

The four suggested equivalents are:

- a. punishment
- b. assault
- c. vengeance
- d. blow

Once more, here is a clear example of the influence of commentators and lexicographers, together with subjectivity on the translators. The Basic Arabic Dictionary (ALESCO, 1989) says that (batshatun) is 'a blow or a powerful act of seizing someone or something.' Although this would support Pickthall's choice, the word 'blow' is very common. Az-Zamakhshari (vol. 4, p. 40) and al-Jalalain (p. 704) say that it means 'seizing someone in order to inflict punishment on him'. Ibn Kathir (vol. p. 266) says that (batshatansa) means our power and punishment.' These four alternatives, in fact, can all be used since they overlap with one another. The 'assault' can be staged to punish' or 'take vengeance on' someone for doing something bad. The 'blow' can also be intended for the same reason.

These four words are, as is clear, different in the way they are viewed. Although the common factor is the use of force, the behaviour and the mental attitude implied by each are not the same. While 'punishment' can be defined as imposing a penalty on someone for a fault, offence or violation; 'assault' is a sudden violent attack; 'blow' is a hard stroke with the hand or a weapon; and 'vengeance' is a punishment inflicted in retaliation for an injury or offence. Even though 'vengeance' is basically a punishment, it is done to someone in retaliation for harm he has done. If it is possible to see these two words as having some sort of affinity with regard to the basic meaning, it is not equally possible to see that 'assault' and 'blow' have the same thing. As a native speaker of Arabic, I can say that (batshatana) can possibly permit, 'punishment', 'assault', 'vengeance' and 'blow' as potential meanings.

#### 11.8 Verse LXXXV. 12

«إن بطش ربك شديد.»

البروج/ ١٢

##### a. Ali

Truly strong is the Grip  
(And power of thy Lord.

##### b. Arberry

Truly thy Lord's assault it is terrible.

Here is another example of the reference to power. In Verse XLIII.8 above, there has been mention of the destruction of peoples who were much more powerful than some other peoples. With regard to (batsh), the four translations offered the following :

- a. ... Stronger in power than they?
- b. ... Stronger in valour than they, ...
- c. ... far greater in power, ...
- d. ... mightier than these in prowess ...

In fact, Ali and Dawood use words that indicate power. Dawood uses the comparative 'greater' as a degree on the scale of power. Ali, on the other hand, compares the generations with regard to power, Arberry compares them as regards valour and Pickthall with regard to prowess. Of course, valour and prowess are highly formal, but they indicate something other than power. Ali and Dawood, therefore, have used the correct words. The other two are not very far away, though not precise. 'Mightier' is formal, while 'stronger' is common.

Al-Jalla'n (p.68 ) says that (batsh) here has the meaning of 'might' or 'power'. Ibn Kathir (vol.4, p.229) says that the reference is made to the fact that they were greater in number and power.

#### 11.7 Verse LI 36i

«وَلَقَدْ أَنْذَرَهُمْ بَطْشَتَنَا فَتَمَارَوْا بِالنَّدْرِ»  
القمر / ٣٦

a. Ali

And (Lut) did warn them  
Of Our Punishment, but  
They disputed about the Warning.

b. Arberry

He had warned them of our assault, but they  
disputed the warnings.

c. Dawood

He had warned them of Our vengeance, but they  
doubted his warnings.

d. Fichtelberg

And he indeed had warned them of Our blow but they did doubt  
the warnings.

We are given here four different equivalents for the word (hatanshatana). According to Arabic grammar, (batshatana) is not an infinitive but an instance of the infinitive. The infinitive is (batsh).

thing. Pickthall is approximately on the same lines. Dawood follows al-Qarri in translating the Verse with the view that (baish) means 'punishment'. Arberry uses the verb 'assault' that semantically functions in conformity with the remainder of the Verse. The assault, therefore, can be meant to inflict punishment or use strong arm against transgressors. However, the diversity of opinion among commentators and lexicographers, in addition to the translator's subjective views, are the main reasons behind the diversity of translations with regard to notion (baish). Hermeneutically, az-Zamakhshari (vol.3, p. 502) says that (al-batshata I-kubra) is the Day of Resurrection. Al-Jalalain (p.657), al-Farra' (vol. 3, 0.40) say that (al-batshata I-kubra) is a reference to the battle of Badr, where and when Allah inflicted His stern punishment on the infidels.

11.6. Verse L. 36

« وكم أهلكنا قبلاهم من قرن هم أشد منهم بطشاً فنقبوا في البلاد هل من محيص . »

٣٦ / ق

a. Ali

But how many  
Generations before them  
Did We destroy (for their  
Sins),- stronger in power  
Than They? then did they  
Wander through the land:  
Was there any place  
Of escape (for them)?

b. Arberry

How many a generation we destroyed before them that was stronger in valour than they, then they searched about in the land; was there any asylum?

c. Dawood

How many generations, far greater in prowess, have we destroyed before them! They searched the entire land: but would they find any refuge?

d. Pickthall

And how many a generation we destroyed before them, who were mightier than these in prowess so that they overran the land! Had they any place of refuge (when the judgment came)?

## 11.5 Verse XLIV.16

« يوم نبطش البطشة الكبرى انا منتقمون .  
الدخان / ١٦

a. Ali

One day We shall seize  
You with a mighty onslaught;  
We will indeed (then)  
Exact Retribution !

b. Arberry

upon the day when We shall assault most mightily,  
then We shall take Our vengeance.

c. Dawood

But on the day We will inflict on them  
the sternest punishment and avenge Ourself.

d. Pickthall

On the day when We shall seize them with the greater  
seizure (then), in truth We shall punish.

Generally, Arabic uses the al-maf'ul al-mutlaq (Lit. the absolute object), especially that type which describes a quality or emphasizes an action, in order to give force to the meaning intended. In English, this is best rendered by the use of an adverb of manner. Arberry uses the adverbial construction in his translation of this Verse that it looks very much English with Qur'anic content. Ali and Pickthall use the verb 'seize' together with the prepositional phrases that would fill the place of the adverbials. Arberry uses 'assault', and Dawood uses 'inflict'. These verbs are used in association with certain phrases that consist of an adjective+noun. Dawood and Pickthall use the objective pronoun 'them', Ali, 'you', while Arberry uses no objective pronouns at all. The Qur'anic Text itself uses no explicit objective pronouns with regard to the verb (nabtushu) in order to make the reference general; i.e. the people to be punished.

To refer to (al-batshata I-kubra), Ali uses the absolute form of 'mighty' in 'a mighty onslaught', Arberry uses the adverb 'mightily' premodified by the superlative degree indicator 'most', Dawood uses the superlative degree of the word 'stern', while Pickthall uses 'the greater' as if there were a comparison between two things.

Ali, it seems, follows the Commentary of al-Jalalain (p,655) in his translation of the notion (batsh) as referring to 'seizing someone or some

everyday's language, which would appeal to the common reader.  
11.4. Verse XLIII.8

«فأهلكنا أشد منهم بطشاً ومضى مثل الأولين»  
الزخرف / ٨

a. Ali

So We destroyed (them)-  
Stronger in power than these;-  
And (thus) has passed on  
The Parable of the peoples  
Of old.

b. Arberry

so We destroyed men stronger in valour than they, and the example  
of the ancients passed away.

c. Dawood

We utterly destroyed them, though were mightier than these.

d. Pickthall

Then we destroyed men mightier than these in prowess; and the  
example of the men of old hath gone (before them).

Excepting Dawood's, all translations look very formal and employ approximately the same structure. Ali tries to be as close as possible to the Arabic structure. He and Arberry use the comparative degree of 'strong'. Dawood and Pickthall use the comparative degree of 'mighty'. Ali uses 'stronger in power', Arberry uses a more literary word, 'stronger in valour', 'though with a different meaning., Dawood finds the word 'mightier' sufficient to be an equivalent, and Pickthall's 'prowess' is another example of literary or highly-formal style.

All Arab commentators and lexicographers, however, agree that (batsh) here means "power, force, or even strength". On this basis, Arberry and Pickthall have used inaccurate equivalents for (batsh). One does not, however, preclude the possibility of using the word (batsh) here to mean something other than the suggestions of commentators, The association of 'strength' and 'valour' in Arberry's translation and 'might' and 'prowess' in Pickthall's could then be regarded as examples of the linguistic and stylistic charm with which they have translated the Verse. Dawood's translation, on the other hand, is very brief and direct. The main problem with it is that it drops the second part of the Verse which mentions the ancients.

b. Arberry

But when he would have assaulted the man who was an enemy to them both, the man said, 'Moses, dost thou desire to slay me, even as thou slewest a living soul yesterday? Thou only desirest to be a tyrant in the land; thou desirest not to be of them that put things right.'

c. Dawood

And when Moses was about to lay his hands on their enemy, the Egyptian said: 'Moses, would you kill me as you killed that wretch yesterday? You are surely seeking to be a tyrant in this land, not an upright man'.

d. Pickthall

And when he would have fallen upon the man who was an enemy unto them both, he said: 'O Moses! wouldst thou kill me as thou didst kill a person yesterday? Thou wouldst be nothing but a tyrant in the land, thou wouldst not be of the reformers.'

Here is another example of the notion (batsh). The four translators view this differently. Ali uses, 'to lay hold of', Arberry, 'to assault', Dawood, 'to lay his hands on' and Pickthall, 'to fall upon'. The main idea implied by Ali and Dawood's translation is that of catching or holding someone firmly, while the situation is different with regard to Arberry and Pickthall. But whether it is a matter of laying hold of, assaulting, or falling upon someone, the contextual meaning is further explained by the later mention of killing or slaying, which comes in the form of a question. Taking such associations into consideration, the word (batsh) here might have some shade of meaning of the act of killing, as suggested by the question. However, to lay hold of, and to lay one's hands on someone are less grave than to assault or fall upon him. Both cases are even less grave than slaying. The idea of laying hold of, assaulting or falling upon someone can be coupled with later mention of tyranny or cruel use of power: "Thou only desirest to be a tyrant in the land, and not to be of them that put things right." On this basis, it is believed that all the translations can be blended together into the following: 'to lay hold of, or assault, people with a view to kill them and be tyrannically, or wrongfully powerful'.

Ali and Arberry use the literary term, 'slay', while Dawood and Pickthall use the common word, 'kill' to refer to the Arabic word, (yaqtul).

Ali, Arberry and Pickthall use highly formal, or literary languages: 'thou', 'dost', 'thou', 'desirest', 'wouldst', etc, while Dawood uses

prefers the word Envoys) of Allah. According to Ali and Pickthal, this Verse is a question following two other questions, while Arberry regards only the two preceding Verse (Vs 128 and 129) as question, and Dawood regards as question only part of Verse 128. To clarify the situation, the following citation will be from Arberry's translation; beginning with Verse 123 and ending with Verse 131;

Ad cried lies to the Envoys when their brother Hood said to them, 'will you not be godfearing? I am for you a faithful Messenger, so fear you God, and obey you me, I ask of you no wage for this; my wage falls only upon the Lord of all Being. What, do you build on every prominence a sign, sporting, and do you take to your castles, haply to dwell forever? When you assault, you assault like tyrants! So fear you God, and obey me;... Commentators, such as az-Zamakhshari, ibn Kathir, al-Jalalain and al-Mausuli; and lexicographers such as ibn Mandhur, al-Farahidi and al-Qarri, do not give the exact meaning of this word in this context. they only say that this (batsh) is performed tyrannically and wrongfully, either with a sword or a whip. This (batsh) can have the form of merciless beating and killing.

### 11.3 Verse xxviii.19

«فلما أن أراد أن يبطش بالذي هو عدو لهما قال ياموسى أتريد أن تقتلني كما قتلت نفساً بالامس. أن تريد إلا أن تكون جباراً في الارض يوماً تريد ان تكون من المصالحين»

القصة ص 19 /

- a. Ali
- Then when he decided to lay  
 Hold of the man who was  
 An enemy to both of them,  
 That man said; "O Moses!  
 Is it thy intention to slay me  
 As thou slewest a man  
 Yesterday? Thy intention is  
 None other than to become  
 A powerful violent man  
 In the land, and not to be  
 One who sets things right?

strong-arm adj (1901): having or using undue force.

strong-arm vt (ca 1903): 1. to use force on: ASSAULT.  
2. to rub by force .

The Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English states the following: strongarm adj using (unnecessary) force.

The Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary of Current English states that 'strong-arm' is used of methods, tactics, etc. to mean 'violent; bullying ,

The modern use of 'strong arm', however, has expanded to include positive connotations. The Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English offers the following within the entry, 'strong':

sense 10. *the strong arm of the law* = the police and forces of law especially considered for their power.

It seems that Ali has used a late Middle-English expression, rather metaphorically, as an English equivalent for the Arabic notion (*batsh*) in this Verse, and left the modern alternative 'strong arm.' The reason behind this is thought to be the translator's desire to use archaic style to give more weight to the English translation of the Verse.

Pickthall, however, goes back to the basic function of the hand, i.e. 'holding, grasping, or more broadly to cover 'the taking possession of something by force', especially when this is done by people who do it tyrannically. The four translations, 'exerting a strong hand', 'assaulting', 'exercising power' and 'seizing by force' refer to the use of force, but differently: while Ali and Dawood translate the Text as simply referring to the 'tyrannical use of power', Arberry prefers 'assault' which indicates a sudden violent attack, and Pickthall uses the expression, 'seize by force', which straddles both 'the basic function performed by hands' and 'the taking possession of something by force'. The use of 'men of absolute power', 'tyrants', (twice), and 'cruel tyrants' is another reinforcing element in the possibility of interpreting the notion (*batsh*) in this context as referring to the (tyrannical) use of power..

As for form, Ali and Pickthall render the Verse in the form of question, Arberry uses an exclamation mark and Dawood uses a period indicating that it is nothing more than a declarative statement. This Verse, however, is a continuation of a dialogue, or a number of points preached by the Apostle Hud (Arberry prefers the spelling, Hood). In the dialogue, the Apostle Hud addresses the People of Ad when they disbelieved the Messengers (Arberry



a. Ali

"And when ye exert  
Your strong hand,  
Do ye do it like men  
of absolute power?"

b. Arberry

...When you assault, you assault like tyrants!

c. Dawood

...When you exercise your power, you act like cruel tyrants.

d. Pickthall

And if you seize by force, seize ye as tyrants?

The Qur'anic text repeats the word (*batashtum*) in the main clause of the conditional construction mainly to give force to the general meaning of the sentence. In English sometimes, this repetition is rendered by the use of a proform.

Ali uses the proform 'do', and Dawood uses the lexical verb ACT, as a proform to refer to the verb mentioned in the subordinate clause. Arberry and Pickthall, however, repeat the words used twice. They do so, it seems in their attempt to keep as forceful as possible the tone intended by Arabic Text. The use of the verb 'ACT' and the 'DO-proform' however, seems to be more forceful as an English equivalent than a repeated form: There are four different forms to refer to the Arabic word (*batashtum*) in the above translations. The only thing common here is the use of force.

The use of the 'strong hand' indicates the use of the force. The 'hand' itself refers to the power used in ruling or dealing with other people. The Shorter Oxford English Dictionary states the following with regard to the expression 'strong hand':

Strong hand. (Now rare) [Late M.E.] The exercise of superior power; the use of force.

We notice that 'strong hand' is described as (Now rare) and (Late Middle English). This Late Middle-English concept, in fact, has given way to modern 'strong-arm'. The Webster's states the following as regards 'strong -arm,;

In addition, no commentator has ever given a special interpretation of the usage of the word (yabtushun). The reason is believed to be the reference to the basic function of holding performed by the hands, otherwise they could have given it, at least, for the sake of clarity or disambiguating the context. That is why all four translators have translated (yabtushun) into English using "hold" or "lay hold". So, the word (batsh) is interpreted as having the sense of "holding" rather than any other suggested idea.

Arberry and Pickthall use the conjunction 'wherewith', while Ali and Dawood use the preposition 'with'. Although, according to the Webster's, 'with' (before 12 c) is older than 'wherewith' (13 c), the former is commoner in formal and informal style. "Wherewith" has a sense of an archaism. In the Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary of Current English, 'wherewith' is described as (old use). In the Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English, it is not given at all. The usage of 'wherewith' is perhaps done on purpose to give the translation a flavour or mark of the text's age as belonging to the remote past. Ali and Arberry use the phrasal verb 'to lay hold', while Dawood and Pickthall use the single lexical verb 'hold'.

All four translators use the verb 'have' as operator; whether directly as in *b*, *c* and *d*, or indirectly as in *a*, where the operator 'have' is ellipted. It might have been mere coincidence because "this use of HAVE as operator is much more common in BrE than in AmE, where it is formal as well as restricted." (Quirk et al, 1972; 10.54 N). The transitive lexical verb HAVE" can be constructed either as an auxiliary (without DO-periphrasis) or as a lexical verb (with DO-periphrasis). In the stative sense of possession HAVE is often (especially in BrE) constructed as an auxiliary. AmE prefers the DO-periphrasis." (Quirk et al, 1972; 3.18 N). There is, however, no semantic difference between the two constructions. The only thing to be noted here is that HAVE can be used both as a stative or a dynamic verb, as an auxiliary or lexical verb.

The use of the coordinator OR usually indicates an alternative. The Arabic particle (au) is called in Arabic 'the al-Munqati'a (approx.= "a disjunct"). In such leading questions suggestive of a NO-answer as the above, the alternative is somewhat added to something earlier, in the sense that what is being stated is an addition functioning as a reinforcing argument.

order of their occurrence in the Holy Qur'an. The occurrence of the cited items in the present work will be according to the alphabetical order of the names of the translators. The text of the Verse will be given in Arabic, followed by the translations, then the present writer's comment. The work is provided with a final section of conclusions. The main thing to be noted here is the dependence on both the lexical meaning and the linguistic context of each occurrence.

## II: THE TRANSLATED VERSES STUDIED

### II.1 Verse VII. 195

«أَلَهُمْ أَرْجُلٌ يَمْشُونَ بِهَا أَمْ لَهُمْ أَيْدٍ يَبْطِشُونَ بِهَا أَمْ لَهُمْ أَعْيُنٌ يَبْصُرُونَ بِهَا أَمْ لَهُمْ آذَانٌ يَسْمَعُونَ بِهَا»

الإعراف/ ١٩٥

#### a. Ali

Have they feet to walk with?

Or hands to lay hold with?

Or eyes to see with?

Or ears to hear with?

#### b. Arberry

...What, have they feet wherewith they walk, or have they hands wherewith they lay hold, or have they eyes wherewith they see, or have they ears wherewith they give ear?

#### c. Dawood

Have they feet to walk with? Have they hands to hold with? Have the eyes to see with? Have they ears to hear with?

#### d. Pickthall

Have they feet wherewith they walk, or have they hands wherewith they hold, or have they eyes wherewith they see, or have they ears wherewith they hear?

From the preceding and the following Verses, it becomes clear that this is a dialogue between Allah, the addressor, and the pagans, who worship besides Allah, deities made of wood or stone. The pronoun 'they' in the Verse refers to these deities. The mention of the usual physical function of the feet, eyes and ears in connection with walking, seeing and hearing respectively leads to the assumption that the 'hands' are consequently associated with the basic function, of catching or holding. Therefore, the linguistic and the logical context makes this point clear enough to be interpreted this way.

nings. But to generalize one meaning is to make mistakes, or even to commit blasphemy, because, for example, it is religiously unlawful to use (batsh) with its "tyrannical use of power" of Allah.

According to Arab lexicographers and commentators of the Holy Qur'an, the basic element of the meaning of the word (batsh) is 'holding or seizing someone or something'. Some thasaet the verb (batash) a means, "to attack suddenly and destroy, annihilate, wipe out, exterminate or extirpate". In Standard Arabic, for example (fulanun yabtushu bi-l (ilmi) would mean, "So-and-so learns very quickly". Al-Farahidi (vol. 6, p. 240) says that (batsh) means "to seize in an assault; to grip something violently". Hans Wehr provides the following:

بطش batasa i u (bats) to attack with violence; to bear down on, fall upon s.o. (ب or نى) ; to knock out (s.o.); to hit, strike (ب s.th.), land with a thud (ب on).

بطش bats strength, power, force, violence; courage, valour, bravery; oppression, tyranny.

Some of the senses given by Hans Wehr can further be interpreted. The Longman Dictionary of Phrasal Verbs, (1983), gives the following definitions, in addition to some irrelevant meanings:

to bear down on = to punish (someone) severely.

to fall upon s.o. = to attack (something or someone) eagerly.

to knock s.o. out = to defeat (someone) or destroy (something) completely; make (someone or something) helpless or useless.

Although these senses are somewhat different, they in fact represent all the uses of this word in different contexts. Commentators agree to these senses because each time the word (batsh) or any of its derivatives occurs, it gives a special sense. In the Holy Qur'an, it is used of Allah, Moses and communities in which apostles lived. This variety of contexts has led to the existence of a variety of standpoints or senses and the eventual vague interpretability on the part of commentators and translators.

### L3 PROCEDURE

The present work makes use of four translated texts of the Holy Qur'an. There are only eight Verses which contain this word, or any of its derivatives. Therefore, these eight Verses have been taken out according to the

**THE TRANSLATIONS OF THE NOTION (batsh)  
IN THE HOLY QUR'AN: A CONTRASTIVE STUDY**

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**I. INTRODUCTION**

**I.1. GENERAL REMARKS**

The translations of the Holy Qur'an into foreign languages, especially English, have been an object of great controversy. This controversy stems from theological and linguistic considerations. Some of these translations contain many archaisms. They even isolate the Verses, number them and show them as independent wholes. Hence, they affect the dynamic force of the text. In addition, literal translations suffer from the fact that an English word is not always the exact equivalent of an Arabic word (and vice versa). This is usually ascribed to both cultural and linguistic differences between the two languages. It is, therefore, difficult, though not impossible, to transfer accurately into English every shade of meaning contained in the words of the Qur'an in a free translation that can convey in English the meaning of an Arabic sentence as a whole, if that meaning is not ambiguous in the original text.

One of the problematic notions for translators is the notion (batsh) in the Holy Qur'an. The word which refers to this notion together with its derivatives, unfortunately, has posed a controversial issue for translators, because in the Holy Qur'an it refers to different things in different contexts. These different meanings will be the subject of the present work. Standard Arabic today uses this word and its derivatives with negative connotations strictly related to the tyrannical use of power or force against people.

**I.2. DEFINITION**

The main problem of translating the word (batsh) arises from the fact that it has different senses in different contexts. It is eligible to say that this word is context-dependent. On this basis, it is possible to subdivide the notion (batsh) into further subnotions to cover the whole range of its mea-

- (8) Jacques Berthoud, *Joseph Conrad: The Major Phase* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1974), p.46. See also Hunt Hawkins, "Conrad's Critique of Imperialism in *Heart of Darkness*" *PMLA*, Vol. 94, No. 2, 1975, p. 295.
- (9) Linda R. Anderson, "Ideas of Identity and Freedom in v.s. Naipaul and Joseph Conrad," (*English Studies*, Vol. 59, No. 6 p. 511,
- (10) E.M. Forster, *A Passage to India* (London: Penguin, 1988), p. 139. Subsequent references to this edition will be cited paranthetically.
- (11) K.W. Gransden, *E. M. Forster* (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1970) p. 97. Emphasis added.
- (12) Ibid, p. 85. For more details about the symbolic meaning of the caes, see Glen O. Allen, "Structure, Symbol and Theme in E.M. Forster's *A Passage to India*" *PMLA* LXX, Dec. 1955, p. 941.
- (13) Albert Camus, *The Outsider*, trans. Stuart Gilbert (London: Heinemann Educational Books, 1974), p.11. Subsequent references to this edition will be cited paranthetically.
- (14) Adele King, *Camus* (Edinburgh and London: Oliver and Boyd, p. 47.
- (15) Robert Champigny, "Ethics and Aesthetics in *The Stranger*" in Germaines Bree (ed.), *Camus A Collection of Critical Essays* Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 1962), p. 124.
- (16) Jean-Paul Sartre, "An Explication of *The Stranger*" in Germaines Bree, p.111.
- (17) Philip Thody "Camus, *L'Etranger* Revisited," *Critical Quarterly*, Vol. 21, No.2, Summer 1979, p. 63.
- (18) Tayeb Saleh, *Season of Migration to the North*, trans. Denys Johnson-Davies (London: Heinemann Educational Books, 1980), p 33. Subsequent references to this edition will be cited paranthetically.
- (19) See Muhammed Siddiq "The Process of Individuation in Tayeb Saleh's Novel *Season of Migration to the North*," *Journal of Arabic Literature*, IX, 1978, p. 83.

ents, his cultural ideas are quite naive. He reduces England to beautiful women who could be rendered inferior by his sexual energy. It is interesting to note that for Mustafa only his bedroom is where he finds his emotional identity: just as in the Sudan, where he eventually goes back, the locked room with its English books and furniture becomes his true intellectual identity. If the West represents for him intellect and mind, the East is reduced to incense, phallus and bed. The equation, despite its gross generalization, reflects Mustafa's conflict of the two values, which are both false in the final analysis, since neither the East nor the West can be reduced to labels and naive formulae.

#### NOTES

- (1) Raymond Williams, *Culture and Society* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1963), p. 16.
- (2) For more details about the aspects of culture, see Edward Taylor, *Primitive Culture: Researches into the Development of Mythology, Philosophy, Religion, Art and Custom* (Gloucester, Mass.: Smith, 1958), Vol. 2, p. 1. See also Alfred L. Kroeber and Clyde Kluckhohn, *Culture: A Critical Review of Concept and Definitions* (Harvard University Peabody Museum of American Archeology and Ethology papers Vol. 47, No. 1, 1952), p. 181, and E. Adamson Hoebel "The Nature of Culture," in *Man, Culture, and Society*, ed. Harry F. Shapiro (N.Y.: Oxford Univ. Press, 1960) pp. 168-181.
- (3) This is essentially the subject of Edward W. Said's monumental *orientalism* (N.Y.: Mantheon Books, 1978).
- (4) Joseph Conrad, *Heart of Darkness* (New York and London: Norton, 1971), p. 311. Subsequent references to this edition will be cited parenthetically.
- (5) Cedric Watts, *Joseph Conrad: A Literary Life* (London: Macmillan, 1989), p. 81.
- (6) Kenneth Graham, *Indirections of the Novel: James, Conrad, and Forester* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1988), p. 102.
- (7) Gloria L. Young, "Quest and Discovery: Joseph Conrad's and Carl Jung's African Journeys" *Modern Fiction Studies* Vol. 22, No. 4 (Winter 1982-83), p. 585.

anomalies' like Meursault have no place in this world, since people are judged not by what they think of themselves but by what they do. Meursault's killing of the Arab, no matter how hard he tries to rationalize it, or explains it, or justifies it, is a breach of cultural codes and values which even the colonial French law refused to condone primarily because Meursault did not seem to be a normal person from the "cultural" point of view. A recent critic offers the following insight:

Any Arab listening to the proceedings which lead to Meursault's death might well be exused for commenting that the Europeans execute a white man for shooting a native only if he also happens to have violated a white man's taboo about the correct way to behave at a funeral (17).

In *Season of Migration to the North*, Mustafa's odyssey to England is marked by academic excellence, social mobility, and by utter failure to adjust himself to the values of the new culture: "a noble man whose mind was able to absorb Western civilization." (18) His bedroom, which reeks of sandal wood incense and ivory, is the center of his own culture and world (p. 30). In it the drums of Africa, the heat of its tropical forests, and the memories of past invaders, 'British, French and Italian' (p. 95) keep on reminding Mustafa of the alien world he is thrown into. For Mustafa, cultural ascendancy could be achieved in this bedroom, with an English woman. His bedroom epitomizes the East and it is where both Mustafa's sexual energies and the British women's bodies are wasted. According to Mustafa, the East seems to be a giant phallus whose might could conquer the West and restore confidence to an already shattered personality. Mustafa thinks that he can assert his identity through sexual domination (19). The ages of colonialism, and imperial ruthlessness are equated with conquering the bodies of English women: "so that when I slept with a woman it was as if I slept with a whole harem simultaneously" (p. 31). His wife, whom he kills, on their bed with an African dagger slowly inserted between her breasts represents Mustafa's final surrender to the illusion that the dagger (literally and symbolically) is the weapon he must use to subject the West to his domination.

Mustafa's successes in the academic sphere at quite an early age are countered by his cultural maladjustments. Despite his academic achievem-



subhumans, similar to crawling reptiles: "they'd slipped like lizards under cover of the rock" (p. 65). None of them is individuated, none of them has a personality, a name or an identity. They are hood characters who collaborate with the inclement weather to push Meursault to kill one of them:

It struck me that all I had to do was to turn back, walk away, and think no more about it. But the whole beach, pulsing with heat, was pressing on my back. I took some steps towards the stream. The Arab didn't move. After all, there was still some distance between us. Perhaps because of the shadow on his face, he seemed to be grinning at me. (p. 67).

Not that the Arab victim is innocent, this is an irrelevant question for the narrator. It is Meursault who gradually turns into a tragic figure gaining the status of an illuminated and liberated hero who has been victimized by the values and institutions surrounding him. His indictment is not based on the crime of killing the Arab (which was not a crime punishable by death) but on the jury's "appraisal of Meursault's character" (14). The real victim in *The Outsider* is not the Arab who lost his life but Meursault who kills him.

The events in the novel move us into the conclusion that of all the characters, French and Arabs, it is only Meursault who is sensitive to the alien culture around him. It bothers him, it hurts him, and finally it drives him to murder. The others, friends and neighbours, confront the same culture, but Meursault alone is vulnerable: He remains culturally 'pure', or immune to the Algerian surrounding. It is this 'purity' that leads to his downfall in the eyes of those who try him. Not that he has killed an innocent Arab, but because of the 'purity' of his cultural attitudes that turn the others against him.

Paradoxically, as Meursault's condemnation by the French grows more intense, his understanding of himself and of the others becomes more subtle. His conflict with the alien culture has eventually led to his downfall for he becomes a "disturbing factor" to the values of his companions (15). On the other hand he rejects their pseudo values and by so doing he shocks his own culture for "not accepting the rules of its game" (16). Cultural

Her mind, confused by the heat, shifts to the "more serious business of her life" (p.14), her relationship with Ronny. At that time, realizing her own problem of "not to love the man one's going to marry", she feels "like a mountaineer whose rope has broken" (p.148). For a second she thinks that love is not everything to a successful marriage. But with the handsome Aziz holding her hand, asking him about marriage and children, speculating about his attractive appearance, thick hair and fine skin and about the attraction of the women of his own race and rank to him, she is perhaps stricken by a form of sexual hysteria: "a virgin's fancy in a hot country," (11) She suffers a terrifying experience and enters the cave thinking that Aziz attempted to rape her.

What really happens in the cave is deliberately left ambiguous, for Forster is after its symbolic effects: Miss Quested, the product of the Western world with all its common sense and emotional denial; is now face to face with another force that she cannot understand. Confused by the natural mystery and by the heat and dust, she undergoes a conflict between body and spirit, an expression of the clash between the rational West and the mysterious emotional East. The incident of the caves is central to the meaning of the novel since it represents, in Gransden's words, "India's refusal to make sense according to the rules of Western logic" (12).

The statement underscores the gap separating the two cultures: The culture of India with its sun, heat, and passions and the culture of the English with its cold and calculating logic. And Forster in the issue of cultural clash seems to be echoing Kipling's words that the East and West are the "twins [that] will never meet."

In Albert Camus's *The Outsider*, the concept of culture centers on heat, dust, sea, and the Arabs. Meursault is a Frenchman who is living among the French, but his surrounding is alien to him. His friends, his ideas, and his work are concerned with the French. Even his mother's death seems to take place in France: "the telegram from the Home says : your mother passed away." (13) Only the details of sand and heat remind, the reader of the Algerian culture: "It was like a furnace outside no sunlight splintering into flakes of fire on the sand and seas" (p.63, see also pp. 60, 61). The Arabs, who form the background of the story, are portrayed as capable of mischief and harm only. They seem to be

hatred of and cruelty towards the blacks is due to a clash with "his own culture, place and moment in time." (7) When Kurtz opts for Africa he opts for material gains and riches but his failure in the end is due to the fact that he is treating Africa in terms of European materialism, or as Jacques Berthoud puts it "what made sense in Europe no longer makes sense in Africa". (8) One of the essential truths that Marlow faces when he confronts the alien culture is that "people do not express their true identities but rather the roles assigned to them by their cultural situation" (9).

Kurtz's attitude is the sum total of the cultural situation expected of a European in Africa in the nineteenth century, and Kurtz's true identity finds its expression in his ruthlessness towards the natives. If Kurtz were to behave otherwise, he would have been thought of as a failure in terms of economic exploitation.

In Forster's *A Passage to India*, the cultural barriers which militate against the acceptance of Dr. Aziz in the English Community is counter-balanced by Miss Quested's fantasies excited by the alien land of India, its heat and its caves. Ronny, her future husband, has no compunctions and no scruples about justice, since for him it is an English concept and non-commensurate when applied to Indians. Dr. Aziz, his contrast, is compassionate, understanding and handsome. His closeness to Miss Quested and the beauty of his physique lead to her emotional outbursts and the accusation of Dr. Aziz as attempting to rape her.

When Miss Quested comes to India, she expects to see a frieze that should move her; instead India blurs all her impressions. It confuses distinctions: a cobra looks like a tree, a snake like a stick, an elephant like a hill (10). Furthermore, what happens in the caves threatens the possibilities of human harmony through affection and goodwill. Before Miss Quested and Dr. Aziz enter the caves, they encounter a heat haze, a distinctly Indian element of culture which has serious repercussions on the development of the novel: "the sun was getting high, the air felt like a warm bath into which hotter water is trickling (11); temperature rose and rose, the boulder said 'I am alive', the small stones answered 'I am almost alive!' Between the chinks lay the ashes of little plants;" (p. 147). Forster deliberately emphasized the effect of the heat and the sun on Miss Quested as an element conducive to cultural clash.

The conquest of the earth, which mostly means the taking it away from those who have a different complexion or slightly flatter noses than ourselves, is not a pretty thing when you look into it too much (4).

In the words of Cedric Watts, "again and again the tale asks by what right people of one color dare to impose themselves on people of another"(5). Kurtz is a successful station manager from the European perspective because he amasses more ivory than any of the other station managers: "...Mr. Kurtz was the best agent... an exceptional man, of the greatest importance to the company," (p.23) and because of his extraordinary ability to get the natives to help him: "Kurtz got the tribe to follow him... They adored him" (p. 56-57). Kurtz isolates himself in the inner station, with no Europeans around, as if he wants to immerse himself in the Africa he is ruthlessly abusing. His cultural prejudices of belonging to colonial Europe which held to the supremacy of the technological over the less technological renders him ruthless and makes him think of himself as being a god. As Kenneth Graham has observed:

At the central station, Marlow morally deplors the "imbecile rapacity" of the white men and associates the unreality of the scene around him with that human capacity (6).

Opposition to Kurtz is punishable by death, with the head of the victim put on the stake, outside Kurtz's house (p. 59). His relationship with the natives does not foster a healthy cultural exchange, since Kurtz treats the natives in terms of marketable commodities. His practices, crimes, material success and even the ivory he sends to Europe do not exonerate him from the guilt that crushed him. The success he has enjoyed becomes meaningless and empty in front of all the misery he has caused, and which paradoxically turns against him. His final words "The horror! The horror!" could epitomize the abyss into which he has fallen as a result of the clash between the colonially-used culture and the colonially-oriented one.

The tension between the primitive society he attaches himself to and his civilized personality is so strong that he is either to yield to 'the primitive' completely or to reject it. His rejection, which manifests itself in his

between nations seems to be possible, but on a deeper level, this understanding turns out to be transient, superficial, or effected.

The novels discussed below are classics of the modern age: each novel has defied critical exegeses, and each novel enjoys a tantalizing obliqueness. More importantly for our immediate purpose, each novel sheds some light on the concept of culture, and also in each novel, culture acquires a meaning different from the other.

"Culture" in these novels could refer to isolation, nature, race, color, dust, heat and sex. To examine these novels from the cultural point of view is to offer a fresh insight into how culture penetrates literary works, and also the delicacy with which novelists handle and respond to anthropological considerations.

The devastating effect of an alien culture on an individual is true of Kurtz in Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* (1902), Miss Quested in E.M. Forster's *A Passage to India* (1924), Meursault in Albert Camus's *The Outsider* (1942) and Mustafa in Tayeb Salih's *Season of Migration to the North* (1969). These four novels also point to the agony each character undergoes as he or she is uprooted from the native culture: Conrad emphasizes the derangement Kurtz falls into because of his long isolation from his natural habitat (his European culture), and Forster highlights the confusion and excitement Miss Quested feels as she sees the Indian frieze with its naked shapes and phallic images and the sensuality that surrounds her. Camus singles out heat and the sun as elements of an alien culture which militate against Meursault and render him compulsive and helpless. Cultural maladjustment and delusions of domination through sexual prowess mark Mustafa's mind as he gropes for his true identity.

In Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, the cultural confrontation between Kurtz and Africa does not simply reflect brutal colonialism against black Africa or the oppressor against the oppressed but more essentially the novel underscores the fatal consequences of the clash between the two cultures the Europeans who subscribe to the supremacy of the whites and the blacks who are oppressed, abused, and crushed. Conrad, the ever skeptical humanist, was never happy with such platitudes, and he always questioned the bases of colonialism and the myth of the right of the white race to conquer the world:

## Cultural Encounter in Literature

### A Note on Four Modern Novels

By

Dr. Adnan K. Abdulla and Aneel T. Rustam

The concept of culture is notoriously obtuse in its protean meanings. That it could refer to a "whole way of life, material, intellectual, and spiritual" seems to raise more questions than answering them (1). When anthropologists discuss "culture", they primarily associate it with modes of economic production, patterns of behavior, authority, religious practices, hierarchy of social, marital, tribal power, etc. (2) When the same concept is discussed by students of literature, they tend to discuss it in terms of those aspects which alienate a character from others and from himself such as color, dust, heat, or sex. In other words, the concept of culture assumes in literature significances and frames of reference not ordinarily discussed by anthropologists.

One of the most striking instances of "culture" in literature is the traumatic experience a character undergoes as he faces a foreign culture.

When a character finds himself imposed on an alien land, his reaction tends to range from absolute antagonism (such as the case with conquerors throughout history) to complete assimilation. But when a character opts for another culture in lieu of his native one for a variety of reasons (economic, religious, intellectual, etc.), then the new culture which he tries to get assimilated into poses a host of problems which the character frequently fails to surmount. When the new culture is marred by historical contention, disagreement, and bellicosity as that which obtains between East and West, then the problems are compounded. Travelers, politicians, historians, military leaders, men of letters and adventurers have tried to conquer, assimilate, compromise, or understand the East for such diverse reasons as colonialism, imperialism, tourism, or commercial exploitations (3).

"East and West" is only a narrow facet of a larger area of cultural confrontation, and cultures are impervious to others, and those who intrude realize that understanding a different culture entails understanding oneself first. Although cultures differ, some sort of understanding

20. Norman Page, *Charles Dickens: Hard Times, Great Expectations, our Mutual Friends*. (London, 1988), p. 109.
21. Jean-Claude Amalric, 184.
22. *Ibid*, p. 130.
23. Monroe Engel, *The Maturity of Dickens*, (Cambridge, 1967), p. 1610.

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