NATIONAL, INTERCULTURAL AND TRANSCENDENTAL SHAKESPEARE:

ADAPTATION AND TRANSLATION ON THE BANGLADESHI STAGE

by

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Abstract

From colonization through decolonization to liberation, Shakespeare has remained alive in the Bangladeshi theatre. In the post-liberation era, from 1972 to 2022, the translation and adaptation of his tragedies, comedies, and histories plays has been practiced by different Group Theatres and organizations all over Bangladesh. The assimilation and reworking of Shakespeare have been a central part of the transformation of the modern and contemporary theatre, and indeed the entire cultural landscape, of independent Bangladesh. This thesis explores the historical, theatrical and theoretical contexts of Shakespearean praxis in Bangladesh, which are still unfamiliar to, unexplored and largely unmapped by scholars studying Shakespeare across the globe. The central aim of this project is to study the translation, adaptation, and staging of Shakespeare by Bangladeshi theatre artists in the context of the changing socio-political and cultural circumstances of this region. After its introduction, the thesis begins with a section on 'History', an account of how Shakespeare's works arrived in the Bengal region, showing that even though these Anglophone masterpieces were taught under the Raj as part of the colonial apparatus, the playwright was also instrumentalised against the colonial power which had brought him to the subcontinent and imposed his texts upon native people. During the internal-colonial regime of Pakistan, as I shall show, Shakespearean works were appropriated in the political process of Bengali cultural nationalism, and I offer a theoretical examination of productions of *Macbeth*, *The Tempest* and *Coriolanus* which critically illustrates the reciprocal relationship between the political-cultural ontology of Bangladesh and Shakespeare. This thesis argues that the cases of these productions reimagines Shakespeare in Bangladesh beyond the simple binarism between the nationalist and the colonialist. These theatrical representations cultivate a shared Shakespearean

creativity to celebrate the infinite variety of the human world and transcendental ethics, uniting diversified subjectivities in one body. From 'History', and from the predominantly Anglophone, the thesis moves to 'Practice', and the question of what Shakespeare means not just in Bangladesh but in Bengali language. Since any academic research, for instance, a PhD project involves the establishment of new knowledge, this project also examines the Shakespearean canon in order to get a new form of understanding to problematise ontologically the research itself. As a result, this PhD employs practice as research alongside the more conventional academic mode of thesis writing as well as studying the Bangladeshi productions of others, it incorporates its own. My production of *Shattered Faces of Piyar Ali* (based on *Pericles*) is designed to participate in the evolving debate of defining what knowledge is and how it can be produced. The production not only compliments the dominant method of archival research but also enhances creatively the methodological scope in researching in arts and humanities. The production, as an embodied form of knowledge, substantiates that practice or performance is also a form of knowledge. This production not only brings the alternative method in writing theatre history but also problematises the positivist method in writing history itself, something explored in the final main section of the thesis, 'Theory.' Although positivist historiography is employed in the course of the case studies offered in my third chapter, the commitment to research as practice demonstrated by *Piyar Ali* deliberately highlights the indeterminacy and performative characteristic of knowledge-production. This research thus charts new territory in contemporary Shakespeare studies, formally as well as in subject-matter. The Shakespeare canon is not an objective and unchanging monolith, rather it is a multiply-unlockable storehouse that seeks performative entry, which, in turn creates a possibility of new subjectivity. This thesis concludes that new intercultural subjectivities exemplified and produced by cross-border Shakespeare require above all playful practice.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

DEDICATION

To my parents

Rokeya Begum Bashu (1960)

Abul Kalam Maishan (1950-2010)

Armado: Define, define, well-educated infant.

Boy: My father's wit and my mother's tongue, assist me.

(William Shakespeare, *Love's Labor's Lost* 1:2, 94-5)

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Global Shakespeare studies, one of the most prominent sub-fields within twenty-first century Shakespeare, confirms that the great author is now all-but omnipresent across the world. However, what was once simply celebrated as evidence of "universality" of his plays, some innate genius which enabled them to transcend linguistic, racial and geographical barriers, is now more often read as a perhaps insidious symbol of "liquid modernity," something which makes Shakespeare not a permanent unchanging monument but an elusive but ubiquitous rhizomatic figure – decentred, irrepressible, unpredictably erupting in different times and places as "disturbingly relevant" (Dickson xxxiii-iv; Gilbert and Tompkins 23). There is already a substantial scholarship detailing how through English colonization in the mid-eighteenth century, Shakespeare was introduced on stage in the Bengal region (Ahmed "European Theatre"; Loomba and Orkin "Post-Colonial Shakespeares"; Loomba "*Colonialism/Postcolonialism*"). From colonization through decolonization to liberation, as this thesis will show, Shakespeare is still alive in the Bangladeshi theatre. In the post-liberation era, from 1972 to 2022, Shakespeare's works have been translated, adapted and performed across the cultural spectrum all over Bangladesh. Shakespeare has hereby made a great impact on the modern and contemporary theatre and cultural landscape in the country. This research is designed to explore and examine the appropriation of Shakespeare in the Bangladeshi theatre, a phenomenon still unfamiliar to, unexplored and largely unmapped by scholars studying Shakespeare across the globe. Therefore, this research charts new territory in contemporary Shakespeare studies.

Literature Review and Context

Aiming to study the appropriation of Shakespeare in Bangladesh, it is necessary to situate this project within the global context of Shakespeare studies. The ensuing review of relevant literature will help to make clear how the critical approach of this research belongs to a longer narrative of change in the theoretical understanding of international Shakespeare – from the blandly "universal" to the post-colonial to transcendental appropriation. Therefore, a broader scope will be adopted to examine and understand the historical, regional, thematic, and theoretical issues, debates, and gaps in the field in which this PhD project is situated.

Apolitical Story of Global Shakespeare

It might be useful to begin not with a specialized academic study, but with a trade book, summarizing and propagating the work of scholars for a wide audience. Andrew Dickson's book (2016), *Worlds Elsewhere: Journeys Around Shakespeare's Globe* usefully summarizes and exemplifies the currently accepted story of a global Shakespeare, possibly the most translated and accepted playwright in global history. He argues that the "unusual" flexibility and adaptability of Shakespeare's scripts and the playwright's "nimble curiosity about … 'the great globe itself'" made him reinterpretable and translatable "so many times, all across the world" (432). Xiao Yang Zhang likewise explores the widespread and profound influence of Shakespearean dramatic works upon cultures and societies across the world. He argues that Shakespeare, as a cultural icon, has become not merely an essential symbol for English culture but has also had a profound effect on cultures around the world (13). Since his book outlines a systematic investigation of the intercultural relationship between Shakespeare and Chinese culture and theatre, it will help to examine the intercultural dialogue and interaction between Shakespeare and Bangladeshi theatre.

However, Jan Kott argues about the idea of the timeless greatness of Shakespeare's plays and how they reflect their formidable potential to draw the similarities of the contemporary human condition with the Shakespearean. Such concepts, suggested by Kott, legitimise the causes for the anglicised globalisation of Shakespeare. The idea of timeless Shakespeare has impacted many ground-breaking theatrical productions in the UK and around the world as well. The universal Shakespeare framework that Kott pursues is significant for this PhD project as it allows a critical position in the context of colonial phenomenology against a dominant discourse of apolitical appropriation of the Bard.

Against the Grain of Anglo-centred Shakespearean Studies

Dennis Kennedy (1993) argues in favour of a "foreign Shakespeare", based on the idea of non-Anglophone Shakespeare as enjoyed by Anglophones, arguing that there is scope to open a new discourse against the dominating grain of Anglo-centred Shakespearean Studies. His collection *Foreign Shakespeare*: *Contemporary Performance* is much more devoted to exploring productions of Shakespeare in France, Germany, Russia, Israel, and Japan, though it has given less attention to South Asia. This volume demonstrates how "Shakespeare without his language" becomes the playwright of "cultural adaptation" rather than "literary translation" through a quasi-globalisation which problematises the hegemonic notion of anglicisation (Kennedy 1-18).

In her book titled *Shakespeare and East Asia*, Alexa Alice Joubin explores the pivotal themes of form, ideology, reception and diaspora in the context of travelling Shakespeare. This research focuses on the intercultural interplay as the point of departure from the linear canonization of global Shakespeare studies. As Joubin argues, "[t]his false dichotomy between the native and the foreign can be broken down when we consider global Shakespeare performances in the context

of cross-media and cross-cultural citations, the cultural vibration linking productions in different cultures. Adaptations reference or echo one another, across cultures and genres, in addition to the Shakespearean pretext" (6).   The essay "Global Shakespeares as Methodology" combines an overview of the predominant mode of studying Shakespeare in a cultural institution as a global phenomenon with a more critical methodology of reading Shakespeare in liminal spaces best understood through theatrically defined cultural locations (Huang). The MIT Global Shakespeares, a work in progress digital archive of over 300 theatrical performances and movies, provides an analytical multimedia platform that offers a wide access to "the diversity of the world-wide reception and production of Shakespeare's plays… ." Furthermore, *The Routledge Handbook of Shakespeare and Global Appropriation*, edited by Christy Desmet, Sujata Iyengar and Miriam Jacobson, examines the multiplicities in adaptation and appropriation of Shakespeare's works through theatre, film, literature and digital media around the world over the decades. Four parts of this anthology critically discuss the transcultural and intercultural aspects, decolonising stratagems, pedagogical topics and debates, local and global ("glocal") issues, and transmedia representations in Shakespearean appropriation in international contexts.

Although recently evolved, theories of performance have incorporated the idea of globalisation as a complex historical phenomenon. Richard Schechner, in his influential book *Performance Studies*, discusses artistic and non-artistic performance in an interdisciplinary approach where he takes "performance" as an all-encompassing idea in relation to globalisation. Based on the explanation of Homi K. Bhabha, Schechner points out that globalisation significantly affects our interpretations of former epochs (287). Though Schechner is ambivalent about the relationship between colonialism and globalisation, the latter is merely the continuation of the former. He illustrates that an intricate type of intercultural performance resulted when "natives" adapted the

socio-cultural norms and values (such as language, rituals, clothes, and dresses) of the colonial ruling class in a manner of their "privilege" (287). Thus, the critical discussion about globalisation and intercultural performance opens scope to study Shakespearean appropriation as a "cultural adaptation" in the discourse of postcolonial theatre.

Colonial Legacy and Postcolonial Counter-discourse

Brian Crow and Chris Banfield critically explore postcolonial drama and theatre that concentrates on the anti-colonialist theatrical canon from Africa to India. The writers focus on dramatists such as Wole Soyinka, Derek Walcott, Badal Sircar, and Girish Karnad, who often celebrate the multiplicity of human history and shape their theatrical narratives to accommodate, and sometimes oppose, colonial [including Shakespearean] dramaturgy and Euro-centric theatre studies. Their work demonstrates the theatrical patterns that have been originated from the colonial legacy. This theatre-culture was brought by the colonists, who imposed the proscenium arch stage, the fourth wall convention, realism, the well-made play, and Shakespeare in English colonies. It provides a substantial resource due to its critical engagement with postcolonial poetics, historicity, and Shakespeare, which also intersects with this research project.

In other words, the postcolonial approach provides a new tool for studying Shakespeare by offsetting the Eurocentric tendency of advocating Shakespeare as an apolitical and universal literary genius. For example, Ania Loomba and Martin Orkin (1988), in their collection *Post-Colonial Shakespeares,* set the playwright Shakespeare in a multitude of subjective perspectives and politics of location against the axiom of his universality. The book is an invaluable source for this research due to its theoretical framework and methodology of analysis. Similarly, in *Post-colonial Drama: Theory, Practice, Politics,* Gilbert and Tompkins illustrate that Shakespeare's

legacy is traceable within the post-colonial recasting of canonical texts as targets of counter-discourse in India, Canada, Australia, South Africa, New Zealand, and the West Indies. The bias to see Shakespeare's appeal as universal not only normalises a specific Eurocentric view of the world but also impedes the blossoming of local traditions of theatre. They argue that "the Shakespeare industry" has a profound effect on systems of education, theatrical and critical cultures, and has frequently influenced the value systems and knowledge of the colonised people to sustain the imperialist fortune in the past. This canonical publication significantly contributes to the ongoing research project for a theoretical framework and a critical understanding of cultural histories in the imperialist milieu.

Furthermore, by borrowing a term from Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, Gilbert and Tompkins assert that "this shaping of the theatre practices of colonised countries according to an imposed foreign standard can be seen as one manifestation of … 'epistemic violence' of imperialism" (21). They argue that the "post-colonial performance texts often violate the canon, setting up an agonistic encounter between local and received traditions" (21). Gilbert and Tompkins, offering examples from different once-colonised parts of the world, including Utpal Dutt's reworking of Shakespeare in Bengal, reveal that the English Bard remains "disturbingly relevant" because his works can only be realized through "a complex replay that can never be finished or final" (23-24). The content of this book reflects a specific geographic affinity and presents theories in post-colonial politics of poetics which can be considered to provide a pragmatic ground for this research.

Shakespeare and the Problematisation of Binarism

Following post-colonial discourse, Margaret Litvin sets her "Hamlet's Arab Journey" in a broader context of not only "foreign Shakespeare", but also "international Shakespeare" studies, by sampling the accrescent corpus of literature in Eastern Europe, Africa, and Asia. By proposing a model of "the global kaleidoscope," this book performs "Hamlet" in the context of the 1950s Arab world. Against such binaries as influencer/influence, coloniser/colonised, Arabs/West, she engages with the socio-politico-cultural context through approaches to Shakespeare that are determining criteria of contemporary Arab identity and signify a crisis in true selfhood: "the problem of self-determination and authenticity" (20). The analytical method of studying Shakespearean appropriation found in this book goes beyond conventional binarism and allows me to look at the project beyond the conventional postcolonial theories that are more to limit me.

Critical Multiplicity in South Asia

In the milieu of growing colonialism of the Indian subcontinent, Nandi Bhatia reminds us that the "acts of authority" and the "acts of resistance" and "local reconstructions" of Shakespeare disrupt the "singularity" accorded to Shakespeare through claims about his "universality" and "timeless transcendentalism," and imparts new meanings to the Bard (52). Likewise, in *Colonialism/Postcolonialism*, Loomba (1998) deliberates a new interpretation of terminologies in the area of colonial and post-colonial studies and explores a critical discussion about complex identity politics in the context of colonial and postcolonial history, developed via an interdisciplinary approach. The discursivity of postcolonial studies that the book offers, can be a significant model for this research to strengthen its analysis. Moreover, the discussion she provides is very closely related to this research topic where the book indicates the multi-layered

appropriation of Shakespeare in the subcontinent, as Loomba depicts that mimicry of Shakespeare creates a site of contestation against the legality of English colonial rule in the Indian subcontinent.

India's Shakespeare (edited by Trivedi and Bartholomeusz), *Re-Playing Shakespeare in Asia* (edited by Trivedi and Ryūta), *Shakespeare's Asian Journeys* (edited by Trivedi et al.), *Shakespeare and Indian Cinemas* (edited by Trivedi and Chakravarti) and *Asian Interventions in Global Shakespeare* (Trivedi et al.) explore the interplay between Shakespeare and (South) Asian appropriations that brings to light the critical multiplicities in postcolonial discourses. For instance, *Re-Playing Shakespeare in Asia*, a compilation of critical essays, argues for a diverse mode of representation and theoretical non-linearity when dealing with the histories of Asian expressivities of Shakespearean dramatic productions, focusing on Indian performances (Trivedi and Ryūta).

This collection incorporates the idea of re-playing, interculturalism, and Asianness, to analyse the Shakespearean performances of identity, ethnicity, genre, and gender within the umbrella of postcolonial theories. In an essay, "Shakespeare and Indian Image(nary): Embod(y)ment in Versions of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*," Poonam Trivedi illustrates how two intercultural productions interplay with the notion of interculturality. One was the multilingual production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* that was directed by Tim Supple in 2006. This was an "Indian *Dream*", performed in a medley of English, Tamil, Malayalam, Singhalese, Hindi, Bengali, Marathi, and even a bit of Sanskrit, to "reflect the multilingual reality of India," underlying the director's belief that "Shakespeare productions should reflect the time and space in which they are made" (Trivedi 57).

However, this production also attracted criticism that as a white Englishman, Supple was enacting and perpetuating a colonial tourist fantasy version of the subcontinent. For instance, although acknowledging the seductiveness with which the show offered "the pleasures of exotic

effects," Michael Dobson warned in *Shakespeare Survey* that the production might well be seen as "a show masquerading as a Shakespeare revival but really offering a composite, exoticized vision of India for audiences of *de facto* tourists" ("Shakespeare Performances" 301). Trivedi also discusses Chetan Datar's popular Marathi adaptation of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* as *Jungal Mein Mangal* [Love in the Jungle] in 2004, which creates a postcolonial desire to deconstruct the original text to fit present-time geopolitics. The critical review of the productions remark that the intercultural performance of Shakespeare is not only self-reflective but also interventionist in the cultural politics of identity. In addition to this, Trivedi internalises the critical notions of body, such as: "multilingual body," "raced body," "body languages," and "indigenous body," as cross-gendered and postcolonial corporeality in the context of Indian Shakespeare.

Colonial Bengal and Postcolonial Shakespeare Studies

Playing with the idea of "Re-playing Textuality/Theatricality," Tapati Gupta (2010) in her essay on Bengali theatre-polymath Utpal Dutt's "Shakespeare *Jatra*", explores her critical reception of a reworking of Shakespeare. She remarks that there are four phases of Dutta's career that concentrate on Shakespearean production in "pre-independence eastern India, in general, and Bengal, in particular" (157). She divides the context of Dutt's work into four phases: "imperial hegemony," "mimicry," "translation and localisation," and "adaptation and transformation" (157). She figures out Utpal Dutt's works by paying attention to the translation of *Romeo and Juliet* and its adaptation, *Bhuli Nai Priya* [I Have Not Forgotten, My Love]. By examining Dutt's works, she determines that postcolonial empowerment of indigenous culture created a mutual interaction with

the colonial culture. Moreover, the essayist argues that the primary element of this reworking of Shakespeare is incorporating the local theatrical form of *jatra*.[1]

Asian Shakespeares are vividly dissimilar from one region to another. In fact, the case of Bengali Shakespeare diagnoses a local creative affiliation and an interiorisation unique to this region, though these studies limit themselves within rare cases to the western part of Bengal. However, as aforementioned, Bengal is currently divided into two independent political entities: India and Bangladesh. Since my project is situated in Bangladesh, this discursive engagement aids an understanding of a common cultural inheritance of Shakespearean theatre but it is insufficient in terms of genealogical evolution of Shakespearean practice in this region due to its complexity.

Since the dominant trend in postcolonial Shakespeare studies focuses on literature, the book *(Post)Colonial Stages: Critical & Creative Views on Drama, Theatre & Performance*, edited by Helen Gilbert and published in 1999, fills the gap in post-colonial studies concentrating drama, theatre, and performance along with the discussion about both theories and practices in this field. Among other exciting essays in this book, it is much more relevant to this research to mention Sudipto Chatterjee's critical chapter "The Nation Staged: Nationalist Discourse in Late

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[1] *Jatra* [lit. Journey] is a traditional form of indigenous theatre in Bangladesh, as well as West Bengal and Orissa in India. It is still a popular form of entertainment in rural areas and has been since the sixteenth century. *Jatra* performances are performed by professional actors and continue throughout the night. It is performed in the open air with a thrust bare stage that excludes all types of Western realistic scenic representations. Rather, it incorporates an empty space where movement, music, stylized idiom of acting, dilated pattern of speech, naturalistic enactment along with continuous live music constitte the performance. The contents of jatra are written in dramatic form but are based on South Asian mythology, colonial history, religious icons, local folk tales, legends and contemporary social phenomena. Jatra mobilises the collective imagination and psyche of the spectator with a didactic spirit of popular theatrical aesthetics of their respective regions. In more urban areas the audience consist largely of working and lower middle classes, whereas rural performances attract wider audiences.

Nineteenth-Century Bengali Theatre," which explores the colonial ambivalence in Shakespearean appropriation in Bengal.

Furthermore, *Shakespeare and Appropriation* (1999) constitutes the discourse of creative mimicry and hybridity as witnessed in the naturalization of Shakespeare in India, particularly in the region of Bengal. The book consists of two parts where one is about "Appropriation in Theory" while the other is titled "Appropriation in Practice." The first part of this book involves cultural criticism, and the second part explores literary criticism. Among eleven essays of the book, Sudipto Chatterjee and Jyotsna Singh contribute in part one in writing the essay titled "Moor or less? The surveillance of *Othello*, Calcutta 1848." The essay examines an English colonial production of *Othello* in Bengal in 1848, where a Bengali actor played the role of Othello. Christy Desmet, one of the editors of this book, evaluates the essay that considers Shakespeare as a "cultural phenomenon" (3). Desmet comments on this essay that one can witness "the importance of lost historical moments from locales far away from the Avon and its swans to the understanding of Shakespeare's role within the colonialist project" (3). Chatterjee and Singh's essay closely connects to this research for providing a genealogical matrix by which this research project could examine the past anecdotes of Shakespearean performance in the region of Bengal. However, it is equally important to consider contemporary creative processes of adaptation in appropriation of Shakespeare in the subcontinent. In her article, Sandra Young reveals the creative process of the contemporary reconstruction of Shakespeare's *Hamlet* into the film *Haider* by Vishal Bhardwaj and the political context of Kashmir in India. The essayist analyses this reworking in the idea of Indigenised Shakespeare to find an astonishing resonance of human tragedy. For this research project, this essay is vital to understand the subcontinental creative process of Shakespearean adaptation through a new lens where indigenisation is equally important as hybridity is.

In the same way, Rustom Bharucha discusses the appropriation of Shakespeare in Bengal in a colonial politico-historical context. He provides a colonial context in *Rehearsals of Revolution: The Political Theatre of Bengal* which he divides into three sections. Part One is dedicated to exploring the ancient Sanskrit theatre, which he recognises as the theatre of the ruling class. Part Two focuses on interpreting the two legendary theatre personalities Utpal Dutt and Badal Sircar, while Part Three focuses on Bengali adaptions of Bertolt Brecht and other theatrical performances. Here I will focus largely on Part Two of his book. Bharucha pays much attention to Dutt's reworkings of Shakespeare in the traditional and indigenous *jatra* form of pre-modern Bengali theatre. Dutt opposed the colonial imposition of the proscenium arch stage by adapting Shakespeare's works to the masses rather than the elite and middle class who were used to seeing theatre in a formal setting of colonial architecture. Overall, Bharucha takes the word "Bengal" to refer to a cultural entity rather than a political unit. For example, he mentions Aranyak, a Bangladeshi theatre group devoted to political theatre as a rehearsal for revolution but did not provide any historical outline of how Bengal was twice divided between 1905 and 1947. Furthermore, how the eastern part of Bengal became an independent state was not an essential element of his discussion. When he intended to discuss the political theatre under the umbrella title "Bengal", he would have discussed the political history of Bengal as well as the theatre of Bangladesh since he considered Bengal a political entity. Nonetheless, this book is an archaeological source that helps to understand the context, colonial influence, and the paradoxical reception of Shakespeare in the region of Bengal.

The veteran actor-director-translator-playwright Utpal Dutt, an important proponent of Shakespeare in Bengal, wrote *Shakespearer Samaj-cetona* [Social Consciousness of Shakespeare] in the Bengali language from a deep-rooted experience in practising Shakespeare. In his polemic,

he discusses the politics, society, and ideology of Shakespeare's plays and it has become a classic in Bengali culture. The book explores many ideas in Shakespeare's oeuvre that demonstrate concepts that shaped a unique practice and contextualisation of the 'Bard' in Bengal: merchandiser, history, religion, Jesus, equality and gold, jungle, the king, and the warrior. This book helps to understand, through a radical practitioner's lens, how Shakespeare has become relevant and related in staging his plays in Bengal. Interestingly, Dutt dedicates this book to his Guru of studying and performing Shakespeare, Geoffrey Kendal, and describes the experiential knowledge that instigates him to write the book. Dutt's *Shakespearer Samaj-cetona* was the genealogical descendent of its predecessor, Kendal's autobiography *Shakespeare Wallah* that illustrates how the theatre company Shakespeareana attempted a commercial journey with the Bard's plays to the various regions of India. It demonstrates an interested Indian spectatorship for Shakespeare and describes the adventures of performing his plays, before and after the decolonisation of this region. The Kendal materials, archived by the Shakespeare Institute Library, along with the autobiography as the ethnographic explorations, describe a mutual interaction between Shakespearean performance, English performers and creative entrepreneurs, Indian performers, as well as a vast range of native audiences. Kendal, Dutt's Shakespeare-Guru, depicts two folds of subcontinental Shakespearean experiences. English investment in Shakespeare as their cultural capital in the region of India, on the one hand; India's enthusiasm for Shakespeare and English cultural expression, on the other.

Following the description of Kendal and Dutt's localisation, against the monolithic claims that Shakespeare is an outsider, some researchers argue that diversified practices in various parts of India confirm a live culture of native Shakespeares. Consider, for instance, the book *Native Shakespeares: Indigenous Appropriations on a Global Stage* (2008), edited by Craig Dionne and

Parmita Kapadia, which is dedicated to exploring regional appropriation of Shakespeare. In part two of this book, titled "Local Productions: Nationalism and Hegemony from the Third Space," Parmita Kapadia writes an article "Jatra Shakespeare: Indigenous Indian Theatre and the Post-colonial Stage," which is very similar in a historical sense to my PhD project. In the analysis of "a colonial production that cast a Bengali actor in the role of Othello" and a contemporary *Jatra* style production of *Hamlet*, Kapadia seeks "to reverse the gaze" to find the examples of Shakespearean production in Bengali that confirm a move beyond the binary of colonial/postcolonial which creates a "counter discursive" site to problematize the discourse of regionalism and nationalism (92-3).

Postcolonial Scholarship, Bangladesh, and Shakespeare under Erasure

In this complex interaction, there is a discussion of what Edward Said has theorized, by engaging with Frantz Fanon, that the process of decolonisation as "liberation" is also a "transformation of social consciousness beyond national consciousness" (Fanon 203). Fawzia Afzal-Khan, for example, locates the post-colonial desire of theatre in her book, *A critical stage: The role of secular alternative theatre in Pakistan*, wherein she confirms that Pakistani theatre mostly bears the colonial legacies of Shakespearean theatre that has contributed to generating such a cultural condition which can be interpreted by the notion of "polysemy" as the process of "hybridization" and "negotiation". The book seems a navigable source for its shared geopolitical histories since Bangladesh was a part of Pakistan until 1971, even after the decolonisation of the Indian subcontinent in 1947.

It is within this complex regional and global context of appropriating Shakespeare that this proposed project aims to examine the theatre of Shakespeare in Bangladesh from 1972-2022. Even

though theatre is thought to be "the most forceful and exuberant expression of post-liberation Bangladesh", no systematic research has been done to assess the theatrical reception of Shakespeare in the country from the post-liberation until now, though there are some researchers who discuss the history of Bangladeshi theatre more generally (Ahmed "European Theatre"). For example, in one of his seminal books, published in 1995, written in Bengali, Syed Jamil Ahmed narrates the history of theatrical performances in this region for thousands of years ("Hajar Bachhar"). With an argumentative stance, Ahmed has explored this region's theatrical history reading against the Eurocentric interpretation of theatre. He divides the entire theatre history of Bengal into four keys geo-historical phases: (1) indigenous or local traditional theatre, (2) Sanskrit influenced classical theatre, (3) modern colonial theatre, and (4) postcolonial theatre of East Bengal after the partition of the subcontinent. In this book, the writer articulates the theatrical practice under the occupation of Pakistani military government. Importantly, where he describes the fourth phase in his book, he also writes about the theatre of Bangladesh after its independence in 1971 to 1980s. Under these four conceptions, he demonstrates the theatre history of this region in twenty-three sections. In the section regarding the postcolonial theatre of East Bengal, Ahmed illustrates the history under the four subsections: Crisis of Identity, Spring Awakening, Suppression and Resistance, and Exploration. On the other hand, he describes the history of Bangladeshi theatre from 1972 to 1989 under the subsections: Waves, Exploration and Experimentation. This book attempts to generate a holistic postcolonial history of theatre in Bangladesh by focusing on local playwrights, rather than on Shakespeare, as being pivotal in shaping the modern theatre throughout, and since, colonisation. Nevertheless, this book is significant given the historical context of this research project.

In his book *Acinpakhi Infinity: Indigenous Theatre of Bangladesh*, Syed Jamil Ahmed (2000) examines traditional theatrical performances by employing an ethnographic method. This book consists of eight chapters where Ahmed writes about theatrical performances related to Krishna and Caitanya, Ramchandra, Siva and Kali, Manasa, Buddhism and Natha cult, Muslim saints and legendary heroes, as well as secular and hybrid performances. This groundbreaking anthropological work confirms that nearly hundreds of extant theatrical genres have predated colonization, sometimes by thousands of years, and rejects that theatrical history in Bangladesh started with colonization. This book is significant in understanding of the diversification of theatrical streams, and creative mutations, in Bangladesh.

Furthermore, *Reading Against the Orientalist Grain Performance and Politics Entwined with a Buddhist Strain*, Syed Jamil Ahmed (2008), studies the Buddhist performances of South Asia that includes Indra Jatra and Carya Nritya in Nepal, Sikkim's Pangtoed Cham, Tibbet's Lhamo, Bhutan's Paro Tsecho, Srilankan performance of Devol Maduva, Yoke Thay from Myanmar and Buddha Kirtan, which is witnessed in Bangladesh. This book critically illustrates South Asia, including Bangladesh, as a significant site of Buddhist theatrical traditions. As a result, it creates an intellectual scope to see the post-colonial location at the south Asian theatrical map through a Buddhist lens. Thus, this scholastic engagement functions as a bridge between this project and the post-colonial location of South Asian theatre. At the same time, this research excavates pre-colonial history, colonial impact, and the postcolonial conditions of South Asia in terms of changing geopolitics and socio-cultural economics. Bangladesh, the country of focus in this research project, plays an extensive role in the context that Ahmed explores. From the perspective of this current project, the postcolonial reading strategy of theatrical performances and

the exploration of subcontinental contexts are the strengths of this book, though Shakespearean practice in this region is entirely untouched by this work.

In the context of South Asian performing arts, *Centre Stage: Gender, Politics and Performance in South Asia* discusses the contemporary South Asian performance culture that surrounds music and dance performances represented in Islamic tombs along with some instances from the Bollywood film industry (Kermani et al.). Though the title contains the geographic notion of South Asia broadly, the content focuses largely on India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh, excluding other South Asian countries such as Nepal, Bhutan, and Sri Lanka. In the introductory essay, Syed Jamil Ahmed argues for a "thousand plateaus" instead of a monolithic identity in South Asian contemporary theatre ("Performing" 30). Exploring South Asian postcolonial context, according to Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, Ahmed illustrates two types of national theatre: one is arborescent narrations of the nation, and the other is rhizomatic narrations of the nation. This essay seeks a "line of flight" in the context of South Asian theatre employing the Deleuzoguattarian notion of "rhizome." According to Douglas Lanier, rhizome is formed with heterogenous elements that emphasises "becoming and difference" in order to obtain "the fluidity of ceaseless change, or to attempt to impose structure (typically a binary one) upon non-unitary multiplicity" (27), which, indeed, involves "a double process of deterritorialization (a destructuring of each original) and reterritorialization (the drive to create a new stability or order)" (28). Paradoxically, Ahmed indicates multiple theatrical expressions in this region, but he also excludes translated and adapted productions such as Shakespearean works that shaped contemporary Indian, Pakistani, and Bangladeshi theatre in his work.

Moreover, other chapters of the book *Centre Stage: Gender, Politics and Performance in South Asia*, such as "political theatre," "politics of class and gender," "Avante Garden Women," and "the politics of representation," normatively do not discuss colonial-textual-canonical influence and interaction in the contemporary theatrical and performance culture in South Asia. However, one of the most sustained efforts to map the Bangladeshi theatre is an essay by Syed Jamil Ahmed in an edited book *Mapping South Asia through Contemporary Theatre Essays on the Theatres of India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal and Sri Lanka*, where he critically explores life through theatre in this country that excludes Shakespearean works but provides a wider context of theatre culture.

Although Ahmed's article leaves an impression of Shakespeare's absence in Bangladeshi theatre, *Natyachinta*, a journal on theatre and performing arts, published in Kolkata, West Bengal of India, dedicates one of its issues to "Shakespeare and His Theatre", where it divides itself into three sections that consist of twenty-two essays, mostly written in Bengali. Many of its articles concentrate on the geo-cultural-historical origins, background, and interpretation of Shakespeare's plays. Other articles excavate unique protagonists, the portrayal of the prince, and the idea of clown, revenge, and magic in the works of Shakespeare. Furthermore, it explores the theatrical cultures of Shakespeare in Bengal including once East Bengal, which is currently the independent country Bangladesh. This journal reflects Bengali meditations on Shakespeare and the regional practice of his plays from the colonial to the postcolonial periods from West Bengal to contemporary Bangladesh.

Shafi Ahmed, a professor of English language and literature, and theatre critic of Bangladesh, in his book titled *Bangadeshe Shakespeare* [Shakespeare in Bengal], asserts that it is now a cultural normality to love and practise Shakespeare in Bangladesh. He even affirms that

Shakespeare has brought not only a high taste in literature but an unimaginable dynamic in the stage and the theatre of Bangladesh. He does not spare any time to discuss the Shakespearean theatre in the country, except for giving a list of translations, adaptations, and performances of Shakespeare into the Bengali language in West Bengal, India and Bangladesh until the publication of his book in 1988. In other words, he attempts to write an informative, rather than a critical, book focusing his attention on Shakespeare only in the colonial era rather than in Bangladesh as an independent state. On the other hand, Rashid Harun, in his article titled "Bangladesher Manche Shakespearer Natok" [Shakespeare's Plays on the Stages of Bangladesh], replicates Shafi Ahmed's data about the translation and adaptation of Shakespeare's plays in the colonial period. In addition, Harun attempts to bring a list of the plays which were staged by the different groups from 1972 to 2000 in Bangladesh. The article informs us that Shakespeare is the most practised playwright in staging of translated and adapted plays in theatre of Bangladesh. However, this is contradicted by his statement that there have only been 18 Shakespeare productions in Bangladesh in 28 years. Though it does not provide any information about Shakespearean production from 2000 to 2020, and even lacks a critical, methodological and in-depth appraisal of Shakespearean productions, this article can be considered an essential source for this project as it provides information regarding the history of Shakespearean performances in Bangladesh.

In short, existing knowledge of this field confirms that many phenomena have emerged in studying Shakespeare. One predominant phenomenon is the advocacy for a timeless and borderless Shakespeare as a universal literary genius in the world, regardless of race, region, culture, history, and politics. On the contrary, the claim for an apolitical and classical Shakespeare is considered as Anglo-centric and implicitly imperialist by some other scholars in this area. In addition to this, there is a keen understanding of colonial history and the politics of knowledge and how it plays a

vital role in shaping a postcolonial critical approach that considers any practice of Shakespeare as a regrettable colonial legacy. This critical approach creates a set of counter-discourses that help us understand the appropriation of the English Bard in the colonial world, one which contains a power relationship between coloniser-elite-ruling class and colonised-subordinate-natives. Some critics also problematise the binarism in Shakespeare studies. A wide range of scholarship on the appropriation of Shakespeare in South Asia, in relation to postcolonial theory, brings the idea of multiplicity which reveals the diverse forms of expression based on the works of the 'Bard'. Similarly, Shakespeare as a vital component of colonial legacies, either erased or discussed inadequately in some scholarly works of this region. In this context, it is noteworthy that the nature and significance of the interaction between Shakespeare and Bangladeshi theatre and culture have not been examined in depth in either Bengali or Western academic circles. This research on Shakespeare in Bangladesh is, thus, an attempt to fill this epistemic gap.

Research Questions

The central aim of this project is to study the staging of Shakespeare's plays through translation, adaptation, and assimilation by Bangladeshi theatre artists in the context of changing socio-political and cultural histories of this region. The fundamental aim of this research generates the central question as follows: What is the nature and significance of intercultural dialogue between Shakespeare and the Bangladeshi theatre?

It is possible to raise some other secondary questions from the lineage of the main question:

1.   How have Shakespeare's plays made a significant contribution to the transformation of Bangladeshi theatrical culture?

2.   Has there been a recognisable and unique Bangladeshi perception and vision of Shakespeare that has made new meanings here for this border-crossing playwright's texts?

Theoretical Framework and Research Method

In pursuing this PhD research project, I employ a theoretical framework that incorporates the idea of hybridity from postcolonial theories along with other intercultural critical theories to examine the theatrical productions from 1972-2020 in Bangladesh. It is useful to conceive of a "post-colonialism not just as coming literally after colonialism and signifying its demise, but more flexible as the contestation of colonial domination and the legacies of colonialism" (Loomba, "Colonialism/Postcolonialism" 12). And "the term postcolonial can indeed paradoxically flatten both past and contemporary situation. All 'subordinating' discourses and practices are not the same either over time or across the globe" (13). In this situation, postcolonial studies also deal "with issues of hybridity" that engage "the mobility and cross-overs of ideas and identities generated by colonialism" (173). Homi Bhabha defines more aptly that "hybridity as camouflage, as a contesting, antagonistic agency functioning in the time-lag of sign/symbol, which is a space in-between the rules of engagement" (277). Again, "colonial identities," Bhabha amplifies, "are always a matter of flux and agony" (qtd. in Loomba 176). This interpretation equates to Stuart Hall's, namely that "[colonial/postcolonial] identity is a constructed process rather than a given essence" (qtd. in Loomba 176). To a certain extent, Bhabha remarks that "colonial presence is always ambivalent, split between its appearance as original and authoritative and its articulation as repetition and difference" ("Signs Taken for Wonders" 150).

In this complex human condition, Edward Said has theorized by engaging with Franz Fanon that the process of decolonization as "liberation," which transforms "social consciousness

beyond national consciousness" (Fanon 203; Said 278). Contrarily, Loomba discursively characterises that "Bhabha had critiqued Said's Orientalism for suggesting that colonial discourse was all powerful, for not considering how it was forged relationally" (178). She dissects Bhabha's concept of hybridity, stating that it is "useful in insisting that neither colonizer nor colonized is independent of the other. Colonial identities—on both sides of the divide—are unstable, agonized, and in constant flux" (178). Loomba even problematises Bhabha's conception of hybridity to reveal its subtext as the generalisation and universalisation of colonial encounter. Moreover, she revitalizes the theory of hybridity by citing Ella Shohat's idea that it is useful "to discriminate between the diverse modalities of hybridity, for example, forced assimilation, internalized self-rejection, political co-optation, social conformism, cultural mimicry, and creative transcendence" (Loomba 178). Again, borrowing from Loomba, it is possible to assume that hybridity defines "our contemporary globality [and] often globalization is celebrated as the producer of a new and "liberating" hybridity or multiculturalism" (256-7). The notion of "hybridity" and "multiculturalism" can give a strong theoretical foundation to critically understand the case of Shakespeare in the theatre of Bangladesh as it has a long genealogy of British colonization and the "internal colonization" of Pakistan as well as the choreographic socio-politico cultural conditions of itself and the effects of contemporary globalization.

Moreover, according to the critical position of Stuart Hall, post-colonialism deals a "re-narrativisation" which is a dislocated story of modernity in the age of capitalism (qtd. in Bignall and Patton). The neo-narrative of postcoloniality moves to the "global peripheries" from Europe as the centre of the globe. The neo-narrative negotiates, challenges, and reconstitutes the imperialist "power/knowledge" discourse through the diversified form of histories in this time of globalisation. This theoretical framework could be a sharp tool to analyse the displaced story of

Shakespearean theatre in Bangladesh. Even, following "the line of flight" from a "rhizomatic" country, "putting into question the traditional image of [postcolonial] thought" (Bignall and Patton), this research also aims to incorporate Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's philosophy of "a thousand plateaus" to explore Bangladeshi Shakespeare with various dimensions. Along with Deleuzean philosophy, I want to employ pre-eminent Bengali philosopher, mystic and songwriter Fakir Lalon Shah (1774 – 1890) whose thought about "the radical intercultural unity or relation" in the multiple forms of "bartoman" (present time) could bring a new light to understand Shakespearean phenomena in Bangladesh (Mazhar). Lalon and the Nadiya School of Bengali philosophy consider that the "ethico-political" duty of human beings is to create transcendence from the biological sphere that reflects the necessity to unite diverse humankinds (Mazhar).

However, "[rather] than historicising theatre productions" (Gilbert and Tompkins 107), I focus on how Shakespeare's translated and adopted plays, as the "imperial, and the post-imperial" text, "construct discursive contexts for artistic, social, and political" (107) phenomena in Bangladesh, by remembering the principles of studying theatre as the "complex signifying systems and reception processes" against "the significant gap within the field of postcolonial literary studies" (Gilbert 2). This research considers theatre "as a set of signs and stimuli (verbal and non-verbal) that are produced by performance and whose producer is multiple (dramatist, director, various theatre practitioners and actors)" rather than "as an organized set of messages whose producer is dramatist" who depends on "only its linguistic component" (Ubersfeld 158).

Therefore, by using Patrice Pavis' semiotic methods—the discourse of theatre semiotics, formal theatre semiotics, intercultural theatre--the collected data and the research findings have been analyzed systematically and critically with the theory of hybridity as well as contemporary critical theories to answer the research questions. Apart from the analysis of Bangladeshi

Shakespearean productions, here I integrate academic and artistic research in one project in which "artistic research as a process whose goal is not just art, but also action-based experience, recognition, and knowledge relates to an epistemological tradition in which practice is valued as a source of knowledge" (Hovik 670-679). According to this line of argument, I reimagine a Shakespearean text *Pericles* as *Piyar Alir Bhanga Mukh* (*Shattered Faces of Piyar Ali*) in my creative manner that also has been an organic part of this PhD thesis. This practice makes a site of interplay between theory and practice since both of them are the ontological elements that constitute the very idea of theatre.

In order to accomplish the aim and objectives of this research, I engage myself in the empirical approach to collect data in answering the central and secondary questions. Since the essential resources are in Bangladesh, by employing the empirical method, I have carried out a number of field studies there. I have collected data through the observation of the Shakespearian performances as well as interviews with the translators, adaptors, directors, dramaturges, and performers of productions of Shakespeare's plays and the journalists, critics and academics who have witnessed these plays. I have used the purposive or judgmental sampling method to select productions from Group Theatre practice and public university praxis in Bangladesh. I also work in libraries and archives of Dhaka University, Bangladesh National Public Library, archives of Bangladesh National Academy for Fine and Performing Arts and office of the Bangladesh Group Theatre Federation for videos, photos, reports, newspapers, transcripts, production scripts, relevant articles, journals, and books. Besides this, I have worked in the main library, Orchard Learning Resource Centre and the Shakespeare Institute library of the University of Birmingham to prepare myself with informative, analytical, and critical documents on staging Shakespeare in colonial

Bengal and across the globe, and scholastic writings about the Shakespearean canon of drama and theatre arts.

As a symbol of "liquid modernity" or a "cultural hero" or the "greatest author," Shakespeare has made a significant impact not only on Anglo-American culture but also on many cultures and countries across the globe. This mutual interaction and creative negotiations among Shakespeare and other cultures consequently became a vital exponent of Shakespeare studies. In the current state of knowledge on global Shakespeare, there are numerous research-works, scholastic and critical engagements about Shakespeare in Africa, UAE, Latin America, and Russia, China, Japan and even in India and Pakistan of the subcontinent. Nevertheless, there is no systematic and critically analytical study of staging Shakespeare in Bangladesh, despite Shakespeare having been regularly staged in colonial Bengal since the mid-eighteenth century. After the country's independence in 1971, Shakespeare became an essential element in the landscape of Bangladeshi theatre and culture as a transformative playwright. Whatever research work has been done thus far in the Bengali language amount to nothing more than scattered listings and mere descriptions of the performances of his plays put on mostly during the colonial era. This research tries to explore and fill this knowledge gap. Therefore, the following chapters subsequently explore the historical, theatrical and theoretical context of Shakespearean praxis in Bangladesh since the colonial intervention in this region. The next chapters particularly examine the productions of *Macbeth*, *The Tempest*, *Coriolanus* and *Shattered Faces of Piyar Ali* (based on *Pericles*) to understand the reciprocal relationship between the political-cultural ontology of Bangladesh and Shakespeare. Also, by the following chapters, this thesis argues that the cases of the productions reimagine Shakespeare in Bangladesh beyond monolithic nationalism and colonial binarism. Instead, the following chapters present that the theatrical representations cultivate the

life via Shakespearean creativity in order to celebrate the infinite variety of the human world and

transcendental ethics to unite diversified subjectivities in one body.

Chapter 2

History

Following the new approaches to writing theatre history in this chapter, I will concentrate on the material conditions which enabled all of the Bangladeshi productions I will be discussing hereafter. I will be treating their historical mise en scène, as one of the "crucial determinant[s] of meaning" instead of treating "the playtext as the primary source of the theatre's meaning" (Allain and Harvie 160). As a result, I aim to interiorise performative and self-reflexive historiography in line with Allain and Harvey's argument: "Drawing on the particular challenges and possibilities presented to the historian by theatre and performance's liveness and inevitable immediate loss or absence, … writings are explicitly self-reflexive about their own subjective formation of history and meaning" (160). The epistemological nature of this PhD project enables me to think of the signifying potential of personal anecdotes which are not less significant than objective scholastic facts in order to come to know the phenomenal world. This research thus resonates with Paul Ricoeur's claim that homo sapiens is homo fabulans as the inter-constituting relationship between narrativity and temporality organises humanity (3). A reverberating point rearticulated by Porter Abbott, who emphasises that "narrative is the principal way in which our species organizes its understanding of time" (3).

As such, I aim to draw upon my own personal stories in order to harness what Naheem Jabbar terms "ontological experience," to explore "the epistemological value of the historical sense" (14). These, my own, stories turn to a very specific personal history in historicizing how Shakespeare, as the "living presence" of a problematised "substance of the past", has been

performed in a corner of the world, thousands of miles away from Stratford-upon-Avon, in the recent past in the context of my family (14).

Hence, this chapter explores relocations of Shakespeare within Bangladesh through three sections: my personal stories (titled as Onto-historical Stories); British colonial histories (titled as Shakespeare, Cultural Capital, Imperialism and Nationalism); the internal-colonial times of Pakistan, and the emergence of new cultural praxis in postcolonial Bangladesh (titled as Internal Colonialism, the Birth of Bangladesh and Shakespeare). The history of Shakespearean praxis that I aim to write here also seeks to destabilise the status quo of a positivist historiography that has hitherto reiterated orthodox differentiations (between story and science, fact and fiction, reason and imagination) in the cognition and representation of human acts.

Onto-historical Stories

I was born and brought up in a Bengali Muslim family in a most remote village, Noagaon in Brahmanbaria district, more than one hundred miles away from Dhaka, the capital city of Bangladesh. I attended Kalikachchha Pathshala Secondary School in the mid-nineteen nineties. On a spring noon, the assistant head teacher, wearing the white punjabi-pyjama, entered into a south-facing room allocated for the students of Class VII and immediately pronounced two fragmented sentences in his compelling voice: "Attention please" and "Keep silent!". And then, dramatically, the teacher took a book out of his antiquated leather bag and held it up to show us the cover page of a prose narrative version of *The Merchant of Venice*. Immediately afterwards, the teacher enthrallingly placed his fore-finger upon the cover portrait, articulating only two words: "Timeless genius!" I know now that the figure of the "genius" the teacher showed was none other than a reproduction of the engraved portrait of William Shakespeare by the artist Martin Droeshout,

produced for the title page of the First Folio. However, the teacher was not interested in the picture's provenance: instead he simply advised us to obtain and read this book as quickly as possible, even though it was an extra-curricular "rapid reader". He triggered our enthusiasm by assuring us that a poem about this "genius" was also included in our compulsory English textbook. I can still clearly remember that my serious teacher ended class by telling us with a placid smile, mixed up with a sense of respect, pride and mystery, "You should know why Shakespeare is the king of England's kings!" The education system in which I was raised thus naturalised the cultural 'kingdom' of Shakespeare within postcolonial Bangladesh. This had continued since Bengal's position as a most precious part of British India. In fact, the lucrative capital of British India, Kolkata, was also located there.

In very recent times, my elder sister reminded me of a story that my father used to tell us throughout our childhood, back in the late eighties and early nineties of the last century. I am the only brother among my three sisters. My father, who was also the father of his three daughters, used to tell the story of an old mad king who had three daughters too. The style my father appropriated in his retelling the story was as such, "once upon a time there was a king who had three daughters…". According to my dad's story, the younger daughter replied to her father that she loved him like salt when she was asked how much she loved her father. The king-father became angry, distributed the kingdom among other two daughters, and even ordered the servants to carry his younger daughter away to a deep jungle. In our childhood, the story, particularly, the deprivation of the younger daughter, made us so sad. I know now that the folk-tale told by my father predates Shakespeare's *King Lear,* but his post-Shakespearean version must have seemed to him to be just the sort of moral tale that the English-educated Bengali Muslim household chief of a middle-class family might choose to tell his daughters. Perhaps it also functioned as a metaphor

that could draw out the morals and values best suited to an "ideal" family in the social context of Bangladesh.

The third anecdote is of a piece of music. A song has been triggering me recurrently throughout my PhD study. The piece I have now recollected, with the help of my Nuru uncle, is a song which enjoyed huge popularity across the country in the eighties and nineties of the last century. From village tea stalls to large-scale public functions, the song had been either sung by local singers or played on cassette recorders. An eminent lyricist Gazi Mazharul Anwar wrote this song for a very popular film, "Joker", released in the early 1980s:

> Manus banailo Allah, manus nilo koto saj
> Keu amra proja saji, Keu saji moharaj
> ………………………………………
> O-o-o ei duniyay dekho hate-ghate
> Ajob ajaob sob kando ghote
> ……………………………..
> O-o-o shohor-bondor ar gonje-grame
> Joker seje sobai monche name.[2]

An approximate translation of the song: "Allah makes human, human plays how many roles / Some of us play as subjects, some of us as kings / ... / O-o-o look at the fairs and piers in the world / So many strange events occur /… / O-o-o across the city and port and mart and village / By taking the role of joker everybody appears on the stage." This popular song illustrates assimilated wisdom about human life, which is also expressed in similar terms in Shakespeare's *As You Like It*:

> All the world's a stage,

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[2] The song, written by Gazi Mazharul Anwar, composed by Anwar Parvez, sung by Syed Abdul Hadi, was used in the popular film, "Joker", directed by Azhar. This movie was produced by Maznu Movies and released in 1980 in Bangladesh. The song along with the movie enjoyed a huge popularity across the country. Many singers still perform this song for TV shows and other public entertainment platforms.

And all the men and women merely players.
They have their exits and their entrances;
And one man in his time plays many parts, (2.7.139-42)

The example from Bengali music demonstrates a significant naturalisation of Shakespearean wisdom and metaphor into the popular culture of Bangladesh.

These three anecdotes demonstrate to what extent and in how many ways Shakespearean works make sense of the life process of education, family, and creative culture in the country where I was born and brought up, and in which I now teach public university students Theatre and Performance Studies, including compulsory Shakespeare. Last but not least, Kazi Nazrul Islam, one of my favourite Bengali poets, who was also imprisoned by the colonial government, wrote a poem, "Kandari Hushiyar" [Be Vigilant the Steersman]. It includes the lines, "Kandari! Tobo sommukhe oi Polashyr prantor, / Bangalir khune lal holo jetha Cliver khonjor!" (Lines 19-20). These anti-colonial lines roughly translate as, "Steersman! Behold the battlefield of Plassey, /The dagger of Clive[3] was red by the Bengali's blood!" By a paradox of history, it was in the wake of Clive, a figure steeped in Bengali blood, that Shakespeare was introduced to Bengal.

Shakespeare, Cultural Capital, Imperialism and Nationalism

Since Clive's time, Shakespeare has been familiarised extensively to the subcontinent through at least three means: educational curricula, traveling companies, and creative as well as critical representations. Using Jonathan Dollimore, Nandi Bhatia shows how Shakespeare as a

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[3] Rober Clive (1725-1774), also known as "Clive of India", served as the first British Governer of Bengal Presidency. He led the military force of the British East India Company to defeat Nawab of Bengal, Siraj-ud-Daulah, in a crucial war, called Battle of Plassey, in 1757. This victory laid the foundation of British Raj in the subcontinent. Kazi Nazrul Islam's anti-colonial metaphor of "Clive's dagger" envisioned an historical reversal that could bring a new dawn for the Bengal as well as the whole Indian subcontinent.

narrativizing force of cultural colonialism has been naturalised in colonial India within the complex "cultural connections between signification and legitimation" in relation to imperial "domination and subordination" (53). As Bhatia argues, "The institutionalization and dissemination of 'Shakespeare' in India through the education system, traveling companies from abroad, and literary critical representations in academic and journalistic discourse, have been crucial to producing a narrative of cultural colonialism …" (53). Cultural colonialism was an inevitable historical expression of imperialism, which could be traced back to Shakespeare's time in the case of the East India Company that obtained the approval of Queen Elizabeth to begin a trade monopoly with the East. Ania Loomba has outlined the company's rapid expansion:

> The spectacular profits made by the first voyages to the East confirmed the promises of older travel stories, and on 31 December 1600 the East India Company was set up with a capital of 50,000 pounds. Queen Elizabeth granted it a monopoly of trade with the East 'for the honour of our nation, the welfare of the people, the increase of our navigation, and the advancement of lawful traffic to the benefit of the commonwealth'. By 1620, the company had trading stations in Sumatra, India, Japan, Java, Borneo, Malacca, Siam, and Malabar, among other places. ("Shakespeare" 13-14)

The early colonial condition of England exposed the condition of "rivalry" with aspiring neighbours, in which "the desire to partake of the soils of both Indies … fuelled a nationalist rhetoric and the pro-imperial as well as pro-mercantile arguments in England" (13). To understand the particular "nationalist rhetoric" and the "pro-imperial argument" which prevailed in England, it is also useful to think of the general design of the proto-imperialist discourse existent across Europe. The story of taking over the Alhambra, for instance, the last Moorish palace in Granada of Spain, involved an internal programme of imperial racial and religious homogenization when

crowned heads Isabella and Ferdinand ordered "Moors either to convert to Christianity or leave" (16). Loomba marks, "The drive to overseas expansion and the desire to create a 'pure' national self were two sides of the same coin" (16). As she goes on to write: "Isabella and Ferdinand's order that Jews and Moors should dress like Christians and melt into the pot was no expression of liberalism but part of an attempt to create a homogenous Christian nation. . . . Thus, as the nations of Christian Europe initiated their attempts to conquer and shape other people in their own image, what we call modern racism was born" (17).

Moreover, the pro-imperial or the pro-mercantile discourses derived from an intertwined relationship among racism, modernism and colonialism. Loomba argues, "It is useful to think about 'early modern' as the 'early colonial' because colonization and imperial ambitions were the midwives that assisted in the development of the European nations, and made possible what we now call modernity" (16). Both an anxiety of national self and the ambitions for the imperial entity played important roles in the early modern/colonial era in Europe. She states, "[T]he idea of national formation as an anxious, unstable, and always unfinished process should not lead us to underestimate the aggressive connections between imperial ambition and nation formation" (16).

The cultural connection between imperial expansion and national formation was quietly evident in the instance of how cultural iconoclasm had been performed in the process of making Shakespeare the national poet that also fuelled an interwoven journey of both British nationalism and colonialism across the 17th to 18th centuries. According to Michael Dobson, the "author-cult of Shakespeare" functioned as "a kind of religion" ("The Making" 6). His study shows that the phenomenon of "Bardolatry" enjoyed a "rise to orthodoxy as a national religion. . . ." (6). Moreover, over the next century, 'the Bard' had been worshipped as a cultural icon, as when David Garrick "gesticulated towards a graven image of the Bard" appropriating Shakespeare's own words

taken from the balcony scene of *Romeo and Juliet*: "''Tis he! 'tis he! / The god of our idolatry!'" (qtd. in Dobson 6). Dobson explained that this "apogee of canonization" marked the establishment of a cult of Shakespeare, who "had often been recognised as occupying a position in British life directly analogous to that of God the Father" (7). Cultural nationalism processed Shakespeare by using him as a symbol for the sake of its class interest and ideology. Dobson's research confirms that Shakespeare was "one of the faiths of the ruling class, dividing Britain between 'They who [were] born to taste' and 'The tasteless vulgar'. . . ." (7). He reveals that "the tasteful" lords believed in "Shakespeare and the Church of England. . . ." (7). In contrast, "the tasteless" deserved no emancipation (7). He has explored how Shakespeare exerted cultural capital, assisting an elitist nationalism, operating in a colonialist/imperialist context concurrently with the expansion of trade:

> Shakespeare has been as normatively constitutive of British national identity as the drinking of afternoon tea. . . . [T]he national habit of Shakespeare, after all, and the national habit of tea have their origins in exactly the same period of expanding trade abroad and vigorous nationalism at home. . . . That Shakespeare was declared to rule world literature at the same time that Britannia was declared to rule the waves. . . . (7)

Postcolonial historiography of Shakespeare Studies traditionally side-steps the inextricability of class in the formation of both imperialism and nationalism. Releasing the repressed question of class, Dobson's historical excavations offer a problematic spectrum across English nationalism that peaked in the mid-18th century. Firstly, the formation of English nationalism was principally a socio-political process of exclusion that celebrated the "tasteful" power elites' victory over the "tasteless vulgar" in Britain. Therefore, the nationalism that cohabited with the imperialism was a cultural-political expression of a highly class-divided society. Secondly, Shakespeare was invested as secular "cultural capital" while the church was employed as sectarian religious "capital" in order

to form that nationalism. Considerably, the cultural nationalism Britain celebrated in times after the middle of the 18th century was quasi-Shakespearean. It was semi-secular and quasi-Christian, meaning semi-sacred. Overall, cultural nationalism transformed itself into the commercial and then the political to set many colonialist adventures to "rule the waves" of the world beyond Europe.

Another way of formulating Shakespeare's influence is through the work of Pierre Bourdieu. Based on the strategy of easy reproduction and transmission, converting economic capital into cultural capital, Bourdieu argues that "[t]he social world is accumulated history" where "[c]apital is accumulated labour" that "can present itself in three fundamental guises": "economic capital [money and property rights], cultural capital [competence and taste] and social capital [connection and prestige]" ("The Forms" 15-6). His notion of cultural capital exists in three forms: embodied state, objectified state (i.e. cultural goods) and institutionalized state (17). In different forms, cultural capital as a form of power reflects the notion of profit, which is based on uniqueness or distinction. British cultural nationalism, therefore, employed Shakespearean "cultural capital" as a powerfully profitable distinction of competence and taste to rule its empire.

Colonial Cultural Capital to Rule the Waves

Looking at the same period from the colonial periphery, Syed Jamil Ahmed describes how Europeans introduced their theatre in Bengal:

> The European traders brought with them in India a theatre distinct from the indigenous practice. The English East India Company, which gained considerable political and economic control after 1757, encouraged English theatre performances in Kolkata for the benefit of the expatriates. It was only the most influential of the native elites who gained access to such theatres, and through them the model began to be disseminated to the urban

middle-class of Kolkata after the 1820s. But before that, theatre was produced and performed by the English on the proscenium stage in a style which often was a copy of the practice prevalent in England. ("Drama" 367)

Shakespeare, therefore, was introduced on the stages when "the earliest known English theatre in Bengal, a proscenium playhouse known as 'The Theatre', was built in Calcutta in 1753" (Ahmed, "European Theatre"). 'The New Playhouse', also called 'The Calcutta Theatre', and supported from London by Garrick himself, began to stage Shakespeare along with other European playwrights in Bengal in 1775. The productions of *Hamlet* and *Macbeth* at 'The Calcutta Theatre' were hailed as a huge achievement (Ahmed, "European Theatre"). The Private Subscription Theatre and the Sans Souci Theatre entered the competition subsequently in 1820 and 1841. These theatres were solely English playhouses which were for the British, by the British, and of the British. Bhatia, critically informed by "multiple mediations of Shakespeare," points out that over the next century "Shakespeare did not remain confined to European playhouses after being introduced in India" (52). Instead, she notes that Shakespeare's works "translated into several Indian languages, including Hindi, Sanskrit, Bengali, Punjabi, Gujarati, Marathi, Tamil, Telugu, Oriya, Malayalam, and Sindhi" (52).

The Hindu Theatre, founded by a Bengali "bhadrolok" or "babu" [gentleman], Prasanna Kumar Thakur, performed part of *Julius Caesar* in the Bengali language at its inauguration on 28 September in 1831 (Mitra 261). The first-ever recorded Bengali translation of a Shakespeare play was *The Tempest*, translated by C Monckton in 1809 (256). The newly founded local playhouses such as the Bengal Theatre, the Great National Theatre and the National Theatre catered to native spectatorship in the last two decades of the nineteenth century in Kolkata in British Bengal. As Parmita Kapadia has outlined, "Although they did produce plays which had as their sources the

ancient Indian epics and Indian mythology and folklore, they were staged within the conventions of the British theatre as they functioned in the mid-nineteenth century" ("Bastardizing" 12). According to R. K. Yajnik, the colonial modern Indian theatre adopted the Victorian theatre aesthetics and strategies in terms of dramatic form and structure, scenography, stage architecture and performance theories (103). The pattern of formation of modern theatre in India provides scope to pose questions concerning the ontological status of cultural colonial knowledge generated under British rule. In order to sustain itself as a form of power, colonialism relies on a systematic dissemination of knowledge that requires an inevitable collaboration with colonised subjects. As Norbert Peabody explains:

> [I]t is no longer tenable to insist that the forms of knowledge through which colonial rule was established were fully European in origin and development but, rather, were created out of conditions that entailed considerable collaboration—intended and unintended, conscious and unconscious, wanted and unwanted—between the British and, at least, certain key indigenous groups. (77)

An illustrative incident of playing the role of Othello in the English language by Baishnava Charan Auddy, a Bengali "gentleman" described as "a real unpainted nigger", at the Sans Souci Theatre in Calcutta in 1848, exemplified just this "considerable collaboration" during the colonial regime (Bhatia 61). Revisiting the collaborative history of English Theatre in Bengal, Chatterjee and Singh argue that

> despite the daring nature of the undertaking, its "medicinable" potential to bridge the gulf of racial difference, the colonial situation had rendered it quixotic. The Shakespearean Moor, despite his complexion, was not dark enough for the Bengali Native to play. This was Shakespeare, after all, and none but the white English could represent Othello in the best

possible way. The (Indian) Other, therefore, could only be produced by the (English) Self. (80)

Moreover, Chatterjee and Singh explain how the performance was hybrid in creation, but the English critics described it as an ineffective performance, which was

>considered a failure by the English reviewers, [but] nonetheless was an important event on the stage of England's empire. [Auddy's] "brown" Othello stood in for mimetic excess, overbearing in the exactness of its verisimilitude, but pointing to a realm of hybridity—the domain of mimetic alterity—both in the colonial society of India and on its ostensibly exclusive stage. (80)

Reviews and reactions generated from civil society around the case of Baishnava Charan Auddy's Othello were indicators of "racialist discourse of difference" that clearly drew a demarcating line between the notion of European supremacy on the one hand and that of the inferiority of the colonised "gentleman", who also gained an upper-class status among the natives in British India (Bhatia 61). Also, Auddy's entry into an exclusively British theatre underlined both his subservience and subversion. Jyotsna Singh marks this as "an alternative choice of 'playfully' disrupting rigid categories of difference through simultaneous mimicry and resistance" (qtd. in Bhatia 61). Chatterjee draws attention to the ambivalence of colonial subjects in respect of Shakespeare's reception ("Nation Staged" 11). Even when the concept of nationalism was gaining ground in nineteenth-century Bengal, Bengali cultural practice continued to adopt Shakespeare and European dramatic theories, which Chatterjee addresses as "legitimising hybridity as a social process of artistic creation" (11). Chatterjee marks that this is "an inevitable outcome of colonial hybridity" (11).

Drawing on Chamberlain's phraseology, Bhatia argues that Britain constructed a "philosophy of empire", through launching an English education system following legislation in colonial India such as the Charter Acts of 1813 and 1833, and the English Education Act of 1835 (qtd. in Bhatia 6). These Acts aimed at producing "a class of persons" who, in the imagination of Thomas Babington Macaulay, would be "Indian in blood and colour, but English in taste, in opinions, in morals, and in intellect" (430). Therefore, to produce Anglicised Indians as an intermediary between coloniser and colonised, colonial power established schools, colleges and university across Bengal and other parts of India throughout the regime. Bhatia argues, "The initiation of Shakespeare into the Indian academy coincided with the introduction of the discipline of English literature in India, which became an important part of the educational curriculum after the establishment of universities in Bengal, Bombay, and Madras in 1857" (53). The colonial investment in literature, and Shakespeare in particular, in the education system has been marked as "masks of conquest" by Gauri Viswanathan. Viswanathan determines that the "humanistic functions traditionally associated with literature—for example, the shaping of character or the development of the aesthetic sense or the disciplines of ethical thinking—were considered essential to the process of sociopolitical control" (3).

An apparently humanist liberal education through Shakespeare was therefore latently political, intended to reconstruct natives in the image of Western man through a civilising mission. Drawing on Homi K. Bhabha and Joanne P. Sharp's critical notions of mimicry and hybridity, Kapadia argues that colonial literature as the primary element of the education system created "mimic man" or the "hybrid individual" who made "visible the contradiction of colonialism" through both strengthening and troubling "colonial authority" ("Bastardizing" 18). According to

Kapadia, "[colonial] Indian productions and interpretations of Shakespeare … are good examples of such mimicry: they reassert colonial authority while disrupting it" (19).

In this contradictory colonial condition, Shakespeare became a vital instrument of colonial culture in Bengal. This is described by Bangladeshi theatre scholar and practitioner Syed Jamil Ahmed: "in the first half of the 19th century, colonial educational institutions such as Hindu college and Oriental Seminary played the most influential role in disseminating interest in European theatre. As a part of the newly introduced educational curricula in the schools and colleges, Shakespeare soon assumed the position of an ideal model" ("European Theatre"). Even local playwrights assimilated Shakespeare's dramaturgy "both in form and spirit" ("European Theatre"). The varied dissemination and assimilation made Shakespeare a brand in urban centres of Bengal. "As a result of the dissemination of Shakespeare," Bhatia argues that "by the late nineteenth century, the vogue of Shakespeare had spread to most urban centres. In Bengal, as the number of private theatres … increased, so did Shakespeare performances, and to watch and study Shakespeare became 'fashionable' among the Bengali elites" (54).

The third means of disseminating Shakespeare throughout colonial India was commercial touring based on Shakespearean theatre. Between 1872 and 1876 Lewis's theatre troupe performed several of Shakespeare's plays in Kolkata, the capital of undivided Bengal, and Herr Brandman toured to the capital to perform Shakespearean tragedies such as *Hamlet*, *Macbeth*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *Richard III,* and *Othello* (55). Bhatia describes the significant role patronage of companies from abroad played, noting it was "central to the colonial enterprise":

Apart from the dissemination of colonial culture, the 'naturalized' superiority of their productions also functioned to protect the dominant society. Through the proliferation of English theaters that attracted elite native audiences, authorities attempted to suppress and

contain cultural threats to the existing order by simultaneously repressing 'seditious' productions. (55)

In response to the partition of Bengal, during the *Swadeshi* movement ["of our own country"], emerging in the name of self-rule, or *Swaraj*, the visits of theatre troupes from London increased in India, and particularly, in Kolkata. The imperial statecraft applied both soft and hard power to suppress the nationalist movements in the early twentieth century. The British Raj exerted power, or as Antonio Gramsci formulated it, "hegemony", as the soft power of civil society devised a cultural politics of performing Shakespeare by the foreign touring theatre companies. They employed what Gramsci would call "coercion" through the hard power of the censorship act.

The Swadeshi movement generated an enraged cultural nationalistic spirit expressed through native theatre and other artistic and political forms of resistance. Being inspired by the Swadeshi movement, Mukunda Das initiated a hybrid form of theatrical performance called 'Swadeshi Jatra.' Ahmed describes it as a vehicle "to narrate the Bengali nation and then the Indian nation with the rising tide of Mahatma Gandhi's satyagraha movement," exploring the themes of "colonial exploitation, patriotism, anti-colonial struggle, feudal and caste-based oppression" ("Performing the Nation" 14-15). Swadeshi Jatra adapted the colonialist theatre, by which Shakespeare had been employed as prime model, on the one hand; Kaliya-daman Jatra, an indigenous devotional form of performance, on the other. The close contact between colonial and pre-colonial theatre gave rise to Natun Jatra and Aitihasik Jatra that "drew its content from the history in imitation of Shakespeare's 'history' plays" (15). Accordingly, Shakespearean theatrics became a tool to Swadesh Jatra that "revealed the aspect of doubleness of both identity and difference," as Ahmed argues: "seeking a distinct difference from colonizers and attempting to exclude and reject them by evoking a Bengali tradition. Thus, Swadeshi Jatra was created by and

included the values of the colonizing culture, even as it rejected the power of the colonizers to define the Bengali Self" (15). According to Swarocis Sarkar, Mukunda Das, the inventor of Swadeshi Jatra, mobilised a successful resistance through "infusing anti-colonial fervour among his spectators. . . ." As a result, the British Raj expelled Mukunda Das "thirty-six times from the area where the performance was scheduled. Failing to contain him with these expulsions, the police arrested him in December 1908, and he was sentenced to three years of imprisonment" (qtd. in Ahmed "Performing the Nation" 15-16).

The British Raj devised its multi-faceted game of ruling through Machiavellian cunning. In this game, Machiavellian cunning of rulers on one hand used Shakespearean cultural capital to gain control over the Bengali cultural nationalism. On the other, the Bengali cultural activists also incorporated the playwright as the same capital of instrumentalization to destabilise the colonial ruling power. As Bhatia notes:

> [T]he government sought to enforce more stringent measures of censorship through the 1876 Censorship Act as well as the Press Act in 1910, making a number of Indian plays, especially in Bengal, the target of government censorship. Coinciding with the suppression of native drama, troupes from London such as those of Charles Allen (1909), Matheson Lang (1911 and 1912), Allen Weekly (1912), and Harding and Howitt (1918) visited India to give performances of *Macbeth*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *Hamlet*, *Julius Caesar*, *Merry Wives of Windsor*, *The Merchant of Venice*, *Twelfth Night*, and *Othello*. In the same years Matheson Lang and Hutin Britton visited from London and performed *The Taming of the Shrew*, *Hamlet*, and *Much Ado about Nothing*. (55-56)

However, a significant theatre troupe among all was "Shakespeareana", a transnational theatre company led by Geoffrey and Laura Kendal, which travelled across both the pre-and-post-

independent India. Geoffrey Kendal's autobiography, and related albums and other archival materials exemplify the paradox that "Shakespearean drama appears to provide the tools for transcending the ideological and political divisions through a cultural remapping of the colony and serves as the link for the fragmented nation, a fragmentation especially manifested in the 1947 partition of the subcontinent" (Bhatia 69). Later, a film *Shakespeare Wallah* was made based on the theatre company Shakespeareana to portray an English theatre company, the Buckingham Players, touring India. "Showing the continuing extension of colonial authority via Shakespeare productions", Bhatia argues that "the film historicizes the phenomena of Shakespeare in India, establishing, through the figurative death of Shakespeare, the literal death of empire" (69). But the case of Utpal Dutt, a native member of "Shakespeareana" and a Marxist mover of the inheritance of Kendal's Shakespearean practice, who popularised Shakespeare to appropriate once again in indigenous Jatra form in the Paschimbanga, the western part of Bengal, in post-colonial India, dismissed half the reading the film offered. The case of Dutt's popular mobilisation of 'Shakesperae Jatra' discharged the calim of "the figurative death of Shakespeare." The theatrical cases, which have been discussed below in this chapter and the others throughout the thesis, of the eastern part of Bengal that became a constituting province in the Islamic republic of Pakistan also falsified the cinematic announcement of "the figurative death of Shakespeare".

Partition of Bengal, Swadeshi Jatra and Shakespeare

John R. Mclane argues about the Partition of Bengal that it "stands out as a major divide in the history of modern communalism and a critical event in the developments leading to the partition of India" (145). Willem Van Schendel outlines how a colonial genealogy made profound changes in Bengal in terms of politics and culture:

[T]he British East India Company, came to rule one of the most prosperous regions of Asia.

… For the British the victory at Polashi marked not just the fact that it gained commercial,

military and administrative control of an area much larger than Britain; it meant the

beginning of empire. They used Bengal's riches to conquer the rest of India and other parts

of Asia. For the people of Bengal the British victory at Polashi meant not just the

emergence of yet another foreign overlord. It meant the beginning of European domination,

new forms of capitalist exploitation, a racially ordered society and profound cultural

change. (56)

The administrative division of Bengal in 1905 exposed the internal friction and faction between

religious communities. After the division, Muslim and Hindu became two distinct political

categories not solely in Bengal, but also all over India. Consequently, the partition of India was

inevitably materialised, which was "a geographical solution to a political fiasco," as "the

partitioner's knife cut through three provinces (Bengal, Assam and Punjab) and left the partitioned

societies in shambles, ruining millions of lives and upsetting the cherished social arrangements"

(96).

I shall later argue that the partition of Bengal as a critical event not only led to partition of

India but also ideologically reinforced the separation of East Bengal from Pakistan and rendered

inevitable the creation of Bangladesh. However, British government announced that they would

restore the Muslim's old day's pride to establish Dhaka as a new provincial capital, before partition

which was, in Lord Curzon's words, "a shadow of its former self" while "Muslims had not even

asked for" the partition (qtd. in. Mclane 150). Mclane supports the popular dictum about the

imperialist policy of "divide and rule":

An appreciation of the political motive behind the partition clarifies subsequent British behaviour and policy. There is no doubt that the effect of partition was a rise in communal tension. A close analysis of British comments upon Hindu-Muslim trouble indicates that this effect was not an accident or unwanted by-product but rather that one purpose of official policy was to create an atmosphere of Hindu-Muslim rivalry. (177)

The administrative fabrication of interreligious communal rivalry the colonial statecraft intended, presumably, was used to silence those voices of Indian nationalism who were emerging in the nineteenth century.

Ranajit Guha, who has brought new perspectives in writing nationalist history in his ground-breaking book titled *Dominance without Hegemony: History and Power in Colonial India*, investigates the relationship between nationalism and "the hegemonic pretensions of the [British] Raj". He poses that "the question Who speaks for the Indian people?" was historically predicated on another: "Who has the right to interpret their past?" (153). Bankimchandra Chattopadhyay, a Bengali exponent of Indian nationalism based on the revival of classical Hinduism in nineteenth century and a representative voice of the educated middle-class, wrote in his edited journal Bangadarshan in1880: "Bengal must have their own history. Otherwise there is no hope for Bengal. Who is to write it? You have to write it. I have to write it. All of us have to write it. Anyone who is a Bengali has to write it. Come, let us join our efforts in investigating the history of Bengal. . . . It is not a task that can be done by any one person alone; it is a task for all of us to do together" (qtd. in Guha153). Bankimchandra's appeal of writing history reveals the ideological function of a linkage between memory and history in which "a knowledge of the Indian past is converted into a category of Indian nationalist thought" (153). Bengali nationalism, to an extent like Indian nationalism, was informed by "a notion of the Other" (Guha 154). The decolonising project of the

philosophy of writing history and/or creating nationalism, offered by Bankimchandra and other "gentlemen" Hindu Bengali elites, otherised its Muslim counterpart. Nirad C. Chowdhury insists, for instance, the Bengali Muslims "stand outside as an External Proletariat" while Bankimchandra sympathetically finds Muslims in the lowest stratum of Bengal in the colonial period (qtd. in Ahmed "Performing the Nation" 18-19). Swadeshi Jatra attempted, assimilating the "colonial commodity" of Shakespearean dramaturgy, to narrate the Bengali nation through the major proclamation of Hindu identity as the tree while Muslim identity was found as only a branch of that tree (Ahmed "Performing the Nation" 17).

The creative expression of Bengali nationalism, such as Swadeshi Jatra, with its inclusion of Shakespearean devices as colonial modernity against the colonial regime and inclusion of Muslims in its imagination of nation, did not transcend the project of otherization. Annulled temporarily in 1911, the partition of Bengal came finally in 1947, when it was cut into two pieces and distributed into two new states--Pakistan and India. However, Shakespearean praxis was to be continued in both parts of Bengal.

Internal Colonialism, the Birth of Bangladesh and Shakespeare

Sadly, postcolonial discourse within South Asian Shakespeare Studies has been constructed for the last couple of decades with a dominant focus on India. I shall argue here that this Indological bias, has on the one hand usefully explored some signifying systems of multifaceted appropriations of Shakespeare across the colonial Indian subcontinent, but has on the other erased either unconsciously or erroneously the praxis of Shakespeare in both parts of Pakistan. Presumably, a majoritarian normative propensity is in part responsible as India has been the largest entity in South Asia in terms of the geographic as well as the demographic volume since the official decolonisation

of the subcontinent in 1947. However, within such a short period of time as 23 years, the world witnessed another emergence of another, still under-studied nation-state, Bangladesh, in 1971. This research project indeed focuses on this Hegelian unknown gap and problematises the epistemological approach of Shakespeare Studies that still has not been capacious to excavate the mode of Shakespearean praxis within the sovereign map of Bangladesh. Nurul Kabir, a distinguished political analyst, quotes Hegel in his seminal book titled *Birth of Bangladesh: The Politics of History and the History of Politics*: "What is well-known, precisely because it is well-known, is not known. In the knowledge process, the commonest way to mislead oneself and others is to assume that something is well-known and to accept it as such" (7). Hence, being urged by Bankimchandra's appeal of writing history, I aim to be more inclusive unlike Bankimchandra, to include the "not known" about the Shakespearean praxis of Bangladesh. This also problematises the "well-known" of Indologised South Asian Shakespeare Studies.

The emergence of Bangladesh has been possible through a "national liberation war" against neo-colonialism. Alternatively, the internal colonialism of Pakistan had been predominantly governed by the "politico-military oligarchy" from 1947-1971. The Bengali-speaking people of East Bengal (later renamed East Pakistan and now Bangladesh) played a vital role in creating Pakistan on 14th of August in 1947. The same people protested against the ruling class of Pakistan's neo-colonial strategy. The ruling elite decided to incorporate Urdu as the only state language of the newly created state, and imposed it upon the Bengalis, the majority of Pakistan's demography who speak in Bengali which is their mother tongue. Consequently, the statecraft of Pakistan at its early period of formation saw an upheaval of Bengali speaking people urging the ethno-linguistic civil right in its eastern part. In the emergence of Bengali cultural nationalism, the exploited part rejected the identity politics of Islam that was treacherously employed by the ruling class of the

then Pakistan. As a result, Bengalis mobilised a series of democratic political social and cultural rights movements from 1948 to 1970. These movements culminated in 1971 and led to a 9 month-long Muktijuddho (Liberation war). As Kabir argues:

> [A series of democratic struggles] waged the war of national liberation in the form of armed resistance to the genocidal military crackdown on the East [Pakistan] by the West [Pakistan] on March 25, 1971. The massacre of the people of the East by the West-based politico-military oligarchy was precisely aimed at foiling the process of transferring power to the East-based Awami League that decisively won the first-ever general elections of Pakistan held between December 7, 1970 and January 1971, on the one hand, and suppressing the East's aspiration for regional autonomy, on the other. The people of the East first put up a spontaneous resistance to the military crackdown and then waged an organised war of national liberation, with the support of neighbouring India, resulting in the humiliating defeat of the Pakistan forces on December 16, 1971. Bangladesh emerged as an independent state. (18-19)

However, Pakistan and India obtained their independence through negotiation and the administrative process of decolonisation, while Bangladesh emerged as an independent state through Muktijuddho (The Liberation War) joined by people from diverse religions, classes, genders, ethnic communities, and political parties.

The multi-axial references of Bangladesh's emergence problematise the partition of India, which was based on religious nationalism and pseudo-secularism. Besides, the emergence of Bangladesh inspired the subjected peoples from diverse backgrounds "to achieve their right to self-determination" in India and Pakistan:

The Independence of Muslim-majority Bangladesh from the Islamic Republic of Pakistan and, that too, based on ethno-linguistic Bengali nationalism, has definitely proved that only religion cannot keep two or more sizeable populations having different linguistic and cultural heritage bound within one state forever, but it has also exposed the artificially crafted 'Indian nationalism' to the serious threat of being challenged from within. India, after all, by no means is a country of one nation; it, rather, remains a huge prison for quite a good number of ethno-linguistic nationalities concentrated to their respective provinces. Under the circumstances, the survival and progress of an independent Bangladesh might well inspire a good number ethno-linguistic populations of the region, particularly within India and Pakistan, to achieve their right to self-determination. (19)

The social drama of Pakistan, therefore, primarily rotated around the two elements, according to the theory of Victor Turner, of "breach" and "crisis", between the Islamic ideology of Pakistan republic and the evolving conscientization of secular Bengali nationalistic identity politics (33). Turner suggests that social drama consists of four phases: breach, crisis, redress, and schism (33). Social theory of theatre proposes society as social drama that "begins when a member of a community breaks a rule; sides are taken for or against the rule breaker; repairs—formal or informal—are enacted; and if the repairs work, the group returns to normal, but if the repairs fail, the group breaks apart" (Bell).

However, Shakespearean theatre, compared to other performances based on translation and adaptation of left-leaning literary works from 1947 to 1971, reveals an ambivalence of the then cultural activism. The theatre practitioners could not invest their creative times on Shakespearean works to use them to mobilise the people of the then East Pakistan in order to secure their cultural-political rights and self-determination. At least, on the contrary, two cases of Shakespearean

practices demonstrated that Shakespearean works functioned as the appropriated cultural element in the self-determining movements of secular Bengali nationalism. *Bhrantibilas*, a Bengali adaptation of *The Comedy of Errors*, which was reworked by Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar in colonial Kolkata in 1869, became an effective form of articulation in the festival that took place in Dhaka in 1964 on the occasion of Shakespeare's quatercentenary. Ramendu Majumder further dramatized the prose version of Vidyasagar while Munier Chowdhury directed the play *Bhrantibilas* for the stage. Majumder and Chowdhury were both playing a significant role in secular ethno-linguistic cultural praxis in the sphere of evolving Bengali nationalism in 1960s. Celebrating Shakespeare in such a politically formative decade of the sixties in Dhaka bore a dual significance. Use of the Vidyasagar's adaptation necessitated a secular outlook of life in the creation of this production. Considerably, the playwright was a Baptist Christian, both adapters were Hindu and the director, performers, and the audience predominantly Muslims. In addition, the Bengalis regardless of their religious identities celebrated Shakespeare's 400th birth anniversary through the production of *The Comedy of Errors*, which appeared as an imaginary space of reunion. This production transgressed the mistaken identity of an Islamic republic that presumably let the audience be nostalgic with a secular vision of collective life sought by Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar et al. in colonial Bengal.

Moreover, the reminiscence of Fakhrul Alam, a professor of English literature, narrates how the Old Vic's touring production of *The Tempest* mesmerised the Dhaka's audience in 1964. Significantly, Munier Chowdhury's *Mukhara Ramani Bashikaran*, a translation of *Taming of the Shrew*, "was a play so popular that it kept being aired on [Dhaka] television repeatedly in the late 1960s and the 1970s" (Alam). Alam recalls of how Shakespeare "has been able to capture the

imagination of the people of Bengal" over the time from the British colonialism to Pakistan's inter-colonialism:

> I remember at this time how in Shakespeare's 300th birth centenary in 1964 educated Bengalis not only in Dhaka but also in provincial towns, would have a copy of the low-priced one volume English Language Book Society one-volume edition of his plays and poems displayed in their book shelves. The book was popular as a gift item, an index certainly of how admired he was in our part of the world. . . .

In the tidal wave of nationalistic struggles in the 1960s in the East Pakistan, Shakespeare was still alive as a palpable "display" of the continuation of the cultural legacies that began in Kolkata in colonial India.

Using Victor Turner's theory of theatre, Syed Jamil Ahmed suggests that the social life of Bangladesh is an ongoing struggle where theatre is both a "reflexive tool" and the "drawing board," which offer the "explanation and explication of life itself" through sketching out the "designs of living" (Ahmed, "Designs" 135). To locate the "designs of living" in theatre within "the tumultuous years immediately preceding the independence of Bangladesh in 1971" as well as "the immediate past or the first decade of the current century," Ahmed offers three nodules: narratives of the nation, subaltern resistance, and the performativity of gender ("Designs" 135). The critical scrutiny of Bangladeshi theatre Ahmed proposes can also be critiqued, in parallel to how the Indologised Shakespeare Studies of South Asia has already been critiqued in above sections, due to normalising the principle of exclusion. As dominant Shakespeare studies ignores other sovereign political entities except India, Jamil Ahmed's apparently post-structural approach of reading the theatrical designs of living in Bangladesh reveals its latent nationalistic positionality that utterly excludes the works which have been translated, adapted and naturalised in the

productions based on the Bengali language. Ahmed has been credited as the designer of *The Tempest* and *Macbeth* in Bengali in Dhaka in 1987 and 2018 consequently. Also, he has directed *Macbeth* in the Hindi language in New Delhi in 2010. Negating and negotiating the discursive contradiction and epistemic exclusion, this research illustrates that nearly a half of the hundred theatrical works have been produced based on Shakespeare's plays' translation and adaption in the field of Group Theatre and public university theatre departments' praxis, which also profoundly participate in the performance of the collective life processes of Bangladesh.

It is possible to outline a map of Bangladeshi Shakespearean productions. These are presented in either a form of linguistic or in a cultural translation and adaptation can be categorised in three groups (see Appendix A for a list of the productions). The first group contains the Bengali translation and adaptation of Shakespeare's plays which are made and premiered in Bangladesh. The second group includes the productions that are neither made in Bengali language nor in Bangladesh but directed by the Bangladeshi directors who are proactive in the theatre scene of their own country. The third group encompasses the British multicultural or the cosmopolitan multilinguistic productions which are directed by the director of Bangladeshi origin based in London and other cities as well as the productions which have a direct or indirect connection to the theatrical culture of Bangladesh.

In the context of academic and "Group Theatre" (public theatre) practice, the current state of knowledge and personal contact confirm that Bangladesh, since its independence, performed eight tragedies and seven comedies (see Appendix B for the questionnaire for the interviews of Bangladeshi theatre practitioners). For example, *Othello*, *Macbeth*, *Coriolanus*, *Hamlet*, *King Lear*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *Julius Caesar* and *Troilus and Cressida*. On the other hand, the comedies include *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *The Tempest*, *As You Like It*, *The Merchant of Venice*,

Twelfth Night, *Taming of the Shrew* and *Measure for Measure*. Interestingly, as far as I have excavated the scenario, still, none of Shakespeare's histories have been performed in Bangladesh. However, most of the productions followed an "authentic" translation. On the contrary, a few attempted to engage adaptations as recreated new literary works like *Darpan (Hamlet)*, *Hamlet Oh Hamlet*, *Ganonayok* [*Julius Caesar*], *The Tempest* and *A New Testament of Romeo and Juliet*. At the same time, Bangladeshi theatre witnessed *A Different Romeo and Juliet* with a cast of 16 disabled adults as well as a non-linear and a site-specific theatrical venture of *Shakespeare Shoptok* to commemorate the 400th anniversary of Shakespeare's death. Besides, the production of Bertolt Brecht's play *Golmatha Chokhamatha* [*Round Heads and Pointed Heads*], which is based on *Measure for Measure*, also inherits a Brechtian political legacy of Shakespeare's creativity. Similarly, in an academic atmosphere, Heiner Müller's *Hamletmachine* was recreated in the name of *Hamletmachine Co. Ltd*. A singular effort was seen in this region where the audience attended *Shylock and Sycophants*, a dramatic adaptation of a Bengali novel titled *Shylocker Banijyabistar* [The Commercial Invasion of Shylock], which had taken its conceptual framework from *The Merchant of Venice*.

The second group reveals two Shakespearean productions which were directed by two prominent Bangladeshi academics and directors in Hindi translation in two vibrant cities, Kolkata and Delhi in India. Moreover, the third group accentuates a vast diasporic and multicultural Bangladeshi creative personnel that has made possible and visible diverse Shakespearean theatrical practices in London, Birmingham, Manchester and other cities in the UK. Most of these productions are produced in London, in one more language (mainly English and Bengali) and travelled across the UK, Bangladesh and India.

The semiotics of phenomenology of Shakespearean theatre in Bangladesh exemplifies "the liberating textuality of performance" that critically replays with the "textual imperialism" to privilege the performance of collective life process of Bangladesh through the "activity of performing as an autonomous form of artistic expression" (Simon and Wallis 159, 158). For instances, after a break of one decade after the independence of Bangladesh, in 1981, Theatre's *Othello* performed the collective life process of Bangladesh engaging its most vital topics of inequality to pose the question of skin colour, social caste and politico-economic hierarchy. Dhaka University's Theatre Department brought the play back on the stage in 2006 based on the notion of becoming black to celebrate the skills of transformation from brown skin into black wherein the society normatively values the colour of white other than any colours. After the acting of two central characters such as Prospero and Macbeth, in the 1980s, Ali Zaker attempted to adapt and direct *Hamlet* as the name of *Darpan* [Mirror], which was produced by Nagorik Natyasampraday in 1991. He created *Darpan,* at a time when Bangladesh came back on a new journey towards a democratic parliamentary government system after the fall of General Ershad's regime by the Mass Upsurge of 1990. Citizens witnessed the vital emergence of the two female iconographic leaders, Sheikh Hasina as leader of the opposition and Begum Khaleda Zia as first female prime minister, in the power-play of the state. At the same time, imprisoned General Ershad also remained a significant political force in the parliament. Still, the country remained agriculture based in the mode of production and semi-feudal in its social system. In that socio-political context, he adapted *Hamlet*, and after that, he named it *Darpan*. He created this work as not *Hamlet* strictly but based on *Hamlet*, considering *Hamlet* as the mirror of Bangladesh. He superimposed the *Darpan* onto the village society of the country, creating a mirror image to seek the true face of rural Bangladesh. However, instead of seeking a social image, Biplob Bala's adaptation *Hamlet*

Oh Hamlet in 1994, problematised the narrative of liberation and appropriated "the political myth" of post-independent Bangladesh that experienced a series of coup d'états and bloodshed. *Hamlet Oh Hamlet* raised questions: "why did these happen like these? Why in our Bangladesh? How does one get the liberation while the murderers overshadow the country?" (qtd. in Harun 282). Dhaka University's Theatre Department produced Shamsur Rahman's translation of *Hamlet* in 2014 to create a site of ontological confrontation between philosophical citizen and political unconscious of statecraft. Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy performed Syed Shamsul Haque's reworking of *Hamlet* in 2016 to explore the psychological crisis of the political elite.

Performing *A Midsummer Night's Dream* in 1982, Lokonatyadal aimed at an experiment of designing their living both in a thematic exploration of subaltern politics of love in a divided society and a formal search for a suggestive scenography of an interior performance space. However, Dhaka University's Theatre Department created an out-door environmental performance of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* that celebrated an open-air ecosystem, acrobatically emancipated body and a non-hierarchical spectatorship through a point of departure from the canon of spatial design and audience system. The socio-aesthetic genesis of Shakespearean praxis conjured up a culturally appropriated production of *Twelfth Night*, produced by the Bangladesh National Academy for Fine and Performing Arts, at a mufassil town Nilphamari around 200 miles away from the capital city in the mid-1990s. Israfeel Shaheen, the director of the play and a practitioner of Shakespearean theatre, set the creative venture through a residential collaboration with the local actors. The production interiorised a pre-colonial idiom of acting and open-air spatial design originating from the traditional theatrical form of Jatra. By the localisation of Shakespeare, the production sought a postcolonial creative transcendence, based on a living heritage of nationalistic performance theories and a point of departure from the urban elite consumption of

the 'bard'. This case built on creative legacy of Utpal Dutt, who also initiated the "Shakespeare Jatra" to reject the "colonial mimicry" to accept the postcolonial innovation and ideology of the people's theatre in the mid-1960s in India. However, the production of *Twelfth Night* aimed at the acts of redefining the cultural life of national self to accentuate the marginal linking with Shakespeare as a signifying text of colonial modernity through a postcolonial cultural renovation.

Barishal Shabdaboli produced *A New Testament of Romeo and Juliet*, which also mobilised the audience in its premiere in 2004 in a town, hundreds of miles away from the capital. This adaptation of *Romeo and Juliet* was envisioned to perform the meaning of love in a class divided society as well as to raise the question of the role religious authority plays in the social context of Bangladesh. Moreover, the performance of *Shattered Faces of Piyar Ali*, based on Shakespeare's tragi-comic play *Pericles, Prince of Tyre* deterritorialised both the Shakespearean canonical dramaturgy and the geographic limits of nationalistic theatrical praxis of Bangladesh. The production reflects the deconstructionist narrative of cultural creation and political nation in the neo-liberal global context. Moreover, the production *Shattered Faces of Piyar Ali*, being a substantial part of this PhD project, exemplifies the critical notion of practice as research and considers thetare as an embdodied form of knowledge or knowing the "truth." In order to do so, this production applies a new creative protocol of doing along with that of thinking how Bangladesh appropriates Shakespeare in the postcolonial intercultural context of nationality and the transcendence of identity.

The following two chapters, therefore, read the theatrical signs of Shakespearean phenomenology where "meaning is made and exchanged" not only in the narrow passage of semiotics but also in the cultural or the ideological sphere (Shepherd and Wallis 237). Umberto Eco understands semiotics in relation to phenomenology using Erving Goffman's socio-

psychological idea of "frame analysis." Goffman forms the concept of "framework," following William James' "perception of reality" and Alfred Schutz's "multiple realities," to comprehend the organisation of individual and interpersonal experience within a specific social reality resonating the question of "under what circumstances do we think things are real?" (Goffman 2). Goffman therefore formulates "frame" as a perspective: "definitions of situation are built up in accordance with principles of organization which govern events—at least social ones—and our subjective involvement in them …" (10-11). Correspondingly, frame analysis is an approach to studying the significance of contextual reality and its inviolable effect on formation of experience. Frame analysis or alternatively, frameworks, are defined as the schemata of interpretation. There are two frameworks—natural and social. Social frameworks make available, according to Goffman, "background understanding of events that incorporate the will, aim, and controlling effort of an intelligence, a live agency, the chief one the human being" (22). If the "frame analysis" focuses on the organization of experience which is also the form of "socially guided doing," then for Eco it is useful for the semiotic analysis to approach "the production of ideologies" (qtd. in Shepherd and Wallis 237). Eco argues that the "elementary mechanisms of human interaction and the elementary mechanisms of dramatic fiction are the same" (qtd. in Shepherd and Wallis 237). In an intersection of semiotics and phenomenology, what Eco determines, resonating with Tadeusz Kowzan is offered in Shepherd and Wallis's words: "the object of study is not the literary text but the 'performance, or the *mise-en-scène*' – the physical arrangements which articulate and set a frame to the activity within them. . . . [The] mise-en-scène works as ideological statement, and a semiotic analysis of it is also an analysis of 'the production of ideologies'" (237).

This research, thus, conceives semiotics as the approach of studying theatre and phenomenology as the ontology of theatre in its exploration of different cases. Bert States argues

that semiotics accepts "cultural units as data," whereas "phenomenology deals with the conditions of their formation" (qtd. in Shepherd and Wallis 237). The cases of Shakespearean theatre the following chapters deal with are studied examples of "production of ideologies," where Bangladesh is "the contextual frame within which we see something" as Shakespearean theatre that "affects the meaning we put on it" (237). The cases have been selected through a critical-judgemental sampling process initiated by me, as I play the role of researching the meaning in this knowledge generation. At the same time, I participate in this project both as a practitioner and a spectator of the mise-en-scène of Bangladesh. As an audience or the "spect-actor", I bring "with it attitudes, preconceptions, knowledges which establish a cognitive framework within which [I] read the performance" (238). Keir Elam claims, "Every spectator's interpretation of the text is in effect a new construction of it according to the cultural and ideological disposition of the subject" (qtd. in Shepherd and Wallis 238). The following chapters discuss the cases that reclaim the context, wherein the plays are not written but produced as theatrical work. The context of Bangladesh is the underpinning cause that validates, receives and appropriates Shakespeare within the new "horizon of expectations" (Jauss and Benzinger 14). As Hans Robert Jauss and Elizabeth Benzinger argue:

> The historical life of a literary work is unthinkable without the active participation of its audience. For it is only through the process of its communication that the work reaches the changing horizon of experience in a continuity in which the continual change occurs from simple reception to critical understanding, from passive to active reception, from recognized aesthetic norms to a new production which surpass them. (8)

In the following chapters, the case studies explore how the cultural site of Bangladesh absorbs and relocates Shakespeare within the country's changing socio-political-historical context. As a result,

the elementary mechanisms of human interaction, as the performance of the multiple realities of Bangladesh, has reframed Shakespeare; here the playwright as a source of what Roland Barthes understands as "playful text" against "masterful work" (Barthes 156-8; Shepherd and Wallis 159).

The playful textuality of Shakespeare's works situates them in interculturalism. Interculturalism, one of the key frameworks for the paradigm shift Richard Shechner proposes in theatre studies, determines "'an arena of struggle' where 'cultures collide'" (qtd. in Shepherd and Wallis 107). Moreover, the following chapters will reveal a reciprocal process of intercultural playfulness where Shakespeare's script or the literariness is considered as what Jacques Derrida defines as "citation rather than origin" (qtd. in Shepherd and Wallis 156). At the same time, the onto-historical being of Bangladesh, which is the contextual "origin" of the productions, has also been reimagined through the performances of Shakespeare. The following chapters thus select the cases based on two tragedies (*Macbeth* and *Coriolanus*), one romance (*The Tempest*) and one comedy (*Pericles* reimagined as *Shattered Faces of Piyar Ali*) to discuss how and to what extent the intercultural productions perform and reimagine both Shakespeare and Bangladesh.

Apart from the partition of British colonial Bengal in 1905, I will conclude that the identity of Bengali Muslims "had passed through three major reversals", as Ahmed explains:

First in 1947, Muslims were imagined as 'Pakistanis' when the nation was narrated with Islam as the homogenizing tool of identity. Second, in 1971, they were imagined as 'Bengalis', by rejecting religion' as the norm of majoritarian demarcation of identity and instead, with Bengali language as the homogenizing tool of identity, supported by secularized principles of state policy. Third, through a series of moves from 1977 to 1987, they were imagined as 'Bangladeshis', by re-mobilizing Islam as the norm of majoritarian

demarcation of identity and de-secularizing the fundamental principles of state policy.

("Performing the Nation" 18-19)

The historical review of Shakespearean practices illustrated that the playwright was also instrumentalised against the colonial power which brought him to the subcontinent and imposed him upon native people. During the internal-colonial regime of Pakistan, Shakespearean works had been appropriated in the political process of Bengali cultural nationalism. In the independent Bangladesh, the summary of Shakespearean praxis hints its relevance and significance. The following case studies will read in detail the signification and meaning of performing Shakespeare in postcolonial Bangladesh under a neo-liberal, globalised war-torn, world order.

Chapter 3

Theory

A pre-modern Bengali philosopher Fakir Lalon Shah's enlightening idea of "bartaman" [the present] signifies an ethico-political duty to achieve creative transcendence and forge relationships with diverse human beings (Mazhar). Likewise, French philosopher Gilles Deleuze posits an ethico-political notion of "rhizome" in the theoretical context of "a thousand plateaus," a metaphor for a non-hierarchical approach that acknowledges insignificances if there be any (Bignal). Considering Lalon and Deleuze's rhizomatic philosophy, here, I will discuss representative Shakespearean productions of *Macbeth*, *The Tempest* and *Coriolanus*, under the three subsequent sections (Historical lives of *Macbeth* Productions; Critical Narratives of *The Tempest* Productions; and Reading *Coriolanus* as Lal Jhanda) which were produced in Bangladesh over a span of time (1980s to 2020s).

Historical lives of *Macbeth* Productions

Macbeth is one of the early productions in the map of Shakespearean theatre in post-independence Bangladesh. For the first time, Bangladeshi theatre witnessed *Macbeth* on the stage, which was performed by an ensemble comprising of members from two troupes, Theatre and Nagorik Natyasampraday, in 1982. After a long pause, Theatre and Performance Studies Department of Dhaka University performed this play in 2005 and 2019, while another theatre group Dhaka Padatik brought the play again on stage in 2012. These productions of *Macbeth* followed the script

translated by Syed Shamsul Haque.[4] Here I will read the productions of *Macbeth*, followed by discussions under five subsections. First subsection, Translation as Cultural Mediation, will explore Haque's strategy of translation; second, The Picture of General Ershad et al., will discuss Theatre and Nagorik Natyasampraday's collaborative production; third, Politics of Processual Act, will focus on two productions of *Macbeth* by the same director at the Theatre and Performance Studies Department of University of Dhaka; the fourth, Masculine Power Game of Militarized Third World, will focus on Dhaka Padatik's production; and the fifth, Text and Context, will examine the relationship between text as the productions of *Macbeth* and the context of Bangladesh that enabled the productions.

Translation as Cultural Mediation

The translations of *Macbeth* have seen a long tradition of performance since the colonial period in Bengal. Girish Chandra Ghosh, one of the great playwrights in colonial Bengal, inaugurated his professional theatre, Minerva, by staging his translation of *Macbeth* on 28th January in 1893. An earlier translation dates back to 1875. Moreover, the iconographic Bengali poet and writer Rabindranath Tagore had started to translate *Macbeth* in his early life. The history of practising Shakespeare in Bengal, research confirms, has two trends: one is the translation, and the other is adaptation (Harun 270). On the other hand, Nazmul Ahsan establishes a proposition that, Bengali has contributed its rigour much more in adaptation of Shakespeare in this region (qtd. in Harun

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[4] Syed Shamsul Haque (1935-2016) was a Bangladeshi eminent poet, playwright, novelist, and short-story writer. He translated Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, *The Tempest*, *Troilus and Cressida*, and *Hamlet*. He also adapted *Julius Caesar* under the title of *Gononayok* (People's Hero). His works are widely performed by the theatre workers and highly acclaimed by the critics.

270). However, in this backdrop, the performance trends of *Macbeth* in Bangladesh demonstrate an artistic reliance on translation that negates the fact, argued by some critics, about the dominance of adaptation. Many a critic considers that Haque's translation of *Macbeth* is the best piece of Shakespearean translation in post-independence Bangladesh (Haque, Alapone; Harun 275). Haque's translation received appreciation for its effectiveness from both the director and actor. Rashid Harun observes that Christopher Sandford, the English director of 1980s' *Macbeth*, adored Haque's translation very much, on the one hand, and the performers had got "a new life" from Haque's translation in their performance, on the other (275). Haque had applied his sharp poetic prowess to overcome the barriers of linguistic style, characterisation, and periodic framing in the translation of *Macbeth* which added a new dimension to the play (275). This new dimension, borrowing from John McCarthy, can be defined as one of the "paradigmatic examples of seminal nodal points in translation and cultural transfer practice" (viii). The "cultural transfer practice" of *Macbeth* involved in an exchange between the Bengali translator and British director. Haque himself revealed the secret of his process of translation, regaling that he had exchanged his thought with the director Sandford through letters, which created an opportunity for both of them to understand this play from two different locations which came into the mediation of Shakespeare's original text of *Macbeth* (Haque, "Alapone"). The process of translation of *Macbeth* comprised of the idea that no culture is constantly undeviating and monolithic, rather it is a circumscribed location of cultural crossovers. As James Clifford argues, "Twentieth-century identities no longer presuppose continuous cultures or traditions. Everywhere, individuals and groups improvise local performance from (re)collected pasts, drawing on foreign media, symbols, and languages" (14).

Furthermore, Haque added: "I tried to translate it literally, on one hand. On the other, I wanted it to become a *bhabnatok* [emotion-play]" ("Alapone;" my emphasis). The aim of keeping

the textual literariness of *Macbeth* in terms of meter, lines and dramatic structure also obtained a playfulness, as Haque simultaneously followed a rewriting process of "bhabnatok." Accordingly, Haque's case of *Macbeth* admitted a performative aspect in the act of translation in a cross-referential cultural condition. Examining the intercultural perception and reception, Philip Zarrilli observes:

> It has become commonplace to assume that 'culture' is both reflected within and simultaneously invented by the webs of signification knit into the performative moment. Performance as a mode of cultural action is not a simple reflection of some essentialized, fixed attributes of a static monolithic culture but an arena for the constant process of renegotiating experiences and meanings that constitute culture. (108)

In Bengali language, the word "bhab" means emotion but also resonates a signification of mental landscape that produces certain emotions in a certain circumstance. Therefore, Haque's translation of *Macbeth* as a "bhabnatok" [emotion-play] can also be redefined as a "mental translation," borrowing the terminology from the field of transculturality (McCarthy viii). Haque claims that at least one thing, "the sound pattern," is unique in his "mental translation," which is absent in the rest of the Bengali translations of *Macbeth* since the early nineteenth century. He has also shown an example of how Shakespeare's quality of sound, or "the sound pattern" was preserved in his translation. There is a famous dialogue in the original *Macbeth*, for instance, "tomorrow and tomorrow and tomorrow." Haque translated it as "din pore din, pore din." Haque argues that he wanted to maintain a sort of "dhonishashon" (governing the sound pattern), which, at the same time, would also be more enactable ("Alapone"). Arguably, Haque consciously endeavoured to govern the "sound pattern." But unconsciously he could govern only the pattern, not the sound. Because the literary meaning of "tomorrow" in Bengali is "agamikal." Therefore, "din pore" and

"agamikal" do not create the same sound. But "din pore" means approximately "porer din" which means, in Benagli, "any next day" or "after this day" that can be any day. Haque's translation, thus, made a literary sense of Shakespearean dialogues but, at the same time, transcended the literariness and obtained what in Haque's own terms was "mental translation."

Haque states that Shakespeare had written *Macbeth* to "focus on the murder of a king," which foreshadowed "his contemporary political situation in England" (Haque, "Mukhobondho"). Thus, in his act of translation, Haque primarily focused on the historicity of the text. David Scott Kastan writes, "The text's historicity, then is not to be thought of as a contamination of its essence but as the very condition of its being, a historicity that locates creativity within determinate conditions of realization" (39). From his experiential point of view, Haque admits that he who completed the translation of *Macbeth* had become a different person than who started the translation. Thus, the act of translation became an act of transformation in the Bengali reconstruction of *Macbeth*. Haque also writes that *Macbeth* was relevant in the context of political history because, at that time, a military dictator was ruling Bangladesh (Haque, "Mukhobondho"). Haque observes that *Macbeth* appeared as the bloodied portrait of a tyrant in the context of a country that longed for abolition of autocracy. Haque's observation determines that "mental translation" of *Macbeth* revisited the contemporary historical landscape of politics, which posed a question against the military rule. The translation of tragedy thus constituted the tragedy of politics engaging the politics of tragedy. As Franco Moretti argues,

> Elizabethan and Jacobean tragedy was in fact one of the decisive influences in the creation of a 'public' that for the first time in history assumed the right to bring a king to justice.…Tragedy disentitled the absolute monarch to all ethical and rational legitimation. Having deconsecrated the king, it thus made it possible to decapitate him.…Tragedy, then

stages not the institutions of absolutism, but its culture, its values, its ideology. This fact by

no means impairs the capacity of tragedy to perform its task of radical dissolution. (7-8)

Moreover, as a translator Haque reimagined *Macbeth* in the political context of Bangladesh, which

could be exemplified as a reaffirmation of the argument that Stephen Greenblatt posits,

"Shakespeare's plays are centrally and repeatedly concerned with the production and containment

of subversion and disorder . . ." (29). Haque expresses that he realized from the experience of

translating *Macbeth* that a play never becomes older ("Mukhobondho"). Instead, it becomes newer

and relevant for the time it is set to be produced in. The translator's discursive position about

Shakespeare's relevance is a reminder of a critical awareness of political Shakespeare. As Alan

Sinfield argues, "'Shakespeare' is not a fixed entity but a concept produced in specific political

conditions, a powerful cultural token, a site of struggle and change" ("Royal" 182).

The translation of *Macbeth* became a cultural translation that created a sharp political

meaning that transcended its literary aspect. Haque's experiential commentary authenticates that

Shakespeare became a collaborative author of *Macbeth* as it was reimagined to be performed in

the political backdrop of Bangladesh through the process of "mental translation." The translation

of *Macbeth*, thus, initiated a transformation of the play's foreign body into the phenomenal

conditions of play-in-practice. As McCarthy argues, "The act of translation represents the

metaphorical gravitational force field that brings the foreign body into play with another emergent

one (that is, translation itself), whereby the translator, and ultimately, also the reader and/or

spectator enter into dialogue with the original and its reproduction" (ix-x). In addition, McCarthy

spells out that the act of translation is a dialogic process which is basically " a system of influence

and confluence" (x). In this line of argument, the further analysis of *Macbeth* productions will

examine how these productions appropriated this system of intersection where translator Syed

Shamsul Haque also played one of the roles as, McCarthy would say, the primary "reader" or as the "cultural mediator" (x).

The Picture of General Ershad et al.

The post-independent Bangladesh witnessed its first theatrical representation of *Macbeth* in the 1980s by the mediation of the local British Council in collaboration with two renowned theatre groups (Theatre and Nagorik Natyasampraday), which performed the role of local creative agents in the event of theatrical production in Dhaka city. Simultaneously, Christopher Sandford contributed as the director who came from England, being invited by the Dhaka office of the British council. However, Tarik Anam Khan, who also played the role of Macduff, describes that the stagecraft of *Macbeth* was created on the principle of "empty space" where wings, cyclorama and sky were removed from the actual setting of the stage. The director, Sandford himself, designed it in order to create a sense of blackness, which could function as the symbol of the ominous as *Macbeth* was considered the symbol of political evil to conceptualize the production. The costume was also abstract to generate contemporaneity rather than lay absolute faith in the original play's time and place. Following this principle of designing, makeup for the characters was also stylistic and symbolic instead of realistic. This production, along with the realistic style of acting, also attempted to incorporate the essence of story-telling technique from the traditional mode of local acting, which has been very popular in Bangladesh for the last hundreds of years. Despite this production's employment of translation, it endeavored to create "a new theatre" based on "an old play" (Zaker; Khan).

Though *Macbeth* production was part of a cultural promotion program, and the director was also British, nevertheless, a further investigation of its scenographic model and the acting

vocabulary demonstrates that this production interiorised the local theatre aesthetics (Khan). Concurrently, the translator and the performers' statement prove that the production was able to generate a sense of "timeliness" regarding the socio-political context of Bangladesh. As Harun states, "This production became more contemporary and relevant for the Bangladeshi audience concerning its political history" (275). The signification of "the political history" can be traced back through the historical reading of post-independent Bangladesh. As Van Schendel explores:

> The political system that evolved in Bangladesh between 1975 and 1990 was one in which the judicial and legislative branches became hostage to military-controlled executive power. In this period, civil rights were much more curtailed than they had been in the initial years after independence. This was something that many citizens of Bangladesh refused to accept. Their aspirations for the future expressed themselves in continual struggles to improve the quality of their lives and to increase their influence over the state. (197)

In this political context of Bangladesh, how the production of *Macbeth* infused a refusal to the military role can be further tracked back by examining the explanation by Aly Zaker.[5] For instance, Zaker, who played the central role of Macbeth in this production, historicises that practising Shakespeare in this region is an anti-colonial expression. His opinion, as I interviewed him in February in 2020, reveals an ambivalent situation of a postcolonial society where cultural

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[5] Aly Zaker (1944-2020) was a phenomenal figure in the cultural arena of Bangladesh. He was also a prolific exponent of Shakespearean canon in Bangladesh. He played the protagonist in the groundbreaking productions of *Macbeth* and *The Tempest* in the 1980s and adapted *Hamlet* under the title of *Darpan,* which he directed consequently in the early 1990s with success in terms of audience reception and cultural impact.

inheritance of colonialism, after a certain period, had become a sharp double-edged sword for a creative protest to colonialism itself. He considers the case of appropriating Shakespeare is a political act in the cultural front of this region. Shakespeare was not a cultural imposition. Instead, the poet became such a weapon with which artists fought against imperialist aggression. In his own words: "Shakespeare has always come to us as a playwright through whom we have resisted colonial invasion. That is what we have always done. And this is our tradition behind our practice of Shakespeare."

Thus, Zaker reflects that a long tradition of creative resistance against colonisation constitutes the culture of Shakespeare in Bangladesh eventually. Taking the example from one of Shakespeare's most performed tragedies *Macbeth*, he illustrates that "this is the total of the political overture of Shakespeare. It is equally important in any society. Particularly in a colonial society." For him Shakespeare is such a playwright who has a universal appeal. However, colonialism brought the "universal" Shakespeare to this region. The Bard's universalism works as a political force in the terrain of colonised people's interest under the condition of the coloniser's repression. He indicates that local practitioners used this great English poet's universal quality against the English rule in this region. Moreover, Zaker portrays Shakespeare as a symbol of cultural universalism, which is different from the political universalism of colonialism in the context of Bangladesh history. Zaker argues that the "humanity" and "social relevance" of Shakespeare's plays made him the greatest. According to Zaker, the player as the protagonist, *Macbeth* production obtained that "social relevance" and the meaning of "humanity" in Bangladesh in 1982.

In focusing on how the "social relevance" of the production of Shakespeare's *Macbeth* criticised and resisted the military dictatorship in the decade of 80s of the last century of Bangladesh, Zaker throws light on the performance of *Macbeth* that was premiered on 8th

December in 1982 at the Dhaka British Council auditorium with the credit of 29 shows (Zaker;

Harun 275). Only eight months before this production premiered, Lieutenant General Hussain

Mohammad Ershad (1930-2019), as the Chief of the Army Staff, seized the state power through a

bloodless coup d'état against an elected president. Zaker, who acted the central character,

demonstrates a unique memory of a show:

> I was playing the role of Macbeth. I just took the crown off, leaning against the big banquet
>
> table. The crown was in my hands. I was staring at this crown for a while and then looked
>
> at the audience. I saw Air Vice Marshal Sultan Mahmud, chief of Bangladesh Air Force,
>
> was seated in the front row, watching our performance. He was then the deputy chief
>
> martial law administrator. And I said, "eta howa kichhu noy, eta hoye thakatai kichhu" [the
>
> Bengali translation of "Nothing to be thus, but to be safely thus"]. And I saw him
>
> distinctively uncomfortable. As if he fears, "is the young actor telling me you got the
>
> crown, but you will not remain safe in the throne!''

Zaker determines that the performance was a protest against autocratic tyranny. He stated that the

protest was performed through art. "It was not a demonstration," he adds, "the inside of the military

collaborator was shuddered suddenly" at that momentous history of theatre as well as politics in

Bangladesh. He reminisces, "Still, I can remember that Syed Hasan Imam [a renowned actor and

cultural activist] came to me after the show and told me that you had forbidden his [the deputy

martial law administrator] sleep tonight."

A theatre professor at the University of Dhaka, remarks on this case as a confrontation

between the actor (as Macbeth who killed the Scottish popular king Duncan) and the military

dictator (who killed the democracy of Bangladesh) (Shaheen). The Bengali appropriation of

Shakespeare's *Macbeth* "constitute[s] an influential medium through which certain ways of

thinking about the world" of Bangladesh as "a site of cultural struggle and change" (Sinfield, "Introduction" 155). The case of *Macbeth* in Bangladesh reconstitutes that "Shakespeare's plays are one site of cultural production in our society [too]—they are one of the places where our understanding of ourselves is worked out and, indeed, fought out" (Sinfield 154). Raymond Williams defines culture as "a *signifying system* through which . . . a social order is communicated, reproduced, experienced and explored" ("Culture" 13). The signifying system of *Macbeth* production in terms of translation, performance and spectator's reception reconstructed the political meaning through the exploration of the socio-political order in order to create a cultural site of collective struggle and change. Thus, *Macbeth* became socially relevant because of its political significance in the socio-historical context. The case of *Macbeth* production authenticated what was political was socially relevant in 1980s Bangladesh.

Politics of Processual Act

More than two decades later, the audience once again experienced Syed Shamsul Haque's "mental translation" of *Macbeth* on stage through some large-scale theatre festivals at a university premises involving public engagement, in 2005 and 2018, in Dhaka. Theatre and Performance Studies Department of the University of Dhaka staged this tragedy while both BA Honours and MA students actively participated in these productions either as performers or designers. Israfeel Shaheen, professor of the department and a distinguished theatre director in this region, initiated, supervised and directed these theatrical ventures. I myself also worked as an active offstage worker in all these productions. I worked as a member of a research group for the productions of 2005 as well as worked as a dramaturge for the production which was reconstructed in 2018. In exploring

this case history of *Macbeth* productions, I would employ my firsthand subjective experiences along with the objective data which I have obtained from the interview of Israfeel Shaheen.

In the production of 2005, Shaheen's creative vision assimilated the Elizabethan scenography with the traditional mode of staging that transformed into a thrust setting consisting of a few platforms in a minimalist approach. The production used lights not for gimmick and illusion but illumination, while costume followed the rules of familiarity rather than the academic norms of Elizabethan costume production. The production was a discursive theatrical attempt to examine the notion of power. Shaheen explained to me in an interview that I took in 2020 in the same auditorium where he started to rehearse this play nearly fifteen years back, he wanted to empower his students to obtain the embodied knowledge of performing a Shakespearean play skilfully while engaging the audience effectively. At the same time, apart from his pedagogic objective, this production aimed to examine the concept of power in the form of theatre from an ethical perspective to mobilise the spectator society of Bangladesh. The playbill of the production also echoed the creative zeal to perform which was to critique "power" as a corrupt institution.

Dhaka University's *Macbeth* of 2005, according to Shaheen, was a processual act where students-performers were deeply engaged in improvisation to learn the naturalism of the Stanislavski system to acquire a modern vocabulary of performance. Furthermore, in the process of improvisation, Shaheen attempted to invent a set of creative rules to deconstruct the scenes of original *Macbeth* by searching performers' own stories that had multiple planes: personal, social, national, and global. His process is very similar to what Leon Harold Craig argues: "Shakespeare's plays invite us—indeed, compel us, if we wish to understand them—to see things from the perspective of different kinds of people differently situated. This need not mean that all such views

are equally valid, of course, not that there is always some way to reconcile them, nor that there is no simply best or true view" (14).

The process of creating *Macbeth*, initiated by the director, was an act of stimulation for the actors toward what Craig would say, "character analysis [psychoanalysis] that requires [the actors] to observe, remember, deduce, and evaluate a heterogeneous array of evidence, collected from a diversity of sources and synthesise it into a single coherent entity that 'makes sense'" (16). He motivated the actors of *Macbeth* to explore such human beings who are, in Craig's words, "divided, confused, or discordant people" (16). As I observed his working procedures for the last twenty years, Shaheen's performance theories are interested in investigating what Craig would say, "[T]he inner contradictions, disharmonies, ambivalences, and vacillations [of people]" (16). For him, a play, like *Macbeth*, can provide some answers only through all creators' collective efforts, including translator, dramaturge, actor, designer, and audience. His idea reflects Craig's conception of the reader (14). According to Shaheen, actors read the text of *Macbeth* to reveal the sub-textual multitudes of a performer in rehearsal. He explains that the text was not taken for granted but revised in the creative process of rehearsal. He prepared his actors to start from the existential point of actors, not from the fictional point of characters (Shaheen). As a second-year student during the creation of *Macbeth* at the department, I witnessed that Shaheen motivated his students to investigate "puzzles of deeper issues of the play" through socio-political and spiritual exercises to express the filtered "truth" of acting (Craig14).

Shaheen defines this process as an exploration of subtext that gives a locational meaning to a foreign text such as *Macbeth*. As the director of the play, he invited his colleagues and other students to attend the rehearsal to be the live part of the performers' exploration of subtext concerning the intended text of *Macbeth*. Thus, before the final staging of this play, each rehearsal

became a draft play for the university community to contest and confront an organic *Macbeth* in progress. As a student, I had also attended these rehearsal-performances of *Macbeth*, where I observed that the director-teacher encouraged the student-actors to perform Shakespeare with an eye to embedding their own stories within the story of *Macbeth*. Sometimes actors' stories were performed as an element of montage with the original story. Therefore, the rehearsal of *Macbeth* became a constant site of identifying and celebrating the instant discoveries of actors. Shaheen explains that he tried to make *Macbeth* true to the actors so that the actors became true to the audience. However, in the final shows, he ensured that the production remained authentic to the original script of *Macbeth* following Haque's translation. Arguably, the creative characteristics of this production negated the "originality" of text by interiorising the subtexts of performers in their embodiment. Thus, *Macbeth* production became a reservoir of internal deconstruction, while Shakespeare's text was preserved as an external expression.

At the final staging of *Macbeth* in the first annual theatre festival of the university in 2006, Professor Shaheen congregated nearly one thousand students along with other audiences including teachers, artists, and the public. Each night celebrated performers enlivened the stage with their bold expressions and presence. Teacher-Student Centre (TSC) of Dhaka University was the venue. The director found this great crowd of audience to be a metaphor for youth. On the contrary, the national political scene was in turmoil seeking a democratic system to ensure a fair and free general election. As a result, according to the statement of the director of the play, the production created a fictive site of the country's politics and peoples' desire for a stable and legitimised way of changing the state-power while the commitment to democracy was fragile in the real-life context. Thus, the performance of *Macbeth* in Dhaka University reconstructed the Shakespearean vision

from the "original" text into a spatio-temporal text of peoples' vision, in order to renew the democratic practice to building the nation of Bangladesh in 2005 to 2006.

Shaheen again directed *Macbeth* based on Syed Haque's translation at the same department in 2018, while MA students mainly performed along with other undergraduate students. As a dramaturge in this production, I observe a point of departure compared to the previous production of *Macbeth* regarding the creative process and presentation, particularly the scenography. Senior professor of the department Syed Jamil Ahmed[6] played an interventionist role in designing the production. Most of the circular auditorium, Natmandal, transformed into the acting space, which left a tiny room for the audience to sit. The lights created suspense and atmospheric quality through nonlinear movements on the geometric-cubic forms of the acting spaces. The costume designer Wahida Mollick, another senior professor of the department, synthesized the Elizabethan references in geometric abstraction in the dresses of the performers. The formalist production reflected the director's aesthetic vision of camouflage where Bangladeshi traditional style of spectacle and performance idiom equated the legacy of English theatre along with the Russian acting school of the Stanislavski system.

After staging in Bangladesh, the second *Macbeth* travelled to two cities (New Delhi and Ranchi) of India as part of Bharat Rangmahatsav in March of 2019. Therefore, this production had confronted the audience from two different contexts: one is national, and the other one is

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[6] Syed Jamil Ahmed (b.1955) is founder chair of the Department of Theatre and Performance Studies at the University of Dhaka. He is a distinguished scholar, public intellectual, legendary theatre designer and director in South Asia. Currently, he is retired from the university and runs "Spardha," an independent theatre collective. He designed *The Tempest* in 1987 in Dhaka, while Deborah Warner worked as the director of this production. Ahmed also directed *Macbeth* in Hindi in New Delhi in 2010.

subcontinental. The national context of the performance mirrored a chaotic political situation where oppositional political parties just rejected results of the national election, which took place in December of 2018, while the ruling party claimed that the election was entirely fair and neutral.

On the other hand, many activists, and leftist politicians vehemently criticised India for often killing Bangladeshi citizens in the border area and oppressive policies for controlling water flow through the shared rivers into Bangladesh, which is a lowland compared to India. Therefore, Dhaka University's second *Macbeth* considered itself the "theatricks" (i.e., theatrics plus theatre tricks) in this geopolitical context. Bangladeshi *Macbeth*, as a cultural ambassador, appeared as a trickster disguising an aestheticised masterpiece on Indian stages, as if, to establish a forum for the audiences to discuss critically the policies towards the neighbouring country (Shaheen).

Masculine Power Game of Militarized Third World

Padatik Natya Sangsad produced *Macbeth* in 2013 which also appropriated Syed Shamsul Haque's translation as their primary text, while director Sudip Chakroborthy, one of the most proactive directors of the new generation, hailed it a masterpiece in Bengali literature of translation. He transformed the stage into the black and white chessboard as he got the inspiration from the design of "As the Mother of a Brown Boy," an English Chickenshed Theatre Company production (Chakroborthy). Unlike the previous staging model, seen in the cases of *Macbeth* in 1982 and 2005, and 2018, Padatik's *Macbeth* reflected a cognitive approach to create a conceptual space where the performers, as the chess-pieces, played their roles as if they all are involved in an ongoing power struggle. The director's note illustrates that the troupe interpreted Shakespeare's *Macbeth* as a classic, which also has a very contemporary relevance in the way of an eternal war between those who want to seize power and who does not want to leave power. Moreover, the

director describes that this production's aesthetic goal was to unveil such human beings, who are involved in this complicated and hypocritical power game.

On the other hand, following the South Asian philosophy, the director conceived the square boxes as the "Purus-shakti" (masculine power) for the chessboard like stage against the circular form which is designated for femininity. The director argues that a square shape denotes the limit that means the power game will be over running its natural course, while a circle signifies such a motion that never ends (Chakroborthy). This production, therefore, was designed to be informed by the South Asian idea of symbols that signify the intertwined relationship of geometric forms and human power.

Padatik's *Macbeth* interweaves Elizabethan costume, designed by Wahida Mollick, with contemporary Bengali pattern of dressing in order to make it familiar to the local audience. The director reveals that the production aimed to cater to the performers providing the costumes which would be aesthetically meaningful and, at the same time, universally significant (Chakroborthy). The director attempted, as I attended the rehearsal and one more show in 2012, to understand Shakespeare, as Craig would say, "[T]he political philosopher as [a] dramatic poet" (16). Furthermore, Craig argues, "Shakespeare's plays portray human nature in its full significant diversity, loving and striving, learning and changing, dreaming and dying in archetypical political circumstances from ancient to modern times" (16). The director endeavoured to symbolise the "archetypical political circumstances" of *Macbeth* using the chessboard to signify the contemporary forms of power play.

Why did Chakroborthy choose to direct *Macbeth*, and why did he get a symbolic design for this production? The answers to these questions, to some extent, are sought in his interview, where he argues that *Macbeth* is very much similar to the political situation, which has been created

in Bangladesh over the last four decades. Chakroborthy argues that the theme of the play resonates with the political situation of Bangladesh as well as other third-world countries, which are ruled by the army following abusive models. He adds that at first, Bangladesh lost its "Father of the Nation"[7] in 1975, and eventually, many military dictators and civilian politicians have died, as if in a sequential manner: one after another. In his opinion, "the situation is similar to that of *Macbeth*," where one death calls for other deaths to follow, following the murder of Duncan. Chakroborthy argues, "So, in a way, *Macbeth* is our mirror". Chakroborthy used the word "our", an all-encompassing determiner, to denote Bangladesh with other "third world" countries. Therefore, the theatre group, Padatik Natya Sangsad, appropriated a conceptual framework of abstraction, which is the idea of a collective identity of the citizens across the "third world" countries. Thus, the "mirror" of Shakespeare's *Macbeth* sought a regional relevance within its thematic universality through this production. In the creative process of the production, as I observed both rehearsals and shows in the year the play was produced, the creative ensemble tried to acquire that which can be identified as an "'intellectual' (or 'conceptual, 'propositional,' or 'cognitive') knowing" (Craig19). The production proceeded its "propositional" framework to relate *Macbeth* to the local audience exploring a wide range of the contextual frame. So that in the end, the production also could be meaningful for the entire "third world" (Chakroborthy).

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[7] Sheikh Mujibur Rahman (1920-1975) was the founder and first President of Bangladesh, widely known as 'Bangabandhu' (Friend of Bengal) and "Sheikh Saheb". After the partition of India, he became one of the key politicians in Pakistan. He mobilised Bengalis, who comprised most of the population of Pakistan, constructing an identity politics based on Bengali secular cultural nationalism that culminated in a nine-month long 'Muktijuddho' (Liberation War) in 1971. According to the constitution of Bangladesh, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman is constituted as "Father of the Nation."

The different types of knowing Shakespeare is "almost exclusively confined to the soul's rational part; involving, that is, only reasoning and memory, though sometimes imagination as well" (Craig 19) However, by "speaking of people," according to Craig, Shakespeare teaches us psychology, whereas logos stands for rational account and psyche is for the soul, the "rational account of human nature" (16). Arguably, Padatik's *Macbeth* obtained a discursive positionality of rationalising both structure of the story and the dynamics of the state power regarding its feminist concern. This production consciously excluded the word "witches," which Syed Shamsul Haque translated as "dakini" in Bengali, due to its misogynistic connotation. "Dakini," or "daini," the literal translation of "witch," is misogynistically used as a derogatory term to signify those women who are "dangerous" in the eye of men in the dominant patriarchal culture in Bengal. However, the production attempted to seek a feminist position against the masculine axiom of linguistic power-play. Engaging the debate about the identity of witches whether they are "English", "Scottish", or "Continental" witches, Marjorie Garber states:

> *Macbeth* begins with witches. Before the inception of the play proper, before the audience is introduced to the title character or any of the Scottish nobility or soldiery, the stage is overtaken by creatures from another world. But who are these "witches," as they are usually called? Are they male? Female? Real or imaginary? Benevolent or wicked? Are they, indeed, supernatural, or are they merely old Scottish ladies with a curious rhyming dialect of speech? (696)

However, the director of the production tackled "dakini" merely calling "supernatural forces", or the "non-being" characters. The production interpreted these metaphysical characters as "Macbeth's hallucinations, which are also his desires" (Chakroborthy). The director's statement could resonate with the critical discourse of Shakespeare studies, as Garber notes:

Usually, however, the witches in *Macbeth* are called not "witches" but "weird sisters." *Weird* is the Old English word for "fate," and these are, in a way, classical witches as well as Scottish or Celtic ones, Fates as well as Norns. The Three Fates of Greek Mythology were said to spin, apportion, and cut the thread of man's life. But the *Macbeth* witches are not merely mythological beings, nor merely historical targets of vilification and superstition: on the stage, and on the page, they have a persuasive psychological reality of their own. (696-7)

Employing the interpretation of gender-sensitive "psychological reality" of witches, this production cut *Macbeth*'s metaphysical root but celebrated the socio-political signification in the context of the political turmoil of "third world" countries as "[t]he witches' landscape," along with the embodiment of the fractured ambitions of Macbeth as a military dictator. The production, thus, created "a geographical counterpart," as Garber would argue, "The witches' landscape, the blasted heath, is typically for Shakespeare, a geographical counterpart of their characters: a wasteland, windswept, empty, unfruitful, uninhabited, inhuman. It is to this wasteland that Macbeth will choose to venture after his first "accidental" meeting with them on the heath. They are a state of mind, and their heath is a country of the mind" (698). Padatik's Macbeth performed "a state of mind" signifying the desire for the seizure of state-power and "a country of the mind" as an "unfruitful" "wasteland" of chessboard game.

Text and Context

How *Macbeth*, as a play, became the mirror image of Bangladeshi political realities is symptomatic to understand the appropriation of Shakespeare within the investigation of an effective relationship between the stage and the society and the text and the context. Arguably, the directors and actors

of *Macbeth* productions sought a "chemistry of theatre" where Shakespeare's text and Bangladeshi context intersected each other through their theatrical acts. As Eric Bentley formulates, theatre is where "A impersonates B while C looks on" (150). According to the theory of modern stage, "the performer's activity is essentially role-playing (impersonation), pretending to be another person. The spectator's activity is the 'willing suspension of disbelief' and acceptance of the make-believe" (Balme 2). Thus, theatre connects "spectator and performance in 'blended spaces'" (2). It is how theatre creates chemistry between performer and spectator since the theatre is an artistic medium "governed by a system of multifarious rules or formulas" (2). As Jerzy Limon argues, the chemistry of theatre is "[a] sequence of compound signs, heterogenous amalgams. . . . These blended amalgams create meaning through a network of relations, such as the rule of equivalence, based on similarity or contrast, and the rule of contiguity, or a theatrical syntax" (8).

Therefore, I will examine how A (*Macbeth*'s performers) played the role of B (*Macbeth*'s characters) while C (the spectators of Bangladesh) looked on Bangladeshi *Macbeth/s* where the relationship between theatrical reproduction and its material context is concerned for the Shakespearean productions. Moreover, according to Marxist theories, "art is thought to reflect society. The impetus behind this theory comes from questions asking how the symbolic forms that constitute culture are related to the material conditions of their productions and to [the] socioeconomic organisation overall" (Shevtsova 50). In this line of argument, there is a necessity to examine how the performance of *Macbeth* as a symbolic form of cultural conditions aligns with the greater material conditions or context.

The sociocultural context of Bangladesh as the material conditions of *Macbeth* productions can be explored borrowing from Schendel, where he argues, "[M]ilitary men controlled the state for twenty years from 1958—thirteen years during the Pakistan period and fifteen [years] during

the Bangladesh period" (195). Schendel attempts to explore the political process of militarisation in this region against the commitment to democracy which was one of the republic's fundamentals since the birth of Bangladesh. He argues, "Military dominance was not rooted in the history of the Bengal delta, but it had been an important feature in the colonial history of Punjab, the far-away, [the] dominant region of Pakistan" (194). Furthermore, the dominance of a particular region over the others in recruiting the military personnel was created by the colonial policies, as Schendel shows:

> [In] the late nineteenth century, the British had developed an ideology that categorised certain South Asian populations as 'martial races' who were better fighting material than others. Punjabis were seen as martial (and Bengalis as non-martial), and several regions of Punjab became prime recruiting areas for the Indian army. Ruled by a civil-military bureaucracy, Punjab became 'the garrison province of the [British] Raj.' (194)

Following the colonial legacy, Schendel argues, "With the ascent of Punjabi power within Pakistan, civil institutions gave way to military ones. The armed forces were a Punjabi institution to begin with: in 1947, Punjabis made up 77 per cent of the Pakistan army" (194). As the army organised its first coup d'état in the late 1950s, Punjabis became the predominant power in the Pakistani army by the end of this decade (194). He shows a noteworthy link between the histories of militarism both in Pakistan and Bangladesh:

> As the Pakistan state took on the military-authoritarian features that the British had perfected in Punjab, it turned East Pakistan [once East Bengal and now Bangladesh] into an internal colony. The Bengali elite's exclusion from an effective say in state affairs—let alone in the army—eventually forced an end to Pakistan. But state-building was a more

continuous process. The colonial garrison state of Punjab, transmuted into the military state

of Pakistan, bequeathed its martial traditions to the Bangladesh state. (194-5)

In the 1970s, Bangladesh witnessed a replay of what Pakistan was in the 1950s, where democratic

aspirations were drastically dashed out by the military dictatorship that lasted for fifteen years

(1975-1990). A similar model of the Ayub-Yahya regime of Pakistan was adopted by Bangladeshi

militarism (Schendel 95). The assassination of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, the then-president of

Bangladesh, on 15 August 1975, installed an army-backed government following what was the

first-ever coup d'état after its independence. To illustrate the consequence of this brutal murder,

Schendel argues:

> This in turn was overthrown by a second military coup 3 November, followed by a third
>
> on 7 November. The man who now emerged as Bangladesh's ruler was Major-General
>
> Ziaur Rahman (popularly known as Zia). One of his first acts was to ban political parties
>
> and crackdown on the JSD. This was the leftist party that had inspired radical soldiers to
>
> carry out the last coup, planned as a soldiers' revolution in the service of the oppressed
>
> classes. Zia had its leader, Colonel Abu Taher, hanged. (193)

The murder of Colonel Taher, in turn, elicited a number of similar insurgences and mutinies within

the military force that made unstable the political scene of Bangladesh which as Jérémie Codron

observes:

> [T]riggered a series of unprecedented rebellions. Taher indeed became potentially more
>
> threatening, post-mortem, to Zia. The resentment brought forth from the execution resulted
>
> in a marked military instability, which inspired chain-reaction mutinies in several
>
> regiments. From November 1975 to October 1977, roughly ten serious revolts questioned
>
> the military hierarchy. Although none succeeded, all resulted in widespread bloodshed.

However, General Manzur was arrested by the police for allegedly assassinating General Ziaur Rahman, the country's first dictator (1975-1981) and one of the key sector commanders in Bangladesh liberation war, in "an attempted coup in Chattogram in 1981" ("Gen Manzoor").

On the other hand, Lawrence Lifschultz argues that General Manzur was also assassinated in army custody on the night immediately after his arrest: "Major General Manzur's last moments inside the Chittagong [Chattogram] Cantonment on the night of 1 June 1981 where, by all indications, he was assassinated while in army custody." After General Ziaur Rahman, General Hussain Muhammad Ershad, who was directly implicated in the assassination of Manzur and was alleged of masterminding Zia's, entered the scene for nine years (1982-1990). Schendel shows, "A military backed civilian government took over for some months before Chief of Staff Ershad overthrew it, thus becoming Bangladesh's second dictator. Ershad was forced out of power by a popular uprising in 1990" (195). He denotes these two dictators (General Zia and General Ershad) as "Pakistani-trained strongmen of Bangladesh" (196).

However, Shakespeare's *Macbeth* illustrates a geopolitical map bathed in the blood of Duncan, Banquo, Macduff's wife, and son. While the action is in progress in this tragic play, Lady Macbeth dies of repentance, on the one hand. A civil war sucks blood from two opponents where the rebellious group kills the throned king Macbeth and creates new hope for a new state, on the other. The close reading of the metaphor of "blood" in *Macbeth* provides foreshadowing as a dramatic device that encircles a murderer's life from the initial action to the dénouement of the play, as Garber argues:

[The second scene of the first act] is the first real scene of the play, and it begins with a question so startling that the question itself seems to present a dumb show: "What bloody

man is that?" These are Duncan's first words, the King's first words. A man covered in blood, who seems to foreshadow all the body language to come in this play. (As Lady Macbeth will later muse, brokenly, in the sleepwalking scene, "who would have thought the old man to have had so much blood in him?" The "bloody man" in the second scene of the play is literally a soldier, figuratively the dead Duncan, and ultimately also Macbeth himself, "in blood / Stepped in so far", unable to wash it from his hand". (701)

In analogous pattern, the contemporary history of Bangladesh outlines how the military autocracy became the mode of governance after the brutal killing of Sheikh Mujib and his family. Eventually, this region saw one after another coup d'état and killing, politically ambitious generals such as Khaled Mosharraf, Taher, Zia and Manzur. In this line of murders and coups, Ershad became the second dictator and alleged killer of the first dictator, General Zia. Similarly, the play of *Macbeth* echoes and reflects the history of army coups and murders that Bangladesh has witnessed for decades. The dramatic pattern of tragic history of military intervention in the consecutive two decades of post-independent Bangladesh equates Jan Kott's concept of Shakespeare's "Great Mechanism of history" (Williams 30).

The creators of Bangladeshi *Macbeth* also suggest that the fiction of a blood-spattered political scene which the play deals with reflects the political facts and realities of contemporary Bangladesh (Zaker; Shaheen). According to Zygmunt Hübner, if "the play [*Macbeth*] is all about "maintaining power" through "greed, demagogy, and ruthlessness", then Bangladesh saw much of these power dynamics in its own political history (qtd. in Williams 27). If Shakespeare's *Macbeth* "… prefers understatements rather than [a] clear allusion, universalisms rather than a specific political context", then Bangladeshi *Macbeth* productions preferred clear facts and a specific context for their own sake (Williams 29). Jaroslaw Komorowski necessitates an aesthetic fact to

make use of *Macbeth*, putting the playwright in a broader perspective: "Theatre always reaches for Shakespeare when modern drama lacks the means to describe the most recent complications and grim histories of our world. When we cannot name something very bad, but we feel that it is in the air, suffocates us, is inside and around us" (qtd. in Williams 31).

When Bangladesh felt suffocated, it staged *Macbeth*, for instance, as Ali Zaker argues how their performance peaked to confront General Ershad's dictatorship in the 1980s. Moreover, the Bangladeshi history of Shakespeare's *Macbeth* intersects with the history of public interest in collective life that had begun to be rendered rotten by the political crime from the very beginning of its independence. The character of Macbeth also draws his aspiration from the collective milieu as a criminological site against his nature, as Jeffrey R. Wilson argues:

> "This supernatural soliciting / Cannot be ill; cannot be good," he says, noting that the thought of becoming king "doth unfix [his] hair / And make [a] seated heart knock at [his] ribs, / Against the use of nature". The imagery of a body doing things it doesn't naturally do suggests that the desire to become king isn't native to Macbeth. Ambition goes against Macbeth's "nature," as his wife later complains, but more generally ambition is not natural because it is a social phenomenon, as Merton argued when he opposed his theory to the biological school of criminology that locates the origin of crime in human nature. The effect of attributing the first inklings of Macbeth's ambition to other characters, the witches, who seem to emerge from and vanish into the primordial ooze of Scotland, is to locate the origin of that ambition somewhere outside of the person who expresses it. As Shakespeare dramatised it, Macbeth's ambition comes from without, not from within, just as Merton argued that crime can be traced back to society, not the individual. Or, better yet, Macbeth's "within" comes from "without". (20)

Likewise, Bangladeshi *Macbeth* productions signified the political crime that could be found in society, not in the individual. *Macbeth*'s directors and performers' interviews prove that political criminals like Macbeth (e.g., General Ershad et al.) seek opportunity from a corrupt society and state.

Being staged repeatedly, from the 1980s to the 2020s, *Macbeth* has become a collective, self-reflexive act to respond to the polluted political systems of Bangladesh. Thus, *Macbeth* productions played a counter political role in nation-building and brought a dream to the spectator contrary to the one they dreamt of, that is, of a republic in which the State, "through the democratic process," will secure "the rule of law, fundamental human rights and freedom, equality and justice, political, economic and social," for all citizens regardless of their ethnicity, religion, gender and class since the independence (the Constitution).

Moreover, in order to understand how Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, as a proponent of the colonial culture, intersects Bangladeshi culture, here it is useful to discuss an essential metaphor that signifies the notion of interweaving performance culture:

> On the other hand, a process of interweaving does not necessarily result in the production of a whole. In it, mistakes, errors, failures, and even small disasters might occur when unintended knots appear in the cloth, when threads unravel or flow apart, when the proportion of the dyes is off, or the cloth woven becomes stained. The process of weaving is not necessarily smooth or straightforward. Moreover, it is backbreaking work under often deplorable conditions that can wear out and enrage the weavers and drive them to despair, even to the point that they destroy what they have woven so far. All these aspects are entailed by the metaphor of interweaving performance cultures. Additionally, the phrase captures far more accurately culture's inherent processual nature with its continuous

production of new differences. However, these differences are not understood as opposites

but seen within an 'as well as' logic, that is, the logic of interconnectedness, as suggested

by the metaphor of threads woven into cloth. (Fischer-Lichte, "Introduction" 11)

Similarly, the "new differences" are seen in Bangladeshi *Macbeth* productions beyond the

canonical practices of Shakespeare. Besides, one production was not distinct from the other;

instead, each of the productions followed the logic of "as well as" that signifies "the logic of

interconnectedness". This "logic of interconnectedness" gave a new significance to the

appropriation of Shakespeare's *Macbeth* in Bangladesh. On the other hand, the elements of "as

well as" inside the context of Bangladeshi *Macbeth* interconnected the inherent sameness of the

outer differences of Shakespeare's text.

How the inherent sameness of outer differences was negotiated in the creative stratagem

of Bangladeshi versions of *Macbeth* is evident in the testimonies of Aly Zaker and Israfeel

Shaheen. An unrelenting determination of Macbeth, for instance, in pursuit of seizure state-power

makes him an appealing character of intrinsic resemblance to play on the stages in the context of

Bangladesh (Zaker; Shaheen'). The tragic appeal of the play is laid in the inherent cause of

suffering of Macbeth: "a man who is split in two directions, who commits murder to become a

King, and suffers every moment once he is King" (Garber 700). Likewise, Andrzej Wajda, Polish

theatre director, reimagines *Macbeth* according to the "themes of crime and punishment"

(Williams 29). Wajda's argument supports Bangladeshi theatre artists' political perception about

the aesthetic appeal of Macbeth's murder and suffering, crime and punishment. As Leon Harold

Craig argues, "In short, Macbeth is a strange combination of [this] contemplative and the impetus,

which may partly explain why we find him so fascinating, intrigued by what he says, appalled by

what he does. Because he lacks the prudential judgement to bridge his inner life of reflection and outer realm of action, his frame of things is disjointed and 'both the worlds suffer.'" (37)

The idea of suffering not only consumed both the inner life of the character and the outer life of the world but also played a catalytic role in creating a "collaborative aesthetics". It emerged due to the crossover of Shakespeare's *Macbeth* and the Bangladeshi context. To explain "collaborative aesthetics", Fischer-Lichte argues:

> In performance, new forms of social coexistence may be tried out, or they simply emerge. In this sense, processes of interweaving performance cultures can and quite often do provide an experimental framework for experiencing the utopian potential of culturally diverse and globalised societies by realising an aesthetic which gives shape to unprecedented collaborative policies in society. ("Introduction" 11)

Therefore, the "collaborative aesthetics" generates "a new kind of transformative aesthetics" through "the process of interweaving" in performance cultures. Bangladeshi productions of *Macbeth* also played a role in creating a transcendental theatrical idiom that brought a voice of protest and resistance against the institutional power. These theatrics also generated, as Fischer-Lichte would say, "intracultural processes of differentiation, negotiation, and inter-weaving" (14). In his essay, "Forms of Time and of the Chronotope in the Novel: Notes toward a Historical Poetics," Mikhail Bakhtin states:

> [W]e get a mutual interaction between the world represented in the work and the world outside the work....[B]efore us are two events—the event that is narrated in the work and the event of narration itself.... [T]hese two events are indissolubly united in a single but complex event that we might call the work in the totality of all its events, including the

external material givenness of the work, and its text, and the world represented in the text, and the author-creator and the listener or reader,- thus we perceive the fullness of the work in all its wholeness and indivisibility, but at the same time we understand the diversity of the elements that constitute it. (Bakhtin 255)

Bakhtinian semiotics thus informs that the continuous circulation of signs creates an "indissolubly united" and complex relationship between "inside" (text) and "outside" (context). Arguably, Bangladeshi *Macbeth*s, by their signs, created an indivisible one wherein inside and outside mingled with each other. It can be more traceable if Bakhtin's idea of "chronotope" is defined. Chronotope "is both dialogical and dialectical principle" (Shevtsova 60). Bakhtinian "chronotopes" sustain agency in a specific spatio-temporal sphere of a created external world which validates a socio-cultural analysis for performance. As Maria Shevtsova argues:

[T]ime and space/places are indissociable because agents act on something with someone in a spatial and temporal dimension. Chronotopes, then, exist in the social world and delineate, limit, and revitalise socio-cultural and historical contexts. Time is always social and, consequently, relative. Space is made and filled. . . . The Distinctiveness of a performance is determined by the way the time-space is created. (58)

Bangladeshi performances of *Macbeth* as Bakhtinian "chronotopes" generated new meaning at the time, when a series of criminal homicides took place, and the space, which became politically confined. Because the text not only overlaps the context, but the former becomes the same as the latter. Shevtsova argues, "[T]he interrelationship between a work and its context is examined via the idea that context is not a matter of mere background, or of a dualistic split between society and theatre art, but is integral to the theatrical processes . . ." (45).

The theatrical processes of *Macbeth* productions in Bangladesh transcend the dualistic split between theatre and society wherein *Macbeth*, "serves as an example of how narrative tropes can overcome historical evidence" (Lasik). Exploring the strategies of state and brutal mechanism of institutional power, the cases of *Macbeth* productions, thus, reconstruct the contemporary historical facts, events and happenings of Bangladesh through the fictional narrative of Shakespeare, which "sought to question political authority" against the "suppression under the pressure of official strategies of idealization" (Tennenhouse 125).

Critical Narratives of *The Tempest* Productions

This section aims to understand how theatrical production and reception of the Shakespearean canon has impacted the modern and contemporary cultural landscape in Bangladesh through a dialogue between two cultures (source culture of the text and receiving culture of the play), examining two theatrical cases of the appropriation of Shakespeare in theatre. Therefore, this section critically revisits and scrutinizes two theatre productions of Shakespearean romance, *The Tempest*, produced in Dhaka, at first, in 1987, and then in 2012. The section focuses on these productions in terms of translation, creation (rehearsal and performance) and reception. Employing the primary data along with secondary sources, this section applies the semiotic method of performance analysis and critical theories to situate the productions of *The Tempest* in a socio-aesthetic context of this region. This section will proceed through three subsections: (a) Renaissance Humanism and Postcolonial Narratives, (b) The Aesthetic Subversion of an Analytical Guerrilla in 1987, (c) Dhaka Theatre's Osmosis of "Bangla Natyariti" and the "Strangeness" of Shakespeare's Story.

Renaissance Humanism and Colonial Narratives

One of Shakespeare's most powerful plays, generically defined as a romance, is *The Tempest*, understood by many modern critics, such as Marjorie Garber, "from two important perspectives: as a fable of art and creation, and as a colonialist allegory" (852). The first school of interpretation follows the humanism of European Renaissance, as Garber argues, "The ideas of Renaissance humanism and the place of the artist/playwright/magician offers a story of mankind at the center of the universe, of 'man' as creator and authority" (852). The critique understands that the ontology of this analytical method is "aesthetic, philosophical, and skeptical" (852). It is argued that

"Prospero is man-the-artist, or man-the-scholar: Ariel and Caliban represent his ethereal and material selves—the one airy, imaginative, and swift; the second earthy, gross and appetitive" (852). Garber figures out the whole gamut of liberal apolitical humanist interpretation of *The Tempest* into three categories: the macrocosmic design, the microcosmic structure, and the humanist doctrine. In the macrocosmic design of *The Tempest*: "Caliban is a spirit of earth and water, Ariel a spirit of fire and air, and together they are elements harnessed by Prospero, here a kind of magician and wonder-worker closely allied to Renaissance science. Together these figures give us a picture of the world" (853-4). The microcosmic structure of *The Tempest* provides "a mirror of the human psyche," as Garber interprets that "Caliban, who is necessary and burdensome, the libido, the id, a 'thing of darkness' who must be acknowledged; Ariel the spirit of imagination incarnate, who cannot be possessed forever, and therefore must be allowed to depart" (854). The third category, the humanist doctrine of Renaissance philosophy, illustrates the Shakespearean play's design of "mankind." Shakesperaean mankind is "a little lower than the angels, caught between the bestial and the celestial, a creature of infinite possibilities. In all of these patterns Prospero stands between the poles marked by Ariel and Caliban" (854).

The second perspective of interpretation proposes that *The Tempest* narrates a colonial narrative of European "early modern voyages of exploration and discovery, "first contact," and the encounters with, and exploitation of, indigenous peoples in the New world" (854). English early modern history reveals that "during the years when *The Tempest* was written and first performed, Europe, and England in particular, was in the heyday of the period of colonial exploration" (854). The colonialist reading, therefore, seeks a postcolonial meaning of the play within a political context rather than the idealized aesthetic hermeneutics, as Garber argues:

>*The Tempest* is not idealizing, aesthetic, and "timeless," but rather topical, contextual,
>"political," and in dialogue with the times. Yet manifestly this dichotomy will break down,
>both in literary analysis and in performance. It is perfectly possible for a play about a mage,
>artist, and a father to be, at the same time, a play about a colonial governor, since Prospero
>himself is, or was, the Duke of Milan. His neglect of his ducal responsibilities ("rapt in
>secret studies," he allowed his brother to scheme against him) led first to his usurpation
>and exile, then to his establishment of an alternative government on the island, displacing
>and enslaving the native inhabitant Caliban, whose mother, Sycorax, had ruled there before
>Prospero's arrival and who, as Caliban says, "first was mine own king." (854)

Shakespeare's late romance *The Tempest* thus interweaves an apolitical humanism of the Renaissance and the colonial political allegory within its very fictional fabrication. The multivocalities of the text allures many theatre artists around the world to reconstruct it in response to their own contextual histories and human conditions. The story of shipwreck and magic with its colonial allegory as well as the polyphonic semiotics, are profoundly evident in two theatre works that produced in Dhaka in Bangladesh.

The Aesthetic Subversion of an Analytical Guerrilla in 1987

***Heterogenous Site of Theatrical Act*:** Bangladeshi theatre spectated a collaborative venture of a heterogenous site generated by the staging of *The Tempest* in 1987 while the Bangladesh Centre of the International Theatre Institute (ITI, Bangladesh Centre) conjoined the Dhaka British council, which invited Deborah Warner, a distinguished theatre director of England, to direct this play. The organisers also initiated a workshop led by Warner to cast the actors, whereas many enthusiastic performers from the various theatre groups of Dhaka participated to be selected. Tanvir

Mokammel, a well-known film maker and cultural critic, describes this process of casting as a pioneering footstep to emphasize the reciprocal existence of collectivity among the urban theatre groups in Bangladesh (qtd. in Harun 276). Apart from the fourteen performers, who were selected to be the cast of *The Tempest*, from the different theatre groups, Syed Jamil Ahmed, an eminent theatre designer, director, pedagogue, and scholar, who then was a freelancer, was also involved in this project to design set, light and costume. Preeminent writer Syed Shamsul Haque again had been invited to translate the play into Bengali. The mode of organisation and participation in producing *The Tempest*, thus, made it a heterogenous site that created a critical forum for creative acts, instead of naïve understanding. As Øivind Varkøy would argue that "tendencies in our societies - tendencies toward uniformity, sameness, and homogeneity-which in the worst case could lead to a simple and naïve understanding of life, society, and culture" (Varkøy 5).

Theatre of Reflection and "Hidden behind the Surface": How *The Tempest* embraced such a creative process beyond the "naïve understanding of life" is reflected in interviews I have taken to explore the first-hand experiential knowledge about Shakespearean practice in Bangladesh. For instance, Israfeel Shaheen, a distinguished director and academic, who also acted the role of Sebastian in that production, indicates that Deborah Warner as the director appeared to the performers like a co-creator: "her process of directing the rehearsal was collaborative and participatory." Syed Jamil Ahmed, the designer of the production, also argues in a personal interview that Warner attempted to direct *The Tempest* against the typical aesthetic procedure that was followed in the early *Macbeth*[8] production in the 1980s in Dhaka. Arguably, *The Tempest*

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[8] *The Tragedy of Macbeth* is one of the most performed Shakespearean plays. Called "the Scottish Play" superstitiously, it deals with the theme of tyrannical power, state and ontology of political desire. This

reflected a shift from the canonical Shakespearean practice, as Ahmed defines it as a continuation of Peter Brook's revolutionary production *A Midsummer Night's Dream* in the 1970s at the RSC (Royal Shakespeare Company) in the UK. Ahmed's interview provides clues to understand Brook's legacy as the theatre of reflection. Brook determines this art form a mirror by quoting Shakespeare: "I am holding a mirror—we hold a mirror up to nature" ("Evoking" 22). The theatre of reflection can be elaborated by taking the idea of making visible the unseen, as Brook states, "A true mirror of life is never cultural, never artificial, it reflects what is there. And a theatre does not only show the surface, [but] it [also] shows what is hidden behind the surface, in the intricate social interrelations of the people and, behind that, what is the ultimate existential meaning of this activity called life—all of these go together, and are shown in the great mirror" (23).

In *The Tempest* in Dhaka in 1987, Deborah Warner employed Brook's creative method of exploring the "hidden behind the surface." As one of the actors of the production, Shaheen states that Deborah established a democratic process where performers were able to participate freely to explore the sub-textual or subterranean meaning of Shakespeare's text, as if Deborah listened carefully to Brook's warning while rehearsing *The Tempest* in Dhaka: "You have to ask yourself as director: are you in touch with all the levels of writing which are rich, fruitful and meaningful and life-giving as much today as in the past. . . . You can do what you want—but one must recognise the gap between a crude modernising of a text and the amazing potential within it that is being ignored" (Brook, "Evoking" 25). To understand Warner's "life-giving" process of theatre-

tragedy has been produced many times in Bangladesh. Here Syed Jamil Ahmed indicates the production that was created in 1982 in Dhaka by the British Council in collaboration with two renowned theatre group, Theatre and Nagorik Natyasampraday, while Christopher Sandford directed it.

making, Rupert Christiansen, writer and critic, elaborates that Warner's "approach transcends national barriers and cultures – to a remarkable degree, her productions have travelled globally, their resonances subtly transformed by exposure to different environments and atmospheres. Skeptical of the conventional division between stage and auditorium, she has a keen interest in exploring 'found' spaces, both large and small" (Christiansen).

Postcolonial legacy against the Colonial Canon: The atypical, collaborative and transcendental creativity of Dhaka's *The Tempest* can be comprehended by borrowing from Kamaluddin Nilu, a distinguished Bangladeshi theatre director and teacher, who also worked on Aimé Césaire's *A Tempest* in the neighbour country India, as "a non-canonical way." Being informed by many postcolonial cultural theoreticians, Nilu argues that Shakespeare's *The Tempest* has been considered "as a reading of colonial expansion, and Prospero emerges as the archetypical paternal figure of colonial domination and authority" in this region (116). In this regard, he considers Paolo Frassinelli's statement as a reminder that "*The Tempest* is an allegory of the colonial encounter and of master-slave dialectics …" (116). Frassinelli signals "the transformative role of Caliban," which is defined strikingly by Césaire: "Caliban is also a rebel – the positive hero, in a Hegelian sense. The slave is always more important than his master – for it is the slave who makes history" (Frassinelli 181).

If Césaire's deconstruction of Shakespeare's *The Tempest* attempted to let the slave make history, Warner's working on the original *The Tempest* rejects the typical aesthetic canon of Shakespearean performance in Dhaka (Ahmed, "Interview"). Against the grain of colonial discourse, Warner set a method to empower the performers who were considered not the colonial object but the postcolonial subject of the creative agency (Shaheen). As the *Sunday Times* critic John Peter writes of Warner's visionary theatre "[it] is an adventure, a journey of the mind, a

discovery of other ages, other countries, other people, other minds" (qtd. in Christiansen). To understand Warner's sense of "other", it is fruitful to remember here Caliban's strategic warning about how Prospero can be defeated:

> Remember
> First to possess his books; for without them
> He's but a sot, as I am, nor hath not
> One spirit to command. They all do hate him
> As rootedly as I. Burn but his books (Shakespeare, *The Tempest* 3.2.92–96).

Warner, the white director as Prospero, thus transformed herself using the creative strategy of burning her own "books" which symbolize the colonial arsenal of knowledge, to make way for theatre arts of *The Tempest* in a former British colony. Thus, she employed the notion of "decolonisation" as a "critical methodology" in her creative process in Dhaka in 1987. As Pramod K. Nayar argues, "Decolonisation seeks freedom from colonial forms of thinking, to revive native, local and vernacular forms of knowledge by questioning and overturning European categories and epistemologies" (3). The process of decolonisation in the creation of *The Tempest* can be traced back when Shaheen reminisces: "Warner never tried to make a scene by herself. She never imposed any ideas upon us, and she didn't dictate to us. Instead, she inspired us to explore our very own understanding of a particular scene or a character. I think she wanted us to explore our collective souls. In doing so, she set a process that valued much actor's point of view rather than the director's points."

Similarly, being informed by the interview of Shankar Sawjal, who played Caliban in *The Tempest*, Harun argues that the proficient director got profit from letting the actors imagine and think freely (277). The process the director of *The Tempest* followed thus questioned the stereotypical representation of colonial discourse, as Nayar would argue:

Colonial discourse is the construction of the native, usually in stereotypical ways, in European narratives, images and representations in a variety of modes and genres such as the arts, literature, the law, science writing and administrative reports. The native is constructed as primitive, depraved, pagan, criminal, immoral, vulnerable and effeminate in colonial discourse. Such a discourse then constructs a reality where future European administrators would not only see the native through the lens of this discourse, but also enact policies or initiate political-administrative measures because they believe in the truth-claims of the discourse. Discourse becomes, in other words, the mode of perceiving, judging and acting upon the non-European.

The Role of Moral Complexity in Directing as Decolonising: The creative process of *The Tempest*, which has been hailed by many who either participated as actor or designer, is also evident in Christiansen's reflections on its director's working procedures in general: "Warner's process requires long, rigorous, and intensely exploratory rehearsal periods and she commits to a continual development of interpretation throughout a production's lifespan of runs and revivals. . . ." Again, Christiansen states, "Over four decades, Deborah Warner has constantly extended theatrical boundaries and redefined the vocabulary of performance through an oeuvre of rare consistency and integrity marked by its raw energy, sharp wit and moral complexity." Arguably, the "moral complexity" triggered her to transcend the colonial positionality of constructing natives stereotypically. Therefore, she navigated the method for improvisation and playfulness to explore the text by the performers within the rigorous rehearsal process of *The Tempest* (Ahmed, "Interview"; Shaheen).

Negotiating the Cultural Difference in Rehearsal and Translation: Warner faced a cultural difference in the process of rehearsing *The Tempest* in Dhaka. As Judith Cook notes, "The

problems lie elsewhere. You're dealing [a] different culture, unused to the rude honesty of the rehearsal room. I'm used to actors telling me what they think and if they really don't want to do something I need to know. Bengalis are always very polite and they didn't want to tell me if they didn't like something so that took some working out" (qtd. in Harun 277). There was also an artistic problem of engaging "different language" and the behavioural difference in rehearsal in Dhaka. As Warner confesses to Cook: "In fact, it was premier of the play in Bangladesh and it was like nothing I've ever done before. It was an exciting enchanting time. What was interesting was that the area I was most frightened of, which was working in a different language" (qtd. in Harun 277). However, the problem of "different language" was tackled by Syed Shamsul Haque, the translator of *The Tempest*, who also translated Shakespeare's *Macbeth* and *Julius Cesear*[9] into Bengali. Critical reception of this performance confirms that the translation was successful since Haque avoided recreating Shakespeare's "word play." Instead, he endeavoured to maintain the dramatic quality of the script so that it could be performed easily and spontaneously in the Bengali language (Harun 276). In doing so, Haque maintained an "energy of relations" that can be comprehended using Brook's explanation of translational Shakespeare: "With Shakespeare the mysterious power is there even in translation, out of which comes the energy that can lead to performance. It is there in the characters, in their relations, in all the other aspects, and also in the ideas that are within his language—all of that leaves something tremendous even when this magical level of the words is diminished" ("Evoking" 27).

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[9] *Julius Caesar* is a subtle Shakespearean historical play of ethics and statecraft. Syed Shamsul Haque adapted and reimagined this play as *Gononayak*, which was produced by Chakrabak, a Dhaka based group theatre, in 1992.

Since I have examined Haque's translated script of *The Tempest*, it can be argued that in the act of translating *The Tempest* from Shakespearean English into contemporary Bengali, Haque restored the performativity of the text. To understand the translational method of rediscovering the textual purity that Haque employed, here, Brook can be rephrased: "he [had] to make a choice and simplify the line to rediscover its purity, at the expense of sacrificing some of what in English is part of its real value" (27). Thus, Haque's effective technique of translation saved the energy of the Bengali *The Tempest* from being "extraordinarily artificial, pompous and flowery" (Brook 27). Furthermore, according to Ahmed, Warner also worked with the translator residentially outside Dhaka city so that she could take part in the creative process of translating ("Interview"). Here Anthony Pym referred to what he discusses as theories of translation, based on Andrew Chesterman and Gayatri Spivak. The Sanskrit term "anuvad" or the Bengali term "anubad" "for written translation that basically means, I am told, 'repeating' or 'saying later'. . . . According to this alternative term, the main difference between one text and the other could be not in space, but in time. Translation can then be seen as a constant process of updating and elaborating, rather than as some kind of physical movement across cultures" (Pym 2).

If an act of translation is "a constant process of updating," then the Bengali translation of *The Tempest*, because of its processuality, became an act of transcultural creation that sought further possibility in the rehearsals. As Shaheen states that the verbal became the physical, which was considered as an organic part of the whole embodiment in the creative process of *The Tempest*.

Rediscovering the Empty Space of Less is More: *The Tempest* in Dhaka celebrated a nodal point of direction and design where the British director was from the former colonial master's country at one hand, and the designer and the performers were from such a country as the British colonised from 1757 to 1947, on the other. The creative process of *The Tempest* obtained a set of

new idioms in terms of not only directing and acting but also designing. When the graphic representation of symbolism was predominant in the urbanized practice of modern theatre in the late 1980s, *The Tempest* saw a "turning point" in terms of its innovation of staging vocabulary. As the designer Syed Jamil Ahmed illustrates,

> When I started theatre design, Bangladeshi theatre used to follow a normative ideal of the box set and simplified realism. I began diversified practices that mainly employed symbolist design, inspired from Adolphe Apia and Gordon Craig. In that time, I was also looking for a way to depart from the symbolism to get a new creative zeal in designing. In the context of the then Bangladeshi theatre, for me, *The Tempest* was a turning point in designing the space to perform the play's story effectively. Remarkably, Deborah Warner's creative method of directing also transmuted into my enthusiasm for a new design. She also wanted an open space indeed. (Interview)

In collaboration with the director, the designer created a space by removing the proscenium arch, borders and wings so as the stage had been turned into an "empty space." The back wall and sidewalls of the stage were also white. An intervention had also been possible to get the ceiling white, changing its previous black colour. Thus, it became absolutely a white box, and the light did not use any colour except the opening scene. The storm scene of the production opened in the dark, emphasizing the soundscape, to represent the shipwreck without employing any scenic representation. Performers used balloons to make the sound of breaking ships and representing the storms. Ahmed states, "I didn't use any scenic representation for the island or anything else. Rather, textual dialogues and actors' scenic embodiment expressed the stories and places" ("Interview"). He informs about the costume as well. Ariel wore blue Shari while the aristocrats wore silk Dhoti-pyjama (cross of Dhoti and Pyjama) and Punjabi. Prospero wore a jacket of patchwork, and the

surface was removed from it. Costumes of the production critically referred to a rejection of Victorian dresses. Instead, it enjoyed the culture-specificity of the performers' dress practices.

After all, Ahmed recalls that *The Tempest* was performed in a white cube (Interview). There was no apparent effort in designing to create any specific place and time for that production. Instead, the design reinforced the overall creative process, making an abstract space to perform the story of the play. Therefore, the performance could engage the audience simply but effectively (Ahmed, "Interview"). In 1987 in Dhaka, *The Tempest* sought, as Thea Bejzek would argue, "A rigorous engagement with questions of the body, of image and of dramatic representation." In doing so, the design of the production had not been "oscillated between a spatial and perspectival understanding (spatial representation) on the one hand and a surface and decorative understanding (graphic representation) on the other" (Bejzek). Hence, being informed by Ahmed's interview, what I understand that can be articulated by borrowing again from Brejzek, *The Tempest* sharply employed the "spatial representation" rather than the "graphic representation" in order to disapprove "decorative elements in favour of the modernist dictum 'Less is more.'"

Moreover, Brejzek argues, "In the performative environments of productively 'blurred genres' between theatre and architecture, the discipline's twentieth-century battles for dominance between the tectonic (structural, meaningful) in architecture and the scenographic (decorative, effect-producing) in theatre have simply evaporated". The argument helps me to relate Ahmed's testimony about the collaborative practice of *The Tempest*, which also attempted to evaporate the difference between "the tectonic" and "the scenographic" in designing. Therefore, Dhaka witnessed such a production in 1987 that regained the essential ephemerality of theatre. As Brejzek argues, "The realisation of theatre does not comprise the material realisation of the model box, but

encompasses beyond the stage design the entire mise-en-scène for the duration of the performance. Theatre thus is realised in the ephemeral, unrepeatable live performance".

Postcolonialist critics argue that the anti-colonialist theatrical canon from Africa to South Asia often celebrates the multiplicity of human history and shapes their theatrical narratives to accommodate, and sometimes oppose, colonial [Shakespearean] dramaturgy and Euro-centric theatre studies (Crow and Banfield 10-11). In this line of practice, arguably, *The Tempest* production also negated the Euro-centric way of Proscenium Arch staging and set a political shift of theatrical narrative. As Brejzek would argue, "The shift towards an understanding of space as social practice, as dynamic rather than static and political rather than neutral. . . ."

Nilu describes the colonial context that "Shakespeare has been rooted in India's [Bengal's] public theatre since the 1750s, when the Old Playhouse was established in Calcutta." He argues that "such theatre spaces are the footstep of the 'imperishable Empire of Shakespeare" (118). In this line of argument, he quotes a Shakespeare critic Parmita Kapadia: "Initially, Shakespeare was simply transported to India [Bengal] and imposed on the colony" (118). R. K. Yajnik argues, "The new theatre came full-fledged. There was no question of the model to be followed. [Bengali] simply adopted the mid-Victorian stage with all its accessories of painted scenery, costume, and make-up" (103). Ahmed suggests that *The Tempest* rejected colonial mimicry of mid-Victorian staging strategies and accessories. Instead, it celebrated an innovated space of emptiness where stories were performed on the limitless imaginative mind of the audience. It had been possible due to the collaborative method that was practised "so honestly" in the rehearsal of *The Tempest* (Ahmed, "Interview"). Kate Burnett argues, "The collaborative dialogue and exploration of the design and rehearsal process build a production that both responds to the original material and derives from its cultural and socio-political context". Moreover, I have perceived from the

interviews of the actors and designer that the collaborative process of *The Tempest* could best be realised by identifying the phases that are followed in many Shakespearean productions:

> A first stage of any new design or piece of writing might be to interrogate the source materials from a range of perspectives and to research related or tangential materials. The second stage would be to make the evolving piece "their own", whether the working team be auteur/director, or close creative team, or an ensemble model of company creativity. The creeping authorship of this stage gives way to a third stage of performance and engagement with the audience/readers; a fourth stage sees the cycle renewed by the resulting and differing "readings" and "writings" made and found in response to the original, by artists, audience and critics. (Burnett)

Example of a Unique Creative Device: The creative process Deborah Warner followed in the production of *The Tempest*, invented some wonderful devices (Ahmed, "Interview"). Ariel (Ferdousi Majumder), for instance, never stared at Prospero (Aly Zaker). Prospero always looked at the broken glass and attempted to call on her. Ariel's movement was prolonged, and Prospero always tried to talk to her through the glass, not the direct gaze. Bangladeshi theatre, thus, witnessed an excellent example of performing magic that signified the politics of innovation based on alternative facts of new aesthetics.

Dilettante vs Analytical Guerrilla: The performance making process of *The Tempest*, as Ahmed claims, was neither the illusionist nor the false ("Interview"). The creative process appropriated an empty space, localised costume, white light and the truthfulness of actors' psycho-social embodiment to play the magical story through an unbound spontaneity. Ahmed also refers to Deborah Warner's word "dilettante", which she used to designate the actors of *The Tempest* in the context of amateur theatre practice in Bangladesh ("Interview"). Ahmed argues that "the

production was a missed opportunity for the actors" since they could not reveal their true selves enough ("Interview"). On the contrary, Shaheen claims that *The Tempest* was a significant production as it primarily aimed to set a process of revealing the actors' "inner" selves. The actor (Israfeel Shaheen) emphasizes the creative process, while the designer (Syed Jamil Ahmed) underlines the acting quality as the aesthetic outcome of the finished production. A significant proportion of testimonies show that *The Tempest* production was successful due to its employment of improvisation in acting, focusing on the exploration of the cultural body and its subversive energy (Zaker; Shaheen; Harun 277). The actors' creative roles in the production of *The Tempest*, therefore, can be articulated, using Della Pollock's performance theory (1-45) that focuses on the body as "the ultimate site of hegemonic reproduction/disruption, forms a powerful analytical space" (Gallegos 124) wherein a performer engages in James C. Scott's "undeclared ideological guerrilla war" (137) of a particular socio-cultural context.

Hence, a Bangladeshi production *The Tempest* initiated, in terms of translation, direction, design and acting, a shift from the canonical/colonial Shakespearean practice in this region. I will argue, using a critical statement on a Korean *Tempest*, the Bangladeshi *Tempest* reconfigured the "aesthetics from text-centered modernism to the performance-centered" invention (Kwon). The critical review and historical revisit of *The Tempest* production show a unique aesthetic example of a Shakespearean practice that depended more on the interaction of imagined space and creative body and cultural translation of the play rather than the mimicry of literariness of the drama. Therefore, the creative strategy of *The Tempest* production enjoyed a symbiotic relationship in making art on the one hand; it reimagined both the humanist narrative and political allegory of Shakespearean drama by operating an analytical guerrilla that subverted the orthodox canon of making theatre, on the other.

Dhaka Theatre's Adaptation of *The Tempest*: Osmosis of Bangla Natyariti and the Strangeness of Shakespeare's Story

Dhaka Theatre, one of the leading and pro-active theatre groups in Bangladesh, produced an adaptation of *The Tempest*, as part of Shakespeare's Globe to Globe Festival, held in London in 2012. Apart from the staging at London's Globe Theatre, the troupe performed about 15 nights the acclaimed production across Bangladesh and India. In order to read the signs and signifying system of the production, I shall use the critical notion of "orientalism", particularly, and the post-colonialism, generally, as well as contemporary unorthodox performance theories. Primarily, this section re-reads the reviews that Western and Bangladeshi local media published after *The Tempest* performance at Globe, to examine how Dhaka theatre's adaptation of Shakespeare was received both at the global and local sphere. The historical reading will also inform how imperialist ideology has been practiced under the British nationalist discourse, making Shakespeare its fundamental cultural capital from the mid-17th to the mid-18th century. Finally, being informed by the several textual criticisms and post-structuralist reading about the relationship between Shakespeare and space, this section will outline how Dhaka Theatre created its post-colonial project through an adaptation of *The Tempest* as a discursive site against the early and contemporary colonialism (neo-imperialism and neo-liberal globalisation), following a process of osmosis.

Dhaka Theatre aims to create a distinct national cultural identity in Bangladesh. Nasir Uddin Yusuff, 'a freedom fighter' of Bangladesh Liberation War and an eminent theatre and film

director, along with Selim Al-Deen,[10] founded the theatre group, immediately after the country's independence. Al-Deen and Yusuff duo has created many acclaimed productions based on the voyage towards rediscovering the cultural "roots" of Bengal since the troupe formed in 1973 (Shazu). Dhaka Theatre has been performing mainly Al-Deen's anti-colonial scripts since its formation. Exceptionally, Dhaka Theatre adapted Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, as a post-colonial narrative in 2012 (Yusuff "Interview"). It was directed by Nasiruddin Yusuff and adapted by Rubayet Ahmed. The production was subsequently presented in Dhaka and London, as part of the Globe to Globe Festival.

    ***Reading the Production against the Orientalist Reception*:** Dhaka Theatre's *The Tempest* production received many criticisms from London and Dhaka based media. I shall argue that these reviews show the exterior of the production, on the one hand. But these miss the political semiotics of the production, on the other. Thus, the production has been entrapped by contemporary orientalist discourse's instrument of othering. I will re-read these mainstream media

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[10] Selim Al-Deen (1949-2008): a distinguished playwright, a pioneering theatre academic and post-colonial performance theorist in Bangladesh. Al-Deen was one of the co-founders of Dhaka Theatre and the regular playwright and theoretician of that theatre troupe until he died in 2008. He was the leading theoretician of the "theatre of the roots" in Bangladesh. Being informed and motivated by the revivalism of pre-colonial traditional aesthetics of theatrical performances of Bengal, Al-Deen had advocated a narrative form of playwriting and acting to negate the cultural colonialism that imposed the proscenium stage and the conflict-based dialogic form of drama. When he founded a full-fledged department of "Drama and Dramatics" in a public university, Jahangirnagar University in 1986, one other public university ran such a department in Bangladesh. Particularly after his death, he has been considered an immensely influential cultural icon, followed by many for his anti-Aristotelian plays, cultural nationalism, and post-colonial performance theory. However, remarkably, an ambivalence is found in the thought process of Selim Al-Deen, who would highly praise Shakespeare as a classic poet and as a timeless dramatic genius ignoring the colonial schema that introduced the Bard in British Bengal.

texts, using Edward W. Said's theorisation to exemplify how the neo-orientalist discourse, which functioned both in London and Dhaka, pertained to Shakespeare. According to Said:

> Orientalism is not a mere political subject matter or field that is reflected passively by culture, scholarship, or institutions; nor is it a large and diffuse collection of texts about the Orient; nor is it representative and expressive of some nefarious "Western" imperialist plot to hold down the "Oriental" world. It is rather a *distribution* of geopolitical awareness into aesthetic, scholarly, economic, sociological, historical, and philological texts; it is an *elaboration* not only of a basic geographical distinction (the world is made up of two unequal halves, Orient and Occident) but also of a whole series of "interests" which, by such means as scholarly discovery, philological reconstruction, psychological analysis, landscape and sociological description, it not only creates but also maintains; it *is*, rather than expresses, a certain *will* or *intention* to understand, in some cases to control, manipulate, even to incorporate, what is a manifestly different (or alternative and novel) world; it is, above all, a discourse that is by no means in direct, corresponding relationship with political power in the raw, but rather is produced and exists in an uneven exchange with various kinds of power, shaped to a degree by the exchange with power political (as with a colonial or imperial establishment), power intellectual (as with reigning sciences like comparative linguistics or anatomy, or any of the modern policy sciences), power cultural (as with orthodoxies and canons of taste, texts, values), as with ideas about what 'we' do and what 'they' cannot do or understand as 'we' do. (35)

The orientalist denigration of the contextual relevance is also evidenced in the reviews of *The Tempes*t. Imogen Tilden, *The Guardian*'s senior arts editor, has found Bangladesh as a problem-stricken country that is "troubled" by water. Tilden observes, "It's apt that in the middle of a

dismally wet spring, a play that begins with a storm and ends with a sea voyage is performed by a group of actors from a land itself troubled by water." The orientalist way of understanding *The Tempest* can best be explained here by using Said's theory that "[r]eflection, debate, rational argument, moral principle based on a secular notion that human beings must create their own history have been replaced by abstract ideas that celebrate American or Western exceptionalism, denigrate the relevance of context, and regard other cultures with derisive contempt" (23-24). The "rational argument" Said suggests, has been replaced, in Tilden's journalistic review of *The Tempest*, by the ideas of the superior European subjectivity as the reviewer (Tilden) and the Oriental backwardness as the reviewed (*The Tempest* production and its context, Bangladesh, which is identified as "a land itself troubled by water"). Said's argument can be considered here to problematise the reception of the production. As he argues, "In a quite constant way, Orientalism depends for its strategy on this flexible positional superiority, which puts the Westerner in a whole series of possible relationships with the Orient without ever losing him the relative upper hand" (30).

The *Guardian* reviewer, for instance, observes, "Dhaka Theatre's Tempest . . . is short on words but strong on both music and dancing, reflecting the company's taste for mixing traditional forms of performance with more modern ideas." Moreover, Tilden states that Dhaka Theatre's *The Tempest* was "short on words" but "strong on music and dance" in a generalised mode of explanation. At the same time, she intends to label the performance as hybrid as it mixed the "traditional" with the "modern," without explaining the terms. As a result, this review resonates with the Orientalist hegemony of circulating what is "truth" (Said 47). In addition, Tilden's review imparts quantitative presence on the stage and qualitative aspects of costume and movements of

the production. The critic reflects the orientalist strategy when she fantasizes drummers' beat describing "frenetic rhythms". As Tilden states:

> The 13-strong cast (11 actors, two musicians) are dressed in pale traditional costumes with bright patches of colour – green, yellow, red. Gestures and stylised movements establish characters: Ariel, played by a woman whose hair flows down her back almost to her legs, is shrouded in a midnight-blue gauze to perform her magic, while Prospero's charms are evoked by two drummers who beat frenetic rhythms on double-headed hand drums while leaping and whirling.

It seems that the reviewer pats Dhaka Theatre on its back as a "multi-skilled company." As she writes, "Shakespeare's concerns in *The Tempest* are universal ones – power, love, betrayal, revenge and forgiveness – and these are sketched in broad brushstrokes by the multi-skilled company" (Tilden). The "universal Shakespeare" framework that Tilden pursues necessitates the colonial phenomenology that also legitimises a dominant discourse of apolitical appropriation of Shakespeare. The ethnocentric characteristic allows *Guardian* criticism "of failing to acknowledge a country's historical, political, and cultural specificity" (Gilbert and Tompkins, "Post-colonial Drama"10). Universalism, as an aesthetical-political proponent of Orientalist discourse, diminishes the cultural multiplicities. As Gilbert and Tompkins argues:

> [U]niversalist criticism whereby a text is said to speak to readers all around the world because it espouses, for example, universal principles of life. Texts which apparently radiate such 'universal truths' have usually been removed from their social and historical setting. Although it is a favourite catch-cry of theatre critics, the 'universal theme' allows no appreciation of cultural difference. (10)

The Guardian's review, thus, revives the predominant grain of Anglo-centered Shakespearean Studies. Contrarily, an author demonstrates how "Shakespeare without his language" becomes the playwright of "cultural adaptation" rather than "literary translation" through a quasi-globalisation that problematises the hegemonic notion of anglicisation (Kennedy 1-2). Moreover, in reviewing Dhaka Theatre's *The Tempest*, Tilden squeezes Shakespeare by labelling with two terms, "modernity" and "traditionality." The reviewer does not explain the terms, as different schools of critical theories pose diverse categories and multi-faceted meanings of the terms. A critic, for instance, states that Shakespeare's plays have poetic ability to transcend linguistic, racial, and geographical barriers (Dickson, "Global"). A symbol of "liquid modernity" has made Shakespeare a "rhizomatic" figure'–decentred, irrepressible, erupting and disquietingly appropriate ("Global"). Moreover, Douglas Lanier argues, "To think rhizomatically about the Shakespearean text is to foreground its fundamentally adaptational nature—as a version of prior narratives, as a script necessarily imbricated in performance processes, as a text ever in transit between manuscript, theatrical and print cultures, as a work dependent upon its latter-day producers for its continued life" (29)

Tilden criticises the presentational mode of the performance while she seeks the Western method of characterization. As Tilden argues, "To my mind, the heart of the play lies in the relationship of Prospero and Ariel. Both here felt underplayed: Prospero lacked authority, while Ariel's presence was so diminished that she seemed little more than a supporting player." However, she praises the final scene for its beauty rather than its politics. As Tilden observes, "Their final scene, though, was beautifully realised – as Prospero grants Ariel her freedom, he stands behind her, arms loosely encircling her. She reaches up, stretching towards the infinite sky, poised to take flight, and laughs for joy." Though *The Guardian* reviewer does not undertake to comprehend the

political significance and postcolonial approach to *The Tempest* that the troupe attempted the production director has clearly demystified his aesthetical-political vision to revive pre-modern/pre-colonial cultural idiom of Bengali performances (Yusuff, "Interview").

Bernard Beckerman, a Western academic and theatre scholar, who reads performances against the Orientalist grain, argues, "In saying that an act-scheme 'represents' or 'signifies' an act-image, I am posing alternatives that raise the issue of the exact relationship between two types of acts, one that is purely presentational (the act-scheme), the other that may be purely imaginary (the act-image)" (102). To explain the relationship between the "act-scheme" and the "act-image", Beckerman determines:

> This relationship is partly determined by cultural conventions. Perhaps it might be more accurate to say that what we accept as representation actually consists of signs that are related in a fundamentally schematic manner. When the actor playing Lear 'dies' onstage, he exemplifies the elements of act-scheme; he recognises a sequence of 'failing signs' to convey cessation of breathing and relaxation of muscles in order to 'indicate' rather than to 'mirror' or 'represent' the process of dying. (102)

The Guardian reviewer ignores decoding the locational codifying system of the "indication" rather than the realistic representation of the character as a specific cultural convention of the "act-scheme." As Beckerman argues:

> How cultural conventions influence the act-scheme is not easy to determine. If we compare death scenes in Kabuki with death scenes in Shakespeare, no sharp distinctions emerge. Both types of performance utilise contextual patterns, although Kabuki actors appear to be able to abstract the pattern more completely than our contemporary actors of Shakespeare.

> Kabuki actors can, for example, create an impression of life seeping out of a body by slowing down their stage activity. (102)

On the contrary, Tilden's review hegemonises to require a compulsory universal matrix of "mirror-like representation" and a realistic module of acting rather than understanding the signifying system of "Asian/Oriental," in general, and Bengali performance aesthetics of creating "an impression of life," in particular. The universalist review misleads the adaptation of *The Tempest*, instead of understanding "the making of the theatre—the choice of working method, topic, form and style" (Goodman 19). The Orientalist review uses merely the Good Samaritan (humanitarian) fashion, while the post-colonial parable as the subtext of this production is plainly missing:

> This adaptation sees human concerns take centre-stage – Miranda and Ferdinand's marriage is celebrated by a rousing song and dance, while the final tableau is not of Ariel being freed, nor of Prospero turning away from his magic, but of Caliban standing tall on a makeshift throne, clutching the conch shell Prospero has handed him, symbolising his kingship of the now-empty island. (Tilden)

Similarly, John Farndon, a Western critic, writes another orientalist review, published not in the UK but a leading Bangladeshi English newspaper, *The Daily Star*. As Farndon observes:

> Shakespeare's "The Tempest" is an extraordinary play. Written at a time when Britain had barely begun to embark on its colonial age, "The Tempest" ends with the exiled Duke Prospero choosing to end his rule over the natives of some distant isle and offer them their freedom. It is this strikingly modern message of power-sharing and toleration that the Dhaka Theatre's production of the play brings home to Shakespeare's Globe, the reconstruction of the famous open air theatre in London where the play was first performed 401 years ago.

Also, Bangladeshi newspaper review entraps *The Tempest* production by the Orientalist discourse, privileging the West (Prospero as coloniser) as a superior entity in terms of strategic locationality and humanism. The review offers a reading of the production where the freedom is gifted and given by authority (as Prospero) to the subject (as Caliban). This review also suppresses Shakespeare's play-text that also problematizes colonialist humanism and exposes indigenous resistance as well as complex poetic mystery and layers of a magical story (Garber 852-854). Besides, Fardon's review uncovers the reviewer's ambivalence in defining the aesthetic strategy of theatre-making, concerning how the synthesis occurs within a double-bind text. For instance, Fardon states:

> Rather than focusing on Prospero's individual journey to understanding, acclaimed Bangladeshi director Nasiruddin Yousuff instead explores the play's colonial themes -- and in doing so underlines how both relevant and timeless Shakespeare is. At the end, tellingly, in a subtle change to Shakespeare's original, Prospero (Rubol Noor Lodi) doesn't simply free his native slave Caliban but hands him the conch shell that symbolises the rule of the island.

Here, this review also (mis)reads that the production symbolises a peaceful handover of political power, which signifies a passivity of colonised as well as the generous magnanimity of colonizer.

Both Orientalist reviews focus on visual vocabulary, characterisation and themes, while another critic, Peter Culshaw, illustrates the Orientalised fantasy of "high-energy singing and dancing" of Dhaka Theatre's production. As Culshaw states:

> The adaptation included snippets of well-known Bengali folk tunes – drinking songs for Stephano, wedding tunes and so on. The exotic element even for Bengalis came with a couple of Manipuri drummers, spirits who somersaulted with their drums. Ariel was

covered in blue gauze and played by Shimul Youssuf with a terrific voice singing high

classical alaaps, which was a useful counterpoint to all the rhythmic energy.

Additionally, in an orientalist manner, Culshaw exoticises the Manipuri elements, the production

had interiorised, without consulting any evidence or logical ground in this review. This review too,

therefore, fails to signify the intercultural and interlocutory potential of the performance of Dhaka

Theatre's *The Tempest*. In Heraclitean flux of culture, "when the performing arts pose more

questions than answers, more strategies than univocal messages" then a review "should mirror a

collective state of mind that is speculative and interlocutory" (Campbell 2).

When the reviewer generated a biased gaze through their criticism, the director of *The

Tempest*, aimed to incorporate other ethnic elements, such as ethno-musical and choreographic

idioms from Manipuri communities, to problematize the dominance of unilinear Bengali cultural

nationalism in Bangladesh (Yousuff, "Interview"). Dhaka Theatre's assimilation of the Manipuri

performance aesthetics regains a metaphysical signification within its political subversion of linear

Bengali nationalism. Sydur Rahman Lipon argues that the world vision of Manipuri community is

based on their theological notion of self-knowledge (94). According to Manipuri philosophy,

"deho" (body) is exterior or the "physical realities" while "atma" (soul) is interior or the "psychical

realities." Both are expressed in the awareness of "advaita" (non-dual), which considers that the

"universal phenomenon" can be tasted by the "ultimate experience" through the narrative dance

performance, wherein body is 'Brindabon' (the holy pilgrimage) as the creative site of "rasa"

[essence or the aesthetic flavor] (Lipon 94-99). Hence, Manipuri drumming and dance had been

assimilated in the production to transcend the unilinear cultural codification, creating the metaphor

of metaphysical movement to understand the realities and phenomena of the human world.

Culshaw also misconceives the production's localised way of characterisation. As he states, "This was all partly because of the production's semi-successful attempt to use gestures and stylised movements to signify character." The review fails to decode the specific signifying system of the production that intended to achieve "a stylisation and direct contact with the audience" (Yousuff "Interview"). Anti-illusionist performance theory can be engaged to read *The Tempest* production against the Orientalist discourse to delimit the analysing process. As Bernard Beckerman argues:

> But with the breakdown of the self-enclosed system of naturalism and the rising interest in popular and alternative theatrical forms, the open involvement of the audience in performance has come into the circle of interest. The virtual disappearance of the stage curtain, the spread of variants of the open stage, and the loosening of dramatic causality have further enhanced the directness of the actor. As a result, many plays now utilise narrators, commentators, or confidants to promote an exchange with the audience. (115)

This review does not explore the production's aesthetics of intimacy between the performers and the audience. As Culshaw states:

> If the emotional resonances of the play seemed muted in the first half, the scenes of forgiveness, the renunciation of Prospero and the marriage of Miranda and Ferdinand did bring some spiritual depth. But here the climactic moments featured the liberation of Ariel, who danced and laughed for joy, and, even more so, Caliban on a makeshift throne, blowing a conch, all deformity gone. This was a post-colonial reading of the play, in which freedom from oppression by the magic-wielding colonialists gave rise to hope.

A problematic ambivalence is seen in Culshaw's review that seeks "climactic moments" or the climax as the structural elements of the drama that Aristotelian poetics suggests, on the one

hand. The review reads that the production employed a "post-colonial reading" of Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, on the other hand. But Dhaka Theatre adapted Shakespeare's play by rejecting the colonial "dramatic" form of dialogue and enactment. Instead, the theatre troupe assimilated the form of "Panchali"[11], as the adaptor, who also performed in the production, explains the theatre company's creative process and strategic aesthetical-political agenda (Ahmed, "Interview with Independent"). Moreover, Dhaka Theatre is committed to rediscovering its national-cultural "roots," and it has a dedicated approach to rituals of Bengalis as well as diverse ethnic communities to re-appropriate performance aesthetics in its contemporary practice (Al-Deen; Yusuff, "Interview"). Therefore, borrowing the ideas from Gilbert and Tompkins, I will argue that "the body, the voice, and the stage space" of Dhaka Theatre's production were the "sites of resistance to imperial hegemonies." And the assimilation of "theatricalised cultural practices such as ritual," which was misread by Culshaw merely as dance and laughter, rather was the creative theatrics to "subvert imposed canonical traditions" ("Post-colonial Drama" 12).

Dhaka Theatre, a former colonial peripheral theatre company, performing an adaptation of *The Tempest* at Shakespeare's Globe Theatre in London which is an ex-English imperial centre, in the form of Bengali Panchali, strategised a razor-sharp decolonising project. As Gilbert and Tompkins, using Bill Ashcroft's ideas, would argue:

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[11] Panchali is a predominant form of Bengali traditional performances. It entails the narrative technique of performance that synthesises song, spoken words, dance, instrumentals and ritualised as well as presentational elements to convey a story toward the audience with a direct contact. Selim Al-Deen and Dhaka Theatre vehemently has advocated for this pre-colonial, traditional form to be a vital expression of Bengali cultural nationalistic identity.

Theatrical manipulations of the English language can significantly amplify the political

effects of a play, since . . . post-colonial adaptations of English have managed to 'relocate

the "centre" of the English language by decentring it.' Other modes of communicating,

such as song and music, also destabilise the political position of spoken English as the

dominant transmitter of meaning. (12)

Inter-play of Historicity, Textuality and Spatio-temporality: Dhaka Theatre employed

literally an "empty space" for staging *The Tempest*. In contemporary Shakespeare studies, some

critics argue for a non-hierarchical shift of space to appropriate Shakespeare worldwide. As

Dobson argues, "Any space can be a space for Shakespeare … and the more spaces that are a space

for Shakespeare the better" ("Spaces"). Dobson's idea indicates that there are at least two distinct

categories: theatrical space and geographic space. The ideas of delimiting the border of stage as

well as topography can also be understood through the examples in relation to the history of

Shakespearean creation on English stages in the late 19th century. William Poel [1852-1934], for

instance, "made his audiences begin to realise the advantages of the kind of open stage for which

Shakespeare had originally written, and so rid Shakespearean productions of extravagant scenic

distractions, that the poetic quality of the plays could be shown as theatrically effective" (Palmer

19). In this line of reading *The Tempest*, Samuel Taylor Coleridge also thought that the play

"addresses itself entirely to the imaginative faculty" (qtd. in Palmer 22). However, crossing the

spatial border of Shakespeare, Dhaka Theatre's production of *The Tempest* was created on an open

stage not only to celebrate the Victorian-Romantic understanding of "the play as a product of the

poetic imagination" (Palmer 19). At the same time, the production attempted to engage, as Francis

Barker and Peter Hulme would argue, "the play's political-colonial sub-text" (qtd. in Palmer 19).

Barker and Hulme determine sub-text as "political realism" whereas "the quelling of a fundamental disquiet concerning its own functions within the projects of colonialist discourse. . ." (Palmer 19).

The disquiet within the colonial project that Shakespeare's play reveals is also an indication of the "social drama" of British life that had performed the content of cultural iconoclasm along with nationalism and colonialism across the 17th to 18th century. English nationalism transformed itself into the commercial and then the political to set many colonialist adventures to rule the "waves" (Dobson, "Making" 6-7). Ironically, Shakespeare, the imperialist's most precious cultural capital, foreshadows a tempest wrecking the imperial ship. The "metaphorical design" of the play, thus, reflects the twin "disquiet" of both cultural nationalism and colonialism in a poetic imagination of "crime," which Antonio does as the design of "exclusion"[12] and Prospero does as an invasion of Caliban's land (Brower 131). Caliban also can be equated with the "tasteless vulgar" (Dobson, "Making 6") as Stephano describes him with "Four legs and two voices; a most delicate monster!" (*The Tempest*, 2:2, 89-90). In the last lines of the play, Prospero articulates, "As you from crimes would pardoned be, / Let your indulgence set me free" (epilogue 19-20).

The colonial sub-text of the play thus reveals a Deluezian ethico-political act that seeks freedom not only for the "delicate monster" (colonised native) but also for the magic-master Prospero. The "political realism" of *The Tempest* explores the "crime" and "sins" simultaneously within the social drama of British life and the colonial world. Shakespeare problematises, therefore, the imperialist "project" itself through the non-monolithic play-text of *The Tempest*.

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[12] The design of "exclusion" can be related with the cases of British tasteless vulgar in the 17th and 18th century England that I have discussed in detail in Chapter Two. Also, the idea might be applicable in the case of conspiracy against Prospero to exclude him from his country. He also excludes Caliban from the land he invades.

Yusuff, the director of the production, determines that he shaped the "dramatic energy" of *The Tempest* to materialize his production ("Interview"). Yousuff argues that Dhaka Theatre listened to what Miranda says as a metaphorical indication of Shakespearean creativity: "The strangeness of your story put/ Heaviness in me" (1:2, 308). It is the "strangeness" of Shakespeare's "story" that Dhaka Theatre considered the "dramatic energy" of Shakespeare's creativity. Dhaka Theatre performed *The Tempest* on almost a bare space with the backdrops, painted with boats, following the Rickshaw painting as the symbolic representation of cultural nationalism. In the strategic staging against the imposed canon of the proscenium stage, Dhaka Theatre used Shakespeare to create a counter-discourse of post-colonialism that, at the same time, validated the idea of many spaces: a "peripheral" capital city of Dhaka, on one hand. The "empty space" of performance, on the other. Moreover, the post-colonial project is pre-dominantly evident in an interview that Nasiruddin Yusuff had given to a Bangladeshi television channel just before travelling to London to attend the Globe to Globe Festival in May 2012. In this interview, Yusuff reminisces about the vision of Selim Al-Deen: "Biswa natyamanche ekdin jhhankrito hobe Banglar natyariti" [one day, in future, the theatre style of Bengal will be jingled on the global stage] (Yusuff, "Interview with Independent"). Hence, it is clear that the production was designed purposefully to be staged on an "empty space" so as it could jingle "Bangla Natyariti" (the theatre style of Bengal).

***Osmosis of Bengali Theatre Style and Shakespeare's Strangeness of Story*:** Selim Al-Deen defines "Bangla Natyariti" as the innumerable flows of theatre, influenced either by religions and rituals or spirited by the simple human consciousness, over the thousand years across the ancient and medieval periods in the region of Bengal. He frames his ideas to redefine the post-colonial style of Bengali theatre, negating the Euro-centric model of dramatic representation on the proscenium stage since the nineteenth century in Bengal. In his nationalistic view, such a thing

is considered a "drama" that contains dramatic quality of the story, dialogue, costumes, juggleries of light on the dark stage, guffaw—overall, a narrow art style (Al-Deen 6-7). He argues that the "Bengali theatre style" is against "the beautified-decorative limit of the [Western structure of] proscenium stage" (6-7). He identifies the core of Bengali theatre as a "narrative technique of performance" that "exists in the intersection of music, dance and enactment" (10). He determines that the art of acting drives the story to the end through the spoken words, movements, and melodies, which are predominantly seen in the form of Panchali: "the acting is such an art what is continuous, what is able to create emotion and taste, and at the same time, what is a form of presentation along with interpretation" (10).

Similarly, Syed Jamil Ahmed, a significant proponent of Bengali post-colonial theatre and an intellectual collaborator of Selim Al-Deen and Nasir Uddin Yusuff, determines the indigenous theatre aesthetics of Bangladesh:

> live music, song, and dance, such that a narrator 'told' parts of the story in prose, as well as in song (partly by narrating in his/her own person, and partly by assuming the character other than his/her own) while other parts [are] presented by characters performing the action in first person. All these performers [play] throughout the performance with the support of a group of choral singers and musicians who [remain] in full view of the spectators, and [produce] music, [sing] choral accompaniment to all the songs by the narrator and characters, and also [dance] to the narrator's songs connecting all the episodes.
>
> ("Personal Testimony")

Bangla Natyariti rediscovers, as Ahmed argues, "a post-colonial articulation of national identity by recovering the 'roots' of the indigenous theatrics of Bangladesh, where narrative performance is very common" that refuses its "'other,' i.e. the master narratives of colonialism and imperialism"

("Personal Testimony"). However, Dhaka Theatre created *The Tempest* using osmosis, a bio-chemical process of life, to synthesise "indigenous theatrics" as the form of Panchali into the spirit of Shakespeare, as the production followed the original "metaphorical design" of the story.

Hence, a careful and detailed examination shows that Dhaka Theatre's adaptation of *The Tempest* did not deny its "other." Instead, it invested the form of Panchali in order to create an osmosis with the creative "strangeness" of Shakespeare's story, urging a symbiotic relationship between two creative spaces: Shakespeare and Bangladesh. Dhaka Theatre's adaptation of *The Tempest* at the Globe, thus, played a role as the trickster, who simultaneously celebrated Shakespeare and negated the British imperialist cultural nationalism through a hybrid Bengali cultural nationalism. Simultaneously, this production negated the hegemonising homogeneity of Bengali cultural nationalism by incorporating Manipuri performance aesthetics to insist on how to learn to live side by side through the acknowledgement of heterogeneity. The Bengali *Tempest* therefore became a political performance where (colonial/postcolonial) history has been unveiled in its most playful form of the present time across the spaces.

Reading *Coriolanus* as Lal Jhanda

A Red Manifesto of a Theatre Group: A Bangladeshi case of Shakespearean theatre celebrated a point of departure from liberal democratic theatrics to a Marxist production of *Coriolanus*, which is believed to have been written between 1605 and 1608, based on the life of Roman military leader Caius Marcius Coriolanus. Produced by Aranyak Natyadal in 1989 in Dhaka, the play was translated by Mannan Heera[13] and directed by Mamunur Rashid.[14] Aranyak Natyadal is "one of the leading companies in the 'mainstream' Group Theatre movement of Bangladesh" (Ahmed, "Revisiting" 5). The urban middle-class-led Group Theatre movement became a proactive proponent of the cultural landscape in post-independence Bangladesh, as Ahmed states:

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[13] Mannan Hira (1956-2020) was a noted Bangladeshi playwright, theatre director, translator, film maker, cultural activist and one of the pioneers of the street theatre movement in Bangladesh in 1980s. He was also a pro-active organiser of Aranyak Natyadal. He considered himself as a Marxist and a theatre-disciple of Mamunur Rashid.

[14] Mamunur Rashid (1948) is a distinguished playwright, director, actor and cultural activist. He founded Aranyak Natyadal in 1972 that also initiated a phenomenal political theatre movement called ''Muktanatok'' (lit. Liberated Theatre) in the mid-1980s across Bangladesh in order to uphold the class struggle. He is a household name for his acting career in television and film apart from his regular performance on stage. He received national and international awards for his versatile contribution in literature, theatre and film. He considers himself as a Marxist as well as a ''propagandist'' rather than an artist.

In Bangladesh, the 'Group Theatre' movement constitutes the 'mainstream' theatre. It emerged in the urban landscape of the country in 1972, immediately after the liberation of the country. Today, it is a network of over 250 non-profit city-based groups of theatre practitioners, who are mostly middle-class students, and professionals belonging to the media, advertising agencies and a few other private services. The groups inculcate professionalism in the work that they produce but are run by voluntary contributions of its members, box office receipt, revenue accrued from adverts published in souvenirs, and occasional sponsorship from national and international business houses. ("Revisiting" 25) Dhaka-based 'Group Theatre' Aranyak Natyadal accepts its motto to "let theatre be the sharp tool for class struggle instead of entertainment" since its formation in 1972 ("Aranyak Natyadal Souvenir").

A theoretical conviction of class struggle consequent on the interweaving material relationship between human beings and their language is intricately stated in the preface to *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy* by Karl Marx:

> In the social production which men carry on they enter into definite relations that are indispensable and independent of their will;these relations of production correspond to a definite stage of development of their material powers of production. The sum total of these relations of production constitutes the economic structure of society-- the real foundation, on which rise legal and political superstructures and to which correspond definite forms of social consciousness. The mode of production in material life determines the general character of the social, political and spiritual processes of life. It is not the consciousness of men that determines their existence, but, on the contrary, their social existence determines their consciousness. (11-12)

However, here is what Eagleton understands by taking both the terms "'forces' and 'relations' of production from what Marx calls 'the economic structure of society,' or what is more commonly known [in] Marxism as the economic 'base' or 'infrastructure'" (5). Eagleton explains, "From this economic 'base' in every period, emerges a 'superstructure'—certain forms of law and politics, a certain kind of state, whose essential function is to legitimate the power of the social class which owns the means of economic production" (5). He further explicates, "[The superstructure] also consists of certain 'definite forms of social consciousness' (political, religious, ethical, aesthetic and so on), which is what Marxism designates as *ideology"* (5). "The function of ideology," according to Marxist canon, "is to legitimate the power of the ruling class in society", and "the dominant ideas of a society are the ideas of its ruling class" (Eagleton 5).

Marxist idea of ideology is a distinguishing expression in relation to aesthetics. As Cliff Slaughter argues, "Literature and art undoubtedly share with all forms of cognition the characteristic of expressing ideology. The historical study of the ideological influences upon and ideological content of literary works is of course essential to any Marxist analysis" (212). However, Slaughter describes Marxist views of materialist dialectics in order to dissect the ideological ontology of Marxist analysis:

Art does not 'reflect' a given class structure such as capitalism. It is a product of the men thrown into struggle by the specific contradictions of the given social formation. In their literature and art men do not produce some mysteriously congruent copy of the social structure; rather they express the content of the fundamental struggle with nature and with their own nature which that society, at its particular stage of development, carries forward or inhibits, or does both at the same time. They express the struggle for consciousness of what they must do to survive against the dangers of these particular contradictions, whether

they can be overcome or merely resisted with nobility. They express the frustrations that arise and achievements made in defining and tracking down the enemies who must be overcome. (23)

Therefore, explaining the creation and reception of art and literature from the Marxist perspective necessitates a concentrated reading of "the specific character of social relations, including the relation between society and individual, in each social formation, and in particular capitalism, to the analysis of which Marx's scientific endeavour was primarily devoted" (Slaughter 24).

What Mao Tse-tung understands as the appeal of artistic and literary works is a significant move to forward the Marxist theory of cultural acts: "Works of literature and art, as ideological forms, are the product of the reflection in the human brain of the life of a given society" (qtd. in Balibar and Macherey 278). Etienne Balibar and Pierre Macherey, mobilized by Mao Tse-tung's Marxist viewpoint of cultural activities as the socio-neurological reflection of ideological forms, argue, "The Marxist conception thus inscribes literature in its place in the unevenly determined system of real social practices: one of several ideological forms within the ideological superstructures, corresponding to a base of social relations of production which are historically determined and transformed, and historically linked to other ideological forms" (278). Eagleton elucidates that Marxist criticism aims to explain with keen attention to the "forms, styles and meanings as the products of a particular history" (3). He further explains the essential idea of history that "[t]he originality of Marxist criticism, then, lies not in its historical approach to literature, but in its revolutionary understanding of history itself" (3). Moreover, Marx and Engels describe this revolutionary understanding of history that brings the idea of base and superstructure into their *German Ideology*: "The production of ideas, concepts and consciousness is first of all

directly interwoven with the material intercourse of man, the language of real life" (qtd. in Eagleton 4).

As a result, the task of Marxist critique is to uncover the subterranean politics of aesthetic works that employ dialectical materialism to scrutinise the ideological forms of a particular history. However, Jackson suggests that "Marxist critics discover the political unconscious of works of art; the assumption here is that political elements like class war are there to be discovered" (123-124). Jameson's Marxist doctrine of the political unconscious (historicizing of Freudian theory), a post-Freudian mode of Marxist interpretation, rejects the illusory categories of "personal identity" as well as "individual psyche" that also defines "political unconscious" as a "collective denial or repression of underlying historical contradictions by human societies . . ." (Dowling 114). According to Jameson's Marxist theory of the political unconscious, "collective consciousness" as an apparent reflection of dominant ideology "represses historical contradictions" (Dowling 115). Dowling understands Jameson's Marxist theory of the political unconscious in relation to the Aristotelian notion of man, which is a social animal that functions within the "constitutive relation between social systems and their individual units" (115). Therefore, Jameson's Marxism points out that "separation or individuality at the level of consciousness itself is a symptom of estrangement from the life of the collectivity" (115).

Hence, Marxism conceptualizes its framework of cultural practice that investigates aesthetic work as one of the ideological forms, alternatively, an ideological superstructure concerning its base of economic infrastructure of a specific historical phase. Again, the historical phase is formed by the dialectical nature of social structure constituted by the ceaseless class struggle against the ruling class that creates alienation and suppresses the political meaning under the disguise of collective denial. Marxist criticism reassesses and regains the unconscious meaning

of cultural practices from the political perspective of dialectical materialism. Overall, in this line of political thought, theatre group Aranyak and its founder and creative director, Mamunur Rashid, accept a contextualised Marxism but rejects the orthodox loyalty to the classical communism. As Rashid expresses his political philosophy: "I believe in Marxist ideology. Though I am not a communist but a Marxist" ("Alapone"). He observes that politics determines life, and the theory of class struggle unfolds the manifold dramatic personae ("Alapone"). He self-reflexively determines, "I want to move forward with 'lal jhanda' [red flag] throughout my life because, without the red flag, there is no other way in a third world country" ("Jonmodiner"). Against the dominant ideology of ruling class, Rashid and his theatre group Aranyak aim to explore the "social conflicts" that form the sociopolitical structure of Bangladesh in theatrical works. He understands the social conflict of Bangladesh through a Marxist analysis to underline the struggle for fundamental rights of food and cloth, "bacha-morar lorai" [struggle of live or die] ("Jonmodiner").

Rashid rearticulates what Utpal Dutt once said to determine his political ontology: "I am not an artist, I am a propagandist" ("Alapone"). As a playwright, theatre director, actor, activist, and creative director of Aranyak, he consciously propagates his ideological views from the Marxist standpoint. To understand the political objective of a Marxist artist, following Althusser and his followers' explanation, Slaughter argues that "the writer or artist communicates to his audience a view of ideology 'from within'" (52). However, Marxist view considers that an artist communicates "through artistic forms the unity and conflict of subject [artist's brain] and object [the external world], the constant struggle to transform and control nature, and not only the ideological forms arising on this basis" (53). Arguably, being informed by the Marxist view of what an artist does, Rashid chose *Coriolanus* as an "artistic form" to signify the "constant struggle to transform" the state apparatus and society. The program of *Coriolanus* demonstrates that

Aranyak chose Shakespeare's *Coriolanus* as a political palimpsest to stage "the image of class struggles" in Bangladesh in the late 1980s ("Aranyak Natyadal Souvenir"). Thus, Aranyak, with its "lal jhanda," attempted to perform the red manifesto of *Coriolanus* through a Marxist understanding of social conflict and class struggle that explicitly appropriated Shakespeare as a political playwright in Bangladesh.

Bengali Shakespearean Story of Two Comrades: Mamunur Rashid reveals a didactic lineage of Bertolt Brecht and Utpal Dutt which had critically informed his life-long journey towards the political theatre in Bangladesh. Rashid says, "My senior friend, Utpal da, in an in-person conversation with him in Kolkata, attracted my attention to the political potency of Shakespeare's plays. Also, his book on Shakespeare's social consciousness shows the great playwright's love for mass people and the dialectical method in line by line. From that point, I start to think of Shakespeare's political potency" ("Interview"). Rashid's recalling and evaluation could be intertwined with a brief reading of Utpal Dutt's book, which is written in Bengali. Dutt writes that the fundamental social conflict in Shakespeare's age was a struggle between two classes: one was the tripartite unity of monarchy, aristocracy and bourgeois; and the other the millions of destitutes who were forced to be the labourers for the new mode of production (53). Dutt argues, "That was the reality of the society in Shakespeare's age" (53). Moreover, Dutt expresses that Shakespeare's plays reflect the ideological conflict between the bourgeois as the natural leader of ruling class and the oppressed people as the proletariat (54). He demonstrates that "the ideology of Shakespeare is formed as a daring and uncompromising opponent to the bourgeois ideology" (55). Rashid appropriates Dutt's political reading of Shakespeare through the idea of "Shakespeare's love for mass people" and "the dialectical method" (Rashid, Interview).

Rashid's legacy of Dutt's political Shakespeare intersects with the Euro-American Critical School of Political Shakespeare. The appropriation of political Shakespeare through different schools of criticism has been a provocative phenomenon in the Western academic spheres for the last decades. Don E. Wayne argues that new schools of criticism, such as feminist, Marxist, and new historicist, set Shakespearean texts against the "older modes of interpretation that located the 'real' Shakespeare through notions of formal and thematic unity," and "moral and psychological verity" as well as "one-dimensional conception of the text's historicity" (50). The new trends of critical schools explore "the Shakespearean text not as the creation of a unique, genial author but, in accordance with Elizabethan theatrical practice, as the product of a collaborative venture" (50). The critical school of cultural materialism, a significant one amongst the new trends in Britain, seeks "to appropriate Shakespeare for an oppositional politics" (50). Wayne argues, "Their main concern is with the decanonization of Shakespeare as a cultural token and with the delegitimization of institutional strategies of containment that rely on Shakespeare as the keystone of an ideology according to which 'man's nature doesn't change'" (51). The critical approach towards the belief in the changeable nature of human beings is defined as Cultural Materialism, a term recently used by Raymond Williams. Williams contends, "[W]e cannot separate literature and art from other social practice, in such a way as to make them subject to quite special and distinct laws" ("Problems in Materialsm" 44). Moreover, Jonathan Dollimore and Alan Sinfield determine cultural materialism in relation to the historical context: "'Materialism' is opposed to 'idealism': it insists that culture does not (cannot) transcend the material forces and relations of production. Culture is not simply a reflection of the economic and political system, but nor can it be independent of it. Cultural materialism therefore studies the implication of literary texts in history" (Foreword, viii).

Following this argument, Shakespeare's plays are set in two-fold context: one is his own time of writing, and the other is the time that constantly has been producing new artistic works. As Dollimore and Sinfield argue:

> [A] play by Shakespeare is related to the contexts of its production—to the economic and political system of Elizabethan and Jacobean England and to the particular institutions of cultural production (the court, patronage, theatre, education, the church). Moreover, the relevant history is not just that of four hundred years ago, for culture is made continuously and Shakespeare's text is reconstructed, reappraised, reassigned all the time through diverse institutions in specific contexts. (viii)

The cultural materialist criticism of Shakespeare emphasises the relationship between the production of a text and the context of the materialist condition of culture. The critics remark, "What the plays signify, how they signify, depends on the cultural [condition] in which they are situated" (viii). In addition, cultural materialism rejects apolitical critique and accepts theoretical tools to expose the socio-economic determining factors:

> [C]ultural materialism does not pretend to political neutrality. It knows that no cultural practice is ever without political significance. . . . Cultural materialism does not, like much established literary criticism, attempt to mystify its perspective as the natural, obvious or right interpretation of an allegedly given textual fact. On the contrary, it registers its commitment to the transformation of social order which exploits people on grounds of race, gender and class. (viii)

Cultural materialist criticism of political Shakespeare, therefore, creates a critical opportunity to reassess the relationship of early modern texts and main discourses of state power, class, race and gender:

The development of cultural materialism in relation to Renaissance literature has been fairly recent although there is already a diverse and developing field of works relating literary texts to, for example, the following: enclosures and the oppression of the rural poor; State power and resistance to it; reassessments of what actually were the dominant ideologies of the period and the radical countertendencies to these; witchcraft; the challenge and containment of the carnivalesque; a feminist recovery of the actual conditions of women and the altered understanding of their literary representations which this generates; conflict between class fractions within the State and, correspondingly, the importance of a non-monolithic conception of power. (Dollimore 3)

However, cultural materialism is significant in Britain, which, in another way, has evolved as new historicism in the US that also concentrates on studying the relationship between political power and creative works as the new historicism deals with the "representation of power in Renaissance literature . . . interaction in this period between State power and cultural forms" (3).

Through this line of political appropriation, Rashid appropriates Shakespeare not in Renaissance context but in that of the post-independent Bangladesh. Rashid reveals that he thinks of Shakespeare through the reading strategy of Utpal Dutt that offers a wide range of socio-political-historical contexts of Shakespearean stories. Rashid takes the cue from Dutt's reading and processes these signs into the material condition of a historical context for producing new cultural forms. For Rashid, Shakespeare is a playwright who offers a dialectical nature of universal human behavioral pattern as well as the fundamental conflicting conditions of human circumstances. Rashid says, "Shakespeare is a radically didactic playwright. From him, I learn how to interpret my own socio-political conflict and mass people's aspiration. His dramatic scheme is highly effective for me to interpret the social structure where I live" (Interview).

Lineage of Brechtian Appropriation of Shakespearean Unresolved Dialectics: Aranyak,

as a cultural-revolutionary theatre group, attempted to appropriate dialectical theatrical method

through the production of *Coriolanus* to interpret the fundamental conflicts embedded in

Bangladeshi social reality. Rashid acknowledges that this was Utpal Dutt, who, at first, inspired

him to bring *Coriolanus* on the stage considering Brechtian radical appropriation. Terry Eagleton

determines that the task of the "revolutionary cultural worker" is employing the radical

interpretation in the appropriation of artworks (qtd. in Fortier 166). Bertolt Brecht employed the

strategy of radical interpretation to staging *Coriolanus* without any changes to Shakespeare's text.

As Mark Fortier argues, "In contrast to the 'bourgeois theatre', which focuses all its attention on

the hero, and thereby aligns itself with the patricians' cause, Brecht is explicitly interested in

examining the class struggle in the opening scene from the plebeians' situation" (166). Brecht

considers Shakespeare's *Coriolanus* as "splendidly realistic" while the beginning scene of the play

"demonstrates how hard it is for the oppressed to become united" and teaches, among other things,

"[t]hat the position of the oppressed classes can be strengthened by the threat of war and weakened

by its outbreak" (166). Brecht notes, "The play is rich in conflict and contradiction, and, because

it offers no easy solutions, it 'gives rise to discomfort;' and in this way it offers 'first-hand

experience of dialectics,' of working through oppositions" (qtd. in Fortier 166-167). Fortier

illustrates how Brechtian radical analysis of *Coriolanus* is based on the Marxist idea of class

struggle:

> The point of producing the scene becomes to 'strengthen' these aspects of Shakespeare's
>
> text. For example, by making the weapons of the plebians makeshift and yet ingenious and
>
> effective, and by contrasting them with the professional soldiers and their weaponry under
>
> patrician control, we can see that the plebians are a force to be reckoned with and yet in a

precarious position in their class struggle. At the end of the scene, when an external threat

of war has united – but only partly and temporarily – the classes of Rome, it is important

to show the limits of this union in the way the members of the two classes interact. (167)

In *Coriolanus*, Brecht sees that "there is great revolutionary potential in reason and

understanding," and also remarks that "a careful analysis of Shakespeare furthers our

understanding" (Fortier 167). Brecht defines the dramaturgical wealth of *Coriolanus* as "the

wealth of events" (qtd. in Fortier 167). Brecht notes, "Compare today's plays with their poverty

of content! . . . within these complex events on a particular morning in Rome. . . . [T]here is much

that a sharp eye can pick out. And certainly, if you can find clues to these events, then all power

to the audience" (qtd. in Fortier 167). Brecht also adapted this play where plebians were "a much

more dedicated force than in Shakespeare," as Fortier argues, "Coriolanus doesn't give up his

attack on Rome because he's tied to his mother's apron strings, but because he realises that the

people of Rome have banded together to resist him. His failure is not so much tragic as something

to be celebrated" (168). Brecht's "careful analysis" of Shakespeare resembles what Henry Ansgar

Kelly argues about Shakespeare's historical plays, which Gabriel Egan summarizes that "the

chronicle sources [that] offer multiple explanations and points of view rather than a single

providential account of history" (67).

Brechtian careful analysis of Shakespeare furthers dramaturgical understanding. In that

case, the explanation of Robin Headlam Wells demands further scrutiny that discovers "the

'unresolved dialectic' in Shakespeare's dramatisation of history, his ability to allow 'antithetical

meanings to exist concurrently', and the 'purposeful ambiguity' [and] opposed elements

[presented] as equally desirable, and equally destructive, so that the choice that the play forces the

reader becomes impossible" (qtd. in Egan 67-68). Furthermore, Wells argues that Shakespeare's

plays offer "an appropriate conflictual structure: a dialectic of ironies and ambivalences, avoiding in its complex movement and dialogue the simplifications of direct statement and reductive resolution" (qtd. in Egan 68). Egan criticises the liberal-conservative agenda of co-opting "the Marxist terminology of dialectic and conflict" (68). Therefore, he maintains that Marxist analysis does not accept an "unresolved dialectic" as a dialectic because "[t]he essence of dialecticism is progress by transcendence achieved in conflict. . . ." (68). Nevertheless, Brecht's interpretation and production of *Coriolanus* validates the inherent possibility of "multiple explanations" against the grain of a "single providential account of history" (24). The *Coriolanus* production thus subverts bourgeois theatre and rediscovers Shakespearean dramatisation of "unresolved dialectic" of history as an anti-tragic site of class struggle (24). Hence, Brechtian understanding of "revolutionary potential" that interiorises *Coriolanus* further reminds us of the task of Marxist critique, which focuses on a political reading of "the specific character of social relations . . . in each social formation. . . ." (Slaughter 24).

As an essential proponent of Marxism, cultural materialism concentrates on class struggle. In that case, Aranyak Natyadal meets the grand narrative of class struggle as the group upholds its motto: "Natak hok srenisongramer sutikhno hatiyar" (Let theatre be a sharp weapon of class struggle). If cultural materialism and new historicism substantiate Shakespeare as a political playwright, Aranyak's rework of Shakespeare reciprocates Western theoretical strands with its local political vision. Bala marks, "Aranyak practices theatre to respond to the necessity of making an effective relationship between politics and aesthetics". A legacy of Brechtian Marxist reading of *Coriolanus*, which is fundamentally based on the revolutionary potential of class struggle, is inherited by Aranyak, as Bala argues, "Aranyak practices theatre to uncover class-based power relations in the state and society. Therefore, the theatre group always seeks on the one hand, the

content of class conflict and struggle in contemporary state and society and, on the other, the effective form and style to create a political formula of actor-spectator relation in its theatrical action."

According to the argument that Bala posits, Aranyak sought "the content of class conflict and struggle" through the production of *Coriolanus* in the contemporary time of the late 1980s "state and society" of Bangladesh. At the time the play was produced, Bangladesh was a land of sufferings for the working class:

> The vehicle of our culture is the fundamental element of life struggle connected to the unpleasant lives of most peasants and workers. No conspiracy can disconnect this element because a farmer, labour or commoner depends on the elements of 'life struggle' to live his life as long as he is alive. As a result, he fights, in favour of himself, for the cause of his own existence. Moreover, the class struggle is the basics of this fighting. We want to represent this fundamental element of life, i.e., class struggle through the theatre. Neither the life struggle moves mechanically, nor the image of the class struggle is one-sided. [the class struggle] also has many ups and downs and shroud of it. The theatre creates an opportunity to interpret these vastly. . . . At this time, we have chosen Shakespeare to stage through our limited resources. ("Aranyak Natyadal Souvenir")

As the Aranyak's political-theatrical action, the production of Shakespeare's *Coriolanus* sought its ideological dialogue between text and context. Aranyak's production of *Coriolanus* manifested its objective of staging as performing an explicitly political Shakespeare. Aranyak aimed at the production of *Coriolanus* to stage Shakespeare as "the vehicle of culture" to "interpret the class struggle" as the basics to the "life struggle" of "the peasants and workers" of Bangladesh ("Aranyak Natyadal Souvenir"). Aranyak appropriated Shakespeare's *Coriolanus* as an effective

tool for a Marxist analysis of "darkness and oppression" of "the class society" of a particular historical phase of Bangladesh. The appropriation of *Coriolanus* in Bangladesh endorses the Marxist idea of literature, as Slaughter explains the role of literature in society according to Marxism:

> Literature must therefore be understood as a product which contains an absolute within the relative (the ideological). By absolute here is meant not some abstract essence of man but the whole world of men's activity, the development of their sensibilities, their struggle for control of nature, their ability to preserve and develop a material and spiritual heritage which more and more provides inexhaustible resources for the struggle to overcome the forces of darkness and oppression that class society has always generated. (212-13)

***Creative Mode of Production*:** In the production of *Coriolanus*, Aranyak implicitly employed the politics of translation that unquestionably followed the group's Marxist politics in the terrain of culture in Bangladesh. The translation of *Coriolanus* was informed by the criticism that the dominant cultural tendency was restricting Shakespeare within the sphere of the ruling class for the sake of capitalist interest. As Mannan Hira, the translator of the play, has argued, "Shakespeare is not the dramatist for elite, rather he is a peoples' dramatist" (Aranyak Natyadal Souvenir). Therefore, in the act of translation, Hira aimed at writing Shakespeare as "a great artist of rebellious mind," "who search[ed] the history of humankind" (Aranyak Natyadal Souvenir). Moreover, the translated version of *Coriolanus* sought a political truth and questioned the dominance of the state over the people. As Hira has argued in his translator's note: "Which one is the truth? People's inevitable conflict with the state? Or does the state need people? Does a brave warrior need the approval of people? Or is the abstract love enough for people? But doesn't it

make an unbreakable wall between them? Of course, these all are very old questions. But still, all are timeless and unresolved" ("Aranyak Natyadal Souvenir").

Translator's argument establishes that Aranyak attempted to employ a political approach of renovation towards the translation of Shakespeare's *Coriolanus*. Though "translatability is not a direct index of value," Bella Brodzki argues that the act of translation "indicates a trait, a capacity for both retention and renovation, across time and space" (6). In the task of translating *Coriolanus*, Hira performed his political "capacity" to interiorize both notion of "retention" and "renovation." He appropriated the idea of "retention" in his understanding of Shakespeare in the frame of people's politics that engaged an "unresolved question" of class society. At the same time, he maintained a literary loyalty to the original text of the play, as Ataur Rahman, a veteran theatre director and writer, remarks:

> Mannan Hira has translated this complex play of Shakespeare by hard work with the deepest devotion. Though dialogues have been translated into prose, but the Shakespearean poetic diction has not been averted. And the Shakespearean strength of dialogue has not also been lowered. The translator has taken his liberty quite consciously in translating the dialogues. Because of that the meaning and style have not been mistreated. In translation, it is not possible to get the fullness of original text. But the translator of *Coriolanus* has been able to remain faithful to the original to a great extent, which is a success indeed. This work of translation will be considered as a new contribution to our literature. (74)

Hira maintained a playful balance between liberty of translator and loyalty to playwright that sought the act of "renovation". The original text of *Coriolanus*, for instance, ends with the dialogue of Aufidius in such an order:

> My rage is gone,
> And I am struck with sorrow. Take him up.
> Help three o'th' chiefest soldiers; I'll be one.
> Beat thou the drum, that it speaks mournfully.
> Trail your steel pipes. Though in this city he
> Hath widowed and unchilded many a one,
> Which to this hour bewail the injury,
> Yet he shall have a noble memory. Assist. (5:6:148-55)

Hira kept all lines except the ending two sentences: "Yet he shall have a noble memory. Assist". Instead, he added some interrogative sentences in the last dialogue, which functioned as an epilogue, which is normatively seen in Bengali traditional narrative play-text.

The translator's own intervention in *Coriolanus* directly propagates a political message against the then military autocracy. Here is the approximate translation of what Hira added to Aufidius's last dialogue: "How does a death earn greatness? By the arms or the peoples' tears? I don't know whether the people of this world will greet me or not. But my arms have forced me to do so, then shall I wait for this same pattern of killing by an ambitious military colleague? When I'll be buried alone, history will lie down along with me" (Hira 95). Thus, Aranyak's Bengali text of *Coriolanus* had been qualified by a new texture through obtaining textual "renovation."

Brodzki, informed by the theories of Walter Benjamin's translation as survival and Jacques Derrida's understanding of the notion of other, perceives the notion of renovation as such: "translation as a kind of critical and dynamic displacement: in an act of identification that is not imitation, translation hearkens back to the original or source text and elicits what might otherwise remain recessed or unarticulated, enabling the source to live beyond itself, to exceed its own limitations" (2). Instead of "imitation," Hira mobilised the "unarticulated" subtext through his addition in order to contextualize the Shakespearean politics to uncover the political crime of military-led oligarchy of late 1980s in Bangladesh. Therefore, Aranyak's translation of *Coriolanus*

acted to identify their political ideology of class struggle, and they appropriated a renovated Shakespearean script. Brodzki argues, "Translations do not belong to a separate sphere of literary production (or as some would say, reproduction) but are embedded in an extensive social and political network of language relations, cultural practices, and perspectives" (2). In similar terms, the benign and venal translation of *Coriolanus* is involved in what is a Marxist ideological act "to underwrite all cultural transactions," and "politics as well as poetics, ethics as well as aesthetics" (2). The act of translation of *Coriolanus* thus practised what Outi Paloposki would say a "paratextual agency" which "consist[ed] of the translator's role in inserting" a new thing (191).

Aranyak considered their 'shrom O gham' [labour and sweat i.e., creative labour] as the production force in their artistic production of *Coriolanus*. The Director of the production, Rashid, has revealed what they thought about a Shakespearean production for 12 years ("Interview"). Finally, he got the inspiration for staging *Coriolanus* from Utpal Dutt through in-person conversation and letters he wrote to Rashid. In an interview with me, he also acknowledged Utpal Dutt's theoretical framework, which was explored in a ground-breaking book in Bengali titled, *Shakesperearer Somajchetona* [The Social Consciousness of Shakespeare] that enlightened Rashid to understand Shakespeare's plays through the Marxist vision in the context of Bangladesh. Rashid mentioned the critical method of judging the values of Shakespeare's plays, which Dutt analysed at the very beginning of his book. As Dutt argues:

> Shakespeare was bound to entertain the audience of his time, on one hand. On the other, Shakespeare hated to give the audience merely entertainment which was explicit in Hamlet: "though it makes the unskillful laugh, cannot but make the judicious grieve". A profound philosophy of life, of course, is presented in the creations of Shakespeare, but it is never beyond the reflections of the social ups and downs in his own times. […] Presumably, no

one except Shakespeare could illustrate such a vast canvas of one's own time. Therefore,

[Shakespeare's plays] are accepted across time. This is the dual method of judgment which

should be applied to read all types of literature including Shakespeare. (1)

Following Dutt's dual judgment, Rashid also accepts the same ideas to consider Shakespeare:

"Shakespeare is our relative. We see ourselves in Coriolanus" (Aranyak Natyadal Souvenir).

Moreover, he admits Shakespeare's *Coriolanus* as a relevant human pattern of his contemporary

society, as he argues that "the straightforward, brave upright and self-destructive Coriolanus is like

any simple-minded Bengalee"("Aranyak Natyadal Souvenir").

Furthermore, Aranyak appropriated *Coriolanus* as a demystified ideological form of

timeless questions about the relationship between rulers and peoples to interpret the class struggle

vastly as "the fundamental of life" in Bangladesh (Aranyak Natyadal Souvenir). Aranyak believed

Coriolanus as a text which met the state as a metatext in 1989 when the country was under the

autocratic military regime of General Ershad. The translator marks Coriolanus a "tyrant," and the

theatre group intended to interpret the play in a similar way. Aranyak contemplated *Coriolanus* as

an enemy of people who also hated the people governed by his "class pride" rather than the

"personal pride" (Aranyak Natyadal Souvenir). Translator of *Coriolanus* argues that the play

contains multifarious political elements which are set within a vast political canvas. The theatre

group defines the play as a political tragedy of explaining the metatext of contemporary socio-

political realities: "The entire nation is now under the clutches of dictatorial power. People fail to

identify them as their enemy. They accept it as their fate. Arbitrariness is inside and outside our

power politics, and this is confusing our life. They are trying to justify it through giving various

international theories and ideas" (Aranyak Natyadal Souvenir).

The sociological investigation also supports what Aranyak understands about the "clutches of dictatorial power" in Bangladesh in the 1980s: "Ershad regime has little or no structures of public accountability, a lacuna which reinforces internally the monopoly of the bureaucrats and military within the regime" (Jahangir 92). Moreover, the Ershad regime established a situation of class domination through privatisation policies in order to maintain the "monopoly position" of the urban elite, as B. K. Jahangir argues:

> Privatisation policies . . . are attempted through local government institutions which are enmeshed within national and local patron/client networks and which ensure the maximisation of the needs of the locally dominant political and economic class that furnishes local elites. Class domination is established in the fundamentals of the society: property, religious ideology, construction of values, political participation, kinship networks and employment practices. (92-3)

Aranyak, as a cultural "vehicle" of Marxist politics, responded to the "economic and political crisis," which was created by the monopoly position of the dominant political and economic class in the 1980s, while producing *Coriolanus* (Aranyak Natyadal Souvenir). For Aranyak, it was a political attempt through the cultural form of *Coriolanus* to understand the political and cultural condition of Bangladesh. Aranyak staged *Coriolanus* as a medium of logical evaluation of the phenomena. As the troupe states, their conviction in the program of *Coriolanus* is that "[w]hat we have seen in the cultural and political arena of the seventies and eighties needs a logical evaluation" (Aranyak Natyadal Souvenir).

Arguably, Aranyak raised its "Lal Jhanda" [red flag] by *Coriolanus* to stage a "logical evaluation" of the socio-political conflict of Bangladesh. Aranyak committed to moving forward with "Lal Jhanda" as an unalterable political symbol and strategy in Bangladesh (Rashid,

"Jonmodiner"). Rashid and his group explore the "social conflicts" of the country within the workings of theatre to propagate the logical evaluation of the reality of staging Shakespeare. The group is devoted to examining the social conflict of Bangladesh through a Marxist analysis of the ruling class that intentionally creates the problem of religious intolerance (between Hindu and Muslim) and fundamentalism or orthodoxy to divert the public's attention from the struggle for fundamental rights of food and clothing, 'bacha-morar lorai' [struggle of either living or death] (Rashid, "Jonmodiner"). Moreover, the proscenium setting of Aranyak's *Coriolanus* served much like a multi-layered encounter between a politically charged theatrical performance and a fraction of civil society represented by traditional intellectuals serving the interest of the dictatorial power in the 1980s. Aranyak labels the reactionary group of civil society, "[as a] group of cultural workers [who] are working strongly as [the dictatorial power's] tool. They want to negate this theory of class struggle, contrivance, and propaganda" ("Aranyak Natyadal Souvenir"). Exploring, thus, the ideology and false consciousness that prevailed in the internal contradiction of the cultural field in the 1980s in Bangladesh, Aranyak also instrumentalised *Coriolanus* by employing a face-to-face confrontation with its middleclass theatergoers to warn them about the falseness of reactionary culture. As a result, the production of *Coriolanus* also played a bold role of propaganda against the state-managed culturalism.

Paradoxically, raising "Lal Jhanda" in their "bancha-morar lorai," Aranyak intended to recreate the Roman characters through the Bengali actors' bodies in terms of employing an apolitical method of psycho-physical characterisation. The troupe trusted in the acting scheme of Stanislavski, which is entirely an apolitical approach towards theatre (Rashid, "Interview"). According to the observation of different productions that Aranyak produced after *Coriolanus*, Ahmed determines that the troupe represents a style of simplified realistic acting ("Designs"145).

Aranyak simplified the complex form of acting that Stanislavski formulated. But Stanislavski's system of acting approves the world "as it really is", which contradicts the Marxist idea of the "changeable nature of political reality," as Mitter argues:

> The effect Stanislavskian drama has in common with political oppression is enforced submission. Theatre which naturalises social reality is oppressive in that it compels assent. By seeking merely to depict the world, the Stanislavskian actor implicitly accepts it: to 'represent' is both to 'present an image of' and to speak 'on behalf of.' By seeming then to give us that world 'as it really is', the Stanislavskian actor induces a corresponding acceptance of that world in the audience. The tyranny of the 'given circumstances' exercise, for example, lies not merely in its power to convince; far more pernicious is its product, tolerance, that which submits to and thereby perpetuates the constraining order. Circumstances that are 'given' are to that extent not subject to question. (Systems 43)

The unquestionability of the Stanislavskian system of acting not only justifies the unbroken line of dramatic action but also naturalises the existing political order of the world:

> When Stanislavskian objectives are used to 'justify' the action, justification implies not only motivation but vindication. In seeking to inspire the actor, the Stanislavskian theatre inadvertently demonstrates the correctness of the world as it is experienced. The 'through line of actions' into which these objectives are then arranged has a quite different but equally crippling effect: it effaces the socially constructed and therefore the changeable nature of political reality. (Mitter 43)

On the contrary, the Marxist poetics of Brecht uses theatre to demonstrate "social reality," which is "neither determined nor always defensible – so whereas Stanislavski elicits submission, Brecht will seek to inculcate dissent" (43).

The question of engaging the audience is central both in Stanislavski and Brecht. Following Brecht's critique, Mitter notes:

> For Brecht, the Stanislavskian theatre 'systematically compels the empathy of the spectator' who is then a 'victim of hypnotic experience, … completely "entangled"' in the action. Brecht is clear: this 'forcing of empathy' must stop – for, he argues, 'how is the spectator to be made to master life when all that happens masters him?' There is a hint here Stanislavski is a microcosm. The situation of Stanislavsky's audience is analogous to that of the proletariat who are the 'passive object of politics' and must also be freed. (42)

Compared to Stanislavski's acting system, Brechtian Marxist poetics contrarily desires to alter the capitalistic world order. When Aranyak employs the Stanislavski acting method, it contradicts their political intention of "propaganda" to create a critical awareness in the oppressed audience as the passive object of the ruling class's ideology.

Aranyak's theatre always seeks an effective relationship between performance and the audience (Ahmed "Revisiting"; Bala). Arguably, Aranyak celebrated, with a hidden paradox laid in its employment of acting system, raising 'Lal Jhanda' of *Coriolanus* through the Marxist analysis of class struggle in Bangladesh, as such, one critic mentions it as a 'successful' production (qtd. in Harun 278). However, after watching Aranyak's production, Rahman remarks that this group followed a specific thought and plan in selecting *Coriolanus*, thus avoiding [Shakespeare's] all other well-known plays (74). Rahman argues that though the play *Coriolanus* is foreign, the production is native. Because Aranyak's Marxist political consciousness fuels a consciousness to bring this play onstage. The group intends to perform the workings of its own society and state as well as the politics of struggle for survival with full dignity by producing *Coriolanus* (74). Therefore, Rahman terms it as a "well-timed production in the context of our country. The

selection of the play carries the wisdom of Aranyak. . . . This production, overall, captivates the audience through the meaning of the play" (74).

In order to rediscover the political meaning of contemporary collective life of Bangladesh, Aranyak, stressed the dramatic act of Plebians' rebellion. As Rashid recalls some months after they produced *Coriolanus*, the country witnessed the downfall of military dictator Ershad through a mass insurgence (Interview). In similar terms, the Plebians' preparation for the revolt in support of the arrest and exile of Coriolanus, what Brecht uncovers in this play as a potential revolutionary act, intersects the political phenomena which enabled the production of *Coriolanus* in Bangladesh. Thus, Aranyak forged a fictional strategy to uncover the political unconscious. The production of *Coriolanus*, which, according to its director, emphasized the transformative potential of people, rang the warning bell to the enemy of the people by engaging the Shakespearean unresolved dialectics in the theatrical context. Therefore, the dialectical text of *Coriolanus* meets the conflictual metatext of Bangladesh of the late 1980s.

Chapter 4

Practice

I shall discuss here my practical work of *Piyar Alir Bhanga Mukh* [*Shattered Faces of Piyar Ali*], which I created as part of this PhD research to explore a compassionate journey from Pericles to Piyar Ali, playing Shakespeare between original and renewal. This chapter consists of five subsequent sections: (i) Philosophy of Practice, (ii) Epistemology of Art as a Way of Knowing, (iii) Methodology of Practice as Research, (iv) Ethics of Rework, and (v) Account of New Work. The first section explores Bengali and South Asian ideas that constitute art as undividable from knowledge, which gives a philosophical foundation for the production *Piyar Alir Bhanga Mukh* to be considered a research work. The second section explores the ideas of knowledge that mark how art functions as a form of knowing. This section serves as the epistemological basis for a practice to be considered a form of knowledge. The third section contextualises the contemporary methodological canon of creative research, alternatively, research-led practice, practice-led research, practice-based research or practice as research. The fourth section seeks ethical energy for creating a new work based on a previous one. This section eventually explores the ideas of the author, discussing Rabindranath Tagore's song, anti-authorial discourses, and critical explanation of Shakespearean authorship. The fifth section, finally, takes account of the production of *Piyar Alir Bhanga Mukh*: manuscript, direction, semiotic framing system, audience reception, rehearsal, characterisation and performance, and visual and aural systems.

Philosophy of Practice: The Indivisibility between Art and Knowledge

Lalonian Shadhona: Knowledge is Performance

I aim to understand the Shakespearean canon to examine how Shakespeare looks without his [English] language, either in translation or adaptation or even recreation in a theatrical performance in the context of Bangladesh. Since any academic research, for instance, a PhD project involves establishing "new knowledge" or "substantial new insights," I, as a practitioner-academic, intend to examine the Shakespearean canon in order to get a new form of understanding to problematise ontologically the research itself (Nelson). Moreover, as this research project aimed to investigate Shakespeare in performance, I envisioned creating a practice (in the form of theatre) along with the normative mode of thesis writing.

Fundamentally, the idea to combine practice with the writing of a thesis has incorporated its archaeological and philosophical inspiration from the Nadiya school of philosophy in Bengal, where Fakir Lalon Shah (1774 –1890) posits that "gyan" (knowledge) comes not from the "mon" (mind) but from the "kaya" (body) through the "shadhona" (meditation, or practice), which can noticeably be considered contrary to the Cartesian principle of cogito (Mazhar). To understand the idea of "shadhona," Farhad Mazhar argues:

> [Kalams or the divine] texts such as Lalon's songs or songs of any 'mohajon' (great saints) can be translated into material being -- words that can be transformed into reality by living human beings in this material world by her 'shadhona', by the ethico-political life-affirming practices. Shadhona means lifestyle practices that contribute to create a global community that lives with wisdom and joy of life.
>
> She who is involved in "shadhona" is called "shadhok" (practitioner). As Mazhar argues, "A 'shadhok' is a knowledge practitioner who consciously changes her lifestyle in order to unfold

the power of human possibilities and thus opens up a new horizon for social, economic, cultural and political transformation of the world". For Lalon, as Mazhar explains, "kalams" are not merely some sorts of "statements, propositions or theories," instead, they are a practical guide to act "to re-establish the relation between the internal (ghor) and the external (bahir). In other words, re-establish the unity between the 'soul' and the 'body.'" Thus, I understand the Lalonian sense of epistemology that situates the condition of knowledge-in-performance in the state of ephemeral creativity. Also, I perceive Lalon's idea of ontology which is based on defining the human being as the performing subject rather than the thinking subject.

Hence, I, as a shadhok or knowledge practitioner, aim to complement a creative piece (kalam/song/performance in the Lalonian sense) in order to unfold human possibilities which may open up a new horizon that rejects the dichotomic idea of knowledge generation, and believes that knowledge only comes from an intellectual faculty, separated from the body. Instead, I was enthusiastic about undertaking this research on the creative work (as Lalon's performance of songs) as the form of embodied knowledge that performs in one organic manifestation of soul and body.

The metaphor of Goddess Saraswati: Art is Knowledge

The worship of Saraswati is significantly indicative of understanding how the subcontinent (more specifically the region of Bengal) conceives and performs the idea of knowledge from the Vedic period till now. Saraswati is worshipped due to her status as the Goddess of knowledge in Hinduism. Jainism and some Buddhism sects also worship her as the Goddess of learning. Worships and rituals of the Goddess Saraswati are the vital expression of popular culture in Bangladesh and the West Bengal of India. Mark Cartwright states:

The Goddess has her own festivals, notably the Saraswati Puja, held on the first day of spring. During the festival, worshippers wear yellow, which is associated with wisdom and prosperity. Statues of the Goddess are also draped in yellow silk, and believers pray for blessings on their pens, books, and musical instruments. Children are taught to write for the first time during the festival, Brahmin priests are given fine food, and ancestors are venerated.

Bangladesh, though demographically a Muslim majoritarian country, witnesses Saraswati Puja at most of its schools, colleges, and universities every spring, and many Muslim student-teachers-guardians celebrate this festival along with Hindu worshippers. The Goddess Saraswati is "[f]requently represented in figure sculpture on temples, the Goddess may be accompanied by either her husband or a peacock [alternatively, goose], her traditional assistant. As with many Hindu deities, Saraswati is often depicted with four [or, two] arms, each holding a symbolic object" (Cartwright). The popular culture of Bangladesh also shows that "[a]nother object commonly seen in Saraswati's hands is the vina (the Hindu classical music instrument)" (Cartwright). This reminds me of her metaphorical significance which perceives the symbolic representation of a musical instrument as a source of knowledge. The metaphor of the Goddess Saraswati, thus, reveals the traditional concept of the relationship between (performing) art and knowledge. The Sanskrit word Saraswati literally means "bidyamoyi" [who has the knowledge] in the Bengali language. In Bengali, there is a phrase "saraswato samaj" meaning the intellectual society. So, as a Goddess of Knowledge (in Bengali, Bidya-Devi), Saraswati's holding of vina signifies that music is knowledge. Generally, art is knowledge, or there is no necessity to divide knowledge from art. The iconography of Saraswati stimulates me to realise that practising or making a theatre production is also generating a living form of knowledge.

Epistemology: Art as a Way of Knowing

My PhD is primarily designed to map the Shakespearean theatre in Bangladesh. This intersectionality of Shakespearean and Bangladeshi theatre creates an epistemic turn in my project to have a breathing space to decipher the ontological meaning of theatre to be reflexive to the methodologies for theatre arts, broadly, performance studies. Edmund Leach argues that artists provide us stimulus "by rearranging, reordering, refragmenting the elements of perception, both temporal and spatial . . ." (14). Lois Arnaud Reid discusses that as the "expressive embodiments of value," artworks create an experience, not just "statements of fact" (30). The artist, for Reid, "comes to know in the occurrent act of creating" (38). So, Reid argues that artistic meaning, or in his own term "meaning-embodied," comes to us through "felt cognition or cognitive feeling" (29, 27). Moreover, three turning points, language, culture and performance, have become the effective markers to create meaning, as Tracy C. Davis argues:

> Since the 1970s, we have marked the "linguistic turn" (emphasizing language's role in constructing perception), the "cultural turn" (tracking the everyday meanings of culture, and culture's formative effect on identities), and more recently the "performative turn" (acknowledging how individual behavior derives from collective, even unconscious, influences and is manifest as observable behavior, both overt and quotidian, individual and collective). (1)

Davis also marks that 'the "turns" have had a momentous impact on the arts, humanities, and humanistic social sciences . . ." (1). Based on Baz Kershaw, Davis determines that theatre, "the institutionalized term for the performance . . . turns the experience into knowledge – or a kind of knowledge enabled by aesthetic effect" (3). Moreover, Davis argues, "As a knowledge regime in its own right, theatre 'makes sense' of the reverberation along with the other staged elements in

the performance and the 'given circumstances' of the historic artefact on which the event occurred" (3). Engaging the critical analysis of Baz Kershaw and Susan Leigh Foster, Davis outlines, "Performance, in the aestheticized contexts, … is a means to both express knowing and acquire knowledge" (3). Moreover, Davis clarifies what Foster explains:

> How neurological perception of action results in an "inner mimicry" of what is seen. Thus, movement is contagious – through the conduit of sight – because spectators' brains mirror the actions in their bodies, which in turn rehearse what is seen even if muscles are immobile. Seeing, in effect, is doing. This concept of the neurological basis of the duet between . . . dancer and viewer is a microcosm of the "practical knowing". . . . Not merely the traces of events but events per se are knowledge. (3)

Davis uses Diana Taylor's explanation of "how UNESCO's concept of intangible cultural heritage acknowledges performances' role in preserving and conveying social memory and identity …. In this sense, knowledge formerly the prerogative of books, is recognized in bodies" (3). Philip Auslander, Davis identifies, "is also concerned with the co-presence of performers and audience members in the phenomenology of reception and the mutuality of making meaning" (4). On the other hand, democratic theory of performance enables a knowledge generating public domain, as Davis explains:

> Nicholas Ridout considers how performance studies is deemed a "democratic" discipline because of its attentiveness to participatory involvement as a means to acquire knowledge. What is this knowledge, anyway, and how is its acquisition democratic? For Ridout, the maintenance of a guise in public – not the private or true self but a projected self – enables participation in open debate without the danger of incurring psychic injury. By occupying the space between one's self and one's role, "politics" is made apparent to the individual.

> Thus, a technique readily recognizable from theatre is revealed in the arena of performance and made indispensable in social relations. (4)

Therefore, contemporary performative turns in epistemological practice conceive "the role of performance" as an enabling action of "immanent critique" (4). Thus, theatre and/or performance ontologically create knowledge through embodiment. Hence, this research project has sought its rationale and syncretic self by bringing a theatrical performance on the stage along with its keen focus on writing a thesis conventionally.

Methodology: Practice as Research

Robin Nelson argues that "in the twenty-first century no methodology or epistemology can be taken to yield an unmediated, self-evident truth. . . ." He attempts to understand a new discipline of generating knowledge in academia that "is the relation between theoretical knowledge and practical knowing and the distinction between professional practice and research. . . ." Being informed by other theories, he examines "a pedagogy in which 'professional practice' and 'academic theory' are not separated." He proposes the Practice as Research (PaR) method which is "a category in which knowing-doing is inherent in the practice and practice is at the heart of the inquiry and evidences it, whatever term is used." He determines the procedure of PaR that "involves a research project in which practice is a key method of inquiry and where, in respect of the arts, a practice (creative writing, dance, musical score/performance, theatre/performance, visual exhibition, film or other cultural practice) is submitted as substantial evidence of a research inquiry." His approach to PaR emphatically seeks "a resonance between complementary writing and the praxis itself." However, Nelson's approach to PaR poses questions of whether it is able to generate new ideas through the employment of interdisciplinarity, as he argues,

Can [the practice-based doctorate] contribute to new ways of thinking about interdisciplinarity? Can it help reconfigure the conventional ways of conceptualizing the difference between making something and studying it? Can it help justify the presence of art departments in universities? Can it provide models for bridging history, theory, criticism, and practice – models that might have meaning beyond the humanities?

However, Nelson argues that he prefers "to ask for the specification of a 'research inquiry,' partly because questions typically imply answers and, in turn, evoke perhaps 'the scientific method' in which data lead to the resolution of a hypothesis. . . . PaR typically affords substantial insights rather than coming to such definite conclusions as to constitute 'answers.'" Moreover, he emphasises that the aspect of spontaneity is involved in the creative process of PaR, as he states:

[C]reative process involves gestation, allowing time for the spark of an idea to be fired, and a process in which it is wrought into realization. The workings of the unconscious mind can be mobilized in sleeping and daydreaming. Some practitioners like to take a walk or a bike ride, others find travelling on a bus or train helps. It is also a matter of the studio practice of trying things out.

Concurrently, he validates a theoretical engagement parallel to the practical inquiry to activate an interplay between material (doing) thinking and conceptual (abstract) thinking, as he rearticulates that the PaR consists of a "double articulation between theory and practice, whereby theory emerges from a reflexive practice at the same time as practice is informed by theory."

Estelle Barrett argues, "The emergence of the discipline of practice-led research highlights the crucial interrelationship that exists between theory and practice and the relevance of theoretical and philosophical paradigms for the contemporary arts practitioner" ("Introduction" 1). Again,

drawing on Heidegger's theory of knowledge-in-action, Barrett argues that practice-led research generates a new species of investigation:

> [A]rtistic practice [can] be viewed as the production of knowledge or philosophy in action. Drawing on materialist perspectives, including Martin Heidegger's notion of "handlability", our exploration of artistic research demonstrates that knowledge is derived from doing and from senses. We demonstrate further, that practice-led research is a new species of research, generative enquiry that draws on subjective, interdisciplinary and emergent methodologies that have the potential to extend the frontiers of research. ("Introduction"1)

Barrett outlines, "The innovative and critical potential of practice-based research lies in its capacity to generate personally situated knowledge and new ways of modelling and externalising such knowledge while at the same time, revealing philosophical, social and cultural contexts for the critical intervention and application of knowledge outcomes" (2). She argues, "Since creative arts research is often motivated by emotional, personal and subjective concerns, it operates not only on the basis of explicit and exact knowledge, but also on that of tacit knowledge" (4). She adds that "an innovative dimension of this subjective approach to research lies in its capacity to bring into view, particularities that reflect new social and other realities either marginalised or not yet recognised in established social practices and discourses" (4). However, Pierre Bourdieu cognises that tacit knowledge, or intuitive knowledge, wires all findings to the alternative logic of practice. Barrett summarises that "Bourdieu's theory of practice suggests that culture and material relations that make up our objective reality can only be grasped through the activity of human agents" (4). Barrett argues that the critical discourse of Practice as Research (PaR) views "the artist as a researcher and the artist/critic as a scholar who comments on the value of the artistic process as

the production of knowledge" ("Foucault's Discourse" 135). Furthermore, Heideggerian concept of 'praxical knowledge' offers a rationale for a methodological basis in the creative research field, whereas 'praxical knowledge' suggests that ideas and theories result from practice (Barrett, "Introduction" 6).

Therefore, South Asian philosophical discourse and theological perceptions and the Bengali cultural studies offer an epistemological logic to perform a 'practice' as the substantial portion of a PhD project. Moreover, modern Western aesthetics and art pedagogy make a fair enough ground to conceive art as a way of knowing. Finally, the recent shift of paradigm in researching theatre and performance at higher education levels across the UK, Australia, Canada, South Africa, and the US creates a point of departure from conventional thesis writing to the creative practice.

Ethics of Rework

Understanding Tagore's Song: Authorship as the Shared Playground of the Creative Game
Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1941), the most revered cultural iconographic character of both parts of Bengal (present-day Bangladesh and West Bengal in India), wrote and composed a poetic song in 1916, just three years after he had been awarded the Nobel Prize in literature in 1913. This song is immensely indicative of his idea of the author. Tagore's song offered me the ethical sensibility and moral energy to negate and negotiate a Shakespearean text to reimagine a new work. The piece suggests that it is an author's subjective speaking in an intense nostalgic tone with its imagined audience which asks what would happen if the author will not be walking on the road and will not be rowing across the pier in this world anymore? Later on, in the song, the author responds to his own question: "[You] may choose not to remember me – / May not recall me gazing up the sky"

(Tagore, "Jokhon" [Ganguly]). The author imagines that when he closes all his earthly "business,"
then "[d]ust would cover the strings of [his] lute" and "[t]horny bushes take over the doorways of
[his] apartment" in a condition of forgetting ("Jokhon" [Ganguly]). But the author confirms that
the action of the objective world will continue the same course of life, as the lyrics pathetically
express:

> The same melody the flute will play
> The days will course in the unchanged way
> Boats will be laden from the same pier,
> Shepherds will frolic,
> And cattle will graze in the same manner ("Jokhon" [De])

Finally, Tagore, the author, expresses his firm belief that as "the eternal I" with a new name, he
will return to the playground (as the world) to join the endless game:

> Who is it that says I am not there that morning?
> You will call me by a new name,
> I will be there to join in every game
> You will encircle me with renewed ties
> And I will come and go as usual – the eternal I ("Jokhon" [De])

A close reading of Tagore's song outlines a conceptual framework which answers the
question 'what is an author?' This outline provides three consecutive phases of his conception:
proposition, description, and conviction. The proposition observes the author's interim and
physiological death, which implies Rabindranath Tagore himself. Tagore, as the subject, is mortal.
This phase envisages the natural death of the author, who belongs to a home, a musical instrument,
the environment and the act of living.

The description illustrates the unchanged and unaffected object as the world-in-action after
the subject's death, i.e., the author himself. Consequently, as a physical being, the author is mortal.
His life is transient and (un)situated in the finitude. When the author completes his creative

"game," he dies. But the playground (world-in-action) remains the same. Thus, the objective external order of the world, as the infinite creative reservoir, consumes the subjective beingness of the author through the course of natural death. Therefore, the author's death is inevitable. However, the author's death does not matter in the creative game of the world.

The conviction conceptualises a rebirth of the new author. Here the author is reborn to take part in the infinite game of the world. But the author is not the same one who dies physically. On the contrary, the new-born author obtains a new name. The naming, therefore, defines the author's eternal presence. Here, Tagore loses his physical beingness, the subjective 'I'ness, the authority. Instead, "the eternal I" appears that proposes a distinct idea of the author who never dies.

Tagore's song thus conceptualises that an author has no name. The individual is mortal, but the author is eternal. The author is not the subject but the object. The author is not concrete but abstract. The physical author is metamorphosed into the series of the succession of the authors. The metamorphosis occurs over time. Hence, authority is a shared entity. And the creative game of the world is a shared playground. This is how I conceived the idea of the author from Tagore's song which set off a series of stimulations to engage with Shakespeare's *Pericles* as a shared playground and take part in the game of making theatre.

Anti-authorial Discourses: Language, Unconscious and Text
Concerned critics, particularly Roland Barthes, in the field of anti-authorial discourses in the West, historicise that modern ideas against the grain of authorialism originated from Stéphane Mallarmé (1842- 1898) via Paul Valéry (1871- 1945), Marcel Proust (1871- 1922) and the Surrealists (Burke 8). Being informed by Mallarmé and others' thoughts, Barthes demonstrates that "it is language which speaks, not the author . . ." (qtd. in Burke 208). As a precursor of this discourse, Mallarmé

significantly announces, "The pure work implies the disappearance of the poet-speaker who yields the initiative to words animated by the inequality revealed in their collision with one another . . ." (qtd. in Burke 8).

Barthes explains how the person as the owner of 'writing' has been replaced by the language itself. He asserts that "to write is" to "perform." Because writing is such a playing "where only language acts" (qtd. in Burke 208). Barthes asks, "Who is speaking thus?" nobody knows who speaks because, for him, writing contains the "destruction of every voice, of every point of origin" (qtd. in Bennett 12). Susan Bennett summarises what Barthes suggests, "[W]riting radically subverts our sense of a stable voice, of a stable origin, for speech or language" (13). Bennett argues, "Barthes's opening salvo in 'The Death of An Author,' then, abolishes authorial voice, eliminates voice as origin and source, voice as identity, unity, as what Foucault will call the 'principle of a certain unity in writing'" (12).

The theory of the author's death decentres the subjectivity of the author and constitutes the language as Barthes says that an "[author's subjectivity is] only a ready-formed dictionary, its words only explainable through other words, and so on indefinitely" (qtd. in Belsey 134). Therefore, Catherine Belsey explains Barthes's idea that the author is unable "to 'express' a unique and transcendental subjectivity, [rather] the author constructs a text by assembling intertextual fragments" (134). As Barthes argues, "[T]he writer can only imitate a gesture that is always anterior, never original. His only power is to mix writings, to counter the ones with the others, in such a way as never to rest on any of them" (qtd. in Belsey 134). Furthermore, authorial death constitutes textual futility, as Barthes states, "Once the author is removed, the claim to decipher a text becomes quite futile. To give a text an author is to impose a limit on that text, to furnish it with a final signified, to close the writing. . . . In the multiplicity of writing . . . writing ceaselessly posits

meaning ceaselessly to evaporate it, carrying out a systematic exemption of meaning" (147). Therefore, Belsey argues, "The death of the Author, the Absolute Subject of literature, means the liberation of the text from the authority of presence behind it which gives it meaning. Released from the constraints of a single and univocal reading, the text becomes available for production, plural, contradictory, capable of change" (134).

Mallarmé's idea about the disappearance of the writer has been further discussed in Michel Foucault's *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences*, where Foucault poses a Nietzschean question: "Who is speaking?" and seeks a reply from Mallarmé: "what is speaking is, in its solitude, in its fragile vibration, in its nothingness, the word itself . . . " (Foucault 305). However, there is a complex relationship between the legislation of speaking agency and the discursive authority, as Foucault argues:

> We would no longer hear the questions that have been heard for so long: Who really spoke? Is it really he and not someone else? With what authority and originality? And what part of his deepest self did he express in his discourse? Instead, there would be other questions, like these: What are the modes of existence of this discourse? Where has it been used, how can it circulate, and who can appropriate it for himself? ("What" 118-119)

A complex and diverse mode of the discourse determines the speaking or any type of cultural production, as Foucault asserts that "I am no doubt not the only one who writes in order to have no face. Do not ask who I am and do not ask me to remain the same" ("The Archaeology"17). For Foucault, it is not the face of the author, but the operating system of discourse that appropriates the meaning. Barrett summarises Foucauldian ideas thus: "Within the power/knowledge nexus, and where cultural production is so regulated by institutional and other disciplinary regimes and apparatuses, it no longer makes sense to focus on the author as the sole creator of meaning" (138).

Linguistic anthropology recognises that the kinship structure, like language structure, is similar to Saussurian formulation of the arbitrariness of the sign. In this formulation, the semiotic relatiship between signifier and signified is based on conventional difference instead of natural correspondence (Lévi-Strauss 33-99). Accordong to Levi-Straussian anthropology, Burke observes that "family members [are] differentiated from one another in much the same way as language differentiates and categorises objects" (13). However, the Sartrian Existentialist notion of individuality and doctrine of freedom is based on Cartesian certainty and consciousness. Again, existentialism has been challenged by the idea of linguistic unconsciousness. Thus, Levi-Strauss declares that "the goal of the human sciences is not to constitute man, but to dissolve him" (qtd. in Burke 13). In other words, this dissolution emphasises elimination of the individual authoritative focus by embracing the relationship of language and unconscious, as Jacques Lacan regains it in *Ecrits* that "the unconscious is the whole structure of language" (147). The intertwined relationship between language and unconscious structure of mind positions the subjectivity instead of rationalised humanness, as Burke argues:

> Though working in very different areas, Lacan and Levi-Strauss had thus come to very similar consciousness concerning the effects of the linguistic revaluation on the status of the subject in relation to knowledge. Levi-Strauss urged that philosophical and anthropological investigation move from their concerns with conscious phenomena to the study of their 'unconscious infrastructure', just as Lacan stressed that it is not man as conscious subject who thinks, acts or speaks, but the linguistic unconscious that determines his every thought, action and utterance. (13)

New historicism focuses on the "refiguring of the socio-cultural field within which . . . literary and dramatic works were originally produced" (Bennett 90). New historicists discard "the

'romantic' ascription of agency to the isolated, autonomous author, since it is concerned with the 'social production of literature'" (Bennett 90). However, Bennett argues that new historicism conceives the author as "the other," though it has a "central and organizing presence…but submerged or embraced by the circulation of social and political energies and the discourses and structures of power" (93). Bennett agrees with the reading of Stephen Greenblatt's *Resonance and Wonder* that the author is a "social being" because the author's "single actions are 'disclosed as multiple'" and the author as an individual participates in the "collective process" of writing (91).

Anti-authorial discourse depends on the idea of reading the text as Jacques Derrida states that "there is nothing outside of the text" (118). The Derridean method of deconstruction pursues that text is a production of critical reading which necessitates a system consisting of a signifying structure that also requires meaning with writing. As Derrida explains, "[T]he writer writes in a language and in a logic whose proper system, laws, and life his discourse by definition cannot dominate absolutely. He uses them only by letting himself, after a fashion and up to a point, be governed by the system" (118). After discussing the "writing," one element of the double bind system of the text, Derrida then explains the function of "reading", the other constituting element of "text": "And the reading must always aim at a certain relationship, unperceived by the writer, between what he commands and what he does not command of the patterns of the language that he uses. This relationship is not a certain quantitative distribution of shadow and light, of weakness or of force, but a signifying structure that critical reading should produce" (118).

The Derridean mode of critical reading can be re-read by Helene Cixous's feminine research mode. According to Susan Sellars, Cixous's feminine research mode posits, "Though no reading can ever be definitive, a reading which 'opens' itself in this way will . . . lead the reader to awareness of other possible threads, enabling the reader to advance further on the path of textual

and self-understanding" (7). Sellers explains the feminine reading method that "may mean the adoption of a whole range of textual perspectives, details the alternative organizational practices that such an approach to the text entails" (7). "Unlike the judgemental hierarchy of patriarchal institutions," Cixous's feminine mode of reading "is founded on the multiplicity of readings that bring a text into play" (7). The playing quality of a text creates the scope of new writing. As Helene Cixous's feminine method of writing "'gives birth'—not to the authorially crafted characters of traditional literature, but to the multiple potential selves of writing I" (6). This feminine mode reveals, "Writing I gives place . . . to the 'naming' of 'you'" (6). Conversely, Helene Cixous says, "[T]his is I who is you" (qtd. in Sellers 29). For this mode of writing, Sellers interprets that Cixous necessitates a requirement of the "conversation" "with a renewed emphasis on the importance of 'poetic thinking'" (Sellers 7). Sellers, based on Helene Cixous's feminine mode of research, therefore argues, "[L]iterature is intrinsic to this search for 'feminine' modes of giving [new] form" (3).

Hence, the anti-authorial theories make a critical basis for rethinking the 'subject' that subverts the 'romantic' definition and position of the author which regains the signifying role of language, discourse and ideology. And the anti-authorial discourses emphasise the deconstructionist method of reading and writing the text, the structure of the unconscious and femininity. Thus, the anti-authorial discourses critically inform and offer an ethical point to creating *Piyar Alir Bhanga Mukh* by deconstructing the gigantic author Shakespeare's *Pericles*.

Shakespearean Idea of Collaborative Authorship and Provocation of New Blending

The Quarto edition "presents *Pericles* as a collaboration between Shakespeare and George Wilkins [c.1575-1618]" (Warren 4). Therefore, *Pericles* itself problematises the idea of an authoritative

text and singular authorship. The textual history of collaboration with Wilkins reveals Shakespeare's ethical framework of authorship that allows a potential grave of a singular author as a colossus figure. Suzanne Gossett, editor of *Pericles*, states, "*Pericles* is an anomaly in the Shakespeare canon. . . . [A] uniquely damaged text and is the only one of the so-called 'bad quartos' that does not exist in another, better version…. *Pericles* is almost certainly not by Shakespeare alone, and the long history contention over its authorship has become intertwined, not always to the benefit of clarity, with attempts to explain the condition of the text" (1). Also, the Shakespearean canon has been widely considered a playful site that rejects the authorially intended meaning, as Dobson argues:

> I think the important thing here is not to make the mistake of believing that Shakespeare's works can ever be wholly assimilated to any single (imagined) world-order or historical moment. His plays, with their multiple viewpoints and metamorphic narratives and endlessly mutating metaphors and kinds of theatrical appeal, far exceeded the official agendas of his patrons and audiences in his own times, and what they perpetually offer to their readers is glimpses of other ways in which the world might make sense. ("Politics")

Moreover, Shakespearean collaboration in authorship organically complements his canon that hosts further generic plurality through new blending:

> The key thing – and it has been very much to the fore in Asia – is their generic plurality: because Shakespearean drama is an impure blend which may at any moment draw on the literary, the popular, commedia dell'arte, medieval mystery plays, classical tragedy, the interlude, the pageant or the improvised, it often provokes new blendings and collisions between different theatrical languages and modes. These new compounds and

incongruities in turn demand new critical languages. The sheer hospitality of the canon is

itself an ethical achievement and an ethical challenge. ("Politics")

The archaic instance of writing *Pericles* collaboratively being recognised as the sheer hospitability

within the Shakespearean canon generates ethics of new narratives based on his plays.

Shakespearean provocation for new blendings thus authenticates the metaphorical statement, as

Jorge Luis Borges says, "Every writer creates his own precursors" (qtd. in Burke 9). Hence, from

Pericles to *Piyar Alir Bhanga Mukh*, actualizes that "all intellectual history is post factum . . ."

(Burke 9).

Account of New Work: *Piyar Alir Bhanga Mukh*

Manuscript

When I decided to work on *Pericles*, I perceived the idea of "adaptation as creative destruction"

(Abbott 105). In the creative destruction, as George Bluestone argues, "[A theatre writer] becomes

not a translator for an established author, but a new author in his own right" (qtd. in Abbott 105).

I was really moved by the story of *Pericles* and inspired to write a "new" story which reminded

me of Paul Ricoeur's philosophy statement that homo sapiens is homo fabolans (3). Apart from

anti-authorial discourses, Graham Holderness's framework of Shakespeare and creative collisions

provided me with a specific reading method to deconstruct *Pericles*. Holderness accepts Jerome

McGann's idea which defines "textuality as a history of change," and also determines "the textual

condition" where "the textual condition's only law is the law of change" (qtd. in Holderness 2).

Holderness constitutes an inevitable "metaphorical death of author" that gives birth to

"appropriation" (3). Jean Marsden argues, "Appropriation studies are more likely, by definition, to

be concerned with the impact we have on the plays and the impact they have on us" (qtd. in

Holderness 3). McGann's critique of modern textual criticism offers that texts "achieve meaning only through the continued negotiation with the institutions of their reception and transmission" (Greetham xv). Therefore, it is the principle of "mutatis mutandis" which reminds us that "appropriation is simultaneously expropriation" (Holderness 3). Holderness reveals that "the secret of Shakespeare's longevity and plurality lies in the 'malleability' of the works" (10). As a creative writer then, I understood Holderness's term "malleability" as Dobson's term "hospitability" of the Shakespearean plays. Therefore, I ignored the semiotic approach to "intentional reading" of *Pericles* and sought a way to go beyond Shakespeare (and his collaborator George Wilkins) as the "implied author" who intended to produce the specific meaning and effects through *Pericles*. Instead, I used the symptomatic reading method that decoded the text of the "author's unconscious state of mind, or of unacknowledged cultural conditions" (Abbott 196).

Eventually, I got an "unacknowledged" clue from my supervisor Michael Dobson. He reads *Pericles* as "an empathetic journey" which triggered me to create a point of departure from the play *Pericles* because the "not-seen" of a play's trace always "opens and limits visibility" (Derrida 124). As Derrida argues, "The opening of the question, the departure from the closure of a self-evidence, the putting into doubt of a system of oppositions, all these movements necessarily have the form of empiricism and of errancy" (123). Indeed, I tried to understand the fundamental dramaturgical structure of *Pericles*: the objective narrative of Gower's storytelling and the characters' subjective enactment. But my intuition and two and a half years' inhabitation of Birmingham helped me shape a story of displaced self. Thus, I wrote a monodrama, *Piyar Alir Bhanga Mukh* in Bengali. I later translated it into English titled *Piyar Alir Bhanga Mukh* (see Appendix C for the manuscript). Here I quote again from my own writing that I wrote for the show's publicity and the Program:

This play explores a ceaseless journey of a Bangladeshi-British middle-aged man named Piyar Ali, who seeks his selfhood in the context of the 1971 genocide in Bangladesh during its liberation war. The play intends to rediscover the history of pain and the existential angst that an individual faces in his very private sphere due to internal colonialism and genocide by examining the concept of the "empathetic journey" that Professor Michael Dobson determines to realize Shakespeare's play, *Pericles*. Thus, the play *Piyar Alir Bhanga Mukh* was inspired by *Pericles* as an archaeological source of a new creation. This [play] as an endless "empathetic journey" blends South Asian story-telling techniques with the post-dramatic theatre aesthetics where a blurred world emerges . . . at the time of coup de grace. I offered the English script to a generous audience member, Guy Young, a PhD student at the Shakespeare Institute, and asked him to provide me with a response which is quoted here as the signified meaning of the semiotics of the script:

This is an immensely powerful script. While the subject matter - human displacement and the trauma of war - has never been more relevant, the piece's directness, and its distinctive voice, arrest the attention like a modern-day Ancient Mariner. We simply have to listen, transfixed, till the end.

And what an ending! If a motif of the piece is that of fragmentation, that humans repeat cycles of exodus without reprieve, riven from their roots, displaced from their homelands, rent from their families, then it is nevertheless inexhaustible hope that drives humans to bridge the fragments, binding together in emergent destinies that overcome the darkness. This is conveyed through Piyar, seemingly doomed to walk his father's homeland looking for answers (and his poet-father's grave), confused by his traumatised mother's written testimony concerning the Civil War of 1971. In his darkest moments, Piyar sees himself as

a 'piece of exodus' - one of many brilliantly evocative poetic phrases in this translation that conveys the vast flows of broken and homeless humanity of which Piyar is one restless, questing atom.

The story is divided between the Gower-like Poet and Piyar, an effective structure that allows us to switch between detachment and embodiment, narration and experience. It is the narrator-poet who ultimately reveals that, off-stage, Piyar comes upon 'seeds' of new hope from a 'witch'. This healer allows Piyar to reconceive himself and his story: not as a shard of a broken history, but as a generative monad in a new narrative. Rather than seeking to lie with his father's skeleton, he will search for his half-sister, in whom a new sense of recognition and futurity will flame up.

Graham Holderness has given us the idea of 'collisions' to describe the atom-splitting generative physics of adaptation. Shahman's work radiates just such energy. It wears its source material, Shakespeare's 'Pericles', lightly, but shows how entirely fresh and hard-hitting work emerges through encounters between histories, cultures and theatrical traditions. The aberration of Piyar's sister's conception, for example, recalls but newly configures some of the disturbing content in 'Pericles'. Rather than dependent on 'Pericles', though, Shahman's work is entirely original, bestowing on the earlier work insights from a separate but all-too-familiar twentieth century context, allowing it to 'flower' with the same sense of recognition with which the play-script ends. And that is something that reminds us of our common humanity - a point perhaps often made, but rarely with such a poignant jolt. For the idiomatic vividness and expressiveness of Piyar, especially in his closing speech, shake stale elements in the source-text into new life. The

source-text benefits from an encounter with Shahman's artful writing, which exchanges rusty fragments with magic seeds.

However, I perceive Young's reception as performative. As Abbott argues the performative is "not what a narrative is about, or what a story is, but how it functions in the world . . ." (194). The semiotic of Piyar Ali's story, as Paul Cobley would say, asserts that "[the narrative] harbours astounding complexity and offers us the opportunity to partake of the unlimited potential of signs" (223). Because "[s]igns are not to be considered as self-enclosed but as operating in a dialogue which is itself necessarily a site of contest or negotiation" (Cobley 107).

I aim to collaborate with the past as the site of negotiation, as Diana Henderson describes to illuminate, "both the multiplicity and the richness of 'Shakespeare'" and at the same time, "the problems his collaborators seek to alter or carry, from his world into our own" (8). In negotiating "the Romantic model of authorship," (7) I dispense with "the simpler idea of Shakespeare as the singular genius on a pedestal that caught the popular imagination, continues to spark hero worship, and funds Globe reconstructions around the globe" (6). The play of Piyar Ali thus intends to participate in the shift of paradigm, in Henderson's term Shake-shifting, of contemporary creative approach towards the collaborating with Shakespeare, "giving special attention to the remediated representation of gender and nationhood" (15). Moreover, Gossett defines that *Pericles* is an experimental play both in terms of collaborative authorship and action of "immediacy and power" as well as "uncertainty and popularity" (163). Gossett argues, "Either Wilkins or Shakespeare could have recalled the earlier work, as both often recalled elements of Shakespeare's previous plays. The causes for the experiment that resulted in *Pericles* were theatrical, social, generic and biographical, the combined experiences of both authors yielding, in collaboration, something different from what either wrote alone" (163).

With a view to the act of collaboration as well as narrativization, I wrote Piyar Ali's interior monologues to mimic the stream of consciousness employing analepsis (flashback) and prolepsis (flashforward) so as to initiate a dialogue with the paratext, the material outside the narrative. As narrative requires happening, it is "a representation of an event or a series of events" (Abbott 12). I employed analepsis and prolepsis because "narrative is the principal way in which our species organizes its understanding of time" (3). However, Paul Ricoeur says, "Time becomes human time to the extent that it is organized after the manner of a narrative; narrative, in turn, is meaningful to the extent that it portrays the features of temporal existence" (qtd in Abbot 4). The "temporal existence" constituted Piyar Ali's "empathetic journey. The narrative of the journey requires the "detours." As Cobley argues that "the progress of fictional narrative must, necessarily, be impeded; and this is the key point. Narrative must entail some kind of delay, detours and digression" (12).

Piyar Ali's journey sought the "alternative scenarios" by narrativizing his "temporal existence". Cobley necessitates that "a notion of alternative scenarios is actually derived from the findings of some branches of quantum physics which posit a 'multiverse' or parallel, rather than singular, universe(s)" (202). Furthermore, the play's title, *Piyar Alir Bhanga Mukh*, indicates an illusion of a unified image of self. As Helene Cixous urges the "recognition of the multiple nature of the self which can never simplify itself to conform to the illusion of its unified mirror image" (qtd. in Sellars 3). That is why Piyar Ali is broken but ceaselessly tries to be unified in his mirror image.

However, the formalist analysis of narratology concerns the text itself. On the contrary, the ideological criticism concerns the context. Because the sense-making process of narrative functions between the story as particular and the context as general, as Divya Dwivedi argues, "Narrative itself, taken most fundamentally as a form of cognition, is paradigmatic of this relation

of reciprocal and irreducible interdependence. It is intrinsic to a narrative mode of meaning that the sense-making process, whether it is generating or interpreting narrative meaning, must negotiate between the particular and general" (6). Some semiotic receptions of the production of *Piyar Alir Bhanga Mukh* indicate its general context, as Julian Jaynes would say, which is "a story of identity, of a voyage to the self" (qtd. in Cobley 54). The South Asian narratives phenomenologically employ prototypical stories of anticolonial nationalism which assert the politics of identity. As Patrick Colm Hogan argues, "the emplotment of nationalism—prominently including anticolonial nationalism—commonly follows a limited number of story prototypes. Those prototypes operate to explain past and current events and to orient nationally identified individuals toward future goals" (37). Hogan identifies traumatic memories of the past in nationalistic Kashmiri stories in Indian subcontinental context: "Both a psychoanalytic and affective scientific account would agree, however, that memories are at the basis of trauma. In a cognitive account, these are specifically what are now called "emotional memories". Emotional memories are memories that may or may not call to mind particular "episodic memories," thus specific sensory images of or information about the past" (42). Although, according to Hogan, postcolonial colonialism demonstrates, using the fractured tales, that "the nation is person" (42). However, in Bangladesh, the predominant cultural nationalistic discourse has not invested much interest in those stories of the liberation war of 1971 that include the lost and displaced lives of people such as Piyar Ali who was born in Bangladesh (then East Pakistan) but brought up in England.

B K Jahangir, a Bangladeshi sociologist and writer, argues that populist nationalism "Bangalianize all post and sectors as the road to recapture national dignity and to overcome imperialism and colonialism and actualize the brother-hood of a community" (42-43). The

recapturing process of national dignity and the actualisation of community rejects the "identifying relationship of self and place", as Bill Ashcroft et al. write in *The Empire Writes Back*, "It is here that the special post-colonial crisis of identity comes into being; the concern with the development or recovery of an effective identifying relationship between self and place" (qtd. in Loschnigg 55). Piyar Ali's narrative rejects the linear relationship of self and place, where the self must be an insider and is required to be situated only within a specific geographic border. Conversely, the narrative of Piyar Ali "represent[s] explorations of alternative version of "self", constructing and revising concepts of postcolonial selves and (migrant) identities" (Loschnigg 56). Moreover, according to the Foucauldian idea, Martin Loschnigg rearticulates that "literature is a means by which individuals make sense of and define their existence through historically and culturally constituted 'subject position' . . ." (56).

The dislocation of Piyar Ali's transcultural self problematizes the postcolonial formal process of citizenship to the social process of naturalization because he was naturalised outside Bangladesh. Also, the war baby, who was not by Piyar Ali's father but from his mother's womb, was adopted by a European (as a former colonial master). The destiny of this unseen character also signifies that the emergence of a new state does not legitimise her "illegitimate" daughter. Thus, *Piyar Alir Bhanga Mukh* generates problematics to the national linear self and also problematizes the narrative of the nation. Instead, Piyar Ali is entrapped by what Jo-Marie Classen calls an "imposed destination" due to internal colonialism (11). As a result, Piyar Ali sets his "empathetic journey" of postliminium or the cross-border movement that signifies his "voluntary exile" (Classen 11). Classen argues, "Exile is a basic aspect of *la condition humaine* looming large in literature, both ancient and modern. Exile is a condition in which the protagonist is no longer living, or able to live, in the land of his birth [removal from the patria—homeland]" (9). Piyar Ali

crucially seeks a spiritual asylum by sailing a journey as the flux for salvation from the crime done by the statal-political process of othering. Piyar Ali's punishing isolation and releasing journey both seek "the flower" as an ultimate redemption, though in an absurd mode, to go beyond colonial binarism and postcolonial linear nationalism.

Direction

On the days of October in the year 2021, I was planning to create a practical work of theatre as part of my PhD during the deadening pandemic. To see the video of the production of *Piyar Alir Bhanga Mukh* click here this private link on YouTube: https://youtu.be/aSJ8p87Ojfo. Whilst I hoped the pandemic would be gone, I became engrossed reading Anne Bogart:

> [Theatre] Artists are individuals willing to articulate in the face of flux and transformation. And the successful artist finds new shapes for our present ambiguities and uncertainties. The artist becomes the creator of the future through the violent act of articulation. I say violent because articulation is a forceful act. It demands an aggressiveness and an ability to enter into the fray and translate that experience into expression. In the articulation begins a new organization of the inherited landscape. (2-3)

> One day I started the rehearsal as a "forceful act" in order to reorganise "the inherited landscape" of the theatrical canon where my role was not solely as the writer but fundamentally as the director. After a long pause due to the pandemic and being on leave from an academic position at the Theatre and Performance Studies Department at the University of Dhaka, I began to do theatre. I was unimaginably excited. I even had been tempted by the zero-degree Celsius temperature on the November evening in West Midlands in Great Britain. Eventually, the great authoritative figures, the shadows of the fabulous directors with their ghostly voices started to

haunt me. I heard many a time the resonance of what a maestro Peter Brook learnt from other masters:

> From Meyerhold, for example, we learn that the director must be cultivated, that he must investigate and know as many areas as he can possibly reach, in both the past and the present, in order to be well prepared for his function. This was Meyerhold's challenge; probing deeply into the human comes from Stanislavski; Craig appeals to us not to lose sight of the invisible world; Artaud demands a recognition of the painful, intolerable sides of human experience and warns against the comfort of beauty and romance; Brecht reminds us that the reality of the world outside the theatre is the same reality that the audience carry with them into the theatre, and that a director must face its urgent needs every moment. (Foreword xi)

During the rehearsal of *Piyar Alir Bhanga Mukh*, along with Brook, I understood that

> unlike philosophers and poets, directors are not alone: theatre, television and cinema are communal activities. Directors depend on and work with others, and these other people, the actors and audience, open up the search for us and allow us to go beyond our individual capacity. Directors never work alone: they function within a complex act of relationships and this is their strength. (Foreword xi)

I owe much to Brook who showed me the way to strategise an effective directorial procedure concerning the collaborative relationship between theatre and its audience. As a director I intended the play to reconstitute an understanding which in Henderson's words signals, "the hybrid collaborations at the very core of … Shakespearen performance" (35). A director, for instance, should always remember that "[t]he spectators do not have a secondary position, to buy or not buy; they are collaborators who allow the whole theatre experience to take on meaning"

(Foreword xi), perceived in my own theatre-making, I, once again, appropriated what Brook realised that

> if the director has a search, this search is animated by an undying sense of Why in relation
> to ever-changing human experience. That search is made real by the need of an appropriate
> craft, and this means recognizing constantly changing means. And because the means of
> theatre are always changing there can be no systems of or schools of directing that last
> forever. (Foreword xii)

Although, primarily, I was hesitant and drowned in an entire world of Hamletesque confusion because I was set on examining the idea of how Shakespeare looked without his language through a reimagined text in a specific context of Bangladesh. I designed the practice project to bring a Bengali language production to the stage at the heart of an English-speaking land UK, Birmingham. The project's scope was that Birmingham is a city of communities from diverse cultural backgrounds, while a large number of populations are Bengali-speaking Bangladeshis. But most of them are from the Sylhet division, the Eastern part of Bangladesh, which speaks predominantly 'Sylheti' dialect, characteristically different from the standardised Bengali language, while the playscript was almost entirely written in standard Bengali. Also, the production was planned to be staged at Midlands Arts Centre (MAC), a cultural hub for many South Asian communities, local English theatre-goers, and Birmingham universities' cultural departments' global communities of academics who do not understand even a Bengali word. Therefore, in the beginning days of our rehearsal period, whenever we discussed the linguistic medium of the production, I noticed fractured lines on the actor's face. Reflexively and infectiously, I felt a thin cold line running through my stomach, I was as concerned as my actor. Finally, however, I got an illuminating thought from Antonin Artaud's *The Theatre of Cruelty*:

The Alchemists of old realized that in each human being there are three elements to be

reached: the body, the soul, and the mind. With harmonic combinations, we hope to awaken

a sensibility that has not been lost but is, as it were, isolated by an infinite number of

obstacles. It should be made clear that what we are attempting is not an imitation of any

country's work and that our only aim is to return dignity to the theatre. (Blin and Artaud

98)

I realised that I would have to, in the first instance, set the rehearsal to explore the protocols

and process to embody such a theatre language that Artaudian theatre insisted on again and again:

"[t]ext, gesture, sound, lighting—each is equally important to me: the play lives off this whole,

and whoever neglects one of these elements is depriving this body of an essential organ…there is

no true language in the theatre except action" (Blin 132). So, what I realised from Artaud was that

he wanted "to return to that idea of universal life", obliquely, a primordial language that solely

constitutes theatre. For Artaud, it meant "doing everything the director can to the sensibilities of

actor and spectator" (132). Thus, the vision of creating the primordial language of theatre art had

been the guiding principle in directing *Piyar Ali*. Therefore, I learned about direction; as Anne

Bogart argues, "Every creative act involves a leap into the void. . . . To leap can often cause acute

embarrassment. Embarrassment is a partner in the creative act – a key collaborator, if your work

does not sufficiently embarrass you, then very likely no one will be touched by it" (113).

The creative research that I envisaged through the reimagination of Shakespeare had been

a story of Piyar Ali. As a displaced and transnational self, Piyar attempts a journey to search for

his selfhood. So, I needed to theatricalise the search for the self of Piyar Ali. At the same time, as

a director, I was also searching for my own kind of theatre that could organically carry out the

search of Piyar Ali's self. Therefore, the total directorial framework evolved into a double-bind

ontological search: the character's self and the self of theatre. And, interestingly, the amateur but passionate actor Tarek Chowdhury also perceived his participation in this project as searching as because he had migrated for the last three decades, lost his father for forty years, and looked for a theatrical expression that would reflect the history of personal as national plus the global self of himself.

Moreover, I realised that it became a question of searching for myself, too, as I created the fiction and envisaged the theatre project. As a result, I started to think that if I could begin a journey of searching what a theatre is, then it would organically aid in accelerating the threefold (character-actor-director) journey to seeking selfhood. From this point, I became interested in getting access to the current debate of whether a virtual space could be a theatrical space or not, as the pandemic pushed human society into a bodyless digital world. Since the theatre is determined by its physical space and 'present' time or ephemerality, I became enthusiastic about examining the definitional status-quo of theatre's nature by thinking about creating a conceptual framework of staging through side-by-side presence of digital images with the physical environment. I dreamt of a significant possibility in such conceptualisation that simultaneously could help to authenticate the memories and unconscious manifestations of Piyar Ali in a dynamic flow of space and time. In this case, semiotics of theatre provoked me towards the study that

> activates the potential use of a wide range of sign systems and signifiers in the imagination
> of the director. An awareness of semiotics stretches the director's horizon, gives her a grid
> upon which to contemplate the choices of thousands of signifiers and how they might be
> layered, and aids her in understanding how meanings are influenced by the mix of signifiers
> that are ultimately present in a performance. (Whitmore 10-11)

Semiotics, alternatively, semiology, Patrice Pavis, who denies normative mode of meaning production in theatre, states, "A method of analyzing text and/or performance that focuses on the formal organization of the text or the show as a whole, on the internal organization of those signifying systems that make up both text and performance, on the dynamics of the processes of meaning and establishment of sense through the participation of theatre practitioners and audience ("Languages" 13). Theatre semiology inspired me to go beyond the normative mode of creating and studying theatre. I understood the problem of traditional dramaturgical approach through semiology. As Pavis observes:

> But whereas dramaturgy remains at a very general level in this endeavor, by considering primarily the written text and textual and scenic macrostructures, semiology attempts the comparative operation at all levels of the performed work, and more particularly at the level of stage systems. Its methodology is also inverse, since it sets out from stage signs to reconstruct, by comparing, adding-up and checking the redundancies of signifying systems, the double system of form and content. ("Languages" 27)

Significantly, I tried to understand the Hegelian problem of dramaturgy, i.e. form and content, through Pavis' semiotic method. According to Pavis, "If Hegel is concerned with a dialectical relationship between a form which is nothing but the expression of a content, and a content which does not exist unless expressed in a certain form, in practice it is extremely difficult to define form and content dialectically" (27). As a result, Pavis determines that dramaturgical approach of a theatrical work "proceed[s] from a certain 'world vision' which finds artistic expression in a certain way . . . presupposes knowledge of the aesthetic or ideological code, according to which the engendering of the message is then explained" (27). I was enlightened by the semiotic argument suggesting a performative context. As Pavis argues, "Instead of explaining

everything by means of a ready-made structure, semiology aims to determine which structuration of the performance the spectator can set up, to what extent meaning is the object of an active elaboration by the spectator, and how the recognition of signifieds from signifiers and signifiers from signifieds contained in the work, takes place" (27-8).

Moreover, semiotic theories have been highly influencing contemporary approaches of crafts and aesthetics of directing theatre. As Peter Sellars reveals his secret to directing in an interview:

> The language of the theatre has to be reinvented . . . I'm talking about the vocabulary of stage language, of what a set looks like, how lighting behaves, how sound works, how video works, how all of those things go into creating a total work of art . . . to create this Gesamtkunstwerk, where the text is as important as the video images is as important as the sound, and nothing has dominance although the words are very powerful (qtd. in Whitmore 2).

Thus, I earned a unique understanding to make a theatre as a meaning-producing sign system, particularly from the postmodern and/or postdramatic theatre director's method, as Whitmore argues:

> Semiotics gives the director a framework for making choices about which sign systems should dominate a production as a whole, which signifiers should take precedence at any given moment of a performance, and how signifiers can be orchestrated through time to create a meaningful, coherent, and symbiotic artistic statement. Each spectator in turn perceives selectively different signifiers and absorbs the impact of the accumulated signifieds, which produce a singular set of meanings tailored from the spectator's psychic and physical uniqueness. (228)

Therefore, I decided to generate a communication system that depended on the sign systems of the performer, mise-en-scene, aural and the audience. Finally, I intended to practice such a theatre as an open-ended text. For example, what poststructuralists believe that Jon Whitmore summarises, "[R]eading a text is much more open ended; the text itself has plural dimensions, and each reader must discover or construct her own meanings" (18). Furthermore, Roland Barthes considers that the "reader gains meaning from a text not by his personal psychological bent and natural inclination to seek unity but, rather, by the text itself, which is open ended" (qtd. in Whitmore 18). The sign-system determines the overall structure of performance and directorial approach, as Whitmore maintains that

> the fundamental choices a director makes when deciding which sign systems to emphasize or deemphasize profoundly affect the style, content, and meanings of a performance. The choices depend on the director's own aesthetic interest and method of operating, the playscript or performance vehicle the director has chosen, and the meanings the director hopes the spectator will assemble. The emotional, spiritual, intellectual, and aesthetic impact of the performance will be shaped and perhaps even dictated by these core choices. The overall directorial style of a performance will be identified by the sign systems the director chooses and the priority assigned to them. (30)

A semiotic mode of theatre-making stimulated me and brought a torch into the dark and void world that contains the unerupted energy of creativity, which made me firmly confident to figure out the directorial conception and role to initiate a 'forceful act'. I shall now discuss, both reflexively and critically, the overall sign system and mode of communication that the *Piyar Alir Bhanga Mukh* envisioned on the evening of 21st December 2021 at Foyle Studio at Midlands Arts Centre (MAC), Birmingham.

Framing System of Piyar Ali

I was involved in creating theatre as part of my PhD at the Shakespeare Institute that focused on a reimagined text of Shakespeare's *Pericles* in collaboration with two community organisations, Shondhani Arts and Bangla Connection. The collaborative play of Piyar Ali "lies in political gestures that undermine and replace the dominant culture's white Eurocentricism" (Henderson 34). This collaborative piece believes that "local shifts can create great art and collaborative reform can bring about significant political improvement—including, though certainly not limited to, a serious place for that art in society" (34). In my play, "the figure of the Bard becomes … a fluid construct destined to reflect his interpreter's [contemporary collaborator's] needs" (147).

Therefore, I was enthusiastic about delineating the theatrical framing of how the audience constructs their meaning through experiencing a completely new work which also collaborated with the spectators' own collective past. Hans Robert Jauss argues that aesthetic perception or experience is "intertwined with historical experience" (qtd. in Whitmore 31). According to Jauss, Whitmore states that "these prior experiences produce a 'horizon of expectation' [that] serves as 'frames' or unique perspectives that influence how she [spectator] constructs meanings" (31).

Hence, I tried to negotiate "these complex frames, these horizons of expectations" that constitute a whole theatrical event (33). I negotiated with these theatrical frames based on physical framing systems and intellectual, historical and social framing systems. Because a director "can manipulate some of the physical frames of a performance and can influence the audience's intellectual, historical, and aesthetic horizons through publicity, the kind of location of theatre building, preperformance lectures or discussion, program notes, and the like" (33). Theatre, in my view, as Carlson would argue, is not just merely the "physical enactment of a written text" (qtd. in

Whitmore 33). For example, Whitmore argues that "all performances take place at a specific location [but] director does not always select the physical setting, he may choose to pick the environment, or manipulate it, in order to control its effect on the audience" (36-37). However, I was convinced by the semiotic argument that location or cities are also "texts whose meanings are expressed by signifiers that are decoded by the city's residents and visitors" (37). Also, I was persuaded by the argument that the location of a performance "within a city can influence the anticipated meanings of a theatre experience" (37). Semioticians argue that the theatre façade or the architectural façade of a "theatre itself, or the visual aesthetics of an outdoor location, contribute to the signification of a performance event" (38).

To negotiate the physical framing systems of the *Piyar Alir Bhanga Mukh* production, I chose a performance site considering the theatre location and theatre façade and interior. I preferred MAC (Midlands Arts Centre), located at the heart of Birmingham city, instead of Stratford Upon Avon's Shakespeare Institute's hall because Birmingham is the second-largest city in the UK which is demographically diverse and the home of Bangladeshi, Indian and Pakistani communities. I considered the demographic characteristic as my conception of the production and the story revolves around the history of Bangladesh particularly, and broadly South Asia. Also, I thought that if the show is in Birmingham, then theatre and related departments' students-teachers might be interested in attending the performance, as the MAC is very close to University of Birmingham main campus and city centre.

To experiment and create an encounter within an intimate ecosystem, I picked the Foyle Studio among the three auditoriums at MAC in terms of its "architectural style, size of auditorium and performance space, proximity of performer and spectator, extent of technology available, size of lobby and adjacencies of lobby" (Whitmore 40). Secondly, I considered to mobilise the audience

in terms of their intellectual, historical and social framing systems. As Whitmore argues, "powerful horizons of expectations are created by the knowledge individual spectators bring to the performance" (42). Accordingly, to activate spectators' intellectual, historical and social framings, I used the notion of publicity, pre-performance music and discussion and post-performance interactions with the audience. "More significantly," Susan Bennett argues, "[Publicity] often determine[s] a very specific set of expectations in the audience and thus determine[s] how that audience will receive the play" (qtd. in Whitmore 44). In order to create specific expectations, I deployed a tertiary publicity strategy: circulating a notice of an experimental Shakespearean free show on the Canvas page through the Shakespeare Institute to attract theatre students and teachers; advertise about an upcoming performance of Bangladesh history and adaptation of a Shakespeare play on Facebook through community organisers involved in the production to get a large number of Bangladeshi community people interested, and using the MAC website to disseminate information about an experimental theatre production to let general theatregoers and frequent visitors to this cultural hub know about the production.

I also planned and executed a pre-performance session in which Makbul Chowdhury, Director of Bangla Connection and Digital artist of the production, delivered a speech about the overall aim and artistic vision of the production. Also, the projected image juxtaposed with the physical object of a suitcase and the music contributed to setting the audience's mindset before the performance began. As Whitmore argues, "many framing devices can be manipulated by the director to influence an audience's attitude and anticipation about a performance before it begins and after it has concluded" (49). Apart from the pre-performance framing strategy, I also organised a discussion session between the actor, director and the audience that helped to review the artistic

meaning of the performance because I never forgot that "the performance itself" was the "final signifier of meanings" (49).

Audience System

Still, I am solely agreed via the semiotic mode of making theatre that theatre is not for only staging but for reading by the audience. Theatre is destined to be created with the audience. The theatre audiences contribute to its production and reception, as Bennett observes, "Emergent theatres have self-consciously sought the centrality of the spectator as the subject of drama, but as a subject who can think and act" (1). In my theatre-making, hence, the audience was also the vital signifier. It would be more substantiated if I re-articulate "that productive and emancipated spectator [was] my subject" (Bennett 1). However, Jeanette Winterson claims, "Art is large and it enlarges you and me. To a shrunk-up world, its vistas are shocking. Art is the burning bush that both shelters and makes visible our profound longings" (qtd. in Bogart 1). Being informed by the Subcontinental Natyashastra's ancient audience reception theory of performing arts, Abhinava Gupta, a fourteenth-century literary critic, asserts, "Drama is like a dream, it is not real, but it is really felt" (qtd. in Varma 128-9). Jatinder Varma, co-founder of the British Asian theatre company Tara Arts, believes "there ought to be all sorts of ways of breaking down the illusion of the audience's voyeuristic experience" (129). Semiotics, thus, re-poses one of the fundamental questions: "why do people go to the theatre?" (Whitmore 51). I can seek one of the preferable answers from Samuel Selden that we go to the theatre for "excitement, illumination, and fulfilment" (qtd. in Whitmore 51). As Whitmore explains:

> Excitement develops from having the senses stimulated beyond the normal, from calling into use all the receptive powers of the sensory system to read the performance,

illumination grows out of discovering something about ourselves and the world we live in that we did not see or understand through everyday living; the theatre reveals the essence of our lives. Fulfilment comes from achieving a spiritual, emotional, or intellectual catharsis or high as the result of giving oneself over to the performance. (51)

Apart from the function of interpreting the world, discovering the self and playing the therapeutic role of Aristotelian catharsis, Bertolt Brecht differently outlines how theatre affects the audience. Brecht argues, "I wanted to apply to the theatre the principle that it is important not only to interpret the world, but to change it" (251). Therefore, Brecht unfolds "the great fable" through his "dramaturgy of contradiction and dialectical process" to reveal the "pivotal moments of that so essential social change" (225). He seeks "the new positive critical attitude of the new audience" to create "new man" through his didactic theatre which also requires entertainment and beauty with the instruction (226-7). Moreover, semioticians comprehend that theatre intertwines both the actor and spectator through its living human condition: "The excitement of participating in a live event, in which performers and spectators are brought into communication with one another in a fictional world, sets the nerves and senses on edge and makes both performer and spectator feel alive and vital. . . . The spectators are *in* the world of the play as it unfolds before their very eyes" (Whitmore 52).

According to Peter Brook, Whitmore reasserts, "If a production fails to communicate in ways that touch an emotional, aesthetic, or intellectual core in the spectators, it will be 'deadly'" (52). As a result, I attempted to create the production against the notion of 'deadly' theatre to activate the audiences' meaning-making creative and critical faculty towards "the design of the play", which was intended to create "a mosaic of feelings and ideas which constitutes a theatrical experience for the audience" (Whitmore 54).

On the evening of 21st December 2021, I facilitated a theatre as a social event where approximately 100 audience members from diverse backgrounds of the Bangladeshi diasporic community, the Shakespeare Institute international academic community and the local British community were gathered. The event explored an archaeological longing for in-person presence to create a collective forum that resisted the fear of social distancing during the rise of the Omicron variant. I noticed the masked faces, but the audience's open eyes served as a sign system that enabled silent participation and generated curiosity in the experimentation that built up a private home as a microcosm of the world to be felt by each other's close proximity.

The narrative device of the performance also helped create an atmosphere where the performer approached the audience directly through his objective mode of storytelling and subjective enactment. The audience validated the production as an experience, as J L Styan would argue:

> In the mesh of every successful performance, the signals from the script to the actor, and from the actor to the spectator and back again, complete a dramatic circuit of which the audience is an indispensable part. Drama needs an audience to throw the switch: no audience, no circuit; no circuit, no play. It is a short step to the next critical syllogism: bad drama, no current; and no current, therefore, no genuinely dramatic experience. (qtd. in Whitmore 63)

Jennifer Begum, a British-Bangladeshi housewife, who did not know very much about the standard Bengali language expressed that she had cried several times during the performance as the actor was so truthful in playing his character. Khaled Ahmed, a British Bangladeshi chef, perceived it as a performance of "searching root and identity", while Abdul Jalil received the production as a "standard expression of community life and participation". Also, Junayed Andrei,

a British Bangladeshi actor and musician, felt that the theatrical work was an "aesthetic mirror of a diasporic self and extended articulation of Bangladesh liberation war". Sang Jin, a Korean MA student of the Shakespeare Institute, read the production as below:

> The play is performed in Bangladeshi language and by one actor. Before the play, I was told from the director that the play is a story of a Bangladeshi man who was adopted to the UK because of the war between Bangladesh and Pakistan and that he was on a journey to find the traces of his biological father. Also, I heard from the director that the play is based on Shakespeare's Pericles. From my perspective, the play is an experimental one in that it uses a black-and-white background film, one character, and just one prop. Although the main character uses only one luggage as a prop and nothing else, the luggage effectively symbolizes a long journey of the main character and acts as a companion to him on his lonely path like the second character of the play. Although there are no English subtitles, I could understand the overall atmosphere of the play by the background film as well as by the appealing vocalization and facial expressions of the main character. In a scene where a graveyard is shown with the moon and the clouds flowing around it in the hush of the night, I could experience empathy with the main character who could have been around the place somewhere, feeling sadness and desperation along with him.

Jin reads the play as an experimental one that "appeals" to him through the digital images as the "background", and "vocalization and facial expressions" also create an empathetic tie between the audience and performance.

Kate Birch, another MA student at the Institute, expresses how the performance is "effectively" felt by her, though she necessitates a requirement of subtitles:

As a native English speaker and a non-speaker of Bengali, *Piyar Alir Bhanga Mukh* still had an effective impact. Tarek Chowdhury's one-man performance sustained so much of my attention with his energetic and heartfelt depiction of what could be described as a tragic and harrowing tale. The combination of projections and music worked as one with Tarek's emotive and physical performance so much, so translation was needed. Director and the creative team made something accessible and emotional for all and I was so glad to be invited to see their show.

Isaac Chong, a Singaporean PhD student at the Institute, describes that "*Piyar Alir Bhanga Mukh* is a very sobering adaptation of Shakespeare's *Pericles*. It confronts us with a loss that is inconsolable, but that needs to be communicated as an important reminder of one's cultural history". Isaac's reception reveals a potential relationship between the stage and spectator which can be understood as an encounter in the Grotowskian sense of theatre. The confrontation effectively happens if theatre signifies the "inconsolable loss" of a human being. Birch's reception of the performance reminds me of the relationship between spontaneity and freshness in art, as John Dewey argues, "[Artist's] most spontaneous outbursts, if expressive are not overflows of momentary internal pressures. The spontaneous in art is complete absorption in subject matter that is fresh, the freshness of which holds and sustains emotion" (70).

Japanese Rena Endo, another MA student at the Institute, decodes the meaning of the production in her own words: "First of all, I liked the idea to use a suitcase as a prop and also as a stage. I think it symbolizes that life is a journey. Also, I liked how you used video images. In the graveyard scene, it looked like Piyar Ali was thinking about his ancestors. In the scene in which many Piyar Alis appeared on screen (if my memory was right), it looked like he explored his identity." The assertion of Rena reinforces the encoded meaning of the production on a

philosophical level: "life is a journey." Also, her reception indicates "art as an experience." The process of having experience functions in an interaction, as the critic argues, "Experience occurs continuously, because the interaction of live creature and environing conditions is involved in the very process of living" (Dewey 35).

Finally, the pedagogic dialogue between me and my teacher-supervisor of the project, Professor Michael Dobson, deciphers the performance of Piyar Ali:

> As I said last night, even without being able to savour the text I was immensely moved by the piece, which in its palpable working-through of trauma reminded me of the work of Tadeusz Kantor. You found the perfect actor in Mr Choudhury -- eloquent, hunted, haunting, evoking the unseen and the lost as only live in-person testimony can -- and his interaction with the imagery of the video footage was compelling. Those repeated concrete graves, the apparently impersonal grounding of the whole piece; that marvellous sequence in which Piyar Ali was multiply seeking his parents' graves, suggesting at once how many, many bereaved Piyar Alis there are in the world and how shattered into multiple lost pieces was this individual's soul...I keep thinking about that hat, on the handle of the wheeled suitcase. I really will think of it every time I think of Pericles from now on. ("Re: Piyar Ali.")

Dobson's in-depth reception reminds me of a two-folded model of how the audience experiences a theatrical event that can be framed by Bennett: "The outer frame is concerned with theatre as a cultural construct through the idea of the theatrical event, the selection of material for production, and the audience's definitions and expectations of a performance. The inner frame contains the event itself and, in particular, the spectator's experience of a fictional stage world" (1-2). Dobson's reception emphasises the cultural relationship between Shakespeare's *Pericles* as an archaic source

material and *Piyar Alir Bhanga Mukh* as a reimagined text that validates Bennett's argument once again: "Cultural assumptions affect performances, and performances rewrite cultural assumptions" (2).

The testimonies of these immediate experiences of the audience thus accept and recreate the "aesthetic paradigm" of *Piyar Alir Bhanga Mukh*. By creating meaning, therefore, audiences contributed to the production. The show received such an audience system in which "[s]pectators are thus trained to be passive in their demonstrated behaviour during a theatrical performance, but to be active in their decoding of sign systems made available" (206). The actor of this performance relied "on the active decoding, but passive behaviour of the audience so that [he could] unfold the planned on-stage activities" (206).

Performer System

Suddenly, at the very beginning of the rehearsal, I felt oblivion in my mind that brought the darkness of confusion, a feeling of fear, a sense of helplessness. At the same time, a passion, an unconscious desire touched me and drove me to a spring awakening on a freezing evening of 15th November. I grasped the passionate hand of Tarek Chowdhury, the only actor in that solo performance. As a director, I started an unknown creative journey with the other of my creative self, the actor. Thus, the collaboration began in the creative practice project that I had envisioned to materialise for my PhD. The first sentence I shared with Tarek was a quote from the British actor John Gielgud: "Acting is half shame, half glory. Shame at exhibiting yourself, glory when you can forget yourself" (qtd. in Bogart 115). He smiled at me and generously replied, "I'm an amateur actor." Instantly, I could remember Antonin Artaud and told Tarek that amateur actors are pure. And then, we began the rehearsal as substantiated by Anne Bogart's argument: "[a]n audience

experiences the actor teasing his or her limits; expressing beyond the ordinary despite the limitations" (46). Again, I emphasised that "[g]reat performances exude both exactness and a powerful sense of freedom. This freedom can only be found within certain chosen limitations. The limitations serve as a lens to focus and magnify the event for the audience as well to give the actors something to measure themselves against" (Bogart 46).

Tarek used to ask a lot of questions during the rehearsal. I responded to these questions in posing further questions instead of too much intellectualising the rehearsal. I learnt that "[a] director thrives when he puts his ideas in the form of questions. . . . When the director limits himself as much as possible to asking questions, the actor develops a habit of right answers. The encouraged actor rapidly develops intuitive right knowledge" (Ball 51). We had both agreed that a theatre is a processual act that is indisputably demonstrable in rehearsal. So, we accepted partly what Augusto Boal proposed, the idea of rehearsal for revolution.

Firstly, we agreed that rehearsal could be a revolutionary process for us, both the actor and the director, to set the holy rules for performance and resist any libidinous capitalistic principle of exhibitionism. Secondly, we realised that rehearsal space and the process could be a conceptual laboratory that would celebrate the rules of exercising freedom and exploring purity by going beyond the "amateur's limitations". However, the maximum amount of rehearsal we did was at Oporupa, a storeroom of decorative materials for the Bangladeshi wedding ceremony, owned by the art-lover Khaled Ahmed, located at 3-4 Doris Road, Birmingham, B9 4SJ. Other rehearsal venues that determined the performer's explorative acts and practices through their materialistic conditions were View Villa (Park Lane, Birmingham, B6 5DE), Piccadilly Banqueting Suite (372-378 Stratford Road, Birmingham, B11 4AB), Shebul's Party Ghor (2, Woodburn Road, Birmingham, B66 2PU), Sampad (Midlands Arts Centre, Cannon Hill Park, Birmingham, B12

9QH), Bidgley Power Foundation (Ashton Park Pavilion, Birmingham, B6 6JD). The places offered the performer warmth, hospitality and cultural comfort that, in my observation, helped Tarek to be motivated toward a selfless journey of creating Piyar Ali.

In the rehearsal, I tried to excavate the artistic journey of Deborah Warner, who directed *The Tempest* in Dhaka in 1987, which I discuss in detail in the last chapter. Warner reveals, "Rehearsals are a complex and organic process . . ." (Warner, "On Directing" 137). When I rehearsed with Tarek, I understood once again that it was complex and unquestionably an organic way of exploring an imaginative world through body-mind and voice. Being a part of Tarek's selfless journey, I realised via Warner that "My role [was] to create conditions for [his] free exploration" (137). As Warner argues, "If the actors are not allowed the chance to find their own way or asked to repeat, demonstrate or copy something, the performance will be dead – by which I mean it will appear false or boring. Quite simply, my role is to enable the organic process to happen so that the actors' performances can live" (138). I also followed *The Tempest*'s Director's principle of actor's liberation, as Warner illustrates that "I never stifle a performer's idea: I let the performance grow naturally. I am patient and wait for a glimmer of truth. Actors can't act truth: they have to be truth. That is the difficulty" (138). Thus, I attempted to create a primary condition of rehearsal to allow the actor to act freely so that the process of performance could generate a metaphor for a liberated self. The rehearsal could be a home of a politically sovereign self that required a revolutionary act of exercising the actor's undiscovered psycho-physical-cerebral world.

Furthermore, as I planned to script a hybrid mode of narrative that would simultaneously employ subjective monologues and objective narrations, I obtained a guiding principle from Vsevolod Meyerhold to train and prepare the actor. The rehearsals of *Piyar Ali* were effectively

mobilised by Meyerhold's discipline of Biomechanics, "a system of movement which employed conflicts between opposing forces as a means of generating dramatic tension in the body" (Mitter "Vsevolod" 30). Therefore, the aesthetic strategy of my project is indebted to Meyerhold's discipline of biomechanics as well as "new actor," "one who was capable of retaining a critical distance from the character and was able, as a result, to persuade the audience to do so as well" (Mitter 31).

The conception of a "new actor" appeared as a "critical actor" in our rehearsal, so Tarek got involved in preparing himself to create the role and separate the imaginary part from his actual self. In this case, Shakespeare's performance theory that I understood from Hamlet, a fictional character and also a theatre director, whose famous soliloquy, "to be or not to be" guided me to operate the rehearsal in a specific context purpose. For Hamlet, it is a condition to choose only one from two options. Obviously, it is a method of alteration. But for me, it was a clue for conjunction rather than the alteration: to be *and* not to be. The directorial approach to *Piyar Alir Bhanga Mukh* let the actor rehearse 'to be' the character and at the same time, 'not to be' the character of Piyar Ali because the actor had to portray the narrator too, who depicted the crucial part of the story objectively.

In creating the performance system, I realised that the actor needed a political conscientization with the physiological method as our theatre perceived a political undercurrent in its narrative. Bertolt Brecht's Marxist poetics, accordingly, gave us a critical awareness of performance techniques that required a unique distance between the role and character within the actor's bio-sphere, which was almost against the Stanislavski system of characterisation that required to submerge an actor into his part of the character, as Mitter argues,

By seeking merely to depict the world, the Stanislavskian actor implicitly accepts it: to 'represent' is both to 'present an image of' and to speak 'on behalf of.' By seeming then to give us that world 'as it really is', the Stanislavskian actor induces a corresponding acceptance of that world in the audience. The tyranny of the 'given circumstances' exercise, for example, lies not merely in its power to convince; far more pernicious is its product, tolerance, that which submits to and thereby perpetuates the constraining order. Circumstances that are 'given' are to that extent not subject to question. (Mitter "Systems" 43)

On the contrary, Brecht opposes the apolitical "'witchcraft', 'hypnosis' and 'mastery' of empathy'" that Stanislavski's theatre practised demonstrating "the correctness of the world" (45, 43). As Brecht argues, "I wanted to take the principle that it was not just a matter of interpreting the world but of changing it, and apply that to the theatre" (qtd. in Mitter "Systems" 47). From the Marxist point of view, Brecht formulates a social critique of performing that is argued as the "dual aspect of characterization": "'he who is showing should himself be shown' that makes two, actor and role, where Stanislavski would have just one, the character" (47). From the Brechtian approach to directing theatre, I have learnt what Mitter would argue, "the metatextual image for the dissociation of actor from the role" should be regained in rehearsal (47).

I felt discomfort with theatre's "revolutionising" role in creating Piyar Ali. Although, particularly for directing the play, I, along with the actor Tarek got a clear vision about characterisation from one of the major aspects of Stanislavski's approach: "[a] character is a product not merely of circumstances but of [character's] intentions" (Mitter "Konstantin" 13). However, "[f]or Stanislavski, actors must 'become' their characters. They must think as their characters think and feel as their characters feel. The task of the director in such a situation is to

generate in rehearsal the conditions under which this identification is most likely to occur" (12). During the rehearsal, I felt that Stanislavski's linear rationalising method was no longer effective in creating the theatre we envisioned because the realism of the Stanislavski system was fundamentally based on an empirical method of immersing "[t]he character's motivation and actor's justification" "in a single thrust of action" (13). Thus, from the Brechtian approach to performance, I have learnt the necessity of maintaining an aesthetic distance between actor and role.

Although we both felt a creative necessity to maintain a purposive distance from the idea of changing society through the revolutionising role of theatre, we got an illuminating conceptual framework from Polish avant-garde theatre director Tadeusz Kantor to play Piyar Ali's memory play. On the one hand, Kantor's "the Informal Theatre" or the "unknown aspect of reality" was "always changing and fluid," which escaped from "the bondage of rational definitions" of character (Kobialka 71). "I consist of multiple series of characters," ties in well with Kantor's the *Theatre of Death* productions which "explored the notions of memory, history, myth, artistic creation and the function of the artist" in a non-linear representation of a character (Kobialka 72). A performance space, I realised, was what Kantor sensed as "a place where memories no longer unfolded in a linear fashion, but were superimposed one upon the other" (Kobialka 73).

I tried to maintain, therefore, in the performance system of *Piyar Ali*, not to "tell the stories" but to stage multiplied selves, symbiotically interdependent with other semiotic systems of the production, so as to create an event where the spectator would be stimulated to 'read' the performance because the performer himself is a unique sign in the signification process. In the production, I never undermined the performer where the actor was "a real human being" who

became "a sign for a human being" (Martin Esslin qtd. in Whitmore 66). The semiotics of performance deeply mobilised me to what is evident in Esslin:

> An actor appearing on the stage or screen is, in the first place, himself, the "real" person that he is with his physical characteristics, his voice and temperament; he is, secondly, himself, transformed, disguised, by costume, make-up, an assumed voice, a mental attitude derived from the study of and empathy with the fictional character he is playing: this is "the stage figure" as the Prague school has dubbed him, the physical simulacrum of the character; but, thirdly, and most importantly there is the "fiction" itself, for which he stands, and which ultimately will emerge in the mind of the individual spectator . . . (qtd. in Whitmore 66).

Tarek Chowdhury, who obtained the complex system of signification through his performance, was encouraged to allow himself to mobilise his voice (spoken word) towards a natural articulation with quality of abstraction. In this case, Tarek used his vocalisation, which was qualified by a pure tone and bold and asymmetric voice texture. The performance system of the production endeavoured to signify the denotative meaning of encoded-spoken words through the "paralinguistic elements: loudness, pitch, inflection, resonance, articulation, tempo and rhythm" (72). The way Tarek followed to portray the fictional character as well as the narrator of the story was effective "to create the expressive and emotive qualities of human speech," which the audience of the production acknowledged (72). We believed that "Faces are not masks. They are ever-changing; they reflect the time of day, mood, physical pain, and health, to name just few sensations. The dynamic rather than the static quality of facial expression makes it a valuable and manipulable tool for directors and performers" (86). Hence, according to subcontinental Natyashastra's codification and the pragmatic outline of facial muscles, brought by Grotowski's theatre

laboratory, the performance system carefully interiorised the facial expressions, instead of using make-up to encode the dialectical tension among the enthusiasm, grief and trauma by using the actor's face, lips, nose and eyes.

Moreover, the performance system employed gesture as a sign system that referred "to communication through the [actor's] body and its parts" (90). The Artaudian idea of gestural or kinesic code of theatre helped me to use it in the performance system where gesture could "provide insight into a scene's subtext that override[s] the denotative meaning of the words being spoken" (90). The actor created his non-linguistic body language to "carry a more immediate wallop because of its strong potential to evoke sensuous associations of personal experience. When both verbal and nonverbal communication occur, body language often contradicts verbal language" (Judith Lynne Hanna qtd. in Whitmore 90). The gestural language was inextricably enmeshed with the actor's movement to set the kinetic paradigm of the production. The performance system focused on manipulating five physical elements of the actor's movement (direction, speed, duration, intensity and rhythm) "to provide signifiers for spectators to decode" the meaning of the production, *Piyar Alir Bhanga Mukh* (100).

Visual System

The engagement in creative research had sketched a deep impression inside me that only a point of departure from the literature could create a probability of the emergence of theatre. When I was writing the script during the rehearsal, I lived in a paradox. I felt an urge for a complete manuscript and the vision to bring it into an effective staging procedure to give life to that departing script. Here I can relate to what Steven Connor argues: "Any theatrical work exemplifies the tension between product and process, for a dramatic work can never exist fully either in its script version

or in an individual performance of that script. Any script must advertise its incompleteness, its necessity of being embodied in more than mere printed words, while any performance must always refer back to some notional script" (142).

What I thought, in the very beginning of the rehearsal period about staging was very similar to American playwright and director Richard Foreman's idea. Foreman determines writing as a passive reception of "what wants to be written," while staging is an "active organization of the 'arrived' elements of the writing" that constantly search for the "ways to make the writing inhabit a constructed environment" (6). However, I realised the inhabitation of writing, to an extent, was a battle against the authority of writing, as it was set in its destiny towards "a constructed environment," which is to say, the intrinsic "theatrical language of light, colour, movement, gesture and space" (Connor 144).

Eventually, the principle that played the guiding role in scenographic procedures of *Piyar Alir Bhanga Mukh* I have recollected from Rabindranath Tagore. Being informed by ancient subcontinental Natyashastra and pre-colonial and pre-modern Bengali performance traditions, Tagore appropriates the idea of "chittopot" (mindscape) rather than the "drisshopot" (scenery) in his performance theory. Tagore's concept of "chittopot" requires only a "shunnosthan" (space) for staging any drama (Tagore "Rangamancha"). Interestingly, a close reading of Tagore's critical idiom of scenography discloses a resemblance with Peter Brook's theory of "the empty space". Brook famously says, "I can take any empty space and call it a bare stage. A man walks across this empty space whilst someone else is watching him, and this is all that is needed for an act of theatre to be engaged" ("Empty Space"11). On the contrary, semioticians argue that "space, setting, costumes, properties, and lighting—are the visual sign systems of the theatre event. Theatre is also a visual art: viewing its components provides an aesthetic experience in and of itself. . . . Several

postmodern directors have found that the visual sign systems of the theatre are the most consequential signifiers" (Whitmore 113).

The dialectics between non-scenic emptiness and the scenic sign system problematised my attempt to design the performance during rehearsal. However, it was illuminating to rethink Shakespearean performance theory of "talking to the audience" that "produce[s] a role for the spectator in the production of meaning" through "the nuts and bolts of theatre" as well as "a theatrical openness" that constitutes the very material condition (Escolme 20). From this point, I had gotten a pragmatic idea of intimate space, as Jerzy Grotowski would argue, "the essential concern is finding the proper spectator/actor relationship for each type of performance and embodying the decision in physical arrangements" (qtd. in Whitmore 114).

To plan for an "intimate space," I reviewed the Foyle Studio's dimensions and general details. The Foyle's total area is approximately 176 m^2 while the length is 16.8m, width is 10.8m, stage depth with seating in place is 10.5m, height to lighting bars 4.25m and get in door's height 2m and width 1.84m. The Foyle's retractable seating area's capacity provides 126 seats for the audience. After reviewing the aesthetic, technical and health issues, I designed an "intimate space" for the performance of 56 m^2 that maintained a 6 feet gap as close proxemics between the performance space and seating area. Moreover, I reviewed the existing lighting facilities of Foyle and designed the light by using sidelights = 6 pieces (PC), three Zone= 6 pieces (profile), diagonal lines = 2 pieces (profile), footlight = 1piece (PC), centre stage backlight = 2 pieces (Par 64), three zonal back light = 3 pieces (Par 64), blue general = 6 pieces (Par 64) and cyclorama with floodlights.

I used the codified system of lighting, mainly introduced by Adolphe Apia, to create the lighting semiotics in the production. But the conceptual framework of "comfort" in lighting I got

from Shakespeare: "Now, God be praised, that to believing souls / Gives light in the darkness, comfort in despair" (Henri VI 2nd Part, 2:1, 69-70). The principle of comfort was applied to complement the overall visual dramaturgy of the production that attempted "to explain the cosmos as part of a unified system" (Aronson 29). However, the monochromatic costume of pant, full sleeve t-shirt, cotton monkey cap and pump shoes were worn by the actor to signify logically a contemporary middle-aged person although the actor transformed his long muffler into a shawl to neutralise his personality from the character to the narrator. A diary served as a single prop to signify his past life and traces for the narrative.

The production assimilated a final form of scenography that evolved over time during its rehearsal. The idea of intimacy guided the production's employment of scenographic elements through an understanding of Zen-Buddhist "shunyata" (emptiness) or devoid of own-being or the flux via Beckettian nihilist minimalism that also complemented the canonical convention of Shakespearean staging. As a result, an "empathetic journey", the thematics of the production, had been materialised into a wheeled suitcase to become a neutral standing box during the objective narration of the performance. The fiction demanded a journey from England to Bangladesh, representing a bedroom to a graveyard, war and everyday life, and memory, dreams, and reality. The play's fictional world was required to externalise an internal plot of backward and forward-- the present and the past, and an amalgamated form of mythic time and the logical time frame.

To create an experience of multi-layered spatial-temporal dynamics, I thought to juxtapose the digital images with the suitcase, a single physical object as a performative set-prop, to create a "visual dramaturgy," a robust approach of postdramatic theatre, which would generate a mindscape, a fluidity within the limitedness of the physical stage. As Makbul Chowdhury, the digital and sound artist of this production, states:

In creating the visuals and music for this play, the notion that inspires the most is its desire to make it a timeless piece that tells the story of people from any location or time. An image of land or place that does belong to any specific location or geography. The visuals in this play does not work as a backdrop of the play rather it is an extension of the story and the character. The visuals and music interplay with the acting on the stage, creating a whole emotion extending the story beyond its physical performance on the stage. The visuals in this play serve various components and themes accompanying the story, which are, in some cases, personal and specific to a time. In some cases, they are memories. In some other cases, they tell the stories of the past. However, they present a story of human journey and experience. Black and white photographs were used with random sketches of life and surroundings, creating a montage of the past that could be anyone's. However, when telling the stories of war and the story of displacement, the images were from the war of 1971 to remain specific to the story Piyar Ali tells. However, the images were carefully selected, juxtaposed and animated so that those images create an illusion of an endless journey that humans are making across nations, across time. Piyar Ali tells his story of war and displacement, but Piyar Ali does not remain alone as the story progresses. His voices and narratives become plural. It echoes and spreads across valleys. The physical performance on the stage cross and extends to the visuals on the screen. If there was one moment of success in using digital projection in this stage play, then this was when the line between reality and virtual reality was broken. We used both on spot shooting and green screen shooting in creating these illusions. I am very pleased that we were able to execute the idea with minimal technical facilities in hand. In my view, a central theme of transforming a story beyond its cultural and historical connotations worked here as an inspiration. This

was my first experience working with digital projection and visuals on a stage play, and I was mesmerised by the power of digital projection. With a strong directorial framework, we were careful that the visuals are not used as a mere backdrop, but it works as an extension of the physical space.

The testimonial of the digital artist determines that the production anticipated "to transcend time and space, to depict inner thoughts and external reality simultaneously. An image in a character's mind could be projected, characters could move fluidly from interiors to exteriors . . ." (Aronson qtd. in Whitmore 139). Moreover, digital images of Piyar Ali that "swelling to an apocalyptic proliferation which destroyed traditional relationship between theatre representation and event. Thus the 'classic' play text [anticipated *Pericles*] became a constant but destabilized element . . ." (Rabkin 322).

The visual system of the production, as Abbott would argue, employed the idea of "point of view (perceptual or conceptual position) rather than perspective" (184). Subsequently, the notional interpretation of gaze became an agency in the visual dramaturgy. The frontal audience witnessed a filmed Piyar Ali from the projection on the cyclorama and the mimicked presence of the same person on a nonproscenium stage simultaneously. Thus, the production intended to become "a semiotic embodiment of theatricality in our visual vocabulary," which offered, according to Richard Foreman, a forum for "the dialectical examination of the problematics of seeing" (qtd. in Aronson 26).

This discussion determines the production as a narrative, consisting of the "deep structure" of Piyar Ali's human mind and genetics (Abbot 3). Video footages and the photos exteriorised Piyar Ali's interior monologues or stream of consciousness by using Analepsis (flashback),

Prolepsis (flashforward) and Paratext (the material outside the narrative) that served effectively in the creation of the deep structure of *Piyar Alir Bhanga Mukh* (Abbott 194).

Aural System

The production's aural semiotics was based on a communicative aesthetic goal of blending the aural signifiers with visual and linguistic sign systems. The production aimed to create a soundscape consisting of spoken language, paralinguistic vocal utterances, sound effects and music "by reflecting or reinforcing the performance's structure, mis-en-scene, rhythms, conflicts, and harmonies or dissonance" (Whitmore189). The aural expression as sound arouses our deepest stratum of intuitive world of human mind, as Sellers argues, "Sound evokes that part of our lives and that part of our experience which cannot be controlled by or reduced to verbal explanations. Sound evokes that part of our lives which is intuitive, that part of ourselves which can never be compromised, a world of pure feeling, being and unmediated experience" (qtd. in Whitmore 173).

I aimed to give an abstract quality to the spoken language and performer's vocal system to create signification for the diverse audience who did not know Bengali. In this case, I followed the example of Grotowski "to create an abstract soundscape through the phenomenal manipulation" of the actor's voice (Whitmore 175). I employed a rehearsing method to explore abstract vocalisation as Grotowski created in laboratory theatre: "a complex contrapuntal vocal score, composed of inarticulate shrieks, ragged whispers and pattern chants, underpinned by a percussive score of abrasive metallic clankings—words are treated as pre-rational incantation and physical sound . . . the darkness of human condition" (David Bradby and David Williams qtd. in Whitmore 175). Tarek Chowdhury, the actor of the production, used "variations in intensity and frequency" by his purposive application of breathing process and vocal cord to produce the character's

condition that was made up of traumatised memories, the agony of the present and the enthusiastic vision for his journey. On the other hand, we used 13 soundtracks by manipulation of recorded music to enhance the performance communication and range of experience. We considered that "[s]ound is made up of a series of pressure waves in the air. The major characteristics of sound waves are their intensity (loudness), frequency (pitch), and timbre (unique quality)" (Whitmore 176). Understanding how sound works helped the production transform into the aesthetic goal by appropriating the aural signifiers where the sound effects and music were "a symbolic emotional experience" (Peter F. Ostwald qtd. in Whitmore 180).

At the very beginning of the audience entry, I used the framing effect as the manipulated piano music of both nostalgia and agony with the visual dramaturgy of physical objects and projected images to set a journey, which created "a context of the production" (Whitmore 178). Also, the audience heard the underscoring of the slaughterhouse and graveyard, where sound and music were used to create "an atmosphere while dramatic action is unfolding" (178). The underscoring of the production attempted to build a sound architecture or the aural environment to reorder the linear electronic source of sound and music so that audience could feel in the same fictional world the character himself inhabited. Sound effects served the specific cues of action, as the bat sound created both environmental and mental specificity. The production immensely relied on music and sound effects for the transition of time and space, particularly for the emotional climax of Piyar Ali. Overall, I followed the method of Richard Foreman where the director worked with the sound designer for the blended sound sequences to "create a unified aural environment with a symbiotic relationship to other sign systems of the production" (Foreman qtd. in Whitmore 183). To conclude this chapter of practice, I quote Michel Foucault:

Each time I have tried to do theoretical [or creative] work, it has been on the basis of elements from my own experience: always in connection with process [that] I saw unfolding around me. It was always because I thought I idendtified cracks, silent tremors, and disfunctions in things I saw, institutions I was dealing with, or my relations with others, that I set out to do a piece of work, and each time was partly a fragment of autobiography. ("So is it Important" 458)

Seam Burke concludes that "[t]his decision is the decision between two conceptions of authorship, two conceptions of man" (99). He argues that "[Foucault] knows that he is part of the history he is writing, he knows that the interpretation is always, in some sense, the interpreter" (99). The practice of *Piyar Alir Bhanga Mukh* is nothing more than the work of two authors: Shakespeare and me, practitioner and researcher, character and actor, creator and receivers, text and critique, fiction and friction, illusion and truth, death and birth.

In this theatrical production I tried to cognise Shakespeare and Bangladesh in a changing context. This creative practice actualises, "Cognition is embodied, that is, not separable from our physicality. Cognition is embedded, that is, it depends heavily on offloading cognitive work and taking advantage of affordances, or potentials, in the environment, and, as such, it is very much a result of 'ongoing agent-environment interaction'" (Blair and Cook 6). Therefore, this practical research necessitates an unfolding neuro-social-scheme "as the continuous coevolution of acting, perceiving, imagining, feeling, and thinking" (Evan Thompson qtd. in Blair and Cook 7). The production appeared as a form of complex interaction among text, body and material world to unfold a cognitive process focusing Shakespeare and an emergence of a nation-state through a creative expression. As William J. Clancy argues,

> [W]e cannot locate meaning in the text, life in the cell, the person in the body, knowledge in the brain, a memory in a neuron. Rather, these are all active, dynamic processes, existing only in interactive behaviors of cultural, social, biological, and physical environment systems. Meaning, life, people, knowledge, and so on, are not arbitrary, wholly subjective, culturally relative, or totally improvised. Rather, behaviors, conceptions, and emotional experiences are constrained by historically developed structural relations among parts and subprocesses in different kinds of memories – neural, artifactual, representational, and organizational – and are dynamically constrained in action across system levels. (28)

The creative and critical review seeks further dialogue to make new sense. Susan Petrilli and Augusto Ponzio apprehend the signification of Bakhtinian dialogue: "dialogue is not the result of an initiative we decide to take, but rather it is imposed. Something to which one is subjected. Dialogue is not the result of opening towards the other, but of the impossibility of closing" (qtd. in Cobley106). "The impossibility of closing" again is reconstituted by the ephemeral art form of theatre that I practised and reviewed which always reminds me that life is ultimately a performance of death. This death gives us a social scope to make sense, give birth, create a new meaning. A text that offers a conclusion is impossible.

Chapter 5

Conclusion

In this thesis I have worked on representative samples of how Shakespeare's plays have transcended the dominantly imposed categories of identification in the context of Bangladesh. My research studied Shakespearean theatrical performances translated and adapted in ways which reimagine both the national self of Bangladesh and Shakespearean representation itself. Theatre through its very nature creates community, and this socio-cultural aspect of calling an audience together has served multiple versions of collective identity. (As I showed in chapter 4, one of these was foregrounded by the context in which *The Shattered Faces of Piyar Ali* was first performed, as part of an expatriate Bangladeshi diaspora festival celebrating the anniversary of national independence). The Shakespearean theatre, with its inclusiveness, multiple voices and commitment to popular entertainment, radically redefines the notion of nation, and hence, as I hope I have shown, the colonial imposition of Shakespeare's works has not so much been resisted in independent Bangladesh as repurposed. The playwright's works have in reality assisted in performing the national self of Bangladesh. My research, furthermore, through reviewing critically the existing literature around global Shakespeare studies in general, and South Asian Shakespeare studies in particular, has identified a substantial epistemic gap: not only has the secondary literature concentrated on India at the expense of other regions of the subcontinent, but its dominant post-colonial paradigms do not accurately describe Shakespearean praxis in Bangladesh. As a result, this project has sought some new epistemological as well as methodological criteria that also necessitate a reinvestigation, through a critical review of literature relevant to the theatrical culture of Bangladesh, focusing on Shakespearean praxis.

Contrasting with the few pre-existing studies in this sub-field, in the second chapter of this thesis I have offered a more complex overview of how Shakespearean practices have been closely connected with the evolving nature of cultural colonisation and the shifting dynamics of colonial power. Education, literature, theatre and other cultural practices, across time, had figured out the body politic of different communities and regions and religions in undivided Bengal from the mid-eighteenth century to the partition of the subcontinent in 1947. From the secular perspective of East Bengal, alternatively, the majoritarian demography of Bengali Muslim, this historical-theatrical-theoretical context rereads the real, imaginative and ideological effects of the colonial divide and rule policy. In this section I necessarily touched on the tension between classes, which theatre sought variously to fictionalize or to heal: 'zamindar' (power elite or the gentlemen), who mostly belonged to the religion of Hinduism, residing in the capital Kolkata, and the lower class, who mostly belonged to the religion of Islam as well as some members of the lower caste of Hinduism residing in the most populous part of Bengal, the East. This examination of colonial Bengal demonstrates that, before and after partition, Shakespeare had been translated, adapted, performed, and above all, appropriated as the instrument of political resistance to both British colonialism and then Pakistan's internal colonialism in the region of East Bengal (later renamed as East Pakistan and then Bangladesh). I hope I have shown that Shakespearean performances became a vital component of secular Bengali cultural nationalism during its formative phase, pitted against the religious sectarian political doctrine of Pakistan in the 1960s, which culminated in the independence of Bangladesh in 1971. The second chapter eclectically shows how the translation and adaptation of Shakespearean texts has performed both a contextualised Shakespeare and the emerging national self of Bangladesh since the very beginning of the 1980s until now.

In my third and fourth chapters, I have argued, through a close look at theatrical case studies, that in Bangladeshi performance Shakespearean texts reimagine Bangladesh to the point of remapping the latter's very essence. My accounts of these local case studies very much counter E. M. W. Tillyard's vertical contextual universalism: "The Elizabethan pictured the universal order under three main forms: a chain, a series of corresponding planes, and a dance" (33). My research has illustrated what is against the statement that "it also shows Shakespeare placing man [sic] in the traditional cosmic setting between the angels and the beasts" (11). On the contrary, I have argued in these analyses that Shakespearean texts, through the act of staging them in translations and adaptations, have also been appropriated to promulgate what Pierre Bourdieu defines as "cultural capital" or "habitus" or "embodied culture" in Bangladesh ("Distinction" 53-7, 101-2). Bourdieu argues, "The habitus, an objective relationship between two objectivities, enables an intelligible and necessary relation to be established between practices and situation, the meaning of which is produced by the habitus through categories of perception and appreciation that are themselves produced by an observable social condition" (101).

Shakespeare has been embodied in the habitus of Bangladesh as "ways of feeling, thinking, and acting," which "classif[y] the world and structures action" by employing the distinctive "process of creative typification to particular situations" (Holt 707). I have argued that Shakespearean texts have been performed in Bangladesh in ways which embody the national desire for democracy, in particular. Simultaneously, the productions transcend the national boundary to contemplate a real sense of the other, becoming a knowingly intercultural enterprise in which translational works mediate a simultaneously English and international playwright. The testimony of these case-studies speaks of a reinventing process, the making of a new Shakespeare who has been reformed bilaterally as a self-aware and self-critical playwright on the stages of Bangladesh.

Three different *Macbeth* productions, for instance, signify nationalistic aspiration, geopolitical concern, and the will for political stability as well as articulating a yearning for statal sovereignty in relation to a greater world order. Through the reconfiguration of textual meaning in the context of performance, three productions semiotised their thematic focus on the political history of Bangladesh, wherein theatre arts functioned as a primary cultural site of nation-building. The Constitution of Bangladesh, which was passed in the parliament on 4th November in 1972, nearly a year after independence, articulates its political ontology in its preamble: "Pledging that the high ideals of nationalism, socialism, democracy and secularism, which inspired our heroic people to dedicate themselves to, and our brave martyrs to sacrifice their lives in, the national liberation struggle, shall be the fundamental principles of the Constitution." This text posits Bangladesh as a republic which Shakespeare's imagined Romans might recognize: "All powers in the Republic belong to the people, and their exercise on behalf of the people shall be effective only under, and by the authority of, this Constitution." Moreover, the Constitution of Bangladesh claims to be the legal articulation of the collective will of the citizens: "This Constitution is, as the solemn expression of the will of the people, the supreme law of the Republic, and if any other law is inconsistent with this Constitution that other law shall, to the extent of the inconsistency, be void."

I would argue, on the basis of my examination of the productions studied in this thesis, that the constitutional promise of a democratic republic as the state's fundamental principle and policy is precisely the aspiration articulated by Bangladeshi productions of, in particular, *Macbeth*. Macbeth appeared as the re-evaluation of Bangladesh through the performance of political crime, bloodshed, and his tyrannous opposition to what the Constitution would call "the collective will of the people." Because, in the early 1980s, military rule, a massive and traumatic constitutional "inconsistency," had devasted the republican values of Bangladesh. In the 1st and 2nd decade of the

2000s, the other two productions resonate too with the constitutional urgency for a renewed democratic process in the state. Besides, one of the productions concentrated on the political embodiment to empower performers to obtain a higher degree in theatrical skills. It also critiqued the power itself as a corrupt institution by showing both an internal deconstruction of the dramatic text and the performers' sub-textual multitudes, in relation to national and global socio-political-personal histories. The subsequent revived version of this production also performed the geopolitical concerns of Bangladesh during a tour across India that emphasised the issue of justice regarding the joint river and shared land border between the two countries. The third production of *Macbeth* also plays on the dynamics of the state power of Bangladesh, though it is here framed in relation to the entire 'third world's' political turmoil through a South Asian feminist point of view. It critiqued the symbolic form of "pourush" [masculine power], representing it as something which corrupts the natural flow of feminine energy which animates a true people's republic. These second and third productions of *Macbeth*, furthermore, reflect not only a desire for "democracy and human rights" but also the constitutional fundamentals of "promotion of international peace, security and solidarity" (The Constitution).

However, the two different productions of *The Tempest* examined above suggested a more aesthetic concern with decolonising knowledge (immediately, knowledge about making theatre itself), and of imagining the nation in the context of a broader socio-political-cultural history of the country. In the late 1980s, the first production of *The Tempest,* as I have shown, suggested a two-fold intercultural aspect of theatrical creation. First, in the act of rehearsal, the Shakespearean text itself sought a cross-referential point of view from its Bengali performers. Then, the British director set an intersectional rehearsal process into action that reclaimed a non-authoritative directing method, placing its emphasis on the ontological exploration of the cultural archaeology

of the performers' body-minds. The production necessitated a recognition that the human body "never exist[ed] as pure nature, apart from history" (Fischer-Lichte, "Theatre" 21). In this production, using Fischer-Lichte's theorisation, I would argue that

> thus, any human body should be seen as the result of a reciprocal process of the organic and the cultural, an interaction between individual nature and cultural context. The process begins at the moment of birth and continues until the moment of death. As a result, each individual body participates not only in the natural order but also in the symbolic order of culture. The body, like any other cultural phenomenon, is historically determined. (21-22)

The second production of *The Tempest* incorporated the critical and creative idioms of cultural nationalism to perform the strange beauty of this late Shakespearean story. It negated the dramatic representational mode and revived a local narrative method of staging the story. The intention of the storytellers of *The Tempest*, as I have understood from interviewing the director, was closely linked to the constitutional definition of national culture. As the Constitution of Bangladesh suggests: "The State shall adopt measures to conserve the cultural traditions and heritage of the people, and so to foster and improve the national language, literature and the arts that all sections of the people are afforded the opportunity to contribute towards and to participate in the enrichment of the national culture."

By contrast, the production of *Coriolanus* appropriated Shakespeare as a political playwright to set an ideological relation between the drama and performance--the aesthetic text and the social context. The theatre troupe Aranyak aimed at staging *Coriolanus* to interpret the class struggle of Bangladesh. It endeavoured to reveal the life struggle of farmers and labourers and to thereby propagate a Marxist vision of a classless society, achievable through the seizure of the state by the proletariats of the country. This production too, I would argue, thought in terms of

the national definition of the Bangladeshi state in that it also attempted to reaffirm the constitutional guarantee of socialism. The Constitution espoused the idea of "socialism and freedom from exploitation" as one of the "fundamental principles of state policy": "A socialist economic system shall be established with a view to ensuring the attainment of a just and egalitarian society, free from the exploitation of man by man." I have argued in the third chapter that this production of *Coriolanus* reflected those socialist principles of the republic, which had also been proclaimed in the constitution of Bangladesh, such as "emancipation of peasants and workers," "secularism and freedom of religion," "rural development and agricultural revolution," "free and compulsory education" as well as "equality of opportunity."

However, artistic desire is not capable of changing the political map, even if it can create the cultural expression of a state yet to be achieved. As Francis Stuart writes, "The artist at his most ambitious does not seek to change maps but, minutely and over generations, the expression on some of the faces of men and women" (qtd. in Delattre 215). The Shakespearean productions I have studied are in this respect transcendental acts, aspiring to express the national self of a Bangladesh to be. A substantial theatrical expression of Bangladeshi self seeks its illuminating light by performing Shakespeare as an inevitably useful other. Grotowski's theological theory of performing the sacred body may help here in understanding the idea of transcendence, where the "self" attempts to embody the "otherness" and the sense of otherness illuminates the self, as he says, "[I]f Hamlet is for you a living area, you can also measure yourself up against him; not as against a character, but as a ray of light, falling on your own existence, which illumines you" (qtd. in Mitter 84).

Bengali philosopher and mystic poet Fakir Lalon's transcendental music, comparably, defines human being as a "sonar manus" or the "golden human." According to the idea of Lalon,

s/he who is a "golden human" is a non-identical being. The Lalonian "golden human" being exists against any kind of identity politics, transcending not just binarism but all otherising procedures. The ethical-political duty of the "golden human" is to perform, as an example of variance within multiple sets of differences, a transcendental act to celebrate the diversity of the universe in a single human body, where there is no difference between the sense of self and the sense of the other.

The interviews I have conducted for the purpose of this research, of the directors and actors of the productions of *Macbeth*, *Tempest* and *Coriolanus* exemplify and suppose a distinct ethical framework. This ethics echoes both the Lalonian and Grotowskian transcendental theories, affirming that Shakespeare has been performed on Bangladeshi stages as the socio-culturally-contextually appropriated playwright, an aspect of the self, rather than as the colonially imported other. In this regard, intercultural theoretical approaches remind me that its interweaving nature makes theatre always an intercultural artistic language. When translation and adaptation intercede in performance and reception, for example, in the case of Bangladeshi theatrical productions in the Bengali language based on Shakespeare's dramatic texts, these intercultural phenomena become even more inevitable, in terms of aesthetic as well as social experience. Besides, a theatre not only transmits a play's text but also the living semiotic process of a cultural system, in which the theatre is itself produced, presented, and tasted. As Fischer-Lichte argues:

> We have to recognize that theatre is not just a medium for "transmitting" a play and its themes. Theatre expresses the society in which it occurs through a full range of cultural systems: painting, music, costume, body movement, gestures, language, architecture, commentaries, and so on. All of these systems form an integral part of the culture as a whole, contributing to its norms and rules, expressing its signs and meanings. Even when

transplanted onto the stage, they never cease to point to their employment and meaning in

the general cultural context. ("Theatre" 19-20)

The socio-aesthetic dialogue and relation I have explored between Shakespearean literary culture

and the theatrical-contextual culture of Bangladesh has clearly exemplified an impure blend of

more than one culture.

However, I have found the nature of the appropriation of Shakespeare in the theatrical

culture of Bangladesh to be transcendental, even while remaining aware of the political faultlines

which linger from the history of colonialism. The theatrical practice I have described and have

tried to exemplify in my own stage work has been fully conscious about hospitality to

Shakespeare as a creative creature, who is a substantial example of Lalonian golden human.

Shakespeare's works have been useful for the theatre makers of Bangladesh and their receivers in

their shared attempt to draw the national designs of "living" or the "deeper life of the people"

(O'Driscoll 12). Here as elsewhere, the relationship between theatre art and nationalism informs a

collective consciousness. As Robert O'Driscoll argues, "In times of acute national consciousness

the theatre is the form of literature which makes the most direct impact on the people, becoming

at times a means for propaganda, but ultimately the means by which the deeper life of the people

is expressed" (12). In staging Shakespeare in Bangladesh, the playwright has been saturated in the

theatrical act of reviewing the national self by the local theatre artists.

The cases I have studied in the previous chapters demonstrate that Shakespeare has been

reimagined as a participant and articulator of the political community of the appropriating country.

Hence, the playwright has been interiorised in the cultural performance of nationalism as a "mode

of self-consciousness," as defined by George Bernard Shaw (qtd. in O'Driscoll 17). The mode of

self-consciousness both problematises and transcends the linearity of nationalist doctrine: it

simultaneously interiorises the bio-geological other of Shakespeare in the articulation of national self, evaporating the sense of the other. The performance of history and Shakespeare in Bangladesh allows to comprehend that even when nationalism governs a sovereign entity, it is not purely monolithic. Instead, nationalism, as a self-conscious political expression, is ethically invalid without the obligatory sense of other that critiques, questions and problematises the binarisms among the colonial and postcolonial, national and international, foreign and native, local and global, traditional and post-national, self and other, etc. Therefore, considering the cases of these productions, it is reasonable to remark that Shakespeare has been performed in Bangladesh as a non-linearly national, transcendental and intercultural playwright, who has been reimagined to imagine Bangladesh within and beyond its territory.

In my fourth chapter, I gave an account of the production of *Shattered Faces of Piyar Ali* that I created as a practical part of this project to complement the traditional mode of research in arts and humanities. As a result, *Shattered Faces of Piyar Ali*, which is based on William Shakespeare and George Wilkins's collaborative *Pericles*, *Prince of Tyre*, substantiates this research project by bringing in the notion of praxis. The idea of praxis acknowledges that the ontology of knowledge consists of both theory and practice, doing and thinking. I set a process of thinking into live realization by doing a Shakespearean text in the form of theatrical language, and it was this which gave birth to the production of *Shattered Faces of Piyar Ali*. This practical work has been functional in this research project at least in three ways.

Firstly, in writing the history of Shakespearean theatre, I sought to create a new theatre to critique the Western 19th century's "objective school" of "the residual positivism of traditional theatre history," and its historiography of "scientific approach to theatrical facts" (Reinelt and Roach 192). My production, therefore, embodied the history of Bangladesh, engaging the

problematic definition of historical documents and facts, to challenge "the assumption that there is a fundamental difference between literary texts and other kinds of texts. It has suggested alternatively that all forms of writing-- indeed, all representations-- are as distanced from the real world as literature [performance as well] was once thought to be" (192). Using Stephen Greenblatt's idea, which synthesises the new historicist intertextuality and "poetics of history" into cultural poetics, I would argue that this production mobilized a cultural poetics of Bangladesh to represent an alternative way of claiming historical truth (193). As Walter Benjamin wrote, to understand, "The past historically does not mean to recognize it 'the way it really was.' It means to seize hold of a memory as it flashes up at a moment of danger" (qtd. in Reinelt and Roach 193). To reflect the memory of "a moment of danger" in the historical emergence of Bangladesh, as a new independent state in the subcontinent, the theatrical production of the *Shattered faces of Piyar Ali* embodied, following Conquergood Dwight, "performance as a means of knowledge-formation" that emphasised "the connection between artistry, analysis, and activism" (qtd. in Bial 264). Hence, this production not only constitutes an alternative method in writing theatre history but also problematises the positivist method in writing history itself. This section of the thesis thus serves as a dialectical counterpoint to the more positivist historiography used for studying the cases in the third chapter, embracing the indeterminacy and performative characteristic of communal knowledge-production.

Secondly, the production of *Shattered Faces of Piyar Ali* was designed to participate in the evolving debate of defining what knowledge is and how knowledge can be produced. Therefore, the production not only complements the dominant method of archival research but also enhances creatively the methodological scope in researching in the field of arts and humanities. The production, as an embodied form of knowledge, substantiates the claim that practice or

performance is also a form of knowledge. It has focused on the Lalonian philosophy of "kaya sadhona" (praxis of body) as well as the Heideggerian "praxical knowledge" that subverts the orthodox differentiating border between thinking and doing, writing and performing. Following Rabindranath Tagore's idea of the shared playground of creativity and the poststructuralist discourse of creative deconstruction, *Shattered Faces of Piyar Ali* reimagines *Pericles* in a way that reconfigures the ethical possibility of adaptation and seeks new ways into the creative potentiality of the forever-unfinished Shakespearean text. This practical work recontextualises too the positionality of Shakespeare as a transcendental and intercultural playwright in creative cultures. The theatrical production of *Shattered Faces of Piyar Ali* asserted in and of itself that "culture is in fact performance. A community's performances reflect and embody its values, beliefs, and traditions. Moreover, the concept of performativity suggests that performance can also define and shape those values and beliefs" (Bial 263). This "Bangladeshi production" came into being in a global setting, and for internally divided audiences: it was performed in Birmingham and London and Verona for audiences which included diasporic Bangladeshi spectators and British spectators (and some who identified as both), as well as spectators of other nationalities. As a result, this production mapped new territory, based on the practice of intermediated Shakespeare. In addition to this, if the articulation of the natural body is formed significantly by culture, then I would argue here that the performer's human body of *Shattered Faces of Piyar Ali* reciprocates all interactive points. For example, traces of Shakespeare's text here met with Bangladeshi culture as well as with a contemporary British multicultural demographic, and all these groups within the audience materialised the production through interacting and sharing the theatrical space with each other. The divided ancestry of the piece made a meeting between diverse cultural points a mandatory part of the experience. As Fischer-Lichte argues, "[A]ny human body should be seen

as the result of a reciprocal process of the organic and the cultural, an interaction between individual nature and cultural context" ("Theatre" 21-22). *Shattered Faces of Piyar Ali*, a Shakespearean reimagination, thus employs the notion of cultural act as the form of "understanding performance," which is "critically important in [an] age when the world's economic, social, cultural, and ideological systems are increasingly interconnected and interdependent. As globalization brings cultures around the world into contact with one another, traditional notions of identity and community have become both more complex and less stable" (Bial 263). In this "more complex and less stable" human condition, the notion of performance the production understands "offers a means to resist the transcultural homogenization of [Shakespearean] globalization" (263).

Thirdly, the case of this production, of which I have given detailed account in the preceding chapter, reimagines the national community of Bangladesh and its birth and ethical legacy not just via the 'other' of Shakespeare but from a geographical distance, as the production was entirely produced, performed, and received in the UK. While my other case studies, such as the productions of *Macbeth*, *The Tempest*, and *Coriolanus,* which I have thoroughly discussed in the third chapter, were presented on the sovereign territory of Bangladesh, speaking of it as 'here,' *Shattered Faces of Piyar Ali*, like its refugee protagonist, discussed Bangladesh as at once home and elsewhere.

While *Macbeth* exposes an undesirable autocratic form of power, *Coriolanus* depicts class struggle and makes a call for equality and *The Tempest* explores colonisation and the postcolonial condition in the light of a nationalist cultural politics, *Shattered Faces of Piyar Ali* performs the post-national empathetic journey to recover the ontological harm of personal as national self of Bangladesh in the context of the 1971 genocide, as seen from the pandemic epoch of 2021. However, the ultimate meaning of Shakespearean performances is not fully extracted here.

Because the ontology of theatre signifies "the bodily co-presence of actors and spectators," where "bodies are shared and spaces are shared" too (Fischer-Lichte, The Transformative 35). Fischer-Lichte argues, "[C]onception of a performance presupposed a unique, unrepeatable constellation which can only be determined and controlled to a limited degree. The created event remains unique as is inevitable when actors and spectators are confronted with each other in their various tempers, moods, desires, expectations, and intellects" (35).

Moreover, *Shattered Faces of Piyar Ali* dramatizes the point, as Michel de Certeau would argue, that "what the map cuts up, the story cuts across" (129). Therefore, the national, as an imagined community, crosses its geopolitical limits, and obtains a transnational dimension and homogenous cultural being, which may transform into heterogenous intercultural condition. The once vertically-hegemonised identity of Shakespeare has here been made curvilinear and deterritorialised as well as transcended. Hence, this production imagines through the reimagination of both the nation and the Shakespearean canon a diversely colourful postcolonial world. It belongs to "a postcolonial world crisscrossed by transnational narratives, diaspora affiliations, and especially, the movement and multiple migrations of people" (Conquergood 311).

From the theoretical study of the productions of *Macbeth*, *The Tempest*, and *Coriolanus* to the practical work of *Shattered Faces of Piyar Ali*, the research I have developed in this thesis sets out on a journey towards an embodied understanding of a Shakespearean performing culture in and around Bangladesh. The basic question I asked to initiate this research was apparently simple: what was and is the nature of performing Shakespeare in Bangladesh? Responding to the question, I have reviewed representative samples of theatrical productions and have given a detailed account of practical research, and together these allow me to realise that Shakespearean performance in Bangladesh "no longer claims any totalization nor any radicalization," rather these creative

rhizomes combine the "elements of varied geographical, historical and ideological origin," and mark an intercultural disorientation where the theatrical representation of culture is not "formalist" in Ariane Mnouchkine's sense nor "authentic" in Peter Brook's sense (Pavis, "Introduction" 18-19). Rather, I would like to rearticulate what Patrice Pavis says when he observes that "[t]his *dis-orient-ation* marks most of the theatrical experiments claiming to be intercultural: the "Orient" [for example, the theatrical case of Bangladesh] is neither cited as a reference nor used as a touchstone to orient the West [for example, Shakespeare's plays]" (19). Instead, my research, though limited to date by the sampling of case studies it has been able to discuss, hopes for a new possibility of theatre culture, based on the Lalonian notion of "golden human," driven by an ethical-political duty to unite examples, extracting from the infinite varieties of the universe, in a non-dual bodily work.

Hence, my research on Shakespeare in Bangladesh must conclude by reaching towards future theatrical forms which will continue to emerge from, while being distinct from, other existing intercultural forms such as "postcolonial theatre," "syncretic theatre," "cultural collage" and "theatre of the fourth world" (Pavis, "Introduction" 8-10). These coming forms can aim to create "communities of practice," based on the understanding that "value lies in intangible outcomes," and a "sense of belonging" as well as "the spirit of inquiry" of who we are (Brown 183). My thesis' examination of theatrical productions shows that "radical nationalism" either in its own expression or in the name of neoliberal global order "is intolerable in itself" (Chomsky 185). But the Shakespeare canon is not in itself an "intolerable" site, rather it is an unlockable storehouse that seeks performative entry, which, in turn creates a possibility of new subjectivity. I remain motivated by the insistence of contemporary cultural studies that "subjectivity primarily consists of practices" (During 11). However, getting impulse from the Bengali idea of "kaya

sadhona" or "the praxical knowledge," I would say that the reciprocated notions of practice and subjectivity can be seen as a compound signpost, which validates the hope for varied locational practices of Shakespeare in the societies of the future, perforating the dominant grand narrative of "so called" global Shakespeare. To echo *Coriolanus,* "Rather say I play the man I am." "[I]n such business / Action is eloquence" (3:2:14, 76). In Bangladesh as elsewhere, a changing world demands new compound forms of Shakespearean eloquence.

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Appendix A

List of Productions

1. *Othello*

   Translation: Muneir Chowdhury and Kabir Chowdhury

   Direction: Abdullah Al Mamun

   Production: Theatre, Dhaka

   Premiere: Mahila Samiti Auditorium, Dhaka, 1981

2. *A Midsummer Night's Dream*

   Translation: Baharuddin Khelon

   Direction: Baharuddin Khelon

   Production: Loko Natyadol, Dhaka

   Premiere: 1982

3. *Macbeth*

   Translation: Syed Shamsul Haque

   Direction: Christopher Sandford

   Production: British Council in cooperation with Theatre and Nagorik Natyasampraday

   Premiere: British Council Auditorium, Dhaka, 1982

4. *Tempest*

   Translation: Syed Shamsul Haque

   Direction: Deborah Warner

   Production: International Theatre Institute (ITI), Bangladesh Centre in cooperation with British Council

   Premiere: British Council Auditorium, Dhaka, 1982

5. ***Coriolanus***

    Translation: Mannan Heera

    Direction: Mamunur Rashid

    Production: Aranyak Natyadal

    Premiere: Dhaka, 1989

6. ***Darpan*** (based on *Hamlet*)

    Adaptation: Ali Zaker

    Direction: Ali Zaker

    Production: Nagorik Natyasampraday

    Premiere: Dhaka, 1991

7. ***Hamlet***

    Translation: Abu Shahriar

    Direction: Emdadur Rahman Saki

    Production: Nandanik

    Premiere: Dhaka, 1991

8. ***Hamlet***

    Adaptation: Nazmul Ahsan

    Direction: Nazmul Ahsan

    Production: Khulna Theatre

    Premiere: Railway Auditorium, Khulna, 1992

9. **Gononayok** (lit. People's Hero based on *Julius Caesar*)

   Adaptation: Syed Shamsul Haque

   Direction: Ataur Rahman

   Production: Chakrabak

   Premiere: Dhaka, 1992

10. **As You Like It**

   Translation: Rabiul Alam

   Direction: Rabiul Alam

   Production: Tirjok Nattyagoshthi Chittagong

   Premiere: Bangladesh Academy for Fine and Performing Arts, Chittagong, 1992

11. **Darpan (**based on *Hamlet*)

   Adaptation: Ali Zaker

   Direction: Shamsul Alam Bakul

   Production: Kathakali (Sylhet)

   Premiere: Sylhet, 1993

12. **Venice Sowdagor** (*The Merchant of Venice*)

   Translation: Abdus Selim

   Direction: Ataur Rahman

   Production: Dhaka Little Theatre

   Premiere: Dhaka, 1993

13. *King Lear*

   Translation: Syed Manjurul Islam

   Direction: Kamaluddin Nilu

   Production: Theatre

   Premiere: Dhaka, 1993

14. *Hamlet Oh Hamlet* (based on *Hamlet*)

   Adaptation: Biplob Bala

   Direction: Ashis Khandokar

   Production: Natyadhara

   Premiere: Russian Cultural Centre, Dhaka, 1994

15. *Venice Sowdagor* (*The Merchant of Venice*)

   Translation: Abdus Selim

   Direction: Ahmed Iqbal Hayder

   Production: Tirjok Natyagoshthi Chittagong

   Premiere: Chittagong, 1994

16. *Romeo and Juliet*

   Translation: Abdullahel Mahmud

   Direction: Israfeel Shaheen

   Production: Bangladesh National Academy for Fine and Performing Arts

   Premiere: Shilpakala auditorium, Dhaka, 1995

17. *Twelfth Night*

Translation: Dattatreya Dutta

Dirction: Israfeel Shaheen

Production: Bangladesh National Academy for Fine and Performing Arts, Nilphamari.

Premiere: Nilphamari, 1996

18. *The Merchant of Venice*

Translation: Subarna Mostafa

Direction: Nasiruddin Yusuf

Production: Dhaka Theatre

Premiere: Dhaka, 1997

19. *Twelfth Night*

Translation: A S M Asadul Islam and Samina Luthfa

Direction: Israfeel Shaheen

Production: Shubochan Natyasansad

Premiere: Bangladesh Guide House Auditorium, Bailey Road, Dhaka, 1998

20. *Taming of the Shrew*

Translation: Munier Chowdhury

Direction: Israfeel Shaheen

Production: Cine and Drama Club, North South University, Dhaka

Premiere: National Theatre Hall, Bangladesh Shilpokala Academy (Bangladesh National Academy for Fine and Performing Arts), Dhaka, 2001

21. **Golmatha Chokhamatha** (*Round Heads and Pointed Heads* is an adaptation of *Measure for Measure*)

   Direction: Israfeel Shaheen

   Adaptation: Bertolt Brecht

   Translation: Abdus Selim

   Production: Nagorik Nattyangon

   Premiere: Mohila Samity Moncho, Dhaka, 2002

22. **A *New Testament of Romeo and Juliet*** (based on *Romeo and Juliet*)

   Adaptation: Saymon Zakaria

   Direction: Saidur Rahman Lipon

   Production: Barishal Shabdaboli

   Premiere: Barishal, 2004

23. **The Merchant of Venice**

   Translation: Abdus Selim

   Direction: Israfeel Shaheen

   Production: Cine and Drama Club, North South University, Dhaka

   Premiere: National Theatre Hall, Bangladesh Shilpokala Academy (Bangladesh National Academy for Fine and Performing Arts), Dhaka, 2005

24. **Macbeth**

   Translation: Syed Shamsul Haque

   Direction: Israfeel Shaheen

   Production: Department of Theatre and Music (currently Dept. of Theatre and Performance Studies), University of Dhaka

   Premiere: Natmandal, Dhaka, 2005

25. *Macbeth*

Translation: Syed Shamsul Haque

Direction: Israfeel Shaheen

Production: Department of Theatre and Music (currently Dept. of Theatre and Performance Studies), University of Dhaka

Premiere: Natmandal, Dhaka, 2006

26. *Troilus and Cressida*

Translation: Syed Shamsul Haq

Direction: Ataur Rahman

Production: Nagorik Nattyasampradaya, Dhaka

Premiere: 2007

27. *Othello*

Translation: Kabir Chowdhury and Munier Chowdhury

Direction: Aditi Arju

Production: Department of Theatre and Music (currently Dept. of Theatre and Performance Studies), University of Dhaka

Premiere: Natmandal, Dhaka, 2007

28. *Shylock and Sycophants* (based on a novel *Shylocker Banijjyabistar* inspired from *The Merchant of Venice*)

Script: Hasan Shahriar

Direction: Azad Abul Kalam

Production: Theatrewala Repertory

Premiere: Dhaka, 2011

29. ***Chaitali Rater Swapno*** (*A Midsummer Night's Dream*)

Translation: Utpal Dutta

Direction: Ahmedul Kabir

Production: Department of Theatre and Performance Studies, University of Dhaka

Premiere: Open air, Natmandal, Dhaka, 2011

30. ***Macbeth***

Translation: Syed Shamsul Haque

Direction: Sudip Chakraborty

Production: Dhaka Padatik

Premiere: National Theatre Main Hall, Dhaka, 2012

31. ***The Tempest***

Adaptation: Rubayet Ahmed

Direction: Naisruddin Yousuff

Production: Dhaka Theatre

Premiere: Dhaka, 2012

32. ***Hamletmacine Co. Ltd.*** (based on Heiner Müller's *Hamletmachine* which is an adaptation of *Hamlet*)

Direction: Shahman Moishan

Production: Department of Theatre and Performance Studies, University of Dhaka

Premiere: Natmandal, Dhaka, 2012

33. ***Hamlet***

Translation: Shamsur Rahman

Direction: Asiq Rahman Leeon

Dramaturge: Shahman Moishan

Production: Department of Theatre and Performance Studies, University of Dhaka

Premiere: Natmandal, Dhaka, 2014

34. *A Different Romeo and Juliet* (with disabled adults)

Direction: Jenny Sealey in collaboration with Nasiruddin Yousuff

Production: Dhaka Theatre and Graeae Theatre Company commissioned by the British Council

Premiere: Shilpakala Academy (National Academy of Fine and Performing Arts), 2016

35.   *Shakespeare Shoptok*

A compilation of Shakespeare's seven plays: *Hamlet* act 2 scene 2, Trns. Shamsur Rahman; *As You Like It* act 4, scene 1, Trns. Tuhin Kumar Mukharjee; *Taming of the Shrew* act 2 scene 1, Trns. Munier Choudhury; *Midsummer Night's Dream* act 2 and 3, Trns. Ashit Kumar Bandopadhaye; *Macbeth*, act 1 scene 7, act 2 scene 1, act 5 scene 1, Trns. Syed Shamsul Haq; *Othello*, act 2 scene 3, act 5 scene 2, Trns. Munier Choudhury; *Romeo and Juliet*, act 2 scene 2, act 5 scene 3, Trns. Mofiz Chowdhury

Compilation and Direction: Sudip Chakroborthy

Production: Department of Theatre and Performance Studies, University of Dhaka

Premiere: British Council, Dhaka, 2016

36. *Hamlet*

Translation: Syed Shamsul Haque

Direction: Ataur Rahman

Production: Bangladesh National Academy for Fine and Performing Arts

Premiere: Dhaka, 2017

37. *Macbeth*

Translation: Syed Shamsul Haque

Direction: Israfeel Shaheen

Production: Department of Theatre and Performance Studies, University of Dhaka

Premiere: Natmandal, Dhaka, 2018

38. *Romeo and Juliet*

Translation: Sudhanshu Ranjan Ghosh

Direction: Ashim Das

Production: Tirjok Nattyagoshthi

Premiere: Chittagong, 2019

Appendix B

Questionnaire for Theatre Practitioners

The Reason for Choosing Shakespeare

1. Why have you selected Shakespeare's play to direct in your case? Which other plays from outside Bangladesh have you worked with?'

2. The universality or the local and temporal relevance of Shakespeare's plays—which characteristic inspired you? Are the plot and structure or the characters and characterisation or the outlook about the human life or the poetic and linguistic beauty of Shakespeare's play or the indisputable iconoclastic identity of Shakespeare—which one had influenced you to choose Shakespeare? Could you explain more about this statement?

3. 'Shakespeare is the greatest playwright in the world'—were you able to stay away from inherited colonial prejudice when you went to select Shakespeare in your directorial project? In your work with Shakespeare, does it matter that he was English? If so, how?' Is it possible for a theatre director to keep oneself away from the unconscious influence of the colonial supremacy in Bangladesh as a former British colony? What is your own experience and opinion, in this case?

4. How about 'Which translation did you use/make? How archaic and/or colloquial and/or poetic did you want the script to sound?'

5. Which Shakespeare plays did you use, and why? Did you find any unique significance of Shakespearean plays to the socio-politico-economical context of Bangladesh?

The Process of Creating Shakespeare (Text to Performance)

6. Did you explore any strong link between the Shakespearean production and the process of nation-building and the social dynamics of Bangladesh?

7. How have you created the production—was it based on merely a translation, adaptation, or a conceptual inspiration?

8. What was the direction process that you followed in creating Shakespeare?

9. How did you engage with the fictive world of Shakespeare through your creative apparatus in making a theatrical piece? Could you explain more?

10. How did you direct your actors to create their roles in rehearsal of Shakespeare's play? Did you feel that specialised training and skills are required for the actor in performing Shakespeare? Alternatively, did you synthesise any new idiom of acting—(for instance, a creative blending of Stanislavsky system with the traditional stylised acting that is seen in Jatra form of theatre in Bangladesh) in the creation of your own Shakespearean production? What is your own creative experience about acting for staging Shakespeare?

11. What was your creating technique to coordinate the scenographic elements aesthetically with the aural effects in the case of staging Shakespeare?

12. Did you face any cultural/aesthetic challenge in blending the textual elements of Shakespeare with other theatrical elements in your production?

The Impact of Shakespearean work in Bangladesh Culture

13. Was the Shakespearean production, you created, able to produce the intended meaning in the public realm of Bangladesh? How was it received, and how do you know?

14. How would you explain the cultural experience and the process that was gained and employed by the audience in engaging the theatrical production of Shakespeare's play in this country?

15. How could you, as a Shakespearean, explain the reception of Shakespeare's works in the sphere of the audience in Bangladesh? Is there any need to divide the cultural domain into 'the elite' and 'the popular' to perceive the nature of the cultural relationship among the local audience and a Shakespearean theatre? Is there any requirement of any cultural or aesthetic preparation for the local audience to decode the meaning in an effective engagement with a Shakespearean production in Bangladesh? To which class of the audience, you felt, the production was more meaningful?

16. How would you explain the overall experience and process of appropriating Shakespeare from the creators' and spectators' point of view?

17. What is your observation on the influence of, on the contrary, the creative resistance, to Shakespeare in field of modern theatre in Bangladesh? Where does Shakespeare fit, if anywhere, in the modern theatre repertory in Bangladesh? With what rival writers, forms and works do his co-exist and/or compete?

18. What is your opinion on the case of interaction with Shakespeare as the most worshipped 'colonial creative figure' in cultural praxis of identity in Bangladesh?

19. How will you define the place of history of Shakespeare practice in the discourse of modernity and colonialism in the culture of Bangladesh? Do you see the performance of Shakespeare as a backward-looking or forward-looking practice?

Appendix C

The manuscript

Bengali Title: Piyar Alir Bhanga Mukh

English Title: Shattered Faces of Piyar Ali

Written, designed, and directed by Shahman Shahriar (Shahman Moishan)

Research Supervised by Professor Michael Dobson

Performed by Tarek Chowdhury

Digital art and music by Makbul Chowdhury

Premiered on 21st December 2021, at MAC (Midlands Arts Centre), Birmingham.

Produced by Shondhani Arts & Bangla Connection in collaboration with the Shakespeare Institute, University of Birmingham, UK.

The Poet

O my unkind mind

Utter the name of Allah in every breath you take

Utter that name in every breath and don't take a break

O unkind mind…

Utter the name of Allah in every breath you take.

At first, I have started my writing in the name of my lord Allah

Aah aah, I have started my writing

Then I have bowed myself to the soul of you the audience

Aah aah, I have started my writing.

…I have started my writing.

A long-lived strange storyteller

Moves me to the peoples' faces

Through the eye-to-eye contact, I sense

Everybody has several stories, but one is unique.

Being entrapped by the story and allured by the love of the plot

As my days go by, searching a life distinct.

If I were the narrator of that life

Then you are the container of that life.

We do live in many parts of a one-world

Where are we from, and where do we go to?

The interplay among the birth, life and death makes a labyrinth.

Life is in a whirlpool to earn daily bread.

But pressed by sudden angst, I wake up from bed at night

Who are the parents, where they are, and the home where it is?

I am thirsty to ask: who you are?

It has been an eternal question for a human being—

Who am I?

Being asked this question, Piyar Ali runs away.

The life Piyar has got is a bizarre one.

He was born in then East Pakistan, now Bangladesh

But brought up in England.

The throes of war in 1971

 revers Piyar Ali's life motion.

The forgotten past and the unbearable present

Creates a cross-over from where Piyar Ali gets a new point.

He starts a journey that moves backwards.

As if it is Piyar Ali's expedition to reverse the cycle of time,

Sitting impassably on the bank of a vast river, I think

Is it Piyar Ali's journey from home to abroad?

Or is it a long walk from abroad to home?

Or is it an irresistible act of diehard Piyar Ali to seek the seed of his life?

I now shall tell you the red story of Piyar Ali, who starts

A journey for searching his ontology.

Piyar Ali

Dead or alive! It doesn't matter. At least not at this moment. I've come. Finally, I've come. This is that graveyard. Oh no, this is the slaughterhouse. This is that slaughterhouse. One grave of these rows, one name of these graves, has been calling me for the last 22 years. Chasing me for the years. I've been thinking of this moment thousands of times for the last 22 years. Hey dad! Dad! Listening? Are you listening to me? Can you hear me…can you smell me? This is me I've come…I'll touch your epitaph. Ah, how many times I've thought of you! How many times! How many times! Dad! O, dad! Nobody shall count how many times I've thought that I was a grave lying beside your grave. I've thought my body adhered to your body inside your tomb. We both lying down together. We, the father and son, sleeping clinging to each other forever.

There are tombs in lines. The beautiful tiny path between two lines. There are black alphabets inscribed on the white granite. Written in Bengali—"in memory of our martyrs who had been killed in the Genocide by Pak Army in 1971..." Dad! Dad! I'm pretty sure today you've been so happy. I can read in Bengali. I can write a bit too. My mom Elizabeth Stair let me get a teacher who taught me Bengali. Hi Dad! What happened! Have you been startled? Listening to my mom's name? Of course, my mom is Mrs Elizabeth Stair. In this diary, my mom everything…I mean, she had written down as far as she could know.

My mom…I can clearly remember…on that day… I was hastily heading to my home after getting A level result…I wished to dance with mom…I was going back home thinking these ideas…back to home hastily. Our home was at the corner near Wellington Park …who is that? If it's a bat! Where has the bat gone by fluttering its deadening wings? Uff! Dad! Have you been so surprised? Has the astonishment pushed your eyes to the forehead?

I can imagine a vulture-eyed ferocious Pak army officer who commanded one of his soldiers. Immediately the soldier triggered just straight to your eyes. Hey dad, can you tell me before you breathed your last…what happened just before the last breath…were your eyes bleeding. Had you been blind at that moment? Dad, had your skull too fled with your eyes? Perhaps a few soldiers had pressed your breast and mouth with their boot and bayonet. And then they buried you alive. At that moment, did you give the slogan Joy Bangla through your snort? And just at that moment did you remember my face? Perhaps they shot straight through your heart. Because you were a poet. Dad! There was a teacher in my college. We called him Mr Johnson. Mr Johnson used to teach Shakespeare to us through acting. He taught us by throwing dialogues in nasality. Mr Johnson used to tell us the poet writes a poem, not by the words but by heartbeats. I'm damn sure the soldier shot straight through your heart. Because they knew you were a poet. I'm the son of such a poet. And what a shame on me! Now I've been a salesman. A poet's son is a salesman! I do supply drugs to the pharmacies roaming around London. And someone has been supplying unbearable pain to me since my birth in this world. Now I've been a gambler in this two-way supply game. I'm not joking. I'm not kidding at all, dad! … …I had got the result out of the A level exam. On that day, I was going back home hastily. I stopped at the door. I couldn't open the door. Suddenly I found a note from grandma on the door's handle. "Your mom is in hospital. Come quickly." My mom…my mom…from that day she never returned home. I buried my mom at the Windsor public graveyard forever. I can clearly remember. Still, I can feel the hollow inside me. As someone took my leaver away from me. One day after mom's death, I had become eighteen years old. Grandma handed me over this diary that my mom left for me.

I began to read this diary…The pages of the diary ignited the old clotted memories as they fired by gunpowder inside my brains. The fire spread out the whole body, and it would burn me from head to toe. The fire flared my body. I had to seek a feeling of peace from the shower. I had the cold water shower in the deadly winter …hour after hour…day after day…year after year… it has been happening in my life…

The memory doesn't release me… …Such the hot noon. Lots of people. Crowd. Everybody was in a rush. All in the running. I was also in this race. Just I was running…I can just remember…Oh, I can feel the heavy ringing in my two ears…the landscapes…blur…unclear…horrific…as I was running along the line of thousands of ants…I was running in such hot noon…When I got this diary, I realised that the hot noon was in 1971. Indeed, I was crossing the border from East Pakistan, I mean now Bangladesh to India. Thus, my life handed over through this running in such hot noon. Father Rosario of our nearby church used to tell us a story from the Holy Bible. Once upon a time, the disciples and followers of Moses run across Jerusalem to Egypt, Jordan to River Nile, bewailing by the persecution. They were running and running through weeping as it was an ancient exodus. So also, had the anonymous people of the crowd become a modern exodus in 1971? So was I also becoming a piece of exodus with the unknown faces to save my life?

Eventually, I started to read the torn pages of my personal history. Later, I realised why my mom was so crazy to teach me Bengali. But still, I can't understand an issue. Mom didn't know my date of birth. But she fixed 26th March as I was born in. But the victory day of Bangladesh is 16th December. So why did she fix for me 26th March instead of 16th December? In fact, everything in my life has been fixed not by me but the others. Why should I bear the others' desire, other's compassion, other's hatred, other's vengeance, other's crime as they all of mine? Look at my soul!

It has been burnt out by the other's whip's thrashings. I can't even fix an enemy's face to punch for releasing my unbearable pressure of revenge. Only I can trace my face…my life is only my enemy. Everything in my life has been unnatural except my birth to this earth. Dad, this is my life which is entirely in inversion. Such as you have been here just like a skeleton. Such as, I don't know who had given birth to me on this earth, and for the first time, I cried like a human baby. It's alright, I even don't want to know this fact. My mom Elizabeth stair raised me excellently. So, I couldn't think of any other woman's face as my birth giving mom. I can't think of it. I shall not think of it. Never ever.

After some days, my mom passed away, I became eighteen years old. I became an adult officially. Grandma handed me over this diary with a bundle of papers like a bundle of histories… shreds of evidence of my birth and life. On that day, I felt I was no longer a human being, instead a property bought by the mortgage. So, dad, I now have become a bundle of documents. Thus, I've got the fragmented histories of myself. I've got some uneven broken pieces of myself. This is how I'm so many shattered faces stuck in one face. Although that's not enough, that's enough. So, thank you, mom!

Dad, I've got this slaughter's house address from my mom. Dad, I've got to know the truth that you were a poet. You became a freedom fighter writing poems and songs for your country mother. I've also got this truth. And you became a victim of a genocide…you sacrificed your life, you… a martyr of 1971. Dad, what shall I address you a martyr for your county's freedom or the martyr for a poem?

I used to buy two bunches of lily flowers every Sunday. I put one bunch of lily flowers to my mom's gravesite at Windsor. I put another bunch upon this diary that my mom left for me. When the flowers had dried, I kept a petal. And pasted it on a page of this diary. Dad, look at this. I've

brought it to you. Dad, I will take away the dried petals from the pages and offer them to your epitaph. Dad, look at me! Now I will find out where is your plaque that I have come here to touch on!

What the name is on this plaque! Martyr Rakib! Achcha, this plaque is for whom…Martyr Abed. This one is for Martyr Narayanchandra. That is for Martyr Rafu Miah…what name is inscribed on that plaque… o Martyr Mangal Chakma…but where is your plaque…which plaque does preserve your name … where your name Martyr Poet Hayder Ali is written on…which one…where it is…where…which…not this one, nor that one…no… no… it's not…no no no, not that…might be this one, might be that one…no…no not at all…achchha these letters are unclear… got it…Martyr Swarajkanti…

I have travelled oceans with this address to find you, dad! You are nowhere. Your plaque is nowhere. Then why have I come here? I don't know. Then have I been here to pay off the debt of blood that gives me life? I can't tell it. I don't know. I only know that I have been pressured inside me to be here. If I were not here, I wouldn't have lived any longer. Ugh, I can't breathe…Dad, dad…here there is none of the plaques contains your name…there is no plaque in the name of you, no, no, your name is nowhere…Now, what shall I do? Now, where shall I go? Why have I come here through a long struggle as you are not here? Mom hadn't left a fake address for me. It's impossible. Dad, none of these plaques carries your name that I could touch…it's not here… not... no… no…

Look! A piece of cloud has just covered the moon. That piece of the cloud has just been moving the moon away. Hey, blue sky! Hey, the blue moon just listens to me for once in my life. Hey, the moon of Bengal, you just become a weapon of mass destruction rather. You just become merely an intense incursive deadening rifle. Hey, the blue moon of Bengal transforms your beautiful body

into innumerable cannonballs to shoot me ceaselessly. Aimed at me. Shoot me. Kill me. Take me to the rest that is a silence forever.

Look! The face of the blue moon has been unveiled once again. Dad o dad, has your face stuck on the face of the moon? Dad o dad, please alight here. Just come to me. I'm here. Just come to me. Dad just whistles your poems from wherever you are. Dad, please just make a gesture for once and tell me that my son, I'm home, I'm here… Dad o dad come back to me just for once… Please come back as a ghost, if not a human. Give me a ghostly smile inside from your skull. Tune your bones to play the violone and then embrace me…whisper to me the song of my birth… … …

The poet

Every story has its end in this human world. But Piyar Ali's story as if hasn't any end. After not getting the commemorating plaque of his father, Piyar Ali feels calamitous. A sense of senselessness, devoid of meaning and non-beingness, consumes Piyar Ali entirely. In this coup de grace, he gets seeds of his life from a 70-year-old woman Namita Rani Devi, who lives in a hut on the other bank of river Surma, not so far from that slaughterhouse. Piyar Ali gets to know about his secret of the past from her. Both Namita Rani and Piyar Ali's mother, Bibi Kulsum, was kept at one of the invading Pak army camps and raped by the gang of Pak soldiers, day after day. After the emergence of Bangladesh as an independent country, they both were taken to the same hospital. Bibi Kulsum had given birth to a daughter, a war baby. On these days, Bibi Kulsum was utterly restless. She used to bemoan and talk about her lost son Piyar Ali in fragmented phrases. She eventually learned how the Pak army shot her husband, poet Haydar Ali and threw the dead body into the river Surma. Bibi Kulsum lost all but a daughter whom she never wanted. On a hot April noon, Namita Rani suddenly noticed Bibi Kulsum was running as she would do something perilous. Namita Rani took the little daughter away from Bibi Kulsum. A day after that incident,

Bibi Kulsum was found dead floating upon the stream of Surma. On that day, a Borka was also floating with the dead body of Bibi Kulsum. Many days later, a Swedish couple adopted Kulsum's unfortunate daughter from Namita Rani. She got in return a photo of the little girl and a Swedish address written on the back of it. She also preserved a box that Bibi Kulsum considered an invaluable treasure.

At last, Piyar Ali stands on the other bank of his life-river as he has already got the unfortunate little girl's photo and the last souvenirs that his mother belonged to. Now to where Piyar Ali's life-road will go? Everybody knows that nobody knows the future. But somebody can determine a journey for the destination if he has an agony of past like Piyar Ali has.

Piyar Ali

One day everything will be lost in this world. But if you think of tomorrow? Then hope remains to get at least something. Isn't it? Though you're not by my father but you're by my mother. O unlucky girl, you are the flower of war, my sister, my beloved sister, I'll not sleep until we meet. O sister, I can promise to the sky, I'll see my mother's face upon your face. You'll see my face instead of your father's face. Look, look, sister, an open road is calling me… … …

Appendix D

Letter of Consent

I confirm that I understand that my participation in an interview is voluntary, and I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving a reason and without my legal rights being affected. I am fully aware of the academic purpose of the interview which is an enabling part of a PhD research project titled "National, Intercultural and Transcendental Shakespeare: Adaptation and Translation on the Bangladeshi Stage" as conducted by Shahman Shahriar and supervised by Professor Michael Dobson at the Shakespeare Institute, University of Birmingham, United Kingdom. I agree to the interview being written and/or audio-visually recorded and understand that the recordings will be kept either by the researcher or the Shakespeare Institute.

I understand that the information (opinion, explanation, experience and memory) collected will be used for academic research only and I will be identified by name in the analysis of the dissertation. I agree that quotes from the interview can be used by name in any publication of this research project. It must be reiterated that I give consent and permission for all interview material (written and/or recorded), either in part or whole, to be used for this PhD research project that does not intend to attack the sentiment of anybody regarding race, religion and gender identity. Both Shahman and I must agree to direct quotes in case of any possibility of misrepresentations. I understand that even if I withdraw from the study, information already collected from me may be included in the final study analysis after being anonymised.

I understand that this may involve a repeat interview at a later stage. I agree to cooperate in such circumstances.

(On behalf of the late Mr Aly Zaker)

Signature: ....

Name: ......SARA......ZAKER..

Date: ....14th May 2023...

Address: HOUSE 63, RD 7/8, BLOCK - A

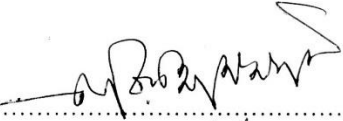............BANANI 1213, DHAKA., BANGLADESH............

Telephone: 8801819219909.........; E-mail: Sara.zaker@gmail.con

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Signature: _____

Name: Tariq Anam Khan

Date: 15/05/2023

Address: Apartment - 15AB, Golf Heights, 1 International Airport Road, Banani, Dhaka - 1213

Telephone: +8801711540556 ; E-mail: actor.tariq@gmail.com

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Signature: ....

Name: .... Syed Jamil Ahmed ....

Date: .... 15 May 2023 ....

Address: .... Flat 204, House 8, Road 101, Gulshan-2, ...
.... Dhaka, Bangladesh ....

Telephone: 880 173 2939 600 ...; E-mail: ... sjamahmed@gmail.com

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Signature: ....

Name: ....MD. ISRAFIL...

Date: ....14 May 2023...

Address: Professor, Department of Theatre and Performance Studies, University of Dhaka Dhaka 1000, Bangladesh

Telephone: +880 171 565313 1; E-mail: israful_shaheen@yahoo.com

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Signature: ....

Name: .....MAMUNUR RASHID......................

Date: ......15th May 2023..............................

Address: ...Home # 97, Road -9/A, Dhanmondi.....
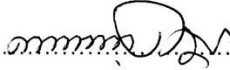......Dhaka...

Telephone: .+88017 11524530....; E-mail: .mamunur 530 @ gmail.com

Letter of Consent

I confirm that I understand that my participation in an interview is voluntary, and I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving a reason and without my legal rights being affected. I am fully aware of the academic purpose of the interview which is an enabling part of a PhD research project titled "National, Intercultural and Transcendental Shakespeare: Adaptation and Translation on the Bangladeshi Stage" as conducted by Shahman Shahriar and supervised by Professor Michael Dobson at the Shakespeare Institute, University of Birmingham, United Kingdom. I agree to the interview being written and/or audio-visually recorded and understand that the recordings will be kept either by the researcher or the Shakespeare Institute.

I understand that the information (opinion, explanation, experience and memory) collected will be used for academic research only and I will be identified by name in the analysis of the dissertation. I agree that quotes from the interview can be used by name in any publication of this research project. It must be reiterated that I give consent and permission for all interview material (written and/or recorded), either in part or whole, to be used for this PhD research project that does not intend to attack the sentiment of anybody regarding race, religion and gender identity. Both Shahman and I must agree to direct quotes in case of any possibility of misrepresentations. I understand that even if I withdraw from the study, information already collected from me may be included in the final study analysis after being anonymised.

I understand that this may involve a repeat interview at a later stage. I agree to cooperate in such circumstances.

Signature: ...mmmmJ_Jr...

Name: ....NASIR UDDIN YOUSUFF..

Date: ....16th May 2023...

Address: FLAT- 8A House- 22 Road- 113 Gulshan.......

....Dhaka- BANGLADESH...
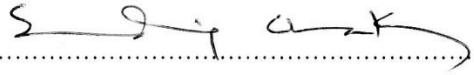
Telephone: +01742150927..........; E-mail: yousuff1971@gmail.com

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Signature: ....

Name: ....Dr. Sudip Chakroborthy........................

Date: ....14 May 2023..

Address: ....Theatre and Performance Dept.,

..........................Dhaka University......................

Telephone: ....01712 892330....; E-mail: ......sudip@du.ac.bd

Letter of Consent

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Signature: ....

Name: ...... SYDUR RAHMAN ....

Date: ...... 14.05.2023 ....

Address: Associate Professor, Tagore University of Creative Arts, Uttara-12, Dhaka, Bangladesh

Telephone: +8801819895862 ; E-mail: lipon-71@hotmail.com

Letter of Consent

I confirm that I understand that my participation in an interview is voluntary, and I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving a reason and without my legal rights being affected. I am fully aware of the academic purpose of the interview which is an enabling part of a PhD research project titled "National, Intercultural and Transcendental Shakespeare: Adaptation and Translation on the Bangladeshi Stage" as conducted by Shahman Shahriar and supervised by Professor Michael Dobson at the Shakespeare Institute, University of Birmingham, United Kingdom. I agree to the interview being written and/or audio-visually recorded and understand that the recordings will be kept either by the researcher or the Shakespeare Institute.

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I understand that this may involve a repeat interview at a later stage. I agree to cooperate in such circumstances.

Signature: ....

Name: Dr. Ahmedul Kabir

Date: 14 May 2023

Address: Professor, Department of Theatre and Performance Studies, University of Dhaka, Dhaka-1000, Bangladesh

Telephone: +8801819896971; E-mail: young.theatre@yahoo.com

Letter of Consent

I confirm that I understand that my participation in an interview is voluntary, and I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving a reason and without my legal rights being affected. I am fully aware of the academic purpose of the interview which is an enabling part of a PhD research project titled "National, Intercultural and Transcendental Shakespeare: Adaptation and Translation on the Bangladeshi Stage" as conducted by Shahman Shahriar and supervised by Professor Michael Dobson at the Shakespeare Institute, University of Birmingham, United Kingdom. I agree to the interview being written and/or audio-visually recorded and understand that the recordings will be kept either by the researcher or the Shakespeare Institute.

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I understand that this may involve a repeat interview at a later stage. I agree to cooperate in such circumstances.

Signature: ....

Name: .... Md. ASHIQUR RAHMAN LEEON ....

Date: .... 14 May 2023 ....

Address: .... Asst Professor, Theatre Director, Designer, Actor
Theatre and Performance Studies Department
Dhaka University ....

Telephone: .01915-730666......; E-mail: .theatreleeon07@gmail.com.