

## Postcolonial Intertextuality: Bangladeshi Anglophone Poet Kaiser Haq's Poetics

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**Abstract:** This paper analyses the Bangladeshi Anglophone poet Kaiser Haq's intertextual liaison with several canonical Anglo-American poets whose forms, particularly free verse, and themes he absorbed during his early exposure to literary studies and reinvented for his poetics. It argues that it is re-creation—not so much of destabilization or subversion of meaning contained in the canonical texts—that concerns the Bangladeshi poet. Through comparative analyses of some selected poems for postcolonial intertextuality in Haq's poetics and its pragmatic consistency in Bangladeshi reality, this research corroborates that Haq's poetics—for its umbilical cord to Western traditions—is geared towards the representation of a nationalistic consciousness that is characteristic of postcolonial Anglophone poets in the African, Caribbean and South Asian regions. With a primary focus on poetic influence and its relevance to postcolonial literary production even today, the paper comes down to a corollary that reading Haq's poetry essentially calls for a contrapuntal, referential consciousness about Anglo-American traditions.

**Keywords:** Bangladeshi anglophone poetry, intertextuality, Kaiser Haq, postcolonial poetry

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Any text is constructed as a mosaic of quotations; any text is the absorption and transformation of another. The notion of *intertextuality* replaces that of intersubjectivity, and poetic language is read as at least *double*.

— J. Kristeva (“Word, Dialogue and Novel”, 1986, p. 37)

The systems, codes and traditions of other art forms and of culture in general are also crucial to the meaning of a work of literature.

— G. Allen (*Intertextuality*, 2000, p. 1).

### 1. Introduction: The Kaiserian Way

Following its inclusion in university curriculum, critical attention and referential value, Kaiser Haq's poem “Ode on the Lungi”—though written much later in his career—has attained a canonical status in literary and cultural discourse. The text's international appeal—with its acerbic humor—can be attributed to Haq's play on pastiche and parody on

certain canonical texts of Anglo-American traditions whose Western politico-cultural moorings he wistfully subverts to advocate sartorial and, by extension, ethno-cultural representation in the globalized diversity of human co-existence. Albeit short of Haq's *ars poetica* (Is it "Published in the Streets of Dhaka"?), the poem's vivisection of hegemony in relation to the ethnic attire *lungi* has recently become a point of reference in Bangladesh in the spheres of social criticism (Mim, 2022; Mithun, 2022; Aaref, 2013; "Lungi Dress Shunned", 2013) and even in an Indian context where lungi wearers are politically targeted for the attire's identarian association (Venkatesh, 2019). The poem's referential use in public discourse may be taken as an instance of intertextuality but what is to be noted here is the poem's intertextual blocks weaving the local and the transnational into a universal that promotes what Tembo and Gerber (2019), taking on Mbembe's social ontology, term as "a postcolonial nonviolent notion of alterity based on the recognition of the in-common existence within one world we share" (p. 1) or what Matin (2013) proffers as "an explicit theoretical incorporation of the universal" not admmissive of "an immanent self-transcendence of the particular" and "a radical amenability to, and constitutiveness of, alterity" in its bid to supplant Eurocentrism (p. 353).

In a recent interview, Haq (2021) broaches how Ferlinghetti's "Underwear" played out "as an inspiration" behind his own poem and how "Whitman's democratic spirit" mobilized that inspiration till "everything fell into place" culminating into an intertext he titled "Ode on the Lungi" (p. 144). Then strange as it may sound for a haloed poet, Haq himself presents a comparison between the two poems to highlight their kinship. However, nowhere does he mention his "East and West" thematically associated with Ferlinghetti's "Underwear" and invested in the same veins of his sui generis humor and democratic spirit to do away with "all binary oppositions" (Haq, 2012/2017, p. 47) and to promote "interventions for the cause of world peace!" (Haq, 2012/2017, p. 48). All the same, both the poems by Haq attest to the discursive possibility that Haq exploits in the postcolonial transnational space or "the transcultural space in which strategies for personal or communal self-hood may be elaborated, a region in which there is a continual process of movement and interchange between different states" (Ashcroft et al., 2000, p. 117).

Dubbed "arguably the most internationally renowned Bangladeshi poet in the English language" (Quayum, 2021, p. 136), or "foremost" Bangladeshi Anglophone poet "in the wider arena of transnational literature" (Ahmed, 2018, p. 126), Haq (2017) once averred: "it's not a bad idea to model yourself on someone that you like". Accordingly, his idea is significantly materialized in "Ode on the Lungi" and several other poems to an effect that we find in case of postcolonial translations of canonical works; in this regard, we may cite Aimé Césaire's 1969 play *Une Tempête* adapted from Shakespeare's *The Tempest* or Derek Walcott's 1990 epic *Omeros* taking after the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, (and even Dante and Joyce) for its maturation as the most daring example of intertextuality. Haq may not be so much ambitious as to exploit the Graeco-Roman classics and Anglo-American canons in their formal entirety; yet we find a habitual symmetry in the act of establishing points of reference in the Western literary-cultural praxis and points of departure in their locales. Walcott's epic

draws the reader into an odyssey through time and space, from the Atlantic to the Mediterranean, from Europe to North America, from the Caribbean to Africa, from

the present of a fishing village on the island of St Lucia to the distant past of the Middle Passage, by way of the recent past of the colonies (Zoppi, 1999, p. 509).

It is no wonder that in some of his most popular poems, Haq too urges the reader's prior knowledge of certain Graeco-Roman myths (e.g., Icarus) and modern British and American poetic forms (e.g., D.H Lawrence's free verse) as integral to understanding his expressions. Hence, without this referential consciousness, who in Bangladesh, or in any non-Western country for that matter, would get a grip on his poem "A Myth Reworked" that draws on the theme of fall of Icarus in the tradition of poetic re-workings by a few Western poets like W.H. Auden and William Carlos Williams? For Haq's blending of the Western and the local into a whole, he stands out as a cultural representative of Bangladesh. According to Ahmed (2018), "by bringing in the myth of Icarus from outside the perimeters of the Bangla literary world, Haq adds a new dimension to this common incident in the everyday life of Bangladesh...[and] fuses different worlds together" (pp. 132–3).

These translingual, transnational and transcultural issues along with so many others need to be addressed in any critical approaches to Haq's poetry in the academia or in self-directed readership. Within its permissible range, this paper elaborates on the poet's intertextual calibration of poetics for a local yet hybrid approach to aesthetic expression and to a Bangladeshi voice. Premised upon postcolonial Anglophone poetry's rendezvous with Western forms and themes, this paper first revisits some major theoretical reflections on intertextuality, then analyses a number of pomes by Haq as exemplars of intertextuality and finally justifies his poetics of intertextuality in the broader post-structural reality of postcolonial Anglophone literary-cultural productions and consumptions.

## **2. Postcolonial Intertextuality: Promises Unbound**

In his interviews, essays, and monographs, Haq (1997; 2004; 2015; 2017; 2018; 2021) clearly acknowledges his absorption of influences from the three main literary streams: Anglo-American traditions, South Asian (or Indian) Anglophone traditions, and, of course, Bengali literary tradition. Aligned with Eliot's thinking, his poetics requires him to "to relate to the various traditions that have a bearing on his work on a one-on-one basis, largely without the mediation of academic criticism or theory" (Haq, 2019, p. 7). The particular names he mentions in relation to his poetic development range from Shakespeare, through Thomas Moore, Robert Herrick, Keats, Shelley, Laurence Binyon, Charles Lamb, Rupert Brooke, John Masefield, and D.H. Lawrence, to Yeats and Eliot, and to even more modern poets. He derives his characteristic syntagmatic spirit from a more contextualized praxis of modern poetry that promises a fluidity of meaning-making:

It would probably be accurate to place my work in the uneasy no-man's-land between the "cool" poetry of Larkin and the vatic utterances of the Beat Generation, and among the latter the zany performances of Lawrence Ferlinghetti rather than the visionary Ginsberg. (Haq, 2019, p. 9)

Simply understood, intertextuality refers to the relationships and connections between different texts, including the ways in which one text references, alludes to, or draws

upon another. In its most revolutionary turn, intertextuality has problematized “the concept of the text as a coherent and autonomous whole, and the concept of a unified subject who is the source of meaning” (Ingelbien, 1999, p. 278). Conceived by Barthes in his *Problems of Dostoevsky’s Poetics* (1929) and subsequently in his collection of essays *The Dialogic Imagination* (mostly published in Russia in the 1920s) as an “interplay between writers, texts, and other texts” (as cited in Durey, 1991, p. 616), intertextuality has opened up a whole new horizon of possibilities for the aspiring postcolonial Anglophone poet whose creative imagination variably comes under the spell of Anglo-American traditions. In those traditions, “the most ambitious poets also take some stance about sources in the past, perhaps for an analogous purpose” declares John Hollander (1973) in his review of Bloom’s 1997 book *The Anxiety of Influence*, asserting that even Eliot’s poetry “invoked the Middle Ages, Dante, 17th-century English literature exclusive of Milton and French symbolism” while the poet Ezra Pound acknowledged his indebtedness to Browning’s spirit, as did Yeats to Shelley’s and Blake’s. Thus, in the British poetry tradition, we have the individual talent’s “historical sense” and “depersonalization” in Eliot’s theorization (1982, pp. 37-39). Bloom’s theory of poetic influence modelled on Nietzsche’s thinking and Freudian psychoanalysis with its focus on the ego’s defense mechanism conceives the author’s inextricable relationship with his predecessors’ texts and reveals how an ambitious poet responds negatively to his predecessors by creating a new, revisionary paradigm:

The history of fruitful poetic influence, which is to say the main traditions of Western poetry since the Renaissance, is a history of anxiety and self-saving caricature of distortion, of perverse, willful revisionism without which modern poetry as such could not exist (1997, p. 30).

With its “heuristic value in unsettling textual interpretation,” intertextuality legitimizes “infinite circulation of words” and “an uncontrollable interaction between texts” (Snyman, 1996, p. 432). The way Friedman (1991) reframes this term as a practice is more relevant to understanding Haq’s poetics; she ascribes the birth of intertextuality to “an anticolonialist resistance to the concept of hegemonic influence” (p. 152). The associated term “influence”, says Snyman (1996) quoting Kristeva, “suggests a power relation” between the colonizer and the colonized with the former “envisioning his influence as a hegemonic penetration” of the latter (p. 432). In its turn, Haq’s poem “Ode on the Lungi” can be a praxis on both Snyman’s and Friedman’s concepts. Trivedi (2007) thinks that today the notion of influence “has simply morphed into trendy and with-it “intertextuality” “so that the latter’s opposite turns out to be the text itself (p. 121). According to him, intertextuality “destabilises the notion merely of (old) influence but equally of all signification” (p. 122).

A term first used in Julia Kristeva’s groundbreaking 1966 essay “Word, Dialogue and Novel” and then in her “The Bounded Text” (1966–67), intertextuality defines the text as “a dynamic site in which relational processes and practices are the focus of analysis instead of static structures and products” (Alfaro, 1996, p. 268). Alfaro (1996) proceeds to develop a synoptic note of Kristeva’s concept:

There are always other words in a word, other texts in a text. The concept of intertextuality requires therefore that we understand texts not as self-contained

systems but as differential and historical, as traces and tracings of otherness, since they are shaped by the repetition and transformation of other textual structures (p. 268).

In all its conceptualizations—whether in the post-structuralist line of thinking or Bakhtinian theories—intertextuality makes all texts “potentially plural, reversible, open to the reader’s own presuppositions, lacking in clear and defined boundaries, and always involved in the expression or repression of the dialogic ‘voices’ which exist within society” (Allen, 2000, p. 209). Mukherjee (2014) frames the possibility of a postcolonial intertextual poetics: “The textuality of a given text can hardly be isolated from its “soul-making” geopolitical and discursive determinations.” She posits that when postcolonial writers enquired about literary “greatness”, they located it in the West and resolved to emulate it through “self-invention that “begins therefore with a reshuffling of the set texts and stifling protocols of a colonial education.”

Trivedi’s 2007 monograph “Colonial Influence, Postcolonial Intertextuality: Western Literature and Indian Literature” is a milestone in its own right for his probe into “the interrelationship” between Western literatures and Indian literature (p. 122), first tracing the former’s indebtedness—through translation and absorption—to the latter until the nineteenth and twentieth century Anglophiles started contributing to the reversal of flows. He cites John Drew’s seminal work *India and the Romantic Imagination* (1987) to highlight the fact that the British Romantic literary movement spearheaded by Wordsworth, Coleridge, and Shelley was deeply influenced by the culture and aesthetics of India that unveiled before them novel ideas about nature, the sublime, and the relationship between the individual and the world. Remarkably, citing from Sisir Kumar Das’s *A History of Indian Literature* (1991), Trivedi surmises that “a direct consequence of our encounter with the West was that we went back to look again at what we already had and to reassess its worth and value” (p. 126). The subcontinental Anglophone author’s absorption of forms and spirit from Anglo-American traditions and subsequent reinvestment of native elements in a hybridized, and often resistant, fashion that is, borrowing Trivedi’s claim, “dialectical and dialogic, which makes it perhaps as vast and complex an example as one could find anywhere in world literature not only of influence but also of reception” (p. 127).

All the above theoretical standpoints from the West and the East having been related to the central argument of this research, it is now worthwhile to turn to an exponential case. Drawing on V.S. Naipaul’s finesse, the Nobel Laureate Walcott (1974) defines Anglophone mimicry as pantomime conducted in front of a mirror with gestures “based on metropolitan references” and dismisses the possibility of any authenticity: “No gestures, according to this philosophy, is authentic, every sentence is a quotation, every movement either ambitious or pathetic, and because it is mimicry, uncreative” (p. 6). Even Walcott, observes Jay (2006), has for a long time baffled critics and reviewers by the way he deigns to reconcile his “St. Lucian roots and his undeniable interest in Caribbean culture with his absorption of the Western canon, his propensity for grounding poetry in something very close to the kind of Great Tradition espoused by Leavis and Eliot” (p. 545). Logan (2007) finds shadows of Coleridge’s classic *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* in Walcott’s “The Schooner Flight” that appears in his 1979 collection, *The Star-Apple Kingdom* while critics also dub the Caribbean

poet's masterpiece *Omeros* as a transformed version of Homeric epics (Zoppi, 1999; Taplin, 1991; Moffett, 2005).

### 3. Haq's Poetics: Postcolonial Translation or Rewriting?

The central argument of this paper evolves the premise that the Anglophone poet Kaiser Haq developed his poetics on the forms and themes he absorbed Anglo-American poets in line with the postcolonial praxis of intertextuality evident in various modes like influence, parody, mimicry, pastiche etc. that, in a few instances, amount to postcolonial rewriting or translation of canonical texts or to redirecting the course of meaning to a contemporary reality. Albeit not directly resulting from any colonial encounters per se (Haq was born in 1950), his poetics of intertextuality marks both an extension to and a distinct block in the global postcolonial Anglophone poetic traditions with South Asian poetry being in focus here. This section's analysis of instances from Haq poetry begins with his 216-line poem "Ode on the Lungi" introduced in the first section. Parodied on the Beat poet Lawrence Ferlinghetti's "Underwear" for an "entertaining yet telling indictment of consumerist capitalism and bourgeois democracy" (Haq, 2019), this poem is interspersed with literary-cultural-political points of reference over its signification field on egalitarianism. The reader who has fathomed the rhythm and spirit of Walt Whitman's opening lines "I celebrate myself, and sing myself,/ And what I assume you shall assume" (1855/1989, p. 1) will, in an amused appreciation, follow Haq's lines in "Ode on the Lungi":

Grandpa Walt, I celebrate my lungi  
and sing my lungi  
and what I wear  
you shall wear. (2012/2017\*, p. 39)

This poem's politically charged thrust of humour and of cadence stems from Ferlinghetti's "zany performances" (Haq, 2019, p. 9). Though a Beat poet, Ferlinghetti is not characterized by the tenet's anti-social outlook and uses allusions to and suggestions of Shakespeare, Praxiteles, Yeats, Wordsworth, Dante, Yeats, Holderin, Rimbaud, A.E. Houseman, Joyce, Becket, Gertrude Stein and others with "no bitter anti-intellectualism but rather a knowledge and appreciation of literary materials which are integral to his own verse" (Hopkins, 1974, pp. 61–63).

It is also worth noting that in most of these poems, Haq reinvents (or reinvests) meaning through his well-picked primary textual models and factual allusion. In the above-mentioned poem, for example, Haq inserts Whitman's title "Passage to India" only extend (or rather to domesticate) the sense:

It's time you finally made your passage  
to more than India—to Bangladesh—  
and lounging in a lungi

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\* All subsequent citations from Haq poetry are made from this edition of *Published in the Streets of Dhaka: Collected Poems*.

in a cottage on Cox’s Bazar beach. (pp. 39–40)

In a successful bid to stress versatility of this piece of clothing, Haq metaphorizes Hawking’s “Theory of Everything” and expediently flips to postcolonial’s posterior theory: “Raised and flapped amidst laughter/ it’s the subaltern speaking” (pp. 42–43).

While Haq identifies himself with the South Asian poets beyond nationalistic, compartmentalized confines, his poetry significantly mimics Anglo-American poets. His nascent poetics, nestled away from the turbulent political currents in the then East Pakistan (now Bangladesh), fructified with his 1996 collection *Black Orchid* that opens with the poem “Imaginary Love” stylistically and thematically:

Imagination dying,  
    imagine  
        love  
I invent your eyes:  
    a gazelle leaps  
        out of the dark.

(“Imaginary Love”, p. 223)

Now compare this poem with Hughes’:

I imagine this midnight moment’s forest:  
Something else is alive  
Beside the clock’s loneliness  
And this blank page where my fingers move.

Through the window I see no star:  
Something more near  
Though deeper within darkness  
Is entering the loneliness:

(Ted Hughes. “The Thought-Fox”, 1982/1984, p. 13)

While, in Hughes’s case, it is “a sudden sharp hot stink of fox” that “enters the dark hole of the head” culminating in the poet’s having the blank page “printed” with a poem, in Haq’s turn, it is a gazelle invoking fructification of his poetry. Since manifestations of influence arguably occur in the earliest expressions of a creative individual, this paper analyzes Haq’s poems published in separate collections in succession before they were accumulated in the 2007 book *Published in the Streets of Dhaka: Collected Poems: 1966-2006*. A number of these poems markedly cull from modernist English poets like D.H. Lawrence, Seamus Heaney, Ted Hughes, and, perhaps several other poets whom he read as part of English studies. Further research may delve out more traces of influence/intertextuality in Haq’s poetry that concurrently conduces to understanding contemporary postcolonial poetry.

It is certain that Haq and Hughes were contemporaneous till the latter's demise in 1998 and that he the former fervently read much of trans-Atlantic modern poetry in his disciplinary pursuits and started composing his own free verse on replicas at hand. Did Haq absorb Hughes's depiction of the hawk fire with ultimate energy and resilience, as found in "The Hawk in the Rain" and "Hawk Roosting"? In the title poem "Black Orchid" of Haq's 1966 collection, the hawk—one of the cardinal symbols of Hughes' in *The Hawk in the Rain* (1957)—takes on an avatar in the impersonation of the poet:

I become the hawk,  
 hovering over  
 your body; skin  
 rippling with love tides  
  
 and the dark patch hiding  
 what my hawk's eye craves:  
 the omphalos of my passion. (p. 230)

The Irish poet Seamus Heaney's magnum opus "Digging" is re-created in "Nirvana" for Haq to probe into the Bangladesh (Bengal) region's tradition of secular spirituality preached by the Bauls as the formula of a universal religion of love that admits of no socio-cultural demarcations or stratifications ("Yesterday I went digging/for my roots in the library"). Whereas Heaney's "Digging" in *Death of a Naturalist* (1966) boasts of the poet's lineage connection with farmers on Ireland's geographic composition of bogland, Haq reveals a legacy of harmonious living guided by a unique tradition in this land historically known as Bengal:

I read of the *Bauls*, long haired  
 groovy wandering minstrels  
 who said Fuck to caste and creed  
 and taught liberation  
 through the equation: Nirvana... (p. 232).

The way the young poet Heaney visualizes his ancestors in "Digging" is replicated by Haq's cognizance of the original Bengali manly form in "Weekend" where the poet puts himself in contrast to "a man in *lungi* and sleeveless vest". Here the poet is rather impressed by the sight this kitchen garden caretaker "kneading the earth like a masseur, /watering it like his own/body in the shower." The elegance of manual work coupled with the naturalistic intimacy signified by the caretaker's handling of objects—as the man "bestows a lover's caress/on a plump gourd! —makes the disinterested, self-critical poet conscious of his relative, acquired incapacity, resonating Heaney's sense of disappointment from the line "But I've no spade to follow men like them":

I haven't written a single poem  
 I'd care to treat like that. (p. 247)



The Heaney-like exploration continues through the poem “Pebbles on the Beach” where the poet-as-archaeologist experiments with symbols in nature. What bogland does to and for Heaney’s poetic self is thematically matched with what the sea of life exposes to Haq’s imagination, i.e., the seashores up for the aesthetically gifted soul a slew of materials: “mineral miracles/ of texture, geometry, colour, / born of cosmic tumult/ and tempered by countless ages”—and these materials induce not only “adoration” but also “contemplation” in silence (pp. 245-246).

One more instance of Haq’s taking after Heaney’s poetics can be made with an analogy between the latter’s “The Skunk” and the former’s “Writing Home” in both of which the home-sick poets are away. While Heaney invests a zoomorphic comparison between his wife and a skunk, Haq is found missing the sounds of birds and rickshaw bells that are integral to a metropolitan area in Bangladesh, like Dhaka. Once Haq recalls all these accustomed features of his city, he admits:

I shut my eyes  
and imagine the weight  
of your head on my chest (p. 256).

Interestingly, Haq avows an intertextual (or interpersonal) communion—through his “Sparrows”—with the American poet William Carlos Williams on the symbolic potential of the sparrow. Williams’ sparrow—in his “The Sparrow”—looms as a “poetic truth/more than a natural one,” whose agility succumbs to the annihilating forces of his female counterpart and ultimately is metamorphosed into a poem: “Practical to the end,/it is the poem/of his existence that triumphed finally”—thus the metamorphosis continues till the poem transform into the poet self: “This was I,/a sparrow./I did my best;/farewell.” In his turn, Haq admits to being moved by Williams’ depiction of the poet’s transformed, vanquished self and having written a poem only to lose it to the currents of time. However, Haq redefined this transformational phenomenon with the metaphor of sexual intercourse as the catalytic of poetic composition, where the poet’s organs like eyes, lips, loins—all metamorphose into the form of the sparrow.

Haq’s purview goes far back to Emily Dickinson for her “I died for Beauty—but was scarce...” in which the poet juxtaposes Beauty and Truth through their associated agents of advocacy who become “Brethren” and “Kinsmen” continuing an infinite dialogue. But shaped by material conditions, Haq presents Truth in “Truth on the Prowl” in a personified with a disillusioned tenacity as she does not enjoy her scripture-defined place in the society. In his version of the reality, whatever orientations they uphold, people seem not to care notice Truth drifting around till she regretfully discovers her efficacy in this epicurean human scene and finally “meets Falsity/Fixes a date—/and is stood up.” The apparent switching between viewing points—who sees whom—is symptomatic of the existence of Truth as an alien or, borrowing Haq’s frequently used word, as a pariah, among indifferently preoccupied masses:

Truth sits alone  
Drinking, lugubriously  
Watches men and women

Busy at their pleasures. (p. 65)

Or man's rejection of Truth or Faith might be projected in Matthew Arnold's "Dover Beach" that has traditionally been incorporated in poetry courses in English departments:

The Sea of Faith  
 Was once, too, at the full, and round earth's shore  
 Lay like the folds of a bright girdle furled.  
 But now I only hear  
 Its melancholy, long withdrawing roar,  
 Retreating to the breath  
 Of the night-wind, down the vast edges drear  
 And naked shingles of the world (1867/ 2006, p. 1368).

#### 4. By Way of a Conclusion

Following the theoretical standpoints and the comparative analyses of Kaiser Haq's select poems in the preceding sections, it becomes clear that the Bangladeshi Anglophone poet absorbed influence from the Anglo-American traditions that nourished the embryo of his poetics into full bloom but he masterfully tailored the received forms and themes to Bangladeshi reality—only "the details of daily life, not the state of governments" and their "partisan politics" (Haq, 2018), the predilection being purely aesthetic and spiritualistic. Nevertheless, he fosters a deep concern for the country's state of affairs under the sway of politics that reaches into the private domain in the manner the bourgeois attitude to the ethnic attire (*lungi*) has time and again proved. In the 2013 event of Baridhara Society's *lungi* ban and its repercussions, he resolved he had not really "anachronistically" (Haq, 2012/2017, p. 34) conceived Whitman's overshadowing figure that celebrated Americanness (Whitman, 1904) and is celebrated on the US soil for his "democratic sublime" (Frank, 2007, p. 402) or "spiritual democracy" (Myers, 1934). Haq (2013) writes:

Little did I imagine, when I wrote the poem, that a dramatic opportunity to translate words into action would suddenly present itself, and that too amidst a continuing, nerve-wracking political crisis that has violently split the country into two definitive camps.

In other words, Haq reinvented intertextual elements to open an aesthetic window on the distinctively "Bangladeshi reality" (Haq, 2017) and he did that with "a strong sense of belonging to his own country and culture" and by "distancing himself from the Eurocentric attitude to literature and life" (Islam, 2020, pp. 66-67). Yet the reader's experience which is essentially prized for higher referential knowledge of the interwoven traditions tells that Haq is simultaneously here and there. Hummel (2022) pins down this duality with his key phrases "transnational local" (p. 2), "in-between space" (4), and "plurality of identity with the shifts of and between space and place" (4). In his exploration of Haq's "temporal, cultural, environmental, and political more than a spatial removal from his place of origin" (p. 1),

Hummel formulates his main argument saying that Haq’s poetic “themes, forms, and language ... heighten the nuances” of his identity “as a Bangladeshi local and concurrent transnational gaze and presence” (p. 2). The intertextual force of his poetry can be validated—or rather appreciated—in view of its being “hybrid”, “polyphonic”, constitutive of his “observation of global systems and local impact” and “dialectic” in the sense James Clifford conveys (Hummel, 2022, pp. 9–10).

Whether we turn to Eliot’s theory of the individual poet’s conformity to a tradition in its temporal and spatial expanse or Bloom’s conceptualization of inevitable transaction, English being the medium of creative expressions, postcolonial or Anglophone poets can hardly extricate themselves from the first impression of Anglo-American verse that they usually encounter in their tender schooling years. While appreciating the Ugandan Anglophone poet Okot p’Bitek’s assimilation of both his native tradition and Western influence, Ofuani (1985) posits it is difficult “where the Western ends and the African begins” (p. 87). This is true of Western poets too: As a poet even, Wordsworth could not break free from Milton’s influence, while writing “The Prelude”. Whether in Bangla or English, for Haq (2015) writing poetry assimilates “what one has gleaned from other languages and cultures ... at a conscious and subliminal level” (p. 6).

In the region once prominently called the Subcontinent, intertextuality or influence in conjunction with translational activity has been a *normal* phenomenon, as Trivedi (2007) tries to make it the point in favor of “a reformulation of the very meaning and definition of these terms on the evidence of their modified function in a (post)colonial context, beyond the ateliers of Western theory” (p. 132). About three decades ago, Dharwadker (1992) located popular models for the poets of Indian languages in the Romantic troupe, associated with the nationalist movement, in the poems of Wordsworth, Keats, Shelley, Byron, and even in the poems of lesser figures like Thomas Hood as well as the writings of Sir Walter Scott, Tennyson, and Henry Wadsworth Longfellow. In his observation, some Indian poets also culled from French literature with its exponents Baudelaire, Mallarme, Rimbaud, and Valery (pp. 219–222). Vis-à-vis, S. S Dulai notes postcolonial and South Asian English poetry’s break—both in content and style imitating British models—from the trends initiated during the colonial period till the modern tradition “became in its own right a genre parallel to British, American and other Western English poetry” (p. 123).

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