



reflection

The Anti-hero in Real Life

by Andaz

WE KNOW ABOUT THE ANTI-HERO, and have read about him. Does he exist only in two dimensions between the printed pages, or loom large in 3-D in real life, as in Bangladesh? The question comes from some debate-watchers in some local drawing rooms, in these troubled times of social and political upheavals.

Since the debaters cannot be the judges, it is necessary to turn to some authoritative source to settle such academic fissionous dissipations (whether a dispute is 'academic' or not would also be settled).

So, welcome to *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms* (OUP, 1990, 246 pages), edited by Chris Baldick, Lecturer in English at the University of Lancaster, and author of *The Social Mission of English Criticism 1848-1932*. This slim and handy reference guide provides witty explanations of some one thousand troublesome words encountered during the study of literature.

Anti-hero or anti-heroine: A central character in a dramatic or narrative work who lacks the qualities of nobility and magnanimity expected of traditional heroes and heroines in 'romance' and 'epics' (both these words are also

explained in separate entries).

Amongst these unheroic characters were Don Quixote (Carventes), Flaubert's Emma Bovary, and Bloom in *Ulysses*; and in drama in Miller's *Death of a Salesman*. "The protagonist is an ineffectual failure who succumbs to the pressure of circumstances. The anti-hero should not be confused with the 'antagonist' or the 'villain' (again these two words are explained separately). Hence our gun and dagger toting 'angry young men' (see entry) are neither heroes nor anti-heroes.

Having a gut feeling about a word or use of a word is not enough to gain admittance into the elite academic circles. For a self-test, let us try a few terms, found in this fascinating collection, best relished within the comfort of an armchair, with Dhaka's din as background music.

Name a Bengali 'anti-novel'. What is a 'lipogram'? It is a written composition that deliberately avoids using a particular letter of the alphabet. Ernest Wright wrote the 50,000-word novel *Gadaby*, without using the letter e.

Note this passage: 'I live in Nyasaland in Zanzibar, an extremely humid state near Tanganika, near the jungle where wild animals can live in large



numbers. We lead a hard life. Much walking is necessary. This exercise is very healthy. The place is quite wet.' Out of the 26 letters, 25 have been used. Which letter is missing?

Define and illustrate 'mannerism'. 'New Criticism' refers to which period; and what is 'new historicism'? The period is 1930s to 1960s; and the latter is the trend set in the 1980s by some American critics in the study of literary works within their historical and political contexts.

"I'll go; you stay here." This is paratactic style, marked by the juxtaposition of clauses or sentences, without the use of connecting words (see examples in Thoreau's *Walden*). The opposite is hypotactic style, "I am tired because it is hot."

There is difference between 'reader-response criticism' and 'reception theory'. The former is criticism that focus on the response of the readers; while the latter is a branch of modern literary studies concerned with the ways in which the literary works are received by the readers.

Got it? It does not matter. You are a reader, so am I.

— Dharitri Feature

interview

A Turkish Professor's Youthful Interest in Bengal

Dr TURKKAYA ATAÖV, professor of international relations at Ankara University and a member of the visiting Turkish delegation headed by President Suleyman Demirel, is a rather "unusual" guest in terms of his long association with this land and its people. Now the author of 101 books and co-author of 46 more, with central executive positions in five international organizations or groups affiliated with the United Nations, and decorated by a dozen governments and academic institutions, the unusual feature of our prominent guest is that he published voluminously about the Bengali people when he was a mere 20 in the early 1950s. He met painter Zainul Abedin and folk-poet Jasimuddin, and published about a dozen articles on the former and translated some poems of the latter. He also published parts of Nazrul Islam's great epic on Kamal Pasha (later Atatürk) and the Turkish National Liberation War. Below is an interview with Prof. Ataöv.

The Daily Star: What were the reasons for your early interest in our land and its people?

Prof. Ataöv: The roots of initial interest probably include my knowledge, although limited at that time, that Turkic groups, pressed by climatic and political reasons, descended to India and contributed to its history and civilization. Conversely, the peoples of India, mostly the Muslims, supported the Turks during the First World War and our War of National Liberation. Another reason is that the Bengali people produced literary giants, like Rabindranath Tagore who won the Nobel Prize and had his genius universally acclaimed. Another minor reason may be the influence on me of the British writer Somerset Maugham's novel entitled "The Razor's Edge", in which the central figure goes to undivided India in search of peace of mind.

DS: Who introduced you to Nazrul Is-

lam and Jasimuddin?

Prof. Ataöv: I believe that the person was Ambassador Arshad-uz-Zaman, whom I have the pleasure of seeing once again in Dhaka, when he was acting as press attache for East Pakistan as well as West Pakistan in Turkey. He read to me parts of Nazrul Islam's long epic in his native tongue, so that I could get a feeling of the music in his choice of words. My article was actually a long article with parts of translations from English inserted in proper places. What made me even happier is that several papers or journals later reproduced parts of it on suitable times such as national holidays.

My connection with Jasimuddin is another story. He was a member of a large good-will mission to Turkey. We all heard him recite his poems, and I had a chance to talk to him, after which I ventured to render some of his poems into Turkish from English. Everyone

liked his simple and sympathetic approach to everyday village life in Bengal.

DS: How did you meet Zainul Abedin? Here or elsewhere? Under which circumstances?

Prof. Ataöv: This is the first time I am amongst the Bengali people. In spite of my deep interest, I have never been in Bangladesh before or when it was East Pakistan. I met him in Turkey. I helped him open two painting exhibitions, one in Ankara and the other in Istanbul. The former opened in the entrance halls of the Languages School. I remember Turgut Zaim, the dean of the Turkish painters then, working with me and hanging the framed pictures on the walls. The exhibition in Istanbul took place at the Girls' Institute at the fashionable Beyoghlu district. Almost every resident in Istanbul, then, saw it. The governor and mayor of the city, the

well-known professor of psychiatry, Dr Gökay made it a point to come. I still remember explaining to him every canvas in the exhibition hall.

I must have published about a dozen articles on Zainul Abedin's art. Some journals made it a cover story. My first article on the daily *Cumhuriyet*, Turkey's prestigious daily, back in 1952, was on Zainul Abedin. Some 45 years have drifted away, but I lived every single moment of it because I work about 18 hours a day. I still write for the same daily, among others. And when its publisher delays the printing of my article, I readily call him up to remind that my contributions were printed in his paper before he was born.

Zainul Abedin was a master of black and white line drawing. I am referring particularly to the thousands of dramatic 1943 Bengal famine etchings. His "Bengali Madonna" had captivated the

spectators in my country; it was printed over and over again. So did his colourful, well-built Bengali women, as vibrant as statues. He also painted gorgeous village scenes.

When a doctorate student in the United States some years later, I ran into his new exhibition in Washington, DC, in which I observed that he had entered a new period of his artistic life dominated by abstractions. He himself was not there. But we had cultivated friendship while he was in Turkey. I took him to the homes and ateliers of several Turkish painters, among whom the child prodigy Hasan Kaptan, then six years old, impressed him most. He was amazed with the talent of that boy, who is now established as a painter with international fame in Paris. Zainul Abedin also spent some of his last years in the French capital, where he had attained deserved acknowledgement.

DS: You must have continued your interest in Bengal.

Prof. Ataöv: I continued publishing on various aspects of your country, be it Islamic architecture, Sylhet tea industry or ballads of Bengal. I knew how the main door of the Small Golden Masjid or the three domes of the Lalbagh Masjid looked like long before I set my foot here. I now have the opportunity to see the land and the people on whom I wrote rather extensively since 1952.

I must add, last but not least, however, that I have met a number of distinguished Bengalis in the international fora. Former Justice Abu Sayed Chowdhury was one of them. I met him when, as a jurist of international fame, he was a member of the UN Commission of Human Rights. I remember, with feelings of gratitude, how our views coincided with his and how his support to us carried so much weight.

poems

In Memory of Allen Ginsberg

by Tapan Jyoti Barua

A riproaring chanting came to an abrupt halt. And I sit up mulling over stark absence Of an angelheaded hipster, his wings clipped off now Life for whom was a ceaseless carnival time. Is that why he was jeered as an alien swilling hobo? But America made him want to be a saint, Now swept into silence is a minstrel Of those who get busted in ghostly sordid cities; A sleepless crusader whose gnashing prophecies made the crooked rapacious elite burp; The startling exit of him, how very like and athlete poised in a final fixity! If his Orphic lips are mute His bravado in 'Howl' will surge on wave after wave If his clasping hands are cold His monument of grief in 'Kaddish' will stand like Niobe, tears flowing towards the curious. And Ariel, in prosperio's world, but do you like his plans for departure? How could he part from everything That's so long been nestled in his lovesick fabulous heart? Zoomed out just as he zoomed in May be away for a long road life again. We salute him, our comrade Who was with us with his trilling carbine ode His 'September On Jessor's Road' When our guns were pounding away at the enemy ranks. How can we let him be gone? There has to be someone with the 'Sunflower Sutra' with the nostalgic mantric scores? Tell me anything except That he won't be back anymore.



Mushroom

by Shawkat Haider

I didn't know the weather, at velocity of unwavering wind Drooping towards my paranoiac senses, astutely. Thru murmurs of cold rain poured in a few punctuations; It pulled waves at the stature of someone's last tear drop. By then, the august firmament lost a temper Following the flight of tress in visitors' shrill And I couldn't cope up with the lightning much Shivered, torn and swallowed by the sudden annihilation; even After that, rustic brook once flowed in bravery Gathered delicate mosses; stones were seldom inundated Instead, they announced the approval of colossal sunset. I kept forgetting the brook song at urbane luxury while Electric degeneration prevailed in a loud premonition; Insomniac nights travelled on prosaic floor At approximate dissolution of proverbial moon Until the memory halted near an intellectual bar Disregarding conventional highways at sardonic rain. Life don't inhale the quasi-heavens, sometimes.

So, What Am I Now?

by Rebecca Haq

I am finally whole, complete, fully evolved. After years of breaking and mending. Pain and joy, sources and failure, I am finally in control, Steering this Ferrari of life.

(God, let me add parenthetically, Has always been, and still is The Great Navigator).

So, what am I now? I am still a mass of contradictions, But stronger, purer, Having achieved a Pyrrhic victory And a Blakean synthesis.

I am euphoria and revulsion, I am agony and ecstasy, I am ardour and trepidation, I am lover and mother and daughter, I am Durga and Kali and Saraswati. I am me, a Woman, Bangali

I am a fish, in water, not out of it. Not a jellyfish, not a hilsa fish Not timi, not koi, not magur, not rui.

I am the dolphin, Surfacing and diving and singing In this wide Buriganga of life.