

Go Set a Watchman

Author: Harper Lee

Reviewed by S M Shabrukh

AFTER reading Harper Lee's now famous sequel (or prequel) to *Mockingbird*, *Go Set a Watchman*, I think the first thing one notices is the mass confusion in Scout, now a 26-year old living in New York and coming back to Maycomb to discover and grapple with the bigotry inherent in the people of her hometown barring none, including Atticus. The ending is too abrupt and she raves at the racism but reconciles to keep loving the family and friends in her hometown.

"Though the new book is, to be blunt, a string of clichés, some of them are clichés only because, in the half century since Lee's generation introduced them, they've become clichés; taken on their own terms, they remain quite touching and beautiful." (Adam Gopnik, *The New Yorker*)

The total absence of Boo Radley, the mysterious neighbor and Dill's (Lee's real life best friend Truman Capote) presence only in flashback are shortcomings of this book. The character of Henry Clinton, Scout's love interest, is a welcome addition though.

Apparently the new book is the 'parent' of *Mockingbird*, as her publisher/editor, not happy with the manuscript of *Go Set a Watchman* asked her to concentrate on the childhood of Scout Finch. That's how *To Kill a Mockingbird* materialized.

"Would it have been better for this earlier novel to have remained unpublished? Though it does not represent Harper Lee's best work, it does reveal more starkly the complexity of Atticus Finch, her most admired character. *Go Set a Watchman* demands that its readers abandon the immature sentimentality ingrained by middle school lessons about the nobility of the white savior and the mesmerizing performance of Gregory Peck in the film adaptation of *To Kill a Mockingbird*."

(From *The New York Times*)
I think it was right to publish the book even if only to break the myth of 'superhuman' attached to Atticus and for

people to realize that in defending Tom Robinson in "*Mockingbird*" he was only making sure that an innocent man was not getting punished by a society that was happy living in its bigotry even though he was himself happily living in that society as a passive participant. Atticus Finch just ensured that Tom was not accused for a crime he had not committed, and not a 'savior' fighting for the blacks of his hometown of Maycomb.

In his arguments with Scout, Atticus, staying faithful to the bigoted high ideals of the South of his time (some would say even now), is heard saying,

"Jean Louise," Atticus says in the midst of their argument, "have you ever considered that you can't have a set of backward people living among people advanced in one kind of civilization and have a social Arcadia?"

He goes on
"Jefferson believed full citizenship was a privilege to be earned by each man, that it was not something given lightly nor to be taken lightly. A man couldn't vote simply because he was a man, in Jefferson's eyes. He had to be a responsible man."

He at least considered the black man fully human, just not yet ready to vote.

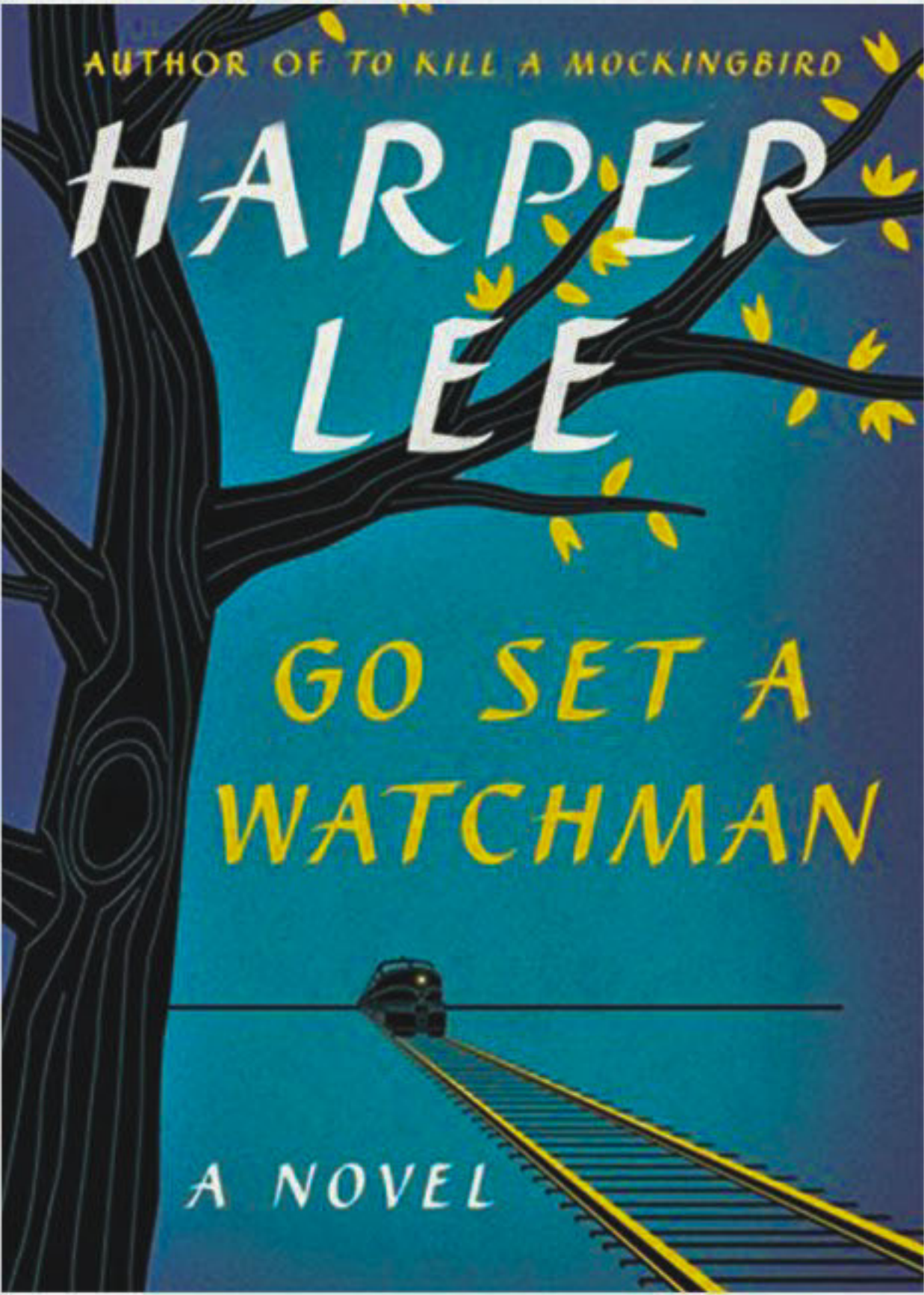
The ambivalence in Jean Louise Finch (Scout) is also very obvious and not dealt with in the vividly it deserved. Asked about the Supreme Court decision (Brown vs Board of Education, surely), she says, "Well sir, there they were, tellin'

us what to do again."

The new book is not great by any means but is a must read for people who adore *To Kill a Mockingbird*, both the book and the movie. It would be time better spent than watching some dumb programming on TV.

However, one may never look at *To Kill a Mockingbird* the same way as before ever again.

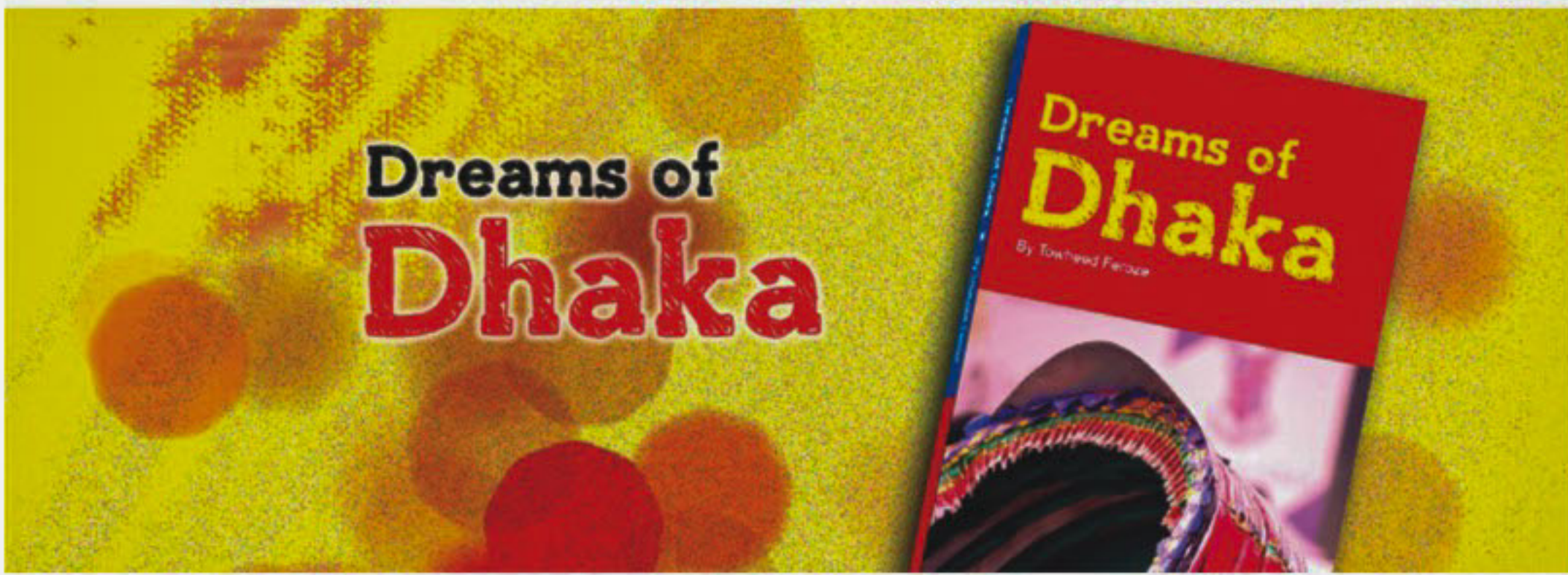
The reviewer is a freelance contributor.



Dreams of Dhaka

Author: Towheed Feroze

Reviewed by Shahriar Feroze



THE most difficult book to review is the one written by one's brother, and especially if he is the elder one. It would be difficult to satisfy him. So, if you find this review 'too sweetened' don't blame me and you may stop reading it right away.

Few writers play with memories and even a few transform those memories in progressive chapters followed by strong emotional feelings topped with humour and baked in adult adventure maasalas. Moreover, the book is also a bold admission of facts composed in the shape of anecdotes weaving the tales of a rebellious yet adventurous mind.

Towheed's chronicling of past events is captured through the exploring lenses of a juvenile that has broken all social taboos. But this hard-to-put down book has a weakness: it's meant for a target specific audience. Those who were born and brought up in Dhaka under a set of precise conditions of that time can most well relate to his writing of Dhaka of those days. His growing up with rock 'n' roll songs, football mania, social-political settings and of course prohibited adventures is that of an explorer defined by his own terms.

Commenting on Towheed's *Dreams of Dhaka* writer and social scientist Dr. Mizanur Rahman Shelley said, 'Not only the book touched our mind but the writer has displayed 'spellbinding magic' in his description of Dhaka.

Can't say if it's magic or not but what's spell-binding is Towheed's simplistic style in narrating to deliver what he is best at: humour.

Many are likely to differ with his drawn-out

political views and appeals for the prohibited world, but actually how many senior writers can you list to have revealed their 'darkest secrets'?

Probably the editor Mr. Nurul Kabir has most appropriately defined "*Dreams of Dhaka*", according to his understanding; he would not have known what he missed out on if he had not read the book. He further added, 'When the anti-autocrat movement was going in the 1980s, the entire society was passing through a transformation in all spheres of life. Transformation was taking place in people's outlook, in their culture and in their desires and expectations. The book has masterfully described every aspect of those transformations. It described how changes were taking place in cinema, book shops, modes of transport, roads and music, as well as the minds of the youth.'

In the end, there is a time machine in Towheed Feroze's book and whether you want to take a journey by it or not is up to you.

Pages, photos and printing handled by Palok publisher echoes the same old truth; in terms of publishing and promoting books we are still far behind to many of our neighboring countries. Such inept handling could have been easily avoided. Selection of photos, too, could have been better.

Priced at TK 350 your copy awaits you at Pathak Shomabesh....

The reviewer is a journalist.

Classics Corner



The Time Machine

A Science Fiction

Author: H. G. Wells

Reviewed by Mahfuz ul Hasib Chowdbury

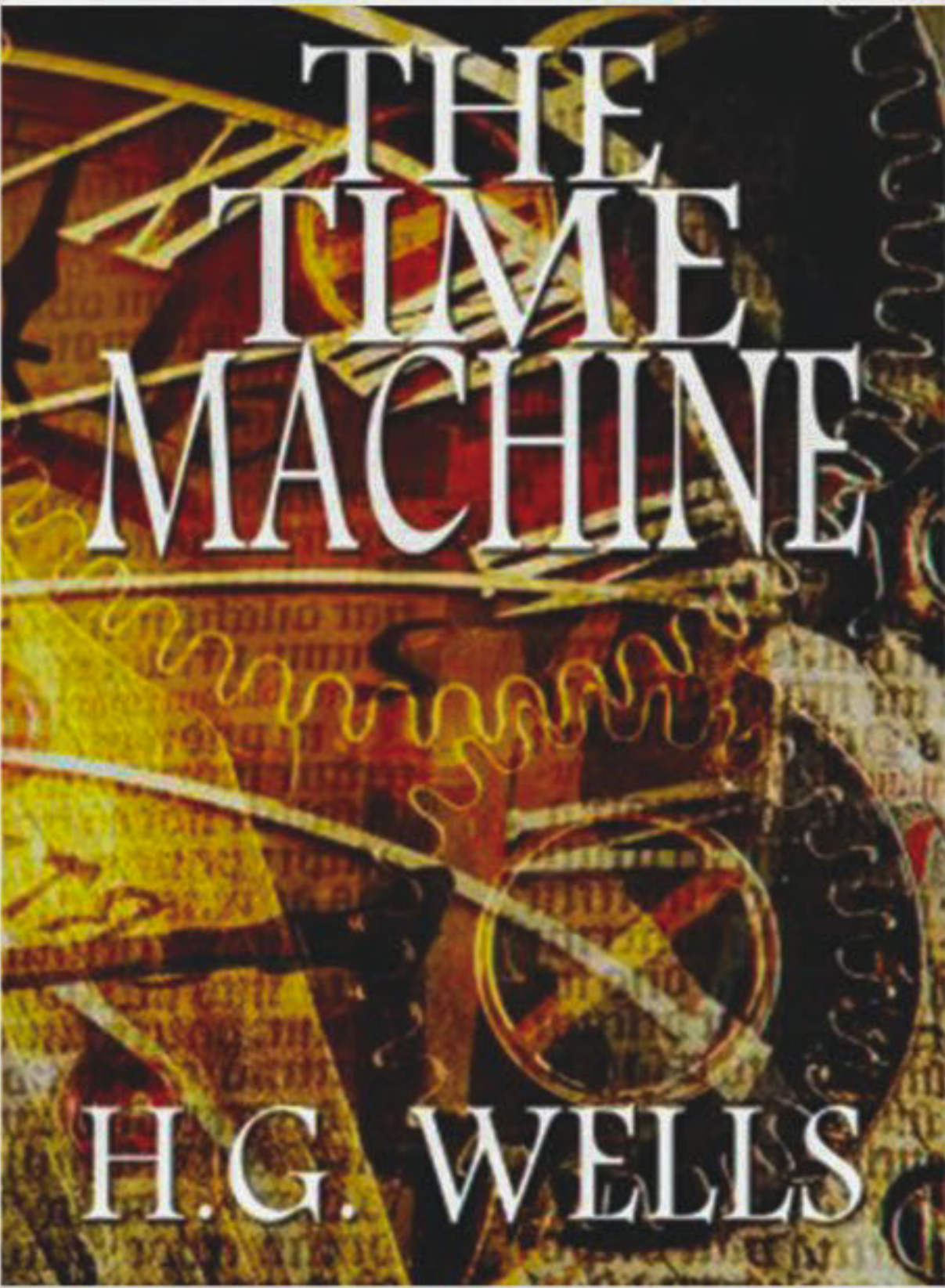
ANY discourse on science fictions will remain broadly unaccomplished if there is no reference to Herbert George Wells or H. G. Wells (1866—1946). He was one of the leading English authors of the Victorian era and is still remembered worldwide for his fabulous fictional works. The *Time Machine* is the book that made him instantly famous to readers of the entire world and it is regarded as a literary classic till today. In *The Time Machine* H. G. Wells characterized an English scientist (also referred to as a "time traveller" in the book) who invented a vehicle which, according to his description in the novel, would make time travel a real phenomenon, not just an imaginary thing. We find him in the novel talking about the theory of time travel and different features of his exceptional transport to a group of audiences.

The scientist travels back and forth through time by millions of years and finds bizarre, unfamiliar landscapes and creatures during his time travel. At a certain point of his tours, he stopped in the year 802,701 AD, in remote future. He landed in a reclusive world with a lot of woodlands but he didn't find any mark of civilization in any part of that place. He was surprised because he had earlier thought humans would have reached the cliff of progress and technologies in future centuries. He even didn't find any human being initially on that strange land. After a while he came across some human-like creatures called "Elois". But they looked much smaller than general human beings and more shockingly the time traveller discovered that, the Elois did not have the intellect and strength humans are known to possess. The Elois were a timid sort of species and very low in physical power. The time traveller makes friends with an Eloi girl

named Weena. Weena gave him fruits to eat and told him about their horrible lives imperilled by frequent assaults from a group of ape-like creatures called Morlocks. The Morlocks were the most powerful species on that landscape and they lived inside underground caves. However, they often came out of their caves at night on to the ground to hunt Elois for food. The gruesome details of the Morlocks and the way they killed Elois to eat them aggrieved and horrified the scientist. In one of the attacks by the Morlocks, the scientist saved Weena from getting killed.

The scientist found that the Morlocks were afraid of fire. So, he taught the Elois how to ignite fire as a defence against the Morlocks. In the meantime the Morlocks figured out that the scientist was their enemy and they also came to understand the power of his transport, the Time Machine. The Morlocks one night stole the machine and took it down into the caves where they lived. In a desperate effort, the time traveller succeeded to get hold of his Time Machine. While running away from the hideouts of the Morlocks, the scientist set fire on the woods to trap the Morlocks. A lot of Morlocks got killed in that fire. Unfortunately, Weena also died as the fire broke out all over the landscape. The scientist set the forest ablaze to destroy the Morlocks so that the Elois, the humanoid creatures of that land, can live without the panic caused by the Morlocks. The scientist wanted the human-like creatures to transfigure and upgrade themselves into real humans restoring the human-specific thinking power, wisdom and intellectual superiority.

The reviewer is Senior Lecturer, Department of English, Metropolitan University, Sylhet.

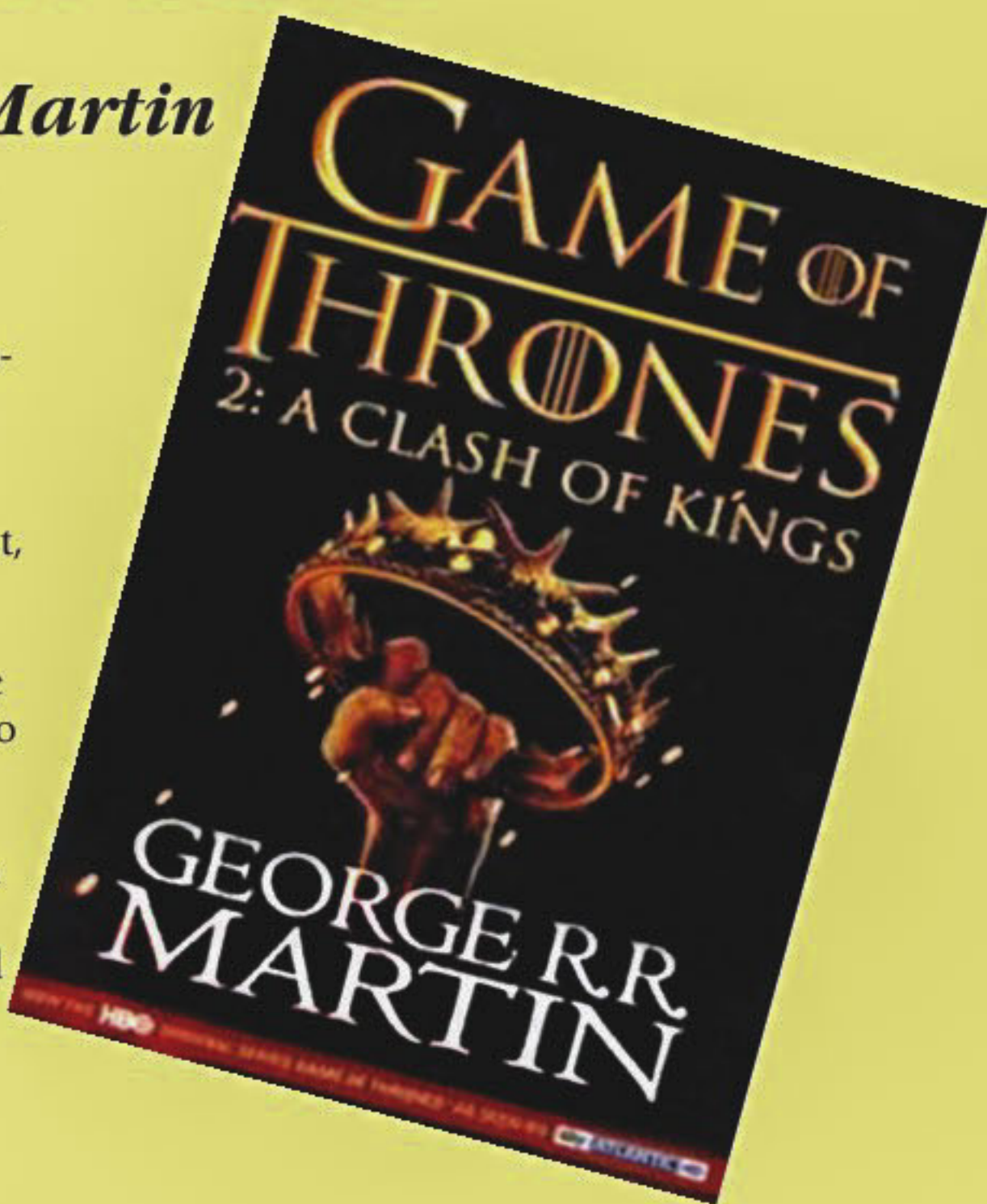


POPULAR BOOKS...

Game Of Thrones

Author: George R.R. Martin

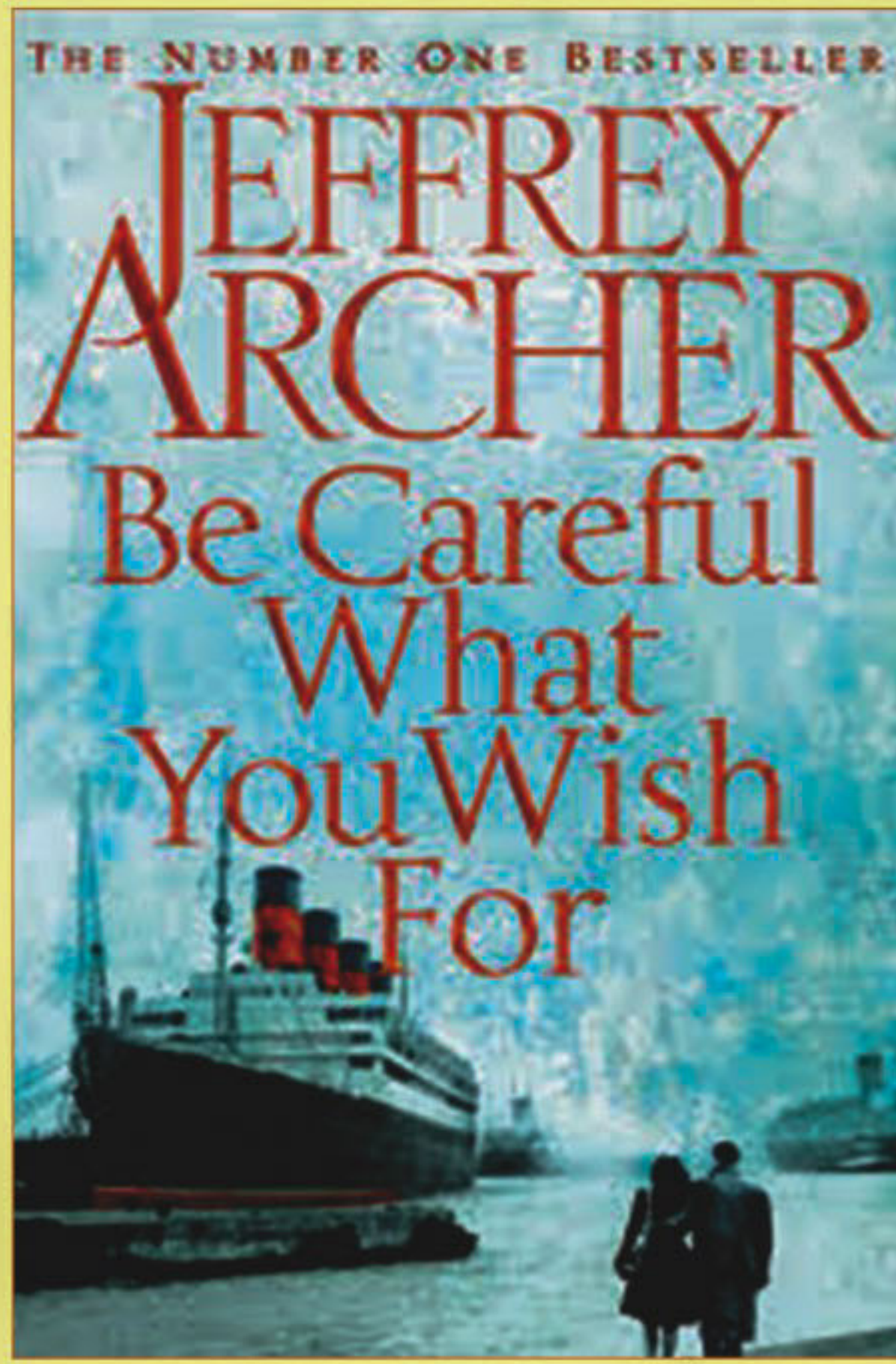
IT is cold in the North. Lord Stark is dead and Joffrey sits on the Iron Throne. The seven kingdoms rise up in arms as contenders vie for the throne. The Starks are separated, and Robb Stark begins his campaign against the Lannisters for their treachery. However, as all the Starks know, winter is coming, and it will only get colder. In the East, Daenerys Targaryen is amassing her armies. Considered the Mother of Dragons by her followers, she slowly begins to rise to the title of Khaleesi and becomes a formidable foe. No one is safe in Westeros, for there is a saying: Valar Morghulis. All men must die. And die they will in the bloodbath that is to follow in the coming days. Who will win the Iron Throne? More importantly, who will live, and who will die?



Be Careful What You Wish For

Author: Jeffrey Archer

THE book begins with a shocker: Harry and Emma's son, Sebastian, is nearly killed in an automobile accident; his friend Bruno does die. It seems Sebastian was the intended target, and Bruno's father, Don Pedro Martinez, who has a long and contentious history with the Cliftons (and who didn't know his own son was in the car), is the likely culprit. If you don't know who any of these people are, you may want to start at the saga's beginning, 2011's *Only Time Will Tell*, because this is an epic-size family drama, operatic in scope. This fourth book focuses on upheavals inside the Barrington Shipping Company: mystery-novelist Harry Clifton's wife, Emma, is descended from the company's founder and wants to take over as company chairman, but Don Pedro, with a seething hatred of the Barringtons, has his own plans for the suddenly vacant chairman's seat. As with the previous volumes in the series, there are myriad subplots winding their way through the book: Harry and Emma's daughter is engaged, for example, but there are those who aren't so thrilled about that, and a new member of the Barrington company's upper echelon is a fellow whose agenda is a troubling mystery. Reaction to the Clifton Chronicles has not been unanimously positive—Archer has his detractors—but if you like multivolume family sagas, it would be hard to find a contemporary example as ambitious and entertaining as this one.



These books are available at Omni Books, Gulshan, Dhanmondi.