Literary Cultures in History

Reconstructions from South Asia

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The Two Histories of Literary Culture in Bengal

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INTRODUCTION

A general reading of the history of a particular literature requires, first of all, a principle of organization. Histories of Bangla literature usually offer a narrative of continuity: they seek to show, quite legitimately, how the literary culture develops through successive stages—how literary works of one period become the stock on which later stages carry out their productive operations. These studies are less interested in asking how literary mentalities come to be transformed or how a continuing tradition can be interrupted, or in speculating on possible reasons behind these significant literary turns. In an attempt to move away from these conventional histories, which record unproblematically the sequential narrative of the production of texts and their authors, this essay gives attention primarily to two questions. The first is: What were the major historical "literary cultures," that is, the sensibilities or mentalities constructed around a common core of tastes, methods of textual production, paratextual activities (like performance, recitation, or other use in religious, nonliterary contexts), reception, and the social composition of audiences? The second question, closely related to the first, is: How do literary cultures, especially deeply entrenched literary cultures, change?

The treatment of Bangla literary history in this essay, therefore, focuses more on textualities or text types than on individual texts, and it offers hardly any literary-critical analysis of major canonical works. A figure like Rabindranath Tagore is treated with relative neglect, since he does not represent a phase of serious interpretative contention or rupture in literary production

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or taste, although his work dominates modern Bangla literary sensibility. The struggles of the generation immediately following Tagore to challenge and replace his aesthetics with a more modern one that tried to come to grips with the problem of evil, are given greater attention.

This essay looks at two types of questions about literary transformation: the first concerns chronological changes in sensibilities or styles of literary production; the second, which cannot be ignored in any history of Bangla literature, is the problem of inclusion and exclusion of different social groups within this literary culture. The literature each group produces, receives, and enjoys contains internal structures of language, mythical content, imagery, or iconic systems that tend to include some Bangla readers and exclude others. It is important to note at the outset that even the question "What is Bangla literature?" is not an innocent or noncontentious one. Writing the history of Bangla literature was part of the project of literary modernity, and since this was entirely dominated by a Hindu upper stratum of society, the initial historical accounts tended to ignore Islamic elements by suggesting either that they belonged to a separate cultural strand (called Musalmāni Bāṃlā) or that these texts were not of sufficient literary quality to find a place in an exalted history of literary art. This is the central question of the complex "place" of Islamic culture in Bangla literature.[1] Comparisons with literary cultures from neighboring regions of northern India, especially the Hindi, Urdu, and Gujarati regions, might yield interesting themes for further understanding of the relation between the Islamic and the Sanskritic in Indian literary tradition as a whole.

Two Approaches to the Past: Tradition and History

The history of Bangla literature has two beginnings, and some of the most significant problems of its historiography stem from the problematic relations between these two separate historical stages. For the history of Bangla literature can have two equally plausible narratives, each with its own internal coherence and problems. In conventional critical discussions on the history of Bangla literature, its origin is placed in the tenth century, when Buddhist religious compositions known as *caryāpada*s were being written in a language recognizable as the first ancestor of modern Bangla.[2] This narra-

1. There has been a good deal of writing and analysis on the exclusion of Muslims from modern Bangla literature. We must, however, maintain a distinction between a large "political" point that asserts the fact of this exclusion and deplores it for moral and political reasons, and a more textual and literary question about exactly how this exclusion works in the body of the literary texts. See for example, Shibaji Bandyopadhyay's recent lectures (Bandyopadhyay 1986).

2. The word "ancestor" here does not connote unproblematic descent. Because the *caryāpada*s are also claimed as the point of origin by other eastern Indian languages, several lan-

tive of Bangla literature is parallel and comparable to those of other north Indian languages, many of which emerged in a typical evolutionary pattern from Sanskrit. Classical Sanskrit developed several distinctive literary styles of composition.[3] The Apabhramsha form diversified into various styles and eventually created the distinctive individual vernaculars. Gradually, the Bangla vernacular crystallized into its particular linguistic shape and came to have an identifiably distinct literature.[4] Even after its linguistic differentiation, Bangla continued to bear an interesting, fluctuating relationship with the canons of Sanskrit high literature, as Bangla writers sometimes tried to emulate the forms and delicacies of Sanskrit, and sometimes tried to consciously move away from the values of the Sanskrit universe and create independent literary criteria of their own. Historically, this literature gave rise to several corpora with peculiar cultural, religious, and literary sensibilities. It is impossible to analyze all of them in detail in this interpretative essay, but as the chapter proceeds I shall flag the major phases and forms.

The literary historian Sukumar Sen considers the advent of the great religious personality Caitanya (1486–1534) a significant watershed in Bangla literary history, and he divides the tradition preceding Caitanya plausibly into three major sections, each with its own internally coherent literary concerns, forms, and styles.[5] The first segment consists primarily of renditions and transfers from the high Sanskrit canon. Its major texts are the *Rāmāyaṇa* of Kṛttibās and the *Mahābhārata* by Kāśīrāmdās (both of uncertain date, perhaps fifteenth century), though these two texts are surrounded by a large literature seeking to translate Sanskrit texts into Bangla. The second segment consists of the large corpus of the *maṅgalkāvya*s inspired by popular religious sects. Each strand of worship developed its own series of these texts, which had wholly original narrative lines celebrating the powers of popular deities in the context of a specific, local literary geography. Third, a considerable body of distinctive literature, often of great poetic sophistication, emerged in the pre-Caitanya era through the Vaiṣṇava sensibility (of devotion to the god Viṣṇu), associated with the works of Vidyāpati and Caṇḍīdās, the two

guages may have differentiated from this linguistic form. The Bengalis, accordingly, do not have an exclusive linguistic or historical claim to this ancestry. See the discussion of Tibetan literature by Matthew Kapstein, chapter 13 in this volume.

3. For the diversification of different styles of Sanskrit, of which Magadhi and Gaudi were the generally acknowledged east Indian forms, see Pollock, chapter 1 in this volume.

4. One of the most influential views about the linguistic differentiation of Bangla from Sanskrit and Prakrit can be found in Dinesh Chandra Sen 1950: 10–20. He notes the particular features of the Gauḍīya *rīti* in Sanskrit as being full of *samāsa* (compounds) and *sandhi* (euphonic combination), and marked by *śabdāḍambara* (erudite ornamentation, devoid of fluidity and grace).

5. Sen 1965.

great early composers of *padāvalī* (sequences of devotional lyrics). These poems worked primarily within the general narrative structure of the popular story of Kṛṣṇa and Rādhā, the divine couple in Vaiṣṇava culture.

After Caitanya, these primary currents of Bangla literary culture continued. But there was an enormous influx of strength and sophistication into the Vaiṣṇava tradition, which produced a new literary genre that Sen felicitiously calls *caritaśākhā,* the "biographic branch," specializing in presenting Caitanya's life as a divine narrative through a skilled combination of the mythical and the historical. The literary impulse associated with Caitanya's religion dominated Bangla literary production for nearly two centuries.

In the eighteenth century, as modern historians have pointed out, it is possible to detect the emergence of a new cultural sensibility that moved away from typical themes of mystical eroticism found in the literary culture of the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas (Bengali devotees of Viṣṇu) and gives rise to a new, more diverse and catholic, literary taste. This is reflected in the works of the major eighteenth-century poet, Bhāratcandra, whose large corpus of texts includes narrative *kāvya*s like *Annadāmaṅgal* (a devotional poem on the goddess Annadā, bestower of food) and the enormously popular *Vidyāsundar* (Vidyā and Sundar), but also many freestanding poetic works of a less traditional variety. The first history of Bangla literature must end in the eighteenth century with this literary culture.

The second history of Bangla literature begins in the nineteenth century with the coming of colonial modernity and the introduction of modern forms and themes, making Bangla the first distinctively modern literature in India. For the study of Bangla literary cultures, the early modern period is one of the most interesting, since there is a fundamental transformation of the literary world—from the definition of literary writing itself to the struggles to incorporate modern forms of narration and performance borrowed from the West, such as the novel or the sonnet, to the overarching problem of how to produce a literature that accepts the "disenchanted" scientific view of the world. Yet this modern Bengali culture of the nineteenth century also made use of the basic repertoire of earlier literary traditions, and it eventually produced a literature that is distinctly modern yet has not lost its strong aesthetic connections with traditional techniques and forms. One of the challenges in the literary history of Bangla is to make sense of the relation between these two histories—the one that ends with the eighteenth century and the one that begins with the nineteenth—and the partial continuities and ruptures that comprise their complex relations.

With the rise of modern consciousness, of which the historical sense is an integral part, there was among nineteenth-century Bengalis an understandable historiographical concern with the origins of their language. The "first beginning," marked by the *caryāpada*s, like all such beginnings, was naive, not tortured by the specifically modern anxieties of reflexivity or ac-

companied by historical curiosity. After the "second beginning" in the nineteenth century, the entire disparate, as well as temporally and spatially dispersed, corpus of texts and literary practices spanning the period from the tenth century to the eighteenth century was perceived as a *single* historical narrative, with a beginning and a characteristically provisional end in modernity. Naturally, this nineteenth-century exercise used implicit definitional criteria based on perceptions of identity. And curiously, in the early histories of Bangla literature, while Vidyāpati (who wrote in Sanskrit, Maithili, and Avahattha) and Jayadeva (who wrote in Sanskrit) were seen to be firmly part of the basic definition of Bangla literary history, Islamic texts were often silently excluded.

The Conception of Literary Tradition

In any literary tradition there is always at least a minimal sense of the past. But the past is not a pretheoretical thing that exists independently of literary conceptualization; the past is formed by concepts, and concepts of the past can differ from one culture to another, as also between different periods of the same literary culture. Evidently, modernity introduces a sharp break with previous concepts of the past; but it is important to understand exactly the nature of this break and not passively follow the trend that absolutizes this rupture. To absolutize is to argue that something that earlier did not exist at all came into existence—in this case, that "something" is a new consciousness of history.[6] If we take this to refer to a historical consciousness in the narrow sense, this is true; but if we mean by this a certain *theoretical* attitude about how to use the past, this is false. It is true that before the nineteenth century a strict *historical* consciousness involving linear and calibrated notions of time—with calendrical indexing, which involved techniques of exact dating of events and texts that together constituted the essential ingredients of a modern historical sensibility—did not exist in literary-critical discussions in Bangla. But there was a strong sense of the presence of the past conceived as tradition. Since with modernity the concept of "the past as history" gradually replaced the concept of "the past as tradition," it is useful to analyze the differences between them.[7]

There is a radical difference in the significance of the temporal order of texts and literary sensibilities between these two senses of the past. Tradition uses the facts of the past as evidence for the continuance of practices, sug-

6. For a strong argument about the newness of modern time consciousness, see Koselleck 1981, especially chapter 3.

7. There are some powerful arguments suggesting that all societies, including the modern, require a tradition that is independent of "scientific" history, and that history in this narrower sense cannot perform the functions of tradition. See, for instance, Gadamer 1981.

gesting that a particular way of doing things is still relevant precisely because it has existed for a long time. By contrast, the modern sensibility infuses its concept of the past with a strong sense of the discontinuity of practices, indicating that a certain way of doing things is no longer possible or appropriate. Significantly, the concept of the past as tradition was quite adequate for the purposes of the practical literary moves for which it was commonly invoked. A "literature" *(sāhitya)* was seen as a unitary field of texts that existed in a differentiated time, with those composed in the past living in a certain relation with those composed in the present.

For literary practice, living in a tradition meant two different things. At one level, there was a sense of a large and loose tradition that was given to "everybody" in the literary world by virtue of their literacy: they had to be educated technically in the sciences of figures, metrics *(alaṅkāraśāstra, chandaḥśāstra),* and the like to be able to appreciate the major texts of Sanskrit literature. Literary cultivation of this *general* kind would consist in a set of technical competencies—knowing, for instance, the difference between simile and poetic fantasy *(upamā* and *utprekṣā),* the rules of alliteration *(anuprāsa),* and the various kinds of *chandaḥ*—that gave the cultivated a capacity to recognize, discern, and enjoy these elements in the texts. Usually, there was a simultaneous initiation into a narrower, more *specific* tradition, in most cases related to a sect—Shaktism, Vaishnavism, Shaivism—which constrained the tastes of writers and their audiences into a more limited horizon.

At the second level, authors had to know and relate their work to a recognized body of symbolic or iconic combinatory, narrative structures or conventionalized narrative lines. Medieval Bangla literature, for example, includes a celebrated tradition of Vaiṣṇava *bhakti* poetry, generally known now by the name literary historians gave it in the nineteenth century: the Vaiṣṇava *padāvalī,* or devotional verses relating to the god Viṣṇu. These used a familiar narrative combinatory: compositions elaborated on the story structure around Kṛṣṇa—not just any story, but ones drawn from the *Bhāgavata* complex of texts, which emphasize the erotic interpretation of his life. Compositions, moreover, had to invoke certain continuities in literary themes *(viṣaya),* moods *(rasa),* and theologies in order to be recognized as parts of that tradition. Yet because of the gradual shift in Vaiṣṇava theology toward the use of sexual union as a metaphor, and the slow legitimation of this metaphor as a vehicle for allegedly deep doctrinal meanings, these compositions could borrow from the luxuriant erotic tradition of classical Sanskrit, which was entirely secular and doctrinally indifferent—for instance, the wittily erotic ambience in Kālidāsa, or the deeply sensuous play of language and sexuality in Bhartṛhari or Amaru.[8]

8. Vaiṣṇava commentaries on sacred texts would often explicitly acknowledge such influence, especially the inexhaustible conceit of the commentators at being able to bring out liter-

This kind of deployment of past texts and literary resources evidently involved both knowledge of those texts and an implicit theory about how to relate to them for practical use. Obviously, this argument can be given a strongly structuralist form by suggesting that the structures of performed narratives or texts could be broken down into literary lexemes, which formed an underlying combinatory from which poets drew elements they required. The stretch of past time from Kālidāsa to Bhāratcandra, or from the ancient Sanskrit *Mahābhārata* and *Rāmāyaṇa* to the recent *Annadāmaṅgal* and *Vidyāsundar,* is vast, and we can see at work the logic of what Pollock has called "vedicization" in the case of literary texts as well.[9]

There are two interesting features in this traditional conception of a literary tradition. There is a certain element of gratuitous reverence for simple antiquity, and more recent compositions claim this value by a suppression of chronological indexing and a pretense of antiquity. Clearly, this constitutes a deft operation on temporality, primarily to stifle it or to erase its sense of linearity. This trick with time is in some ways exactly contrary to the modern orientation to time and its effects. To treat traditional literary doctrines as lacking a sense of the past, or a sense of what to do with the past, is thus false and unnecessarily patronizing. It is more worthwhile to bring out what they could and could not do with the past, given the way they conceptualized its existence.

The traditional literary sense of time was fuzzy and approximate, which made certain types of composing and reception practices possible. Authors or critics would not have been able to tell exactly when the *Meghadūta* was composed, and would not have been excessively bothered if they failed. Even more intriguing, a text like the *Meghadūta* would have come down to them from a generalized past as part of an *āgama,* a practice that tended to break down or efface the layers of time and in a sense placed literary texts in a common horizon of literary contemporaneity, or better, atemporality. It is important to distinguish between historicist contemporaneity (according to which a text is continuously refracted through a long succession of literary cultures, as, for instance, in the case of Greek tragedies in the contemporary West), and atemporality (which creates a kind of calendrically unstratified time in which all classical texts coexist in a temporally undifferentiated "past").[10] Texts lack an ordinal sense of pastness. The meaning of something becoming a classic is precisely its rising above the indexing specificity of local culture and taste, thereby conquering the localizing and

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ally everything implicit in a text. Against the assumption of authorial spontaneity, commentaries set up a literature of meticulous erudition about internal references and allusions.

9. Pollock 1989.

10. See Gadamer's interesting discussion of textual temporality in Gadamer 1981: 356ff.

decaying effects of time—a meaning that still subsists in the English use of the term "classic." The concept of tradition, *paraṃparā* (one after another)—a sense of things, texts, tastes being handed down in an unbroken chain of reception (not necessarily repetition)—therefore, contains an implicit theoretical understanding of the pastness of literary texts. In this way of thinking linear succession is not progress, which makes it impossible to change order, but is turned into formal difference, which can be endlessly emulated and played upon as a repertoire. The most significant difference with the modern sense of time is that pastness does not lead to obsolescence; if anything, the hierarchy goes in the opposite direction, and a text tends to acquire greater value simply because of its alleged antiquity.[11] Kālidāsa's excellence might be recognized as something impossible to repeat, but not because it is obsolete.

Literary Territoriality

In studying literary traditions in South Asia, the problem of historical anachronism assumes a form quite different from the problems concerning historical anachronism analyzed in recent discussions on social theory centered elsewhere.[12] This is illustrated by difficulties that arise regarding the notion of space—an obvious and unavoidable concern in this discussion—when we look for relations that tie bounded forms of territoriality to cultural and literary processes. Where does Bangla literary history take place? If we accept the anachronistic teleology normally implicit in the writing of modern Bangla literary history, that the main purpose of all previous history was to produce the present, then the answer becomes simple. Viewing the entire past of Bangla literature from the vantage point of the modern literature that arose in the nineteenth century, historians of Bangla literature often assume that the purpose of the whole of earlier cultural evolution was to "produce" that literature. Given that teleological vision, the intriguing question of space or territoriality of literary culture—"How is the medieval structure or geographic spread of literature different from the modern?"—dissolves. It is replaced by a story of undeveloped, inadequate forms in a literary space that is left indeterminate, encouraging the casual assumption that it was the same as modern Bengal and that a long time is required for a literature to mature and take the modern form of a territorial linguistic identity. Teleological historical reasoning, especially popular with national-

11. This is reflected, for instance, in the traditional dichotomy of *prācīna/arvācīna* rather than the modern *prācīna/navīna*.

12. The most relevant in this context are the critical discussions about anachronistic reading in the works of Quentin Skinner, John Dunn, and J. G. A. Pocock, and the resulting controversy around the work of the Cambridge school. See in particular Skinner [1969] 1988.

ist writers, thus obstructs the asking of some interesting structural questions.[13] Absolutizing a single territorial configuration—the one that the modern period demonstrates—turns all other previous evidence into a "tendency toward" or a "waiting for" that configuration. This often makes us forget that there was a different configuration of the territorial in earlier times that needs to be spelled out.[14]

Still, identifying the exact territorial boundaries of Bangla literary reception is a *question* for which it might be difficult to find a satisfying answer, given the state of knowledge about readerships or audiences of listeners in premodern Bengal. I have wondered about the lack of territoriality in premodern cultural structures, which appears so strange to modern observers because we consider such territorial grounding so utterly natural and necessary—almost an ontological condition for the existence of all cultural objects. Evidently, in precolonial times there were people who understood a clearly differentiated, identifiable Bangla language and had the necessary skills to recognize, read, write, and carry on literary practices in it. But the "unity" of this language is itself an interesting concept. Unity of a language, Bhūdev Mukhopadhyay observed perceptively, can mean two different things: a single language that a group of people *speak,* or one that they *understand.*[15] The structure of the linguistic world is often marked by the interplay between these two. In contemporary India, for example, there is a functional Bombay-based Hindi that is easily *understandable* to people in most parts of the country where these vernaculars are spoken (demonstrated with incontrovertible certainty by the vast popularity of Hindi films). However, more stylized and purified forms of Hindi or Hindustani used by native speakers of the language, which have greater overlap with Sanskrit or Persianized Urdu, are not as easily intelligible to others.[16]

In considering premodern Bengal, similarly, there are clearly discernible variations between the languages used by the *maṅgalkāvya*s and by the Vaiṣ-

13. I have tried to analyze the most common forms of this kind of argument in Kaviraj 1991.

14. Recently, some of these issues have been discussed with great perceptiveness and scholarship in the special millennium issue *(sahasrāyan sankhyā)* of *Deś* (2000).

15. Mukhopādhyāy [1892] 1981. I have discussed his views in Kaviraj 1995a. Bhūdev Mukhopādhyāy is of course concerned with a different question: What can be a common language for India? His argument is that Hindustani is already a common language because it is the language the largest number of people in all parts of India would find intelligible, though this does not mean that they would be able to speak it. He distinguishes between a commonly spoken language and a commonly intelligible language.

16. I have heard complaints that the Hindi used in All India Radio broadcasts is too artificially Sanskritized and therefore often inaccessible to Muslims and common people. Critics say that this Hindi is intended to create a speech community from which Muslims and subalterns are excluded. By contrast, the Hindi used in Bombay popular films has to find a level understandable to both Hindi- and non-Hindi-speakers. For an excellent analysis of the recent history of Hindi, see Alok Rai, *Hindi Nationalism* (Delhi: Orient Longman, 2000).

ṇava *padāvalī*. Yet at another level, the two show a commonness not just in the words and their meanings but in the more complex registers of *alaṅkārik* forms, iconic images, and the structure of *rasa*s evoked. Another feature of the traditional culture helps literary intelligibility, based on these common attributes. In the premodern linguistic structure, Sanskrit was the universal high language, and understanding Sanskrit requires training in its grammatical rules. Sentences formed in proper Sanskrit are not immediately accessible to ordinary vernacular speakers. But Sanskrit has a more complex and subtler cultural function. The vocabulary of the literary vernaculars are based on Sanskrit, composed of words either identical to *(tatsama)* or derived from *(tadbhava)* words in Sanskrit. Sentences formed primarily with *tatsama* words, minimizing the use of verbs and drawing the poetic play as much as possible from the use of nouns and adjectives, makes the vernacular closer to Sanskrit and widely understandable. I suspect that one of the most interesting features of Vaiṣṇava poetry was its use of that kind of "dual" language, a kind of inexplicit Sanskrit standing behind the Bangla or Maithili, precisely because the region through which it circulated was much larger than present Bengal. It could be received as a Sanskrit-Bangla transverse composition, just as it could be received as Sanskrit-Oriya. It would ideally have had to be intelligible to the entire space of eastern Vaishnavism, which included Mithila and Orissa (and possibly also Manipur, through the extended influence of Gauḍiya Vaishnavism). Take as an example Jayadeva's famous lines:

lalita-lavaṅga-latā-pariśīlana-komala-malaya-samīre
madhukara-nikara-karambita-kokila-kūjita-kuñja-kuṭīre.

This is evidently Sanskrit, but each word here can also be read as a Bangla *tatsama* of the same meaning. The undecidability of this ambilinguistic writing is enhanced for Bangla-speakers by the final words of the lines, *samīre* (where the wind) and *kuṭīre* (in the hut), which can also be Bangla words with roughly identical meanings as locative singular. That is how a modern Bangla literary audience would hear these lines. This is an example of a Sanskrit composition that, paradoxically, can be *read* in Bangla. Compare, as an obverse example—that is, a Bangla verse that is almost entirely composed of Sanskrit words—a poem from the Vaiṣṇava poet Jagadānanda:

mañju-vikaca-kusuma-puñja madhupa-śabda gañji guñja
kuñjara-gati gañji gamana mañjula-kula-nārī
ghana-gañjana cikura-puñja mālatī-phula-māla-rañja
añjana-juta kañja-nayanī khañjana-gati-harī.

In this stanza the Bangla language has already settled considerably, if we look closely at the rhetorical devices. For instance, in a later line *(lalitādhāre milita hāsa deha dipati timiranāśa)* the two words *hāsa* and *nāśa* would not rhyme in Sanskrit, but would in Bangla (where *s* and *ś* are pronounced more or less

the same), and that is clearly intended. Similarly, there are alliterative passages that would work only with a Bangla pronunciation.

> *daśana kundakusumanindu badana jitala śarada indu*
> *bindu bindu śarame gharame premasindhu-pyāri.*

A recognizable literary culture exists here, but it stretches out on several planes. It is not merely a Bangla culture but is also inextricably associated with the universalizing presence of Sanskrit. First of all, there is a unity imparted by the appreciation of the high Sanskrit canon, ranging from religious texts like the *Bhagavadgītā* to literary classics such as those by Kālidāsa and Jayadeva. All those educated in Sanskrit would be able to relate to this canonical tradition. Below that overarching cosmopolitan culture, and with a more restricted spatial spread, is another literary culture based on eastern Vaishnavism. Within this culture, historically, the literary center shifted geographically with the power of exemplary performances. Jayadeva had the apparent advantage of writing in Sanskrit; but Vidyāpati wrote his *padāvalī* compositions in Maithili. Interestingly, however, this did not restrict Vidyāpati's audience to the Mithila region. He had a vast and respectful audience in Bangla-speaking areas, where his verses were perfectly understandable, down to the modern period. In fact, his poetry was also actively imitated, which could not have happened without some element of overlap or indeterminacy. A whole group of accomplished Bangla poets composed *padāvalī* under the explicit influence of Vidyāpati's compositions. This canon was so strong that the young Tagore in the late nineteenth century composed a whole book of poetic songs in Brajabuli (supposedly the mellifluous language of mythical Braja; actually, a passable imitation of Vidyāpati), which are still sung with undiminished ardor in commercial musical performances in Kolkata. At school, historical collections of Bangla poetry for children, clearly intended to provide them with a poetic genealogy, standardly begin with famous verses by Vidyāpati.[17]

This medieval Vaiṣṇava literary culture was evidently held together by a combined configuration of religious devotion and literary forms. Court patronage must have been an additional source of sustenance. Royal patronage, however, was a fickle and unreliable support, undependable if the religious persuasion of the ruler or his successors changed. The tastes of ordi-

17. For instance: *mādhava bahuta minati kari toyā / deyi tulasī tile e deha samāpalu dayā janu choḍabi moyā* (Mādhava, I implore you, I have offered this body to you with basil leaf and sesame seed; please rescue me, in your mercy). This came in the school collection *Kavitāñjali,* edited by a well-known modern poet, Kalidas Ray. This collection was widely used as a "rapid reader" in lower secondary schools (in class 7 or 8) in the early 1960s. Standard collections of Bangla poetry might formally begin with a perfunctory reference to *caryāpada* verses, but the real business of appreciable literature starts with Vaiṣṇava *padāvalī.*

nary householders were more reliable and more widespread. Stories told about lives of poets, even if exaggerated or wholly apocryphal, illustrate that the frontiers of principalities and religious cultures did not in fact coincide, and this helped literary figures or styles to escape excessively obtrusive supervision by political power. Poets often escaped the disfavor of their notoriously fickle patrons by moving to a competing court or another part of the same religious region. Competition between courts or dynasties also restrained capricious royal treatment of celebrated artists.

Schematically, there are two salient features of the structure of premodern literary space. One is that the "sense of space" of each vernacular is quite distinct from those of others, yet it is also organized in a different way from bounded modern spatiality. A territorial configuration contains certain points, such as holy cities, birthplaces of saints, locations of important events, and sites of pilgrimage and festivals. From either single or multiple centers it radiates outward, and as one goes toward the outside, the sense of this particular space grows fainter and then changes into a strange space, no longer familiar. Distinctions come on slowly, not dramatically. The significant mark of this conception of spatiality is probably the use of broad distinctions between near and far, familiar and strange—different from the sense of a bounded, meticulously calibrated space to which we are accustomed. The latter, it must be noted, requires both a contiguity of space and a corresponding homogeneity of the cultural community—the "we" who would call this space their own. The other feature of premodern literary space is that it is not a single plane on which all types of cultural practices take place. It has several layers, and the configuration of the space on one layer, say, Sanskrit, does not coincide perfectly with the others. The mappings are quite different on different planes, the ends and beginnings are divergent; yet it is a single lived world of literary cultivation. Modern thinking tends to split this into a Sanskrit literary map and a Bangla literary map, but people would have experienced it as a single literary culture.

PREMODERN LITERARY CULTURES IN BENGAL

It appears that in many parts of India the rise of the vernacular literatures had a great deal to do with two primary factors: deep changes in religious sensibility and alterations in political authority, both of which sought a new language of cultural expression. The earliest form of the Bangla language separated off from the general north Indian linguistic form of late Middle Indo-Aryan known as Avahattha.[18] The first extant specimens of Bangla texts,

18. The standard work on the linguistic origins of the Bangla language and the technicalities of its slow process of separation from the Avahattha is by the late Suniti Kumar Chatterji (1970–1972).

discovered in the late nineteenth century by Haraprasād Śāstrī in Nepal and the lower Tarai areas, are primarily Buddhist poetical compositions, *caryāpada*s. Buddhist religion had long showed an acute consciousness of the question of popular language, starting from the use of Pali and Prakrit, and it was entirely consistent with that tradition of religious sensibility for *caryāpada* poets to compose their doctrinal songs in the emerging vernaculars. Written primarily by religious mystics, these expressed popular Buddhist ideas about conduct, occasionally in a symbolic and esoteric language.[19] The Buddhist *tantras* made abundant use of such special linguistic codes, referred to as *sandhyā bhāṣā,* enigmatic or elusive speech. Like other forms of technical jargon, the mastery of this symbolic language served to distinguish insiders from the uninitiated. Among Buddhist tantric adepts, *sandhyā bhāṣā* provided a means to articulate esoteric knowledge that was thought to be inexpressible in ordinary terms.

This religious context for the early use of Bangla points to a peculiar feature of the cultural development of Bengal. From the time of the *caryāpadas* themselves, the religious sensibility that has carried Bangla literature forward through successive stages has very often been associated with a non-Brahmanic strand, possibly because of the strong connection between Brahmanism and the ritual use of Sanskrit. It is not surprising, then, that all the major strands of early and medieval Bangla literature are associated with dissident traditions: Buddhism (*caryāpada*s); cults of the lesser goddesses (the *maṅgalkāvya*s, dedicated to goddesses like Mānasa or Caṇḍī); and the reformist Vaiṣṇava religious sects, which remained within the general limits of Hinduism, but occupied heterodox positions *(padāvalī).*[20] This trend was to continue throughout the history of the literature, with the emergence of practically every new literary sensibility being tied to some form of anti-Brahmanical religious experiment. A transformation of religious sentiment through doctrines of *bhakti* produced a split in linguistic and literary expressions of devotion as well. The theology of Hindu sects changed, creating a different aesthetic conception of divinity, one that emphasized kindness, compassion, and accessibility that required expression in a different linguistic register. *Bhakti* images necessitated a shift from a language of distance, which could give appropriate expression to the *aiśvarya,* the inconceivable and ineffable splendor, of the divine, to a language of *mādhurya,* or emotional gentleness and sweetness, which could express intimacy with the deity.

19. *Caryāpada* refers to *caryā,* meaning conduct. There is considerable scholarly debate about the *caryāpada*s: whether the language they are written in should be called primitive Bangla (see Suniti Kumar Chatterji and Sukumar Sen) or something else. For the state of this debate, see Kvaerne 1977.

20. For a detailed and scholarly discussion, see Dasgupta 1966.

The World of the Maṅgalkāvya*s*

One of the primary strands of medieval Bangla literary culture is the genre known as *maṅgalkāvya:* legends composed in celebration of deities that were meant to bring religious merit to the lives of their devotees. The *maṅgalkāvya* is clearly demarcated from other genres by its narrative form, literary stylistics, and peculiar brand of religiosity and representation of the social world. *Maṅgalkāvya*s were intimately connected with large-scale religious changes, most probably a slow incorporation of lower-caste cults of non-Brahmanical deities into the orthodox tradition. The narratives normally suggest some kinship between the new deities (which were most often female) and well-known figures in the Hindu pantheon. The goddesses Manasā and Caṇḍī were the most popular subjects of *maṅgalkāvya* composition, though there were instances of *kāvya*s of the same genre to the glory of Dharma and other gods. The genre enjoyed a surprisingly long life, continuing down to the eighteenth century: Mukundarām Cakravartī's *Caṇḍīmaṅgal,* the masterpiece of the form, was composed in the mid-sixteenth century, and Bhāratcandra composed the *Annadāmaṅgal* in the eighteenth century.

Though the narrative structure of the *maṅgalkāvya* is known for its social role in championing relatively unknown, subaltern deities, it is also significant for its internal literary features. In *Manasāmaṅgal,* for instance, the merchant Cāndsadāgar, a devotee of Śiva, is unwilling to offer worship to Manasā, the goddess of snakes. He goes through a string of misfortunes due to Manasā's curse: fourteen of his trading ships laden with wealth capsize in storms; six of his sons die prematurely; and his last son, Lakhindar, dies of snakebite on his wedding night. His new daughter-in-law, Behulā, a rural and subaltern Sāvitrī, eventually brings the son back from the dead, forcing the reluctant merchant to accept Manasā's divinity. In Weberian terms, the religious spirit animating the *maṅgalkāvya* stories leans toward the magical, in contrast to the more intellectual and rationalized preoccupations of orthodox or developed *bhakti* doctrines. The narrative crises are mostly resolved by explicitly supernatural means, and there is little effort at elaboration of philosophical doctrine: the stories' authors appear content to win a place for their divine protagonists in the Hindu divine order.

*Maṅgalkāvya*s are primarily written in a rustic vernacular style, with a predominance of *deśi* vocabulary over *tatsama* words, matched by relatively unambitious, uncomplicated metric composition. Dialogues often approximate the grammatical laxity of ordinary conversation. In the internal narrative economy of the genre, female characters acquire an entirely unaccustomed prominence, and often their behavior is much less constrained than the social restrictiveness of the feminine roles of high Brahmanical tales: Behulā and Sanakā in the *Manasāmaṅgal* stories, and Phullarā in *Caṇḍīmaṅgal,* of-

fer a far more pronounced subaltern feminine than the classical images of Rādhā or Sītā in the Bangla versions of the epics.

It is generally acknowledged that the *maṅgalkāvya* tradition offers a detailed and reliable picture of a lower-class social world, reflected in the activities performed by the main characters, and so brings startlingly realistic depictions of everyday life into the highly stylized world of conventional literatures. It is entirely possible for *maṅgalkāvya* characters to have uproarious domestic quarrels, and their colorful language makes use of forceful expletives—a linguistic order unimaginable in exchanges between characters of the *Rāmāyaṇa* or the Kṛṣṇa stories of the Vaiṣṇavas. From the aesthetic point of view, too, the *maṅgalkāvya*s, though often emotionally rich, present a world far apart from the more formal *rasa* conventions of classical literature. The *maṅgalkāvya*s, therefore, represented a highly significant complex of literary sensibility—combining a distinctly subaltern religious spirit with the depiction of a peasant world of want and domestic troubles. Some sections of this tradition show a great awareness and representation of an Islamic social world, or at least a clear recognition of the mixed religious character of Bengali society.

The *maṅgalkāvya* tradition might not be more impressive than others in purely aesthetic terms, but from the point of view of a social history of literature, its significance is incalculable. The *maṅgalkāvya*s contain in an understated way a complete reconstruction of the conventional aesthetic world and its narrative economy. In nearly all significant respects, the classical order based on a Brahmanical view of the world—both social and narrative—is left behind, replaced by an order that rejects some of its most sacred conventions. The deities worshipped, the human characters portrayed, the story lines, the forms of fabulation, the nature and implements of literary and aesthetic enchantment, the implied audience—everything is different.

In conventional narratives, the central characters are individuals empowered by either ritual status or political authority: narrative exchanges are normally between Kshatriyas and Brahmans, and there are a number of side characters. In the *maṅgalkāvya*s, by contrast, the central characters often belong to lower castes or inferior professions: Dhanapati and Cāndsadāgar are wealthy, but they are *sadāgar*s, traders, who are not conventional objects of poetic celebration. Kālketu is a *vyādha,* a hunter who kills animals for profit—a low, polluting profession. But by a combination of Caṇḍī's blessings and his own premiraculous qualities of strength and honesty, he earns the right to be ruler of a kingdom. In traditional narratives, adventure is the exclusive preserve of the Kshatriya warriors: as they travel to unknown lands on military expeditions or personal journeys they meet and win beautiful women and fame. In the *maṅgalkāvya*s, somewhat like the Sinbad stories, however, some of these same elements are centered on the *vaṇik,* the seafaring

merchant. As the merchant-heroes take over the Kshatriya qualities of bravery, however, they add to it a new element of seafaring adventure, a kind of subtle intelligence, the curiosity of the explorer. They, not the Kshatriyas, are the masters of space.

In these narrative moves, the *maṅgalkāvya* tradition seems to disregard the Brahmanical hierarchy of virtues. The stable, unworried system of equation between castes and individual qualities and their professions is set aside, and boundaries are breached by a more radical imagination of possibilities. It takes the narratively significant qualities of bravery, steadfastness, resourcefulness, and subtlety and redistributes them among members of different castes and genders. The feminine characters of the *maṅgalkāvya*s are often subtle, intelligent, and masterful in the management of their households and their world, as they are often gifted with a more penetrating awareness of the world's complexities than their husbands. Characters like Phullarā and Khullanā exude a much greater assertive femininity than the inhabitants of the upper-caste *antaḥpur,* or women's quarters. They often assist their husbands outside the home (for example, the hunter's wife sells the hide in the market); they loudly assert their disagreements on important domestic decisions; they fend off rivals in love—even Caṇḍī herself—by the simple force of their chastity mixed with some slyness; and at times of crisis they give excellent counsel to their headstrong or unsubtle husbands. The *maṅgalkāvya* tradition therefore shifts the narrative world to a different social universe; the life of lower-caste society is brought into the sacred sphere of literature.

The Caitanyacaritāmṛta

A parallel process of growth of a new vernacular literary form can be found in the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava tradition, in a text poised between two moments of its historical development. All the three great religious biographies of Caitanya—those by Vṛndāvandās, Locandās, and Jayacandra—underscore Caitanya's divinity by telling with a sense of incredulous wonder how he made the miraculous happen. However, Kṛṣṇadās's *Caitanyacaritāmṛta,* the great philosophical text of the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas, is filled with a different sense of Caitanya's divinity. At the time of this text, Caitanya was already in the process of being canonized. The Brahmanical tradition, which he defied so wonderfully, already recognized the need for reconciliation with his canonization; and reciprocally, his disciples acknowledged the advantages of accepting the high Sanskritic language and iconicity, and of transferring those techniques to a celebration of Caitanya's personality.[21] Thus, the evident hu-

21. By the time Kṛṣṇadās was composing the *Caitanyacaritāmṛta,* Caitanya's religion had already been reabsorbed into mainstream Brahmanical Hinduism. The story of the evolution

manity of the biographies—the narrative tension of which lies, for instance, in waiting to see what would happen in his contest with the *qāzi* (civil judge), the symbol of political authority—is replaced by a text of a very different type. The narration of the same episode in the *Caitanyacaritāmṛta* is calm, not tense. Unlike Vṛndāvandās, its narrator is not conveying an unbearable anxiety through this unprecedented contest, but is entirely assured of the eventual victory of his lord. The episode becomes his play, literally, his *līlā*.

The *Caitanyacaritāmṛta* is an astonishing document, situated between several literary models and written in a mixture of languages. It is still a biographic narrative of Caitanya's life, written with the evident claim of testimonial authenticity. Like Caitanya's other biographers, Kṛṣṇadās recounts what the master said after invoking the exact situational context. However, compared to the others, Kṛṣṇadās is far more interested in Caitanya's religious philosophy. Consequently, a great deal of attention is paid to Caitanya's sermons, to the intricate disputations with religious scholars who preferred other modes of *bhakti* worship or other strands of Vaishnavism, and occasionally to Caitanya's glosses of literary texts from the wider tradition of classical poetry. The historical-biographic narration throughout the text, including the master's dialogues, is in Bangla. Kṛṣṇadās rarely portrays him breaking into Sanskrit in ordinary situations, though it is generally acknowledged that Caitanya was one of the great scholars of the language in his time. So Kṛṣṇadās's decision to dilute his language into Bangla rather than retain a pristine Sanskrit medium is a denial of Brahmanical orthodoxy; it is a way of *doing* religion, a way of inviting people who are usually excluded from a high religious experience into its center.

In Kṛṣṇadās's work we can see the workings of a philosophical reinterpretation of Caitanya's life. He recounts the tales of Caitanya's life in Bangla but is always careful to frame them in theological terms, providing first a preparation for the great event to be narrated and following up with a commentary that separates out the divine from the mundane, so that no unwary reader misses the cosmic significance in the apparently human drama. The

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of Caitanya's religion is complex. Several distinct types of associates and devotees were drawn to Caitanya. Nityānanda was drawn from an *avadhūta* background, contemptuous of normal Hindu observances; on the other hand, there were sedate householders like Śrīnivāsa Ācārya who sought to bring Caitanya's doctrines back into the solid bases of respectability. Consequently, after Caitanya's death his religion gave rise to several sometimes mutually incompatible strands, all of which, however, treated the vernacular *Caitanyacaritāmṛta* as their main religious text rather than the more esoteric and Sanskrit texts of the *gosvāmi*s from Vṛndāvan. By reabsorption into Brahmanism I refer primarily to such cultural practices as the use of Sanskrit; the condensing of ideas into relatively esoteric *sūtra*s, which require learned commentaries; and the general use of an exclusivist literate apparatus. It is a cultural rather than a strictly religious Brahmanism that is at issue here.

commentary is in a heavy, because more technical, Bangla style, but the doctrinal framing is always in Sanskrit, using the entire apparatus of classical Sanskrit, from the learned exoticism of its vocabulary to the lofty skill of fashioning verses in complex meters like *mandākrāntā*.[22]

The mixed composition of the *Caitanyacaritāmṛta*—it is at once a biography and a doctrinal treatise, an account and a commentary, incorporating Sanskrit and Bangla, high and low—helps us understand what medieval authors were attempting to achieve by writing in Bangla. Every time a religious movement had to widen its circle of followers, it had recourse to this linguistic technique. Thus, the historical process by which Bengalis became a people in a linguistic sense must be related to these periodic extensions, these successive "democratizing" movements of religious ideas. At the same time, the linguistic texture of the *Caitanyacaritāmṛta* shows that the traditional structure of linguistic practice, in which individuals knew and used several languages, especially Sanskrit and Bangla, continued. Associated with these movements was the creation of a kind of bridge language, a form of Sanskrit that could be read from both sides. Accessibility from the Sanskrit side ensured that these compositions would have a wide circulation and make sense to those who understood Sanskrit or neighboring vernacular languages; accessibility to Bangla meant that the works could also circulate among Bengalis who knew little or no Sanskrit.[23] This kind of mixed competence continued, certainly down to the work of poets like Bhāratcandra in the eighteenth century.

The topic of mixed literary modes becomes more interesting and complex when the focus turns to literary practice: when we move from the question of what language the poets wrote in to what aesthetic structures were typically associated with each literary field. Was the act of writing in Bangla merely the translation of Sanskritic aesthetic processes, structures, feelings (*rasa*s) into a lower, more accessible language? Or was the language shift the condition for writing an aesthetics that began to be different? Obviously, this question is closely related to a fascinating and awkward larger question: If the shift to writing in Bangla marks a rupture with the literary sensibility of early medieval times, should we treat it as the beginning of a certain kind of modernity?

There is a particularly intriguing aspect of Caitanya's religious teaching that might connect significantly with this question. Caitanya constantly em-

22. As for example *Caitanyacaritāmṛta,* Ādikhaṇḍa 1, *śloka* 5.

23. Many popular *stotra*s (hymns) would seem to have this status: like the Rāma *stotra*s by Tulasīdās, or the Vallabhācārya *stotra* to Kṛṣṇa.

Many versions of the *Caitanyacaritāmṛta* were found outside Bengal, in north India, and Tarapada Mukherjee argues that the text itself shows the use of Hindi terms. See his editorial introduction to the *Caitanyacaritāmṛta* in Kṛṣṇadās Kavirāj 1986.

phasized the metaphorical quality of the transgressive principle at the heart of his new doctrine: *parakīyatattva,* love for God with the intensity of a lover's desire for a loved one to whom he or she is denied social access—for instance, because the loved one is married to another, as in the case of Kṛṣṇa and Rādhā. The emphasis on metaphoricity was taken up with great seriousness by Caitanya's later interpreters, such as the Vṛndāvan *gosvāmi*s. (The classical text that expounds the theory of *parakīya* love is Rūpa Gosvāmi's *Ujjvalanīlamaṇi* [The blazing sapphire], c. 1550.) This interpretive strategy ensured that the doctrinal innovation could be immense without being socially disruptive. And turning supernatural or otherwise rationally inadmissible ideas into metaphorical keys is often a mark of a modern religious sensibility.

The World of the Vaiṣṇava Padāvalī

Medieval Bangla literary cultures reveal two rather different, in some ways contradictory, aspects. Socially, the Hindu religious system was pervasively and punctiliously hierarchical. Yet culturally there was considerable scope for improvisation and innovation—a feature of much of Indian high culture, which allowed new religious figures and their followers to claim that they were trying to extend or explore ideas that were already part of the received tradition *(āgama).* Loosely terming these as vertical and lateral relations, respectively, we can say that there was practically no tolerance for revisions of vertical relationships but considerable tolerance for lateral experimentation. For this reason many reformist trends started off with a disingenuous or at least misleading claim that they were engaging in a lateral extension of doctrine and religious experiment. A remarkable example from medieval north India is Tulsidās and his remaking of Rāma in an image that is significantly different from Vālmīki's.

There are partial parallels to this kind of reformism in the Bangla texts of the *Rāmāyaṇa* and the *Mahābhārata* by Kṛttibās and Kāśīrāmdās, respectively. Though these texts are conventionally called translations *(anuvād),* what they do to the originals is actually more complex. They retell the story freely in Bangla verse—quite a different literary enterprise from what translation means in modern contexts. (In fact, a translation of this literal sort had to wait until Kālīprasanna Sinha produced his famous version of the *Mahābhārata* in the mid-nineteenth century.) Because they are free translations, they provide their authors with ample opportunity for recreating, often quite dramatically, the narrative, literary, and *rasa* structures of the text. The tight structure of the narrative becomes loose and unfocused, and at times narrative complexity is sacrificed for a clearly linear popular story. The verse forms, though usually unadorned yet graceful in the Sanskrit original (as for instance the *anuṣṭubh* meter), are sometimes excessively simplified and one-dimensional, as in the simplest Bangla metric form of *payār* (a fourteen-

syllable rhymed couplet). Culturally, this accomplishes something quite significant: it brings the high epic text closer to people precisely by destroying its distancing grandeur. But it is doubtful that these adapted texts bring into being anything of great consequence aesthetically.

More interpretively intriguing from the point of view of aesthetic history, as well as more historically noteworthy, was the *padāvalī* poetry of the Vaiṣṇava tradition. Medieval Vaiṣṇavas in Bengal had a stock of resources to draw upon—a large, disparate earlier tradition of Hindu religious literature whose elements were dispersed across the texts and religious thought of the *Mahābhārata,* the *Bhāgavatapurāṇa* (which it relied upon more than either of the great epics), and the more popular fabulist traditions around Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa. They also had available to them the riches of the Maithili Vaiṣṇava poetry of Vidyāpati. But the specific configuration of images and narratives, along with the registers of aesthetic emotions, that the *padāvalī* gradually produced, is quite unique. Elsewhere, I have explored the nature of this transformation of the *rasa* register of Vaiṣṇava poetry, since it is so crucial to understanding modern Bangla.[24] It provided, in a sense, the template from which modern Bangla writers of the nineteenth century were to break away. Yet even while rupturing the *padāvalī*'s aesthetic template, the modern writers continued to value and deploy its elements so as not to let them disappear and become unobtainable. They used them constantly in their own literature as "material"—as, for instance, in Tagore's famous interpretative poem, "Vaiṣṇavkavitā."

The most striking transformation affected the literary character of Rādhā, the central erotic figure of the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava cult. In the works of earlier Vaiṣṇava traditions, she seems to be very close to some of the images from earlier literary traditions, such as *prakṛti,* or primal nature—utterly indomitable, impossible to deflect from her decided "natural" course of love. In earlier Vaiṣṇava texts, Rādhā has the irrepressible quality of nature's great generative power, not merely in the crude sense of an endless willingness in love play, but also in the unconquerable lust for life that she represents in her resplendent sexuality. Ordinarily, conventional religious sensibility is coy and prudish, unwilling to speak openly about erotic enjoyment, but the early figure of Rādhā turns this upside down in the most remarkable fashion. Her existence is focused on sexuality; she seems to exist for nothing else. And her sexuality is so utterly open and uninhibited that it becomes, in an ironic but undeniable sublimation, strangely pure (the *Ujjvalanīlamaṇi* makes this point doctrinally). In her disloyalty to her husband and family, and to her social entanglements, there is a finality and power that can only be regarded as destiny. Ordinary mortals can only see her great spectacle

24. See Kaviraj 1995b, chapter 3.

and rejoice and hope that their own lives may be touched by a waft of this divine breeze.

The Rādhā of the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava tradition—not necessarily in religious doctrine but definitely in literature—still shows a struggle between two very powerful tendencies. One reflects and carries forward the *Bhāgavata* icon of joyous abandon, and interestingly, whenever this aesthetic configuration is invoked there is a propensity toward rhetorical embellishment. When this Rādhā is going into the dark forest on a full-moon night, we must hear the jingle of her restrained anklets; the entire descriptive tradition of the *abhisārikā* (the woman who braves the night to meet her lover), expressed in a grammar well understood from Kālidāsa onward, is condensed in the depiction of Rādhā's bodily movements and gestures.[25] The mandatory *anuprāsa* (alliteration) and *utprekṣā* (poetic fantasy)—the connection between literary ornamentation and this description of beauty, symmetry, fullness—is retained in the poetry of Vaiṣṇava authors like Govindadās. But there is an unmistakable new contrasting tendency in the representation of femininity in the Rādhā of the *padāvalī*. This femininity is much less assertive; she is weak, constrained, caged, simply bewailing her fate and enlarging on her own vulnerability and misfortunes in love. At the same time, there is a distinctive new development of character, an unconventional attention to the poetic exploration of inner mental states. Intricate, conventionalized mental states did form part of the traditional representational repertoire,[26] but the stirrings of individual subjective states in the Vaiṣṇava *padāvalī* literature is of an entirely different kind: it avoids conventional typologies and begins to explore individual consciousness and its infinite, unpredictable variability. Accordingly, the tone of speech in the Vaiṣṇava *padāvalī* texts changes significantly. They become primarily Rādhā's speech, but her speech has a strange character. It tries, in a sense, to take revenge on a new kind of incarceration through an interminability of speech. A second strand of Vaiṣṇava *padāvalī* poetry, inaugurated by Caṇḍīdās and continued by Jñānadās, which differentiaties itself from the Vidyāpati strand, developed an entire metaphysic of loss and suffering that was represented primarily through feminine perception and metaphor. The representational, iconic figure of Rādhā signals a real transformation of the *rasa* aesthetics of this strand of *padāvalī* literature.

This new Vaiṣṇava *padāvalī* poetry gave rise to a new canon of poetic performances, and some "great poets" were selected among others less worthy

25. Detailed discussion can be found in Rūpa Gosvāmī's *Ujjvalanīlamaṇi,* chapters 9, 10, 11, and 15.

26. The *Ujjvalanīlamaṇi,* for instance, follows up its ninth chapter on *harivallabhā-prakaraṇam* with three immensely elaborate sections on the components of *rasa* analysis: *anubhāva, vyabhicāribhāva,* and *sthāyibhāva.*

of eminence. Its iconic material affiliates it to the story of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa derived from the *Bhāgavata* and, in part, ultimately from the *Mahābhārata;* its more directly literary ancestry is drawn from Jayadeva's *Gītagovinda* and Vidyāpati's verses. But the aesthetics of this literature are completely distinctive. The structure of *rasa* it developed was unique—close to the range of emotions ordinary people experienced in their ordinary lives, and thus transforming the everyday with a touch of the divine.

From a literary-historical perspective, therefore, the Vaiṣṇava corpus carried much greater significance than the adaptations of the epics. The Bangla versions of the epics, in my view, made an important sociological contribution by making the stories accessible in a written vernacular form to common people, but they gave up the heroic aesthetics of the original Sanskrit texts without discovering an aesthetic structure of their own. The *padāvalī* poetry, on the other hand, continued to work with elements of the Kṛṣṇa narratives from past Vaiṣṇava traditions, but it focused on the unheroic narratives of the episode in Mathurā as a new axis around which all elements of the narrative economy could be rearranged, and a unique structure of *rasa* sensibility developed. Sociologically, this aesthetic structure enjoyed wide popularity and was continually performed in *pālākirtan*s in local temples in Bengal and major theaters of eastern Vaishnavism down to the 1950s.[27]

Through this particular instance, we might be able to grasp what the literary meant in this culture. Clearly, the literary was a sphere split into multiple layers, each requiring distinctive types of skills of composition and appreciation. The high Sanskrit level did not remain constant and unchanged. Precisely because it continued for such a long time, there was an incessant accretion of texts and textual materials. Because of its continuity and the constant need to cater to different tastes and skills, the Sanskrit layer was in some ways the most extensive and also the most internally differentiated. It vascillated through time between a tight, high Sanskrit corpus and a more accessible popular corpus meant for enunciative uses (e.g., chanting, which does not require pedantic grammatical mastery over the passages or stanzas). The lower levels of this Sanskrit stratum touched the boundaries of the Bangla stratum, which performed a different function. Bangla was used to produce a new form of literariness, closer and more accessible to popular sensibility, and exemplifying something of the doctrine of universality implicit in Caitanya's religious thinking. It at once brought the sense of the high religious

27. The *pālākīrtan,* recitation of the story of Kṛṣṇa and Rādhā through a series of evenings to a group of devotees gathered in a specific temple, is an innovative form of religious practice that diverges from more traditional kinds of Hindu worship. It is interesting to note that the inventiveness of Caitanya's religion spread to all spheres. It developed not merely a new literary sensibility centered on a new story but also a far more communal form of the use of these literary forms in religious rituals than ordinary Hinduism.

within the reach of ordinary people and lifted everyday, ordinary life into contact with the divine—a distinctive feature of all *bhakti* movements.

This literary culture implies the existence of a circle of oral competencies, but we should guard against the usual, imitative superstition that the oral is always "lower" than the written. At least one kind of literary orality is based on the idea that all texts necessarily have a representative function. Texts contain a possibility of meaning, but this meaning often waits on something that exists even before meaning begins—the sensuous, presemantic attractiveness of the aural or the musical. This stratum of the text must be brought into presentation (i.e., into aural presence) by means of oral mediation. In functions like the chanting of mantras in household worship or the enunciation of the *padāvalī* in a hymn *(kīrtan)* performance, oral skills are crucial and aesthetically vital for bringing the right sound to a *śloka* or a song.

Vaiṣṇava literature eventually broke down and reformed boundaries between literary languages in a radical fashion. Sanskrit was no longer the only prestige language, and the newly developed poetic Bangla tried imperceptibly to slide into a high status alongside it. In Vaiṣṇava religious practices the use of Sanskrit for ceremonial purposes remained, but the new compositions in Bangla came to occupy a place of aesthetic prestige. A portion of Caitanya's enormous importance in history is that he taught the Bangla language to speak the divine.

The late-medieval Vaiṣṇava rupture with traditional high culture was in one respect more radical than modernity's break with tradition in the nineteenth century. The nineteenth-century literary language enlisted Sanskrit on its side; it is very Sanskrit-near. The poetic language of the strand of medieval Vaiṣṇava literature of Caṇḍīdās and Jñānadās, however, is often consciously Sanskrit-distant. From the standpoint of a comparative sociology of literature, the Vaiṣṇava break with tradition contained elements similar to the ruptures with traditional forms and literary practices that led to the early-modern turn in Western literature: it was based on a crucial intervention in the religious sensibility of the society and was associated with fundamental religious and social reform. The congregation of the new religion provided its particular audience. A religion with a deep democratic impulse temporarily undermined the established authorities of orthodoxy and forced orthodoxy on the defensive. Acutely conscious of its newness, this religion sought a different aesthetic as well as a language appropriate for its anti-Brahmanical message. It used traditional aesthetic and literary constructs, like Sanskrit texts and anthologies (for example, Mammaṭa's eleventh-century *Kāvyaprakāśa* was a favorite of Caitanya's and he returned to favorite verses for constant reinterpretation), but the cultural process at work was strikingly similar to what Pollock describes in his accounts of early Kannada. Use of Sanskrit cosmopolitanism is not surprising, because the new vernacular was created by a bicultural intelligentsia, and the Sanskrit world was a constant

reference—either positive or negative—as a cultural structure to be emulated or abjured. Significantly, the vernacular culture that the new religion sought to establish, partly in competition with the Sanskrit, was meant to be cosmopolitan, not parochial.[28] It boldly innovated popular and collective aesthetic forms like the *saṅkīrtan* (congregational singing, usually in a procession), where the musical performance did not happen in a specified, restricted space—in a temple, or a house—but moved through the streets of Navadvip in a new, open-ended "public" spectacle. It also produced a literature that shifted the emphasis in the narrative discourse to the feminine subject in an astonishing inversion of conventions. Most significantly, it started to speak about the individual's state of mind in a new language of self-exploration. Yet there is no doubt that this stage in the history of literature passed without establishing durable institutions or leading to permanent modifications of the social world. The reforming energies of the social movement and the innovativeness of the literary forms were contained, eventually lost their way, and ultimately succumbed to orthodox restoration.

There is an apparent pattern in the history of relatively defined literary cultures like the Vaiṣṇava structure. They periodically shake up the traditions of social and cultural orthodoxy without decisively destroying them. As a literary culture gradually becomes cut off from the social process that generated it in the first place and gave it vitality, its active cultivation and continuation as a "serious" literature suffer and degenerate, often falling into endless uncreative repetitiveness and pointless exhibition of skills. Jagadānanda's stanza quoted earlier is a good example of this kind of literary mannerism. As a composition, it demonstrates undoubted rhetorical skill, but its concern with formal features such as alliteration is obsessive, and its poetic imagination is feeble.[29] Its most significant feature historically is its slippage from the distinctive aesthetic structure of the Vaiṣṇava *padāvalī* toward reabsorption into the sterile prosodic technicality of the standard Brahmanical erudition.

28. See Pollock 1998. Although I do not find an exact parallel in Bengal to the role of patronage of political power in literary developments Pollock demonstrates in the case of south India, there are strong parallels in other regards. Caitanya is clearly a cosmopolitan figure, having exemplary control of the Sanskrit corpus; and his travels in south and north India, particularly his disputations with other Vaiṣṇava schools, is crucially facilitated by this. The religious sensibility he intends to set up is also clearly cosmopolitan in character—intelligible to southern Vaishnavism as well as to northern devotees based at Vṛndāvan. Clearly, the redactions of the *Caitanyacaritāmṛta* that its editors, Sen and Mukherjee, analyze show a vernacular cosmopolitanism—with versions collected from areas as distant as Rajasthan, the Braj region, and Orissa. See Mukherjee's introduction to *Caitanyacaritāmṛta* in Kṛṣṇadās Kavirāj 1986.

29. As in this *vyatireka* from the same Jagadānanda poem, which is utterly standardized and unsurprising: *daśana kundakusumanindu / vadana jitala śarada indu* (Her teeth put the *kunda* flower to shame, and her face is superior in beauty to the autumn moon).

It would be entirely wrong, however, to conclude from the social decline of Vaishnavism that the *padāvalī* literary culture was erased without a trace. The peculiar intelligence of a tradition often prevents that eventuality, and its important creations are stored away in a kind of inactive inventory in the literary-cultural memory. They survive not as living literature but within the living anthology of the tradition, available to be played upon by a new literary sensibility or a historically recreated consciousness. A tradition perhaps always exists as an archive for effective literary history, though the exact manner in which it produces these effects needs to be elucidated.[30]

There is evidence of a widespread anthological practice associated with the *padāvalī,* though materials were probably not collected in standardized, written anthologies. Thus a canon was formed that, though weak, still exhibited an internal coherence. Certainly, high points of performance were recognized, implying that some standards of judgment were applied by the collective spirit, which used these cultural items iconically. Compositions of Jayadeva and Vidyāpati were treated as models by aspiring composers, though not by the more Sanskrit-distant writers, like Caṇḍīdās and Jñānadās. The new poetry of emotion appeared to appeal increasingly to a more diffuse, undefined, and unorganized popular taste with a new criterion of accessibility. Beautiful poetry, it was realized, could be created by a string of mundane words, consciously abjuring the pedantic, rhetorical conceits of the erudite. Yet when the creative and social vitality of the Vaiṣṇava culture waned, the strand that retained greater literary coherence was the one closer to the standard Brahmanical practices and pedagogies—which emphasized the sound *(śabda)* or the technical element, rather than the distinctiveness of meaning *(artha)* that characterized the less academic style. The Sanskrit or Sanskrit-derived segment could securely defend its literary place precisely because it could go back to the strongly rehearsed pedagogy of the Sanskrit schools *(ṭol)* and their teaching of poetics.

To state a large and risky hypothesis: The movement of literary language in Bengal seems to have paralleled the movement of social, particularly religious, reform.[31] As long as the impulse for religious reform remained active,

30. If we look at nineteenth- and twentieth-century Bangla appropriations of the Vaiṣṇava *padāvalī* texts, it is clear that interpreters could invest them with a modern romantic sensibility and read them through a strikingly fruitful "fusion of horizons." This is quite self-conscious in Tagore's famous poem on the *padāvalī*, "Vaiṣṇavkavitā."

31. This is not meant to be a general statement about Indian vernaculars. I am sure Sheldon Pollock is right that this line of argument has been used uncritically and often erroneously. In certain vernacular regions there is an obvious connection between the rise of new political power and the appreciation of the power of the vernacular, though in Bengal it is difficult to find such a direct connection. But two other lines of thought need to be explored more fully. First, the political ascendancy of Islamic rulers may have been associated with the writing of texts that used an Islamic cosmopolitanism. Secondly, religious reform is itself, in important

experimentation in literary technique and aesthetic structure continued. When that impulse died down, literary forms—like the religion itself—tended to be reabsorbed into orthodoxy. It appears unfair to characterize the forms of Vaiṣṇava poetry like the *padāvalī* as medieval except in a purely chronological sense, since they display some elements of early modern literature; yet their eventual demise indicates that modernity is a matter not simply of sensibility but much more emphatically of institutions. If these sensibilities do not enable the crystallization of institutions that can provide them with practical, material form, they tend to decay, disperse, and eventually succumb to the silent but immensely powerful undertow of orthodoxy.

The Eighteenth Century: The Last of the Premodern

An analysis of the literary culture of the eighteenth century is important not because that culture produced a distinctive new literature but for understanding the nature of colonialism's impact. The works of Bhāratcandra Rāygunākar, one of that century's foremost writers, display the cultural forms that marked that period and show what it lacked in comparison with the forms of literary modernity introduced through Western contact. Bhāratcandra's corpus is amazingly varied and full of technical virtuosity, starting from his early *Rasamañjarī* to his three best-known works, *Annadāmaṅgal, Mānsinha,* and *Vidyāsundar,* which form parts of a single poetic structure. These three texts together illustrate the strange geometry of literary culture in precolonial Bengal.

The *Annadāmaṅgal* continues the tradition of medieval *maṅgalkāvya,* but its focus on Annadā, or Annapūrṇā, divine figure from the central Śākta canon, rather than on a relatively marginal goddess, reflects its adaptation to the high Brahmanical religion. The *Mānsinha* recognizes the mixed social world of Muslims and Hindus, and, more crucially, the political supremacy of the Muslim elite. It portrays a world of Muslim political power in which Hindus like Majumdār, Annadā's exemplary devotee, live by a combination of loyalty, cunning, and when all else fails, miraculous assistance from Annapūrṇā herself. In the *Vidyāsundar* a romance takes place in the city of Barddhamān, which represents an urban context with a strong commercial element. The work's celebration of the power of money *(kaḍi)* confirms suggestions from recent historical research that the eighteenth century was a period of

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ways, related to shifts in social power; so it might be prudent to avoid saying that religious reform involves religious but not political changes. Instead, we could perhaps argue that these changes are political through being religious. In that case, the boundary between a religious and a political explanation would have to be modified.

intense commercial expansion.[32] An old woman with privileged access to the princess in the forbidden space of the royal *antaḥpur* (harem) consoles Sundar, the hero, by singing the praises of money as the main implement in the pursuit of happiness:

> Money buys what we eat; there is no friend except money. Money can buy tiger's milk, and get an old man married. People die for the love of it; it helps seduce respectable married women.[33]

Bhāratcandra was highly skilled in the use of meter and rhetoric, and he experimented with producing in Bangla, with miraculous virtuosity, the most difficult forms of classical Sanskrit prosody.[34] Yet these experiments remain within the formal conventions and *rasa* structure of a decidedly traditional literary sensibility; they are a world apart from the struggles that were to convulse Bangla literary culture in the next century.

Islamic Aspects of Bangla Literary Culture

A complex and contentious problem in the historical evolution of Bangla literary culture is the place of Islam. Bengal as a region had a long and continuous history of religious heterodoxy in which one anti-Brahmanical movement followed another. After the decline of Buddhism in Bengal, other strands of religious practice hostile to orthodox Brahmanism found considerable support. Some commentators suggest that Caitanya's followers were clearly divided into several groups, and one of these, centered on the figure of Nityānanda, tried to carry on practices of heterodoxy abhorrent to the ideologically timid mainstream, which wished to maintain the respectability of the normal householder. Eventually, Brahmanical Hinduism had major contenders in Islam on one side and in reform or heterodox sects like the Vaiṣṇavas on the other. The historical relation between Bangla literary culture and Islam is a question of immense complexity.[35]

32. The extent of the exploration of new routes to social power in eighteenth-century India, after the collapse of the Mughal empire, is described in Bayly 1988, and Subrahmanyam 1990 and 1994. For a general discussion, though now somewhat dated, of this revisionist literature see Washbrook 1988. A readable translation of *Vidyāsundar* is available in Dimock 1963.

33. Bhāratcandra 1950c: 202. The original reads: *kaḍi phatkā chiḍā dai bandhu nāi kaḍi bai / kaḍite bāgher dugdha mile/ kaḍite buḍar biyā kaḍi lobhe mare giyā/ kulabadhu bhule kaḍi dile.*

34. Writing Bangla verse to the exacting specifications of some Sanskrit *chanda*s was considered technically difficult. Bhāratcandra showed off his skills by composing verses in meters like *bhujaṅgaprayāta.* In modern Bangla, similar skills were displayed by Satyendranath Datta, who composed in *mandākrānta,* albeit with some awkwardness.

35. For reasons of space, it is impossible to analyze the scholarly literature on Bangla literary history in terms of their relative emphasis on Hindu and Muslim authors here. A com-

Islamic courts often patronized composers of Vaiṣṇava *padāvalī,* and there is considerable evidence of a slow extension of Islamic influence into various branches of Bangla literary culture. The Islamic strand of literary composition that developed, in turn, elaborated a cosmopolitanism parallel to the Sanskritic literary universe. Critical analyses of Islamic composition in Bangla point out that the language was full of loan words not only from Arabic and Persian but also from the north Indian vernaculars with which Islamic high culture bore a particularly close connection. Just as for Hindu literature Sanskrit was a vehicle for a high cosmopolitan culture from which vernaculars drew many of their literary principles, this Islamic literature shows a similarly transregional culture that gave its intellectuals access to an equally varied Islamic cosmopolis. They were the bearers of a second and parallel vernacular cosmopolitanism.

Other branches of late medieval literature carried obvious marks of a lively transaction between the Hindu and Islamic parts of late medieval Bengali civilization. Some observers consider it possible that Caitanya (who died in 1534) came into contact with Sufi ideas through some of his early associates, though the literary culture associated with him, at least in the form in which it was eventually canonized by the *gosvāmī*s of Vṛndāvan, shows little direct influence of Islamic language or forms. By contrast, both the language and the narrative content of Mukundarām Cakravartī's *Caṇḍīmaṅgal* (its first recitation, according to internal textual evidence, took place in 1555–1556) shows an intimate knowledge of Islamic locutions and social practices.[36] Bhāratcandra's *Mānsinha* presented an Islamic side of the social and political universe with fluent familiarity. Mukundarām and Bhāratcandra are eloquent examples of Bhūdev Mukhopādhyāy's judgment at the end of the nineteenth century that orthodox Hindus should consider Muslims their *svajāti* (own race or people) because the two, if divided by religion, were joined together by participation in a single material and social world.[37] In texts written by Hindu authors Muslim individuals and groups were seen, with increasing frequency and decisiveness, as part of a mixed social world—in Caitanya's biographies, the hostile *qāzi* who was won over by his new religious dispensation; the mixed language of the *Caṇḍīmaṅgal,* which tells the story of the establishment of a Muslim area in the capital of Kālketu's kingdom; and the frequent appearance of Muslim characters in Bhāratcandra's writings.[38]

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parison of standard history texts from West Bengal and from East Pakistan or Bangladesh would show the obvious difference in emphasis between the Hindu and Islamic sides of Bangla literary culture. It is interesting, however, to compare differences between the histories published in East Bengal before and after Bangladeshi independence in 1971.

36. Sen 1965: 132.

37. Mukhopādhyāy [1892] 1981: 13–16.

38. Cakravartī 1977: 68.

It is by its contrast to this history of continuous and expanding transaction with Islam that the turn of events in the later part of the nineteenth century appears astonishing. The great Sanskrit and Bangla scholar of the second half of the nineteenth century Haraprasād Śāstrī, with his keen sociolinguistic sensitivity, put the situation of Bangla linguistic culture before the coming of colonialism quite accurately:

> In our country in those times three types of language were current in cultivated circles. Those *bhadralok* who had to deal with Muslim Nawabs and Omarahs used a Bangla with a great many Urdu words mixed in it. The language of those who studied the *śāstra*s contained a large number of Sanskrit words. There were many other people of substance apart from these two small groups. Both Urdu and Sanskrit words were mixed in their language. Poets and composers of *pāñcāli*s composed their songs in this language. Broadly, there were three types of language for three groups: the Brahman pandits, people who dealt with courts, and ordinary men of property.[39]

More important than this linguistic taxonomy was the structure of linguistic and literary culture as a whole. It appears that through their respective forms of hyperglossia—Sanskrit and Arabic-Persian—the two sides of the Bangla vernacular had access to vast cosmopolitan literary spheres. These two cosmopolitanisms were not entirely exclusive; rather, people of high education acquired an asymmetric proficiency in both. Thus cosmopolitanism was not newly discovered by the modern intelligentsia; they were merely rearranging and redirecting a much older tradition of linguistic and cultural versatility.

In the age of Rammohan Roy (1774–1833), cultivation of an upper-class Bengali included a mandatory initiation into Islamic culture and a fluent grasp of Persian. By the time of Rabindranath Tagore (1861–1941), roughly a century later, literary high culture had gone through a striking conversion to become a more solidly Hindu sphere. The cultural processes that brought on this transformation were driven by Western influences of all kinds, ranging from political liberalism, rationalist epistemology, and positivist sociology to modernist conceptions of culture.

Although a small Muslim political aristocracy had established itself in Bengali society through the distant and ever-weakening support of the Mughal empire, the Muslims constituted the bulk of the peasantry. Literacy skills were largely confined to the Hindu upper castes, who were the first to respond to opportunities offered by colonial rule. Certainly, this group of willing and

39. Śāstrī 1956, 1: 199. For a serious exploration of the class and cultural definitions of the Bengali *bhadralok,* or "gentle persons," see Bhattacharyya 2000. *Pāñcāli*s were popular poetic compositions celebrating the glory of deities. They were used mnemonically by common people but were also read more formally in religious ceremonies, particularly in women's rituals.

enthusiastic collaborators did not represent the whole of Hindu society; their collaborative and reformist efforts faced stiff opposition from more traditional opinion. But it is significant that the conflict between the Brahmo Samaj (the "society of Brahma," a religious reform group founded by Rammohan Roy in 1828) and Hindu conservatism was in some ways an internal affair of an elite that had learned to use the modern cultural apparatus—including schooling in the colonial education system, developing the skill of articulate debate in a literary public sphere, and highly intelligent use of the colonial legal system. The Muslim participation in the early stages of this new modern culture was accordingly disproportionately small. It is to this new culture that we must now turn, for it constitutes one of the most fateful, complex, and contradictory transformations in the history of Bengal: the arrival of a colonial modernity in which formal principles were often universalistic but social practices involved enormous exclusions.

LITERARY CULTURES OF MODERN BENGAL

Colonialism and Linguistic Change

Undoubtedly, the greatest change in the history of Bengali literary culture happened after the firm establishment of colonial authority from the late eighteenth century. The entry of colonialism into Bengali society had a peculiar character that determined the manner in which Western intellectual influence spread in Bengali culture. It is wrong to portray the cultural impact of colonialism as exclusively coercive. The society into which competing European merchants and military adventurers entered was complex, and the defeat of the *nawab* of Bengal, Mir Kasim, in 1764 was not seen as a collective indignity. Some revisionist histories claim, not implausibly, that the eighteenth century saw the rise of powerful indigenous mercantile interests, who might not have been displeased at the defeat of greedy and capricious local rulers.[40] The British entered Bengali society slowly, as one set of players among many others in an arena of political turmoil. Their eventual victory over other contenders and establishment of their authority led to the imposition of several new institutions. A significant feature of the Bengali response to colonialism was the remarkable enthusiasm shown by a section of the elite for the new institutions and knowledges coming from the West. Although the relations between a colonial authority and a subject people could never be free of tensions, the modernist elite, produced by early colonial processes in Bengal, developed surprisingly congenial relations with British authority.

In a development with important consequences for Bangla literary cul-

40. See especially Bayly 1988.

ture, Europeans early on started the process of framing grammatical rules for the Bangla language, copying and editing culturally significant texts and introducing a culture of print.[41] More detailed attention than is possible here should be given to the production of standard grammars by the British missionaries at Serampore (Carey and Halhead), and the creation of the Bangla print script. Print culture immediately created pressures toward standardization in two fields.[42] Print culture tends to privilege a particular dialect among the variety of regional forms that have traditionally flourished side by side. In this case, high Bangla was based partly on Calcutta speech but relied heavily on the style of the Nadīyā-Śāntipur region, which was regarded as "pleasant" but not necessarily cultivated, language. The transformation of this dialect into "standard" Bangla met surprisingly little opposition—despite the fact that within a short time other speech forms were ascribed a subordinate status, and in literary texts, dialogue in these dialects was soon marked as a "low" form. A parallel pressure toward script standardization transformed the new print faces into models for writing, displacing the traditional diversity of calligraphic styles.

Out of this combination of intellectual influences, an entirely new kind of high Bangla was created, transforming the earlier, far less structured linguistic economy. And one of its most significant features was the deliberate adoption of the modified Sanskritic version of precolonial Bangla, out of the three forms delineated by Haraprasād Śāstrī and mentioned earlier.[43] As Bangla tried to negotiate the intellectual demands of modern culture, the two modular languages with which it initially developed a strangely mixed relation of contention and emulation were Sanskrit and English. Sanskrit, after all, was the high language of the Hindu society's "internal" practices, such as worship, marriage, and literary cultivation. English, by contrast, was the language of a new kind of external practice, immediately associated with modern forms of power: law, administration, and new opportunities for external trade.

41. For searching analyses of these transformations by a near contemporary, see Śāstrī, "Bāṅgālār Sāhitya," and his three presidential addresses, all of which deal in detail with institutional changes in Bangla literary culture (Śāstrī 1956, 1: 171–96, 211–83.)

42. I am opposed to the casual, undiscriminating acceptance of Benedict Anderson's idea of "print capitalism." While this idea applies to European historical examples, it is doubtful that the connection between print and capitalism is equally strong or invariable in Asia. In the Bengali case, it appears that print increased the accessibility of both traditional and newly composed texts, in principle. In practice, however, it did not increase accessibility immediately. Initially, printed texts were not very cheap. The establishment of printing presses produced a flourishing business in chapbooks and cheap pamphlets on diverse subjects, and these were consumed primarily by the newly emerging urban lower-middle class.

43. Ghulām Murśed has provided a detailed historical analysis of how this "Sanskritization" of Bangla prose took place. See Murśed 1992.

The Search for a Modern Aesthetic

Changes in literary practice, as distinct from language, were also fast and radical. The entire sphere of culture was powerfully affected by a new emulative imagination prompted by English education. This is clearly discernible in techniques of poetic composition. Traditional poetry had followed widely acknowledged and fairly stringent criteria concerning meter and style. These explicitly rhetorical elements gradually begin to fade from the serious attention of poets. Īśvarcandra Gupta (1812–1849), whose compositions exemplify the transition in poetic aesthetics, still worked with traditional norms of rhetorical virtuosity, remarkably similar to those of Bhāratcandra, but an astonishing change is revealed in his choice of literary subjects, which were mostly drawn from the urban life of colonial Calcutta. Gupta had found the secret of writing poetry about the ordinary, though doing so brought charges of frivolity, occasional obscenity, and lack of dignified themes (he wrote verses on entirely untraditional topics, like the gastronomic celebration of pineapples and *tapse* fish). But it is clear that his application of traditional forms to an urban, colonial, modern subject was already transient and unstable. The forms were inadequate for the subjects and were rapidly left behind in the search for more complex solutions.

Michael Madhusudan Dutt (1824–1873), by contrast, emulated the aesthetic forms of the sonnet and the Miltonian epic in an attempt to create a high "classical" atmosphere.[44] In Madhusudan, as in many of his contemporaries, we find the potent and unprecedented combination of elements from Sanskrit and English that marks the serious advent of modern literature: his narratives and characters are primarily drawn from the Sanskrit high classical tradition—Indrajit, Lakṣmaṇa, Pramilā, Rāvaṇa, and so on from the *Rāmāyaṇa;* Tilottamā and Śarmiṣṭhā from the *Mahābhārata.* But his great dramatic poem, *Meghnādbadh,* is a defiant declaration of independence from the traditional Sanskrit poetry.

Madhusudan's language is highly Sanskritic with several innovative elements, particularly in the use of verbs, that led to bitter debates in the Bangla critical world—his supporters considering them enhancements of the language, his opponents viewing them as travesties. Above all, *Meghnādbadh* is an excellent document of the paradoxical conjuncture in Bangla intellectual culture in early modernity. In one sense, *Meghnādbadh* was a radically new creation that turned all the values of the traditional epic upside down. It inverts the relation between Indrajit and Lakṣmaṇa—and more indirectly, between Rāvaṇa and Rāma—by treating the *rākṣasa* (demonic) figures as heroes and Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa as morally and practically devious. Yet seen

44. On Dutt see also Dharwadker, chapter 3 in this volume.

from an alternative and equally plausible angle, it is a cultural artifact of the most dedicated imitation—an adaptation of Milton's *Paradise Lost* into Bangla culture, copying not only the narrative theme but also the metric form of blank verse (called in Bangla *amitrākṣar chanda,* verse of "unfriendly" or nonharmonizing syllables).

Poetic excellence was now measured by the poet's skill in producing sonnets *(caturdaśpadī)* rather than stately quatrains in quantitative-syllabic verse forms such as the *mandākrānta.* In a remarkably short time, elite pastimes such as *kavigān*—occasions, usually spectacular in nature, in which poets gathered to compose impromptu poems and passages, sometimes in competition with each other—were fatally undermined by a more introspective literary culture, marking a fundamental shift in the nature of the literary itself.

Kavigān was a poetic exercise that showed the conventional associations of poetry. It was performative, instant, part of a public spectacle, and it required a ready intelligence and quick-wittedness from its composers. Its performance was exactly like that of music: the creator did not get a chance to revise, reflect, redraft, and present to the audience the product of an introspective and reflective private craft. Normally not written down, the compositions had no ambitions of permanence, though the most popular ones gained a form of oral immortality. Compositions by Madhusudan or Rabindranath, on the other hand, stood at the opposite end of the continuum of poetic forms. These were attentively crafted products, meant to be enjoyed primarily by a private reader. Above all, the culture of reading was fundamentally transformed. The presupposition of the silent reader introduced a series of interesting changes in poetry's technical structure, the most significant of which was the slow decline of the aural in favor of semantic delectation. This is reflected in the restrained, often almost embarrassed, alliterations in Tagore's poetry.[45] The overt representationality of performative poetry—its theatrical aspect—was entirely lost. Poetry now came to be enshrouded in a great silence of refinement.

Shifts of the kind evidenced in poetry formed part of a larger cultural change that instituted a new kind of boundary between everyday practices and crafts and the exalted sphere of the high arts. Recitation of the *Rāmāyaṇa* or the singing of *padāvalī* as part of the seasonal and daily *kīrtan*s had intertwined that poetry with the unremarkable rounds of everyday activities, a re-

45. Tagore is again an interesting example here; he has undoubted mastery of metrics and figures of speech, and sometimes his use of this technical repertoire is strikingly original. But there is no demonstrativeness about it. Unlike traditional poetry, his works invite literary assessment not primarily on this terrain, but on others. Nevertheless, it is not surprising that standard Bangla discussions of *chanda*s use Tagore's poetic corpus almost as much as canonical Sanskrit examples. For a highly complex and deeply sympathetic appreciation of Tagore's metric originality, see Sen 1974.

lationship reflected quite often in the declamatory manner of reciting (often such recitation would be carried on alongside a mundane activity, such as doing everyday chores). The new poetry could not be used in this way—as part of religious ritual or community gatherings, or for inattentive mnemonic incantation in the household. Moreover, inasmuch as high literacy was a prerequisite, the new poetry was not equally available across gender.[46] Unlike some high poetry in north India that customarily functioned as part of sophisticated conversation, this poetry was unsuited for use in even the most elevated normal dialogue. It could not be approached without the inescapable sense that it was high art and thus separated from all other mundane pursuits.

Further transformations in literary culture came about as authorial practices changed in relation to reception practices. What had been a local, participatory, communal collectivity, often gathered at a public spectacle, became for the first time an impersonal "audience" of readers sitting and perusing texts in private, where the simultaneous enjoyment of others did not interfere with or determine their assessment of the text. As literature was turned into a primarily lonely pleasure a series of institutional changes followed. Appreciation of literary objects (poetry in particular) changed form from the instant applause or coolness of the face-to-face audience to the scrutiny of modern criticism, which elaborately dissects the text at leisure and enhances both the prestige and the enjoyment of the text by a commentary that is itself literary, a literature supplementing literature.[47] A literary public sphere formed in the early nineteenth century around a group of journals, some of which were short-lived but immensely influential (like Bankimchandra Chattopadhyay's *Baṅgadarśan,* established in 1872), and the disputations in their pages determined the formation of canonical criteria for literary production. Literature now worked through a dialogue between the literary activity of poets and writers and the critical activity that offered aesthetic commentary and encouraged or inhibited various performative trends.

The creation of this literary modernity in Bengal, through the dissemi-

46. I do not mean there was something intrinsically gender-biased in these writings, but rather that modern education was initially almost entirely a male preserve. Subsequently, reading novels was often seen as a specially female literate activity, with many popular magazines directing their wares to a female audience.

47. Significantly, this also affects the appreciation of traditional Sanskrit texts. Formerly, the only aids to the study of texts like those by Kālidāsa were well-known commentaries; in the modern era, important literary figures wrote highly individual assessments of current works. This type of literary criticism produced a literary sense of taste that was far more individualistic, exploratory, and subject to periodic change than the heavy conventionality of the commentary tradition.

nation processes of printing and the creation of an impersonal literary public, was related to movements of political power in a fundamental way. In premodern India, political authority had a relatively marginal role to play in such important parts of life as economic activity, which was governed primarily by the rules of the caste order. It is not surprising that fundamental structures and institutions that helped cultural reproduction or commanded constitutive power over cultural form were also by and large outside the direct influence of rulers.[48] Those who ruled were routinely praised, and they reciprocated primarily by providing patronage; this culture continued down to Bhāratcandra's stay at the court of King Kṛṣṇacandra of Kṛṣṇanagar in the Nadīyā region. By contrast, the colonial state, using the modern conception of politics brought from the rationalistic phase of European culture, lay claim to its territory and space in a radically new way, represented in its theory of state sovereignty.[49]

The British administration was naturally negligent about cultural life in its empire. The British did introduce cultural forms, which they saw as part of the civilizing processes of modernity, but they were hardly interested in producing in their imperial dominions something similar to the cultural homogeneity of nationalist Europe. From the late eighteenth century British power expanded with astonishing rapidity, and this prompted the question of clearly defined territorial structures to demarcate the jurisdictions of the British and the native princes' political authority. This habituated Indians to living in a stable, politically bounded space; but the connection between this space and its cultural content was still entirely accidental. As British rule extended westward, extensive Hindustani-speaking territories were added to the Bengal presidency. Bengalis duly developed subimperialistic delusions about themselves and considered other groups within the larger territory of the presidency their natural inferiors (these attitudes are reflected with particular clarity in the extensive travel literature produced by the Bengali elite). Except in a few extreme cases, they did not propose inclusion of these groups in the exalted realm of Bengali culture. Other linguistic groups could regard the lighted circle of Bangla literary culture with admiration or resent-

48. However, in the light of the evidence Pollock (1998) puts forward, it appears that the relation between political power and cultural forms can be varied and complex: in contrast to the Bengali case, royal patronage obviously affected the direction of literary production in the case of south Indian empires. Wherever literature bore a strong connection with a polity through a common language, such pressures must have existed. Persian and Urdu writing had strong connections with north Indian courts. See the contributions by Alam and Faruqi, chapters 2 and 14, respectively, in this volume.

49. Modern historians who have analyzed the nature of premodern political authority have suggested the term "segmentary state" to mark this difference, though not without controversy. See Kulke 1995.

ment, but they were not serious interlocutors. The delineation of the *cultural* boundaries of Bengal was the work, therefore, not of the colonial state but of the new Bengali intelligentsia.[50]

Separating Bangla from Other Languages

By the early nineteenth century, a separate modern linguistic identity was clearly discernible in Bengal. Naturally, what this language was and how its purely linguistic frontiers were drawn were major questions of internal contention in this early modern period. If we take early-nineteenth-century Bangla writing as an example of the state of thinking about the Bangla language, we find a remarkably complex ordering in the structure of linguistic practice. Speaking and doing things in Bangla had to make a place for itself in a world of many languages. An ordinary Bengali householder would speak to his family and friends and in the bazaar in one of the local Bangla dialects (these dialects are usually specific to relatively small regions, but they are framed in a more general division between western and eastern speech, referred to in Bangla colloquial usage as *ghaṭī* and *bāṅāl*). But dealings with political authority, for instance regarding landholding or revenue, called for the consistent and skillful use of Persian.[51] Religious ceremonies—a constant part the household routine—involved the mandatory use of Sanskrit, though the average householder might have an insecure grasp over its grammatical intricacies. Any transaction with colonial power required knowledge of English. It was thus not uncommon for an educated Bengali to know all these languages with reasonable degrees of fluency. Each language performed clearly designated functions. If we classify these functions as high and low, then, interestingly, in the early nineteenth century Bangla was used for distinctly low functions. Serious business—concerning gods or kings or property—was dealt with in other languages.

The entrenchment of British power and spread of Western education had the effect of simplifying this complicated triple hyperglossia with astonishing rapidity. English took over Persian's administrative function as records

50. But one should not put too benevolent a construction on this process of delineation of the boundaries of the Bangla cultural space. Some sections of the early Bengali intelligentsia claimed, for instance, that Oriya was not a separate language but a degenerate version of Bangla, and it would be better for the "civilization" of Oriyas to learn and write standardized Bangla. There were serious suggestions that Oriya teaching should be abolished in schools in Orissa and replaced by Bangla. For details, see Mohanty 1986. Not merely cultural chauvinism but also hard calculation of material advantage were involved in making such aggressive subimperialist claims.

51. For a fascinating collection of old Bangla letters, see Sen 1961. Not surprisingly, a large number of these letters discuss land transactions, and consequently, their Bangla language is heavily laden with Arabic-Persian terms.

were converted into English, though record-keeping practices passed through a long period of administrative diglossia, and an otherwise English administrative discourse bristled with terms like *tālukā, moujā,* and *pattā.* The term *zamindārī* remained in good semantic health until Independence, after which the institution was ceremonially abolished by legislation. Terms like *rāja* and *mahārāja* were severed from the original practice of rulership, which had been fatally undermined by the expansion of British rule, and became free-floating and available for adoption under British permanent settlement by middling *zamindār*s without the faintest aspiration toward independent political authority. Earlier this would have been preposterously illegitimate as a social practice. A title like "the Mahārāja of Cossimbāzār"—worn by a considerable player in factional politics in colonial Bengal—would have appeared completely ungrammatical in the context of the earlier map of social practice. (Appropriately, the ultimate resting place for the term *mahārāja* is as a sign for a particular lifestyle, vaguely suggesting opulence, indolence, and geniality, in the famous advertisement for the national airline, Air India.)

It is a significant, if neglected, fact that the historical contact with colonialism was very uneven across the whole of South Asia. The Bengali contact with colonialism was peculiar for at least three reasons. First, Bengalis simply had the longest-running contact with modern British culture, and probably also had the longest time to devise a complex range of differential responses to British culture. Second, the nature of that contact differed in the case of Bengal. Since the British did not initially establish themselves with an unambiguous claim to state power, it was possible to see them as simply one force in a society in which several powers were jostling for position. The party of reform, led by people like Rammohan Roy, therefore could enlist British support without moral scruples about surrendering to an alien civilization. Third, the entrenchment of British colonial power in India afforded upper-class Bengalis a great opportunity for subimperialist expansion and made them even more eager and inclined to ingest the Western cultural model. Consequently, the emulative enthusiasm of Bengali culture became particularly intense. From the start of the nineteenth century Bangla intellectuals were under enormous pressure to reinvent their intellectualism in a modern form, which altered the entire definition of what it meant to be an intellectual. Literariness played a specially significant role in this process. Not merely were creation and knowledge of literary texts in both English and Bangla essential skills for the cultivated; a certain clarity of syntax, chasteness of vocabulary, refinement of pronunciation—all operations influenced by literary texts—became mandatory constituents of the modern Bengali sense of cultivation.

One of the most striking features of literary modernity in Bengal was the rapidity with which the culture changed. There was an urgency to differen-

tiate the modern period from the past, which was now seen as "traditional" (that is, in the sense in which I used the term earlier: not as *āgama,* or what is received from the past, but as part of *atīta,* or the past itself). But although through its various stages of change—represented by Īśvarcandra Vidyāsāgar (1820–1891), Bankimchandra Chattopadhyay (1838–1894), and Rabindranath Tagore, respectively—Bangla literature quickly became modern, it did not establish a stable, unworried pattern of either verse or prose writing, or of aesthetic structure.

Rammohan Roy is significant for two reasons. First, he exhibited in his own life a model of what Bangla education or cultivation meant during his time, particularly the almost mandatory inclusion of Persian skills and Islamic culture. The entire project of the putative upgrading of Bangla and the creation of a "high" language was to erase this Islamic element in a surprisingly brief span of time. Within two generations, Bangla literary culture would become far more solidly Hindu—though in a rather complex way. Second, Roy is immensely important for the nature of his cultural project. He established the relatively liberal, strongly reformist Brahmo Samaj. Its principles, seen as a set of basic ideas or religious resources that would include metaphysical, philosophical, doctrinal beliefs, stocks of images, and iconography, stood in a very interesting relation to Hinduism. The Samaj played a foundational role in the creation of modern Bengali culture—from the devising of rules of ordinary *bhadralok* etiquette and the refashioning of the whole world of literary language through the works of Rabindranath to a revolution in women's dress.[52] If Hinduism is viewed in the structuralist fashion as a combinatory of elements, Brahmo improvisation responded to the challenges of the West, Christianity, and modernity by using with wonderful deftness some specific elements of this repertoire.

Hindu caste customs, rooted in texts like the *Manusmṛti,* were utterly repugnant to progressive Brahmos, but they replaced those canonical texts with the equally canonical Upaniṣads. The Brahmos disliked the mutilation of classical Sanskrit by half-educated officiating priests and the utter aural disorder of worship in Hindu temples, but they replaced it all with the singing of appropriately solemn songs called *brahmasaṅgīt* (congregational singing of Brahma), and the adaptation of Vedic hymns. Doctrinally, it would be wholly unfair to accuse Brahmos of being more averse to Muslims than traditional Hindus. They were certainly seeking a more liberal religion, free

52. The introduction of the blouse to go with a new style of wearing the sari made it easier for women to come out of the *antaḥpur.* The traditional attire, though inviting romantic descriptions like Duṣyanta's wonder at Śakuntalā's appearance—*iyam adhikamanojñā valkalenāpi tanvī* (this slender girl looks even more beautiful dressed in bark cloth)—would not have promoted women's activity in the public sphere. On the historical transformation of dress, see Tarlo 1994.

from fanaticism. Yet their project for the creation of a high Bengali culture and literature looked entirely toward the repertoire of classical Hinduism for its resources.

The high culture of modern Bengal, created through the stunning originality of the nineteenth century, thus became a generally Hindu affair.[53] And this slow but decisive equation of the modern Bengali self with a cultural gestalt associated with Hinduism was a fundamental reason for the gradual alienation of Muslims. One strand of nineteenth-century literary culture even showed explicit hostility to Muslims and, with the growing interest in history, began to represent Islamic rule as "foreign" domination. References to Islamic rule as foreign are quite widespread and can be found in many Brahmo writings, apart from the unsurprising presence of this idea among more conservative Hindu texts. And hostility to Muslims in the works of highly influential writers like Bankimchandra played a significant role in this story. But to illustrate the crucial underlying problem I quote an extended passage from the famous essay, "Indian History," by Rabindranath Tagore, who would not be suspected of communalism:

> Countries that are fortunate find the essence of their land in the history of their country; the reading of history introduces their people to their country from infancy. With us the opposite is the case. It is the history of our country that hides the essence of this land from us. Whatever historical records exist from Mahmud's invasion to the arrogant imperial pronouncements of Lord Curzon, these constitute a strange mirage for India; this does not help our sight into our country, but covers it with a screen. It casts a strong artificial light on one part in such a way that the other side, in which our country lies, becomes covered in darkness to our eyes. In that darkness the diamonds on the tiaras of the dancers flash in the light of the dancing halls of the nawabs; the red foam in the tumblers in the Badshahs' hands appears like red, sleepless, maddened eyes; ancient holy temples cover their heads in that darkness, and the high spires of the bejeweled marble mausoleums of the emperors' lovers try to kiss the stars. In that darkness the sound of horses' hooves, the trumpeting of elephants, the jangle of weapons, the paleness of tents stretching into the distance, the golden glow of silk curtains, the stone bubbles of mosques, the mysterious silence of the palaces guarded by eunuchs—all these produce a huge magical illusion with their amazing sounds and colors. But why should

53. The Muslim responses to this new form of cultivation constitute a complex and large question. One kind of response was to acknowledge this culture as a historical given and acquire it: the language of many Muslim writers who adopted this solution is hardly different from that of their Hindu peers. But others felt the exclusion more sharply and suggested developing a "Musalmāni Bāṃlā" whose predominant feature would be the frequent use of Arabic and Persian words to mark it off from the Hindu high Bangla. After Partition, the efforts of the Pakistani authority to impose Urdu brought on a strong reaction and a tendency to use a more Sanskrit-based high Bangla.

> we call this India's history? It has covered the *punthi* of India's holy mantras by a fascinating Arabian Nights tale. No one opens that *punthi.* [But] children learn every line of that Arabian Nights tale by heart.[54]

This striking passage presents a field of signs in which all the symbolic markers of the self are securely tied to Hindu culture and what is not of "the essence of this land" is associated with Islamic and British history. The entire problem with modern Indian nationalism was that this way of representing history was not the preserve of Hindu communalists but was part of a far more common and casually commonsensical language.

The Making of Modern Prose

If Bangla was to be the basis for a restructured linguistic economy, it had to show itself capable of performing the high cultural functions, which at this historical juncture were divisible into two mutually opposed types. Some were connected to religious practice and were normally performed in Sanskrit. Others were associated with modern culture: the practices of science, law, and administration that had come to be associated with English by the late eighteenth century. The challenge facing Bangla was further complicated by the philosophical contradiction between these two spheres of high functions: acceptance of a "scientific" view of the world was widely held as undermining orthodox Hindu religious life. To acquire a place of value, however, Bangla, incongruous as it seemed, had to be able to do both: It had to become a language capable of the high recitative solemnity of Sanskrit conventionally used at worship *(pūjā)* or ceremonials (replacing Sanskrit), and it had to acquire sufficient complexity and subtlety to become a language of law and science (replacing English). Finally, as a decisive mark of modernity, it had to acquire the capacity to produce a high literature (like both Sanskrit and English). Interestingly, the question of turning Bangla into a language of property-related jurisprudence was given less attention, illustrating that modern Bengalis, though poetically inclined, are characteristically negligent about pecuniary matters. Instead, a certain amount of Persianized language persisted in the practices of the revenue administration.

To perform all these functions successfully, Bangla had to enter into a peculiar relation of transaction with both Sanskrit and English. With the rise of early modern literature, two contradictory trends became immediately

54. Tagore 1968: 3–4. *Punthi* refers to a genre of Bangla literature centered on themes of ritual and myth. My intention in adducing this passage is not to revise the general opinion about Tagore but to illustrate a widely used rhetoric. Tagore went on to write some of the most radically anticommunal and anti-Brahmanical poems in nationalist literature, generating a rare form of self-critical nationalism. In some of his late correspondence he recognized that his own earlier patriotic poems often shared a nationalist imagery that was revisionist by implication.

apparent. One sought the fluidity, lilt, suppleness, and liveliness of colloquial speech; the other resolutely faced the other way, toward borrowing maximally from Sanskrit vocabulary. Consider the opening sentences from Īśvaracandra Vidyāsāgar's *Sītār Vanabās,* a major text in the founding of modern Bangla literature:

> ei sei *janasthānamadhyavartī prasravaṇagiri.* ihār *śikharadeś satatasañcaramān jaladharapatalasaṃyoge nirantar nibiḍ nīlimāy alaṅkṛta.*[55]

Grammatically, this is Bangla,[56] but the words are almost entirely Sanskrit—a string of *tatsama*s, or words borrowed directly out of Sanskrit. In the quotation, Sanskrit-equivalent words are italicized; if the *sandhi*s and *samāsa*s were uncoupled, the number would be higher. The sentence structure is such that the main verb is hidden, which accentuates its similarity with Sanskrit.

Vidyāsāgar was engaged in a process of "classicization" of Bangla. Indeed, in his writings the politics of the grammatical past is particularly intense and clear. He wished to create a Bangla that denied the language's somewhat mean and mixed medieval ancestry by making Sanskrit more *internal* to the Bangla linguistic structure. He supplemented this effort with his choice of the narratives that this newly formed "high" Bangla was to present to its modern audience through institutionalized educational curricula. Vidyāsāgar's selection follows an impeccable syllabus of early proto-nationalist culture—a combination of high Sanskrit tales like the *Rāmāyaṇa* of Vālmīki, *Raghuvaṃśa* and *Śākuntala* of Kālidāsa, *Uttararāmacarita* of the seventh-century playwright Bhavabhūti (all of which leave their traces on Vidyāsāgar's own storytelling), and Shakespeare (*Comedy of Errors* retold under the title *Bhrāntivilās*). Given this reading list, the new Bangla civilizing process simply could not fail.

Vidyāsāgar's cultural strategy contained an important element of politics. Against the colonial argument that Indian traditional literature was vulgar and degenerate it asserted the exemplary character of the Sanskrit classical canon, which, however, was subtly reconstructed in a discernibly Western style through the surreptitious filter of "modern" taste. There was clearly an en-

55. Śāstrī 1956, 1: 197–202.

56. Haraprasād Śāstrī wrote a perspicuous essay on the strange hybridity of what passed for Bangla grammar, showing that what *vyākaraṇa* meant in Sanskrit was different from the meaning of "grammar" in English. Recent writers, he argued, made elementary mistakes by, for example, confusing "parts of speech" with *vibhakti* (Śāstrī 1956, 1: 203–10). Although it is not central to my analysis here, I cannot resist noting that the casual celebration of "hybridity" today sometimes tries to appropriate the creativity of the culture in nineteenth-century Bengal. I consider this totally illegitimate and thoughtless, perhaps prompted by a lack of familiarity with that culture in detail. People of Śāstrī's culture would have made a sharp and indignant distinction between cultural self-making and hybridity, and would have regarded the latter with some contempt.

terprise to construct a past for Bangla that replicated the high classical past of the Italian Renaissance and ancient Greece that the British appropriated to their own literary culture. Vidyāsāgar's suggestion about what modern Bangla should be proceeded in the right modern direction: reinvented through the deliberate Sanskritization of its vocabulary, this new Bangla was capable of performing all the specialized functions expected of a modern high culture. It could easily perform the function of religious solemnity and worship precisely because these practices had traditionally been done in Sanskrit.[57] And by borrowing from the enormous wealth of Sanskrit's vocabulary and grammatical operations, it could also perform efficiently as a language of science, legality, and serious reflection.

In the period between Bankimchandra and Rabindranath Tagore there was intense and sophisticated discussion about what a "genuine" high Bangla should be. The literary result of this discussion is seen in the grace, limpidity, and spontaneity of Tagore's mature language. But a purely literary reading of this process hides the highly interesting theoretical reflection on the nature of a modern language that continued for nearly half a century. A key figure in this discussion was the linguist and scholar Haraprasād Śāstrī, who was given the affectionate title Mahāmahopādhyāy for his seminal contribution to a scientific study of the Bangla language. Śāstrī's linguistics were not merely technically excellent; they were also astonishingly alert to sociological contexts. In one of his influential essays, "Bāṃlā Bhāṣā" (The Bangla language), Śāstrī sharply criticized the high Sanskritic style of two venerated figures of the earlier generation, Vidyāsāgar and Akṣayakumār Datta, the editor of the prestigious journal *Tattvabodhinī Patrikā:* "The fact is, those who have taken up the pen in the Bangla language have never learned the Bangla language properly."[58] Excessive Sanskritization affected what was perceived to be the natural, spontaneous rhythm of the language, and soon faced serious criticism. Śāstrī scorned the "Vidyāsāgarī" style as "translation," not "creative writing": "His Bangla is understood only by himself and his followers, no one else. How could they? After all, it was not a regional *[deśīya]* language. It was a linguistic leftover *[ucchiṣṭamātra]* imagined by some translators."[59]

Subsequently, the excessive Sanskritization of the Vidyāsāgar style was abandoned in favor of a more complex and versatile form developed by Bankimchandra, who wrote a spirited defense of the use of a mixed language

57. Brahmos were the only group that carried this logic through to its end. Others normally performed their *pūjā*s and marriage ceremonies in Sanskrit, but the Brahmos used Bangla translations of conventional *śloka*s even for marriage ceremonies. They were also often the most particular about the purity of their language, taking enormous care not to slip English words into common speech—something that requires excruciating alertness.

58. Śāstrī 1956, 1: 197–202.

59. Śāstrī 1956, 1: 198.

for literature. Bankimchandra's Bangla was still full of Sanskrit words, but it was not defensive or ashamed of showing, through the verbs, that it was Bangla. This innovation freed written Bangla from the woodenness *(jaḍatā)* of Vidyāsāgar's style; made it supple and sprightly; and allowed it to draw on the very different resources of colloquial, slang, and typically feminine speech. By the time of Tagore we find a fully developed and highly complex language, though in my view it was still weak as a vehicle of serious reflective prose compared to the strength of its ability to express sentiment.[60] But precisely by going through this short period of experimentation Bangla had, as it were, created for itself a history in capsule form: a high, sonorous, unpractical classicism that through modern influences was gradually unfrozen into the recognizable cadences of an ironic modern prose (to echo Bakhtin's idea that irony is a mark of all modern literature).

A second process in the creation of modern high Bangla had to do with English. Since Bangla is largely a Sanskrit-derived language, vocabulary could be taken unproblematically from that source. But a modern language expresses a world—material, social, intellectual, and aesthetic—that is structured by a different kind of complexity from that of premodernity. A significant element in this new sensibility is the determining, yet often subterranean, presence of science. This new rationalistic sensibility is often called in Bangla *pāscātya bhāv* (Western sensibility).[61] Bangla intellectuals understood quite early science's ability to produce a dramatic disenchantment with the world. In the Bangla context, the process of disenchantment was particularly brutal and dramatic; for unlike in Europe, it did not occur over a long period through an internal dialogue within European culture, often within Christianity, through which religion slowly ceded intellectual problems and fields to scientific reasoning. The total effect of intellectual changes in Europe over the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries was utterly revolutionary, but the actual experience was often incremental. In India, by contrast, this disjuncture occurred as a political clash between two civilizations, and any acceptance of modern science could immediately be denounced by conservatives as capitulation to alien ideas. Although Bangla modern culture was guided for about a century by religious and literary performances

60. There is considerable debate and reflection among writers of prose who, given the poetic obsession of the Bengalis, are often poets attempting a different mode of writing in their spare time. But the charge that the language Tagore used with incomparable grace was adept at sentiment yet weak on expressing serious, complex ideas is fairly common. In their various ways, writers like Pramatha Chaudhuri (primarily a prose writer), and Sudhin Dutta and Bishnu De (both poets and creators of deliberately "complex" styles) experimented with prose forms that were self-consciously distinct from Tagore's often mellifluous but weak later prose. Tagore's own prose went through what appears to me a regressive transformation.

61. Bhūdev Mukhopādhyāy wrote a deeply perceptive and highly critical analysis of *pāścātya bhāv* in his *Sāmājik Prabandha* ([1892] 1981).

rather than scientific ones, science was clearly a subtle and ubiquitous presence.[62] Acceptance of the scientific, disenchanted view of the world, even if implicit, made the practice of traditional literature impossible. Those who accepted this sensibility had to accept by implication a new map of the frontier between literature and scientific discourse.[63]

Science and Syntax

In modern cultures, science comes to have a paradoxical relation with literature. While it is differentiated from literature as a field of intellectual activity, it supplies in a sense the boundaries of literature, forcing literature to become more self-consciously aesthetic. The distinction between modern science, with its high and querulously sharp self-definition, and literature/aesthetics was thus another determining influence on the making of modern Bangla literary culture, especially prose.

Prose has become, in modern times, the privileged vehicle of science; and although literature can exclude itself from the strict regimes of expression required by science, by invoking that dichotomy it declares itself, after all, a literature in an irreversibly (if not entirely) disenchanted world. Prose, and generally all modern literature, carries this mark of disenchantment, which makes statements fallible and exudes a general sense of cognitive skepticism.[64] To effect this, in the case of Bangla, required new kinds of sentences expressing a provisionality entirely untypical in traditional syntax. For example, sentences beginning with *yehetu* (since/because), indicating a strong relation of causality, were required for expressing inductive generalizations

62. For a recent discussion of the contradictions of colonial science, see Prakash 1999.

63. Originally, the Brahmo critique of orthodox Brahmanical Hinduism was developed on the basis of rationalist arguments: modern Hindus should only entertain ideas compatible with modern rationalism, it was argued, and therefore it was essential to reject traditional superstitious beliefs. A striking example of this belief in scientific reason was Tagore's famous rebuke of Gandhi for his claim that a devastating earthquake in Bihar was God's punishment for the practice of untouchability. See Tagore 1996.

While most writers and opinion-makers agreed about the crucial importance of science, views differed about the best means of acquiring it. In addition to reading the latest scientific material, extensive translation and writing of general science texts were greatly encouraged. Bhūdev Mukhopādhyāy, who as an inspector of schools had special title to speak on these matters, pointed out with characteristic perceptiveness that the spread of science required a true laicization of knowledge, as in modern Europe. It was unlikely, in his view, that this could happen without imparting science education in the vernacular. To him, it appeared that Bengalis were learning not science itself but "stories of science"—a much inferior substitute. See Mukhopādhyāy [1892] 1981.

64. It would be wrong to say that earlier secular literature did not, at times, show a highly refined sense similar to rationalist skepticism. One of the best examples would be Ghalib's famous couplet: *ham ko mālūm hai jinnat ke haqiqat llekin dil ke bahlāne-ke liye ẏah ḳhyāl acchā hai* (I know the real truth about paradise, but for beguiling the human mind it is an excellent idea).

or subsuming particulars under general laws; *yadio,* or in earlier versions the more Sanskritic *yady api* (while/although), indicated an open-endedness of judgment, registered a contradiction, or indicated a measured sense of qualification.[65] Though initially authors felt a certain awkwardness with these syntactic forms and sometimes used them as flags of stylistic rebellion, within a short time, as the nature of discursive practices changed, they became commonplace. By Tagore's time, at the turn of the century, they were being used with great ease and style, as in Tagore's famous poem "Duḥsamay."[66]

Probably the most striking use of the kind of syntactic structure at issue, applied with a deliberateness impossible to ignore, was in the conscious urbanity of Sudhindranath Dutta (1901–1961), who was famous precisely for the excess (to some) or the fluency (to others) of his mixture of obscure Sanskritic terms with obtrusively English syntactic form (a style that is also seen in striking forms in the poetry of Bishnu De). This combination, and especially the internalization of these syntactic structures, became the mark of both the maturity and the modernity in all types of writers, irrespective of political or artistic positions. Other, subtler uses of the element of surprise in language occurred in poetry. To take a random example, in two apparently simple lines of Jībanānanda Dās's (1899–1954) famous poem "Cil" (The kite), there is a startling use of a possessive case, creating a delectable effect of inversion:

hāy cil, sonālī dānār cil, ei bhije megher dupure
tumi ār kendo nāko uḍe uḍe dhānsiḍi nadīṭir pāśe.

The second phrase in the first line, *sonāli dānār cil,* inverts the normal relation of possession: instead of *ciler dānā*—the kite's unproblematic possession of its wings—the poem chooses to speak of *dānār cil,* the golden wing's relation (possession/metonymy) with the kite. The phrase *bhije megher dupure* (the afternoon of wet clouds) in the next phrase has a similar, though weaker, effect.[67]

65. The obvious exception to this was the esoteric language of technical philosophy.

66.
yadio sandhyā āsiche manda manthare
sab saṅgīt geche iṅgite thāmiyā
yadio saṅgī nāhi ananta ambare
yadio klānti āsiche aṅge nāmiyā.

Though the dusk is approaching in slow steps,
All singing has stopped at some strange signal,
Though there is no companion in the unending sky,
Though weariness is slowly numbing your limbs.

67. Because English admits phrases of this kind, their effect when rendered in English is considerably diluted. Fortunately, there is an excellent study of Dās's poetic art available in English: Seely 1990.

Disenchantment and the Prose of the World

Self-consciously artistic prose writing led to the slow discovery of the poetics of prose. Traditionally, most compositions aspiring to attention and claiming intellectual seriousness were composed in verse, no doubt partly because the mnemonic element supported the pedagogy. As the conception of knowledge became more secular such mnemonic devices were less required, though the importance of memory in Indian learning continues even today. With the breakdown of the caste-based order with regard to occupation, arrangements for storing and imparting knowledge needed to be more impersonal. There was a shift from the tightly controlled system of Brahmanic pedagogy to a written, impersonal, accessible knowledge.

For analyzing the world in a disenchanted manner, whether in everyday or scientific discourse, prose was increasingly seen to be the "natural" form. Prose assisted a calm, unexcited, and exact recording of things. Prose was also the language of sober and recursive reflection. As the general picture of the world became more scientific and was rendered increasingly prosaic, the character of the literary was affected in a process similar to transformations occurring in the world of useful objects. It is often suggested that in the traditional world, art and craft were not separated by a definitional distinction but existed at two points of a continuum. A certain kind of artistic craft could be encountered everywhere: from the appliqué work on *kānthā*s made from old rags to carvings on ordinary household utensils. Modernity, however, tends to divest useful things of this additional gratuitous artistic dimension and subject them to a minimalist, utilitarian design. Crafts become increasingly functional, while high art is given a more formalized presence. The general map of cultural practices is fundamentally altered.

So also, as the literary world was given over to prose, and an underlying, commonsense scientific criterion came to govern prose writing, literature gained at once a more restricted and a more exalted place. Literature could no longer happen unexpectedly and anywhere: it became highly formalized, prized, precious precisely because it was made the subject of an increasingly specialized profession. Though authors in the nineteenth century could not survive by taking literature as an exclusive profession, as Michael Madhusudan Dutt's tragic fate demonstrated (he lived out his days in abject poverty, depending entirely on support from his friends), literary writing was clearly seen as a extraordinary activity. Its task was to recreate enchantment in a world that had finally been desacralized and disenchanted. In social terms, this development paralleled the rise of a new concept of entertainment—in a lifestyle increasingly dominated by temporal regimes driven by work.[68]

68. There is unfortunately not much systematic study of the distinction between work time and leisure time under conditions of modernity, but some provocative thoughts on the signifi-

Disenchantment and the Transformation of the Fantastic

Nothing reveals the enormous and ineradicable impact of science on literature—how science imperceptibly determines the conditions of possibility for literary forms—better than the fate of the fantastic. A major constituent of literary enchantment is the work of the fantastic, in the form of the wondrous affairs of the supernatural. In classical literature, interventions by the supernatural are common and often occur in ways that appear gratuitous to modern literary taste. At times, the intervention of the supernatural plays an astonishingly complex role, as, I think, in the climactic point of the *Mahābhārata,* the disrobing of Draupadī.[69] In common traditional stories, especially in the *maṅgalkāvya* tradition, supernatural intervention is often the most necessary point of the plot, as the relevant deity magically dispels an inevitable disaster. With the goddesses Manasā and Caṇḍī, accomplishing supernatural miracles was almost routine. And Annadā unleashed her goblin army to terrorize Delhi's inhabitants and force Jahāngīr to recognize the merits of her devotee, Majumdār.

A modern sensibility immediately brings embarrassment, if not straightforward disrepute, to such literary conventions. Within the short span of a century, Hindu deities completely lost their abundant capacity of interfering with natural causality—particularly their proneness to appear theatrically in order to invert the narrative scene. Now they could only come to Calcutta within the clearly protected formal space of humor, as in the famous popular story *Devganer Martye Āgaman* by Durga Charan Ray (1886), in which the gods plead their inability to help the goddess Gaṅgā against British technology, which has humiliatingly spanned her with the steel arches of the Howrah Bridge.[70]

The civilizing process of modern culture included the formation of a specialized literature for children, and the fantastic, driven from adult stories, found refuge in that literary space. However, even the children required scientific, rationalistic education, and the traditional stories of goblins were increasingly replaced by a different kind of fantasy, one associated with the mythical and historical past. Tagore arranged for publication of a collection of "grandmothers' tales" (Dakṣiṇārañjan Mitra Majumdār's *Thākurmār Jhuli*)

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cance of *cākrī* (salaried employment) are found in the work of historians like Sumit Sarkar and Dipesh Chakrabarty. See, in particular, Chakrabarty 2000.

69. This is one of the most difficult and complex episodes of the epic to interpret. Is Kṛṣṇa's intervention—rescuing Draupadī and scorning the efforts of Duḥśāsana—to be taken literally, or does it show that because of the magnitude of its immorality, the episode is impossible to bring to words and literary representation?

70. Ray [1886] 1984.

to prevent the disappearance of that tradition. And children's literature came to be dominated by the writing of Sukumar Ray—most notably his nonsense verse in *Ābaltābal*—and the wonderfully colorful recreations of the past by Abanīndranāth Ṭhākur, the celebrated painter, in Ṭhākur's *Rājkāhinī*. The only place where the fantastic could find a secure sanctuary, entirely protected from the charge of being antiscientific, was in a hugely popular and expanding literature of science fiction, because here fantasy could in fact ride on science itself.[71]

Technologies and Transactions

Not surprisingly, the coming of the new high literature altered the nature of the audience for literary productions. Some traditional texts, like any written narrative, were meant for huge, partially anonymous audiences—like the two adaptations of the *Rāmāyaṇa* and the *Mahābhārata* mentioned earlier, or the *maṅgalkāvya*s—but their sense of audience was clearly quite different from that of modern literature. Indeed, extending and modifying Gadamer's theory of textual representation in *Truth and Method,* it could be argued that a text like the *Rāmāyaṇa,* even when translated and written down, could not find its appropriate audience without going through various procedures of representative mediation.[72] The *Rāmāyaṇa* would not be read at one sitting or in a series of sequential occasions, the way a modern story is read. Parts of it would be either collectively read by communal audiences or enacted by mediating poets or performers, who would draw on their own narrative imagination in the theatrical depiction, the selection of words, and the composition of dialogues. The story could not "come to life" without their representation on each narrative occasion.

At a level lower than the "universal" literature of the epics were entirely episodic creative forms. One example would be the *kavigān*s mentioned earlier—contests of extempore verse composition, which people enjoyed immensely, but which were also entirely ephemeral. The compositions were not meant to survive the day and therefore did not face the kind of scrutiny of form, substance, and style that a written text-object would face in a primarily written culture. There was no way of retrieving them except in unreliable reports from memory, and the performance was appreciated for the aston-

71. Arguably, the act of putting Dakṣiṇārañjān Mitra Majumdār's tales into the textually inflexible format of a modern book was itself a fundamental change. It dispensed with the esoteric knowledge of the grandmother—and in most cases, with the grandmother herself—since literate children could now read the stories straight from the book.

Children's science fiction made a triumphant start with *Ghanādār Galpa,* by the well-known writer Premendra Mitra, and was pursued by a distinguished string of front-ranking writers, down to the stories by Satyajit Ray.

72. See Gadamer 1981: 91–127.

ishingly spontaneous creativity of the versifiers. Obviously, the *kavigān* was a total experience for the audience, who could appreciate it only firsthand; and they had to be familiar with the utter contingency of occasions to which much of the humor would refer.

Some premodern texts were of course canonized, but with such strong associations between the authors and the gods they praised that the authors were turned into mythical figures. Somewhat like Vyāsa or Vālmīki, they were not individualized precisely because their achievements were so immense. Although we can certainly detect personal styles among the Vaiṣṇava poets—for instance, the very different styles of Caṇḍīdās (who emphasized the semantic and the emotional) and Govindadās (who stressed the aural and technical craft)—the authors were not individuated in the modern sense. This was partly because the finished literary product did not reach directly from the author to the reader (another reason, of course, is the paucity of information we have about these authors). These songs, poems, and stories formed parts of *padāvalī kīrtan* recitals, where the narrative could be inflected by the improvisations of the narrator *(kathak),* who would exploit the immediate surroundings to enhance his presentation. The text in the strict, written sense was thus a core structure on which the narrator would build his personal rendition of the tale.

This improvisational performativity was entirely removed from the modern text, which was fixed, nonperformative, and supposed to reflect, in the European style, the author's individual sense of life. In other words, the earlier texts allowed—and in some cases required—the representation of the textual content by a mediating performer, exactly like the mediation of a dramatic text by actors. Modern texts, on the other hand (like lyric poems or novels, the two literary forms considered paradigmatic of a modern cultural sensibility, centered around a cult of "authenticity," such as the one that quickly dominated Bangla),[73] created a unified, singular authorship in place of such secondary authorly functions; by their very form, these did not allow any other subjectivity to interpose itself in the private exchange between the author and his reader. The best and most perverse example is perhaps the imposition of an utterly fixed performative structure on Tagore's songs, on the grounds of a largely spurious sovereignty of supposed authorial intention. It would create utter consternation among the Bangla *bhadralok* audience if the rendering of Tagore songs deviated from the musical notation *(svaralipi),* while in the case of many other songs of comparably recent origin, singers were allowed a great deal of performative liberty.

Thus the meaning of the literary, as also of the community of readers, was significantly transformed: it shifted from an event performed face-to-face

73. For an illuminating discussion of the Western context, see Taylor 1989.

before a relatively intimate community, to an abstract, objective textual object, emphasizing the individuality of both author and reader and the impersonal nature of that relation.

In modern Bangla culture, for reasons that ought to be explored sociologically, literary work—often generically referred to as "writing" *(lekhā)*—soon came to be especially valued among modern intellectual practices. Haraprasād Śāstrī, observant as ever, noted that to place Bangla literature on a firm foundation writers had to become professionals (in other words, work as full-time writers), though paradoxically, in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, this was possible only for aristocrats. Successful early writers of those days belonged to the colonial elite. Bankimchandra was a deputy magistrate, and Tagore came from a *zamindar* family and was happily exempted from the need to earn a common living. But even Tagore, one of the most celebrated writers worldwide in the early twentieth century, found difficulty financing his university at Shantiniketan through royalties.

Only in the 1940s did serious literary writing descend socially to become primarily the work of petty bourgeois individuals living on small office jobs. Saratchandra Chattopādhyāy's unprecedented popular success as a novelist allowed him to become a professional author, but in his time this was still an exception. Jībanānanda Dās, perhaps the most remarkable and distinctive poetic voice after Tagore, was shadowed by lack of professional success his whole life, and he worked as a college lecturer in obscure institutions in Calcutta and rural Bengal.[74] He died in a tram accident that was as heartbreakingly urban as some of his poetry. After his time, the modern associations of Bangla high literature, in which the subject and object are both petty bourgeois and its predominant theme is an oppressive, unfulfilling urban modernity, were firmly established.

Cultural traditions are hard to obliterate, however. Although they were dislodged from the high grounds of literature, some of the older, oral processes of literary delectation were preserved in the great Bangla institution of the *āḍḍā,* an informal gathering typically devoted to conversation on matters of literature and culture that became the source and seat of judgment of much literary production. The *āḍḍā* was not an impersonal public sphere; rather, it was an unstructured and private literary association, access to which was controlled by common taste, technical style, or political ideology. The *āḍḍā* itself was predictably degraded after the 1940s, turning into a mandatory activity for aspiring young writers, often focused on radical departures in little magazines.

74. See Seely 1990, which contains—besides critical appreciation and biography—admirably translated passages from Dās's most important poems.

Amazingly, Dās was dismissed from his position as college lecturer in Calcutta because of uncomprehending and unfair reviews of his poetic work (Sen 1965: 330).

Reminiscences of literary personalities show a clear change of location, style, and context of the literary *āḍḍā*. Initially, important writers attracted groups of admirers and collaborators around them. Haraprasād Śāstrī reminisced about conversations with Bankimchandra in his house at Kānthālpāṛā during which drafts of Bankim's novels in progress were read out and discussed. Similarly, a large and varied circle of literary and artistic personalities gathered around Tagore, the institutional setting of Shantiniketan giving the group a particular stability. Subsequently, important trends in poetic writing, like the post-Tagore iconoclasm of the group associated with the journal *Kallol* or the attempt to fashion a radical left-wing literature around the journal *Paricay,* came out of literary *āḍḍā*s. These groups were complex and heterogeneous, consisting of creative writers, literary critics, and ordinary men of literary taste—a kind of inner and privileged audience. The writers themselves were often quite a mixed group, including poets, novelists, and short story writers. Later, when some groups became affiliated with political ideologies, they expanded to include writers of political commentary. The first *āḍḍā*s were held in the opulent and quiet interiors of upper-class homes.[75] Access to and membership in these gatherings were therefore rigorously restricted. Literary friends gathered in the houses of eminent poets or writers and discussed literary works by way of unstructured conversation. By the forties, non-elite versions of such things were already in place—for instance, in the offices of the Communist Party or the Progressive Writers' Association, or in editorial offices of journals like *Paricay,* where access was not socially restricted yet was largely ideologically determined.[76]

By the 1960s, literary *āḍḍā*s also spilled over into more public places, like roadside cafes or the famous Calcutta Coffee House in the College Street area, which single-handedly housed the editorial boards of hundreds of highly interesting though ephemeral journals. By that time, literary careers went hand in hand with the unemployment of the educated lower-middle-class youth, or in cases of the more talented or fortunate, with a turn to professionalism usually supported by publishing groups that marketed popular magazines of huge circulation.

As Bangla literature established itself, it became part of a wide world of cultural transactions. Surrounding the "death of Sanskrit," of which Pollock has written, there were other subtle deaths, one of them being the death of medieval Bangla.[77] Most significantly, the medieval tradition of literary cosmopolitanism, in which Bangla had ingeniously selected elements out of Sanskrit culture and recombined them into something of its own, was replaced

75. Datta [1985].

76. *Paricay* was started around 1931 by a group of literary aesthetes, but was taken over later by Communist and left-wing writers.

77. Pollock 2001.

by a modern version, in which Bangla began to imitate Western bourgeois forms. It also imitated Western forms of canonicity. As modern Bangla literature established itself, it became part of a wide world of cultural transactions within the cultural space of South Asia. Bangla began to have immense influence over literatures of adjacent regional languages, though not surprisingly this was a rather fraught and ambiguous relationship of emulation and resentment. The works of Bankimchandra, Rabindranath, and Saratchandra were translated in huge waves all across India. In this brief early phase, Bangla contentedly accepted its position as a "hegemonic" literature in India, casually presuming its preeminence among other vernacular literatures. But even in this context Bangla placed itself in a clearly recognizable cosmopolitan hierarchy ranging from the local to the global.

Bangla was seen as positioned in the middle of a literary "world" in which European literatures—English and French especially—stood at the top, *above* Bangla in some sense, and the other Indian literatures stretched away below. This helps us understand the flow of traffic in translations. Very little from other Indian literatures was translated into Bangla, and little of what was translated became popular. In this condition of relative isolation Bangla resembles English, with its sense of being privileged and having little to learn from others. For instance, a Bengali child given a fairly careful literary education could grow up in the 1950s without hearing a reference to *Godān,* the great Hindi novel by Premchand; however, Bangla versions of even minor European novels of adventure or romance were quite plentiful. A children's writer, Nripendra Krishna Chattopadhyay, almost single-handedly presented the entire canon of European classics to the young Bengali reader. An average middle-class child in a small town could easily grow up with his imaginative world populated on the one side by characters from Sanskrit story collections *Kathāsaritsāgara* (Ocean of stories) and *Vetālapañcaviṃśati* (Twenty-five tales of the undead), and on the other, *Ivanhoe* and *The Three Musketeers.* Children's editions of both kinds of texts were equally popular as gifts in school prize distribution ceremonies.

Until the 1950s, cultivation did not sever connection with the high classical past. Kālidāsa at least, and some common classical literary texts, were mandatory parts of a fastidious literary education. From the 1940s, due to radical influences, there were attempts to accord *literary* recognition to folk traditions, which had been treated with indifference if not contempt by the early creators of a high Bangla. This is reflected in an interest in the recovery and inventorization of Bāul songs and tales told by grandmothers.

It is interesting to consider what the divergent values embedded in this literary cosmopolitanism produced in terms of the Bengali "habits of the heart." In the 1950s, there was a wave of translations from Western literatures other than English. But these translations had a metaliterary purpose. They were meant not only for simple delectation but also to assist in reflec-

tion on the nature of literary modernity in the context of a debate about what was modern poetry and whether Tagore's poetry qualified. One of the most striking documents of this discussion was Buddhadev Basu's essay justifying his translation of Baudelaire as an example of what *modern* poetry, with its vision of a city of "steeples and chimneys," should be. Radical left-wing political influence regarded this strand as degenerate and balanced it with equally energetic translations of poetry from an astonishingly cosmopolitan spread of sources from Pablo Neruda to Nazim Hikmet (the latter was translated by Subhās Mukhopādhyāy, at the time a young and promising poet with the Communist Party). In the 1960s came a second wave of translations, which focused on European drama—Chekhov's *Cherry Orchard,* Pirandello's *Six Characters in Search of an Author,* Brecht's *Three Penny Opera*—intended not for a reading public but for a very appreciative theater-going audience with highly eclectic taste. All these translations have since played to consistently full houses in Calcutta's theater district. What the Bengali inhabitant of a declining modern Calcutta has found so absorbing in these plays is an interesting question for the understanding of cultural translation.

Tagore and the Problem of the Modernity of Literature

Early-modern Bangla literary practice—the second "origin" of Bangla literary culture—raised a set of questions: What was the meaning of modernity in the literary field? Was it simply a temporal marker, indicating merely that this literature existed effortlessly in the "present"? Or did modernity have some substantive content: acceptance of a general cultural sensibility, a background understanding of the world taken from modern science, or some literary principle like individuality and rejection of convention? Since the work of the early-modern writers developed in the context of an implicit contest with colonialism and the prestige of English, they had to claim that Bangla possessed the dual distinctions of having a classical past and being able to produce a high literature in the present. In Vidyāsāgar's time it was easy to claim the first by reinventing a Bangla artificially proximate to Sanskrit; but the second task was obviously more difficult. There was a growing sense of a strange historical chasm between the pasts of Bangla literature and its present, an uncomfortable but inescapable feeling that those pasts were enabling factors for the growth of modern literature yet were aesthetically discontinuous from the modern literary enterprise. Quite often the solution was daring and ingenious: instead of finding modern subjects for aesthetic presentation, authors chose ancient narratives, but handled them in distinctly modern ways.[78] By the time Bankimchandra wrote his prose works to com-

78. This important question calls for careful and separate analysis. But the main point can be illustrated by Madhusudan's choice of themes: the stories about Meghnād, Tilottamā, and

plement the considerable riches of Madhusudan's poetry (mid-nineteenth century), modern Bangla could claim a distinctive and distinguished body of new literature.[79] It was the works of these two writers in particular that became the "classical" texts of modern literature, occupying the strangely dual status of "modern classics." The more modern literature evolved, reaching a mature stage in the later works of Rabindranath Tagore (in the first part of the twentieth century), the more its difference from traditional literature became transparent.

The entire line of Bangla literature from Bankim to Tagore was modern in some ways, but its central aesthetic ideals and principles remained "classical." The ideas and techniques that animated that literature were similar to the principles underlying Shakespearean drama, nineteenth-century English romantic poetry, or the Victorian novel. From the 1940s onward, however, a new intellectual anxiety forced more reflection on what constituted modernity in literature. Exposure to contemporary European art led to the birth of a new, more complex form of modernism. It became evident by this time that the principle of "modernity" was curious; it represented not a single set of literary criteria but rather the principles of motion, displacement, and openness toward transformation and experimentation in literary values. However modern a form of literature was, it was not immune from challenge by forms that spoke in the name of modernity against any existing body of texts. Many "modern" writers and critics found this aspect of literary modernity deeply unsettling. Modernity turned into a problem because of the rapidity with which both poetic and prose conventions were threatened with what some considered undeserved obsolescence.

By this time, one peculiarity of the literary modern must have been clear to its more perceptive practitioners. In traditional literature, temporality had a clearly different form. In ancient and medieval literature in Sanskrit the making of new classics at a later period did not cancel out, transcend, or more significantly, "make impossible" writing in an earlier style. Jayadeva in the twelfth century and Vidyāpati in the fifteenth did not make their predecessor Kālidāsa obsolete; in fact, Kālidāsa's style was a canonical option for later poets. Classic texts, once they were admitted to this exalted status, shared a common immortality. Clearly, this kind of temporalization was not

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Śarmiṣṭhā; and Tagore's reworkings of classical moral dilemmas in his long narrative poems in *Kathā O Kāhinī* (1900), discussed later in this chapter.

79. Interestingly, Haraprasād Śāstrī made the astonishingly chauvinistic claim that the historical situation of modern Bangla was unparalleled in the world. He believed that modern Bangla writers' access to the traditions of both Western and Indian antiquity as well as the great variety of modern European literature would spawn a literature of unequaled glory. In other words, literary writers for the first time had before them the dual ideals of Kālidāsa and Shakespeare.

happening to modern Bangla. The classicism of Bankim and Madhusudan was highly individual, in that other authors could not follow them without appearing unoriginal, and their works became stylistically or aesthetically obsolete relatively quickly. Although Madhusudan's poetry and Bankim's fiction and satires had already achieved the status of "classics," they lacked some of the attributes possessed by acknowledged classics in traditional literature.

True, modern Bangla literature slowly developed a canon of "great texts," but these texts and their concerns and styles soon became unrepeatable. Classics failed to become conventionalized as literary practice—as parts of a repertoire of acknowledged styles in which literary writing could be carried on for the indefinite future. Even Bankimchandra's admiring contemporaries apparently found it impossible to write like him; so it is not surprising that his concerns with Indian, Hindu, and Bengali history, his powerful Sanskritic language with its great internal differentiation, the manner in which his characters conducted themselves, the dramatic structure of his novels, the sketchiness of the world depicted inside his stories were all inimitable to Tagore's generation. This was so not merely because of the power of his imagination and its peculiar individuality, but also because of the subtle sliding away of his aesthetic world—a double obsolescence of both that world and its aesthetic forms.

Tagore's pervasive influence on modern Bangla literature was subtly present even in work that strove to break away from him. His younger contemporaries, including rebellious poets associated with the iconoclastic urges of the *Kallol* group (formed in 1924), could not deny that the language they used had been fashioned by him. Yet even Tagore was not immune to the accelerated obsolescence that haunted modern "classicism." Critical discussions about Bangla poetry gave compelling reasons why it was impossible to "write like Tagore" any longer, and by the 1940s, even Tagore was firmly, irrevocably in the past. In fact, the novel *Śeṣer Kavitā*—his brilliant attempt to find an answer to the insidious challenge of literary modernity, his refusal to belong to a literary past during his own lifetime—in a paradoxical fashion, tragically illustrated his failure. The craft of the novel shows his unparalleled skill with words, proving that he could write colloquial prose if he chose with a poetic fluidity far surpassing the young writers. He could portray youthful, "modern" characters whose romantic sensibility was quite different from the usual figures in his own mature writing. Yet *Śeṣer Kavitā* was the best refutation of his own claim that he was, by the standards of the gritty and melancholy forties, a literary contemporary. It represented a magnificent failure to be modern by the current criteria. By contrast, a single line of Jībanānanda Dās's gloomy poem in which he quickly sketches the habituation of despair in the posture of an Anglo-Indian prostitute puffing smoke under a dim street light while waiting for some indefinite American soldier in Calcutta's twilight contains a deeper expression of the moods of postwar

urban despair and its awkward demand for an aesthetic that could make poetry out of degradation. This was beyond the moral possibilities of Tagore's aesthetic, despite his extraordinary technical virtuosity. What had been demanded was a change not in style but in the fundamental aesthetic itself.

After Tagore, this kind of historical obsolescence, as if by definition now part of the modern literary condition, was routinely acknowledged. Accomplishment in poetic or novelistic writing was noted for the individuality of style but was never expected to be conventionalized in the manner of traditional literature. There was an underlying critical sense that the movement of literature consisted in bringing each new literary aesthetic to its limits and then crossing them by making literature take account of subjects that had been impossible to talk about in a literary way before. The claim of novelty among the post-Tagore poetic generation was focused entirely on this problem.

Modernity presented writers with two different literary worlds, one drawn from Indian traditions, the other from the West. Authors improvised by using elements from both aesthetic alphabets and produced new forms that were irreducible to either. Numerous examples can be drawn from Tagore's poetic work to illustrate this and to show that what he eventually produced was not an imitation of Western forms, but a distinctively Indian/Bangla species of the literary modern. However, it would be wrongheaded to celebrate this as a case of aesthetic "hybridity," in line with current postmodern appropriations. In fact, poets like Tagore had a well-articulated conception of what hybridity was and believed that aesthetically hybrid forms were produced by a fundamental failure to reconcile contradictory traditions. This can be shown by reference to several aspects of Tagore's work. Under the pressure of modern intellectual influences, Tagore fashioned a language that could express the complex urges of modern subjectivity. In several poems, he reflects on the nature of the unity of his self—a question forced on him clearly by the pressure of a modern conception of the subject coming from Western literature—but he answers through a complex combination of themes and elements drawn from Indian literary-philosophical sources.[80]

80. Several of Tagore's poems are titled "Āmi" (I). One of these, in his *Pariśeṣ,* asks with exemplary precision:

I wonder today if I know this person
whose speaking makes me speak,
whose movement makes me move,
whose art is in my painting,
whose tunes ring out in my songs,
in this my heart of strange happiness and sorrows.
I thought he was tied to me.
I thought all my laughter and tears

The same virtuosity is shown in Tagore's handling of the past. In a group of poems written in his middle period and gathered into a book called *Kathā o Kāhinī* he takes up poignant occasions or scenes from ancient Indian literature, like the conversation between Karṇa and Kuntī, the mother Karṇa never knew, on the night before the battle of Kurukṣetra; the appeal by Gāndhārī to her husband Dhṛtarāṣṭra against her son Duryodhana; and an astonishingly intense inquiry into the nature of moral responsibility for one's acts through an encounter in hell between King Somaka and the priest who had advised him to sacrifice his small child in a *putreṣṭiyajña* (sacrifice for obtaining a son).[81] A third example is Tagore's artistic reflection on suffering and evil in the world, which required both Western ideas of the tragic and Hindu/Buddhist conceptions of *duḥkha* as theoretical preconditions, though they were not direct sources of his thinking.

A mark of modernity is the increasing reflexivity of its literature. Artists and writers think more self-consciously about what they are doing; interpretation of form enters into writing itself. It became clear as time passed that Tagore represented a form of the modern in sharp contrast to everything that had gone before. Yet there was simultaneously a gathering sense of dissatisfaction precisely with Tagore's literary immensity, and an attempt, faltering at first but increasingly more assertive, to find ways of going beyond him.

Two tendencies, discernible from the 1940s, attempted to escape Tagore's limits—which were also the limits of Bangla literature—and to start questioning the nature of modern aesthetics.[82] The first was reflected in the style of poetry associated with the journal *Kallol,* which began to carry the works of some of the best post-Tagore writers; the second was linked to the political radicalism of the Communist cultural movement. At the time, these two strands treated each other with the ruthlessness reserved for the ideological enemy, in a grotesque local reenactment of the Cold War. Yet, in historical retrospect, there was a strange complementarity in their distinct efforts to take literature beyond Tagore's overwhelming but limiting presence. Aesthetic critics of Tagore experimented with formal properties of poetry that went beyond his art, absorbing the most diverse cosmopolitan influences—

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had drawn a circle around him and bound him to all my work and play.
I though that he was my own:
it would flow down my life to end at the point of my death. (1964: 172–73)

There can hardly be a more precise elaboration of the nature of individual subjectivity than this.

81. The relevant poems are "Karṇakuntīsaṃvād," "Gāndhārīr Ābedan," and "Narakbās"; all figure in *Sañcayitā* (Tagore 1972)

82. Some of the most intellectually searching discussions on why Tagore was indispensable and at the same time had to be gone beyond can be found in Buddhadev Basu's essays (Basu 1966).

Buddhadev Basu looking at Baudelaire, for instance, or Jībanānanda Dās using surrealist imagery. An example of the latter is Das's famous line, *harinerā khelā kare tārā ār hīrār āloke*—"Deer play in the light of stars and diamonds"; even a prosaic translation shows how utterly different this is from any contemporary poetic idiom in Bangla writing. Radical writers sought a literature that transcended Tagore by crossing social boundaries, by making the poor, the marginal, and the disheartened legitimate objects of literary enunciation.[83] But both trends critiqued Tagore on the same significant point: his art looked away from the everyday slovenliness, degradation, and the problem of evil in modern life, an evil that was mundane, banal, inescapable.

A major task emerging from this aesthetic and sociological criticism of the limitations of Tagore's immensity was the search for an aesthetic in the increasingly grimy city life of Calcutta. Tagore wrote two famous poems on Calcutta as a sign of modernity: "Nagarsaṅgīt" (Song of the city) in his relatively early phase, and "Bānśi" (The flute), his late attempt at capturing poetically the everyday bleakness in the life of the average clerk. But in both his face is averted; he despairs of Calcutta being in any possible sense an aesthetic object. Therefore, among post-Tagore writers, finding an aesthetic of the indigent, restricted life of the urban lower-middle class became the center of artistic contention.

Some of the most interesting arguments about modernity and its aesthetic expression turned on the reading of Baudelaire's poetry, which had been translated into Bangla, with a defiant and insightful introduction, by Buddhadev Basu.[84] This brought into Bangla literary debates one of the central

83. In "Aikatān" (Orchestra), one of his most historically perceptive late poems, Tagore sought to give a preemptive answer to these arguments. He listed what his poetry had failed to cover and, with great regretful honesty, said that he had at times stood outside the courtyard of the next neighborhood but had entirely *(ekebāre)* lacked the strength to step inside *(mājhe mājhe gechi āmi o-pāḍār prāṅganer dhāre / bhitare prabeś kari se śakti chila nā ekebāre)*. But he warned against what he saw as "a fashionable working-class-ness": "to steal literary fame without paying the price of real experience" *(satya mūlya nā diyei sāhityer khyāti karā curi / bhālo nay, bhālo nay, nakal se śaukhin majduri)*. He also presciently invoked the poet of a lower order of human experience, which had escaped him:

eso kabi akhyāta janer nirbāk maner
marmer bedanā yata kariyo uddhār
gānhīn e-deśete prāṇhīn yethā cāridhār
abajñār tāpe śuṣka nirānanda ei marubhūmi
rase purṇa kari dāo tumi.

Come, O poet who would recover the deep pain in the speechless minds of unfamed men, this songless land where it is lifeless all around, this joyless desert dried by the heat of neglect/ignominy, fill it with enjoyment. ("Aikatān, Janmadine," Tagore 1972, 823–24)

84. Basu 1961.

questions of literary modernity: Can evil be at the center of an entire aesthetic? A seriously reflective rejoinder to this argument—which preferred Baudelaire's engagement with evil over Tagore's detachment—was offered in Ābu Sayid Āyub's essay *Ādhunikatā o Rabīndranāth* (Modernity and Rabindranath). Āyub deplored the tendency of modern literature to center its artistic reflection on the problem of evil. Āyub translated the concept "evil," with an instructive awkwardness, as *amaṅgalbodh,*[85] but this was entirely appropriate: Tagore in his "Song of the City" called the earth outside of the city *sundar* (beautiful) and *śubha* (auspicious), indicating the fundamental internal relation between these two concepts in his aesthetic. The poem almost implies that the city is external to what the earth normally is. Āyub restated this philosophy of art, claiming that two features of modern literature are especially significant: first, "the intense attention to the literary form" (*kāvyadeha;* lit. the external or formal "body" of literary art) and second, "the excessive consciousness about the presence of evil in the world."[86] Āyub conceded that Baudelaire was a poet not in a mere formalistic sense but in a "vedic" (i.e., philosophic) sense: he was *satyadraṣṭā,* a seer of truth. "Particularly, when those gifted with subtle and sympathetic understanding observe the helplessness of the human condition, their imaginative minds come under the shadow of limitless despair and sadness. Baudelaire has given form to this shadow in his poetry. . . . All this is acceptable. Still I would like to state that Baudelaire is an incomparable poet of a certain mood, a certain *rasa,* not more." "My greatest complaint against Baudelaire is that he is a talented poet, but he has used his amazing genius to bring himself and all of us to perdition."[87] Āyub then went on to prove that Tagore's poetic world does not show a naive denial of evil, but places its unquestionable presence in the more complex pattern of an ultimately metaphysical optimism.

Despite the intricacy and subtlety of this debate between critics and defenders of Tagore, and Āyub's attempt to argue the continued relevance of Tagore's aesthetic, the subsequent evolution of Bangla poetry shows that historically the verdict went against Āyub. Bangla literature eventually found an answer to the problem of evil in another way. In certain respects this solution is reminiscent of Baudelaire himself, because it too is a poetry of a soiled, degraded world, a poetry in which chimneys and drains outnumber steeples, or temple spires. But it is also quite different. The Calcutta of post-

85. If rendered with pedantic accuracy, *amaṅgalbodh* could mean a sense *(bodh)* of the inauspicious, which raises an interesting problem of *Begriffsgeschichte* in literature. The duality of good and evil could be rendered in more colloquial Bangla as *bhālo* and *manda;* but when authors sought a more philosophical term, they tended to opt for the more religiously laden distinction of *maṅgal* and *amaṅgal.*

86. Āyub 1968: 9–10.

87. Āyub 1968: 8, 12.

Tagore poetry is not just a faint copy of Baudelaire's Paris; its evils and provocations are not derived but authentic—like the poets' voices that eventually speak about it. In Baudelaire there is still a vestigial classicism in the heroism of the poet's loneliness. He faces an evil that is grand and metaphysical without assistance from anyone, least of all from the women who poison him and help him forget. Baudelaire's poetry offers a subtle monumentalization of evil, which Jībanānanda's poetry utterly lacks. Even this consolation—the grandeur of the evil that is the poet's eternal enemy—is denied to the tired, lower-middle-class worker of Calcutta, who, unlike the upper-middle class professional, does not come home at "the violet hour." His life has no violet hour. His life faces an evil that comes in small, unavoidable pieces—indefinable insults and disappointments that become routine, the attrition of everyday life. To paraphrase a famous line, life ebbs like water dripping from a dirty, leaking tap. It is the repetitiveness and unremarkableness of this destiny that makes it so difficult to turn into poetry: but this precisely constituted the aesthetic challenge that Bangla literature after Tagore tried to address. A wonderful poetic statement of this melancholy is the title of Sunil Gangopadhyay's recent title poem: "The Beautiful Is Depressed, and the Sweet Is Feeling Feverish" *(sundarer mankhārāp mādhuryer jvar).*

Practical Contexts of Literary Practice

My discussion of literary traditions would not be complete without some analysis of the social contexts of literary practice: journals, societies, coffeehouses and tea shops, and the ubiquitous *āḍḍā*s—places characterized by an inextricable mix of unemployment, literary ambition, subtle taste, and loafing.[88] Though this topic warrants a whole discussion by itself, some points can be made briefly.

At its earliest stage, the new literature relied on two types of support. First, many writers came from the upper crust of the colonial elite and had the means to publish their own work. Their efforts were assisted by a kind of social collegiality of class, and since the elite collectively longed for a high Bangla literature, they felt it was their social responsibility to support this literature by becoming its audience. Financial support for commercially unviable literary enterprises came through donations, subscriptions, and at later periods, through influential supporters securing highly profitable advertisements. Eventually, as Bangla literature developed in variety and confidence, a market for it grew. But it is significant that as late as Tagore's mature period

88. On the significance of *āḍḍā* for Bangla literature, with some persuasive and a few startlingly excessive claims, see Datta [1985]. A more general, and perceptive, analysis is offered by Chakrabarty 1999.

literature was not profitable. Even Tagore's literary earnings—phenomenal compared to other contemporaries—were too meager to support a substantial institution.

It appeared for some time that the imitativeness of modern Bangla literature would lead to the emergence of literary institutions along British or European lines, in the form of *sāhitya sabhā*s (literary societies) and the formalization of university and school syllabi. But the law of early and rapid decay in Bengal's travestic modernity ensured that such institutions rapidly declined. Even august bodies meant to represent the interests of Bangla literature or native learning, like the Baṅgīya Sāhitya Pariṣad (Bengal Literary Society) or the Asiatic Society, appear to have gone into terminal decline from the 1960s. Only the *āḍḍā*s and the inclination of young intellectuals to publish small magazines have survived; individual projects have tended to sink quickly, but the authors have consistently regrouped into new journals and genres.

Two other developments that have affected the literary scene since the 1950s are the coming of the modern newspaper market and, subsequently, of the film narrative. With the rise of popular journals with large circulation, like the legendary weekly literary magazine *Deś,* popular novelists started writing serialized novels and stories especially for the annual *pūjā saṃkhyā* (the autumn festival number). This affected the structure of the stories: formless length was more readily tolerated, and the stories could be cut up into small episodes like television serials. The criteria for judging these stories, which were often bestsellers, were also utterly different from those applied to the self-consciously artistic prose compositions of earlier times. The effect of film aesthetics on literature is an important potential area for analysis, since the transaction of influences is reciprocal. Just as films depend heavily on the narrative resources of literature, so literature is affected by the presence of film. As literary culture turns into an interactive element in a very different cultural economy it enters into yet a new phase. It appears that since the 1960s, Bangla literary culture has been in a serious process of restructuring, of which only the broad terms can be specified. First, the linguistic economy that emerged through the nationalist movement with its political diglossia has been seriously modified by the structural developments after Independence. People at high levels under both national capitalism and state socialism prefer to speak in English, and through the increasing power of the state and the market, English has found a much wider domain of use compared to the linguistic economy of the 1960s. A new middle-class elite has developed that uses English as its only serious language, and the literary production of this social group has tended to be in English. The relation between vernacular literatures and this new domain of literary English is being gradually negotiated, displacing in some significant ways the earlier

relation between nationalism and vernacular writing. It affects the claims of vernacular cosmopolitanism particularly seriously. Cultural changes have also restructured the audiences for the various vernacular literatures.

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