

The final debate: Highly contentious but decisive

PLEASURE IS ALL MINE



SHAH HUSAIN IMAM

It may have proved to be the make-or-mar debate in the US presidential election held at the university of Nevada, Las Vegas on Wednesday night. This is borne out by some reinforcing factors in what experts tend to characterise as one of the most convoluted US presidential elections to-date.

Looking at the performance curves in the previous two rounds of debate Hillary Clinton had won by around 18-20 percent over her rival Donald Trump. The pattern seems to have been confirmed by and large in the third and final round. Instant polling among those who watched it gave 52 percent to Hillary compared with 39 percent for Donald.

The difference narrowing down to 13 percent for Donald this time around may be indicative of just simply a slightly improved performance by him. Also, one gets to feel how suggestions of a sex scandal revolving around him may have weighed in peripherally.

Well, two interesting snippets betray that blasé attitude to personal character issue of public figures. One American woman quipped that she was looking to elect a president, not choose a husband. In a *Daily Mail* issue, I am told, a woman with an asterisk sign on her t-shirt apparently suggested, 'He can touch me.'

On a serious note, however, a television commentator after the debate lamented how Trump let go of raising a touchy

Clinton family issue - in the first debate, he had rather sensibly kept from referring to it recognising Chelsea's presence - when Hillary was taking her rival on his reported sexual indiscretions.

At the end of the day, Trump has lost all the three debates and that puts him in a bind from which it will be next to

impossible for him to shore up his fortunes.

More to the point, before Trump went in for the final round, electoral votes tally, the crucial determinant of victory or defeat in the race, was heavily tilted towards Hillary Clinton. As against her 300 plus pile, Trump camp cut a sorry

figure of 170.

Thus, for both sides, very high stakes were involved on the eve of the third and last debate three weeks before the November 8 election to the most powerful office in the world. Even to the divided GOP, it offered the final chance for Trump to reverse the course, come

role from a high pedestal as an extension of and equating it with corporate or company-centric successes. As if to blight his standing he allegedly did not submit his tax returns nor pay federal taxes. This came to light when Hillary was defending the Clinton charitable foundation vis-à-vis the Trump foundation.

For her part, Hillary had to craft credible answers to WikiLeaks latest disclosures of e-mails to ward off any blemish on her trustworthiness. She made a point of what she termed Russia's intervening in the electoral process to secure a Trump victory. Such an allegedly solicited interference in other country's affairs does not bode well in international relations.

Dogged by impressions having gained ground about uneven contests and rather low levels of conversions on mainstream issue often with escapist digressions, the Fox television anchor Wallace moderated the debate with great intrepidity. He choreographed the layout very carefully formatting the debate along such rubrics as would maximise articulation and juxtaposition of views so that the voters are able to make informed judgments.

The six self-contained segments read as follows: Supreme Court; appointments and interpretation of the Constitution; deportation; economy; fitness to be President; hot spots; and finally closing remarks on the question—Why you?

Clearly aimed to bring the best out of both the candidates, the US Presidential Debate Commission to a very extent succeeded in its mission.

The writer is a contributor of The Daily Star.



In their last face-off, Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton punched home many of the lines of attack that have defined their epic battle. PHOTO: AFP

PROJECT SYNDICATE

Bob Dylan and the literary idiot wind

BERNARD-HENRI LEVY

Bard and rhapsodist both. A poetico-musical revolution in one man and one body of work. I like to think that it was this tour de force - this prolonged stroke of genius that is forever young - that the Nobel committee was recognising in its selection.

OH, the anger of the fusty at the announcement of Bob Dylan's Nobel Prize! What an outcry from the academy - not the Swedish one, mind you, but that of the world church of literaturology.

The panic of the literary bureaucracy, ensnared in its certainties and steeped in its petty calculations, its half-baked prognostications, its crafty shifts of position, has been palpable. Was the choice of Dylan political or non-political? Why an American? Why not a woman? Or a voice, any voice, of a visible minority? Or this one, who's been waiting 20 years? Or that one, who's given up hope?

The truth, however unpleasant it may be for the fuddy-duddies, is that awarding the Nobel Prize in Literature to an author who has written just one book is no more surprising than giving it to Dario Fo or Winston Churchill, neither of whom wrote many more.

And here's the even greater truth: to bestow it on one of our last popular poets, the distant relative of Rutebeuf, Villon, and all the minstrels and songsters of solitude and dereliction; to consecrate a troubadour, a bard of the brotherhood of lonely and lost souls; to crown the author of ballads that have been, to borrow André Suarès's phrase about Rimbaud, "a moment in the life" of so many people in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries makes a lot more sense than pulling out of a hat the obscure Rudolf Christoph Eucken or picking poor old Sully Prudhomme instead of Tolstoy.

Of course, it's wrong to respond priggishly to priggishness. But, confronted with those who have been shouting, "That's not literature! It's just not!" one is tempted to side with Francis Ponge who, citing Lautréamont, defined the poet (he would say "proet") as a bard or troubadour who, by expressing the "voice of things," becomes "the most useful citizen of his tribe." And to whom does that definition apply better than to the author of Chimes of Freedom or Long and Wasted Years, which bring to life and to music what the critic Greil Marcus has called the "invisible republic" of American culture?

One is tempted to side also with Mallarmé, who urged us, in more or less the same terms, to "give a purer meaning to the words of the tribe." Again, who better than this collage artist, this chameleon of citation and intertextuality, this laconic lyricist, this verbal alchemist who spent his life reinventing others' words and his own, uncovering the embers of the era beneath the ashes of the day's defeats, and transmuting into gold the lead he heard on the radio?

Or consider the familiar distinction between scribes, who make instrumental use of language, and writers, who spin it into silk.



IMAGE: THEEHUIS.TUMBLR.COM

Wasn't Dylan alluding to something similar when, after years of struggle for civil rights, resistance to the war in Vietnam, and support for the feminist revolution, he titled one of his most beautiful songs I'm Not There, as in, I'm not here anymore, no longer your servant, goodbye to all that, so long?

But the true question lies elsewhere. The most conclusive exercise would be to compare apples with apples and the author of *Blonde on Blonde* with those who were and remain

his key contemporaries.

Dylan is a Kerouac who can sing. He's a Burroughs who put to music the great parade of the Beat generation, with its wild parties and naked lunches. He is what Allen Ginsberg said in describing his shock upon first hearing A Hard Rain's A-Gonna Fall in 1963, a song in which the accents and pacing, the abrupt changes in emphasis, the voyage to the very heart of words and the imagination all echo the best literature of the time - but with music as well!

Are we going to hold that against Dylan, charge him with the sin of having grafted the rhythms of the blues, soul, and country music onto those of the Bible, William Blake, and Walt Whitman? Why should we withhold from the trouper of the Never Ending Tour (more than two thousand performances!) the dignity accorded without hesitation to the author of *On the Road*?

It was Louis Aragon, I think, who said that setting a poem to music was like moving from black and white to colour. Aragon, the poet sung by Léo Ferré and others, believed that a poem unsung was half dead.

Well, then, it seems that Dylan was the only one of his era to have been able to embody fully the musicality that is essential to great poetry, the second voice that haunts every poet, but which he generally delegates to those who recite or read him, the power of song that is his ultimate and secret truth and that some have gone mad - literally and tragically mad - trying to pull from cage into canto.

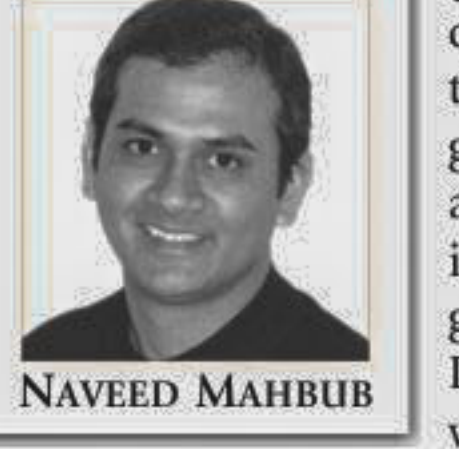
Bard and rhapsodist both. A poetico-musical revolution in one man and one body of work. I like to think that it was this tour de force - this prolonged stroke of genius that is forever young - that the Nobel committee was recognising in its selection.

The writer is one of the founders of the "Nouveaux Philosophes" (New Philosophers) movement. His books include *Left in Dark Times: A Stand Against the New Barbarism*, *American Vertigo: Traveling America in the Footsteps of Tocqueville*, and the forthcoming *Spirit of Judaism*.

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WWKS

HUMOROUSLY YOURS



NAVEED MAHBUB

NOT sure if there is a direct correlation between the plummeting of gold imports in India and the fact that there is once again another gold smuggling bust at Dhaka Airport. But a whole kilogram of gold inside a living, breathing human being? This has got to have shattered all world records, the previous one surely also set by another Bangladeshi. We really should check with the Guinness Book of World Records, though I'm not sure how the editors would actually word it, let alone have any illustrations.

We are not the only people who have been engaged in this strange exercise. Even the 'First World' has had similar instances. Take this 'First World' incident with its certain level of smartness, where the homo sapien has outsourced the job to the canine to smuggle illicit drugs into the US by implanting them inside a dog. No wonder the dog is man's best friend. But the customs officials at Miami Airport are not far behind our boys, probably for once THEY came HERE to be trained on successful detections. The scene there is surely amusing with several armed customs officers stooped near the tail region of a rather unsuspecting dog. Stranger still that it's not a dog sniffing a suspect human, but a bunch of humans gathered to sniff a dog, and at a rather unhygienic part of the latter's anatomy.

Coming back to the gold. Not sure where the smuggled gold ends up, but if it's at the regular ornament market, I would say many a progressive bride would be inclined to shun the stool gold just like the blood diamond.

Interestingly, it is the same demographics who choose to be the rectal Fed Ex for gold. Does it say something as to why they are particularly vulnerable to being lured into such a risky exercise while initially being lured into paying a small fortune to get jobs overseas that the locals will not stoop to doing? Getting the rough end of the stick when going, when being there and finally upon returning. What Would Kissinger Say (WWKS)? He called us a bottomless basket and now a bottom full of gold?

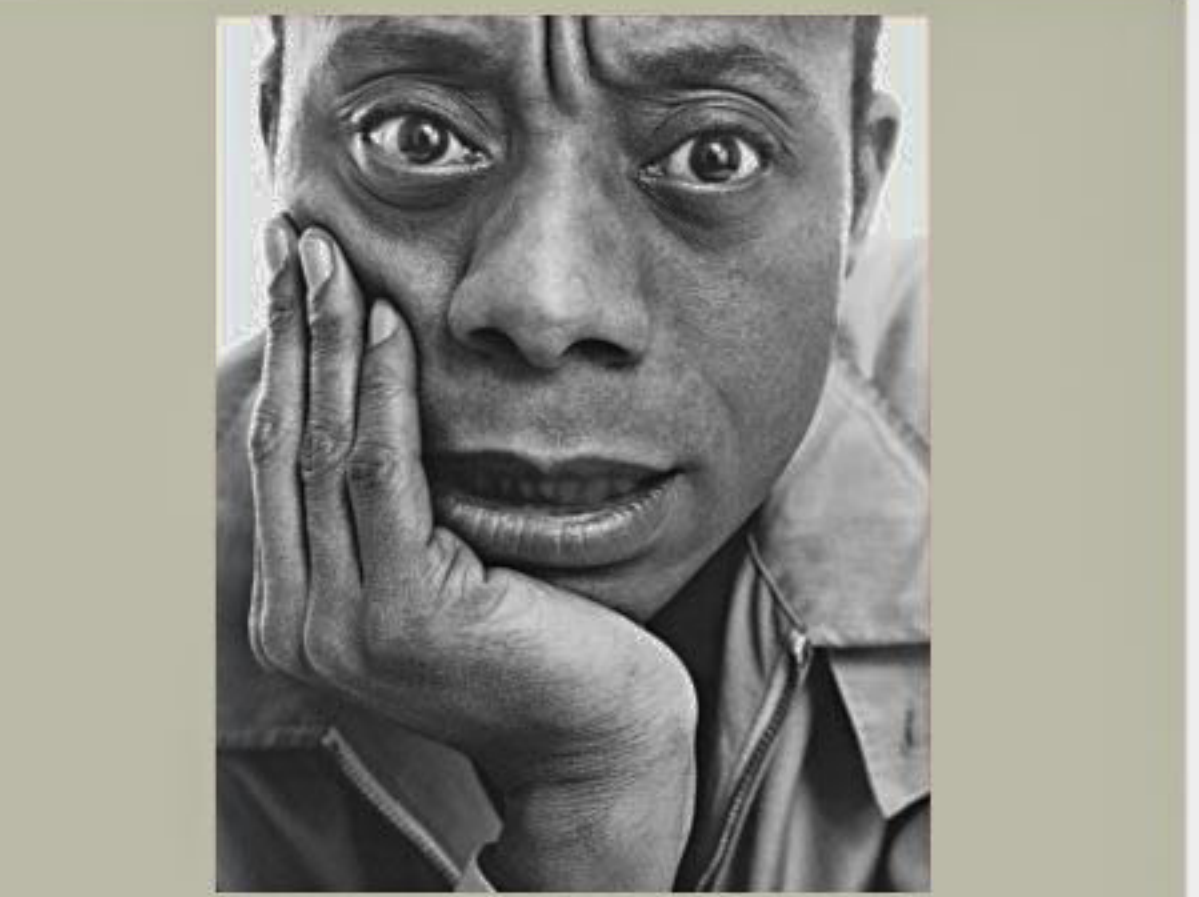
Speaking of Henry Kissinger, I am surprised that some still think of Bangladesh as such. I headline at the Jakarta Comedy Club where a Bangladeshi shows up (a rare occurrence, "pay to watch comedy?"). He pulls me aside, "Dude, you gotta bring down the house [with your comedy] as I have brought these expat friends with me to whom Bangladesh is still the way Henry Kissinger described it." Now, THAT's a LOT of pressure. Do comedy and de-Kissingerify the audience? I finish my show amidst high fives and pats on the shoulder. Then the coveted guard of honor for the best comedian of the evening, "Hey mate! You were funny!! Let me buy you a drink." "Coke Zero for me, thanks!" as I don't drink and Coke Zero costs more than a litre of petrol in Dhaka. He is surprised to see a comedian so dry, literally and figuratively, off the stage, but also knowing that his allocated budget to intoxicate a comedian can get this Bangladeshi a dozen Coke Zeros plus a handsome tip for the server. But it is the pleasure of the conversation that, yes, we Bangladeshis do comedy, we have talk shows, we have cars, we have flyovers, we don't die of starvation, we have floods but we handle them, we have traffic but we wait patiently, we have corruption but we navigate through it, we are poor but we are rich.

Kissinger may have muttered under his breath that Bangladesh will cease to be a bottomless basket when hell freezes over, pigs start to fly and Bob Dylan wins the Nobel Prize. Well, the latter has happened and Henry Kissinger is history.

The writer is an engineer at Ford & Qualcomm USA and CEO of IBM & Nokia Siemens Networks Bangladesh turned comedian (by choice), the host of ABC Radio's *Good Morning Bangladesh* and the founder of *Naveed's Comedy Club*. E-mail: naveed@naveedmahbub.com

CORRIGENDUM
The editorial titled "Unprofitable BTRC", published on Page 6 of The Daily Star on October 20, 2016, should read "Unprofitable BTRC." We regret the inadvertent error and apologise for it.

QUOTABLE Quote



JAMES BALDWIN

It is very nearly impossible to become an educated person in a country so distrustful of the independent mind.

CROSSWORD BY THOMAS JOSEPH

- | | |
|-----------------------|---------------------------|
| ACROSS | DOWN |
| 1 Burn a bit | 1 Alter |
| 5 Charity event | 2 Plane's place |
| 9 Barbershop offering | 3 Steer clear of |
| 10 Last Greek letter | 4 Horse strap |
| 12 Vietnam's capital | 5 Obtained |
| 13 Striped cat | 6 French friend |
| 14 Car part | 7 Gofers |
| 16 Pop's wife | 8 Ancient |
| 17 Old oath | 9 Woolly ones |
| 18 To wit | 11 Battle group |
| 21 For each | 15 Interlace |
| 22 Leave high and dry | 19 Region |
| 23 Impressed greatly | 20 Steamed |
| 24 Singer Estefan | 22 Steamed |
| 26 Decline | 23 Stir-fry pan |
| 29 Undermine | 24 Zodiac twins |
| 30 Naked | 25 Ran out |
| 31 Guitar blaster | 26 Ho Chi Minh City, once |
| 32 Horse-related | 27 James of "Gunsmoke" |
| 34 Shopping aids | 28 Gagger group |
| 37 Longings | 29 Base on balls |
| 38 Prepare to propose | 30 Pack animal |
| 39 Stood up | 33 Campus area |
| 40 Without basis | 35 -- Aviv |
| 41 Mafia heads | 36 Crafty |



YESTERDAY'S ANSWER

P A I L E R B O O T H
R I N S E A L T H O
A B S E N T M E T R O
I D A C S A A I D
S E T S I N A W L S
S E C T I O N A L S
R E F I T
C O A S T L I N E
C A R P E S S A Y S
O R E A R K T E A
L O G I N I N A L L
A L O F T N O L I E
S E N S E W E D S

BEETLE BAILEY by Mort Walker



BABY BLUES by Kirkman & Scott

