

No, it's not Dial M for Murder

AUTHOR: TOM WATSON AND MARTIN HICKMAN FIRST PUBLISHED 2012

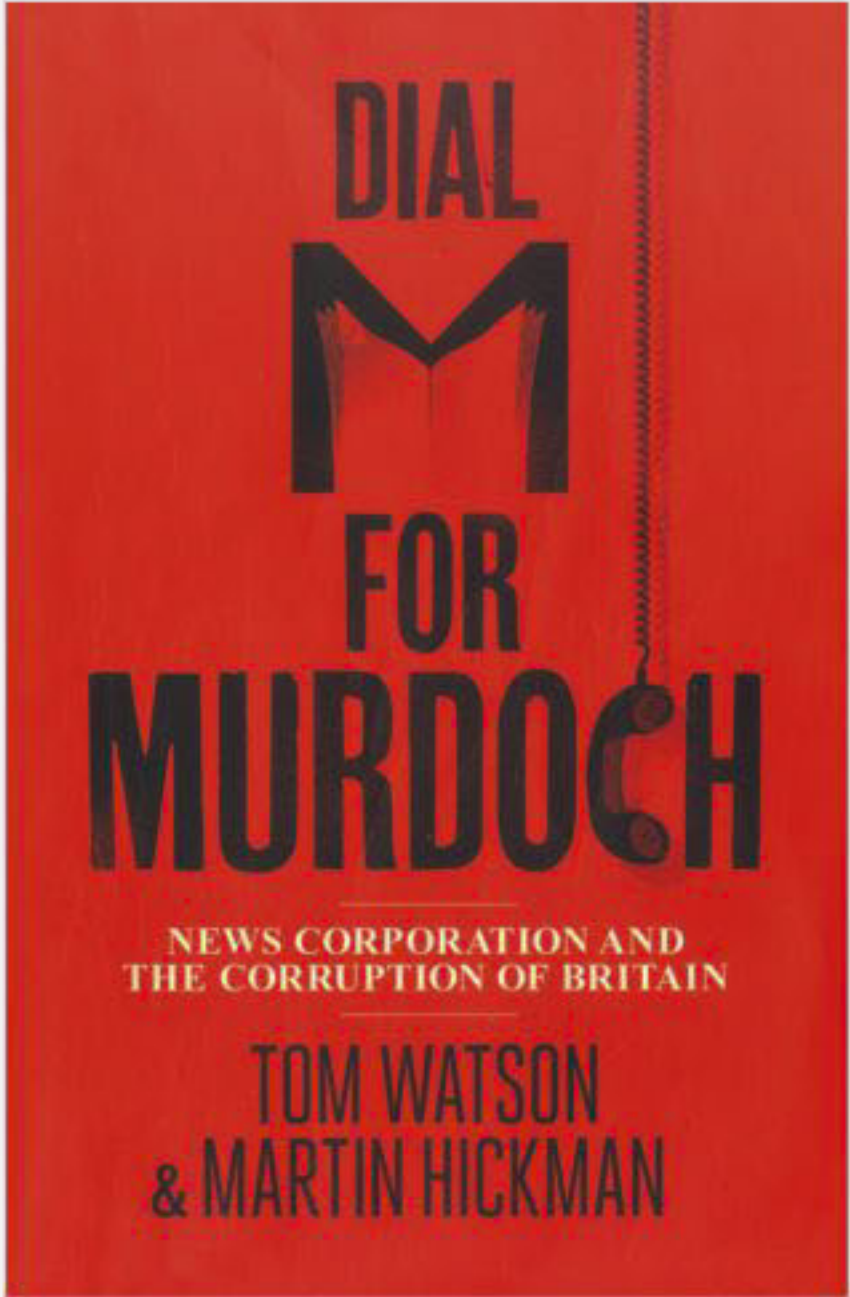
REVIEWED BY SHAHNOOR WAHID

WRITERS Tom Watson and Martin Hickman couldn't have selected a better title than Dial M for Murdoch, borrowing from Alfred Hitchcock, to accentuate the aura of the bizarre and the uncanny that surround Rupert Murdoch when it comes to owning and using media, and becoming a billionaire in the process. The media Moghul has hit the headlines himself many times for creating news of sorts and continues to do so. Starting as the owner of a small Australian newspaper, this wayward genius soon went on a frenzy of owning some of the large media establishments across the UK and the USA. He had the Midas touch to say the least. He has done everything required to own media houses, one after another, and has done everything to make them grow and keep them running. In the process he even allowed some of his fervent deputies to go for unconventional ways of collecting news thereby giving birth to some scandals of colossal proportion that are now parts of history. If we read some of the paragraphs from the book we'll have a clear idea of what Rupert Murdoch was and how he operated to create his empire.

A paragraph in the preface of the book says: "This book tries to explain how a particular global media company works: how it used its huge power to bully, intimidate and to cover up, and how its exposure has changed the way we look at our politicians, our police service and our press. Some political 'friends' have tried to portray the hacking and bribery which has exposed the workings of News Corporation as part of the price you pay for good tabloid journalism. They're wrong. Of course, tabloids sometimes get out of hand, but this is not (at least, not much) a story of harmless mischief, of reporters in false moustaches and rollicking exposes of hypocrites. It is not just the famous and wealthy who have been damaged, but ordinary decent people who happened to be in the wrong place at the wrong time."

Over the decades he earned the reputation of having used his power and powerful sources to manipulate news, to tap into people's phones, to intimidate people, politicians, to influence the administration and so on. But

finally "he had been hauled before a parliamentary committee to do something peculiar for him: explain himself. In a single tumultuous fortnight, the global business he had accumulated over sixty bustling years had fallen into a deep crisis. His moralizing tabloid newspaper, the News of the World, had been caught systematically and illegally spying on the rich, the powerful and the famous. For years, his British executives had covered up its crimes. They had destroyed evidence, run smear cam-



paigns, lied to Parliament and threatened and intimidated journalists, lawyers and politicians. Despite their efforts, the truth about the 'dark arts' of newsgathering at Murdoch's UK newspaper empire, New International, had slowly surfaced."

The list of excesses done by Murdoch and his gang seems like a never ending one. He used corrupt police officers and public officials to obtain private phone numbers, emails, vehicle registrations, and tax, income, employment and medical records. He however did not target the rich only. It has been said that even "the grieving and even the dead could be swept into the sights of his clandestine news-gatherers." Here is a poignant tale of what he could do to get his hands on news. Reportedly, on 4

July 2011, the News of the World gave birth to a very big scandal. It had hacked into the voicemails of a missing 13-year-old schoolgirl, and also those of parents of murdered children and survivors of terrorist bombings. It caused national revulsion."

What was the reaction from the Murdoch camp? As usual Murdoch made all efforts to get out of trouble, but this time he had little luck. The outpouring of disgust was so intense that "Britain's political leaders, for so long servile to the Australian tycoon who took US citizenship in 1985, rose up against him and opposed his biggest ever business deal, the intended takeover of the BSkyB TV network, from which he was forced to withdraw." Thus wrote Watson and Hickman.

What was the cost of such scandal? Let us see what the writers of the book have to say: "As the scandal swirled around Britain and the world, it cost Murdoch tens of millions of pounds, ruined the reputations of several of his most trusted lieutenants, and damaged the wider press, police, prosecutors and UK government. In London, the Prime Minister, David Cameron, announced a judge-led inquiry to investigate the delinquency of British newspapers. In the United States, the Federal Bureau of Investigation launched an investigation into the possible hacking of the victims of the 9/11 terrorist attacks. Shares in Murdoch's multimedia conglomerate, moored in a black skyscraper in New York, fell 19 per cent, wiping \$10 billion from its value. Commentators began whispering that the octogenarian billionaire might be deposed and his quick-tempered son James might never inherit the crown. Shareholders might even force the sale of his British papers. In all his years in business -- mostly of breakneck expansion -- these were the heaviest blows to rain down upon Rupert Murdoch."

Yes, it was costly enough, to see \$10 billion disappearing in thin air is no light matter.

Murdoch and his son were summoned to appear before a Parliamentary committee to defend their case. It was not something that Murdoch was used to doing in his long, long business career. The father and son were apparently humble and apolo-

getic, but also 'defiant.' They insisted they had not known about the crimes committed behind their back. They tried to impress the committee members by explaining what a tiny part the News of the World played in their media group. Murdoch said, "My company has 52,000 employees. I have led it for fifty-seven years and I have made my share of mistakes. I have lived in many countries, employed thousands of honest and hard-working journalists, owned nearly 200 newspapers." It is at this point, when asked who did he blame for his tabloid's excesses and the loss of the BSkyB bid, Rupert Murdoch blamed his rivals and said, "They caught us with dirty hands and built the hysteria around it."

While giving an account of his worth Watson and Hickman wrote: "At the start of 2011, 1 billion people daily digested his products -- books, newspapers, magazines, TV shows and films -- and News Corporation, his holding company, had annual sales of \$33 billion. His passion was not money, though, but business itself. He loved the piratical thrill of takeovers -- the brinkmanship, the deal-making, the constant expansion -- and the power. Both came most intoxicatingly in ink. In Britain, he had come to control 40 per cent of national newspaper circulation -- making him the most important proprietor in politics -- through his ownership of the best-selling Sunday paper the News of the World and The Daily Sun, and their quality stablemates The Times and The Sunday Times. In his native Australia his dominance was greater still: 70 per cent of the newspaper market; while in his adopted United States, through the New York Post, the Wall Street Journal and the most-watched cable news outlet, Fox News, Murdoch exerted a strong pull on American politics."

In his 90s, Rupert Murdoch "ruled over a media business mightier than any other in history." A biographer wrote about him, "The Man Who Owns the News."

By all accounts Dial M for Murdoch is an interesting book to have around one's bedside.

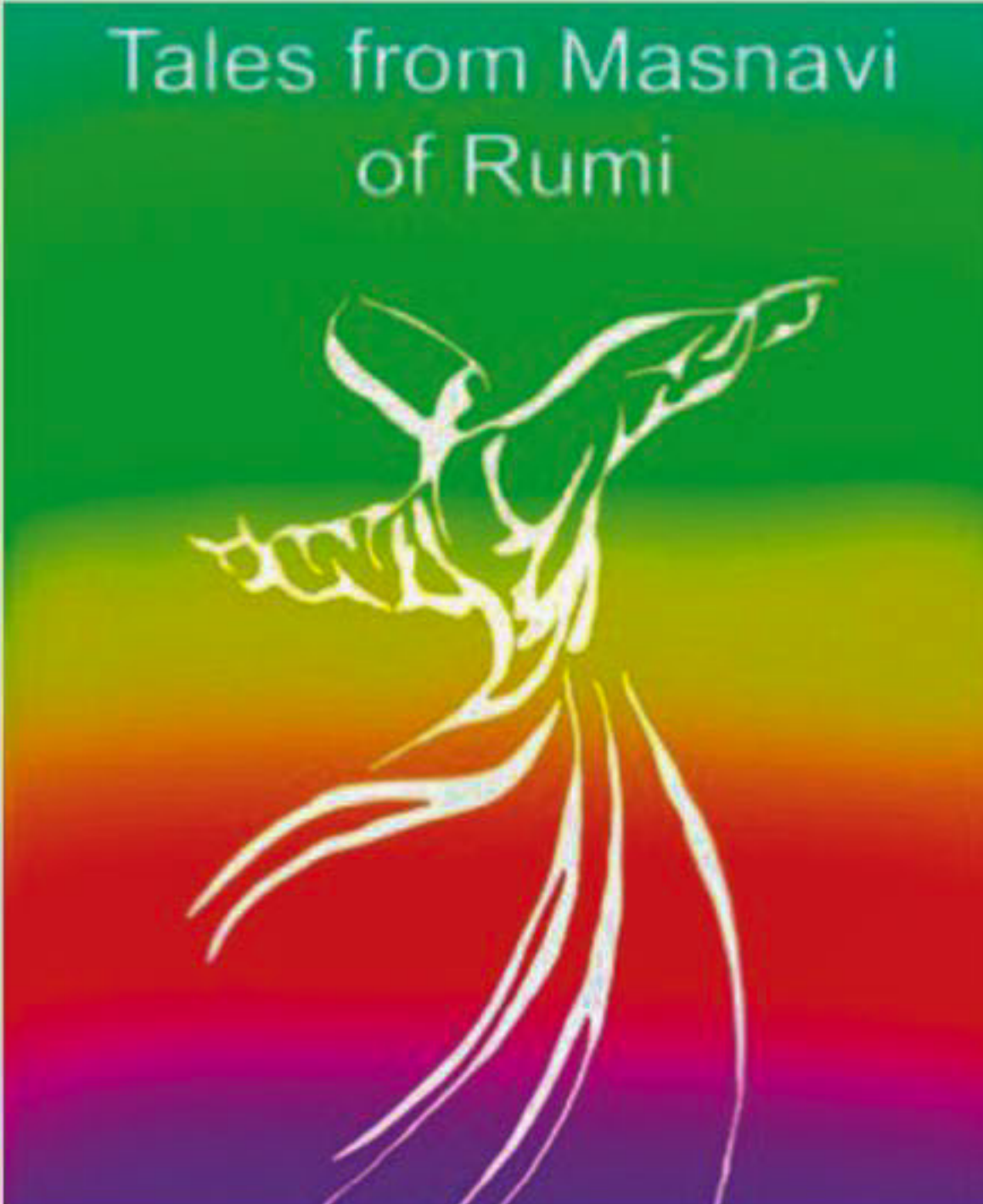
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A Monograph on MYSTIC MUSINGS

TRANSLATED BY EVREN SENER

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TALES from Masnavi of Rumi is a translated book summarizing the spiritual and mystic ideas illustrated by Jalal-al-Din Rumi in his thoughtful exhortations and poems. It was translated by Evren Sener, a female Turkish author, into English in 2013 and this book offers a substantial and lucid glance into the messages the greatest Persian mystic poet intended to convey to people of all ages and centuries through his evocative words and precepts. In particular, readers with eagerness to know about Rumi in a deep but incisive way will certainly find this book very conducive.

Acknowledged as probably the greatest ever scholar and mystic poet of Persia, Jalal-al-Din Rumi (1207-1273) expressed his thoughts in such a lovely and fascinating way that his writings have overwhelmed believers of all religions for hundreds of years and the illusion cast by his spiritual ideas bemuse millions of readers worldwide till today. During the time while Rumi lived, monarchs, merchants, sages, theologians, peasants, common men and women of all beliefs used to meet him to hear his verses and sermons. He was a scholar of such a height that he could touch the heart of everyone that came across him with his profound words. The true essence of humanism lies in the sense of sacrifice. "We have learnt in order to give. We have not learnt in order to take" said Rumi, reminding us of the higher importance of dedication to uphold humanity. Over the years Rumi became all the more popular with the western readers and impacted the western school of thoughts even several centuries after his death. Rumi's poetry has been so far translated into English by quite a few writers such as Coleman Barks, Robert Bly and A. J. Arberry.

Rumi's honour for other religions on some occasions made him face unfriendly questions from theologians of his time. One of them was Qonavi, a leading Muslim cleric of that period. He once confronted Rumi before an audience, "You claim to be at one with 72 religious sects, but the Jews cannot agree with the Christians, and the Christians cannot agree with the Muslims. If they cannot agree with each other, how could you agree with all of them?" Rumi answered to this, "Yes, you are right. I agree with you too." Rumi was respected by the kings and noblemen of Persia, but still he was found more inclined to tailors, carpenters, shopkeepers or even vagabonds. He focused on illuminating the most overlooked people of the society with the light of divinity. There was a story about Rumi that, one day Rumi was absorbed in deep contemplation while his disciples were sitting close by. At that time a drunk pedestrian was staggering along that way, who insensibly stumbled over Rumi. Rumi's disciples were enraged at this incident and they all stood up to teach the drunk fellow a good lesson, but Rumi raised his hand to stop them and said, "I thought this intruder was the one who was intoxicated, but now I see it's not him, but it's my own students who are drunk." This is how Rumi instilled tolerance into the hearts of his followers.

Rumi glorified wisdom and placed it on top of power and pomp. Rumi's love for wisdom with dignity, rather than for wealth is reflected through the following lines:

"The worst of scholars are those who visit princes, and the best of princes are those who visit scholars. Wise is the prince who stands at the door of the poor, and wretched are the poor who stand at the door of the prince."

Looking for the emblems of God in ordinary surroundings like leaves, grass, rocks remain the quest of Rumi in all his poems and discourses and an identical tune is echoed in Walt Whitman's poem "Song of Myself" too in which we find Whitman seeking to find the image of the Creator by looking deeply into blades of grass. Another frequently quoted saying by Rumi is "Don't grieve. Whatever you lose comes around in another form". This recalls the 'Universal Law of Compensation' by Ralph Waldo Emerson, another frontline American author of 19th century, who said, "For everything you have missed, you have gained something else. And for everything you gain, you lose something else." Rumi's mystic legacy is still going on through uncountable authors, analysts and readers from different countries and languages who have been seeking spiritual enlightenment from his disquisitions and poetry. Rumi spoke of the intermingling of human body and soul into the entity of God like this "I don't exist, God is all. There is no existence but God. If I shatter into pieces, it's through the infinite grace of God's unlocking of Himself....I am nothing."

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Humanity enslaved by the inhumane

AUTHOR: HARRIET BEECHER STOWE

REVIEWED BY ANIKA ALAM

WHAT makes humans so different and stand out among all of God's other creations? Is it their appearance, their ability to speak or their higher cognitive capabilities? How are humans any different from a wild animal when they turn savage and harm other creatures willingly for their own benefit? Mankind has been enslaved by the whims of their cruelty and violence since their inception. The only difference is that the methods of executing such brutality have changed and refined over time. The best-selling 19th century novel, Uncle Tom's Cabin, by Harriet Beecher Stowe explores man's inhumanity, opening a window to the tragic lives of African slaves in the Southern states of 1850s America.

The novel narrates the tragic tale of Uncle Tom, a long-suffering black slave, around whom the stories of the other characters revolve. The sentimental novel portrays the reality of slavery while also emphasizing that Christian love can overcome something as heinous as human enslavement. It opens with two gentlemen, Mr. Arthur Shelby and Mr. Haley, a slave trader, discussing how many slaves Mr. Shelby must sell to clear his debt. After much trepidation, he agrees to sell Tom, his most faithful and honest slave, and Harry, the son of Mrs. Shelby's favorite slave, Eliza.

Eliza luckily overhears the aforementioned exchange, prompting her to take her son and flee to Canada that very night. Earlier that day, her husband, George Harris, had shared his plan to leave his own master as well, so she hoped they will both escape and reunite in Canada. Before Eliza takes off, she visits Uncle Tom's cabin to warn him and his family that he has been sold to Mr. Haley. Aunt Chloe, Tom's wife, urges him to run away to Canada too but he opts against it, as his master Shelby depends on his honesty. Mr. Haley chases Eliza, almost catching her but she escapes to Ohio by crossing a river on a piece of floating ice. Mr. Haley sends slave catchers after her and returns to collect Tom. Sometime later, Eliza's husband discovers Eliza is headed for Canada and sets out to find her. They reunite under the shelter of a kind Quaker family and

prepare for the journey towards their liberation.

On a Mississippi river boat, Tom meets a little white girl named Eva St. Clare, and is moved by her gravity. He rescues her from drowning. Eva's father, Augustine St. Clare, buys Tom from Mr. Haley at Eva's request, and Tom accompanies Eva, her father, and cousin Ophelia to their New Orleans home. There he meets Eva's mother, Marie St. Clare, a typical slave owner who runs her slaves ragged as they try to satisfy her endless demands. Tom and young Eva form a close relationship. By reading to Tom from the Bible, Eva herself grows to understand and love Christianity. They discuss their

This anti-slavery novel is believed to have helped lay the groundwork for the Civil War.

mutual Christian faith on a daily basis.

St. Clare writes a letter to Tom's wife in Kentucky, informing her of Tom's whereabouts and well-being. St. Clare also buys a young slave girl called Topsy and "gives" her to Ophelia to raise. Eva then transforms the life of hardened young Topsy, and teaches her to be kind and how to read. Back in Kentucky, Aunt Chloe convinces Mrs. Shelby that she should be hired out to a confectionary baker in Louisville and her wages can be saved to buy Tom's freedom. Shelby's son, George, writes back to Tom with this news.

After two years, when it is apparent that young Eva is extremely ill and on the throes of death, she calls all the slaves together to give them a speech about God's love and her love for them. She gives each slave a lock of her blonde curls so they will remember her. As death approaches, Eva touches the hearts of all around her with her sweet Christian acceptance, and when she eventually dies, everyone mourns her. Tom's influence at this point brings St. Clare almost to belief in Christ, and the man promises Tom his freedom, signs Topsy over to Ophelia legally, and begins to make provisions to protect all his slaves from sale should something happen to him. However, before St.

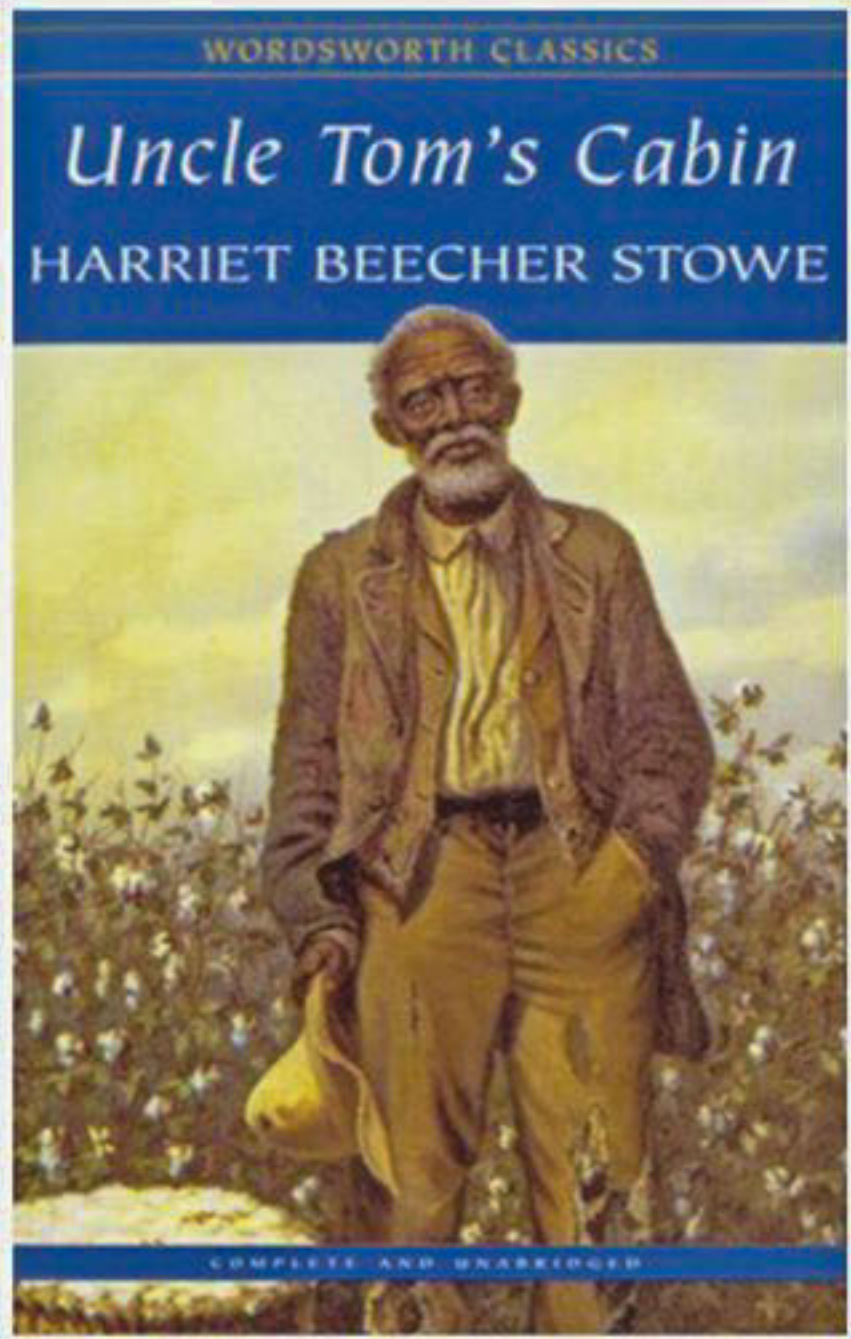
Clare could finish all the paper work, he is killed in a bar-room brawl and his wife auctions off most of his slaves, including Tom.

Tom's new owner is Simon Legree, a ruthless man who works his slaves to death, then buys new ones cheaply in a never-ending cycle. He is a plantation owner, who also bought two women slaves: one intended as the sexslave of Legree's black overseer Sambo, the other was 15-year-old Emmeline for Legree himself. They are taken to the man's run-down plantation among the swamps. Tom is set to picking cotton, and he tries to make the best of his position by prayer and hope. He meets Cassy, Legree's black concubine, and learns her horrifying story. Tom is whipped mercilessly for attempting to help his fellow slaves and Legree vows to break his spirit or kill him. Cassy does her best to use her influence to save Uncle Tom.

When Tom aids Cassy and Emmeline to escape, Legree beats Tom to death as he refuses to inform where they fled. It takes a few days for him to die, though, and in the meantime, his old master's son, George Shelby, arrives to emancipate his dear Uncle Tom, but unfortunately it is too late. Master George arrives in Tom's shed just in time to speak to "Uncle Tom, my poor, poor old friend!" one last time, a heart-breaking moment, where the reader is sure to weep in grief for the poor honest man.

Uncle Tom's last words to George is certainly the most moving and tragic part of the story, where he says, "Ye mustn't, now, tell Chloe, poor soul! How ye found me,—it would be so drefful to her. Only tell her ye found me going into glory; and that I couldn't stay for no one. And tell her the Lord stood by me everywhere and al'ays, and made everything light and easy... I loves every creature everywhar!—it's nothing but love! O, Mas'r George! What a thing't is to be a Christian!" These last words of a dying slave are touching, inspiring faith in God and pursuit of an honest life.

Later, disheartened, George Shelby buries Tom and returns home. On his way back, he runs into Cassy and Emmeline, the two escaping slave girls, on the same ship travelling north. When Cassy realizes George is sympa-



thetic towards the escaping slaves, she shares her story to him. Another lady on the boat reveals that she is George Harris's sister, and Cassy recognizes that George's wife Eliza is her own daughter. The two, with Emmeline, go to Canada and find George, Eliza, and their children; they all eventually go to France, return, and plan to settle in Liberia. Meanwhile, George Shelby returns to his farm, and breaks the news of Tom's death to Chloe, and frees all his slaves, telling them to remember that they owe their freedom to Uncle Tom. Although Tom's life ended in tragedy, there is much happiness among these slaves who survived and escaped the trials and tribulations of slavery, either through emancipation or by fleeing to Canada.

This anti-slavery novel published in 1852 is believed to have helped lay the groundwork for the Civil War. Even though slavery might be abolished from society today, people still continue to abuse the innocent. Cruelty of one man to another is still prominent in today's society. Lives are lost every day to sexual abuse, bombs and massacres. This novel makes readers question humanity and asks them to stand up against abuse.

The reviewer is a major in English literature from Independent University Bangladesh (IUB).