



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 fissiparous 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 (Carvantes), 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 Tanganyika, 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 ATAOV, 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 Ataturk) and the Turkish National Liberation War. Below is an interview with Prof Ataoov.

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

Prof Ataoov: 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.

poems

In Memory of Allen Ginsberg

by Tapan Jyoti Barua

A riproaring chanting came to an abrupt half.
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 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 Jezzore' 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 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.