and find new avenues of expression – through art, politics, and a restless search for alternatives and affiliations. Exile can thus be a complex route to creation and self-expression. Said finds the fate of the exiled intellectual perfectly encapsulated in an observation by the twelfth century Saxon monk, Hugo of St. Victor, that he is fond of quoting at length again and again in his works:

The man who finds his homeland sweet is still a tender beginner; he to whom every soil is as his native one is already strong; but he is perfect to whom the entire world is as a foreign land. The tender soul has fixed his love on one spot in the world; the strong man has extended his love to all places, the perfect man has extinguished his. (RE 185)

All of Said's heroes have achieved this last state of permanent independence and detachment: Joseph Conrad, Theodor Adorno, and Erich Auerbach. All of them embrace homelessness and secularism, and articulate a complex, contrapuntal vision. Exile, diaspora and cosmopolitanism have become conducive to musings on their state stimulating them to experiment, precisely because their condition allows them to have "a plurality of vision" (RE186). Their nomadic sensibility prevents them from being reified, assimilated and subject to the herd mentality. Instinctively, the exilic intellectual veers towards ironic, oppositional work and radical or off-center postures.

In this essay and in everything Said wrote, one realizes in these years that have passed after his death, he is driven by the obsessions and incertitude that mark him as the quintessential intellectual in exile. He is driven in particular by the loss of the Palestinian homeland of his people and the Jerusalem home of his ancestors, but also by the trajectory of the cosmopolitan education he had acquired. This trajectory has made him the consummate extraterritorial intellectual, at home in the shifting, contested terrain of theory and the sophisticated world of "high" culture. The result is that he has become an incomparably interdisciplinary comparatist, theorist and critic, and a passionate and exemplary intellectual who felt he had to engage with the cultures in which he had found himself locked in opposition, whether of the east or the west. He seemed to believe that it was his unique destiny to arraign western cultures for their imperial investments and postures.

Edward Said, in other words, is a fascinating case study of the diasporic intellectual. His career and achievement appears to be especially appropriate in a discussion about diasporic spaces and voices and the travels and travails of exilic minds. But as I will argue in this paper, his example shows that mooring is not necessarily the answer to the quest of the postcolonial voyager. Indeed, Said's life and works show him embracing permanent estrangement as a desirable condition. To quote from the excellent conclusion of his brilliant 1999 memoir, *Out of Place*, induced or inspired by the sleeplessness that he used to experience perennially:

I occasionally experience myself as a cluster of flowing currents. I prefer this to the idea of a solid self, the identity to which so many attach so much significance. These currents, like the theme of one's life, flow during the waking hour, and at their best, they require no reconciling, no harmonizing. They are "off" and may be out of place, but at least they are always in motion, in time, in place, in the forms of all kinds of combinations, moving about, not necessarily forward, sometimes against each other, contrapuntally, yet without one central theme. A form of freedom, I'd like to think, even if I am far from being totally convinced that it is. That skepticism too is one of the themes I particularly want to hold on to. With so many dissonances in my life I have learned actually to prefer being not quite right and out of place. (OUP 295)

This paper is an attempt to study Said's career as a literary critic and theorist stimulated by creativity by not being "quite right" and inspirational because "out of place." It will range throughout his works, taking in everything from his first work, *Joseph Conrad and the Fictions of Autobiography* (1967) to his posthumously published final books, *Humanism and Democratic Criticism* (2005) and *On Late Style* (2006) to demonstrate how he has made out of his uprooted condition and diasporic imaginings a contrapuntal mode of criticism, a skeptical engagement with the western world, and a constant, restless quest for the right to be engaged with the world because he finds it out of place

and because he would like to intervene in it to draw attentions to at least some of the places where he finds it is askew if only to change it.

II

A good way of understanding Said is to listen to him talking in his interviews and lectures. Most of his major interviews are collected in *Power, Politics and Culture: Interviews with Edward W. Said*. In one of them, he talks of his life as "a series of displacements and expatriations which cannot be recuperated" and which has given him a permanent feeling of "living between cultures" (PPC 70). Born in a Palestinian Christian family in Jerusalem of a father who had an American passport and business interests in Egypt, Said moved with his family to Cairo because of his father's financial investments there but the family's home in Jerusalem was soon taken over by Zionist settlers. But as *Out of Place* reveals, he was not at home in Cairo either, despite or perhaps because of the family's affluence, and his own exclusive English-medium schooling. His sense of exile was accentuated as he left his family behind to study in another boarding school in America. Much later, he would keep returning to the Middle East in general, and Lebanon in particular, where his mother had settled. Though settled in New York and a teacher of English and Comparative Literature at Columbia University who had become a full professor at a very early age, he never owned a home in the city or elsewhere and continued to use it as only as a base, opting for a peripatetic existence which saw him travel all over the world despite the virulent form of blood cancer with which he was diagnosed in the early 1990s and which led to his death in 2003.

This experience of displacements and exile, as he reveals in another interview, as well as his mastery of the piano and western classical music, leads to his keenness for counterpoint as a mode of criticism congenial to the diasporic sensibility. As he explains in it, the exilic individual remembers what he has left behind as he experiences a new world and plays off the old one against the new one, becoming instinctively a comparatist in the process and developing forever a suspicion of purity, authenticity, and fixed locations. To quote him, "The notion of a *single* identity, the polyphony of many voices playing against each other, without . . . the need to reconcile them, just to hold them together, is what my work is all about" (99). For similar reasons, he prefers to go beyond the nation-state and embrace secularism as a mode of imagining in every possible instance. Also for these reasons, he is attracted to hybrid texts and "issues of race and immigration" and "the crossing of boundaries," although he has strong reservations about critics like Homi Bhabha who make a fetish out of hybridity but remain from opposition and activism.

Instead, Said made use of his diasporic experience to oppose marginalization, misrepresentation, and ghettoization everywhere. As a Palestinian and Arab in America and endlessly with the travails of his people and their misrepresentation and vilification in the west, he opted to become an activist in his scholarship as well as in the media. To him, his unique destiny is to be engaged contrarily and even adamantly with issues of misrepresentation, the knowledge-power nexus, and the western predicting "the clash of civilizations" in the west. He would rather use his privileged location as a cosmopolitan intellectual to intervene strategically to provide alternative narratives and readings and confront the powers that are. His vocation, he

has determined, is to be a proactive critical and oppositional intellectual. This made him become for a long time proactive in the Palestinian resistance movement and its most visible spokesman in the west. It also helped him evolve critiques of misrepresentation and chauvinism and produce exposés of dispossession such as *Orientalism*, *The Question of Palestine* and *Covering Islam*. His experience of immigration and expatriation has led him to the recognition that we live in an irreversibly mixed world where texts like people have become interdependent and thus must be read contrapuntally. Imperialism's unwitting legacy, he stresses, "is a world full of interconnections . . . interlacings . . . interdependencies" (247), and it is the task of the postcolonial critic to study these formations in cultural work, as his 1992 book *Culture and Imperialism* testifies. Such a critic is also focused on imaginative geography and "the struggle over competing conceptions of geography" (252). He or she must read a cultural text in a "decolonizing way," revealing its deep structure and exposing culture's complicity with imperialism, as he does with his reading of Jane Austen's *Mansfield Park* in his book. But the postcolonial critic's interest must extend also to decolonizing cultures, the pitfalls of the nationalist consciousness, and the "tremendous dimension of exile and dislocation" in contemporary cultural productions (256).

At the same time, Said says in another interview, he is "opposed to most forms of nationalism" as well as "secession, to isolation, to separatism of one sort or the other" (424). In the same interview, he confesses that he does not see himself returning to Palestine. Certainly, return to Jerusalem is not an option for him, and in his case at least, once uprooted, he is content to stay uprooted for the rest of his life and defer the "question of an actual return" (429). In one interview, Said even suggests that he is disinclined to using the term "diaspora" for himself, since it connotes an element of nostalgia where the lost homeland becomes the locus of one's life. Indeed, he says that he prefers to use the Arabic word *shatat* or dispersion (442). One can surely say that he is inclined to make a virtue out of his necessity, opting to be a wanderer, disinclined to going back to originary sites and opposed to valorizing any pure state of being.

A useful supplement to Said's interviews is his 1994 book, *Representations of the Intellectual*. Based on the Reith lectures he delivered in England the previous year, the lecture distills his ideas about the role and responsibility of the intellectual who has opted to travel permanently and become the perennial outsider. Such a position, he suggests in this lecture, is conducive to critique. It enables the exilic intellectual to oppose the status quo and confront essentialist or reductive categorizations. The vocation of the intellectual in our time, Said declares throughout this lecture, is to "speak truth to power" and be the perennial outsider. For the intellectual who has become part of a dispersed population, the task is not only to represent "the collective suffering" of his people and testify to "its travails," he must commit himself to "reasserting its enduring presence, reinforcing its memory" and universalizing its predicament (RI 44). He must, he emphasizes again and again, make use of his location in the metropolis to remind his readers and listeners of occluded, marginalized and dislocated people such as the Palestinians.

Chapter III of *Representations of the Intellectual* is wholly focused on the intellectual in exile, which Said describes as "a median state, neither completely at one with the setting nor fully disencumbered of the old, beset with half-involvements and half-detachments" (49). Said is well aware that some exilic intellectuals prefer to adjust to their new world as quickly as they can, forfeiting their old identity opportunistically

in their desire to survive at any cost. Some of them thus prefer to be trimmers; others such as V. S. Naipaul, after going through a state of alienation and irony end up being what Said sarcastically calls "native informants" or "witnesses to the prosecution." He, of course, prefers the perennial "nay-sayers," that is to say, those who are disinclined to be "fully adjusted, and who unsettled themselves," unsettle others. The epitome of such an intellectual to Said is Theodor Adorno whose "paradoxical, ironic, mercilessly critical" stance Said had admired all his life (56), though he is himself too much the Palestinian to be as distanced from activism as Adorno is. What attracts Said most is Adorno's epigrammatic formulation in *Minima Moralia*, "It is part of morality not to be at home in one's home" (57). Writing, then, becomes a provisional home, an explanation which no doubt accounts for Said's productivity and books streaming out of him, even as he struggled with a lethal strain of blood cancer, while juggling, teaching, mentoring, performing and writing about music, and opting for political activism. Writing, in fact, is to him one of the pleasures of the intellectual in exile, which also include adopting "different angles of living and eccentric angles of vision" that "enliven the intellectual's vocation, without perhaps alleviating every last anxiety or feeling of bitter solitude" (58). Said thus indicates that there is no need to moan about being exiled if you see it as an opportunity for creativity stemming from the peculiar freedom that comes from not belonging to the majority. Such freedom allows one "to move away from centralizing authorities towards the margins, where you see things that are usually lost on minds that have never traveled beyond the conventional and the comfortable" (62). What Said says at the conclusion of this chapter is, in fact, quite upbeat, and will explain the extraordinary output of this exiled, embattled Palestinian-American writer, "The *exilic* intellectual does not respond to the logic of the conventional but to the audacity of daring, and to representing change, to moving on, not standing still" (64).

III

A key and canonic writer in exile for Said is Joseph Conrad and it is fitting that his first sustained work, *Joseph Conrad and the Fiction of Autobiography* (1966) should be a study of the Polish émigré novelist. Based on his doctoral dissertation, it is one of many works he has devoted to Conrad. As Abidrahman A. Hussain has observed in his *Edward Said: Criticism and Society*, one reason for Said's obsessive interest in the novelist here and elsewhere could be that "the Polish exile's existential and artistic development prefigures in an uncanny sort of way the career of the Palestinian exile" (177). The connection between homelessness and modernity evident in Conrad's intellectual evolution is something that Said no doubt found fascinating and illustrative. For Said, there is something uncanny about Conrad. In "Between Worlds," a late essay collected in *Reflection on Exile and Other Literary and Cultural Essays*, he notes that "the moment one enters his writing the aura of dislocation, instability, and strangeness is unmistakable" (RE 554). But Conrad attracts Said too because the Polish writer is able to indict at least a few aspects of European imperialism and enlightenment and denigrate Europeans of some of their illusions about their empires in works such as *Heart of Darkness*. Such unmasking has become instructive to Said. To quote Hussain again:

Said's fascination with Conrad . . . involves a multiplicity of agendas: the homeless citizen of the world; the postcolonial critic of Eurocentrism and western imperialism;

the corrosive genealogist – the profoundly suspicious historian of ideas and their interconnections with the material realities of bodies, institutions, artifacts, and societies; the interpreter-historian of literary culture; the demystification of ideological epiphenomena – all of these different Saidian phenomena find specifically appropriate points of departure in Conrad's large body of writing. (22)

In *Culture and Imperialism* Said notes the limits of Conrad's criticism of imperial ventures in his novels and his obtuseness not only to some of the heads of this hydra-headed monster but also to the dehumanization of natives consequent to the empire's onset; nevertheless, Said's examination of Conrad's letters in his book on the novelist shows him that the "multiple tensions" (28) induced by exile were profoundly instructive for Conrad and led to the skeptical, ironic vision underlying his work.

Said made his presence felt in the world of theory at the height of the poststructuralist movement with his 1975 book, *Beginnings: Intention and Method*. It is easy to see now that this extended meditation on intentionality and creativity is essentially the work of an exilic intellectual who knows that he must begin again and again and construct his own world and impact on the one that he finds himself in so that it becomes more humane. As he acknowledges in an interview: "for me the notion of beginning also meant really the beginning of a fairly deep political and moral affiliation with the resurgence, after 1967, of the Palestinian movement" (PPC 167). In the book itself, self-reflexively, Said presents the act of beginning as an exercise ideally suited for the wanderer, whom he envisages as someone "going from place to place for his material, but remaining a man essentially *between* homes" (8). Beginning can involve rupture, since the beginner might have to depart from a familiar position and take a route that will lead in "unforeseen estrangement from the habitual" (9).

Said the critic also meditates about beginnings by drawing upon Georg Lukacs's theorizing of the novel as the genre of the "transcendentally homeless" (11). This is what the critic must also be, for Said feels that the critical vocation requires one to leave familiar positions and assay forth. The writer, Said argues in his Introduction to his book, aptly titled "Beginning Ideas" must be necessarily "nomadic . . . never in the same place . . . never always at the center" (23). Each act of writing, he implies, is a matter of reinventing the self and repositioning it in terms of not merely previous works on the subject but on the writer's own previous work. Beginning, he emphasizes self-reflexively once again, also leads to dispersion and difference, which is why this book is the most post-structuralist of all of Said's works. Indeed, in addition to Nietzsche, Foucault, and Derrida, he refers in it to Deleuze's notion of "nomadic centers, provisional structures that are never permanent, always straying from one set of information to another," (376), finding in the theorizing of the French intellectual a very apt metaphor for the methodology of his book.

Beginnings, one can see with hindsight, is a turning point in Said's *oeuvre*, for although embedded in the dense and hermetic world of the theory of the nineteen seventies, it is the work of the exile seeking to break free of conventional scholarship and criticism so that he can begin work in the realm of scholarship on projects that would allow him to meld his exilic obsessions with his increasing impatience with a west which preferred to not view the havoc wrought by contemporary imperialism's depredations. As he puts it in his conclusion to the book:

to make explicit what is usually allowed to remain implicit; to state that which, because of professional consensus, is ordinarily not stated or questioned; to begin with other men to take up writing dutifully at designated points and in a way dictated by tradition; above all, to write in and as an act of discovery rather than out of respectful obedience to established "truth" – these add up to the production of *Orientalism*. They summarize the method of beginning about which this book turns.

With these, the next three books that Said wrote, which we can for convenience label as the *Introduction Trilogy*, launched Said decisively into active engagement with Westernization's past and present traditions as far as the Middle East is concerned.

Orientalism (1978), the first book of the trilogy, and undoubtedly the most controversial as well as influential of Said's works, is a massive indictment of the domination of the discourse of Orientalism and an unremitting exposé of its connections to imperial power, which Said sees as stretching back to thousands of years. Gathering momentum in the nineteenth century, this discourse peaked by the mid-twentieth century, although it continues to thrive in the American imperium. In his Introduction to the work, where he talks about the personal dimension of his work, Said reveals that in his view his study is "an attempt to inventory the traces" upon him, "the Orientalist vision of the culture whose domination has been so powerful a factor in the life of all Muslims" (25). He also stresses the way the book grew out of an exilic state where he, a Palestinian in America, finds himself caught in a "web of racism, [and] cultural stereotypes" and subject to a "dehumanizing ideology" (23). Said confesses at the end of the introduction to his book that by "an almost inescapable logic" he has found himself writing the history of a "strange, secret sharer of Western anti-Semitism" (927). As a Palestinian living in New York, he can understand the xenophobia that had targeted Jews and sympathize with the surge of victimization that they went through in Europe in the recent past, although ironically he and his people were now the recipients of their aggressive and intolerant intent.

Like *Orientalism*, the two other books of the trilogy, *The Question of Palestine* (1979) and *Covering Islam: How the Media and Experts Determine How We See the Muslim World* (1981) are works that grew out of the exile's repeated trips back to his homeland and his renewed involvement in the plight of his people at a time when the region was in extraordinary turmoil. Prior to writing *Orientalism*, Said had spent a seasonal year in 1972-1973 in Beirut. Earlier, he had been particularly affected by the 1967 war that broke out in the region and upset by its consequences for Palestinians. From now on till the last few years of his life, Said would be intensely involved in the politics of Palestine and in touch with the leaders of the Palestinian diaspora. In other words, Said the elegant and urbane Columbia University professor, already an academic celebrity because of *Beginnings*, was observing from up close and on a regular basis the sufferings of his people in their camps and makeshift homes all over the Middle East. At the same time, while in the States, he was being repeatedly exposed to the media distortions and falsifications of Palestinian lives and witnessing the biased images broadcast regularly of Arabs as the perpetrator of terror. The three books of the *Introduction Trilogy* are, in effect, critiques of imperial misrepresentations and exposés of sanctioned scholarship, media stereotyping and the unholy alliance of intellectuals and *de jure* imperialists. Said castigates the insidious and persistent discourse of empire in these works and they are made keener by his ability to contrast the reality of

the suffering of dispersed Palestinians with their vilification in books and the media in Israel and the West.

Always in this trilogy, Said writes about the Middle East polemically. He knows that his mainly American audience must be demystified and disturbed. In an interview, he says pointedly that *The Question of Palestine* was "not meant to be written for an Arab audience, but a Western readership" to whom the reality of Palestinian suffering had been eclipsed by the portrayal of uninterrupted Jewish suffering. He emphasizes that he "wanted to give Americans a sense of what the dispossession and the alienation of Palestine meant . . . from the Palestinian point of view" (PPC 171) and evoke their sympathy so that they would consider giving his people the right to their land and their entitlements. His constituency, he explains, included the American Jewish community as well as American policymakers. The three books, therefore, are attempts to indict, reveal, but also inform, arouse, and evoke compassion amongst adversarial Americans by someone who believes that he can intervene strategically, taking advantage of his privileged but exilic status in the west.

The *Orientalism* trilogy was succeeded by *The World, the Text and the Critic* (1983), a book which illustrates splendidly the leverage Said tries to get from his location between two worlds for the causes he believed in so passionately. In the essays collected in the volume, he ranges over theory and criticism, western literature and orientalist discourse, and cultural work and hegemonic structures of representation. His intent, he declares, is to "affirm the connections between texts and the existential actualities of human life, politics, societies and events" and to focus on "the realities of power and authority" (5). Said's fascination with exiles, extraterritorial writers, and the intransigent, dislocated intellectual who has embraced a skeptical, ironic vision comes out clearly in two essays on Swift and the study of Conrad's mode of narration. His interest in traveling and theory is put to brilliant use in the first of two seminal essays he has written on travelling theory (the second one is collected in *Reflections on Exile*). The essays of the book also meditate on the ferment in theory and the state of radical criticism in the contemporary American academy. Said believes that the radical cosmopolitan intellectual must engage with the world, formidable though the forces arrayed against him may be. As far as he is concerned, "criticism cannot assume that its province is merely the text, not even the great literary text." It must see itself "with other discourse, inhabiting a much contested cultural space" (225). Not textual radicalism but "a sense of the greater stake in historical and political effectiveness" of intellectual work distinguishes this brilliant collection of essays. As he points out in "Secular Criticism," the introduction to the collection, the pieces collected in it were all written while he was working on the three books that constitute the *Orientalism* trilogy, and like them these essays are passionate and committed "to speak truth to power," to use one of his favorite phrases, although they are much more academic in intent. Like the works of the *Orientalism* trilogy though, they indicate that he wants his readers to recognize through his writing the nexus between knowledge and power, scholarship and politics and academic research and its worldly affiliations and consequences as a matter of urgency.

Perhaps the most passionate of Said's book, a work that is truly *sui generis*, and one in which he is most eloquent in making visible what his western readership tends not to see is *After the Last Sky: Palestinian Lives* (1986). This book consists of remarkable photographs by the Swedish photographer Jean Mohr and five eloquent

essays by Said spotlighting Palestinian lives under occupation in vivid prose. The photographs and the text focus on Palestinians as victims of people who were once victims. Said and Mohr depict the displaced and colonized Arabs trying to get on with their lives even under extremely difficult circumstances. What the duo manages to do also is make their readers look at Palestinians as people, for this is precisely what the western media will not let them do. To invoke the punning title of the third book of the trilogy, in "covering" the Arabs and Islam, they have "covered" it up! Israel has dispersed the Arabs and crippled them politically and financially in their territories, but because of the sympathy and support Jews have attracted after the holocaust, and the control Zionism exerts over the western media, Palestinian lives are occluded or misrepresented. In fact, the Arabs are almost always seen as terrorists and permanent threats to Israel and its Jewish population although the truth more often is that the majority of them are trying to get on with their lives in the most difficult of circumstances as well as they can. What Said has set out to do in this book, then, is "to deny the habitually simple, even harmful representations of Palestinians and to replace them with something more capable of capturing the complex reality of their experience" (ALS, 6). Drawing on his own intense feeling of being out of place, Said has collaborated with Mohr in this work to create something that is "unconventional, hybrid and fragmentary" in form as well as in content.

In *Edward Said at the Limits*, Mustapha Marrouchi calls *After the Last Sky*, Said's "most profound and moving essay on the 'figure of the exile'" (113). Marrouchi sees the book as "an essay of 'self-exploration' as well as an attempt to come to terms with the Palestinian historical experience" (114). To quote Marrouchi again: "The whole narrative conveys a sense of loss, invasion and rupture, both in a writer and a people from whom he in the United States is himself separated by time and distance" (117). Certainly, this is a book created by the exilic imagination. In writing it he has tried to bond with his people and explore the question of Palestinian identity and take recourse to his own memory and experience of the region. No wonder that as he wrote the book, he found himself "switching pronouns, [and moving] from 'we' to 'you' to 'they'" (6). Said's conclusion, on the other hand, stresses that he and his people are 'migrants and perhaps hybrids in, but not of, any situation in which' they find themselves" (163). The positive lesson Said has learned from this act of self-exploration is that every Palestinian has learned "to transform the mechanics of loss into a constantly postponed metaphysics of return" (150). Consequently, while the tone of the book can be wistful and somber on occasions it can also be upbeat too as it is at the end. Said then concludes that Palestinians can turn the rigors and agonies of exile into energy that can be creative and productive. As he puts it elliptically: "Fragments over wholes. Restless nomadic activity over the settlements of held territory. Criticism over resignation" (ibid).

The distinctively new note in Said's next book, *Culture and Imperialism*, is precisely the notion that there was, is and must be criticism over resignation just as there was, is, and will be complicity between knowledge and power, cultural work and imperial ventures, literature and colonization. What Said considers most important in this book is his spotlighting "the grand narratives of emancipation and enlightenment" that "mobilized people in the colonial world to rise up and throw off imperial domination" (CI xiii). This is why the book highlights resistance to imperialism. It is almost as if the Palestinian intifada movement that was going on at the time and his consequent emotions after the writing of *After the Last Sky* had led him to write a book

that could take him beyond the mindset of *Orientalism*. As he acknowledges in an interview, while *Orientalism* emphasized cultural formation in the west under imperialism, *Culture and Imperialism* goes a step farther to depict “resistances to it, and [underscore] the fact that imperialism *could* be overthrown and *was* – as a result of resistance and decolonization and nationalism” (PPC 268, emphases Said’s) For this reason the book incorporates the contrapuntal method of reading that can be seen now as one of Said’s legacies for criticism.

Bill Ashcroft and Pal Ahluwalia are thus justified in noting in their book, *Edward Said: the Paradox of Identity*, that *Culture and Imperialism* reveals the exile in a celebratory mood. They also suggest that such a book could only be the product of a critic who has a “plurality of vision” poised, as he is, between cultures. They note, too, that “the form of contrapuntal reading” that Said incorporates in *Culture and Imperialism* whereby he can connect the very English country estate depicted by Jane Austen in *Mansfield Park* to its owner’s plantations in the West Indies, reveal how imperial interests are embedded in English culture . . . Said has acknowledged in his 1998 essay, “Between Worlds” that studying in the United States and becoming an American academic allowed him “to think and write contrapuntally, using the disparate halves” of his experience (RE 562) and it is obvious that he makes good use of this technique in *Culture and Imperialism*.

Culture and Imperialism was followed by *Reflections on Exile* (if we bypass Said’s voluminous works on Palestine and his essays on music on this occasion). Essentially a collection of essays, it showcases his diverse interests and cultural work, reveals his literary affiliations and acknowledges his cultural heroes, indicts the writers he dislikes and the politics of knowledge and the persistence of Orientalism in our time. It shows the exilic condition can be a spur to creativity and emphasizes the necessity of defiance. Fascinating though this work is, it is best to conclude this survey of Said’s writings as productions of the exilic intellectual with a consideration of the posthumously published *Humanism and Democratic Criticism* (2004). This book, based on a series of lectures he first delivered at Columbia University in January 2000 and then in an expanded version at Cambridge University in 2003, can act as a coda to the work of the quintessential diaspora intellectual of our time, at least seen from our postcolonial perspective.

The first thing that needs to be said about *Humanism and Democratic Criticism* is that it is a work devoted to the idea of coexistence of cultures. In it Said the exilic intellectual brings his experience of years of living and teaching in America, his specialist interest in Comparative Literature, his expertise in teaching “The Humanities” at Columbia, his idealism about the university as the place for “the critical investigation of values, history, and freedom” (14), and his unwavering commitment to humanism as the guiding light of all intellectual work to bear on bringing disparate cultures together through what he calls “democratic criticism.” Said envisions in this book the possibility of an America where instead of the melodrama of the “clash of civilizations” enacted by a group of academics and neo-conservatives, there is movement towards reconciliation and reformation through critique, self-exploration, self-criticism, dialogue, contrapuntal movement and acceptance of each other’s similarities as well as differences. He opposes humanism to nationalism, which he accepts up to a point and even finds inevitable in many cases, but which he notes can also be crippling, overbearing and counterproductive. Said, it may be pointed out, is

probably influenced in taking up such a position by Tagore, whom he has quoted approvingly in many of his books.

On the other hand, Said is also wary of the "disengaged humanist" (38) who is Eurocentric, oblivious of the workings of ideology, and insular in tendency. Instead, Said recommends "the dialectics of opposites" (43), something he sees as being embraced by a world where the movement of populations across boundaries has promoted diasporic communities and placed disparate ethnic groups together. He suggests to his American audience that true humanism in our time would mean receptivity to "the non-European, genderized, decolonized, and decentered energies of our time" (67). He has no doubt that the greatest threats to "humanistic enterprise" all over the world are "religious enthusiasm" and "exclusivism" (51). Here, as elsewhere, he reaffirms his commitment to "secular criticism," to an expansive vision, "of catholic inclusiveness, of genuinely cosmopolitan or internationalist perspective, of intellectual curiosity" (53). Hectoring the "great traditions" obsession with "great books," "high seriousness," "mass civilization and minority culture," etc., he asks, "When will we stop allowing ourselves to think of humanism as a form of smugness and not an unsettling adventure in difference, in alternative traditions, in texts that need a new deciphering within a much wider context than has hitherto been given them?" (55) Opposing "the overmastering paradigm of globalization" (78), he gestures towards intellectual work whose horizon is the entitlement of peoples and nations excluded by narrow specialization and Euro- or American-centered, or for that matter nationalistic and sectarian, perspectives. Instead, he aligns himself with "younger humanists" who adopted perspectives that have made them "cosmopolitan, worldly, mobile," devoted to internationalism, small nations, "and marginalized peoples outside as well as inside the mask of the metropolitan center" (81).

Said concludes *Humanism and Democratic Humanism* with a chapter on "The Public Role of Writers and Intellectuals" where he expresses his dismay at "the generally hermetic, jargon-ridden, unthreatening combativeness" of mainstream "academic intellectual discourse" of recent debates (123). Here, too, he urges his audience to look beyond Eurocentric and purely academic intellectuals and exhorts them to take on adversarial positions and present "alternative narratives" and look for "fields of coexistence." In the conclusions of this posthumously published work one can see that in this work Said the Palestinian-American is addressing his "home" audience at Columbia University in the mode that he, Adorno-like, has made his true home. For, as we can now see with hindsight, seven years after his death, writing was his true home. As he says in his final sentences of the book:

I conclude with the thought that the intellectual's provisional home is the domain of an exigent, resistant, intransigent art into which, alas, one can neither retreat nor search for solutions. But only in that precarious exilic realm can one truly grasp the difficulty of what cannot be grasped and then go forth to try anyway.

IV

It may be worthwhile, in concluding, to contrast Said with some other leading diasporic intellectuals who shares his cosmopolitanism and have the kind of status in contemporary theory which he had when he was alive. In particular, Said's life work can be contrasted with that of Gayatri Chakravarty Spivak and Homi Bhabha. However,

it must be emphasized at the outset that the three of them, all resident in the United States, complemented each other in some ways and acknowledged the importance of each other's writings. When Said died, for example, Spivak and Bhabha were among the many leading postcolonial intellectuals who lamented the passing away of the man whose books and example, more than that of any other writer, established postcolonialism as an important locale of intellectual work all over the world.

But Said's position and writings are different from that of Spivak and Bhabha in ways that are instructive for the student of postcolonial theory. For one thing, unlike them, he is an exilic intellectual because he is truly the product of a diaspora; settling abroad and embracing cosmopolitanism was for him determined by history and not by choice. He has also been a lifelong activist for his people; not for him the pure good of theory or radical chic. In his books and essays he has embraced everything from classical music and opera and philology to belly dancing and Tarzan of the Apes; in other words, his range of interests, his "worldliness" – to use one of his favorite words – sets him apart from Spivak and Bhabha who move mostly within the realm of theory. Perhaps because of this reason, while making use of theory, he has frowned on the use of jargon and refused difficulty and obscurity, and elliptical expressions (*Beginnings* is an exception in this respect). Moreover, towards the end of his life, he displayed explicitly something that had been implicit in his early work: his commitment to humanism and his readiness to be eclectic in his work. He has never been bothered about the hobgoblin of consistency either. A couple of minutes ago we heard him decry "the generally hermetic, jargon-ridden, unthreatening combativeness" of contemporary theory in a manner that suggests that he would have massive reservations about the style of the two Indian exponents of postcolonialism and their existence at rarefied heights. Indeed, Said's style, except perhaps in his first two books, is always accessible, insistent and even rhetorical – he intends to be persuasive and is not interested in splitting hairs or arguing in a logic-chopping or elliptical manner. His tone is passionate, polemical, and persuasive; he does not intend to be playful and has no time for punning endlessly or using circuitous routes to establish his points.

One is also reminded here of the critiques of postcolonial textual radicals by writers such as Aijaz Ahmed, Arif Dirlik and E. San Juan, Jr. Ahmed, for example, uses his 1995 essay, "The Politics of Postcoloniality" to lament "the globalised condition of postcoloniality" which seems to be upheld in the works of a Spivak or a Bhabha (Ahmed 288). True, Ahmed is critical of Said too for not being sufficiently historicist, or dare one say, Marxist, and of overemphasizing postcolonialism as a binary of colonialism, in his essay, "Orientalism and After: Ambivalence and Metropolitan Location in the Work of Edward Said" in his major work, *In Theory: Classes, Nations, Literatures*. Nevertheless, even Ahmed, one of the most rigorous of Marxist theorists writing about literary theory, it can be noted, began his essay with an expression of solidarity with Said's work on Palestine and acknowledges his participation in the resistance movement of his people. Dirlik for his part, is caustic about "Third World intellectuals" in the "First World academy" of the ilk of Spivak and Bhabha and sees these postcolonial critics as complicit with late capitalism in his trenchant essay, "The Postcolonial Aura: Third World Criticism in the Age of Global Capitalism." But Dirlik, too, has written with great understanding and appreciation of a text like *After the Last Sky* and in the essay that I have just mentioned he has almost nothing to say against Said's position although he is quite severe about Spivak and Bhabha. In other words,

even the most abrasive critics of postcolonial intellectuals and their privileged locations are not able to discount Said's work or castigate him as frivolous or elitist or under the spell of global capitalism or complicit with its late manifestation.

The Philippine-American critic E. San Juan, Jr. has recorded in a recent essay titled "Postcolonial Dialogics: Edward Said Versus Antonio Gramsci" that recent postcolonial criticism has been moving away from Said. This may be the case; it is hard to keep up with the latest postcolonial fashions in Bangladesh and I plead guilty to not knowing much of the latest trends. But San Juan notes that this swerve away could be caused because of Said's "almost obsessive engagement with the global power of imperialist or corporate finance capital (both European and US), with the tension between secular and religious ideologies, with varying nationalisms, and so on, no longer preoccupy postcolonialists" (1). Also, these things do matter for us in this part of the world and surely do to every Palestinian and progressive people in the Middle East. San Juan, Jr. himself is quite unsparing of many aspects of Edward Said's work in the paper, once again largely from a Marxist perspective, but his endorsement of the late and forever exemplary figure in his conclusion is worth repeating:

Overall Said, despite a resort to a singular brand of militant humanism, provides a critical perspective on the complicity of academic discourse with predatory and neocolonial attacks on people of color everywhere, and on the value of popular-democratic ideals of democratic sovereignty and egalitarian community that can reconcile Europe/the Atlantic world with the revolutionary movements of the 'postcolonial' subalterns around the globalized planet. (13)

It is of course fair to say – as do these three critics implicitly or explicitly-- that Said was not engaged with Karl Marx's work in any significant way. It could be argued that the author of *Capital* should have been an ideal exemplar for an exilic intellectual like Said who uses his unique position in the society in which he had relocated to show its propensity to building empires and oppressing whole nations. It will also not be unfair to note that he has only engaged with postcolonial literature marginally. Certainly, even E. R. James and Fanon get minimal attention in his work compared to the space he habitually allots to, say, Adorno or Auerbach.

But surely Edward Said has given us more than enough ideas and left sufficient critiques to help us contend with neoimperialists and combat hegemony and contend with globalizations's latest postures. No one can deny that he has taught us passionately and persistently to unmask misrepresentations and has encouraged us to write counternarratives and shown us how to narrate and create alternative histories. And, of course, he has demonstrated how to spearhead an oppositional movement without compromising one's position from within the academy. Truly, Edward Said has given us a lot to be thankful for; he had made out of exile and his cosmopolitan life a body of works that is still indispensable for all of us in the decolonized parts of Asia, Africa, and the Americas at this juncture of world history.

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The Confessional Poetry of Robert Lowell: Artistry or Accuracy?

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Abstract: The "grace of accuracy" ("Epilogue" *Day by Day* 127) serves as a credo for Robert Lowell's art and for confessional poetry in general; it is the art of describing experiences in words, it is the artist's reward of love, both to the art and to the fact. The cardinal force behind this artistic intention in writing even the most confessional of poems of *Life Studies* is Lowell's formal mastery of New Criticism stimulated by T.S. Eliot. Tellingly, Lowell broke away from the culpability of making confessional poetry a by-word for limp infatuation, and hence restored his position as an avant-garde poet of the twentieth century American poetry. Poetry, for him, serves simultaneously as a snapshot of life and an interpretation of that picture – a record of fact and a figurative design laden with significance. This paper deals with Lowell's encountering the paradoxical dilemma of self and self-representation in his confessional poems through which he created his poetic identity and wheelingly added a feather in the artistry of poetry per se.

A few months before his death, Robert Lowell assesses his own canon of works by saying: "the thread that strings it together is my autobiography, it is a small-scale *Prelude*" ("After Enjoying" 114). But what makes him the pre-eminent American poet of the twentieth century is something deeper than autobiography. It is the artistic personality that is exposed in his rhythms and his metaphors, his language and his thought. Even when he seems most directly confessional, it is Lowell's artistry – which is also to say, his artificiality – that makes him a great poet. Lowell himself acknowledged that even the effect of total honesty in *Life Studies* is just that – an effect, based on deliberate manipulation. In a comprehensive interview given to the *Paris Review* two years after the publication of *Life Studies*, he said:

You leave out a lot, and emphasise this and not that. Your actual experience is a complete flux. I've invented facts and changed things, and the whole balance of the poem was something invented. So there's a lot of artistry, I hope, in the poems . . . the reader was to believe he was getting the *real* Robert Lowell. (*Collected Prose* 246)

Hence the poetry of Lowell "is the result not of accuracy but the illusion of accuracy" – poems intended to mimic reality for the purpose of some type of unearthing (Bidart 234-238).

Robert Lowell's long effort at self-interpretation, rather than only a Freudian therapeutic project, demonstrates his commitment to memory and his struggle to preserve it. During his poetic career, Lowell would recognize repeatedly the force of memory in his poetry and in his life. His poems are found to weave as well as illuminate a multifaceted matrix of the personal, the familial, and occasionally the medical. Lowell's biographers and critics, hence, have argued that his personal and

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familial details provide the potency and energy for the poet's stylistic accomplishments. While Doreski construes that Lowell attempts to "move [his] poetry as close as possible to his experience" for aesthetic development (xix), Yezzi considers that such employment of apparently personal details within the poem produces authenticity and "inject[s] new life" into the poem (17-19), allowing Lowell's commentary to possess an air of authority and verisimilitude. Indeed, what gives the poems of *Life Studies* and *Day by Day* their enduring value is predominantly their honesty about Lowell's personal past where the poet's experiences are not merely revealed but shaped, through rhetoric and rhythm and tone, into works of art.

This obviously suggests his writing process, a recent concept of autobiographical act, through which the original experiences are transformed into art via imagination. Memory is "an imaginative reconstruction, or construction, built out of the relation of our attitude towards a whole active mass of organized past reactions or experience" (Bartlett 213). Moreover, Lowell's poems are not "intended to be revelatory but to be exploratory," and poems such as "Memories of West Street and Lepke," "Man and Wife," and "To Speak of Woe That is in Marriage" exemplify the artistry of Robert Lowell that is commonly mistaken for confession (Travisano 44). These poems not only challenge the confessional label through movement but also through the artistry employed, illustrated through the changing voice and illusion of autobiographical representation. At the same time, the primary motive for treating private subjects in these poems is more to cause an aesthetic effect than to evoke ethical or therapeutic effect; "*Life Studies* just takes a new approach to his old goal of creating a self-sufficient work of art" (Kirsch 34).

Confessional poetry, as defined by Diane Middlebrook, has clearly identified characteristics and a distinctive voice that is understood to be the voice of the poet himself:

[Confessional poetry] investigates the pressures on the family as an institution regulating middle-class private life, primarily through the mother. Its principle themes are divorce, sexual infidelity, childhood neglect, and the mental disorders that follow from deep emotional wounds received early in life. A confessional poem contains the first-person speaker, "I," and always seems to refer to a real person in whose actual life real episodes have occurred that cause actual pain, all represented in the poem. (Travisano 39-40)

While Lowell's poems frequently deal with such subject matter, the first person "I" is not necessarily representative of Lowell himself. The inspiration drawn from real life events creates "the illusion that the poem is not art but a report on life, that the reader is getting 'the real Robert Lowell'" (Bidart 234-238). Hence, the label is, at its best, problematic, and although still used loosely by some general commentators, has been widely discredited by critics and scholars. For example, Elizabeth Bishop's distaste for lyric verse which "deals with the facts and intimate mental and physical experiences of the poet's own life" is clear in an early letter to Lowell when she writes "this suffering business . . . is so inevitable there's no use talking about it, and that in itself it has no value, anyway" (Bishop 170-71). Her professional nonchalance speaks for one principle at work, the integrity of art, in my reading of Lowell's autobiographical poetry. Jeffrey Gray assures this integrity of art while writing autobiographical poems in "Memory and Imagination in *Day by Day*" saying that the "poet and reader realize

memory never did exist apart from imagination, and that paralysis of art by fact was a fear, never a reality" (Axelrod, *The Critical Response* 232).

The opening of "Memories of West Street and Lepke" (*Life Studies*) seems to be a direct depiction of the genuine daily life of Robert Lowell. Beginning the poem with the illusion of a commentary on the actual life of the poet himself allows Lowell to lay the foundation for regression into a half-invented past, without compromising the appearance of truth, in order to explore a simulated personal history in relationship to the larger political and social movements of the time. Lowell's poetic material here is less a return to the past to remember what happened in search of time lost, or to a familiar location to restore the person the subject had been when there previously, than a discursive and symbolic narrative of now created as the speaking "I" revises conscious and unconscious matter in his present perspective. Recalling and imagining are both voluntary and involuntary, conjoint creative activities which support the poet's representation, or making out to be, of that past to fit into the narrative, or "plot." In the same way, "Memories of West Street and Lepke" mingles the imagined with the remembered, as Lowell exercises his prerogative to create and revise meanings. In fact, the poem helps Lowell to create a mythic tale of himself – a tale based on a significant real life gesture, of a romantic figure who, though closely identified through the Lowell-dynasty with the ruling establishment, comes to mean much more to "the average American" than any remote figurehead.

The poem was conceived in a robust Lowellian coupling of art with life; Wordsworth is its godfather, in his frequent references to the creative crux that challenges him to fill the shifting "vacancy" caused by gaps in memory, so as to integrate at least two different selves. For example, Wordsworth meditates in *The Prelude* Book II (1805-6 version):

Of all mankind, who does not sometimes wish
For things which cannot be, who would not give,
If so he might, to duty and to truth
The eagerness of infantine desire?
A tranquillizing spirit presses now
On my corporeal frame: so wide appears
The vacancy between me and those days
Which yet have such self-presence in my mind,
That, sometimes, when I think of it, I seem
Two consciousnesses, conscious of myself
And of some other Being. (28-33)

"Memories of West Street and Lepke" is a complex narrative poem that returns to the past to join past, present, and future, and in so doing, creates a vacancy between poet and the persona. The poem illustrates, as Wordsworth puts it, the "eagerness of infantine desire" giving way to, but not being overcome by, the more mature sensitiveness, or "tranquillizing spirit" of adulthood. Lowell's work subjects both selves to some criticism, and probably has that Book II passage, in general and in some details, among its memories. Lowell's poem views public activity from high moral ground commanding long ranging perspectives. But the vantage point has first to be won by selection of the fictive plot from documentary-seeming autobiographical memories used for meditative self-examination. Lowell converted to Roman

Catholicism in 1940 with the zeal that is supposed to fire all converts; but this burned itself out and by 1946, the year after he tried to murder his wife Jean Stafford, he was apostate and in the throes of divorce. He registered for the draft after America entered World War II in December 1941, received his call-up notice in July 1943, expected to be rejected because of poor sight, but learned he was to be inducted on 8 September. On 7 September, he sent an open letter to President Roosevelt, with a "Declaration of Personal Responsibility" attached of about one thousand words, was arraigned on 13 October and sentenced to a year and a day for refusing the draft, not for conscientious objection as the poem claims. He spent a few days in a cell next to Czar Louis Lepke in New York's West Street Jail before being moved to a correctional center at Danbury, Connecticut for five months. Finally, it is after Lowell's mother's death in 1954, his doctors suggested that as a therapeutic measure he write down what he could remember of his childhood (Wallingford 12); so Lowell began writing a series of prose reminiscences which would eventually become the basis for *Life Studies*. There is much to deprecate and enjoy among the story's ironies.

These are the tranquilized *Fifties*,
and I am forty. Ought I to regret my seedtime?
I was a fire-breathing Catholic C.O.,
and made my manic statement,
telling off the state and president, and then
sat waiting sentence in the bull pen
beside a Negro boy with curlicues
of marijuana in his hair. (12-19)

Lowell's insertion of the word "manic" gives the impression to the reader that his "Declaration of Personal Responsibility" was composed while he was suffering from madness. But neither Hamilton's nor Mariani's biographies on Lowell give any proof that the poet experienced any symptom of mania at that time. Moreover, Lowell was not, in actual sense, a C.O., because the C.O. position was legal since it meant a person refused to serve in any war for reasons of conscience and was eligible for alternative service in civilian public service camps. Most strikingly, Lowell's politely written official letter could scarcely be called a "telling off" of the President.

An American whose family traditions, like your own, have always found their fulfilment in maintaining, through responsible participation in both the civil and the military services, our country's freedom and honor.

I have the honor, Sir, to inscribe myself, with sincerest loyalty and respect, your fellow-citizen,
Robert Traill Spence Lowell, Jr. (*Collected Prose* 368)

The association of mania and Lowell's refusal to join World War II, in a subtle descriptive context, suggest a contented caress attained at some cost to richness of feeling and recollection. At the same time, it creates a vacancy between the poet and the persona and engages imagination to play in the plot.

However, "Memories of West Street and Lepke" freely travels through time and space. Without a change in tone, one moves out of the time spent "waiting sentence in the bull pen" into the midst of the prison sentence itself" (17).

I was so out of things, I'd never heard
of the Jehovah's Witness.
"Are you a C.O.?" I asked a fellow jailbird.
"No," he answered, "I'm a J.W."
He taught me the "hospital tuck,"
and pointed out the T-shirted back
of *Murder Incorporated's* Czar Lepke,
there piling towels on a rack,
or dawdling off to his little segregated cell full
of things forbidden the common man: (36-45)

Here, realism, provided through dialogue, disguises the social commentary contained within the lines of the poem as confession. Because of Lowell's careful representation of reality in the beginning of the poem, subsequent presentation of events is perceived as truth. The focus of the poem is not to reveal feelings of responsibility for the imprisonment but to call attention to Lowell's observed hypocrisy of the justice system during the 1950s. Rejection to massacre for one's country is thought more of a crime than cold-blooded murder, established by the luxuries Lepke is provided that the speaker is refused. According to Hamilton's 1980 talk with Jim Peck, a long time anti-war activist, "Lowell was in a cell next to Lepke, you know, Murder Incorporated, and Lepke says to him: 'I'm in for killing. What are you in for?' 'Oh, I'm in for refusing to kill'" (Hamilton 91). It is not difficult to envision Lowell saying such a thing, keenly conscious of the ironies and paradoxes of state statute. Lepke and the *Fifties* President Eisenhower, both Chief Executives, share an identity, a symbol of at least one aspect of American public life. Lepke has organized, bureaucratized, depersonalized individual murder; America, in the "tranquillised Fifties," has done the same thing with its power to annihilate mankind.

Similarly, "Man and Wife" challenges the confessional label by presenting an allegedly pragmatic description tied with persistent shift from beginning to end. Because "the confessional model carries strong connotations of hierarchy and stasis," the action taking place within the poem should be fixed in time and space in order to accurately be categorized as a confessional poem (Travisano 57). However, "Man and Wife" shifts both temporally and spatially from start to end. In the outset of the poem, the reader comes across the couple in the bedroom, lying in a condition of drug-induced numbness as life continues around them. The action taking place between the couple is conveyed through the world around them, and the harsh description of the external world reflects the battle occurring internally between the two characters of the poem. Although the mode of the poem is essentially realistic, there are a number of local metaphors to intensify the external and internal effects. The setting and the background are vigorously colored by the sifter of tranquilized numbness through which the poet sees them. The opening lines, which in effect, if not purposefully parody Donne's "The Goodness Rising," owe much of their power to just this kind of distortion:

Tamed by *Miltown*, we lie on Mother's bed;
the rising sun in war paint dyes us red;
in broad daylight her gilded bed-posts shine,
abandoned, almost Dionysian.
At last the trees are green on Marlborough Street,

blossoms on our magnolia ignite
 the morning with their murderous five days' white. (1-7)

The sun is dressed for battle, and the white of the magnolia blossoms have lost their innocence, paralleling the hostility and loss of love present in the bedroom scene and intensifying the death-in-life existence of the couple. But the condition which causes the poet to see the sun as a feared savage and the white magnolia blossoms as "murderous" is defined by a larger metonymic sequence of alliterating nouns: "Miltown," "Mother's bed," "Marlborough Street," "our magnolia." In fact, the external movement in the beginning of the poem gives the reader a sign that something has occurred to alter the force of the relationship from one of closeness to antagonism.

The poem continues to move, although the focus of the action shifts from the external world to the internal mind of the speaker.

All night I've held your hand,
 as if you had
 a forth time faced the kingdom of the mad-
 its hackneyed speech, its homicidal eye-
 and dragged me home alive . . . (8-12)

The speaker realizes that she has saved him from himself but seems to have no emotional response to her sacrifice. Despite the fact that the couple is physically close and they are holding hands, there is an emotional distance between them which seems to be the result of the man's repeated episodes of madness. His acknowledgment of her as his savior does not elicit a response of remorse or guilt but propels him back in time through "the partial recovery of a half-forgotten memory" (Travisano 51):

you were in your twenties, and I,
 once hand on glass
 and heart in mouth,
 outdrank the Rahvs in the heat
 of Greenwich Village, fainting at your feet - (14-18)

The introduction of the memory not only provides further evidence that a drastic change has occurred within the relationship but also serves "as [a] window onto wide-ranging moments across times, cultures, and versions of the self" (Travisano 58). The speaker now recollects the night, so unlike the "homicidal" one, when he first met her. Again the focus is on setting rather than on emotion. The landscape is absolutely contradictory to that of Marlborough Street: it is the roaring, boiling intoxicating, left-wing Greenwich Village of Philip Rahv, the editor of *Partisan Review*. Lowell ironically calls to mind his ex-self, "hand on glass/and heart in mouth," longing to drink to the brim the Rahvs and "fainting" in front of his would be wife, the Southern female intellectual whose "shrill invective" criticizes the traditional values of the Old South. The flashback allows the reader to see the man in another place and time when he was on the verge of falling in love, as opposed to, the verge of insanity.

The reader is thrust out of the memory when the man was "too boiled and shy/and poker-faced to make a pass" into his present state of despair (19-20). The promise of what the relationship might hold, as conveyed through the memory, is lost, and the

suggested through the images of nature in the beginning of the poem is

Now twelve years later, you turn your back,
 Sleepless, you hold
 your pillow to your hollows like a child;
 your old fashioned tirade –
 loving, rapid, merciless –
 breaks like the Atlantic Ocean on my head. (23-28)

The return in the final section evokes a paradox. The speaker in the opening of the poem is seen "All night" holding hands of his "Petite," but as he retreats to the same bedroom at the end of the poem the wife is seen turning back, "Sleepless" in the bed. The sea-water-image in the poem, the imagery of the sea-wave breaking against the speaker's head, marks a turn-off point. The revitalizing water awakens the poet from his Malraux-induced indolence, a lethargy in which he envies the Thyrsus-like bed-romance, and carries him back to reality. Moreover, the resentment of the external world in the opening of the poem is clearly stated in the return to the bedroom scene. The return to the present completes the movement of the poem, resulting in a resolution of the larger thematic significance that is the human experience.

In addition to the artistic technique of the manipulation of time and realistic detail, Lowell offers further support of perceived authenticity masking artistry through the management of voice. Lowell introduces, in place of himself as the "I," a "she" first person speaker in "To Speak of Woe That is in Marriage," hence opposing Middlebrook's claim that a confessional poem "contains" the poet as the "real person in whose actual life real episodes have occurred that cause actual pain, all represented in the poem" (qtd. in Travisano 39-40). It should be noted that Lowell had written several poems spoken by an assumed feminine persona. Marie de Medici in "The Daughter" and the beleaguered woman in "To Speak of Woe That is in Marriage" are two examples from *Life Studies*. Albeit according to this description of the confessionalism, "To Speak of Woe That is in Marriage" may not fit into the criteria of a confessional poem since the "I" of the poem is clearly not Lowell, and the implied pain as a result of what is occurring in the poem does not belong to Lowell, yet the subject of the poem seems to conform to Middlebrook's criteria for a confessional work where the use of a female speaker illustrates artistry in action as Lowell utilizes experimentation of voice to move away from the "public, prophetic voice" of his early writing (Hendley 89-91).

"To Speak of Woe That is in Marriage" does not rely on the "incorporation of personal detail for emotional effect" but rather provides details of a dysfunctional marriage in order to provide commentary on the destructive nature of personal relationships. Lowell's examination of domestic relationships through the voice of a female is a technique of invention that allows to safely uphold the idea that "men's and women's roles and prerogatives are radically different," criticizing the reality of gender roles in the 1950s and 1960s (Hendley 112-113). The handling of voice serves as a medium for social commentary and allows Lowell to project his "illusion of honesty and seriousness and responsibility" (Yezzi 20-21).

In "Shifting Colors" in the third section of the "Day by Day" sequence, Lowell repeats his "description without significance, transcribed verbatim by my eye" and

longs for something higher: "I would write only in response to the gods" (*Day by Day* 119-20). In the poem, we see the conflict between imagination and memory, between creation and description, between the painting and the photograph, all of these framed by the anxiety of representation. The poem opens with the aged pastoral poet (Lowell's self-image) fishing "until the clouds turn blue,/weary of self-torture, ready to paint/lilacs or confuse a thousand leaves,/as landscapists must" (119). The speaker is trying to respond to the phenomenal world with a visual artist's trained eye, although the pun in "landscapists" alerts us to look out for rhetorical escapism. He sees and transcribes natural facts into words, confusing the facts with metaphor just as the landscape painter must confuse (or muddle) the leaves.

I seek leave unimpassioned by my body,
I am too weak to strain to remember, or give
recollection the eye of a microscope. I see
horse and meadow, duck and pond,
universal consolatory
description without significance,
transcribed verbatim by my eye. (*Day by Day* 119-20)

Is seeing truly ("I see"), but without feeling ("I seek . . . too weak to strain"), a failure of the imagination ("description without significance")? Moreover, "transcribed verbatim" implies a question that worries the speaker in "Epilogue" – the idea that the writing is mere reproduction and yet the consciousness that it is not possible to transcribe verbatim. Can we say "what happened?" We can only "pray for the grace of accuracy." By way of an answer, "Shifting Colors" offers the conundrum that closes the poem:

This is not the directness that catches
everything on the run and then expires –
I would write only in response to the gods,
like Mallarmé who had the good fortune
to find a style that made writing impossible. (*Day by Day* 119-20)

"This" we must take to mean this writing, "without significance," the writing a poet must do who has neither the strength to remember nor the capacity to represent what is before him, but insists on mediation, indirectness, on not merely recording. The ageless "white horse" in the second stanza may seem to objectify feeling, even unspecified emotion, but it is not merely an emblem. The painter or poet of the first order respects the material existence of other forms of being, aware that existence in form itself is significant. In total abasement, he "shifts" his colors, deserts his old standards of realism, the image, actual human speech, and surrenders to the abstract enemy.

"Shifting Colors" – its title refers to changing aesthetic allegiances in the wavering persona. The "I" admits a yearning to shift the direction, burden and responsibility of his writing. However, unable to settle on an explanation of the best way of writing, but certain in his rejection of what has been tried and found wanting, the poet opts for writing "in response to the gods/like Mallarmé . . ." Stéphane Mallarmé, the French Symbolist, was probably the immediate precursor for the notion of fictive impersonality pursued in poetic practice by Eliot and Pound. This was systematically and theatrically

advanced by Eliot as the cherished idea of separation between "the man who suffers and the mind which creates" and the transfiguration of personality on the page through writing. Mallarmé's "Devant le papier, l'artiste se fait" (faced with his writing paper, the artist manufactures himself) would be a rhetorical anathema to this "I," the real Robert Lowell, verse autobiographer (*Correspondence* 1.59). But Lowell admits the fact of his "verse autobiography" saying that "My verse autobiography sometimes fictionalizes plot and particular" ("Note," *Selected Poems* vii) and "there's no truth in this processing of words" ("Ten Minutes," *Day by Day* 108). The feigned inability, or unwillingness, of the poet's mind to separate fact from fiction, or myth ("sometimes fictionalizes"), is at the center of the self-restorative hope Lowell has for creating his poetic identity. He returns frequently to his family tale to form a poetic identity to more than divulge a personal life, to present an order and meaning in a fictive life not accessible in the inevitably wobbly and imperfect raw material that has existed.

Mallarmé, as Lowell would have known, was pointing to the disjunction between language and the apparent experience it signifies: "languages are imperfect because multiple; the supreme language is missing" (*Selected Prose, Poems, Essays and Letters* 38). As if in response to the critical theorists who claim that language can only defer expression of experience, Lowell's stylistic "shifts" reverse the process and incessantly bring his poetry into the present and establish the "endurance of art."

We are poor passing facts,
warned by that to give
each figure in the photograph
his living name. ("Epilogue," *Day by Day* 127)

Poetry thus serves simultaneously as a photograph of life and an interpretation of that photograph – a record and a figurative design laden with meaning.

Though the work of Robert Lowell is frequently labeled as confessional, the realism contained within the poems is no more than a crafty reproduction of reality for the intent of aesthetic effect. In Adam Kirsch's view, "just as Marx was not a Marxist, so Lowell was not a confessional poet" (33). What gives the poems of *Life Studies* their enduring value is not their honesty about Lowell's personal life, but their artistic form; the poet's experiences are not simply revealed but shaped, through rhetoric, rhythm, symbol and tone, into works of art. Throughout the later poems of Lowell, there is a great deal of tinkering with reality, resulting in an artistic accomplishment that is often mistaken for a form of revelation, but is really an incredible accomplishment of creativity and invention. Since Lowell's "best poetry is personal, not in the way of a diary entry, but in the way of a work of art," it expresses him essentially but indirectly, in the mode of artistic self-criticism, not self-analysis (Kirsch 60). Obviously, the Romantic miasma created by too close connection between Lowell's art and life makes it difficult for the reader to see the art clearly. If his poetry is seen today as only about Robert Lowell, or primarily about Lowell writing poetry, it is partly Lowell's fault for subverting our readings, seeming to minimize the part imagination plays in the tension of his work's dynamic energies, with pre-emptive strikes such as "My verse autobiography" (Headnote to *Selected Poems*: 1976), "I want to make/something imagined, not recalled" ("Epilogue," *Day by Day* 127), and the "jumble" that gives "my simple autobiography a plot" ("Unwanted," *Day by Day* 121). Yet we need to remember also the shrewd dissimulation in the hope that "the reader was to believe he was getting the real Robert Lowell."

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Using Graphic Novels to Teach English Majors in Bangladeshi Universities

ATM Sajedul Huq

Abstract: *The paper examines the existing misconceptions about graphic novels and explains how this medium of art can be used to teach graduate students majoring in English Literature. Graphic novels can be a great aid for students who are pursuing degrees in English, yet struggling with language acquisition. The lack of vocabulary is one stumbling block which can be averted by the illustrations of a graphic novel that both exemplify the context and contextualize the narrative. The inclusion of graphic novels in syllabi across the globe, the paper argues, can be replicated in our local universities.*

What most educators in our country are completely unaware of is that Graphic Novel and Comic Book studies are not only established courses in most universities in North America and Europe but also an integral part of the K12 curriculum in the USA and Canada. Japan and most Southeast Asian countries are way ahead of the western world in that they have been using 'Manga' in education for decades. Although today's graphic novels are a recent phenomenon and the term itself was not coined till 1978 by Will Eisner, it is generally accepted that the comic book movement in the 1960s led to the existence of graphic novels as we know them at the hands of writers who were looking to use the comic book format to address more mainstream or adult topics.

This particular way of storytelling is nothing new and has been used in various forms for centuries – early cave drawings, hieroglyphics, and medieval tapestries can be thought of as stories told in pictures. However, though the term 'graphic novel' is now generally used to describe any book in a comic format that resembles a novel in length and narrative development, Gorman (2003) describes graphic novels as an original book-length story, either fiction or nonfiction, published in comic book style or a collection of stories that have been published previously as individual comic books. Comics, in production, publication, and consumption, are essentially serials. Graphic novels, on the other hand, act as monographs and serve as distinct volumes within a collection; anthologies of comics can serve the same function.

There is some debate as to this name even today, as many graphic novels are actually works of non-fiction (not technically novels) or comic strip series collected into one bound copy (Gravett, 2005). Graphic novels tell a single, self-contained story with more pages than a single issue comic, usually written and/or drawn by the same writer or artist. However, there is room for overlap between the two forms; both *Watchmen* and *The Sandman*, for example, are graphic novels originally published in serial comic book form. Though a comic and a graphic novel are told via the same format, officially called *sequential art*: the combination of text, panels, and images, there is one major difference. Whereas comic books may stretch a story out to about

thirty pages, graphic novels can be as long as six hundred pages and are published and bound in book form with quality paper as opposed to comics.

Because many teachers in Bangladesh are quite unfamiliar with graphic novels, upon discovering that graphic novels are actually comic books (though far more serious), they very often tend to suffer from the following misconceptions, that *comics and graphic novels are for children, they are all full of violence and explicit sex, are only about superheroes, are for reluctant readers, and that they aren't "real" books.* It is also true that many people tend to confuse the term "graphic novel" with a genre. They fail to realize that "graphic novel" is a term that describes a **medium**, not a **genre**. And just like any other medium, graphic novels have a variety of genres, such as:

- Fiction
- Nonfiction
- Mystery/thriller
- Fantasy
- Memoir
- Historical Fiction
- Adventure/Action
- Superhero (Heroes Journey)
- Adaptations of traditional or classic literature

While most people in our country, if asked, will admit they have no idea what a graphic novel is, they will be able to name at least one or two comic books, like *Archie* or *Tintin*. Most children will be able to identify at least one superhero. It is no surprise that they equate the format with children's books. Just like audio books, videos, and television, sequential art is simply another way of telling a story, with different demands on the reader, and is not a genre. People tend to view graphic novels as a genre and this is why they may assume they are the same as comics and perhaps dismiss them with this in mind (Brenner, 2004). While comic books may have started off as no more than modern day morality plays about the war between good and evil, they have evolved.

Art Spiegelman's *Maus: A Survivor's Tale* (1986) was arguably the first graphic novel to reach a wide audience, including people who were not already comic book fans, when it was first published in 1986. Its mixture of aesthetic quality and narrative sophistication established an audience for practitioners of so-called "adult" graphic novels and also for autobiographical storytelling in a sequential art style (Gluibizzi, 2010). It was only after *Maus*, based on Spiegelman's father's survival of Auschwitz, went on to win the Pulitzer Prize in 1992 that graphic novels began to be accepted as 'real' literature.

In 2006, The Royal Society of Literature, Britain's oldest literary society whose fellowship boasts some of the most eminent playwrights, novelists and poets in the world (Tom Stoppard, Seamus Heaney, Harold Pinter, and Doris Lessing are among the current fellows), devoted the front cover of the annual RSL magazine to two graphic novelists, Posy Simmonds and Raymond Briggs, who were made fellows of the society - the first graphic novelists to receive the honor. Neil Gaiman, winner of the 1991 World Fantasy Award for the *Sandman* issue, "A Midsummer Night's Dream," is listed in the *Dictionary of Literary Biography* as one of the top ten living post-modern

writers. Erudite, allusive, complex and ambitious, *The Sandman* is undoubtedly the finest writing the mainstream comic book industry has ever seen. This epic comic series is a revolutionary series that helped establish comic books as a serious literary format. Comics finally emerged as a medium worthy of study in and of itself, with the establishment of both undergraduate and graduate programs in comics at the Savannah College of Art and Design (Sturm, 2001).

Today it has become commonplace to hear critics from the literary and arts worlds celebrating graphic novels as accomplishing critical reorientation of their respective fields. Meanwhile, comics scholarship has taken off from within the comics' world, with Will Eisner's *Comics and Sequential Art: Principles and Practices* and Scott McCloud's *Understanding Comics: The Invisible Art*, both comics works that engage academic readership of the medium.

Graphic novels have today not only earned their place as a respected literary form, but are now the strongest sector of growth in publishing in the US. It is interesting to note that some of the better-known graphic novels are published not by comics companies at all but by mainstream publishing houses (Pantheon, for example) and have put up mainstream sales numbers. *Persepolis*, for example, Marjane Satrapi's story which relates the events of the Islamic Revolution in Iran through the eyes of the author as a young girl, has sold almost 500,000 copies worldwide so far.



We have only to look at our own students in Dhaka to realize this undeniable truth. One would be hard put to find more than a handful of students in any university or college who do not have a Facebook account or own a cell-phone. A decade or so ago as teachers, we only had to compete with television. Nowadays, we have to constantly compete with Facebook and YouTube for students' attention. Teaching methods that may have been tested and true then can no longer make that claim (Huq, 2013).



Having grown up immersed in technologies such as the Internet, iPads, tablets and cell phones, most of today's undergraduates are "digital natives" and therefore enter our classrooms with different experiences, expectations and learning styles than previous

generations of students. The way they view the world is very different from those of other generations. We must accept that 21st century students, whether in Dhaka or Dallas, are screen addicts and that they learn differently and therefore we need to look for new ways to motivate, engage, and inspire them. As teachers we need to harness the wealth of visual media available to us and incorporate them into our teaching (Huq, 2013).

Today's students and classrooms are becoming more diverse and unique each day. In an increasingly visual culture, the boundaries of the concept of literacy itself have been expanded to account for multiple intelligences and skills important in the 21st century (Beers, Probst, and Rief, 2007). In fact, according to the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE), twenty-first century readers and writers need to:

- Develop proficiency with the tools of technology
- Build relationships with others to pose and solve problems collaboratively and cross-culturally
- Design and share information for global communities to meet a variety of purposes
- Manage, analyze and synthesize multiple streams of simultaneous information
- Create, critique, analyze, and evaluate multi-media texts
- Attend to the ethical responsibilities required by these complex environments

Keeping this in mind, graphic novels with their poignant text and captivating art, are inherently stimulating and offer an abundance of learning possibilities (Monin, 2010). According to Tabachnick (2009), "... the form is uniquely suited to a modern audience, classroom and student, and how the medium lends itself to useful employment in literature, art, history, composition and film adaptation studies ... it is truly a form for all seasons."

Recent studies have shown that roughly 80% of undergraduates studying in universities in Dhaka have a pre-intermediate English language proficiency level (there are one or two universities which do not fall into this category). The English majors, whether studying Language or Literature, are only slightly better. Expecting students with such a limited grasp of the English language to read, comprehend, analyze, let alone critique on the literary classics, or any of their prescribed texts for that matter, comprehensively, is no more than wishful thinking at best. To most Bangladeshi students, English is a foreign language. Everyday English is hard enough for them; the language of Shakespeare well nigh unintelligible. It is to be expected that these English language learners will become reluctant readers. Therefore, the obvious question arises, how can we present serious literature to a generation of students that is intensely visually aware but often reluctant to read? (Huq, 2013) According to Eisner (1985):

For the last hundred years, the subject of reading has connected quite directly to the concept of literacy; ... Learning to read ... has meant learning to read words. Recent research has shown that the reading of words is but a sub set of a much more general human activity which includes symbol decoding, information integration and organization... Indeed, reading – in the most general sense – can be

thought of as a perceptual activity. The reading of words is just one manifestation of this activity; but there are many others – the reading of pictures, maps, circuit diagrams, musical notes....”

Bill Templar, in “Graphic Novels in the ESL Classrooms” (2009) refers to S. Canagarajah who “has noted new paradigms in EFL teaching, reflecting a conceptual shift from ‘treating competence as rational to developing it as multisensory [...] from communication as solely verbal to multimodal or polysemiotic [...] These conceptual shifts portend significant changes to the way we practice language teaching.” In his book, *Every Person a Reader* (1996), Dr. Steven Krashen states that free voluntary reading is an effective way to foster reading improvement. He goes on to cite several studies that show that students who read for pleasure will naturally progress in the amount and level of reading that they engage in. With regard to comic books in particular, Krashen notes that “middle school boys who did more comic book reading also read more in general, read more books, and reported that they liked reading better than those who did less comic book reading.” In 2005 he went on to say that there was growing evidence that plenty of readers of graphic narratives become better readers in general, so comics and graphic novels can serve as a “conduit to harder reading” (Krashen, 2005).

Though there are many reasons why our English language learners are struggling, it would be fair to say, that because our students have little or no background knowledge of the language they are studying, along with its unfamiliar vocabulary, which they do **not** use in their lives outside of the classroom, they find English language learning to be a de-motivating experience, which has no connection to their reality. However, research has shown that graphic novels and comics are effective in helping English language learners (Carter, 2007).

Graphic novels can not only help improve reading development for students struggling with language acquisition, as the illustrations provide contextual clues to the meaning of the written narrative, but also help to understand overall concepts and themes, even if they have not yet mastered all the relevant vocabulary.

Taking all this into account, graphic novels can be extremely effective in ESL classes because:

- They are visual ...they facilitate and support visualization of complicated text and content. Visual messages alongside minimal print help ease frustrations of beginning or struggling readers (Gorman, 2003);
- They are relevant ... they allow the reluctant or emergent reader to emotionally connect with the text;
- They are manageable ... they reduce the overall text load, decreasing student anxiety and lowering students’ affective filter;
- They are engaging ... they capitalize on the success and engagement of the format and its popularity with students;
- They are positive ... they increase student motivation and desire while promoting positive associations with reading. (Liu, 2004) found that “the reading comprehension of the low-level students was greatly facilitated when the comic strip repeated the information presented in the text.”
- They are 21st century ...they promote the development of 21st Century Literacy skills;

- They are communicative ... they also serve as a format for student language production (student authored comics and graphic summaries);
 - They are brain-based ... they access one of the ways the brain learns best, through visual processing (60,000 times faster than text); and
 - They are cross-curricular ... they offer opportunities to teach content across the curriculum (history, social science, etc.).
- Graphic novels are also beneficial for our students because they can see how colloquial English is actually used and thereby expand their vocabulary skills and understanding of slang and idiomatic expressions.

Teachers may also find it useful and motivating to use graphic novels in writing instruction. According to Morrison *et al.* (2002) in their article "Using student-generated comic books in the classroom," "constructing a comic book requires students to determine what is most important from their readings, to re-phrase it succinctly, and then to organize it logically." This same article provides step-by-step instructions for students to create their own comic books based on a variety of subjects and provides research-based evidence for success. They go on to say that, "Writing comic books and graphic novels can help students with story mapping, organization, re-phrasing, character development and editing." As O'English (O'English *et al.*, 2006) puts it, graphic novels can also be beneficially used for writing instruction. When students read graphic novels, they become familiar with tone, mood and especially dialogue techniques, which can be transferred to their own writing. Teachers can even get students to use comic making software like Comic Life and Strip-Generator to do assignments on topics such as:

- Timelines (history, events, sequences)
- Historical figures (history of, life of)
- Instructions (step by step, details, illustrations)
- Dialogue punctuation
- Character analysis
- Storytelling

While there are many graphic novels that are true to their comic book predecessors, written about superheroes, science fiction and fantasy, many have also been written about history, including past and recent wars, politics, civil rights, and more personal issues such as abuse, disabilities and family relationships (Gorman, 2002). Many classics have been rewritten in graphic novel form. Graphic versions of canonical literary works such as Eisner's (2001) *Moby Dick*, Kuper's graphic versions of Franz Kafka's *The Metamorphosis* (2003), and Upton Sinclair's *The Jungle* (2005) have been published while Classical Comics adaptations of Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, *Henry V*, and *Romeo and Juliet* are now available in a versatile form: a simplified 'quick text,' 'plain text,' and original dialogue editions. These editions can be used both with pre-intermediate and more advanced students, with a choice of British or American English (Templer, 2009).



Original text, plain text and quick text in Classical Comics adaption of *Henry V*

Educational comics are nothing new. Most of us who grew up in Dhaka in the 70s will remember the 'Classics illustrated series,' which was delivering comic-book versions of English literature classics back in the '50s. Classics Illustrated, for those who are not familiar with them, was a comic book series featuring adaptations of literary classics such as *Moby Dick*, *Hamlet*, and *The Iliad*. However, in spite of their obvious contribution, they were regarded by most educators as not much more than graphic 'Cliff's Notes' at best.

Yet, if we were to examine why Bangladeshi literature students still flock to 'Cliff's Notes,' generic Indian 'Study Guides,' or the more recent 'SparkNotes' in the first place, we would find that the answer is simple. Our students simply do not have the level of proficiency required to comprehend or analyze the original texts. In order to get a satisfactory grade, they have no other recourse than to skim through summarized study guides, ending up with an incomplete understanding of the original text. In looking at how students comprehend texts, Booth (2009) notes that visualization is a significant cue that students must use when reading. He reminds us, however, that not all students are able to generate images in their minds while they read and the lack of this comprehension skill can negatively impact students' understanding of what they read.

The solution is to use teaching strategies that ensure students gain understanding (Bull & Anstey, 2006). Through the use of graphic novels, students can make associations between the images and the text to help simplify the reading process and aid comprehension. Imagine the difficulties our students face when they read Kafka's *Metamorphosis* for the first time. Getting through that first page, visualizing what is happening is almost impossible for most of our students, but if they were to be given visual clues, they would definitely find it easier to comprehend.



Franz Kafka's *Metamorphosis* adapted by Peter Kuper

It also cannot be denied that sometimes the sheer volume of prescribed texts is what intimidates and pushes our students towards generic 'study guides.' At the same time, because more graphic novel titles can be taught in the same amount of time one would have to spend teaching lengthier print only texts, students can be exposed to a wider variety of stories and genres that keep them engaged in reading. It is important to note that students actually 'read' graphic novels, and they do not need to rely on a study guide to provide them with summaries. As Bakis (2011) states:

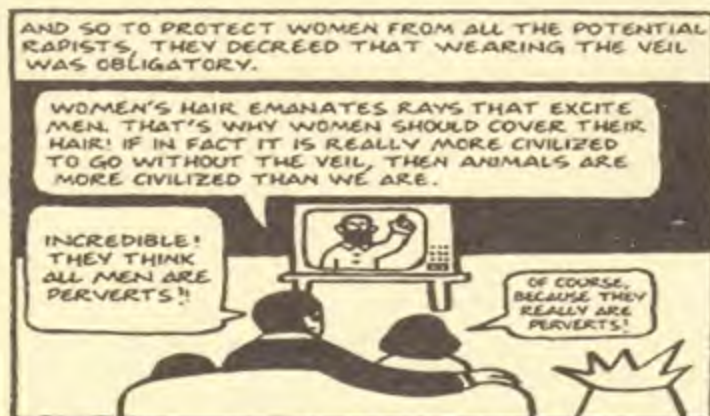
- Students find the aesthetic experience with visuals pleasurable (as opposed to more typical anesthetic experiences associated with common types of school-based reading);
- Because images are open for interpretation, this prompts rich discussion, stimulates problem solving, and builds social meaning;
- Graphic novels challenge weak and strong readers alike;
- Students must exercise more skill (reading images and text), not fewer when reading graphic novels.

Many readers, when confronted with solid pages of text, become intimidated and overwhelmed and just give up. Getting our students to read graphic novels will at least ensure that students will have an understanding of the texts in their entirety.

Graphic novels allow for a new approach to diction, imagery, syntax, structure, and language. For example, many graphic authors frequently emphasize words by making them boldface, italic, or underlined, practices applied sparingly in traditional texts. Graphic novels also substitute figurative imagery with the images themselves, but the interplay of what is written and what is drawn makes for an important point of analysis. Often, graphic novelists exploit the dual expressions of text and visuals to create puns, irony, and paradox. Syntax also becomes an examination of both sentence structure and panel and object structure (Cohen, 2008).

Overall, students can not only discuss the same topics and practice the same skills they would have used in classic literature, but they also develop new media literacy skills involved with understanding the comics medium and graphic novels (Monin, 2010).

Reading texts like Will Eisner's *A Contract with God*, Scott McCloud's *Understanding Comic*, Alan Moore's *V for Vendetta*, Frank Miller's *Batman: The Dark Knight Returns*, Marjane Satrapi's *Persepolis I and II*, Art Spiegelman's *Maus I and II*, and Gene Luen Yang's *American Born Chinese*, students can discover, discuss, and write about what it means to be human, explore themes like fate, identity, and survival as well as environmental, societal, and familial influences on an individual, just as other students do reading traditional world literature (Monin, 2010). One of the most noted praises for graphic novels as a literary genre is that many of them have been written about issues of cultural diversity and different world view points. Graphic novels have branched out into themes representing cultures and ethnicities around the world. They are able to make serious comments about culture in a way that is accessible to a wide audience. Examples of this include graphic novels such as Marjane Satrapi's *Persepolis*, the story of a young girl growing up in Iran and her family's suffering following the 1979 Islamic revolution. Marjane's experiences are not difficult for our Bangladeshi students to relate to.



Persepolis by Marjane Satrapi

One of the common arguments against graphic novels has always been that literature is not just about the text, it is about imagination and that if the pictures are doing all the 'imagining' for the reader, then there is no point in reading literature. However, it is a fact that good graphic novels actually require more imagination on the part of the reader, because in this case, the reader not only has to read and interpret the images presented in the panels, but needs to further imagine the action taking place between the panels. Unlike prose, where frequent amounts of exposition are necessary, quality graphic novels leave much up to the imagination of the reader where inference is a critical skill. The reader has to not only interpret the images, but then infer information from the ways in which the images and text work together to communicate a message. The images provide the comprehension support needed to ensure that students can do the work of imagining everything else that is happening.



From *Understanding Comics: The Invisible Art* by Scott McCloud

In fact, in many ways, comics require more thinking than mere prose. A quality comic contains text and images seamlessly interwoven. More thinking is involved because the reader has to actually 'study' the complement of words and images to make meaning. The most significant difference of a comic is that the text is both written and visual. Every part of each frame plays a role in the interpretation of the text, and hence, graphic novels actually demand sophisticated readers. Graphic novels and comics push beyond the boundaries of illustrated books to the point where illustrations and text are equivalent, each driving the other, rather than the illustrations supporting or attempting to explain the text. Text in comics can serve as dialogue, narration, sound effect, commentary, clarification, image, and more.



Watchmen by Alan Moore

As we can see from the first three panels of the third issue of Alan Moore's *Watchmen*, without any text, the panels would simply depict a man hanging a sign, pushing back from the extreme close up in panel one to a medium shot of the same action in panel three. With the text, however, the panels develop a complicated interplay of different elements. There are three distinct types of text here: the text boxes, the speech balloons, and the sign and clothing text.

The **text boxes** contain narration from a pirate comic book, which we discover a panel later is being read by a teenage boy at a newsstand. The language and shape of the text boxes indicate their distance from the principal narration, but the parallel text provides an ironic commentary on the main scene. The speaker behind the **speech balloons** is indicated in the third panel: a news vendor expressing his fear and anger about the cold war. Some words are in bold, giving a sense of spoken emphasis and volume. Finally, the **sign text** is an instance of text as image. While the "Fallout Shelter" text simply mirrors the nonverbal icon on that sign, the "Missing Writer" sign in the third panel gestures toward another part of the narrative (the writer turns out to be a character, introduced several issues later). The "NY" under the apple on the workman's jacket places the scene quickly.

More important than any of these three in isolation, however, is how they all work together. The horrifying imagery of the pirate story gives a mediated image of the potential destruction of nuclear war endorsed by the news vendor's dialogue, while the likelihood of such a war is given iconic reference through the fallout shelter sign. A lot of people perceive graphic novels as just "frozen films." However, the difference

between films and graphic novels is that the action in the latter takes place inside individual panels as well as in-between the panels. With a film, the audience sees only what the director wants to show. With a graphic novel the audience actively personalizes the experience by, say for example, imagining the voice of each character. They can linger over images and revisit any image or text. They can go to the end before they start at the beginning or they can jump from page to page. A movie forces the viewer to sit passively and watch that world unfold, but the graphic novel actively engages the reader/viewer.

There are many graphic novel adaptations of classic literature, from *Beowulf* to *Moby Dick* (Gorman, 2003). Yet, as McGrath (2004) states, the graphic novel is not just like the old Classics Illustrated series, an illustrated version of something else. It is its own thing: an integrated whole, of words and images both, where the pictures do not just depict the story, they are part of the telling. Not only are these entertaining to students, but they also provide the same stories without the intimidation often found in such lengthy and complicated classics. By using these and other graphic novels, teachers can still follow the curriculum and cover the same required concepts and standards while maintaining student interest and excitement in the classroom.

Some educators may feel that graphic novels, as nontraditional texts, may take away from time that could be spent with more accepted books. Little (2005) states that the most prominent reason for teachers' reluctance to use graphic novels is, "most teachers either don't know what comics do, or aren't familiar enough with the medium." Based on the author's conversations with faculty from different institutions and personal experiences at numerous conferences, interestingly enough, the greatest resistance to using graphic novels seems to come from literature teachers. Yet a good literature class should not exclude anything that can foster reading, writing, listening, speaking, and critical thinking. A literature class devoted entirely to one type of reading or one genre is probably, in most cases, a poor idea. If the goal is to understand literature, then you necessarily must include multiple media forms and a variety of genre and styles in your curriculum (Bakis, 2011). This resistance seems to stem from an unfounded apprehension that graphic novels will somehow be used to replace literary texts. However, graphic novels should **not** be seen as a replacement for prose that instead should be taught alongside or as supplements to traditional texts.

There is another misconception that comics or graphic novels do not have enough vocabulary or enough text to benefit students. The reality is, however, that graphic novels or comics include close to 20% more rare vocabulary than a typical chapter book for children and 40% more than a typical conversation between a child and an adult (Krashen, 2005). It should also be noted that there are a huge number of comics out there that have as much, or even more text, than many prose-only books that our students are reading. For example, the "Death of the Family" Batman story arc has over 90 pages with word counts ranging from between 50 to 250 per page, which is actually more words than many classics. Today, graphic novels are considered to be valuable resources at institutions of higher learning. Randy Duncan and Matthew J. Smith have written the book on how to teach the history, impact, importance, and cultural significance of comics at the university and college level. Their book, *The Power of Comics*, delves deeply into the teaching of comics at the higher level and offers other professors a structure for setting up their own intensive comics courses, whether they are an introduction to Comics or something more specific. *The Power of*

Comics is a good introduction for undergraduates if they know nothing about the medium, and it is also a useful tool for graduate students because it is an introduction to the past research.



Graphic novels today are used across the curriculum in ways we never thought possible—they are used in science, math, business, medicine, history, journalism, economics, statistics, law, archeology, and even philosophy. Researchers at the University of Toronto recently started using graphic novels as a teaching tool to communicate the ethical and emotional complexities of illness, disease and trauma to medical students. “Cartoons and comics were dismissed as a trivial medium, but we realize now they are extremely sophisticated,” says Allan Peterkin, associate professor of psychiatry at the University of Toronto.

Jeremy Short, professor of management and Researcher of the Year in 2010 for the College of Business at Texas Tech University, has written and introduced graphic novel textbooks as teaching tools in his courses. “Textbooks are just plain boring,” said Short. He said that he wanted to create a textbook that would get the necessary points across while keeping students engaged. *Atlas Black: Managing to Succeed* was his first attempt at a graphic-novel textbook; it covers, Short says, all the bases of what his students need to learn, while telling a story in panels about a college student named Atlas and his friends. It is interesting to note that the *Atlas Black* series is being used in undergraduate and M.B.A. classes.

In *Economix: How Our Economy Works (and Doesn't Work) in Words and Pictures*, Michael Goodwin explains the progression of Western economic theory in the context of political history, and brings a lively visual sensibility to this intensely abstruse subject matter without condescending to the reader or dumbing the ideas down. *Logicomix: The Epic Search for Truth*, written by Doxiadis, Papadatos, and Di Donna and *The Stuff of Life: A Graphic Guide to Genetics and DNA* by Schultz, Cannon and Cannon, are both science graphic novels that have received rave reviews and accolades, and have been used in education from the primary school level to graduate courses.



Indeed, recent studies have shown that a science comic book used in addition to traditional instructional materials could improve student learning and content knowledge at both introductory and advanced courses, particularly in the case of non-majors (Hossler, 2011). It cannot be denied that, today, graphic novels are major players in the literary world. They are extremely popular in libraries, have entire sections in chain bookstores and are reviewed and discussed by many mainstream newspapers and internet sites, including the New York Times, and Amazon.com. Closer to home, the Malaysian government recently honored Lat, author of *Kampung Boy*, who pioneered the genre in Southeast Asia, by bringing out a set of commemorative stamps.

These days there are very few reputed universities anywhere in Europe, North America or Australia that do not offer courses in Comic Book or Graphic Novel Studies. Yet in our country, educators barely know they exist. By excluding graphic novels from our curricula, as educators we are missing out on an opportunity to reach all our students, reluctant or otherwise. It is high time that we, English teachers, realize the value of using these exceptional academic tools and incorporate them in our classes regardless of whether we are teachers of Literature or English Language Teaching (ELT). English departments in Bangladesh should seriously consider using them not only as teaching tools for English Language Learners, but also include them in 20th century novel courses, and hopefully in the not too distant future introduce courses on teaching the Graphic Novel itself.

As historian Paul Buhle (2007) observes: "The possibility that the lowly comic-format could become a vehicle for non-fictional versions of the big stories as well as the personal tale marks a turning point of sorts, for scholars with an inclination in that direction, but perhaps also for generations of students to come." Perhaps the panel below from Scott McCloud's *Understanding Comics: The Invisible Art* describes the future of graphic novels in Bangladesh best:



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Anglophone Interventions: A Post-colonial Analysis of Translating Tagore's *Gitanjali* Poem "Aji Jharer Rate Tomar Abhisar" in English

Asif Iqbal*

Abstract: *I intend to study three translations, which includes Rabindranath Tagore's prose-translation in *Gitanjali: Song Offerings* (1912), Brother James Talarovic's Christianized translation in *Show Yourself to My Soul* (1983) and William Radice's contemporary initiative in *Gitanjali: Rabindranath Tagore* (2011), of Tagore's poem "Aji Jharer Rate Tomar Abhisar" to analyze the relation of the translations with the original. Identifying them as Anglophone translations, I have tried to analyze the rationale behind these translations. By incorporating Naomi Seidman's viewpoints in *Faithful Renderings: Jewish Christian Difference and the Politics of Translation*, I have traced the colonized, Christian missionary, and capitalist motives of the translations. Seidman's analysis of the strategic ambivalence Jewish translators adopted to confront the hegemony Christian discourse uses postcolonial theory to understand the unequal relation between the source language and target language. In my analysis of the translations of "Aji Jharer Rate Tomar Abhisar," I have identified an unequal transaction between the original Bengali poems and the translations, which also illustrate the translators' colonialist strategy to make an unfamiliar culture resonate with the sensibility of English-speaking poetry-lovers.*

This paper is a study of three different translations of Tagore's poem "Aji Jharer Rate Tomar Abhisar" to analyze the cultural and political implications of the translations. The three works of translation I have decided to analyze includes Tagore's own translation published in 1912 in *Gitanjali: Song Offerings*, James Talarovic's translation in *Show Yourself to My Soul* (1983), and William Radice's translation *Gitanjali: Rabindranath Tagore* (2011). All the translations as part of Anglophone translation projects offer interesting insights into the different cultural decisions taken by the translators to negotiate modern Bengali culture and language, which has links to European colonization. Listed as poem number 20 in the Bengali *Gitanjali* published in 1910, "Aji Jharer Rate Tomar Abhisar" is essentially a love-poem manifesting the speaker's longing for the beloved on a stormy night. The poem is listed as number 23 in the English *Gitanjali*, a collection of Tagore's prose-translations and is listed in the same order as in the original Bengali in Brother James Tavarovic's book. William Radice, the most contemporary of the Anglophone translators, lists it as number 43 in his collection.

One aim of this study is to take into consideration the close contact between the flowering of Bengali literature and culture and British colonialism in the eighteenth-century. European colonialism is considered by scholars as the harbinger of an incredible flourish of literature, culture and erudition, widely known as the Bengal Renaissance, among elite and middle-class Bengali Hindus in British-ruled India. Of several prominent figures of the era and the century following that, Rabindranath Tagore is the epochal figure. Because of this incredibly close alliance between

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European colonization and vernacular literary flourish in Bengal, Naomi Seidman's *Faithful Renderings: Jewish Christian Difference and the Politics of Translation*, which studies Jewish translation discourse under European/colonial seize, is pertinent to my analysis. Seidman's emphasis on the history of strategic maneuvering of Jewish translators to confront colonial/Christian hegemony will inform my analysis of the translations of Tagore's "Aji Jharer Rate Tomar Abhisar" from a post-colonial perspective. I will refer to post-colonialism to argue how the translations of the poem reflect the Anglophone translators' often colonialist and misguided translation strategies to make an unfamiliar culture resonate with the sensibility of English-speaking poetry-lovers.

The attempt to familiarize a non-European literary culture to the minds of a European readership is fraught with the danger of an unequal transaction. Translation discourse in Seidman's viewpoint is also problematic since it has historically attempted to interpret the colonized culture to the colonizer as exotic. Expressing her profound indebtedness to post-colonial scholarship, Seidman argues that "translation cannot be understood outside of the trajectories of capitalism, Christian missionary movements, and European imperialism . . ." (Seidman 7). While the confrontation between Jewish translation discourse and European colonization is fraught with all sorts of ambiguities and double-bind, as Seidman's analysis tells us, what is relevant to my discussion is her identifying the colonizer's insatiable desire to translate the conquered culture, to understand the irreducible "other" as the mirroring of the colonized culture.

Because Seidman emphasizes that "[h]istorically, translation has . . . accompanied imperial conquest, enabling colonial control or channeling cultural spoils," she is intent on understanding the problematic dynamics between source language and target language "in which the dominant culture of the target language exerts what is often felt to be a disproportionate advantage over that of the source literature" (Seidman 100, 250). Despite Eugene Nida's prescription of cultural equivalence, Seidman believes that there is a greater disparity between target language and source language. This assessment of Seidman's can facilitate understanding of the cultural inadequacies of the Anglophone translations of "Aji Jharer Rate Tomar Abhisar."

To understand Tagore's prose-translation of "Aji Jharer Rate Tomar Abhisar" in *Gitanjali*, it is necessary to briefly discuss Yeats' fascinated intervention into the culture of the colonized. While making Tagore more accessible to Western readers is a legitimate premise for this sudden interest, Seidman's analysis tells us this desire to make the colonized culture familiar to the colonizer by translation is never free of colonial, commercial and religious stakes of the colonizer. Moreover, Bengali culture's inextricable connection with English colonization makes the English publication of Tagore's *Gitanjali*, welcomed with gusto in the Western world when published, even more interesting.

The English version was hailed as a work of profound mysticism. Since the Enlightenment, mysticism has been considered in European intellectual discourse as profoundly un-European, and hence dismissive, because it is devoid of the rigors of rationalism. Projecting Tagore as a mystic is a political move as it would relegate the rise of Bengali culture, of which Tagore was then a representative figure, to, as Edward Said has argued "a sort of surrogate or even underground self" (qtd. in Bayoumi and Rubin 70). The Introduction Yeats prepared for Tagore's *Gitanjali* ensured the poetry-collection embraced the fate of exoticization, an "Other . . . that is almost the same, but

not quite" as the translation is touted as representative of Eastern spirituality (Bhabha 66). While it is true that Yeats' enthusiastic Introduction played a key role in familiarizing Tagore to a Western audience, and eventually earn the Bengali litterateur the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1913, it had failed to make a genuine critical assessment of Tagore's work.

According to Adam Kirsch, the introduction was "the booster rocket that launched Tagore's name into worldwide orbit, and its whole premise was that Tagore's poems were more than literature" (*The New Yorker*). In an eruditely-executed Introduction to his own translation of *Gitanjali*, William Radice also argues that Yeats' Introduction was so immensely influential that it may have been the sole reason for establishing Tagore's glory in the Western world in a very short time, earning Tagore the coveted Nobel Prize. Radice is of the opinion that Yeats "played a highly active role in the preparation of the book for the press, making changes and adjustments to Tagore's drafts and taking possessive control of the books" (Radice xviii). Yeats' role, Radice's analysis tells us, was to take possession of Tagore's work, and to interpret them as representative of a homogenous Eastern civilization.

Since Tagore in Yeats' view is endowed with the capacity to capture "the civilization of Bengal . . . unbroken" and his poetry was reflective of the "common mind," he is singled out as the one to capture "the fluctuating status of two competing sign-systems, one of which lays claim to an undeniable store of political, cultural, and aesthetic power and another that holds exclusive title . . . to a literature with ultimate religious value" (Yeats xiv; Seidman 102). Tagore's fluctuating status of "occupying two places at once," that of a propagator of mysticism of an alien non-European literature and an individual familiar with the colonizer's language-codes, is what makes Tagore's translation of his own poems an attractive proposition to Yeats (Bhabha 62). Drawing distinction between Tagore's Eastern mind, and its ability to find a place in the Western tradition, Yeats sees Tagore's works as mesmerizing.

Tagore is interpreted as a Saint whose exuding of Eastern spirituality has long been lost in the West: "We had not known that we loved God, hardly it may be that we believed in Him; yet looking backward upon our life we discover, in our exploration of the pathways of woods, in our delight in the lonely places of hills, in that mysterious claim that we have made . . . on the women that we have loved, the emotion that created this insidious sweetness" (Yeats xix). Yeats' Tagore is telling his Western readers the significance of discovering God in a culture whose insistence on secularism has deprived the people of the light of spirituality. Even Tagore had flirted with this imposed image of saintliness to gain access to the Western literary market.

Tagore's desire to gain recognition in the West can be linked to Seidman's assessment of Aquila's translation strategy in her book. While analyzing Aquila's translation of the Hebrew Bible, Seidman argued, it "can be clearly counted as symbolic capital transferred from the Greek to the Jewish community, and particularly valuable symbolic capital, since he is a member of the ruling class" (Seidman 93). Seidman's Aquila, being a member of the privileged social order, finds it easier to subvert the dominance of Eurocentric culture by a non-hegemonic space in which "Hebrew is described into the Greek . . . circumcised on it, as a mark that signals both Jewish affiliation and divine mimesis" (Seidman 94). Tagore, however, does not subvert the dominant culture but capitulates to the symbolic capital of the target language by placing himself within the trajectory of Victorian poetry. Kirsch writes "[i]f spiritual

sustenance was what Europeans and Americans needed from Tagore, that is what he would give them; it was a way of serving mankind and his own ambitions as well" (*The New Yorker*). What is to be noted from Kirsch's viewpoint is Tagore's role as that of a native informant who caters to the colonizer besides creating an advantageous position within the dominant culture.

While Aquila and Tagore as translators are both familiar with the colonizer culture, and its insistence on assimilation, they adopt dissimilar methods to counteract it. Aquila's response to Christian/European dominance is a mutinous subversion but Tagore attempts to achieve equivalence by adhering to the colonizer's cultural assumptions through his translations. The "old-fashioned diction and Biblical echoes," evident in Tagore's prose-translations, greatly diminish the finesse of the original poem in Bengali (*The New Yorker*). It can thus be said that the translation of "Aji Jharer Rate Tomar Abhisar," one of the major poems of the English *Gitanjali*, is characterized by Victorian poetic diction and style.

The translation of the word "Abhisar" is significant to capture the context of the original poem. The Bengali word "Abhisar," which has sexual connotations, translated as "love" to suit the Victorian mindset of the English readers. The word "Abhisar" attempts to capture the sexual longing of the speaker in the poem. While the very first line in the source poem "Aji Jharer Rate Tomar Abhisar" is connotative of possible romantic union on a stormy night, the translation "Art thou abroad on this stormy night" becomes a hackneyed sense-for-sense translation. Thus the entire prose translation renders obsolete the sensuality of the original poem:

Art thou abroad on this stormy night
on the journey of love, my friend? The
sky groans like one in despair (Tagore 18)

The above lines destroy the romance of the original poem by translating the longing for the beloved as "the journey of love, my friend." Particularly significant is the omission of "Poranshoka" in Tagore's translation. "Poranshoka" gives the word "Abhisar" of the first line an intensely personal imagery of sexual longing for the beloved. Perhaps there is also an element of *Vaishnava* tradition in the speaker's asking his beloved for tryst. Tagore also leaves this untranslated. To ensure that his English readers are not offended by the sexual suggestiveness of the poem, and to fit into the imposed representation of a saint, Tagore must have dismissed traces of sensuality in the translation.

The prose translation also diminishes the lyrical melliflence of Tagore's poem in Bengali. While Nida argues that "a lyric poem translated as prose is not an adequate equivalent of the original," it should be noted that Tagore's prose-translation, perhaps because of Yeats' editing and authorial intervention, becomes lifeless prose (Nida 15). Yeats' intervention can be easily identified if we consider the insipid opening lines and the near-poetic closing lines of the poem:

By what dim shore of the ink-black
river, by what far edge of the frowning
forest, through what mazy depth of
gloom art thou threading thy course
to come to me, my friend?(Tagore 19)

This is a unique example of an effort to replicate the poetic diction of the original. Thus, the image of the river is depicted as "the ink-black river" and the forest imagery is translated as "far edge of the frowning forest," and the darkness of the path is recreated as a "mazy depth of gloom." While these last lines are poetically rendered, the plain prose of the opening lines fails to make an indelible impression. Thus, that Yeats' ignorance of Bengali has contributed to the insipidity of the poem can be premised here. Colonialist hegemony is evident in Yeats' editing and Tagore's adhering to a language suitable for his Western audience imposes limitations on the translation of "Aji Jharer Rate Tomar Abhisar."

Seidman's opinion that the discourse of translation cannot be separated from capitalism, colonization and Christian missionary exploits is evident in Talarovic's Christianized translation of Tagore's poem. Part of a collection titled *Rabindranath Tagore: Show Yourself to My Soul*, in which James Talarovic attempts to capture the essence of the original poems by translating all the One Hundred and Fifty-Seven poems of the Bengali *Gitanjali*, the translation of "Aji Jharer Rate Tomar Abhisar" is approached from the missionary concept of divinity.

That Talarovic's effort is part of a project to identify Tagore as votary of a monotheistic God can be deciphered from David E. Schlaver's Introduction to Talarovic's translation: "Tagore expressed confidence in an omnipresent God as he sat by the rivers of Bengal, managed his father's estates and cared for the tenants, watched the rice shoots sprouting in the water-logged paddy fields, followed the flight of birds and the sway of trees, and delighted in children at play" (Schlaver 13). Schlaver's discovering the presence of a Christian-God amidst nature and the people of Bengal depicted in Tagore's poems also delineate Talarovic's translation strategy to render the poems Christian.

Also, Talarovic's awareness of the song-like qualities of some of the Tagore poems, "Aji Jharer Rate Tomar Abhisar" being one of them, prompts him to capture the melody of the poem by attempting a faithful translation. Since "[u]nfaithful translations are against originals, while faithful translations acquire their sacred aura," Talarovic seeks to capture the paeans of profound religiosity word-for-word in his translation (Seidman 38). It might be tempting to draw similarities between Talarovic and Aquila. But unlike Aquila, Talarovic belongs to the dominant culture, armed with the political power of the target language. Thus, the "theological lens" of the translation "threatens to expose the faithfulness" of his labor as a "religious rather than an ostensibly neutral linguistic judgment" (Seidman 38). Consequently, the images of nature and lovers' longing in "Aji Jharer Rate Tomar Abhisar" are translated as the speaker's desire to become connected with the divine.

The beloved who is expected to lighten up the lover's cottage is a personification of the divine. Addressed in the poem as "Beloved," "Companion of my soul," and "my friend," the beloved of the original Bengali is deified while the speaker becomes a weary longing for an epiphany and spiritual transformation. Talarovic's translation, while seeking to capture Tagore's poem faithfully, betrays the romanticism of the poem. Talarovic's translation fails to capture the speaker's longing for the beloved by presenting him as a voice asking for a reverential co-existence of the One and the many:

The sky weeps in despair
There's no sleep in my eyes.

I open wide my eyes, Beloved.
I look about again and again,
Companion of my soul, my Friend. (Talarovic 38)

The speaker and nature both in Talarovic's version long for the Beloved. Hence romantic lyricism of the original is disrupted by the imposed divination of the translation. The last lines of the poem, instead of capturing the paean of the lovers of the original, makes a frantic search for the divine, and tries to locate God amidst "distant river," "dense forest," and "thick darkness":

I wonder,
where Your path lies,
what distant river You are crossing,
what dense forest You are passing through,
what thick darkness envelops You,
Companion of my soul, my Friend. (Talarovic 38)

Radice's translation of "Aji Jharer Rate Tomar Abhisar" is a radical shift from Tagore's prose-translation and Talarovic's faith-inspired rendition of the poem. Aware that "...translation performances ... demonstrate the asymmetrical relations between languages ..." Radice seeks to "reduce linguistic and cultural differences" to achieve equivalence (Seidman 7; Venuti 113). In an attempt to go as close as possible to the original translation and to undo colonialist approaches of Tagore's prose-translation and Talarovic's faithful rendering, Radice traces "areas of difference and different differentiations" (Spivak 380). He argues that Tagore considered "three different spheres: that of the perfect poem, the perfect woman and the perfect soul" to create poetic "harmony" in *Gitanjali*, which consists of three types of poems, songs or song-like poems, sonnets and the poems of *Kheya* that are "most definitely poems rather than songs and are intricate blends of narrative, character, imagery, metre and rhyme" (Radice lxvi, lxvii). This intricate analysis is that of a scholar painfully aware of the limitations, if not the colonialist overtures, of previously undertaken Anglophone translation projects.

Moreover, Radice's proximity to Bengali language and culture contributes to his extra-linguistic sensitivity in translating Tagore's poem. Referring to an article by Buddhadeva Basu in his Introduction, Radice argues that Tagore's mode was one of *rapture* when he created the original Bengali poems besides translating in English almost at the same time. Radice is intent on capturing equivalent rapturous ambivalence: "The 'real' *Gitanjali* that I am trying to arrive at in the present book must take account of that rapture, and never forget that it combined poetry with song" (Radice lxviii). It can be said that Radice is trying to achieve what Nida has called *dynamic equivalence*. Roman Jakobson's idea of inter-semiotic translation can also be found in the British scholar's attempt to capture the "rapture" and the rapturous framework, since "*bhava* or feeling" is integral to the song-like poems, combining "poetry with song" (Radice lxvi; lxiii). In translating "Aji Jharer Rate Tomar Abhisar," Radice focuses on the performativity of the poem since he intends to preserve "the

repetition of lines that occurs when the songs are sung" (Radice lxvii). Radice's translation can be identified inter-semiotic because of its mimicking of the performance of the poem as *RabindraSangeetor* Tagore song.

Acknowledging his indebtedness to "performance tradition" which has "established which lines to repeat and how many times," Radice translates keeping in mind contemporary song rendition of "Aji Jharer Rate Tomar Abhisar" (Radice lxviii). The repetition of the first two lines sets up the repetitive tonality of the poem:

You have a tryst somewhere this stormy night,
O my close companion
You have a tryst somewhere this stormy night,
O my close companion (Radice 59)

While it is very difficult to capture the melody of "Aji Jharer Rate Tomar Abhisar" as a song, Radice makes a tenuous attempt to capture the essence of the song-like poem for readers unaccustomed to the intricacies of Tagore's songs due to cultural differences. Perhaps, one needs to listen to Rupa Ganguly or Kalim Sharafi's musical rendition of the poem to get a sense of Radice's philosophy of maintaining repetitions in translation. The most intricate aspect of his translation is his attempt to capture both *antara* and *abhog* and *sthayi*, or "chorus," of the song. Radice decides to appropriate *antara* and *abhog* "in italics, as a way of indicating that the melody of these two sections is always the same" (Radice lxviii).

While *formal equivalence* enables Radice to adhere so faithfully to "the linguistic and cultural values of the foreign text as to reveal the translation to be a translation," Sakul Alam in his essay "Translation Viewed as the Territory of Unending Differences" rhetorically asks, ". . . is it possible to read poems as songs and hear the song in the poem . . . without being distracted and even irritated by the repetition and italicization?" (Alam 12) Acknowledging Radice's labor to attain "[f]idelity," Alam argues, "For sure, the English reader of *Gitanjali* will be disturbed if not put off by the techniques employed" (Alam 12). For Alam, translation of Tagore poems cannot really capture the song for the reader and vice versa. Thus, the translator should not distract the readers with inessential textual information.

Seidman's critique of the colonialist nature of European translation can help explain the repetitions and italicization of Radice's translation of the Tagore poem. Seidman identifies "modern English-translation practice" as carrying the legacy of "British imperial conquests of foreign texts" which functioned under the guise of translational transparency to appropriate "a foreign-language author" according to English cultural and social values" (Check quotation marks placement (Seidman 118). Radice's rationale that the repetition and italicization of the song-elements of the poem would create a more nuanced understanding of "Aji Jharer Rate Tomar Abhisar" caters to the doctrine of domesticating a foreign text, thus, can be identified as colonially motivated.

Finally, the Anglophone translations of "Aji Jharer Rate Tomar Abhisar" are replete with Eurocentric assumptions. While Tagore's early twentieth-century translation conforms to the image Yeats creates of the poet as an Eastern mystic in the influential Introduction to the English *Gitanjali*, Talarovich's translation, since it is part of a missionary project, finds a divine voice in the speaker's quest for the beloved and mimics a Christian world-view in the translation of the poem. Radice's translation,

while it tries to appropriate the contemporary song renditions of the poem, appears to domesticate the poem for the English readers, a method Seidman views as colonialist. It is imperative that in the post-colonial translation scenario, which is again the globalized space of unequal transaction between nations, a translator needs to “turn the other into something like the self in order to be ethical” (Spivak 372). And what can be more ethical than considering “[t]he history of the language, the history of the author’s moment, the history of the language-in-and-as-translation” alongside “correct cultural politics” when translating texts from formerly colonized spaces? (Spivak 375) Because of the historical complicity of translation with colonialism, missionary exploits and commercialism, if it were to sustain the ethico-political parameters, the translator must clear the ground littered with traces of colonized, sexualized and gendered works of translation impervious of its hegemonic grip on the “other” spaces.

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The Quest for Beauty in Rabindranath Tagore's Poetry

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Abstract: Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1941) pursued beauty all through his life. In his quest for beauty, he passed through many stages of development. His early poems incorporate sensuous observations of nature. The effect of sensuous magnetism persists, but the soul is awakened towards a greater vista of beauty. The soul keeps searching and comes to the conclusion that mere sensuous beauty is not the goal; it needs a revelation of a deeper meaning. He finds beauty in harmony with the inner and the outer principles of nature midway through his poetic life. It is also at this stage that he finds beauty and truth synonymous. To find the absolute beauty, the Infinite, Tagore reaches the final stage where he discerns God and seeks communion with Him. The paper aims at showing how Tagore sees beauty in every object of this universe; how he correlates beauty and truth; and how he seeks communion with the Infinite, the definitive source of all beauty and truth.

Rabindranath Tagore, the first non-European Nobel laureate and poet-saint of India, started his career as a poet and turned out to be one of the most powerful litterateurs, educators, painters, social reformers, and philosophers of his times. He has poured out outstanding masterpieces which have given spiritual nourishment and delight to all those who read them. His messages to the world are, by and large, the messages of truth, beauty, peace, and love which, seeping out of his deep insight of human life, encompass God, nature, and the human soul. In the words of W. B. Yeats, "[The poems of] Tagore have stirred my blood as nothing has for years . . . These lyrics . . . display in their thought a world I have dreamed of all my life long" (ix, xii). Yeats was so pleased reading the poems from *Gitanjali* that he remained engrossed with the book and would carry it with him during his travels. Ambidextrous, Tagore has covered "almost every literary genre" (Radice 21) and the "core object of his writings has been truth and beauty" (Ahmed 9). Believing that ultimately truth and beauty will prevail, Tagore occupies himself in a quest for beauty all through his life. However, while searching for beauty, Tagore often relates beauty to truth and remains aware of a supreme principle pervading nature and the entire universe. This supreme principle, the absolute truth or the unknown mystery, is beautiful, because it shines through the finite, and it is only in the Infinite that mankind finds perpetual freedom.

The quest for beauty is eternal and universal. Throughout history, all cultures and civilizations have searched for and defined beauty in their own ways. From the time of

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Plato till today, many thinkers have tried to explore and define beauty. The quest and an eye for beauty have always been there though there are differences among individuals in the perception of beauty. Plato believes that just as the world people live in is not complete, similarly the beauty people seek is a part of the absolute beauty which is beyond sense perception. His disciple Aristotle adds, "the essential constituent of beauty are symmetry, order and proportion" (qtd. in Chaudhary 62). The beauty Aristotle searches for in symmetry is completely external. Neo-Platonic humanist philosopher Marsilio Ficino states, "The beauty of the bodies" consists "in a kind of luminous harmony (qtd. in Mukhopadhyay 35-36). However, to Keats, beauty and truth are synonymous as he writes one of the most quoted lines on beauty, "Beauty is truth, truth beauty." Tagore's position on beauty and truth is also revealed "in the well-known dialogue with Einstein," that Kaiser Haq quotes in his essay "Tagore's Humanism: A Philosophic Quest" in the *Encyclopedia of Philosophy*:

Einstein: Truth, then, or Beauty, is not independent of man?

Tagore: No.

Einstein: If there would be no human beings any more, the Apollo of Belvedere would no longer be beautiful?

Tagore: No.

Einstein: I agree with regard to this conception of Beauty, but not with regard to Truth.

Tagore: Why not? Truth is realised through man. (52)

Tagore associates beauty and truth with the conception of the human mind that plays, "a part in the perception of truth" (53) and beauty. He thinks beauty and truth are not independent of the conception of human mind. As the human beings realize them, truth and beauty exist in their mind. Emily Dickinson also finds beauty and truth to be analogous. In the second stanza of her "I died for beauty but was scarce," she addresses beauty and truth as "one" and "brethren" who are also "kinsmen." In the poem, one who dies for beauty and the other who dies for truth are brought together to converse. "He questioned softly why I failed? / 'For beauty,' I replied - / 'And I - for Truth - / Themself are One - / We Brethren, are,' He said -" (5-8). Beauty and truth are considered inseparable as one is reflected in the other.

Beauty is also close to goodness. It is assumed that all that is beautiful has to be good and morally correct. Plato in his *Lysis* sees beauty in line with good, "the good is the beautiful." Much later, Kant agrees with Plato, "Beauty is the symbol of good" (qtd. in Mukhopadhyay 92). Seventeenth century philosopher Lord Shaftesbury writes, "what is at once both beautiful and true is of consequence agreeable and good" (qtd. in Knight 165-66). Shelley finds beauty in various objects of the universe. In "Alastor," he depicts a poet who sets forth to search for "all that is excellent and majestic, to the contemplation of the universe . . . The magnificence and beauty of the external world sinks profoundly into the frame of his conceptions." To Shelley, ideal beauty is the beauty of all beauty. Tagore has, to a greater extent, semblance with these thinkers and poets in his perception of beauty. The beauty which ordinary people see in a particular image is seen by Tagore as well as Shelley throughout the world. Like Plato, Kant, and Shaftesbury, Tagore sees beauty as good, and like Aristotle and Ficino, he sees beauty in unity and harmony. Like Keats and Dickinson, he sees beauty and truth to be analogous. But unlike them, Tagore's quest for beauty is a spiritual one that shifts from

the tangible to the intangible, from the finite to the Infinite and sees fulfillment in union with the Infinite who is the absolute beauty and truth.

Tagore, an unparalleled worshipper of beauty, pursues beauty not extrinsically but essentially introspectively, and the sense of beauty appears in his conception as a living, dynamic force. As the spring of beauty is heart, his quest for beauty is chiefly in the heart's Eden. He searches for the basis of the budding beauty of creation within himself and finds an indomitable force within himself. However, as human creativity is dependent upon forces from the phenomenal world, unless and until it is motivated by something in this world or universal life that generates human capacity to appreciate beauty, the human mind cannot succeed in appreciating it. Tagore's quest for beauty, in such a case, is stirred by his wonderful experience with nature. In his own words, "The first stage of my realization was through my feeling of intimacy with nature" (qtd. in *ibid.* 11). The world of nature quivering inside the poet's heart leads him to search for beauty in the outer world. It appeals to him both on account of its purer beauty and the ubiquitous beauty of the most trivial and commonplace objects. One day he stands on the balcony of his brother's residence and observes:

The glow of sunset combined with the wan twilight in a way that gave the approaching evening a special wonderful attraction. Even the walls of the adjoining house seemed to glow beautiful. The effect of the evening had been from within me; its shade had obliterated myself. When the self was rampant during the day, everything I perceived was mingled with it and hidden by it. Now that the self was put into the background, I could see the world in its own true aspect. That aspect has nothing of triviality in it, it is full of beauty and joy. (qtd. in James xv)

The description of nature that is found here is extraordinary, and it mesmerizes him as he is an avid admirer of nature. Absorbed in the amazing beauty of nature, the poet can discover truth in it. Though it seems to be trivial, he finds it as a source of beauty, truth and joy. It reminds everyone of Keats's celebrated poetic line "A thing of beauty is a joy forever." Looking toward the same Sudder Street, Tagore experiences:

The sun was just rising through the leafy tops of the trees. As I continued to gaze, all of a sudden a covering seemed to fall away from my eyes, and I found the world bathed in a wonderful radiance with waves of beauty and joy swelling on every side. This radiance pierced in a moment through the folds of sadness and despondency which had accumulated over my heart, and flooded it with this universal light. (qtd. in James xv)

The extravaganza of nature invokes thoughts in the poet. He can see the "waves of beauty and joy" pervading the surroundings. He can also feel despondent within a flash of a moment and his heart gets "flooded" with "universal light."

Tagore discovers through the flush of a glorious sunrise the fountains of beauty and joy in the universe and in his famous poem "Nirjharer Swapna-bhanga" (The Dreamer's Awakening), his newly stirred soul expresses itself beautifully. It appears in the poem that the new experience unlocks the door of his heart, and he awakes to a new morning:

O, how did the sun's first ray
Into my heart find its way?

This dawn, how could birdsongs pierce my heart's dark den?
 After all this time, why does my heart suddenly stir again?
 My heart stirs again,
 Like a river swelling and bursting its banks
 My desires overflow. (Alam 205)

Through an open door enters the beauty of the natural world. Nature at this moment casts aside her façade and with endless wonder, the poet discovers for the first time how pleasant the beautiful nature is, how captivating her majesty. Tagore's soul stands in admiration before the naked beauty of nature's charms and thus nature, a being of heavenly beauty, steps out in all her magnificence. This beauty of nature, without any doubt, is completely sensuous. Nevertheless, it generates a sort of inspiration and creativity in Tagore's mind. Philosopher poet George Santayana notes, "Sensuous beauty is not the greatest or most important to effect, but it is the most primitive and fundamental, and the most universal" (78). Similar is the case with Tagore. Though sensuous beauty is not ultimate, it has a great appeal to Tagore. The natural world invites him affectionately; and he responds with joy in a way that suggests he had a connection with nature since time immemorial. All these instigate him to build up an all-pervasive relationship with nature. This union of his growing consciousness and the spirit of nature generates joy that springs, Tagore feels, from a realization of the inner harmony of objects.

Tagore's sense of beauty is manifest in almost every poem of *Sonar Taree* (Golden Craft) that reflects his absorption in beauty. That beauty lies in everyday life and not in the distance is well-expressed in "Akasher Chand" (Moon in the Sky) and "Parash Pathar" (Touchstone). "Akasher Chand" portrays a votary who is busy with his whims ("Give me the Moon") and rejects everyday life. To get the distant beauty (the moon), he denies the beauty of the blowing "breeze," laughing "sky," singing "birds," "boys and girls, brothers and sisters" playing and the mother smiling at her child (5-12). In the words of Tagore:

So much earthly life happiness
 comes very close to him and drifts away.
 With face averted and eyes full of tears,
 he just sits there and keeps saying,
 'I don't want any of you;
 I only want the moon.' (James 34-39)

However, the moon "stayed where it was" and he "in the same place" (40-41). But when time passes, he recognizes his mistake and realizes that beauty does not lie in the rejection of everyday life. The world then turns out to be beautiful in his eyes:

he suddenly thought of something;
 He turned round and gazed about -
 He saw that the green earth was beautiful
 on the shore of the blue sea. (James 43-46)

At the sight of the beauty of the world, the worshipper thinks of his past and repents. He heaves a sigh of grief, "I don't want the moon / if I can get back this life" (54-55). Now he discovers the never-ending beauty, "He saw the beautiful village full of life,

ever noisy with daily joys and sorrows" (56-57). He reviews the "Tiny flowers, flitting smiles, trifling remarks, / fleeting joys, the loves of every moment, / cheerful faces," and so on, which blossom out "spontaneously / around the life of" (65-69) human beings.

A similar truth is explored in "Parash Pathar" (Touchstone) in which the poet implies that earthly and everyday life is pleasantly beautiful. No one can taste the beauty of life if he or she denies the joys of life and thinks of it only partly. Tagore seeks to reach beauty through the joys and sorrows of life. In the poem, a madman who has rejected the joys of life searches for "the touchstone," the absolute truth, the God who can make his life beautiful. His body looks "Like a dark shadow" for "dust and mud" has turned his hair matted and brownish (4-5). He rejects "food and shelter" and wears "dust and ashes on his body" (12-13). Wearing "a gray loin cloth" around his waist and looking "lowlier than a street beggar," he despises "Gold and silver" and is "not envious of riches" (14-19). However, he is so obsessed with the idea of the touchstone that he has no time to look at the beauty of the things around him:

The sky stared with a steadfast look,
The moaning wind blew freely.
At dawn the sun climbed toward the forehead
of the eastern sky,
In the evening
the moon rose slowly.
Incessant streams of water babbled sweetly
as if they longed to tell some deep mysteries, (James 29-36)

The external world looks very beautiful, but the man does not pay any heed to it and goes on searching for his touchstone. Tagore informs that "His old strength is gone, / He stoops under the load of his body, / His heart sank like a felled tree" (125-27). As he rejects the beauty of the world to get the touchstone, he gets neither the glimpse of beauty nor the touchstone. Tagore adds, "Now he offered the remaining half of his broken life / in search of the touchstone" (136-37). That the touchstone of beauty lies in everyday life is not understood by the madman. Hankering after the illusive, he is indifferent to the beauty and joy of everyday life and thereby deprives himself of the easy and simple joys of life.

Several other poems incorporated in *Sonar Taree* (Golden Craft), especially "Mayabad" (Illusionism), "Khela" (A Game), "Bandhan" (A Bond), and "Gati" (Motion) enhance the idea of beauty. This world, replete with diverse joys and sorrows, is beautiful and not an illusion. Through these poems, Tagore seems to emphasize that to have beauty in life, people should not deny the world they inhabit. Our success and beauty lie with everyday things – there is no beauty, no freedom without them. In "Khela" (A Game), Tagore asks people whether they will "keep sitting / in some dark corner of" their heart "after giving up everything" (5-7) and tells them that they should not "stay that way, sitting all alone, / grown old before" (22-23) their age because "The heart of this world / consists of countless creatures" ("Mayabad" 21-22) of this world. He adds in his poem "Gati" (Motion):

I know
that life is full of joys and sorrows.

smiles and tears,
 that cruel bonds form knots and knots of scars.
 I know
 that in the churning of the ocean
 of earthly life,
 it is someone's luck to get nectar,
 someone's luck to get deadly poison.

.....
 I don't want to tear by myself
 the world-wide bonds –
 I have only one way to go –
 it's with the countless creatures
 of this world. (James 1-9, 22-26)

Tagore wants to live by enjoying the beauty in this world rather than living a life of an ascetic. Narasingha Sil, an Indian American Professor of History at Western Oregon University, writes in his article "*Devotio Humana: Rabindranath's Love Poems Revisited*," "Rabindranath Tagore was no world-weary self-abnegating ascetic. He was a seeker of the ultimate freedom and beauty in this life on this planet, and not a beyonder. 'Not self-immolation, but self-expression must be our aim,' the poet proclaimed." Rejection only brings about frustration. It is the experience of life that gives the ultimate joy. And these thoughts are, as evidenced above, well-expressed in Tagore's poems.

It is obvious that Tagore's poetry is not an escape from life; rather, it is an expression of joy in the mere act of living. "In his writings, we encounter no longing to escape the world," observes Kalyan Sen Gupta, "but instead the love of a world that he had found beautiful ever since childhood: 'I don't want to leave this beautiful world / I want to live among men.' And this love never waned, it seems, even for a moment" (87). For his love of this world, Tagore feels the touch of beauty everywhere. And this touch makes everything sweet to him. In his poem "Madhumoy Prithibir Dhuli*," Tagore remarks that "The heaven is honeyed, honeyed is the dust of this world" (*Sanchayita* 559). To Tagore, real beauty is to be found not in the pursuit of distant gains, but in the enjoyment of the trifles of the moment. He finds beauty in his surroundings. The beauty of the dew-fringed paddy-plants fascinates him. He says that people vainly go far away and waste huge sums of money to seek beauty. If they observe their surroundings intently, they would not be deprived of the real beauty of the dew-fringed paddy field. In Verse no. 34 of *Sphulinga* (Spark), Tagore writes:

For many days I trekked miles after miles
 And spent vast wealth traveling countries,
 Went to see mountains and oceans.
 But hardly did I see
 Walking only two steps from the house
 The beauty of a drop of dew
 Perched upon an ear of paddy.* (*Sanchayita* 511)

* All poems marked with an asterisk have been translated by the authors of this article.

As beauty exists everywhere, no one can separate it from the whole. When one tries to find beauty only for one's own purpose or for a particular intent, he or she blemishes its originality. Tagore gives an excellent analogy to explain the idea:

Be it religion, beauty or any other great thing, whenever someone tries to achieve it, especially by fencing, it loses its originality. For instance, if one dams up the river to keep it for himself, it doesn't remain a river; rather, it turns into a pond." (*Shahitya* [Literature] 51)

In *The Philosophy of Rabindranath Tagore*, Kalyan Sen Gupta states that, according to Tagore, to appreciate the harmony and beauty of the world, it is not necessary to deny or ignore the evils or the ugly because they are a part of the whole. To support his claim, Gupta paraphrases Tagore's analogy:

A piece of cloth looks beautiful to us even though, were we to look at it through a microscope, we would find it full of ugly, jagged holes. These holes are indeed parts of the cloth, but they in no way spoil its beauty when the cloth is viewed from an appropriate standpoint. Only when they are unduly magnified do they interfere with enjoyment of the whole piece of material. (90)

The analogy clarifies the point that one has to admire beauty as a whole and not in parts. When someone considers beauty a matter of consumption and pride, and attempts to get it narrowly and in parts like the votary ("Akasher Chand") or the madman ("Parash Pathar"), he or she damages beauty, and then the beauty loses its grandeur.

Beauty is not what one tends to consume as Tagore considers beauty to be more valuable than other things in life. One cannot satisfy his or her thirst for beauty and reach it with a corporeal, unrestrained, and impatient mind. He or she has to get it by means of peace and holiness and by controlling passion for worldly or earthly things. If one looks for beauty for narrow, worldly purposes, he or she will not have its grace. Monotony and apathy will grow out of all these vain pursuits. Tagore rejects the material approach to beauty; he enjoys the fountain of beauty, and his world is jovial, lively and full of music. In "Chhinna Patrabali" (Torn Letters), Tagore writes, "Beauty is a real addiction to me. In fact, it cheers me up . . . It is beyond the perceptibility of the senses. Not to speak of eyes and ears; one cannot satisfy one's quest even if he or she tries with the whole heart" (qtd. in Sharif 11). Sacredness of mind is important to attain eternal beauty.

However, Tagore's rejection of material approach does not suggest that one needs to be a monk and renounce one's family to appreciate beauty. In his essay "Soundarja O Sahitya" (Beauty and Literature), Tagore reports that somewhere in Europe there are people who reject the natural and everyday aspects of life and mark them as trivial and "humdrum" in the name of beauty in literature. They insult the average people's lifestyle all the time and keep themselves aloof from everyday life. Tagore takes pity on them and suggests that if passion for beauty keeps people aloof from family life and hinders them from living life with the surroundings, they had better not seek such beauty (Tagore, *Sahitya* 50). He also adds that their quest for beauty is similar to the extraction of wine from grapes and then throwing away its juice and splendor (50). On the other hand, Tagore writes in Verse no. 73 of *Gitanjali*, "Deliverance is not for me in renunciation. / I feel the embrace of freedom in a thousand / bonds of delight" (1-3).

Tagore does not endorse separating beauty and ugliness from daily life. He accepts the bonds and everyday life of enjoyment. He asserts further, “No, I will never shut the doors of my / senses. The delights of sight and hearing and / touch will bear thy delight” (11-13). Tagore believes that the enjoyment by the senses continues to come to people, and they should not stop the flow in any way. According to Sen Gupta:

For [Tagore] truth and beauty are omnipresent, representing, respectively, the law and the harmony of the universe. So there can be no ugliness or untruth in life; it is man’s incapacity to see life as a whole that gives rise to untruth and ugliness. . . . If man can get over his selfishness and view things in a detached manner . . . he can have the true vision of beauty that is everywhere. (qtd. in Tilak 55-56).

People should forsake their selfishness and narrow-mindedness and view things broadly as beauty and ugliness are omnipresent in the world, and they altogether represent the law and harmony of the universe respectively. To deny this co-existence is to show a partial attitude to life. Tagore urges people to shun this partial attitude and see beauty with broader perspectives, and only then they can have a true vision of beauty.

Tagore is never exhausted in enjoying the beauty of nature; he seems attached to nature to feel the presence of beauty. He, therefore, refers to the sky and millions of stars in Verse no. 21 of his *Rogshajyaye* (Sick-bed):

I can only gaze at the universe
 In its full, true form,
 At the millions of stars in the sky\
 Carrying their huge harmonious beauty –
 Never breaking their rhythm
 Or losing their tune,
 Never deranged
 And never stumbling –
 I can only gaze and see, in the sky,
 The spreading layers
 Of a vast, radiant, petalled rose. (Radice, 20-30)

The poet sees the “harmonious beauty” in the countless stars in the sky. His heart is invested with pleasure that he attains from nature’s rhythmic music. He keeps his eyes on the vast sky and finds the image of the rose there.

For Tagore, the world of matter is empty of significance and it becomes true, beautiful, and meaningful only because of human perception. Beauty is a matter of realization and can be perceived through sincerity. If one looks for beauty intently with a beautiful mind, he or she can find it everywhere. In his poem “Ami” (I), Tagore writes:

Emerald becomes green in my perception
 and ruby glows red
 I take a glance at the sky –
 light begins to sparkle
 in the East and the West.
 I take a look at the rose and say ‘beautiful’ –
 beautiful does it appear.* (Sanchayita 482:1-7)

Beauty lies in the perception of the people who portray its image in their mind in various ways. One who has a mind to see beauty in a rose can admire the flower. It depends upon how a person approaches a thing.

Tagore's incessant quest for beauty is well-expressed in his "Niruddesh Jaatra" (Aimless Journey). "Oh Beauty, how much further will you take me?" – with this line begins "Niruddesh Jaatra" as translated by Brother James. The poet asks his ideal Beauty to tell him "on what shore [her] Golden Craft will dock" (2). She "seems to be there in her very flesh, not only beautiful herself, but the cause of beauty in that vast oceanic scene" (Bose 54). The sun is "setting in the distant west" ("Niruddesh Jaatra" 10) but the journey is not yet finished. The poet's ideal Beauty is guiding him from seen to the unseen and known to the unknown. The poet begins his quest for beauty and gathers new ideas and experiences overcoming a great many obstacles. But when will the poet reach absolute beauty? Has this journey any end, any termination at all? The poet asks, "Is there new life there? / Do the dreams of hope / grow into golden fruit there?" (47-49). His Muse "only smiled," in reply, "without speaking" (50-51). Tagore asks again, "Is calm death there – / Is peace there? Is sleep there in the darkness?" (61-62). But "she never speaks or moves; her sole gesture is a lifted finger pointing at the endless seas" (Bose 54). Here beauty seems to be elusive to Tagore because his Muse makes him swim in the maze of mystery.

In *Chitra*, Tagore still searches for his ideal beauty and finds a beautiful place to take respite in. Here he may have a glance of his ideal beauty. In "Din Sheshe" (Day's End), he leads his boat ashore because "It is too late for further sailing" (Radice 2). "On the bank," he finds a girl and asks her on whose shore he is landing. The girl with her bowed head "leaves without a word" (5) and her water-jar overflows. Tagore finds the place lovely, "On the forest's thick canopy shade is falling, / I find the sight of this country pleasing" (8-9). Neither the water nor the leaves stir or move; the birds sleep throughout the forest. At this moment, the bangles on the girl's hands rub the water-jar and produce sweet melodies. The distant temple-lantern glimmers, the marble road, sprinkled with fallen *bakul*-flowers, gleams in the shade, and the breeze brings a melody from the king's distant palace. The poet wishes to anchor his boat in this place as the beautiful nature attracts him so much. Radice illustrates the poet's fascination with the place, "Sunset, strangely beautiful, girl, royal buildings, music combine to suggest an ideal world of beauty, drawing the speaker away from worldly concerns" (135). It is the ideal beauty that the poet is in quest for, and now he feels that he has found that beauty in this place. At the end of the day, he intends to harbor in the land of ideal beauty.

In *Chitra*, Tagore also eulogizes beauty as a whole. With immense variety, the poems "Chitra," "Urvashi," and "Bijayini" reflect Tagore's feeling of ideal Beauty that gives the poet peace, and he sees the image of this beauty in this world. He envisages the presence of that beauty pervading the external world in Bijayini and Urvashi, two beautiful women. In "Chitra," the title poem, Tagore sees beauty in its diversity. Beauty makes its appearance in various forms. In the poem, he explains how beauty exists in this world in various forms. It pervades the blue sky, the flower gardens, the world, the heaven and so forth; it takes various complexions, rhythm and tunes. Nature's diverse forms and its beauty are described in the poem. Countless stories have also been written

and studied, exploring beauty. However, in spite of its *multiplicities*, beauty was a *single undivided reality* in his psyche. Tagore writes:

How diverse you are in the world,
 how varied in beauty.
 You're alone within the heart,
 alone, you pervade the heart." (*Sanchayita* 166: 15-18)

Through these lines, Tagore seems to say that though beauty in the external world is diverse, the heart catches hold of it as one entity. Thirst for beauty lies in the heart of all people, and for Tagore, this thirst cherishes an unfulfilled yearning in his heart.

"Urvashi," another poem from *Chitra*, authentically embodies Tagore's perception of beauty. In the poem, there is a picture of a perfectly beautiful woman that the poet has always dreamed of. The beauty which is absolute and essential, incessant and integral, is beyond reach, and that beauty is perfect on its own. Tagore's Urvashi symbolizes the dancer who scatters the manifold beauties of nature as she dances. She also symbolizes the eternal yearning in the soul of man for Beauty, for union with the Eternal. Moreover, she symbolizes ideal Beauty, eternal youth, and boundless freedom and joy. Tagore sees perfect beauty in the image of the female indeed. But that is beyond consumption, beyond necessity and description, "Not mother, nor child, nor wife, but the beautiful woman, / Thou Eden-inhabitant Urvashi!" ("Urvashi," *Sanchayita* 1-2). The poet accolades the eternal beauty in this poem; Urvashi stands for that perfect beauty.

According to Hindu mythology, Urvashi is a blissful dancer of Lord Indra's court, the type of eternal Beauty, who in the beginning rises from the sea when it is churned by the gods. She carries nectar in the right hand and poison in the left. Urvashi "slumbered till day came, and then appeared in her 'awful little bloom'; she is of all men adored, the ageless wonder" (Tilak 99). Her nectar and poison have special significance. The nectar symbolizes the delight people get by reaching beauty while the poison symbolizes their disappointment and sorrow when not reaching it. In the translation of Edward Thompson:

In the assembly of Gods, when thou dancest in
 ecstasy of joy,
 O swaying wave, Urvashi,

 In the crest of the corn the skirts of the earth tremble;
 From thy necklace stars fall off in the sky;
 Suddenly in the breast of man the heart forgets itself.
 The blood dances! (qtd. in Tilak 99-100)

The poem is an adoration of perfect beauty which is seen to be incorporeal, formless, beyond words, and of no earthly use; it has no relation to this world, no bond and connection as well. "Tagore's 'Urvashi,'" asserts Sen Gupta, "is the essence of pure beauty, timeless and eternal as God himself" (qtd. in Tilak 94). In "Urvashi," as evidenced above, Tagore's perfect worship of timeless beauty finds its expression.

In "Bijayini" (The Victorious Woman), Tagore's perception of beauty is expressed through the image of a woman. He considers this victorious woman to be a symbol of

perfect beauty. Human beings crave beauty, but when they see perfect beauty, they can no longer enjoy it. They become captivated then, and their minds tend to adore the beauty with devotion. In the poem, Tagore depicts the image of a woman who comes to bathe in a lake. Her deep-blue clothes lie forlorn in a corner, her girdle lies discarded from her waist, and the breast-cloth becomes disordered upon the ground as if fallen from the twin heavens of a hard stone. Sweet melodies rise in water, land, and sky from four directions and the Love-god (Madan), sitting secretly under a *bakul* tree, frames a winsome story in shadow and sunshine. To get this beautiful woman, "the Love-god, friend of Spring, / was sitting concealed at the foot of the bokul tree, / on fallen flowers, carelessly leaning on the trunk" (Trans. Ketaki Kushari Dyson 70-72). He smiles "with sidelong glance" and observes "the alluring young woman's / bathing-dalliance" (76-78). When "the beautiful woman came up to the bank" (88), the Love-god rises and comes before her with a soft smile on his face. But when she appears before him after bathing, he becomes spellbound seeing her perfect beauty:

. . . kneeling on the ground,
speechless with wonder, his head bowed down,
at her feet laid his offerings of adoration,
his flower-bow and all his flower-arrows,
emptying his quiver.
At Love after disarmament
the beauty looked benignly, with a serene countenance. (Trans. Dyson 109-15)

In this poem, beauty is depicted concretely. The grace of such beauty is so intense that the Love-god surrenders to the victorious woman, the symbol of perfect beauty. Through this poem, Tagore gives the message that real and perfect beauty lies above sensuality; before it, all carnal desires disappear, and everyone is happy to see this beauty. As the Love-god sees the beautiful woman bathing in the lake, he desires to get her close sensually, but as she appears before him, he changes his sensual mood and begins to adore her perfect beauty, abstaining from all thoughts of sensuality.

Tagore firmly believes that admiration of true beauty cannot be limited to an assessment of color, fragrance, and form. External beauty can entice the eyes momentarily but can never make a permanent impact upon the soul. In his quest for beauty, Tagore moves from the most tangible and visible level of perception to a level where perception is a little more subtle, where beauty is not limited within sensual observations, but in the abstract ideas. In Verse no. 35 of *Gitanjali*, Tagore dreams of a beautiful country where there is no place for negative elements. He calls the Infinite to raise his country "Into that heaven of freedom" (14) "Where the mind is without fear and the / head is held high; Where knowledge is free; / Where the world has not been broken up / into fragments by narrow domestic walls" (1-4). Here the "words come out from the depth / of truth" and "tireless striving stretches its arms / towards perfection" (5-8). The reason does not lose "its way into the dreary desert sand of / dead habit" and "the mind is led forward . . . into ever-widening thought and action" (10-13). In the poem, Tagore wishes not only for inner but also for outer freedom and fearlessness of mind. He seeks the Lord's support in expanding the consciousness of his people and awakening the country from its lethargic position. He believes that only a perfect harmony where "narrow walls" cannot break the world "into fragments" can help a nation progress. This harmony between the inner and the outer is the essence of Tagore's spirituality and a distinct sense of beauty.

Apart from Tagore, many other great thinkers of the world have also seen beauty in harmony. Plato states that "The deformed is always inharmonious with the divine, and the beautiful harmonious" (*Symposium*). As referred to earlier, Ficino also sees beauty "in a kind of luminous harmony." In his *Creative Unity*, Tagore mentions that "[L]ife finds its truth and beauty, not in any exaggeration of sameness, but in harmony" (*The English Writings*, 2:552). Though Tagore's views on beauty have similarity with those of the aforementioned thinkers, Tagore shows his distinctiveness. His notion of beauty matches Keats's, and he seems to have been influenced by Keats. Buddhadeva Bose points out in *Tagore: Portrait of a Poet*, "The only line of European verse he quotes repeatedly and with a constancy of admiration . . . is Keats' 'Beauty is Truth and Truth Beauty'" (113). Tagore declares, "When our universe is in harmony with Man, the eternal, we know it as truth, we feel it as beauty" (qtd. in Datta 22). He sees truth as beauty, ". . . the personal expression of truth in its perfection is beauty" (*The English Writings*, 2:524). Tagore's view of beauty is akin to that of Keats. While Keats states "Beauty is truth, truth beauty," Tagore acknowledges that truth reveals itself in beauty. He adds that "Beauty is no phantasy," and "it has the everlasting meaning of reality" (500). For Tagore, beauty is everlasting and akin to truth and is to be found in harmony with the universe.

Tagore continues his quest for beauty, and the beauty stands with truth, and he finds that truth in the Infinite, "thou art that / truth which has kindled the light of reason in / my mind" (*Gitanjali*, Verse 4). God is truth and it is He who illumines the mind of man with the light of truth, wisdom, and knowledge. Tagore reveals that God has endowed him with the faculty of reason, and He always provides him with the necessary strength and energy to act in this world. His spirit of beauty dwells in the Infinite, "thou who art the King of / kings hast decked thyself in beauty to / captivate my heart" (*Gitanjali*, Verse 56). The Infinite, the king of kings, has decorated Himself to look beautiful and to enslave the poet's heart, "O thou beautiful, there in the nest it is / thy love that encloses the soul with colours / and sounds and odours" (*Gitanjali*, Verse 67). God objectifies Himself in the countless beautiful objects of nature. He writes that "To crown the earth" morning comes "with the / golden basket in her right hand and bearing the / wreath of beauty" while the evening comes "through / trackless paths, carrying cool draughts of / peace in her golden pitcher from the western / ocean of rest" (*Gitanjali*, Verse 67). According to Tagore, morning and evening with their respective charms and beauties are different manifestations of God. Though God resides in multitudes, in reality, He is one and indivisible. Through these poems, the poet seems to affirm that the beauty and splendor of nature are only the decorations in which God decorates Himself to captivate his heart and win his love.

The Indian philosopher and poet Sri Aurobindo states, "To find highest beauty is to find God; to reveal, to embody, to create, as we say, highest beauty is to bring out of our souls the living image and power of God" (qtd. in Bidwaikar). To find absolute beauty, Tagore also strives to find God and seek communion with Him. Linking beauty with truth, he expresses the view that it is through our sense of truth that we realize order in creation. Our sense of beauty helps us recognize harmony in the universe (*The English Writings* 2:335). The more we become conscious of this harmony in creation (both within our soul and within the physical world), the more our apprehension of the blissful spirit of the world becomes universal and then "the expression of beauty in our

of goodness and love towards the infinite" (336). And Tagore's *Gitanjali* effectively manifests this journey to the Infinite.

Nothing within bounds can reach perfection until it transcends its limitedness and merges in the unlimited and the unformed. The finite and the Infinite, the form and the formless, the part and the whole coexist. Tagore believes that this great world which is an impression of the Infinite calls upon all human beings to explore truth. And that truth is not in his intellect or his possession, but in the illumination of his mind and recognition of the world, not merely as a storehouse of power, but as a habitation of the divine spirit, with its eternal music of beauty and its inner light of the divine presence. Tagore writes:

The light of thy music illumines the
world. The life breath of thy music runs
from sky to sky. The holy stream of thy
music breaks through all stony obstacles and
rushes on. (*Gitanjali*, Verse 3)

Tagore feels bewitched by God's music, the light of which brightens the world. It is the source of life and vitality which spreads over and permeates all skies. He wants to win the Infinite who illumines the world with His music. In "The Realization of The Infinite" of *Sadhana*, he speaks about the nature of communion with God. He asserts that God cannot be possessed, but experienced. To reinforce this remark, he draws the analogy of the river that joins the larger body of water, the ocean, but cannot become the ocean. Likewise man's soul, though it yearns to become one with the Infinite, cannot become Brahma Himself (*The English Writings* 2: 341-42). Man can only experience Him, and if one tries to be like Him, he or she is sure to lose everything.

Through his quest for beauty, Tagore reaches the point of death knocking at his door, but he is not afraid of death. Rather, he sees his path wrapped in beauty, "At this time of my parting, wish me good / luck, my friends! The sky is flushed with the / dawn and my path lies beautiful" (*Gitanjali*, Verse 94). He is not scared of death because to him, death is not the end, but a gateway through which he can reach the Infinite. It is not the termination of life, but the rejuvenation of life. In nature, there is a never-ending cycle of birth, death and re-birth. Tagore experiences many deaths of his near and dear ones. After the death of Kadambari Devi, his sister-in-law, Tagore realizes that his sorrow only enables him to view the beauty of nature from a more accurate perspective. Death gives him a sense of freedom, and he comes to appreciate the deeper meaning of beauty of the world. He realizes that like birth, death has its own beauty and truth. Death is the fulfillment and completion of life, "O thou the last fulfillment of life, death, my death, come and whisper to me!" (*Gitanjali*, Verse 91). In death, nothing is lost, rather, it is the channel through which life incessantly flows and renovates itself, and through which one can commune with the Infinite. For this reason, Tagore is not afraid of death.

Tagore is optimistic about meeting his much adored God, the absolute beauty and truth. He has "no fear" in his mind though the way is long and unfamiliar. He wishes to commune with God and describes the "unification scene" through the metaphor of the bride and bridegroom's union, "The flowers have been woven and the / garland is ready for the bridegroom. After / the wedding the bride shall leave her home / and meet her lord alone in the solitude of / night" (*Gitanjali*, Verse 91). He writes more about the

point of meeting his God, "The evening star will come out when my voyage / is done and the plaintive notes of the twilight / melodies be struck up from the King's gateway" (*Gitanjali*, Verse 94). Then God will welcome him with His sweet music, and thus the poet will be united with his King, the absolute beauty and truth.

Tagore's quest for beauty continues till his last days, and his constant contemplation on beauty and truth leads him to a new realization of the presence of the Supreme spirit. He sees beauty in the trifles of the world while nature, as the endless vessel of beauty, appears before him, opening up windows and revealing sights and objects touched with ethereal beauty. Charmed by the diverse and amazing panorama of nature, he pursues beauty unremittingly, and in his quest, he never advocates a renunciation of life. He accepts and enjoys the manifold beauties of life and nature enthusiastically. His fascination for beautiful nature becomes so elevated that Edward J. Thompson claims in "Criticism," "No poet that ever lived (I shall use this phrase again) has had a more constant and intimate touch with natural beauty." In search of beauty, Tagore does not follow the path that the ascetics choose nor does he suggest it to others. With an inquisitive mind, he continues his search for beauty and truth. He firmly believes in participating in the humble activities of daily life to realize and reach absolute beauty and truth, the Infinite. The sense of beauty in Tagore is strong and distinctive, and the quest for beauty is certainly his major poetic object.

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Distant Ties and Troubled Bonds in Trans-cultural Family Relations: A Reading of Jhumpa Lahiri's "Unaccustomed Earth" and "Hell-Heaven"

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Abstract: Jhumpa Lahiri, an Indian-American writer, highly recognized for her exquisite investigation into human relation, vividly pictures the heartbreaking transformation of family ties and loss of traditional bonds in the trans-cultural backdrop of the 21st century global village. Instead of celebrating transnational and multicultural identity, Lahiri poignantly portrays how, losing the traditional family bonds and merely becoming mechanical continuation of companionship, in the migrated land, the diasporic families exist and strive to move forward. This paper is an attempt to show the persisting unhappiness in the dismantled relation between husband-wife and parents-children in the light of "Unaccustomed Earth" and "Hell-Heaven." Delving into the untrodden areas of conjugal lives in a trans-cultural milieu, where echoes of the broken heart die in silence, the paper will also explore the dominant causes responsible for the breakage and transformation of family relations.

Introduction

Jhumpa Lahiri, the chronicler of diasporic communities, holds a unique place among Diaspora writers because of her emphasis on personal and familial lives of the immigrants rather than the external hardships they confront in the migrated land as Fakrul Alam says "Lahiri writes about the day-to-day world of Asian Americans" (362). Being a second generation immigrant, with her keen eye for detail, Lahiri precisely scrutinizes the familial and psychological complexities of Indian diasporas that unavoidably affect the familial relations between the first and the subsequent generations. In the twentieth century, even at the cost of being dismantled and dislocated from their motherlands, millions of people from distinct parts of the world migrated to America, a land of promise and infinite opportunities, to explore their fortune. Edward Saïd in *Culture and Imperialism* perceives the spread of migrants as "one of the unhappiest characteristics of the age" (402). The mass migration produced not only "more refugees, migrants, displaced persons, and exiles" (Saïd 402) but also generated and spread the unhappiest generations of men and women throughout the world because "exiles or emigrants or expatriates, are haunted by some sense of loss" which, being permeated in their psychology, is transforming the lives of the immigrants into inevitable discontentment (Rushdie 10). This paper will exhibit the disheartening transmutation of family relations of Indian immigrants and explore the reasons why, in the trans-cultural milieu, loving and ecstatic relationships between husband-wife and parents-children are transforming into loveless bonds.

Conjugal relations at a crossroads

Simon de Beauvoir in *The Second Sex* asserts the following about marriage: "it is becoming a union freely entered into by two autonomous individuals; the commitments

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of the two parties are personal and reciprocal" (364). But in the marital lives of the diasporas, absence of commitment and reciprocal understanding is intensifying the deterioration of the marital relation and Jhumpa Lahiri's "Unaccustomed Earth" and "Hell-Heaven" exactly reflect this disheartening deterioration. In the story "Hell-Heaven," Shyamal, who decides to explore his fortune in the foreign land, consents to marry Aparna not with the intention of forming a happy family in a new land or out of love, but to "placate his parents" (HH 65) so that he should be permitted to go abroad to pursue his higher studies, that his parents were unwilling to permit unless "he had a wife" (HH 65).

After completing his training on Microbiology from Berlin, Shyamal, along with his wife settles in Central Square, America, where he works at Mass General as a researcher. Shyamal actually represents the vast population of male immigrants who, being attracted by the American myth of success, migrated to the land of promise that offered indiscriminate opportunities to explore one's own fortune. In "Unaccustomed Earth" and "Hell-Heaven," Lahiri, along with telling the success story of Bengali male immigrants, also gives the readers a glimpse into the lives of their spouses and children who suffer, uncared for and unnoticed. Being oblivious to the loneliness of their spouses, the first generation male immigrants "toiled in unfriendly soil" (UE16) in their attempts to be acculturated in the migrated land. This, however, resulted in unavoidable disappointment and frustration in their wives who had "moved to the foreign place for the sake of marriage" (UE 11). According to George Eliot, "Marriage must be a relation either of sympathy or of conquest" (380). In his conjugal life, however, Shyamal was neither sympathetic nor enthusiastic about conquering his wife's heart. He was so insensitive towards Aparna that when she complains of her loneliness, "he said nothing to placate her" (HH76). Instead of paying her attention, Shyamal turns a deaf ear to her emotions and never attempts to provide her with solace or warmth through conversation. He further emphasizes the futility of Aparna's existence in his life by offering to send her back to Calcutta, and "making it clear that their separation would not affect him one way or the other" (HH76).

In the migrated land, Aparna, the "third-world woman," as Gayatri Spivak calls women like her, is used as a ladder in the fulfillment of her husband's material success. Her marriage to Shyamal transports her to a land where everyone is unknown, the language is unwelcoming, and the culture is shocking. In her "homesick and bewildered life" (*The Namesake* 38), though the husband is expected to be the best support, the patriarchy demands her to be "listless and silent" (*The Namesake* 11). In the "Hell-Heaven," Aparna stands for the unheard voices who, being entangled in the demand of modernity and engaged in an unresponsive relationship with the husbands of materialistic mentality, feel like fish out of water and suffer silently. In the migrated land, the displacement and the suffering of the Indian women like Aparna, can aptly be understood by Spivak's words in her semiotic essay "Can the Subaltern Speak?"

Between patriarchy and imperialism, subject-constitution and object-formation, the figure of the woman disappears, not into a pristine nothingness, but into a violent shuttling which is a displaced figuration of the 'third-world woman' caught between tradition and modernization. (102)

In the din and bustle of everyday life, loneliness is the only company for the first generation Indian female immigrants. Aparna's distress in her forlorn life gets

expression in the comment of Usha, Shyamal and Aparna's daughter, who says: "The sadder I got, the more I saw what a desolate life she led" (HH 76). In "Hell-Heaven," Lahiri, delineating Pranab as the "foil" for Shyamal, refers to the possible picture of a perfect family even in the distant land (Abrams 225). The foundation of family lies in dependency and understanding but in her conjugal life Aparna felt the absence of both. Through Pranab's attentive and caring attitude, Lahiri sheds light on the rudimentary issues that can essentially make a family happy under any circumstance. In the company of Pranab, as they discussed their lives in Calcutta, Aparna felt transported to the world she had left behind because of her marriage. In her lonely life, like all other first generation migrated women; she searched for solace in the memories of her family and motherland. But Aparna did not get such psychological support from Shyamal, which she might have expected from him. Usha, the constant observer of the agony and isolation of her mother, point blank declares that it was Pranab Kaku who "brought to my mother the first and, I suspect, the only pure happiness she ever felt" (HH 67). Shyamal's unusual and careless attitude causes the tie between them to deteriorate with disheartening consequences. In his conjugal life, Shyamal neither tries to step beyond the boundaries of his professional life nor gives his wife and daughter any access to his heart. Usha believes that her father "existed in a shell that neither my mother nor I could penetrate" (HH 65). Therefore, in her marital life, Aparna lived a life of complete alienation. Through the psychological alienation of Aparna, Lahiri epitomizes the heartrending picture of the conjugal lives of the Indian immigrants where marriage, being derailed from its conventional notion, exists merely as a mechanical continuation of companionship. Salman Rushdie's term "translation" is useful in understanding this deviation from the traditional familial bond. Living across the world, the diasporas are Rushdie's "translated men" and in their transplanted lives, the quintessence of the familial tie is "lost in translation" (Rushdie 17). In "Hell-Heaven," Shyamal, frustrating his conjugal relations and disappointing his wife, undeniably, epitomizes the "loss" that the diasporas must lament for.

Lahiri delineates that, against the trans-cultural backdrop, matrimonial relationship is destined to suffer, irrespective of whether the spouses are Indians or Indian-Americans. Although a thread of silence and compromise bind Shyamal and Aparna together, nothing helps Pranab and Deborah, an Indian-American couple, to continue their relationship and the mixed marriage ends in a divorce. In his companionship with Shyamal's wife, Aparna, though Pranab shadowed the qualities of a possible better husband, in his marital life he was no better than a loveless and negligent one. The accusation is clarified in Deborah's confession that, in all the years of her marital life, she "had felt hopelessly shut out of a part of" (HH 82) Pranab's life. Actually, from the very initiation of their cross-cultural relation, the Bengali acquaintances considered the affair as "fun" and were waiting for the ultimate catastrophe, firmly believing that "she will leave him" (HH 73). Indeed, Pranab could not overcome the prejudice that, by marrying an American, he had thrown "his life away" (HH 73) and because of his diasporic prejudice and confusion, Pranab made the divorce inevitable, proving that "mixed marriages were a doomed enterprise" (HH 75).

In the title story "Unaccustomed Earth," Lahiri portrays an unmitigated breach in the matrimonial relations of the subsequent two generations of couples. Instead of being grieved at the sudden death of his wife, Ruma's father, the first generation Indian immigrant, started to enjoy his newly-found freedom which deplorably reflects the

absence of any emotional connection with his wife. In this story, Lahiri uncovers the untold estrangement of another heart-broken woman, Ruma's mother, who was continuing her marital relation without any loving response in return. Because of the unbearable shock of her mother's death, Ruma was so traumatized that she failed to continue her career as a lawyer and confined herself in the very role of her mother "caring exclusively for children and a household" (UE 11). Ruma's striking resemblance to her mother forebodes the melancholic life that is in store for her. Ruma's obsession with the grief of her mother's absence affected her conjugal life so severely that "she could not explain what had happened to her marriage after her mother's death" (UE 25). On the other hand, Ruma's father, without hesitation, wiped out all the memories of his wife by selling their old house where they had invaluable memories together.

The relationship between Ruma's parents was nothing but a compromise, especially on the part of her mother. Like a typical Indian wife, she nurtured her children in a land where she felt "un-homed" and a "psychological refugee" and her alienation was more intensified when she failed to instill her traditional Indian values into her children (Tyson 241). Leading a life together for nearly forty years, Ruma's father failed to love his wife in the way Mrs. Bagechi loved her husband within the two years of their marriage which shows that, although Ruma's parents spent forty years together, no strong bond was created with the passage of such a long time. Guy de Maupassant's words in *A Woman's Life and Other Stories* aptly applies to Ruma's parents: "two people can never reach each other's deepest feelings and instincts, that they spend their lives side by side, linked it may be, but not mingled, and that each one's inmost being must go through life eternally alone" (56).

The statistics that denote "long term spouses typically dying within two years of one another, the surviving spouse dying essentially of a broken heart" is not applicable to her parents because Ruma knew that "her parents had never loved each other in that way" (UE 33). In fact, in both of the stories, Lahiri depicts that neither of the first generation couples are in a harmonious relationship. Even the off-springs of the first generation are affected by the persisting lovelessness in the conjugal lives of their parents. The unhappy marriages of their parents cast their shadows on the lives of the second generation immigrants as well. In "Unaccustomed Earth," Ruma's marriage with an American man, Adam, not only created a discontentment in her parents as it was an act of defiance against Indian tradition, but it also entangled her in a very uncaring relationship like her mother. The cross-cultural marriage offers nothing atypical other than the same disappointment and dismay. By marrying Adam, Ruma dreadfully experiences the similar distance in her conjugal life that persisted between her parents.

In "Unaccustomed Earth," Lahiri, through gardening, symbolizes the struggle of the first generation immigrants who "toiled" to find their niche in the dynamics of the "last superpower" (Said 341). One day, before starting his work in the garden, Ruma's father wanted to "borrow some old clothes of Adam's, and Ruma gave him a pair of khakis and a torn oxford shirt, . . . The clothes were large on her father, the shoulders of the shirt drooping, the cuffs of the pants rolled up" (UE 43). The mismatch of Adam's clothes on Ruma's father's body clearly indicates that the immigrants do not belong to this land. They are outsiders who need to struggle to become accustomed to the unaccustomed earth. In the pursuit of attaining their American dream of success, they

bankered after it so much that they had to pay the price of becoming strangers to their dear and dear ones. Giving work the supreme priority, they strived in the 'unfriendly soil' to strengthen their roots.

Ruma's husband, Adam, in no way is different from this mentality of forsaking his family for the quest of more material success. Although Ruma married the person she loved, disregarding her parents' disapproval, nowadays no glue of love, no care or understanding exist between them. She feels no sympathy for him even though she knows "Adam was doing everything in his power to make Ruma happy. But nothing was making her happy" (UE7). Ruma felt the same sort of uprootedness because she was also in the process of migrating from one place to another for Adam's job that put her in eternal adjustment. Ruma's father realizes, "like his wife, Ruma was now alone in this new place, overwhelmed, without friends, caring for a young child" (UE 40). He had always desired to see Ruma's life in a different way and "wanted to shield her from the deterioration that inevitably took place in the course of a marriage" (UE 54). In her married life, Ruma experienced the exact alienation that her mother went through and the lifelong anxiety of her mother becomes the ultimate present for her. In both of the stories, Lahiri depicts how family life is undergoing heartbreaking changes where love is vaporized and sympathy is non-existent. In the migrated land, turning away from the traditional definition, family is assuming the face of frustration, anxiety and disappointment. The relations between spouses appear like nothing but a recurring vision of a mechanically continued relationship and "the trauma of loss and death of love" (Alam 365).

Deviation in parents-children relation

It is a universally acknowledged truth that parents constitute the world for children. In "Unaccustomed Earth," a poignant picture of parent-child love and dependency stirs the emotion when Ruma's father, being nostalgic about his children, reminisced "how young they had once been, how helpless in his nervous arms, needing him for their very survival, knowing no one else" (UE 54). But, needless to say, as they grow up, their needs dissipate and they start to live a life of their own. From the very inception of immigrant life, the breach in the relation between parents and children begins.

Lahiri associates disappointment with the very word "migration." When the first generation immigrants, forsaking their motherland, create spatial and physical gaps with their parents, in spite of living under the same roof, the second generation immigrants create a psychological distance with their parents. Once "in the name of ambition and accomplishment," Ruma's father "had turned his back on his parents" (UE 51). Pranab stopped maintaining any tie with his parents because they refused to acknowledge his mixed marriage. Thus Pranab's marriage to Deborah, an American girl, ended his connection with his family. Having migrated to America, the first generation male immigrants maintain only distant ties with their parents and, with the passage of time, their visits to India become less frequent, so the gap increases. On the other hand, choosing an American life and preferring their own choices, the second generation inevitably remains psychologically detached. In "Unaccustomed Earth," Ruma's marriage to an American disappoints her parents because of her violation of traditional Indian norms while her brother Romi "had crushed them by moving abroad and maintaining only distant ties" and it can be predicted that the same shock is awaiting Ruma through her own son Akash(UE 26). Although the land of promise

fulfilled the dreams of its immigrants by providing them "opportunity for prosperity and success, and an upward social mobility," it also transformed the happiest family relations into complete disarray ("American Dream"). For the offspring of the first generation, the trans-cultural atmosphere is the foremost ground of contradiction with their parents because they get more inclined to the host culture that offers them more freedom than the imposed Indian culture that they are completely unaware of. It is the alteration that parents must accept -- "the more the children grew, the less they had seemed to resemble either parent-- they spoke differently, dressed differently, seemed foreign in every way" (UE 54).

Parents-children relation takes a distinct shape in the migrated land. Children of the Indian immigrants grow in the cross-cultural milieu struggling with cultural conflicts, partially absorbing the host culture and mostly deviating from imposed Indian culture. Since their childhood, Ruma and Romi had not been raised with any sort of sincere attention from their father as it should be. In the same way, they did not learn to take responsibility of their parents in return. After her mother's death, the visit of her father made her fearful of the fact that "her father would become a responsibility, an added demand, continuously present in a way she was no longer used to" (UE 7). Although it is natural in India for a widower to live with his children, Ruma's father knew that "Ruma hadn't been raised with that sense of duty" (UE 29).

Life in a diaspora is full of scattered hopes and dismay. In the trans-cultural milieu, parents can hardly keep their grip on their children. The imposition of Indian culture at home and the influence of American culture everywhere put the second generation Indian-Americans in a dilemma. There is always the urge to get out of the grip of Indian culture and live like American children. In this conflict of cultures, family relations suffer and fail to play its traditional role. In this way, family exists merely as a continuation of a fragile bond, where love, care, duty, and respect are forgotten myths. The children of the immigrants advance with the unique pressure of a double reality because:

Paradoxically, although a majority of East Indian immigrant parents immigrated to the US in search of a better life for themselves, and to afford their children the opportunity to make the best of themselves, by getting the most from the US, many such parents often resist their children's acculturation to the US culture as a means of preserving their native culture. (Baptiste 352)

Their parents' misunderstanding, prejudice and rejection of their American self and their inevitable connection with the same from neighborhoods to schools, colleges, universities as well as working places throw the children into a life-long crisis. This eternal anxiety of multiple realities puts them in the world of psychological complexity and keeps them aloof from their parents just as Ruma's use of English and her western dresses alienate her from her mother since childhood. The "fear that their children are becoming 'Americans' and abandoning the family's values" (Baptiste 351-352) is once again the secret to Aparna becoming detestable to Usha in "Hell-Heaven." With her "red and white bangles" and "common Tangail sari," Aparna is still a typical Bengali woman who wants her child to grow up as an Indian. But Aparna's daughter, Usha, an American child, finds herself when using English and wearing jeans and skirts. She is attracted to American culture and develops a friendlier relation with Deborah than her mother. Throughout the story, Lahiri shows that there is no affectionate,

compassionate, sharing relation between Aparna and Usha. Rather, Usha keeps secrets, evades her mother intentionally, increases her mother's agony by making her lonely and rejecting her in all spheres, and declaring several times that she hates her. Eventually the mother and the daughter make peace, but this peace is not out of realization or love or respect from the daughter's side; rather it is Aparna who compromises and takes it for granted that Usha "was not only her daughter but a child of America as well" (HH 81-82). In this way parents-children are newly identified, their relations are bound together with newly woven threads, where love and respect are absent.

Conclusion

Keeping diasporic families in focus, and scrutinizing the ties between husband-wife and parents-children, it can be concluded that the normalcy of relations is waning with the awakening of ambition, acculturation, and culture collision. Though people migrate to a foreign land to pursue success and the ultimate happiness that success promises, Jhumpa Lahiri shows that against a trans-cultural backdrop, "the attainment of happiness" is not so simple (UE 4). In point of fact, it cannot be known what would have happened to these people if they had not been migrated but for those who have chosen an immigrant's life, it becomes an unavoidable truth for them that the "previous life has vanished" and the new life in the foreign land is "a constant burden, a continuous feeling out of sorts" (*The Namesake* 49). It must not be forgotten that wherever it is, a family is the temple of happiness but Lahiri shows that in a multicultural set up, the familial relationships, being consumed with rejection, secrecy and non-communication, are frustrated with distance and disappointment. Delineating the minute details of the lives of the diasporas in "Unaccustomed Earth" and "Hell-Heaven," Lahiri, thus, exposes the persisting unhappiness in the family relationships between husband-wife and parents-children that is negotiating the crossroads in the form of distant ties and troubled bonds.

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Darwin, Cognition and Literary Evocations of the Mind: The Case of *Requiem for a Nun*

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*Abstract: William Faulkner is one of the American writers who does not clearly and easily make the case for the significance of ideas in his fiction but argues that his literature is not inimical to ideas. It flourishes upon ideas, but it does not present ideas partly and neatly. It involves them with the "recalcitrant stuff of life," and it is the literary critic's job to deal with that involvement. Sensibility to contemporary movements in science is a literary prerequisite, and Faulkner, in particular, understood the need for "interdisciplinarity," which he fulfilled with his notions of evolution. There are notable manifestations of Darwinian ethos in his literature, and *Requiem for a Nun* stands ahead to present his notions of evolution. This paper analyzes the evolutionary ideas through the explanation of cultural and societal evolution embedded in the text. The transformation of textual spaces and transition of fictional minds in Faulkner's fiction seem to align with David Herman's notion of "modernist authors" and Jakob Johann von Uexküll's idea of *umwelt*. Therefore, this paper studies the evolutionary consciousness of the text through Herman and Uexküll's perspectives.*

The mind and the body
Together form the *kaya*
Define the surroundings
Emerge through evolution
And reflect *Maya*

(Sain Lalon, from the song "Make a soul-trap beyond the air")

The soul defines the mind
And Mind renovates body
The body decorates nature
An evolution to nurture

(Shah Abdul Karim, from the song "In the festivity of mind")

Charles Darwin finds "grandeur" (12) in nature and in life, and the stylists of evolutionary fictions incorporate the notion of "grandeur" to their narratives through the portrayal of the mind, experiencing nature. William Faulkner may not be a follower of Darwin, but as a modernist author he is definitely influenced by the Darwinian notions of evolution. This article aims to explain the aspects of Darwinian evolution in William Faulkner's fiction *Requiem for a Nun* through the spectacles of David Herman's perspectives on "modernist authors" from his essay "Re-minding Modernism" published in *The Emergence of Mind* and Jakob Johann von Uexküll's idea of *umwelt*. *Umwelt* (plural: *umwelten*; from the German *Umwelt* meaning environment or surroundings) is the biological foundation that lies at the very epicenter

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of the study of both communication and signification in the human and non-human or animal (Deely 13). The term is usually translated as “self-centered world” (Deely 13). Von Uexküll theorized that organisms can have different *umwelten*, even though they share the same environment (cited in Deely 13). Herman also defines the modernist authors as “*umwelt* researchers” who manifest the vantage points in their narratives to exhibit the consciousness of fictional minds (Herman 266). The operation of this consciousness in relation to its surrounding evokes the cognition of Darwinism in *Requiem for a Nun*. William Faulkner seems to incorporate the societal evolution and the cultural evolution in this regard. These evolutionary aspects evoke different *umwelten*, representing the consciousness of the fictional minds and the textual spaces. This article, therefore, locates and analyzes the evolutionary minds and spaces in Faulkner’s *Requiem for a Nun*.

Much of Faulkner’s fiction display a Darwinian ethos, but, an acceptance of evolution does not manifest that everyone has, idealized in his brain, a duplicate copy of the exact words of Charles Darwin. Learning is often a convoluted process, and Faulkner’s road toward Darwinism was greatly determined by his “upbringing in the South: half a century elapsed following the Civil War before the South as a whole began to enter the mainstream of scientific research and another half passed before it began to become an equal in such research” (Wainwright 65). Thus, much of Faulkner’s Darwinian understanding came to him in an ancillary manner over several decades. His attitude towards evolution, therefore, reveals a personal change, an intellectual progress that bears evidence to the emergence of modern America, following Darwinism that challenged older ways of thinking.

Experiencing the English naturalist’s rational effect upon epistemology from a number of sources, Faulkner became responsive to their significances. In his book *Darwin and Faulkner’s Novels: Evolution and Southern Fiction*, Michael Wainwright mentions Faulkner’s approach to literature manifesting the philosophical effect of Darwinian thoughts. According to Wainwright, Darwin’s ideas on evolution certainly helped the artistic delineation of his Southern Republic of Yoknapatawpha which came from the *History of English Literature (1863-1867)*—written by French critic and historian Hippolyte Taine. He adds that Faulkner never owned a copy of this work but “he was definitely aware of the kind of determinism originated by Taine” (67), and Ludwig Lewisohn’s compendium, *A Modern Book of Criticism*, which he read while in Normandy during 1925. These books have accustomed him to the critic’s ideas; Faulkner’s “hand-written explanations to this volume are numerous” (Wainwright 67); their manner signals his productive engagement with Taine’s *History*. Wainwright also discovers that the Darwinian inspired *Creative Evolution* of Henri Louis Bergson was also highly rated by Faulkner who recommended it to a friend with the commendation that “it helped me” (cited in Wainwright 67). Specifying Wainwright’s views, the intellectual association between Faulkner and his stepson, Malcolm Franklin that had begun with “a series of lessons in herpetology” led to their reading anthropology and discussing “Darwin and variations in species” (Wainwright 67). Wainwright emphasizes Faulkner’s continued engagement with the subject: “[w]ill you get me a good Darwin?” he asked a New York friend, “I want it for my fifteen-year-old boy, who is messing with anthropology. *Origin of the Species*, I mean, and what about Huxley?” (cited in Wainwright 68).

Requiem for a Nun appeared twenty-five years after his first recorded engagement with Darwinian notions. Faulkner's notions on evolution have come to the forefront in the narrative sections of *Requiem for a Nun*. The titles of three major sections, "The Courthouse (A Name for the City)," "The Golden Dome (Beginning Was the Word)," and "The Jail (Nor Even Yet Quite Relinquish-)," not only focus on his knowledge of Darwin's evolutionary theory but also present his appreciation of subsequent adjustments to scientific epistemology. In 1948, for example, George Gamov, Ralph Alpher, and Hans Bethe had suggested the Big Bang theory as the origin of the universe (cited in Carroll 103). Just after three years of Hans Behte's Big Bang Theory, *Requiem for a Nun* narrates the event that delineated Jackson's topographical position in the space and that site's eventual status in Southern affairs as "one see the one spawn one mother- womb, one furious tumescence, father-mother-one, one vast incubate ejaculation already fissionating in one boiling moil of litter from the celestial experimental Work Bench" (Faulkner 88). Faulkner's nuclear terminology expresses a cutting-edge knowledge of physics while recalling "far less obscurely than Darwin does – the anteriority of divine existence" (Carroll 104).

According to the Darwinian model, societal development and the outbreak of inter-ethnic conflict accompanied the emergence of modern man. Those more skilled as artisans, asserts *The Descent of Man*, win in this struggle for existence:

We can see, that in the rudest state of society, the individuals who were the most sagacious, who invented and used the best weapons or traps, and who were best able to defend themselves, would rear the greatest number of offspring. The tribes, which included the largest number of men thus endowed, would increase in number and supplant other tribes. Numbers depend primarily on the means of subsistence, and this depends partly on the physical nature of the country, but in a much higher degree on the arts which are there practised. As a tribe increases and is victorious, it is often still further increased by the absorption of other tribes. (128)

In Europe, concludes Darwin, "the men of the Bronze period were supplanted by a race more powerful, and, judging from their sword-handles, with larger hands; but their success was probably still more due to their superiority in the arts" (128). Darwin's conclusion was that "at the present day civilized nations are everywhere supplanting barbarous nations, excepting where the climate opposes a deadly barrier" (129). The unpleasant consequence of such progress, he argues, is:

the most closely-allied forms, – varieties of the same species, and species of the same genus or related genera, – which, from having nearly the same structure, constitution, and habits, generally come into the severest competition with each other; consequently, each new variety or species, during the progress of its formation, will generally press hardest on its nearest kindred, and tend to exterminate them. (86)

Requiem for a Nun incorporates the Darwinian model closely in respect of societal growth. David Herman, in his essay "Re-minding Modernism," discusses that the narrative (on societal growth) of modernist writers based itself less "on the fictional world" than "fictional-world-as-experienced" (243). The scope of nature and the characters' or narrator's experience in this modernist fiction fall within the domain of psyche "including sense impressions, emotions, memories, associative thought patterns and so on" (243). The vicious newcomers, in the text, tend to be rapacious males whom

indigenous folks fail to distinguish as a threat until it is too late. Deceptive penetration of the established state is the result. Faulkner's perception on the appearance and evolution of societies in the American South posits this intra-special notion of "world-as-experienced" as one check on the vigorous spread of *Homo sapiens* (91). In colonial America, the pillagers are Caucasians, people whose progress wiped out not only "Northern indigenes but also the stratigraphic traces of autochthonous existence" (Godden 158):

not because of the grooved barrel but because they could enter the red man's milieu and make the same footprints that he made; the husbandman printing deep the hard heels of his brogans because of the weight he bore on his shoulders: axe and saw and plow-stock, who dispossessed the forest man for the obverse reason: because with his saw and axe he simply removed, obliterated, the milieu in which alone the forest man could exist; then the land speculators and the traders in slaves and whiskey who followed the husbandmen, and the politicians who followed the land speculators, printing deeper and deeper the dust of that dusty widening, until at last there was no mark of Chickasaw left in it anymore. (Faulkner91)

The biological legacy does not leave genealogical attributions. The manor of Louis Grenier, the original owner of Frenchman's Bend, reveals this veracity:

his manor, his kitchens and stables and kennels and slave quarters and gardens and promenades and fields which a hundred years later will have vanished, his name and his blood too, leaving nothing but the name of his plantation and his own fading corrupted legend like a thin layer of the native ephemeral yet inevitable dust on a section of country surrounding a little lost paintless crossroads store. (Faulkner25)

The unrelenting coming of settlers even removes past existence of the patriarchal ancestry: "new names and faces too in the settlement now – faces so new as to have (to the older residents) no discernible antecedents other than mammalinity, nor past other than the simple years which had scored them; and names so new as to have no discernible (nor discoverable either) antecedents or past at all" (Faulkner 26).

Mankind of the boundary, whatever their race, have become an "anachronism out of an old dead time and a dead age" (Faulkner 88). The cultural inferences, both creative and emotional, that evolutionary science conveys, thereby, perform on the stage of the established Faulknerian aesthetic.

Jakob von Uexküllⁱⁱ, the originator of the idea of *umwelt*, also discusses evolution and popularizes the balance between body and cell system and environment. He states that the mind and the world are inseparable, because it is the mind that interprets the world for the organism (cited in Tonnessen 286). Von Uexküll explains, "in our body the majority of the body's cells were to decide in place of the cortical cells, which impulse the nerves should transmit" (cited in Tonnessen 286). Similarly, Faulkner explains, "all living organisms in Jackson behave as subjects, responding only to signals and signs and, not only to causal impulses" (89). This literary biological foundation has procreated a cultural superstructure based on mind and environment. For Faulkner's paradigm, as for present-day genetics, biological edifice has its equivalent in the cultural environment. Natural selection works by the denunciation of unstable genes; survivors reproduce and tend toward solidity. Cultural diffusion has similarly given rise to a type of evolution, which is moving at a pace faster than

biological one. Language is the foundation of this environment. If a single word, name, or phrase is sufficiently unique and remarkable to be articulated in its context, then it is one "meme" (Wainwright 25). Wainwright defines a gene "not in a rigid all-or-none way, but as a unit of convenience, a length of chromosome with just sufficient copying-fidelity to serve as a viable unit of natural selection" (25). Similarly, a "meme" is a "replicating entity" subject to differential survival in cultural terms (26). The chief benefit of "memes" over genes is their ability to survive in non-somatic forms. The subtitle of the second section refers to the beginning of the "word" which is similar to "meme." Words are playing themselves in this section. The word "absolute" (Faulkner 88) turns into "quasi-absolute" (Faulkner 89) when Joseph Johnson faces an emotional outburst. When Joseph is reaching the extreme point of his anger the word "quasi-absolute" is turning into "obsolete-absolute" (Faulkner 89). The readers find the environment around The Golden Dome is also going through a transition with the emotional transition of Joseph. Thus, the character's *umwelt* is causing the evolution of a word and surroundings. Similarly, Temple Drake reacts to the topography of Yoknapatawpha, and her word "mad" responds to the first phase of her thoughts and turns "manning-madness" (Faulkner 92). Eventually, when she expresses her failure to visualize Yoknapatawpha as her home, she picks up the word "dreading-madness-madhouse" (Faulkner 92). These words work like "memes" which evolve with the change of psychological states of different characters in the text. Therefore, the *umwelten* of characters are causing the evolution of words and environment.

On the basis of Yoknapatawpha's *umwelt*, *Requiem for a Nun* manifests the association between Faulkner's literature and the cultural evolution. "The Courthouse (A Name for the City)," for instance, narrates the argument at which cultural evolution becomes a manifesto. This narrative section begins with the account of the town's formation, a moment which is signifying the importance of communal records. During its early stage of Yoknapatawpha, local land grants and loans are accepted with the local for their safe storage. Before this comprehension, the community had existed as a settlement and then as a village, pioneering people with a frontier attitude in which personal liberty and freedom were almost a physical condition like fire or food, and no community was going to interfere with anyone's morals as long as the amoralist practised somewhere else" (Faulkner 23). However, an eccentric group follows its morality within the localities of the village. There is no alternative but to imprison them in the community's provisional jail. To secure a cell door that until now has never required fastening, the locals put Old Alec Holston's padlock from the federal mail pouch. Local troublemakers could be relied upon to serve their time. The outlaws are not so courteous; they escape, taking the padlock with them.

Not operative for protecting the mail, since it could easily be cut from the leather pouch, the lock nonetheless conveys a symbolism which its vanishing has made obvious: the village is no longer a sovereign of the United States but is knotted to the federation. This link may be easy to evade but the necessary self-restraint in keeping the relationship is a responsibility that ensures liberty. The stealing of the lock, as Faulkner's philosophy advocates, is a serious business: the community "had already realised its seriousness from the very fact that Peabody had tried to make a joke about it which everyone knew that even Peabody did not think humorous" (25). Ratcliffe (also known as Ratliff) somewhat solves the dilemma. He suggests putting the cost of a replacement lock on the Indian settlement ledger and let America pay. Written down in

this way, they can write off the debt: "they could have charged the United States with seventeen thousand five hundred dollars worth," in Ratcliffe's arrangement, "and none would ever read the entry" (25).

Thomas Jefferson Pettigrew, the federal mailman who cherishes the lock, will not allow such an evasion of accountability. From the moment the lock is stolen, "Pettigrew sets himself up as arbiter of right and wrong in the settlement" (26) and thereby personifies "the whole vast incalculable weight of federality, not just representing the government nor even himself just the government; for that moment at least, he was the United States" (Faulkner 26). To write off the padlock is a violation of the mutual trust guaranteeing the federation. This is a matter of finite liberty, autonomy as its own prisoner, so another solution is required. Peabody settles the dilemma with his pronouncement that "we're going to have a town" (Faulkner 27). The formation of a community topographically identifiable on a map of the United States sustains the federal connection. With Peabody's suggestion that "her name's Jefferson now," the town is objectified through the process of naming (Faulkner 27). This vocabulary satisfies the mailman. Kinless, he senses that his existence, and by parallel the federal constitution, will last in perpetuity on the map of America. This change is especially appropriate: Faulkner portrays Mississippi as evolving out of prehistoric ages and Pettigrew displays an evolutionary essence. He is "a pterodactyl chick arrested just out of the egg ten glaciers ago," a man "so old in simple infancy as to be worn and weary ancestor of all subsequent life" (Faulkner 34). For the inhabitants, however, the concept of a town remains barely plausible until the construction of a courthouse. Then "somewhere between the dark of that first day and the dawn of the next, something happened to them" (Faulkner 35). This recognition of the courthouse as symbolic hub of Jefferson instantly effects a shift towards the impersonality of a modern urban environment. Consequently, the men working on the project are "a little unfamiliar even to one another" (Faulkner 35).

David Herman discusses the evolution of textual environments in the narratives on modernist authors. Herman states that "modernist narratives suggest the degree to which perceiving, acting, and thinking are inextricably interlinked with the constant cross-circulation among these activities accounting for the intelligent agents' enactment of a world. Thus, modernists emphasized on the tight coupling between mind and the world" (264). Moreover, this "cognition between the mind and the world evokes the notion of *umwelt*" (Herman 265). The evolution of cultural superstructure, in *Requiem for a Nun*, stresses on the interlinked factor of the mind and the world. First, Faulkner incorporates Darwin's ideas for specific narrative tracks: for instance, the planning and building of Jefferson. Sutpen's French employee, as part III launches, is the architect of the courthouse. Faulkner echoes this character from *Absalom, Absalom!* (1936) and presents the evolutionary mechanism associated with Jefferson's development. The undefined interface, the evolutionary tension between the primitive and the erudite, is blatant in the architect's existence. He tries to escape Yoknapatawpha but is "overtaken and caught in the swamp" by "Sutpen and Sutpen's wild West Indian headman" (Faulkner 96). They pluck him from this primordial space to resume stamping, or marking out, Mississippian civilization. Sutpen's Frenchman also supervises the brick-making process. The slabs produced from his brick-mound correlate to replicating entities, their final distribution in the town's superstructure equivalent to the bodily manifestation, or phenotype, of genes. Natural selection does indeed build with bricks.

and its effect could be labeled as the tactics of brick substitution with Faulkner's deliberately anthropomorphic metaphor corresponding to Wainwright's articulation of Darwin's use of analogy in *The Variation of Animals and Plants under Domestication*:

I have spoken of selection as the paramount power. Let an architect be compelled to build an edifice with uncut stones, fallen from a precipice. The shape of each fragment may be called accidental; yet the shape of each has been determined by the force of gravity, the nature of the rock, and the slope of the precipice, events and circumstances, all of which depend on natural laws; but there is no relation between these laws and the purpose for which each fragment is used by the builder. (qtd. in Wainwright 5)

Variations, suggests Darwin, are resolute in a similar fashion by immutable laws that have no connection to the living structure which is slowly erected through the power of selection, whether natural or simulated. Continuing his analogy, Darwin argues that if an architect succeeded in building an edifice, "[w]e look at some highly complex and excellently adapted organism, variability sinks to a quite subordinate position in importance in comparison with selection, in the same manner as the shape of each fragment used by our supposed architect is unimportant in comparison with his skill" (249).

Faulkner's sharing of these ideas is obvious in the genetic matrix from which Jefferson and its inhabitants' minds evolve and from which it "will never be able to get away" (97). Jefferson's original buildings see and exhibit the evolutionary paradigm. The jail, for example, "had seen all: the mutation and the change" (Faulkner 196); a building in uninterrupted development, constructed by "successive layers," as if resonating "men and women and children in their successive overlapping generations" (Faulkner 197). Over the years, the jail's basic structure, "the old mud-chinked logs of the ground floor," stays intact despite the imposition of a "by-neo-Greek-out-of-Georgian-England" exterior (Faulkner 199). Built from a "vener of brick," trickery appears prevalent as the facade, a representative of civilized Jefferson, attempts to conceal "the old ineradicable remembering" of our evolutionary succession (Faulkner 199).

The second approach to the outlining of a cultural superstructure emphasizes Cecilia Farmer's biological and cultural implication. As with so many of Faulkner's characters, the Civil War is a turning point for Cecilia. She meets her future husband during the struggle and marries him upon the end of hostilities. Despite her anemia, Cecilia gives birth to her twelve sons (Faulkner 147). She is stronger than her husband who is injured in the battles. She represents the matriarchal figure of generations to come. It is inconclusive whether the character is idealized by a divinely-led evolution or not. However, Cecilia Farmer's life would never have been recorded, insists Faulkner, had she not scratched her name on the jailhouse window on the day war broke out. By scratching that pane, she created a permanent mark. With Cecilia, Faulkner commits to creating a few "moments of being" (Darwin 96) from an ordinary life but sees and presents her in her human principles. These "moments of being" create an existence that represents the evolving human strength in agonizing circumstances. The "moments" characterize the evolution of human history from a miserable existence to a stable and civilized being. Moreover, Faulkner's thin pane of small glass carries meaning in terms of new historicism. The preeminent way to

emphasize the value of the past in our changing world, suggests Faulkner, is to inspect the events in that period, recognizing that the two eras, although markedly different, are at the same time a whole.

Faulkner is manifesting a paradigm "in which preceding generations of evolution account for the present state of living phenomena" in the world (Godden 200). This model demands not only biological variation but also the hyperboles and misunderstandings of cultural inheritance that both endow history with a questionable legitimacy. The medium for Cecilia's trace reveals this caution, the windowpane that bears her name becoming nacreous over time with "a faint quiet cast of apocrypha" (Faulkner 151). With dubious validity, Faulkner associates and frames every text. His "apocrypha" is a form of mythology that lasts longer than history; mythology can even overwhelm the trace. Evolution creates this uncertainty because the evolutionary essence, by its very nature, moves on. Social progress, as suggested in *Requiem for a Nun*, advances the ability to evolve. The frequency of evolutionary acceleration increases; consequently, biological barriers provide less hindrance to *Homo sapiens*. Jeffersonians, for example, observe humankind's impact on nature with the defoliation of their town: "The last forest tree was gone from the courthouse yard," and in their place, "formal synthetic shrubs contrived and schooled in Wisconsin greenhouses" (Faulkner 183). There is, moreover, a change to the medium of the South's circumambient ethos. National Radio means "no more Yoknapatawpha's air nor even Mason and Dixon's air, but America's . . . one air, one nation" (Faulkner 187). By the 1940s, therefore, "the last old sapless indomitable unvanquished widow or maiden aunt had died" (Faulkner 185) and "in its surface aspects," as Noel Polk concurs, "Jefferson becomes indistinguishable from all other cities its size" (135). The old Southern nature, once of introspection, now spreads to a vision as wide as can be humanly envisaged: "one universe, one cosmos" as radio telescopes produce electromagnetic waves that bounce back to the earth from distant constellations. Faulkner represents the doom of humankind as an express train "grooved ineluctably to the spidery rails of its destiny and destination" (140). These two rails, like the two chromosomal rods of biological heirloom, direct mankind along a "steadfast and durable and unhurrying continuity against or across which the vain and glittering ephemerae of progress and alteration" wash (Faulkner 141). The foundation of human life is biological inheritance, and Cecilia Farmer is part of the *Homo sapiens*'s Southern destiny. This course is not inexorable. Culture, as *Requiem for a Nun* submits, can provide essential anticipation.

Faulkner embodies the evolutionary cognition required for cultural proliferation. Biological evolution "favors genes with three properties: longevity, fecundity, and accuracy of replication" (Wainwright 57). Genes with longevity have more time for reproduction, fertility ensures a rapidity of replication, and replication accuracy prevents the demise of genetic descendants. Taken together, these properties enable a gene to become more numerous in the gene pool (Wainwright 57). Thus, sampling a gene pool over a significant duration, the later sample will contain a larger proportion of varieties with high longevity, fecundity, and copying-fidelity. Successful memes exhibit sustainability but, as Faulkner confirms, stability often occurs after a number of transmission blunders. The post trader of Pettigrew's time was named Ratcliffe, but "a hundred years later, [the name] would still exist in the county, but by that time it had passed through two inheritors who had dispensed with the eye in the transmission of words, using only the ear, so that by the time the fourth one had been compelled by

simple necessity to learn to write it again, it had lost the 'e' and the final 'fe' too" (Faulkner 183)^v. The biological conclusion is stark: after a few more twenty-first-century generations, no William Cuthbert Faulkner genes may survive; his meme-complexes, as exemplified by the Jefferson of Ratcliffe to Ratliff, will remain vital.

Faulkner states that the writer traces "a desire to leave some mark on the world so that people after you will know that for a little while Smith was here, he made his scratch" (Wainwright 27). Therefore, according to Herman, Faulkner can be viewed as an "umwelt researcher" because he is the "explorer of the lived phenomenal worlds that emerge from, or are enacted through, the interplay between intelligent agents and their cultural as well as material circumstances" (266). For Faulkner understood the power of nature to be the power of motion, and evolution to be the universal process. The narrative sections of *Requiem for a Nun* express the "interplayed" principles particularly well; movement may not mean change, but evolution does. "The process of reading leads into divergence and variability," writes Herman (265). He continues, "Even while we are observing how closely human beings conform in the taxonomy of events we learn how differently they feel and think" (Herman 265). *Requiem for a Nun* with all its "overtly complex ordering, has as its particular deep counter-enterprise the establishment of individual diversity beneath ascribed typologies" (Godden 143). The love story of Cecilia Farmer, her scratched name on the jailhouse window, analogous to Faulkner's Kilroy and Smith, assigns the importance of individuality. As Von Uexküll explains, the "individuality maintains umwelt thoughts ontological niche which keeps the phenomenal world of a being intertwined with other phenomenal worlds, thus integrating this being into the society of phenomenal subjects" (qtd. in Tonnessen 287). Therefore, the science of psychology is expressed through Faulkner's science of fictional narratives.

Faulkner's affiliation with science also benefits from his knowledge of Ice Age theory. Faulkner used to discuss Agassiz's Ice Age Theory with his stepson Malcolm (Wainwright 19). Swiss-born American naturalist Louis Agassiz (1807-1873) had reasoned that fossil remains of bygone tropical megafauna suggested extinction due to the sudden arrival of a global freeze (cited in Wainwright 19). "The gigantic quadrupeds, the Mastodons, Elephants, Tigers, Lions, Hyenas, Bears, whose remains are found in Europe from its Southern promontories to the northernmost limits of Siberia and Scandinavia," in Agassiz's argument from 1866, "may indeed be said to have possessed the earth in those days. But their reign was over. A sudden intense winter, that was also to last for ages, fell upon our globe; it spread over the very countries where these tropical animals had their homes, and so suddenly did it come upon them that they were embalmed beneath masses of snow and ice, without time even for the decay which follows death" (cited in Wainwright 20).

Darwin assumed the concept of a Great Ice Age but found the views of Scottish geologist Charles Lyell more agreeable: extinction by gradual elimination due to subtle changes in climate, invasion by competing species, and excessive predation by man (cited in Wainwright 21). In the Darwinian paradigm, therefore, extinction is a natural consequence of increased rarity. "If we see, without the smallest surprise, though unable to assign the precise reason, one species abundant and another closely allied species rare in the same district," he argues in *A Naturalist's Voyage*, "why should we feel such great astonishment at the rarity being carried one step further to extinction" (176). Within twenty years, on the publication of *The Origin of Species* and throughout

its subsequent editions, Darwin would concede that “the geographical and climatical changes which have certainly occurred within recent geological times, must have rendered discontinuous the formerly continuous range of many species” (321). Nevertheless, he continued to prefer natural selection as the primary, and almost exclusive, mechanism for special extinction:

It is most difficult always to remember that the increase of every living creature is constantly being checked by unperceived hostile agencies; and that these same unperceived agencies are amply sufficient to cause rarity, and finally extinction. So little is this subject understood, that I have heard surprise repeatedly expressed at such great monsters as the Mastodon and the more ancient Dinosaurians having become extinct; as if mere bodily strength gave victory in the battle of life. Mere size, on the contrary, would in some cases determine, as has been remarked by Owen, quicker extermination, from the greater amount of requisite food. (295)

In Faulkner’s model, the Earth’s topography, existing “longer than the miasma and the gigantic ephemeral saurian,” finally emerged from “the Great Ice Age as a series of recessional contour lines like the concentric whorls within the sawn stump (of a tree)” (21-22). Therefore, the numinous “laboratory-factory” had spawned the “unalien shapes” which inhabit the world today, and “*Homo sapiens* beings” are the most “familiar of all” among them (Faulkner 24).

To conclude, it seems obvious that evolutionary narrative in *Requiem for a Nun* manifests a cognitive platform where modernist methods interweave with the *umwelten* of minds and spaces, and stand together as Darwinian ethos. William Faulkner’s narrative of progression evolves literature of modern America as Darwinism evolves the older ways of thinking. Faulkner begins with the evolutionary aspects of societal growth in *Requiem for a Nun*. The evolutionary topography of Yoknapatawpha evokes the transitions of consciousness in its fictional characters. The conflicts within this narrative zone present the conflicts in minds which contribute to the evolution of spaces in Yoknapatawpha. Therefore, Faulkner incorporates the Darwinian model in respect of societal growth. He also signifies the *umwelten* of all the living organisms as they respond as subjects to all the signals and signs, not only to casual impulses. The subjects also form a literary biological foundation which contributes to the evolution of a cultural superstructure. The evolving culture in Yoknapatawpha maintains a “tight coupling between the mind and the world” (Herman 264). The evolutionary tension between the primitive and the erudite is blatant in the existence of Faulkner’s cultural entities. In *Requiem for a Nun*, he represents the evolutionary cognition required for cultural proliferation. Furthermore, Faulkner’s affiliation with Darwinism also benefits from his knowledge of Agassiz’s Ice Age Theory. So, his evolutionary aspects on society and culture, in *Requiem for a Nun*, make him a pioneering author promoting cognition of Darwinism in literature. “We don’t know what man might evolve into,” he says shortly before his death in 1962, “just how low he is, what flea he is on, something that we can’t even see, it is so great, so vast” (cited in Wainwright 198). *Requiem for a Nun*, as a sequel of *Sanctuary*, has other aspects of Darwinian evolution which have further research possibilities. The evolution of sexual politics and the evolution from race to ecology can be prominent research areas among them.

Notes:

Wainwright mentions that Faulkner's copy bears the autograph of J. Hamilton Basso and the date is 7 December 1923. Lewisohn's compendium was intended to counter the humanism of Paul Elmer More and Irving Babbitt with the radical aesthetics of writers such as Randolph Bourne. (25)

Jakob Johann von Uexküll (8 September 1864 - 25 July 1944) was a Baltic German biologist who worked in the fields of muscular physiology, animal behavior studies, and the cybernetics of life. However, his most notable contribution is the notion of *umwelt*, used by semiotician Thomas Sebeok and philosopher Martin Heidegger. His works established biosemiotics as a field of research (cited in Tonnessen 281).

Another building that testifies to the importance of the past to this emergence is the Holston House Inn, "the original log walls and puncheon floors and hand-morticed joints of which," the narrator enthuses, "are still buried somewhere beneath the modern pressed glass and brick veneer and neon tubes" (Faulkner 201).

One notes the mutation present in Ratcliffe's name in the following quote from the Penguin Books edition of *Requiem for a Nun*. He is a man who "had invented or evolved a scheme so richly rewarding that he - Ratcliffe - had not only been unable to forestall him and do it first, he - Radcliffe - couldn't even guess what it was after he had been given a hint" (Faulkner 121)

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Lives Gone Astray: The Impact of Dysfunctional Families on Literary Characters

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Abstract: This article aims to highlight the depiction of the negative effects of unfavorable family situations on literary characters. The vastness of the topic compels me to concentrate on the portrayal of some characters from American plays written in the first half of the 20th century. The discussion will, therefore, focus on three American dramatists who have very skillfully drawn the lives of some of their characters who are thrown off balance because of the disturbances in their families. These dramatists are Eugene O'Neill, Arthur Miller, and Edward Albee. Each of them has presented characters suffering from different psychological problems, the causes of which were rooted in almost the same types of problems, that is, their dysfunctional families.

Family has a lasting impact on the human psyche. The sense of security and emotional support provided by a stable family lasts for a lifetime, even when the caring members cease to exist. On the other hand, lack of familial love, care and shelter can result in a lifelong sense of loss and insecurity, not to be substituted by any other kind of fulfillment in life. It is like a hole that can never be closed. Nancy Chapin in her article "Honor thy Father and Mother" states:

Parents are transmitters of attitudes that the child adopts in forming a self-image. Our personal narratives are initially largely constructed through our relationship with our parents or other significant adults. The relationship that we form with our parents is elemental to the concept of self, forming the base of our identity. (47)

As literature is the mirror of life, it depicts vividly this aspect of human psychology. The same thing goes the other way round, that is, writers are profoundly influenced by the reality or their immediate environment. This family-individual relationship, their impact, both positive and negative, on each other and the consequences are also revealed through the characters of a literary piece. How these characters think and react to different situations is conditioned by how they grew up. Our world is made up of our thoughts. But the sanity of our thought depends on the development of our mind which is nurtured by the family. Literary characters, being the representation of real human beings, are also affected by their adverse familial situations and are shown to suffer the way normal people do. To justify this line of thought, this paper is going to present five characters from plays written by three famous twentieth century American dramatists namely Eugene O'Neill, Arthur Miller, and Edward Albee. The characters to be discussed are Edmund and James (Jamie) Tyrone from Eugene O'Neill's *Long Day's Journey into Night*, Biff and Happy Loman from Arthur Miller's *Death of a Salesman*, and Jerry from Edward Albee's *The Zoo Story*.

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It is undeniable that the national character of the American drama was drawn primarily by Eugene O'Neill. Afterwards, it developed through the later works of O'Neill himself, along with Tennessee Williams, Arthur Miller, Edward Albee, Elmer Rice, Sidney Howard, Robert Sherwood, and other playwrights of the 1920s. The huge Broadway success, O'Neill, single-handedly and very successfully introduced the elements of realism into American drama. In the autobiographical play, *Long Day's Journey into Night*, he modeled the characters of Edmund and James (Jamie) Tyrone after himself and his elder brother. These two characters reflect the effects of familial imbalance on children. In fact, all four members of the Tyrone family are shown to suffer from the bitterness resulting from their inability to forgive and forget. According to Lillian Feder:

O'Neill transforms his own painful experience into the prototypical emotional crises of modern human beings sustained by neither religious nor social bonds and left only with an awareness of emptiness that somehow must be filled. The isolation of the characters in *Long Day's Journey*, O'Neill's tragedy of his own family life, is the 'curse' that drives them to drink, drugs and grandiose fantasies, substitutes for the selves they cannot acknowledge and the love they can neither give nor receive. Each time they approach or are confronted with authentic feelings, they return to the illusions that feed and destroy them. If they express what they feel, they instantly retract the trenchant remark, the impulsive gesture, love and hate cancelling each other out to nothingness. (338)

How children are treated by their parents has a direct impact on how the children see themselves. The level of exposure the children get in society is also regulated initially by parents, which in turn determines the social adaptability present in them as adults. Both the Tyrone sons had to pay heavily for the instability they had to experience all through their childhood. Their father's insecurity with his own financial condition, which itself was the result of his traumatic childhood wholly spent in earning money and supporting his family, had much to do with his choice of a financially secure but artistically frustrating career path. This choice brought in him dissatisfaction and disappointment as he was aware of his own potential for becoming a truly gifted Shakespearean actor. This discontent with life found expression through his inconsistent role as a husband and as a father. Mary's exclamation bears testimony:

Oh, I'm so sick and tired of pretending this is a home! You won't help me! You won't put yourself out the least bit! You don't know how to act in a home! You don't really want one! You never have wanted one - never since the day we were married! You should have remained a bachelor and lived in second-rate hotels and entertained your friends in barrooms! (67)

This irregularity takes its toll on the other members of the family. Mary, who has shunned her dream of becoming a pianist to marry James, a man with such a career that they would not be able to live in a place long enough to make a home to raise children properly in, is thrown into deep depression. She lacks the company to share her problems with and get some sort of relief. Along with it, comes the physical pain she has to suffer frequently after giving birth to her youngest child, Edmund. The cheap and incompetent doctor brought by James, administered Morphine, an easy but potentially dangerous drug, to Mary to help her cope with the pain. But she becomes an addict,

rendering her even more unfit to take care of her children. Mary could never forgive her husband for this. She utters her feelings again and again: "I knew from experience by then that children should have homes to be born in, if they are to be good children, and women need homes, if they are to be good mothers" (88). She also felt that the way her sons were brought up was not fitting at all. All this together push her deeper into the addiction and deteriorates their family situation even more.

The Tyrone sons grew up in a wretched family where both of the parents had trouble coping with their own problems. They could never, therefore, provide a healthy environment for their sons to develop mentally. As Jamie is ten years older than his brother Edmund, he has to suffer more and was the more affected of the two brothers. In Jamie's own words:

Listen, Kid, I know you think I'm a cynical bastard, but remember I've seen a lot more of this game than you have. You never knew what was really wrong until you were in prep school. Papa and I kept it from you. But I was wise ten years or more before we had to tell you. (57)

Again:

I've known about Mama so much longer than you. Never forget the first time I got wise. Caught her in the act with a hypo. Christ, I'd never dreamed before that any women but whores took dope! (163)

Jamie resents that he had to deal with their family troubles longer than his younger brother. His long exposure to this dismal family environment leaves him as a bitterly cynical, alcoholic, pessimistic, and jealous yet caring man with no ambition in life whatsoever, teetering on the edge of destruction. The decline in his physical health is indicative of his suicidal and irregular lifestyle. Jamie's character is carried over into another play by O'Neill, *A Moon for the Misbegotten*. It presents the eleven years older Jamie, renamed as Jimmy Tyrone. Here Jamie carries himself through his self-destructive life to his destiny of an untimely death caused by alcohol. He is the Tyrone son who has to suffer most for the negativity prevalent in his family. Losing all hope and aspiration to survive, he succumbs to his dark fate. Sarwar Chowdhury presents the matter in a nutshell through the abstract of his article "Rebellion of the O'Neill Son: *A Moon for the Misbegotten*." He says:

Among the son characters portrayed by Eugene O'Neill, Jimmy Tyrone in *A Moon for the Misbegotten* is outstanding because of his inability to break with his past; the memories of his family life linked to his parents, particularly his mother, affect him so much that he fails to build a family life of his own and remains unmarried. Jimmy's abnormal life-style is a protest against the loss of his past bliss; it is the O'Neill Son's rebellion against life, a rebellion that, of course, leads him towards sure destruction. (104)

This type of anomaly in Jimmy, i.e., Jamie, is the direct and very common pattern which children from dysfunctional families behave and lead their lives. Ross Mackay in his article, "The Impact of Family Structure and Family Change on Child Outcomes: A Personal Reading of the Research Literature" discusses some more adverse effects on children from troubled families, such as problems with schooling, physical health,

mental and emotional health, social conduct and behavior, peer relations, criminal offence, substance abuse, early departure from home and early-onset of sexual behavior. Further impacts on their early adulthood and beyond include early marriage, marital dissolution, lone parenthood, low occupational status, economic hardship, poor-quality relationship with parents, unhappiness, discontent with life, mistrust in others, and reduced longevity. Very realistically, both Jamie and Edmund exhibit most of these signs or would most certainly have in the future.

The younger of the Tyrone sons, Edmund, who is actually a representation of O'Neill himself, is more fortunate, compared to his elder brother James. This fact can be attributed to his being less exposed to his degenerated family as well as his strong personal character. He, being the youngest member of the family, has also the luxury of being treated with the most care and affection. All these issues combine to lessen the effect of the negativity he is subjected to. That is why his character appears to be almost a steady and normal one, compared to the other members of the Tyrones. Still, he bore the scars of his depressing family environment. His nervous and emotional nature, problem with alcohol, fragile health, suicidal vein, gloomy attitude towards life, inability to choose a career, and restlessness can be attributed to the lack of security and serenity at home. Edmund's character is modeled on the playwright's own life in that O'Neill had two failed marriages, considered suicide, and had an alcohol problem, all of which were very possible outcomes in the case of Edmund. However, the tragedy is, with the talents and potential present in Jamie and Edmund, they would have fared much better in life if they had a regular childhood with normal parents.

Like Jamie Tyrone, Biff Loman, in *Death of a Salesman* is the older son of Willy Loman. Biff has long been internalizing Willy's vision of success which, in simple terms, meant to be rich and, at the same time, to be well liked. This philosophy of Willy's becomes clearer from the following conversation between Biff and Willy when Bernard leaves them after trying in vain to persuade Biff to practice some math in order to avoid failing in school:

Willy: Bernard is not well liked, is he?

Biff: He's liked, but he's not well liked.

Happy: That's right, Pop.

Willy: That's just what I mean, Bernard can get the best marks in school, y'understand, but when he gets out in the business world, y'understand, you are going to be five times ahead of him. That's why I thank Almighty God you're both built like Adonises. Because the man who makes an appearance in the business world, the man who creates personal interest, is the man who gets ahead. Be liked and you will never want. You take me, for instance. I never have to wait in line to see a buyer. "Willy Loman is here!" That's all they have to know, and I go through.

Biff: Did you knock them dead, Pop?

Willy: Knocked 'em cold in Province, slaughtered 'em in Boston. (25-26)

Willy gets so carried away by this theory of personal attractiveness as being the only way to success that he fails to give proper importance to the well-established ethics of fidelity and truthfulness. He even supports Biff's habit of stealing and covers it up with the more acceptable term "borrowing." He has his own set of values which

re neither very noble nor very practical. Willy was aware of it at the last stage of his life. In a radio broadcast, Miller said:

The trouble with Willy Loman is that he has tremendously powerful ideals. We're not accustomed to speaking of ideals in his terms; but, if Willy Loman, for instance, had not had a very profound sense that his life as lived had left him hollow, he would have died contentedly polishing his car on some Sunday afternoon at a ripe old age. The fact that he has values. The fact that they cannot be realized is what is driving him mad – just as, unfortunately, it's driving a lot of other people mad. (qtd. in Williams 175)

In the same broadcast, he says that his plays "...set forth what happens when a man does not have a grip on the forces of life and has no sense of values which will lead him to that kind of grip" (qtd. in Williams 175).

These two statements might seem contradictory. But according to Dennis Welland, they are not. He says, "The two statements are not, as some critics argue, contradictory. They are in fact reconciled by Biff's epitaph on his father: 'He had the wrong dreams. All, all wrong'" (58).

This in fact summarizes the tragedy of Willy's life. Biff internalizes his father's philosophy, and then knocks them out of his life. According to his father, Biff had great potential. Indeed he did. In high school, he was the star football player, not only liked, but "well liked" by his father's standards, gifted with personal attractiveness and with scholarships to three universities on the basis of his athletic excellence. But as a human being, he is not flawless as we already know that he inherited his father's flawed view of success which allows him to steal and bunk classes. Consequently, he fails in math and loses his scholarships. But this failure was nothing compared to what he was going to confront next. When Biff fails in math, he goes to Boston to meet his father and ask him to talk to his math teacher. He believed that once his father met his teacher, he would talk him out of this mess. Such was his faith in his father's abilities and personal charm. But in Boston, he accidentally discovers his father's affair. This shock changes him completely. According to Bernard, "he'd given up his life" (74). The problem with Biff, at this crucial stage of growing up was the destruction of his role model, his father. After this episode, Biff stops applying any of his natural gifts to advance in life and ultimately, refuses to grow up. He keeps everything to himself but his changed attitude towards his father does not escape his mother, Linda's notice. She confronts him much later:

Linda: ... [to Biff] And you! What happened to the love you had for him? Youweresuch pals! How you used to talk to him on the phone every night! How lonely he was till he come home to you!

... ..
Biff: He threw me out of this house, remember that.

Linda: Why did he do that? I never knew why.

Biff: Because I know he's a fake and he doesn't like anybody around who knows! (45)

Still he keeps everything a secret to save his mother from heartbreak. But he himself cannot get over the disappointment and loses all his ambition. This state of

arrested development continues for almost fifteen years after dropping out from high school. Yet, perhaps, this negative phase of his life ends with his last encounter with Willy. Biff clearly sees what went wrong, how his father lived his life based on some wrong ideals, and how erroneously he tried to instill them in his sons. This realization helps him to get over everything and ultimately forgive his father. But Happy, his younger brother, unfortunately keeps on nurturing his father's faulty values. He continues to live a life of pleasure and money-making ideas. Biff, though he initially fails to make any progress in life, seems to be liberated by his understanding and forgiveness. Miller, in his essay "The Family in Modern Drama" says:

If, for instance, the struggle in *Death of a Salesman* were simply between father and son for recognition and forgiveness, it would diminish in importance. But when it extends itself out of the family circle and into society, it broaches those questions of social status, social honor and recognition, which expand its vision and lift it out of the merely particular towards the fate of the generality of men. (223)

Biff's inability to advance in life, which on the other hand means his inability to have any positive contribution towards society, is the direct outcome of the wrong notions of life, success, and himself implanted in him by his father. In Biff's own words: "And I never got anywhere because you blew me so full of hot air I could never stand taking orders from anybody! That's whose fault it is!" (104)

He does not want to be a "fake" like his father, and at the same time, he does not have his own code of conduct to lead his life. Unlike Jimmy Tyrone in *A Moon for the Misbegotten*, it is not possible to guess what becomes of Biff after his father's death as Miller did not leave any hint. But at least, one thing is certain, it is that whatever he'll do, he'll do it on his own terms, by applying his own judgments. At last, at the age of 34, he is able to start anew, freeing himself from the shackles of his father's worthless philosophy of life.

The most important character that needs to be discussed in this context is Jerry, from Edward Albee's *The Zoo Story*. He is the most important because he is the most affected by the problem we are dealing with here. In this one act play, Jerry mentions his family only once, in a paragraph of disjointed sentences while talking to Peter about his empty picture frames. From this conversation, we come to know that his mother left her family for another man when Jerry was only ten and half years old. When she died in a dump one year later, his father brought her body back home to be buried. But his alcoholic father was also killed in an accident a few weeks later, which, in Jerry's words, "sort of cleaned things out family-wise" (30). Then he remembers his aunt, his mother's sister, who according to him, "was given neither to sin nor to consolations of the bottle" (30). She possessed a very indifferent attitude towards life. But this aunt, his last link to a family, also died on the afternoon of Jerry's high school graduation, a day, which was supposed to be celebrated with all the family members. On Peter's exclamation to such a sorry history, he replies:

But that was a long time ago, and I have no feelings about any of it that I care to admit to myself. Perhaps you can see, though, why good old Mom and good old Pop are frameless. (30)

Jerry had, indeed, lost feelings for his family, but at the same time, he had lost feelings and interest in everything in life. Theories of psychoanalysis focus on an individual's childhood environment. Freud held the view that much of the child's personality is formed by the time it turns five. If this is the case, those who had a troubled childhood are prone to developmental and adjustment problems in the society. Jerry seems to be the perfect example of it. He keeps on merely living and breathing. He has lost all interest in what is called a good life. This destruction of all familial bonds ultimately brings about his separation from the world, turns him into the alienated modern man, deprived of genuine happiness, incapable of forming any ties, and even most of the time, oblivious of his own bleak existence. This wretched life of Jerry's had its initiation at the split between his parents. His lack of experience in forming meaningful relationships in childhood or whatever short period of time he had spent with his disturbed caregivers (father, mother, aunt), seems to haunt him till the end of his life. Unable to relate to his fellow beings, he pathetically turns to animals to establish some kind of communication. While trying to rationalize his attempt to have a meaningful contact with his landlady's dog, he says:

It's just . . . it's just that . . . it's just that if you can't deal with people, you have to make a start somewhere. WITH ANIMALS! Don't you see? A person has to have some way of dealing with SOMETHING. If not with people . . . SOMETHING.(39)

Jerry's isolation in childhood, the lack of love or meaningful relationship with his parents, and later, his dismal boyhood without a proper guardian culminates in his chronic disability to connect with human beings, his schizophrenic indifference towards life and turns him into a "permanent transient," an "outsider." His self-destructive nature is in fact a gift from his irresponsible parents, so engrossed in their own world of adultery and alcohol. It is true that Jerry's life does not revolve around only one misfortune. It is rather a chain of misfortunes, for which Jerry himself is responsible. His undoubtedly this whole cycle of unfortunate incidents is set in motion by some people other than Jerry himself. They were two individuals whom he called Pop and Mary.

Having discussed the characters, now the question arises, are these the logical outcomes of the given situations? That is, is this the way these characters should turn out or behave, given the familial turmoil of different levels they had to go through? The answer might be drawn from the effect these characters had on the readers. They were able to move the readers so much because the readers could comprehend the authenticity of the situations and their outcomes portrayed through the characters. These tragedies were felt even more strongly because of the reader's understanding of the reality behind them. The characters discussed above have behaved in a very plausible manner, in sync with their respective family situations. They were not allowed to have a stable homely environment to grow into decent individuals. Both Bernard and Jamie Tyrone in *Long Day's Journey into Night* had shown great potential in their childhood, which made their parents hopeful of their future success. But the unfortunate parents could not nurture their talents properly because of their own personal demons of addiction, frustration, and fear of poverty. Biff and Happy Loman in *Death of a Salesman* were so full of their father's faulty and impractical philosophy that they could not even build up their own values. Biff does show some signs of emancipation because he was lucky enough to be knocked out of these wrong notions

by accident. This accident revealed how fake his father had been and, at the same time, how valueless his values were. But still, at that early age, he could not determine his ways, for he had none of his own values to guide him in the absence of his father. However, towards the end of the play, he appears to be optimistic. But Happy haplessly keeps repeating the same mistakes committed by his father as he could not be exorcised of his father's philosophy of life. He had been so poisoned by these faulty values that he was rendered beyond any correction. The most pathetic and unfortunate character of all though is Jerry in *The Zoo Story*. The very dark beginning of his life with his mother's adultery, alcoholic father's death, aunt's insufficient care, and subsequent series of unfortunate events veers his life towards such depths that he cannot think of any positive or curative measures to redeem himself and lead at least a normal life, if not a good and wholesome one.

None of these characters seem improbable or unreal, as they all conform to the possible outcome of the given situations. All that they do together is once again affirm the need of a balanced family environment for children to grow up with a stable mind to lead a normal life. If one of the aims of literature is to make people conscious of what should be done or what wrongs in this world should be removed, all five characters of these three famous plays seem to work on the same plane, at least partially. They all show us how strongly human beings are influenced by their families and how badly they can be destroyed by the carelessness of their parents. This, obviously, is no new discovery in the field of literature or psychology, but this point definitely needs to be emphasized more and realized in the present state of moral decay and familial disintegration.

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Theater of Deschooling: Safdar Hashmi's Conscientization Theater

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Abstract: Safdar Hashmi's oppositional theater is aimed at dismantling the caste, class, and gender-ridden establishment. It explores a strategic way for the establishment of a society that is free of any biases. In this struggle, Hashmi, as a theater activist with a political purpose, uses theater as his weapon. A communist with an aesthetic bent of mind and an artist who took his theater to the masses, Safdar was the co-founder of the militant political theater of protest, *Jana Natya Manch*. His commitment to giving vent to the aspirations of the toiling masses gave his performance and writing a sense of urgency and the need to act purposefully. He proceeded with this fight for justice against exploitations and discriminations from a left leaning point of view. This paper explores Safdar Hashmi's use of theater to mobilize the public conscience.

Art is always anti-establishment. Art flourishes in the loopholes of the best society. All meaningful theater then is always on the left. . . . If, for instance, a regime of the left-wing gets established, then art and literature must move further left of the left. (Tanvir, "Art")

Even though all forms of art, knowingly or unknowingly, engage in proliferation of some ideologies, theater as a distinct form of art is more overtly preoccupied in such a political mission. The very attempt to dramatize something stems from the political urge to make some individual/collective perspectives social. Therefore, dramatization becomes an ideological journey from the realm of the private to the public sphere. The cultural practice of theater demands strong collectivism among its various departments to ensure its desired social consumption. It takes its origin from the communal life and ultimately infiltrates back into the collective psyche of the community. The dissociation between the social and the artistic concerns in this era of technologically manufactured cultural indices explains well the contemporary detachment of the masses from the theater. Among all forms of art, drama is the most sensitive index of any commune, despite temporal, spatial, and ideological distinctions. Being a live art, its impact would be deep and immeasurable to a certain extent, as it encodes the aspirations and objectives of divergent congregations based on various identity markers like gender, social, class, caste, nationality so on and so forth.

Genealogically, agitprop theater exhibits an umbilical relationship with class identity. Therefore, it has to be, and it is, blatantly partisan towards class identity. This open affiliation of agitprop with a peculiar social grouping is its strength as well as its perceived weakness. Rather than 'enacting,' agitprop theater 'speaks out' the concerns and preoccupations of the working class, thereby providing an opportunity to comprehend the mindscape of the proletariat. Engrossed in the arguments of globalized capitalism, now it has become an intellectual fetish among the metropolitan

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intelligentsia to denounce agitprop theater as grossly biased. However, it is this biological bias that empowers agitprop performances to provoke the establishment and illuminate the discontented lot.

Highly charged class consciousness could be the prime indicator of any true agitprop performance. The sense of continuous exposure to exploitation and injustice converts these performances into something extremely inflammable. Unlike the hidden nature of capitalist ideological hegemony which operates in every conceivable sphere, agitprop ideology is plain and direct – it often proclaims openly that there is blood in the street. Most often agitprop format is a property-less theater, but it is a perspective-rich one. Rather than a mere performance, agitprop is more of a political pronouncement where the dramatic conclusion invariably invites vigorous political activism from the spectators.

Perhaps, theater could be a potent pedagogical tool which could be made use of in stirring up passion and morale of all sorts. Watching live plays and responding to the moral issues explored through character conflicts offers an alternative teaching and learning strategy by which to develop students' moral consciousness about the intricate contextual variables that often determine moral response not only on the stage, but often in real life (Basourakos 277). Theater experience is directly carried over to real life situations. Like in every aspect of our communal life, in theater too, apolitical claims in critical engagements are nothing but a conning concealment of the submission to the hegemonic ideology of the establishment. In the same way, being a dissent in a society means becoming a megaphone of the marginalized voices. Taking an oppositional posture is a way of questioning the dominant ideology of the time. Oppositional drama rigorously questions the exploitative class, caste, gender, race dynamics, which are taken for granted as a natural phenomenon.

Safdar Hashmi's oppositional theater aimed at dismantling the caste, class, and gender-ridden establishment, thereby exploring a way for the establishment of a society that is free of any biases. In this struggle, Hashmi, as a theater activist with a political purpose, uses theater as his weapon. A communist with an aesthetic bent of mind and an artist who took his theater to the masses, a 19-year-old Safdar co-founded the *Jana Natya Manch*, a militant political theater of protest, in 1973. According to Gopalakrishnan, "Through its rousing, visionary street plays, the group sought to address issues of class and gender and religious sectarianism. Against the bourgeois conception of art as an individualist aesthetic pursuit, he pitted his version of the people's collectivist view of art" (46). His commitment to giving vent to the aspirations of the toiling masses gave his performance and writing a sense of urgency and the need to act purposefully. He proceeded with this fight for justice against exploitations and discriminations from a left leaning point of view.

Safdar did not shy away from the fact that he was a partisan both in politics and in his artistic activism. His partnership did not in any way diminish the aesthetic excellence of his performance. "As in the case of Brecht, it is this commitment to revolutionary politics that gave the unequalled excellence of his performance its shining halo," says Pillai (31). It is this unwavering political commitment and determination, directly expressed through his plays that brought Safdar's early martyrdom at a young age of 34. He was fatally assaulted on 1st January 1989, in Jhandapur, in the industrial town of Shahibabad, 15 kilometres away from Delhi, while performing the street play *Hallabol* (Attack) in support of the striking factory workers.

Safdar, along with his actor-activist wife Moloyoshree, was a founder member of *Janam* (Jan Natya Manch) and the main driving force behind it. He was a brilliant theater theoretician and a practitioner of political theater, especially street theater. As a versatile personality, he was an actor, playwright, political activist, theater director, theoretician and an organizer. The inseparability of his artistic creativity and political ideology made his name synonymous with the progressive cultural movement in India and with street theater (Ganguly i). Hashmi started his artistic career in proscenium theater with plays like, *Bharat Bhagya Vidhata* (The Makers of India's Fortune) in 1973, *Bakri* (Goat) in 1974, and *Ab Raja Ki Bari Hai* (Now It's the King's Turn) in 1976.

For Safdar Hashmi, theater was one of the many means of political struggle with the ultimate aim of liberating the down trodden from economic exploitation and caste class discrimination. In this struggle against exploitation and discrimination, he never tried to alienate the proscenium theater from the street theater. Instead he viewed both as powerful weapons, even though he largely practiced the street theater. As Tanvir puts it, "Safdar deliberately and assiduously practiced both the so called proscenium theater and the street theater and believed that they mutually supported each other" (2001: 3). In his attempt to combine both the theatrical forms, he contributed greatly to the growth of street theater movement in India as well as to the growth of a democratic culture. Safdar believed that whatever be the form, theater ultimately belonged to the people. According to him it is not the form but the content of theatrical performance that decides its ideological or political partisanship. Rejecting the misconception that street theater is basically a rebellion against the proscenium theater, Safdar had identified:

In our view it is absurd to speak of a contradiction between proscenium and street theaters. Both belong equally to the people. Yes, there is a contradiction between the proscenium theater which has been appropriated by the escapists, the naturalists and the revivalists and the street theater which stands with the people. Just there is a contradiction between reactionary proscenium theater and progressive proscenium theater, or between democratic street theater and reformist and *sarkari* [governmental] street theater. (1989: 13-14)

According to Safdar whether drama is performed in squares or in rectangular or circular spaces, as long as it expresses the sentiments of the oppressed people, it is people's theater, whatever be the form. He believed that the themes of plays have to keep in close touch with popular mass movements, have to interrogate anti-people political policies of the establishment, they have to defend the right to protest, and should register the dissenting voices. But due to its innate weaknesses such as huge financial investment, comparative immobility and incapability to immediately respond to topical issues, the proscenium theatrical productions become unapproachable by the masses.

The amazing spontaneity of theatrical reaction to a topical event ensures street theater an emotional proximity with the people as the themes are related to their everyday lives. To achieve people's interest, Safdar says, street plays have to be bold, and direct. This aspect of urgency in execution, spatial mobility and monetary viability are both the limitation as well as the advantage of street theater. Street theater activists cannot afford a big time gap for a conceptualization of the topical event, and confine

their performance to specialized fully equipped auditoria or afford huge monetary investment. But the burning topical issues and people's discomfort at the misdeeds of the rulers necessitate the existence of street theater. In order to keep it alive and involved in the day to day people's movement it cannot afford to wait for relevant scripts to be written by professional and celebrated dramatists. Involvement of culture with peoples movements requires immediate analysis of the current political and socio-economic developments and preparing a new play on that within a day or two, if not in a couple of hours. This leaves no scope for professionals and celebrities to come on the picture (Hashmi 1989: 17).

The promptness of theatrical action and topicality of themes has brought criticism that street theater is aesthetically inferior as well as thematically shallow. It is argued that the spontaneous theatrical intervention does not leave any scope for a deeper penetration of the issues and the themes handled therewith. But a reality check of this argument reveals that it sprang from a theatrical method of street theater, namely, the simplification of the plot. The intended audience in street theater is the general public who, largely, would be semi-literate or illiterate. This fact necessitates the presentations of the issues in a general comprehensive way without attempting complicated abstraction.

Safdar Hashmi, who was steeped in political awareness and deeply in love with theater, identified that the street theater is the most suitable form for his political expression (Tanvir 2001: 3). He discards the appropriation attempts of street theater by the developmental agencies and the political right wing. He is of the opinion that because of its inherent leftist political leanings, the appropriation exercises would be futile. Hashmi believed that by its very definition street theater has to be ideologically deep rooted and politically leftwing. Speaking on the politics of Safdar Hashmi's theater, the eminent theater director Habib Tanvir further explains:

Street theater is a theater of protest, which must always be on the left. It has to be always anti-establishment. All meaningful theater is always on the left. Why theater alone? All activities in art and literature have to be antiestablishment to gain contemporary relevance. If, for instance, a regime of the left wing gets established, then art and literature must move further left of the left. It must serve as a gadfly to society, always stimulating progress . . . So theater by birth a leftist movement can only align itself with the proscenium theater of the left, to the exclusion of the bourgeoisie theater. (2001: 2)

Safdar Hashmi's committed theater had no time for mere entertainment. It had to present aspects of reality imbued with humanistic values and to deal with disturbing or inconvenient socio-political questions. So Safdar took theater to the people, with the vision of a creative genius, endowed with the zeal, energy and determination of a farsighted organizer and theater visionary. His concept of theater had "a strange blend of Marxian and Gandhian Philosophies" (Tanvir, 2001: 3). He "was the embodiment of those communist values which shaped his craft – that of cultural activist and street theater artist" (Prashad). In his politics of liberation of the mass from exploitation he embraced Marxian ideology and in his deep humane concern he resembled the Gandhian thought.

Without any claims of political mentality, Safdar took his theater to the venues of trade union strikes, students' protest demonstrations and other places of mass

mobilizations. His political aim was to inform, educate and to help the mobilization the common man towards democratic movements. In other words, he told them the need for urgent political action and showed them the platforms of pro-people political organizations. Student convention against communism, authoritarianism and unemployment; a demonstration against cutting down labor ratio, a propaganda meeting for some working class rally; strikes and lockouts; literary seminars or even the victory celebrations of trade unions would be the right opportunity for a performance by *Janam* [Jana Natya Manch] (Hashmi, 1989: 169). With great artistic skill, Safdar Hashmi ensured that his plays left space for entertainment, but not at the risk of missing the sharpness of their political message.

Through the subversive presentation of reality, often going for exaggerations Safdar made people laugh throughout his plays. He believed that laughter is a weapon and laughing at political heavy weights becomes a political weapon. Rather than taking the edge off this political message, laughter made it more politically fatal. On the use of laughter as a political weapon in his plays Hashmi explained that "It helps to reinforce the people's revolution against the state structures and its upholders. Many people think that laughter is an indication of casual or non-serious involvement in the play. But I think that laughter is a weapon in the hands of the people with which they destroy an image which is hatred" (1989: 169).

On the aesthetics and aim of political street theater Safdar Hashmi had a clear perception in contrast with the approach prevalent among other street theater activists. Baring some exceptions, the general assumption on street theater was that if one could get the political message across to the audience, it was sufficient. Performance skills and other aesthetic enhancements were looked upon as unnecessary embellishments. Safdar resisted this approach and emphasized the need to have theatrical abilities in every departments of political street theater. He saw street theater as a significant theatrical form and strove to explore its dimensions and reach. This was typical of his attitude to whatever he took up. He was never superficial (Qamar Hashmi 269). In his excessively consistent efforts to develop a peculiar aesthetics for street theater, to give the forms its own individual competency, he never compromised on the subject of content.

For Safdar, providing some spectacular theatrical images alone would not serve the purpose. His fundamental disagreement with Badal Sircar's theater is related to this subject of form and content. Bluntly expressing his non-appreciation of Badal Sircar's excessive obsession with form, which sacrificed the content, Safdar opined that "[t]hey have made a kind of merit out of doing theater only with one's body as sole source. It is a mere display of technique. It's a spectacle and nothing more" (1989: 145).

Augusto Boal, the Brazilian theater activist, who conceptualized the "Theater of the oppressed" or "Forum Theater," gave the theater community the unique technique of drawing theater from the arena to the middle of the audience. His unique experimentation in involving the audience in the play was to explore various options for the issues raised through the performance. He transformed theater into a discussion forum converting the passive spectators into an aggressive 'spect-actors' who would actively watch the performance and 'unknowingly' 'act' in the performance by their critical interventions amidst the performance. His aim was to establish the consistent practice of dialogue between the rulers and the ruled. For him, the absence of dialogue itself is a form of oppression, and domination. He says that:

The idea of the Oppressed for me was exactly that moment when dialogue becomes a monologue. In dialogue two people talk. One talks, the other listens; then the other talks and the first listens. It is the same in all relations—between men and women, class and race, country and country. The ideal is dialogue. But in too many cases very soon one part begins to monologue and the other part is reduced to listener-only. One commands, the other obeys. (Boal in Schechner et al 90)

One of the major criticisms against Safdar Hashmi's street theater was its inability to involve the actors in the performance. Even though Safdar depicted the existential grievances of the working class, it is a fact that his audience remained outsiders around the performance circle, passionately watching and comprehending the dramatization of their real life problems. But Safdar had his own view on this. He was not for the emotional manipulation of the audience. Rather he believed that, during the performance a critical relation has to be established between the audience and actors. This critical relationship has to come from the rational understanding of the issues raised through theater, not through any emotional manipulations. For his audience he presented a problem and depicted it analytically, leaving them to react to the problem critically. For him theater was not for the cathartic effect, but for the analysis of the political issues from the perspective of the exploited. On the relation between audience and theater he was of the opinion that,

I am temperamentally opposed to any kind of theater, cinema or act that manipulates the consciousness of the people or which gives them an experience by proxy. It is like taking someone by his collar and shaking him until he accepts your viewpoint. In that sense I'm more a Brechtian. I would rather appeal to the people with reasonable arguments and make them reflect about what is going on. (1989: 147)

From these arguments it has to be presumed that he preferred presentation rather than didacticism in his theater. But definitely his theater was a conscientization effort, although not presented by any melodramatic or sensationalizing methods. In this aspect he always observed a high sense of propriety in achieving his political aims by rational arguments. At the same time he was always sensitive to the need for revolutionary political plays to attract audience by matching the caliber to other plays, in terms of theater craft, not by using frequent sensational methods. He believed that only these would revolutionary forms acquire the position and influence of art forms and sentimentalism and sentimentalism would turn theater into a shallow pool where the absence of thematic abyss would be conspicuous.

The tremendous revolutionary influence of Pablo Neruda and Bertolt Brecht was, in Safdar's view, based on their impeccable credentials as practitioners of their art with emotional and logical propriety (Qamar 257). Safdar assiduously observed this property of techniques in his plays. Even though he widely used music, songs, and linguistic manipulations of words in his plays, all those were done with a definite aim in mind, not just to spice up his performance. On the methodological peculiarities of *Janam's* street plays, Habib Tanvir comments:

Janam's creations were entirely dictated by the times, the late seventies. They were out to catch a fleeting crowd in the street. They would attract them by their drum or shouting in chorus above the street noise repeating and echoing single syllable words.