

Creole Glossary: Tārāshankar Bandopādhyāy's Hānsulī Bānker upakathā

Author(s): BENJAMIN CONISBEE BAER

Source: *PMLA*, May 2010, Vol. 125, No. 3 (May 2010), pp. 622-639, 896

Published by: Modern Language Association

Stable URL: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/25704460>

---

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact [support@jstor.org](mailto:support@jstor.org).

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at <https://about.jstor.org/terms>



Modern Language Association is collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *PMLA*

JSTOR

# Creole Glossary: Tārāshankar Bandopādhyāy's *Hānsulī Bānker upakathā*

BENJAMIN CONISBEE BAER

THE BENGALI NOVELIST TĀRĀSHANKAR BANDOPĀDHYĀY'S *HĀNSULĪ Bānker upakathā* (হাঁসুলী বাঁকের উপকথা 'The Tale of Hansuli Turn'; 1946–51) confronts the reader with a language staged as if divided against itself, a language negotiating with its own shadow on either side of a class and caste partition in modern India.<sup>1</sup> *Hānsulī Bānker* maps representations of social differences in class and caste onto language differences between "standard" and creolized Bengali. It dramatizes a problem of literary representation—how to tell the tale of a subaltern group—as a reflection on the transformation of tale into written novel across an abyssal social divide. The mechanisms of this dramatization involve mutations of syntax, semantics, and rhetoric that make *Hānsulī Bānker* an unusual example for postcolonial political interpretations. It depicts the predicament of India's "tribal" (aboriginal) peoples when colony becomes independent nation-state, and the alternative postcoloniality suggested by the novel lies in its rhetorical staging of a call and response, a shuttling transaction across jagged partition lines that are not defined by the boundaries between nation-states.

The initial appearance and final shape of *Hānsulī Bānker* were both scarred by the ferocious violence surrounding the partition of the colony into the nation-states of Pakistan and India during the final months of British rule and marked by the enormous optimism of a newly independent India. Yet the novel depicts partition in the new-old polity from an angle different from the now familiar focus on the ruptures between India and Pakistan, and Hindu and Muslim, taking as its object the place of the Indian tribal (the aboriginal or the "Criminal Tribe") in the colonial-to-postcolonial social formation.

India's *adivasis* 'original inhabitants,' tribals, Denotified Tribes, and Scheduled Tribes are, as this list of names suggests, difficult to

BENJAMIN CONISBEE BAER is assistant professor of comparative literature at Princeton University. His translation of *Hānsulī Bānker upakathā* is forthcoming as *The Tale of Hansuli Turn* from Columbia University Press. He is also completing a book of case studies on transnational modernism, representations of indigeneity, and vanguard political movements in the 1920s–40s.

define succinctly. *Hānsulī Bānker* does not provide clear definitions but merely takes as its collective protagonist a group that is perhaps typical: the Kahars, a rustic, untouchable community subsisting on the edges of Hindu society and branded as “born criminals” by the British, as were hundreds of nomadic or resistant rustic groups during the nineteenth century (Devy; Fürer-Haimendorf). Tārāshankar’s eye is finely attuned to the distinctions of India’s tribal and untouchable worlds, as attested by the marginal appearance of the Santals in the novel, a group signifying an “authentic” and persistent pre-Hindu aboriginality. The Kahars are a more creolized mix. They are what the old colonial anthropologies call “Hinduized aborigines,” occupying the rigid yet permeable boundary between the tribal and nontribal worlds (Risley).

Moreover, *Hānsulī Bānker* imagines the now typically postcolonial topoi of diaspora and exile in terms of the millennial internal scatterings and hybridizations of the tribals in the subcontinent. In literary representations, the question of these other partitions and other diasporas, the tangled lines of which cross from precolonial to colonial to postcolonial times, disappears almost as soon as it is articulated. It is not seriously taken up again in Bengali fiction (nor perhaps in Indian fiction) until the mid-1970s writing of Mahasweta Devi. The novel thus supplements works that have taken caste difference as a guiding motif. Although the Kahars also fall into the large category of untouchable (now *dalit*), Tārāshankar’s complex primitivism carries a valence different from that of late colonial writers (e.g., Munshi Premchand or Mulk Raj Anand) who took caste but not the tribal as a subject.<sup>2</sup> While Premchand and Anand use literary representation to record social injustice, Tārāshankar adds the task of preserving the stories of a disappearing world. Through the vectors of a creolized language and the retelling of the story or tale, *Hānsulī Bānker* emphasizes a disappearing primordiality in a

way that is not possible for all untouchable or low-caste groups. *Hānsulī Bānker* supplements contemporary literary figurations of caste by focusing in on creolized Bengali as the double object of mourning (loss) and of reelaboration in a new form for future use (gain).

Tārāshankar dramatizes these tasks in the rhetorical form of an almost denial in the 1948 dedication of *Hānsulī Bānker*. এই মানুষদের কথা শিক্ষিত সমাজের কাছে কেমন লাগবে জানি না ‘I don’t know how the subject of these people will go down in educated society,’ he writes (138). “These people” are the Kahars, a so-called Criminal Tribe that lives on the river bend named in the novel’s title. The dedication, made to the poet Kalidas Ray, alerts the reader more than once to what will take place at the level of the novel’s language. সেখানকার মাটি, মানুষ, তাদের অপভ্রংশ ভাষা—সবই আপনার সুপরিচিত ‘The earth of that place, its people and their aberrant language [*apabhraṅsa bhāsā*—all these things are very familiar to you,’ writes Tārāshankar. I use “aberrant” for Tārāshankar’s Bengali *apabhraṅsa*, which means “fallen away,” “collapsed,” “disintegrated.” In the great Sanskrit treatises on language and literature from the sixth to twelfth centuries CE, *apabhraṃś* (अपभ्रंशः) appears as a name for corrupt, or at least derivative, language—that is, language that differs in significant ways from Sanskrit, usually in the direction of a perceived incorrectness, and that is often associated with rustic, non-Brahmin groups (Parasher; Pollock). In the present context, I call what Tārāshankar refers to as *apabhraṅsa* language *creole*, after Édouard Glissant’s definition: “a language whose lexicon and syntax belong to two heterogeneous linguistic masses: Creole is a compromise” (118). The Bengali creole of *Hānsulī Bānker* is not a creole in a strict technical sense, nor is it unconditionally aberrant. Here its aberrant or *apabhraṅsa* status refers to its literary elaboration in the novel as a relational, differenced mix, like the “Hinduized aborigines” who use it, positioned in the lowest strata of class and caste.<sup>3</sup>

Tārāshankar's use of the historically sedimented word *apabhraṅsa* therefore puts *Hānsulī Bānker* in relation to a complex and extensive literary and linguistic debate in South Asia. The classic Sanskrit dramas, for example, had always used differences of linguistic register between Sanskrit and multiple vernacular Prakrits to encode hierarchies of gender, class, and caste (Pollock; Stoler Miller). While, strictly speaking, a creole comes after the event of the cultured languages it mixes, the Prakrits represent nature to Sanskrit's culture. *Hānsulī Bānker* revisits the relation between Sanskrit and its others, revising that story through the mechanism of a creole glossary that is distributed within the main body of the narrative. The novel's strange glossary amends Sanskrit's self-glorifying narrative by making the deliberate, and hence aberrant, mistake of imagining Prakritic creole as a prior resource or ground of Sanskritic cultural constructions.<sup>4</sup> Structured as an erratic yet persistent shifting of the narrative into explanatory mode, the glossary enacts the task of responding to an other, aberrant scene of meaning and of preserving the trace of that response.

In stressing his representation of an "aberrant language" to "educated society," Tārāshankar underlines the work of glossing and commentary for another time and place that unfolds in his novel. And although he is careful to cite Labhpur, Birbhum (his birthplace, in the region where the novel is set), in his dedication, he has already been a part of educated society in Calcutta for many years. He knows that this novel will have an impact in Calcutta. At first critically lauded, *Hānsulī Bānker* was quickly held to be obscene, antisocialist, reactionary, nihilistic, elitist, and unrealistic.<sup>5</sup>

Tārāshankar displaces earlier (re)presentations of the levels, types, and appropriate domains of literary language into a reflection on the place of tribality in the postcolonial public sphere in modern India. In *Hānsulī*

*Bānker*, the Kahars' creole Bengali cannot be a placeholder for the popular—or for an originary, nationlike home for the educated society of the modern Bengali—because it is a language of subalternity, a language of the indeterminate shifting stratum forever below the surface of the representations that constitute the popular or the national (Spivak, "Scattered Speculations"; Guha). Nor is this creole Tārāshankar's own language, since the author is separated from subalternity by the internal class differences that are the very means by which he can record the transformation of a subaltern condition. Yet *Hānsulī Bānker*'s rhetorical texture describes a counterfactual history, in which the novel's ancient subaltern woman speaker can call for a shuttle between the discursive orders of story and history, tale and novel. This counterfactual space displaces the novel's plot, which aligns its movements with those of recorded (factual) history. It is here that the unusual postcolonial politics of *Hānsulī Bānker* reside.<sup>6</sup>

*Hānsulī Bānker* emerged across the tumultuous cusp of the colonial and the postcolonial in an empirical, historical sense. The moment of independence and partition was a period of unprecedentedly violent dispute about who the felicitous inhabitants of India were. *Hānsulī Bānker* was first published in a short version in the Puja special issue of the main Bengali-language daily newspaper, *Ānanda bāzār patrikā* (আনন্দ বাজার পত্রিকা), dated December 1946. As Tārāshankar puts it in his autobiography, ১৯৪৬ সনে আগস্ট মাসে হিন্দু-মুসলমানের ভারত-বিচ্ছেদী দাঙ্গা আরম্ভ হয়। দাঙ্গার জন্য 'আনন্দবাজার' পূজোর সময় বাজারে বের হয়নি বা হতে পারেনি, বের হয়েছিল কয়েক মাস পরে, বোধহয় ডিসেম্বরে। 'In August 1946, Hindu-Muslim riots over the partition of India began. Because of the riots, *Ānanda bāzār* did not or could not reach the stores at Puja time; it came out a few months later, perhaps in December' (*Āmār sāhitya jiban* 287). *Hānsulī Bānker* was worked up into a longer novel over the next several months, and between 1947 and 1951

further versions appeared, changed by Tārāshankar to reflect his vision of the newly independent country's prevailing mood.

Alongside the better-known discussions about India's Hindus and Muslims, fierce debates over the situation of tribals and untouchables in the emergent nation arose during the 1930s and 1940s. At issue was the question of what the proper indigenous population of India was, who should represent that population, and how. A broad sketch of this debate about national indigeneity would place the missionary-turned-anthropologist-and-advocate Verrier Elwin against the social scientist G. S. Ghurye. Elwin vehemently claimed firstness for the aboriginals, emphasizing their autochthony to the extent of proposing a new name, *bhumijan* 'soil-born,' and famously concluding his 1943 pamphlet *The Aborigines* by saying, "The aboriginals are the real swadeshi products of India, in whose presence everyone is foreign. These are the ancient people with moral claims and rights thousands of years old. They were here first: they should come first in our regard" (32). Strategically, this was a brilliant argument, turning around the nationalist claim to be *swadeshi* 'of one's own land' to define precisely the groups most neglected and marginalized by the nationalist construct. By contrast, Ghurye denied aboriginality or autochthony as an assertion of empirical priority because it can never be known who was really original in the millennia-long waves of nomadism, invasion, and assimilation to what he called mainstream "Hindu society" (11–20). And as early as 1931, Gandhi had claimed to represent all the marginalized groups of India "in my own person." As is well known, Gandhi staked his claim as representative through the extraordinarily effective political performance of a rustic transvestism designed, in Partha Chatterjee's words, to enable a political framework "in which the peasants are mobilized but do not participate" (125). *Hānsulī Bānker* finds a form in which to stage an un-

resolved tension between inclusion and exclusion as it pertains specifically to a subgroup of Chatterjee's peasants, the Criminal Tribe.

The plot of *Hānsulī Bānker* tells the story of one Criminal Tribe. The police periodically check up on these *dāgi* (দাগী 'marked persons'), though the Kahars are now sharecroppers and palanquin carriers (188–90). The novel's setting is a provincial hamlet on the bend of a river in 1941–47, a period of war and anticolonial independence struggle in eastern India. These two processes provide a broad dramatic backdrop for the novel's tracking of the disintegration and displacement of the Kahar community. When the villagers hear a terrifying sound coming from the jungle, differing interpretations of its meaning divide them. The elders, led by the headman, Bonwari, see it as an apocalyptic warning from the old gods that they are abandoning their forest home, while a group of younger villagers, led by his adopted son, Karali, seeks a more rational explanation. The conflict between Bonwari and Karali intensifies after Karali kills the snake making the sound, which the elders regard as the familiar of the local god. Following a violent dispute with Bonwari, Karali moves to the local town, begins systematically to attack all the symbols of the elders' world, and plans on modernizing the villagers by getting them all work in the town's wartime rail industry. War progresses, making increasingly visible the fault lines in the village. Meanwhile, the Gandhian independence movement rages, but the Kahars are excluded because of their low social status. An interwoven sexual and generational conflict between Karali and Bonwari comes to a head in the aftermath of a devastating cyclone. Bonwari is mortally injured in a fight, and in the months he lies sick in bed, Karali organizes an exodus of the villagers to the town and sells the surrounding jungle to a timber contractor for the war industries. When Bonwari awakens, his world is unrecognizable, and he soon dies. The village is abandoned. Suchand, the female village elder and guardian of its narratives,

lives on as a destitute in the town and retells the “tale of Hansuli Turn.”

The surface layer of the text is thus the archetypal story of a “parregicidal” father-son conflict as an allegory of primitive accumulation. The fatal intergenerational conflict between Bonwari and Karali articulates the narrative of the expropriation of the Kahars: their transformation from landless farmworkers to an urban subproletariat. At this level, the narrative aligns itself with mainstream history; the fate of the Kahars is to merge into the modernity of an independent India. History is animated by masculine intergenerational struggle.

Karali is the figure of a subalternity brought into contact with the cutting edge of capitalist development—the war machine. Most of the novel is set during World War II, when eastern India was an Allied front against Japan, and the war’s effects on the structures of rural Bengali life are vividly drawn. His entry into the colonial war machine paradoxically offers Karali the resources to condemn the feudal humility and caste segregation of the Kahars. The horizons of rustic feudal hierarchy are ruptured by the world of wage labor and British military structure. Thus, as the war machine touches Karali’s subalternity, it causes that subalternity to exceed its own bounds and enter crisis, enabling a critique of the violence of feudality. Karali moves out of subalternity and becomes a *sardār* (সরদার), a labor-gang leader and procurer of labor power for the urban war workshops, as well as brokering the ecologically devastating sale of the Kahars’ ancestral bamboo forest to timber contractors and arranging for the villagers’ final move to the town. This process is emblemized above all in Karali’s transvestite metamorphosis from village boy to uncanny, militarized avatar in uniform, cap, and boots.

Taken in isolation, the plot presents an impossible double bind: breaking feudal violence requires complicity with the great structural violations of colonialism and war. *Hānsulī Bānker* codes the entire (narrative) process

as one of a necessary and wrenching violence that will incorporate the primordial Kahars into the body of the new nation at the price of death, terror, and the loss of idiom. Yet in its rhetorical structure the novel cannot complete the process of mourning that this loss should entail. While *Hānsulī Bānker* is generally primitivist in its thematic treatment of the Kahars, who appear as survivals from a primordial epoch, অগ্নি আবিষ্কারের পূর্বযুগের মানুষ ‘humans from the age before the discovery of fire’ (200), the task of the novel is to deal with their uncanny (un)familiarity as it persists and overflows into the present. The internal glossary dramatizes the ghostly presence of the unfamiliar within the familiar, of story within history, and vice versa (Freud). Refusing to undo the double bind, the novel’s glossary represents an attempt to imagine the idiom’s survival in the unfamiliar terrain of educated society: a new literary/literate public sphere.

One of the earliest responses to *Hānsulī Bānker* from educated society is a letter of 12 October 1947 sent to Tārāshankar by the great linguist and philologist Suniti Kumār Chatterjee. Chatterjee writes:

আপনার বইয়ে একটি জিনিস পাইলাম যাহা অন্যত্র পাইবার নয়,—আপনি বাঙ্গলা দেশের আদিম যুগের মানুষের মনের একখানি নিখুঁত ছবি দিয়েছেন। হাঁসুলী বাঁকের যে বাউড়ী কাহারদের ছবি আপনি আঁকিয়াছেন তাহা অবশ্য তাহাদের পিতৃপুরুষদের স্বাধীন, স্বতন্ত্র, পারিপার্শ্বিকের বাতাবরণ হইতে ভ্রষ্ট, ব্রাহ্মণাদি উচ্চজাতির আর্য সংস্কৃতির চাপের ফলে পরপ্রসাদপুষ্ট, আত্মবিস্মৃত, বিলীয়মান একটি জনসমাজের ছবি। সূচাদ এবং বনওয়ারী ... তাহার অবস্থান মিশ্র আর্য ও অনার্য পরিবেশের মধ্যে, কিন্তু প্রাগ্ আর্য এমন কি প্রাগৈতিহাসিক যুগের মানুষের ধ্যানধারণা, চিন্তা কল্পনা তাহাতে পুরাপুরি বিদ্যমান, এবং অন্য শ্রেণীর মানুষেরা কল্পনা-জগৎ হইতে ও তাহার মৌলিক পার্থক্য বা ত্রুটি নাই। ... বনওয়ারী আর করালীর সংঘর্ষ শেষটায় সেই আদিম বা প্রাথমিক বস্তু লইয়া সংঘর্ষের রূপ ধারণ করিল—অধিকার এবং নারী। ভাষাসংস্থানীর কৃতজ্ঞতা—বাউড়ীদের ভাষার টুকিটাকি অনেক জিনিস পাইলাম যা কাজে লাগিবে

In your book is something that I could not find anywhere else—you have given a flawless

image of the minds of Bengal's archaic human beings. . . . The Bauris and Kahars of Hansuli Turn, whose portrait you have painted, have of course become detached from their ancestors' independence, autonomy, and surrounding environment; a picture of a society living by the grace of others, forgetting itself, dissolving as a result of upper-caste, Brahminical, "Aryan" pressure. . . . Suchand and Bonwari . . . are situated in a mixed Aryan and non-Aryan context, but within that a pre-Aryan or even prehistoric epoch's human mindset and imagination are completely alive. And compared with the imaginative world of other classes of people, there is no fundamental difference or defect. . . . In the clash between Bonwari and Karali . . . [is staged] an original or primary reality . . . possession and woman. . . . A language enthusiast's thanks: I found out lots of useful bits and pieces about the Bauris' language.

Chatterjee observes that the novel bears witness to a disintegrating premodern mind-set, that it records or preserves a society that is disappearing, and that it makes accessible a singular kind of language in a more general space. Yet the Kahars' *parole* 'speech' is not unmediatedly given. The novel provides a glossary, and Tārāshankar's innovation was to make this glossary a key structure of the book by weaving it into the syntactic and semantic architecture. The glossary is not found at the end of the book or in footnotes but is instead unevenly dispersed throughout the text, constantly interrupting the movement of plot with glosses of the meaning of words. The Kahars' creole Bengali is brought into the text under the two-way sign of a disappearing way of life and a story to be newly animated in future elaborations of reading and writing. The alternative postcoloniality of *Hānsulī Bānker* thus consists in its rhetorical structuring of a possible call-and-response across the partitions of class and caste.

The glossary performs two main operations: First, quotation marks are often used to

signal words deviating from the lexicon of so-called received *mānya calit bhāsā* (মান্য চলিত ভাষা 'colloquial Bengali'). Second, words and phrases whose syntax or lexicon differs from standard colloquial Bengali are glossed in the mainstream form. The difference or deviation here is always the swerve into the creole of the Kahars, their *apabhraṅsa* 'aberrant' language.

The literary critic Pareschandra Majumdār writes that the narrator constantly steps in to give তার অর্থও ব্যাখ্যা করে দিয়েছেন 'an explanation of [the] meaning' of vernacular words (218). But how the glossary takes place is not explored further by any commentator (Ā. Rāy; Pāl, Dās, and Rāy; P. Bandopādhyāy; R. Mukhopādhyāy; P. Mukhopādhyāy). The gloss is always announced with the word *arthāt* (অর্থৎ), from the Sanskrit ablative that literally means "from its meaning" and colloquially means "that means" or "that's to say." *Arthāt* is used so often in the novel that it becomes a refrainlike signal of rapid shifting to the explanatory level. The place where the word appears most frequently in Sanskrit is the extensive commentaries attached to the classical literary, legal, technical, and philosophical treatises. *Arthāt* is a didactic, explanatory pointer, constantly deployed to produce the meaning of the classical text: "This means x."

The word *arthāt* is colloquial in Bengali and is inconspicuously blended into the surface of the text of *Hānsulī Bānker's* narrator. Yet that text is reconstellated by its scatterings of *arthāt*, each one indicating a shift to an explicitly didactic level. Thus, the novel's glossary is dystactically disseminated throughout the work. The Sanskritic *arthāt* shades into the novel's Bengali by pointing to a *meaning*, indicating the real meaning. Its function is not to suggest that the modern, standard Bengali of the narrator's text is the real meaning; rather, what is being pointed at with the didactic stick of *arthāt* is an anterior substratum, decoded into the (implied) reader's derivative, standard idiom. Here *creole* does not represent a deviant fall from an

original standard language form; instead, the deracinated plurality of *creoles* underlies the possibility of a generalized standard.

Below is a representative example from the novel. I have underlined the occurrences of *arthāt* in the English and Bengali:

Ākāser dike cāile Banwārī. Hān, gatik khārāpi bote. Ākāś ekebare ispāter “banna” arthāt barna dhāran kareche. Chāyā thik pare nāi, tabe rod jena “āmale” arthāt mlān haye esechē.

আকাশের দিকে চাইলে বনওয়ারী। হ্যাঁ গতিক খারাপই বটে। আকাশ একেবারে ইস্পাতের ‘বন্না’ অর্থাৎ বর্ণ ধারণ করেছে। ছায়া ঠিক পড়ে নাই, তবে রোদ যেন ‘আমলে’ অর্থাৎ ম্লান হয়ে এসেছে। (275)

Bonwari looked up at the sky. Yep, sure lookin’ bad. Sky’s took on the exact “you,” meaning the hue, o’ steel. Not like shadder’s fallin’, but like the light’s gone “iskily,” meaning sickly.

From the first sentence to the second, we shift from the unmarked narratorial voice into free indirect discourse, the mixed representation of Bonwari’s thought world and the narrator’s voice. In the third and fourth sentences, the idiomatic words *banna* and *āmale* (*barna* ‘hue’ and *mlān* ‘sickly’) are held in the sentence by quotation marks. These words and their punctuation simultaneously indicate the idiomaticness of the protagonist’s (internal) utterance and enact a shift of levels that is completed by the narrator’s gloss of the idiomatic term, commencing with *arthāt*. The pattern is perfectly visible in this typical extract from a novel whose warp of glosses is held together by a weft of instances of *arthāt*.

In the words of V. N. Vološinov, the work of the creole glossary effects throughout the novel a “peculiar disfigurement of the semantic and syntactic physiognomy of the clause.” Vološinov is writing of free indirect discourse, a discourse that, he says, “serv[es] two masters, participat[es] simultaneously in two speech-acts” (137). *Hānsulī Bānker’s* auto-interruptive and ironic system of free indirect discourse is itself interrupted by the glossary.

Free indirect discourse remains forever suspended between the voice of the narrator and the voice of the protagonist, each inextricably superimposed on the other (Miller). The operation that Vološinov identifies in free indirect discourse is a “double-faced . . . matter of both author and character speaking at the same time, a matter of a single linguistic construction within which the accents of two differently oriented voices are maintained” (144).<sup>7</sup> The “author’s accents and intonations [are] interrupted by these value-judgments of another person” (155). In *Hānsulī Bānker*, *arthāt* announces the intercession of an interruptive glossing voice, collapsing the simultaneity of free indirect discourse (or indeed the mimetic straightforwardness of direct speech) into a sequential expository mode: “Karālī pāp, karālī sāksāt ‘dāno’ arthāt dānab” কৱালী পাপ, কৱালী সাক্ষাৎ ‘দানো’ অর্থাৎ দানব ‘Karali evil, Karali th’ incarnate “deemo,” meaning demon’ (333). The voices speak in turn, each enunciating the “same” word. *Deemo* and *de-mon*: the semantic, lexical, and phonic excess of the creole word calls forth its redeployment in the standard form by the glossing meaning machine of *arthāt*, but this reiteration gives rise to a “disfigurement of the semantic and syntactic physiognomy of the clause.” Every time the mechanical glossing of the Kahars’ aberrant tongue occurs, it produces a ruined and aberrant semantics and syntax in the novel itself.

Tārāshankar, like Vološinov, regards the speakers not as psychological entities (i.e., as nonexistent real persons) but as carriers of a language, linguistic entities. In other words, as in any novel, the persons or voices are carriers of language seams or strata. The event that occurs is thus the encounter not of two egos or psychological realities but of two braided languages in the same language.<sup>8</sup> The phonic and semantic overflow of subaltern creole is used to generate a productive crisis in the narrator’s language, both interrupting the narrative and fleshing it out. It is in

this crisis that the novel's deepest modernist primitivism resides: its attempt to explore the disintegration of the representational sign by coding the creole signifier as an archaic sound prior to sense and by miming the process of meaning making whereby sound becomes sense. As the creole signifier cuts into the semantic level as sound, so the machine of *arthāt* engages to turn the signifier into public meaning. An imagined developmental trajectory from a creole—coded in the text as archaic—to a modern, public standard is thereby repeated, remembered, over and over again by *Hānsulī Bānker*; a phantasmic history of the language is written and mimed in every clause of the glossary.<sup>9</sup>

The classical figure corresponding to the semantic effect here is anacoluthon, a shift in rhetorical register, a break in the expectations set up by a syntactic or semantic pattern. Anacoluthon happens all the time: “It’s a restaurant which I don’t know whether it will be any good.” The syntactic structure shifts here as the sentence abruptly changes its subject in the middle, swerving from its implied course. Everyday language is full of such abysses. Anacoluthon wrenches narrative sequence out of joint by splitting the enunciating voice into (at least) two alternative trajectories. In *Hānsulī Bānker*, the turns of anacoluthon are primarily semantic: ব্যাপারটা বুঝেছে বসন । সে শঙ্কিত কন্ঠে প্রশ্ন করলে—বাবা ওড় ? অর্থাৎ ভূত ? ‘Bashanta understood what was going on. In a fearful voice she said, Dad ‘ob? Meaning, ghost? [bābā or? arthāt bhut?]' (309). Through the repetition of this pattern, the novel becomes a story about the making of meaning and not just the telling of Bonwari and Karali’s intergenerational fight as an allegory of modernization. *Hānsulī Bānker*’s system of anacolutha cannot stabilize the relation between the creole language seam and the narrator’s standard, and the system highlights the repetitive work of bringing the two into relation and of laying out one in the format of the other. Creole ultimately

cannot appear as a primitive ground zero of presemantic locutions. Rather, an excess of meaning—Vološinov’s interruptive “value-judgments of another person”—is staged and redeployed by the novel’s anacoluthic glossary. These two elements, creole and the glossary, are locked into a productive tension that splits *Hānsulī Bānker*’s language at the seams and engenders new narrative turns.

The novel’s historical drama and all its fascinating anthropological details concerning the life of a Criminal Tribe on the cusp of postcoloniality thereby become surface images of another scene of meanings secreted in the language of the novel. This scene of multiple meanings, encrypted and elaborated in the surface of the text, tells a different, counterfactual story about the relation between a criminal tribe and the postcolonial public sphere. It minimally delineates a place at which the inevitability of the (hi)story of primitive accumulation and proletarianization can be called into question.

Let us look at another example. In an important passage of direct speech, Suchand, the village’s elder woman, describes how the Kahars in the old days used to be *dacoits* (ডাকাত ‘bandits’). After a flood that washed away the plantation, they resorted to robbery to survive until the landlord Chaudhury reemployed them as sharecroppers and farmhands:

Kāhārērā sāyeb māshāyder āmale sadgop māshāyder jomite jor kare “leel” *arthāt* neel bunechhe dhān kete niye giyechhe, dhare niye giyechhe. Tā chhārā kāhārērā chāsheri bā jāne ki? Satyii kāhārērā “chāshkarma” bhāla kare jāntā nā. Tabu chaudhuri māshāyer kathāy chhelechokrāke “bāgāl mānder” *arthāt* rākhāl māhindār rākhle.

কাহারেরা সায়েব মাশায়দের আমলে সদগোপ মাশায়দের জমিতে জোর করে ‘লীল’ অর্থাৎ নীল বুনেছে, ধান কেটে নিয়ে গিয়েছে, ধরে নিয়ে গিয়েছে । তা ছাড়া কাহারেরা চাষেরই বা জানে কি ? সত্যিই কাহারেরা ‘চাষকর্ম’ ভাল করে জানত না । তবু চৌধুরী মাশায়ের কথায় ছেলেছোকরাকে ‘বাগাল মন্দের’ অর্থাৎ রাখাল মাহিন্দার রাখলে । (247–48)

During the saheb masters' day, the Kahars planted "lindijoe," meaning indigo, by force on the Sadgop masters' land; they cut the paddy an' took it away, jus' grabbed it. 'Sides that, what's Kahars know about farmin'? I mean, the Kahars didn' know "farmwork" well at all. But at Chaudhury-sir's word the young boys was kept on as "herduns an' skinkers," meaning cowherds and servants.

Herein lies a microhistory of the fate of a Criminal Tribe under colonial semifeudalism. The Kahars go from being armed muscle for the colonial planters to being farmhands for the colonial-era Bengali landlord once the planters have gone. The creole glossary is again at work, this time in Suchand's direct speech. The effect of one voice being elaborated by another is intensified because Suchand cannot be imagined as glossing her own utterances. The explanatory shift is operated once more by the disposition of *arthāt*. While the rustic creole of *leel* 'lindijoe' or *bāgāl mānder* 'herduns an' skinkers' indeed retains a trace of meaning in mainstream, standard Bengali, an elaboration nevertheless takes place, representing the pervasive texture of the entire novel and exemplifying the glossary pattern that can be found on almost every page.

In subcontinental anglophone (post)colonial writing, the glossaries to be found at the end of some (but by no means all) novels often mark the works' quasi-anthropological authenticity at the same time as they bracket off the non-English idioms.<sup>10</sup> It is generally true to say that the glossary is a fraught textual prosthesis that creates an odd dynamic of marginality and centrality. Tārāshankar innovatively disperses the glossary throughout the text so as to activate the relation between the two language fields, to elaborate each by means of the other. His novel's positive gloss, then, subsists in its counterfactual effort to imagine the possibility of the subaltern creole speaker as a catalyzing agent of the glossary's elaboration as a public mechanism of meaning

making. The subaltern creole speaker is not yet such an agent in real history, and though the novel does not presume to offer the reader—educated society—an image of the subaltern point of view or subaltern identity, it offers an other scene of meaning to be thought, a scene that cannot be depicted as such. The novel's pervasive glossary texture is the dispersed site of this other scene of meaning, which finds unexpected textual support at the end. In the closing moments, the possibility of an other scene of meaning is powerfully staged, and the glossary is retrospectively reframed.

A dramatic *après coup* reveals the preceding several hundred pages to be a framed narrative, knotting the text around itself. The entire preceding narrative is shown to have been the stake of another narrative that now reveals itself as the key event of the novel (Barthes 212–15). This key event is the injunction to preserve the very *upakathā* 'tale' that was just narrated: the tale of the disintegration of the Kahar community under the pressures of modernity, the tale that recounts the Kahars' past and present, the tale punctuated by the creole glossary.

This wager is finally revealed near the very end, when the Kahars have been uprooted from their village and displaced to the town. Suchand, the keeper and teller of the village's tale, is now reduced to being a marginal urban beggar:

সুচাঁদ গাছতলায় ব'সে ব'লে যায় হাঁসুলী বাঁকের উপকথা । শ্রোতার কেউ শোনে গোড়াটা, কেউ মাঝখানটা, কেউ বা শেষটা । অর্থাৎ খানিকটা শোনে, তারপর উঠে চ'লে যায় । বুড়ী আপনমনেই ব'লে যায় । গল্প শেষ ক'রে বলে—বাবা, ছেলেবেলায় শুনেছি, হিয়ের জিনিস যা—তা মাখায় রাখলে উকুনে খায়, মাটিতে রাখলে পিঁপড়ে ধরে, হাতে রাখলে নখের দাগ বসে, ঘাষের ছোপ লাগে; তাই হিয়েতে রেখেছি । হিয়ের জিনিস নিয়ে হিয়েতে যদি কেউ রাখত—তবে থাকত । তা তো কেউ নিলে না, রাখলে না । আমার সাথে সাথেই এ উপকথার শেষ । তবে পার তো নিকে রেখে । আঃ—হাঁসুলী বাঁকও শেষ—আমিও শেষ—আমিও শেষ, কথাও শেষ । আঃ—আঃ ! (407)

Sitting under the tree, Suchand tells the tale of Hansuli Turn. Some of the listeners hear the beginning, some the middle, and some the end. Meaning they hear a bit, then get up and leave. The old woman tells it to herself. At the end of the story, she says, Sonny, 'eard it when I were a kid. 'S an 'eart thing, ya know—keep it in yer 'ead, lice'll eat it; bury it in earth, termites'll geddit; 'old it in yer 'and an' yer nails'll mark it, or sweat stains; so I've 'eld it in me 'eart. If ya keep an 'eart thing in the 'eart—it stays there. None took this 'un, nor kept it. This tale's gonna end wi' me, yeh. But if ya can, keep it in writin'. Uh!—Hansuli Turn's done—I'm done too—story's done.

For the first time in the novel, on its penultimate page, a central Kahar character addresses the narrator or the reader directly.<sup>11</sup> The narrator has so far been extradiegetic, absent from the story, and the entire preceding sequence—which has led us to this point—is thus suddenly reframed as an embedded narrative. The passage establishes an infinitesimally condensed retrospective frame narrative that stages the inheritance of the tale by the narrator or reader, who only appears inside the diegesis at this moment, reflected in another's imperative statement. The novel's allegory of reading opens onto a scene of writing in which the novel attempts to grasp the figure of its originating impulse: a call for response across the divisions of class and caste—Suchand's demand.

“[I]f ya can, keep it in writin’”: I read this demand for preservation in writing as staging a demand for inscription into history and the public sphere. The narrator or reader is invited to enter into the performance of the tale and thereby to engender future performances elsewhere: the space of literacy, of educated society and the mainstream public sphere. History and the public sphere are what writing in the narrow sense is made to mean in *Hānsulī Bānker*. In the logic of the novel's rhetoric, Suchand's telling of the tale becomes a performative, a speech act whose event pro-

duces an effect, and in this case the effect appears as a performance, as the novel itself (Austin; Derrida). The performative necessarily engenders, as it transgresses, an institutional setting, a collectivity of some kind. The injunction from the ancient subaltern woman figures the invitation to enter a collectivity and become a part of a tale machine, one that will make possible a new performance of the tale in another time and place.<sup>12</sup>

Suchand's demand of the narrator can be read as an attempt, in Roland Barthes's term, to “contaminate” the other with her narrative (213). It is as if the main event or primary fabula of the novel were, in fact, “Suchand asks someone to write down the *upakathā*—the story—she has been telling.” The story's dramatic change of subject shifts the earlier pattern of anacoluthon onto a higher structural plane as the novel takes a sudden swerve out of its expected trajectory. What happens is the possibility that the *upakathā* will be passed on to an indefinite future by being set out in another frame, another story form as glossary structure. *Hānsulī Bānker* thereby allegorizes the elusive source of its fictive work as the subaltern desire to contaminate (to touch) the inaccessible literary public sphere by elaborating the tale within it. If read characterologically, Suchand's attempt to pass on the tale is not a moment of quiet heroism or a cause for celebration; it is clearly staged as the last resort of a desperate individual calling to an unknown future in terrible circumstances. If taken as part of a rhetorical reading, the act dramatizes the tension between the subject who wants the tale of Hansuli Turn to be preserved, written, and therefore generalized for (unknown) others, and the novel itself, whose title is *The Tale of Hansuli Turn*. In the productive tension between Suchand's “tale of Hansuli Turn” and the novel *The Tale of Hansuli Turn* is posed the question of a possible survival as reelaboration.

Suchand requests that the reader or narrator reelaborate her tale, her *upakathā*, in

writing. The creole glossary is a key means by which *Hānsulī Bānker* stages a response to this fictive call. Moreover, the word *upakathā* rings like a refrain throughout the novel and is deployed in a double-genitive relation to place from the novel's title onward: *hānsulī bānker upakathā*, the tale of Hansuli Turn. "Tale" is an unavoidably trivializing translation of *upakathā*, but it conveys the folkloric sense that the word also has in Bengali. While *kathā* names "an utterance," "a discourse," "a topic," or "logos," the field of connotation for the prefix *upa-* includes "under-," "sub-," "proximity," "inferiority," "not-quite-there-ness." A possible translation of *upakathā* is "subnarrative," meaning not only the underlying material or stuff of any particular narrative but also a narrative that diverges from a main story. In Sanskrit poetics, the latter sense of *upakathā* names a type of story or subnarrative within the Indian epics, a story or subnarrative that interrupts the main narrative line as a digression or as an opening onto an entirely different narrative space (Goldman). Thus, *upakathā*: the apologue that does not quite make it into the felicitous logos or *kathā* of a main narrative line but that reveals a tangential, other scene of meaning.

*Upakathā* is not the word used for "novel" in Bengali.<sup>13</sup> *Hānsulī Bānker* plays a brilliant game with its elaboration of *upakathā* as *upanyās*, (উপন্যাস); in Tārāshankar's time, the latter word was established as the name for what in English is called a novel. *Upanyās* 'laying out,' 'setting down,' 'elaboration' became the preferred term for novelistic narratives during the nineteenth century, carried over from a looser definition of story types in, for example, Nilmoni Basak's translations of *Persian Tales* and *The Arabian Nights* as *Pārasyar upanyās* (পারস্য উপন্যাস; 1838) and *Ārabya upanyās* (আরব্য উপন্যাস; 1850). Before the meaning of *upanyās* as "novel" stabilized in the early twentieth century, the definition and usage of the word underwent many turns. For example, in 1877 the acknowledged

father of the Bengali novel, Bankim Chandra Chatterjee (1838–94), collected three of his shorter "novels" (*Indirā* ইন্দিরা, *Jugalānguriya* যুগলাঙ্গুরীয়, *Rādhārānī* রাধারানী) in a volume called *Upakathā: Arthāt ksudra ksudra upanyās sangraha* (উপকথা অর্থাৎ ক্ষুদ্র ক্ষুদ্র উপন্যাস সংগ্রহ 'Upakathā; or, A Collection of Very Short Novels'). In this title, *upanyās* 'novel' is subordinated to *upakathā* 'tale,' 'story,' as if the latter encompassed separate novelistic narratives juxtaposed or strung together. The structure of the title shows the instability of the term *upanyās* at that time, an instability that persisted into the early twentieth century, through the era of Rabindranath Tagore (Dasgupta).

The question of how *upanyās* became the preferred term for "novel" has not been explored in depth by literary critics. The literary debate has rather centered on the combination of formal elements that are thought to make *upanyās*, as a "stipulative neologization" (S. Das 15, 21–22), a nationally specific literary structure equivalent to the European novel: its modernity, its realism, its concern with the worldly present, its focus on characters as individuals, its prosaic and vernacular languages, its structured plot, and so on (Sen; Siraj Bandopadhyay; Ā. De; Mukherjee, "Epic").<sup>14</sup> Such elements were already at work in precolonial and early colonial literature, and the heterogeneity of these can be sensed from any of the accounts of the emergence of the Bengali novel or *upanyās* (Sen; Srikumār Bandopādhyāy; Ā. De). Furthermore, the "persistence of anterior modes of narrative" in the "supposedly realist" Indian novel has been convincingly demonstrated (Mukherjee, Introduction xi), an observation true for the novel as such and one that could continue to pluralize our histories of this narrative form.

As Hans Harder has pointed out, earlier prose-narrative modes (e.g., *nakshā* [নকশা 'sketches']) should not be seen teleologically as the evolutionary precursors of some normative novel form of narrative (390–94). However, these modes were generally seen as

part of a novelistic teleology in Tārāshankar's day, for example in the classic literary history by Srikumār Bandopādhyāy, *Bangasāhitye upanyāser dhārā* (বঙ্গসাহিত্যে উপন্যাসের ধারা 'The Development of the Novel in Bengali Literature'; 1938).<sup>15</sup> *Hānsulī Bānker* frames a different, counterfactual source for the material that *upanyās* will lay out: a subaltern *upakathā* removed from the rhetorical register of an *upakathā* performed by a rural *kathak*, an itinerant orator and balladeer who was the purveyor of a predominantly Brahminic culture and morality to the lower levels of rural society (Bhadra 61–64). An ancient subaltern woman's *upakātha* engendering *upanyās* is not the actual story of the rise of the Bengali novel. Thus, the staging of *Hānsulī Bānker* is a counterfactual sign, a projective gesture at restoring a relation otherwise shut down by history.

Siraj Bandopadhyay conjectures that “the word *upakathā* shades into the word *upanyās*” and that the emphasis in the latter is, as I have suggested, on an “ordering of the structure” (32). Yet he then reasserts the evolutionary competition to locate the first Bengali novel or *upanyās* in the 1860s, an effort that Tārāshankar's work implicitly subverts by suggesting that *upanyās* is repeatedly elaborated anew from *upakathā*. In *Hānsulī Bānker*, *upakathā* is *upanyasta* (উপন্যস্ত) into *upanyās*, set into a new layout, elaborated as public discourse: this process, says the novel, is the fictive origin of *upanyās*, of novel-ing in Bengali. Therefore, *Hānsulī Bānker* does not exemplify folklore's preservation in the novel but is a fiction marking the site of a possible counterfactual history, a counternarrative to the “real” history it also tells. This real history reappears in its final socialist realist motifs of the disappearance of the Kahars with modernity and independence, of their becoming proletarians and joining the mainstream of history:

উপকথার ছোট নদীটি ইতিহাসের বড় নদীতে মিশে গেল। কাহারেরা এখন নতুন মানুষ। পোশাকে-কথায়-বিশ্বাসে তারা অনেকটা পালটে গিয়েছে।

মাটি ধুলো কাদার বদলে মাখে তেলকালি, লাঙল কাস্তুর বদলে কারবার করে হাম্বর-শাবল-গাঁইতি নিয়ে। . . . সাপের কামড়ের বদলে কলে কেটে মরে, গাড়িচাপা প'ড়ে মরে। কিন্তু তার জন্যে বাবাঠাকুরকে ডাকে না। ইতিহাসের নদীতে নৌকা ভাসিয়ে তাদের তাকাতে হচ্ছে কম্পাসের দিকে— বাতাস-দেখার যন্ত্রটার দিকে। (405–06)

The small rivulet of tale [*upakathā*] has joined the great river of history. The Kahars are now a new people. In dress, speech, beliefs, they've really changed. They've exchanged smears of earth, dust, mud for engine oil; exchanged plow and scythe for dealings with hammer, crowbar, pickax. . . . Instead of dying from snakebite, they're sliced by machines, crushed by wagons. But they don't appeal to Babathakur for this. Afloat in a boat on the river of history, they're looking to the compass—to the weathervane.

Because and in spite of this paradoxical relation to the history and counterhistory of the subaltern, *Hānsulī Bānker* risks being seen as a neutralizing containment of subaltern dialects and memories, as a recuperative suppression of the plurality of subnarratives in the monocultural epic of nation building, or as a scenario of the bad faith of the upper-caste rural gentleman-novelist (Anderson; Lukács). The rhetorical structures of the novel work against the undeniable force of such a reading. The counterfactual scenario stages *Hānsulī Bānker*'s story form—*upanyās* as layout or template—as a site that Vološinov's “value-judgments of another person” may invest. This layout or template can be filled out with thick, historical-anthropological detail, such as that which appears in *Hānsulī Bānker*, but the story form may be filled with all sorts of other values or meanings. *Hānsulī Bānker* enacts the play of bringing to meaning in its creole glossary. The deployment of *arthāt* throughout the novel thus constantly bends the entire structure back toward Suchand's final (or initial) injunction, “if ya can, keep it [the *upakathā*] in writin'.” Whether this

keeping is good or bad will depend on how it is set to work, how the empty template is filled up. The gift of *Hānsulī Bānker* is its dramatization of the site of an impossible, subaltern perspective on its own writing, on nationalist histories of the Bengali novel, and on the historical class and caste segregation of the Hinduized aborigines and the Criminal Tribes.

In spite of being constrained by the immense torsion of its narrative of violent modernization and primitive accumulation, *Hānsulī Bānker* says that the story could have been different. The story is one of meaning making that can take any theme as its working material. The *upakathā* never appears as such because it cannot: it makes up the novel's very resource, its subnarrative sepulchrally secreted in the writing that the novel figures as demanded by Suchand. As the staging of a post hoc rewriting of Suchand's tale in another voice, *Hānsulī Bānker* registers the force of this other scene of writing every time its glossary machine kicks into effect. The trace of an authorial responsibility might be found in this repetition of a figural original, where the mechanical tic of the glossary subverts any simple ventriloquism or reproduction of the subaltern voice by author or narrator.

If *Hānsulī Bānker* mourns the tale's loss of idiomaticness, which the Kahars lose as they become "a new people," then the mourning is held open by a melancholia whose sign is the glossing mechanism. Both tale and novel, *upakathā* and *upanyās*, are incomplete without the open-ended shuttling between them. The politics of the text thus push against understanding the manifest level of the story as normative or descriptive. A careful reading of *Hānsulī Bānker* points us to a scene of writing where *upakathā* will have been written in another history in a future anterior: "if ya can, keep it in writin'," says Suchand. This scene of writing is the trace of another historical possibility imagined from within a dominant text of educated society and its public sphere. The novel expresses a nostalgic or primitiv-

ist desire to preserve the Criminal Tribe as it was, beyond its seemingly inevitable historical assimilation into the subproletariat. But *Hānsulī Bānker* also articulates the desire to leave this drama open-ended and show that the uncanny words, rhythms, and subnarratives of the rustic *upakathā* can be written into the future in a different way. The new story would—for better or worse—break with the hegemonic or dominant representation of the we of the public sphere, just as Suchand's performance of the story is depicted as breaking with the collectivities it generates.

Debate over the "place of these peoples [tribals and untouchables] within the emerging nation" and its public sphere was at a height during the 1940s, and though a political-legal form for a resolution was reached in the Indian constitution's Articles on Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, the debate persisted "as the quality of life of the large majority of Adivasis continued to deteriorate in post-independence India" (Hardiman 155). I cannot here go into the complex legislative and political history that led up to the official representation of the subaltern in the constitutional form it finally took (Galanter; Zelliott). In *Hānsulī Bānker*, it is the Kahars' distance from the political space that is most noticeable, such as when the Quit India movement of 1942 erupts. Quit India was one of the greatest counterpublic manifestations of the official nationalist movement, a "popular nationalist upsurge that occurred in the name of Gandhi but went substantially beyond any confines that Gandhi may have envisaged" (Pandey 5). The space of a Gandhian or nationalist political collectivity can be registered, but not occupied, by the subaltern in *Hānsulī Bānker*. The active political factions do not permeate down to subaltern space as locus of an active and participatory constituency:

মাথার উপর দিয়ে বড় বড় ভীমবুলের ঝাঁকের  
মত গৌঁ-গৌঁ শব্দ ক'রে উড়োজাহাজের দল চ'লে  
যায়; তখন হাতের কাজ ফেলে সবাই উঠে দাঁড়িয়ে

দেখে । বনওয়ারী পর্যন্ত দেখে । ওঃ, কাল যুদ্ধ রে বাবা ! ওদিকে চন্ননপুরে আর সব বাবু মহাশয়দের 'গেরামে' শহরে লেগেছে গান্ধীরাজার কাণ্ডকারখানা । লাইন তুলছে, সরকারী ঘরদোর জ্বালাচ্ছে; পুলিশ-মিলিটারিতে গুলি করছে, গুলি খেয়ে মরছে, তবু ভয়-ভর নাই । (375)

[A]bove their heads, a group of airplanes flies, buzzing like a swarm of giant hornets. Then everyone puts work aside, stands up, and looks. Even Bonwari looks. Ah, wartime, O Lord. There in Channanpur all the gentry sires've started all that Gandhi Raja business in the villages an' towns. Pullin' up rail lines, burnin' gov'ment buildin's; police an' military shootin' bullets, dyin' from bullet-wounds, but no fear, no dread.

The passage articulates in free indirect discourse an awareness of Gandhian politics seen from a distance of nonparticipation and exclusion: a mix of detachment from and admiration for the courage of the "gentry sires" in the country town. The Gandhian movement spectacularly included the variegated rural masses as a representation and political weapon but tried to ensure their instrumentalized nonparticipation, and in spite of Tārāshankar's own committed Gandhism, *Hānsulī Bānker* depicts the movement this way. The creole glossary and the elaboration of *upakathā* as *upanyās* are the means by which his novel imagines the loosening of such historically frozen relations.

Perhaps the best thematic illustration of this uncanny play of intimacy and separation comes in *Hānsulī Bānker*'s portrayals of sexuality. These are, incidentally, one of the main reasons Tārāshankar got into trouble for writing the book.

স্নান করতে নাকি উলঙ্গ হয়ে । সেই আমল থেকে কাহারদের কয়েকটা ঘরে রূপ এসে বাসা বেঁধেছে । পরম কাহারদের গুটিটার রঙই সেই আমল থেকে ধবধবে ফরসা । সুচাঁদপিসীর কতবাবা অর্থাৎ বাবার বাবার রঙ একেবারে সাহেবের মত ছিল । সুচাঁদপিসীর রঙও ফরসা । মেয়ে বসন্ত খুব ফরসা নয় । কিন্তু ওর মেয়ে পাখী তো একেবারে

'হলুদমণি' পাখী; চৌধুরীবাড়ির কতঁর ছেলে অকালে ম'রে গেল মদ খেয়ে, নইলে যুবতী পাখীর এখনকার মুখের সঙ্গে তার মুখের আশ্চর্য মিল দেখা যেত । তেমনিই বড় বড় চোখ, তেমনিই সুডোল নাক, চুলের সামনেটা পর্যন্ত তেমনিই ডেউখেলানো । (152)

[White sahebs] even went in naked to bathe. And from that time forth, beauty set up home in several Kahar homes. From that time on, the color of Porom Kahar's clan was luminously fair. Suchand's granddaddy's—meaning her father's father's—color was exactly like a saheb's. Auntie Suchand's color is fair too. The daughter Bashanta isn't very fair. But her daughter Pakhi's quite the "amber-jewel" bird; the head of the Chaudhury household's son died an untimely death of drink, but if he hadn't the young Pakhi's face would now have shown an amazing similarity to his. The same large eyes, the same well-formed nose; even her hair has the same kind of wave.

As local colonial-feudal sovereignties shift, so do the outside men with whom the Kahar women form sexual relations: from Englishmen to higher-caste Bengalis. These sexual relations give rise to the creole generations that make up the Kahars. Bonwari exemplifies the mind-set in which these relations are seen as normal. In the next passage, he justifies to himself why a husbandless and soon-to-be-childless Kahar woman should earn her living from sex work. It is a matter of economics: না জমি, না টাকা, নয়ান ম'রে গেলে নয়ানের মায়ের সম্বল হবে গতর 'no land, no money . . . [her] resource will be her body.' The passage continues:

পাপ পুণ্য বনওয়ারী বুঝতে পারে না এমন নয়, সে বুঝতে পারে মেয়েলোকের সতীত্বের মূল্য । কিন্তু বিধির বিধান, উপরে আছেন সংজাতেরা তাদের ময়লা মাটি থুথু সবই আপনি এসে পড়ে তাদের গায়ে । সংজাতের ময়লা সাফ করে মেথর । চরণসেবা করে হাড়ি ডোম বাউরী কাহার । শ্মশানে থাকে চণ্ডাল । বিধির বিধান এসব । কাহারদের মেয়েরা সতী হ'লে ভদ্র-জনদের পাপ ধরবে কারা, রাখবে কোথা ? কাজেই কাহার-জন্মের এ কর্ম স্বীকার যে করতেই হবে । (241)

It's not that Bonwari doesn't understand good and bad karma; he can understand the value of women's modesty. But it's divine prescription, all the shit and spit of the pure castes above will fall onto their bodies. The Methar clears up the pure castes' shit. Hari, Dom, Bauri, Kahar are footservants. Chandals at the cremation grounds. It's all divine prescript. If the Kahar women stayed modest, who would soak up the evil of the gentry—where would it go? The Kahar-born just have to accept their function.

This passage describes a line of internal social difference: the Kahars' sexuality is depicted as something other than that of the caste Hindu. For Tārāshankar, sexuality is a major zone of difference, and the subject runs through all his ruralist novels of the 1940s. Kahar women are depicted as having a tumultuous and passionate determination of their sexual activities, in a community where sexual norms are less rigid than those of caste Hindu society. The women's open or liberal sexuality—which both signifies the caste fatalism of the lowest and recodes the bad side of caste segregation as a good—is susceptible to relations with outsiders but also to appropriations and exploitation.

The list *Methar, Hari, Dom, Bauri, Chandal* tabulates several key untouchable and semiaboriginal groups engaged in the lowest forms of menial work. In this scenario of extreme functionalist caste separation, woman is allotted her place too: to soak up the sins of the pure castes, cleaning their karma. The generality and unity of the caste system are ideally secured through a rigid and institutionalized separation, guaranteed by endogamous reproduction within the caste group, which will keep the impure castes impure precisely so that, through their inborn shells of resilience, they can maintain the bodily purity of the delicate purer castes. The fiction proposed by *Hānsulī Bānker* is that the figure of a Kahar woman performing sex in the function of sin absorber is both rigorous example of and exception to this rule: through her body the impure caste

group is reproduced and through the use of her body the bad (karma) of the purer, more fragile high-caste man is absorbed.

Transgressing endogamy and populating the Kahar community with the children of whites and upper-caste men, this process undoes the biological or reproductive ground of the caste system it enables and alienates that system from its ground. The Kahar neighborhood is populated with uncanny doubles of the white planters and the Bengali landlords: "The same large eyes, the same well-formed nose; even her hair has the same kind of wave." In the novel's figuration, the caste system as such is instituted on an originary impropriety or alienation, a failure of familiarity in the sense of the generational linearity of families and other communal collectivities. This originary gendered alienation or "depropriation" is the structure that allows phantasmic claims to propriety, caste purity, or security of difference and identity to be generated. The difference between the Criminal Tribe and the nontribal hangs on such a partition. *Hānsulī Bānker* does not moralize, and nor does it stage the comparative openness of Kahar sexuality as simply a site for the exploitation of women. But it does set the reader the task of thinking through postcolonial India's other internal partitions, especially as the lines of those partitions engender ever more creolity and ever more rigid and violent attempts to suppress it.

---

## NOTES

For their comments on and assistance with various versions of this essay, I thank Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, Partha Chatterjee, Subha Chakraborty Dasgupta, Anjan Sen, Pradip Basu, Clinton Seely, Gyan Prakash, Isabelle Clark-Deces, Herman Tull, and Siona Wilson.

1. I refer throughout to the author as Tārāshankar, the way he is respectfully known in the subcontinent. All quotations of *Hānsulī Bānker upakathā* are from *Tārāshankar rachanāvali*. Unless otherwise indicated, all translations are mine. I have not given conventional (e.g., Sanskritized)

transliterations of characters' names but have rather romanized them in a way that approximates how they sound when spoken. Thus, for example, I use "Bonwari" rather than "Banwāri" and "Suchand" rather than "Sucānd."

2. Although figurations of caste permeate much colonial fiction in the north of the subcontinent, untouchability as a major theme seems to be a development in Tārāshankar's generation. Meenakshi Mukherjee has written that "*Malapalli* (Telugu, 1923) and *Untouchable* (English, 1933) have generally been regarded as the earliest attempts to tackle [the] uncomfortable issue" of caste in fiction, excepting some works in the south in the 1890s (Introduction xviii). The word *dalit* did not become a current, militant appellation for the old *untouchable* or *Harijan* until the 1970s, although it was used occasionally in the 1930s (Zelliot; Michael).

3. I use the term *creole* loosely so as to relate it to Glissant's work on creolity, and I differentiate the trajectory of my inquiry from the trend in positivist linguistics that attempts to mine literary representations for verifiable information about dialect distribution or variation or authorial linguistic competence. Examples of attempts to verify the latter are Ives; Schneider and Wagner. In such studies, the literary staging of dialect (creoles, pidgins, etc.) is typically reduced to, at best, a sub-Barthesian reality effect and subordinated to an entirely empirical register.

4. I am indebted to Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak for discussion on this point.

5. A selection of the original criticism can be found in D. Dās.

6. I draw here on Spivak's discussion of the counterfactual element in fiction (*Outside* 71–74). As will become clear from my reading of *Hānsulī Bānker*, I cannot endorse Rajat Kanta Ray's anthropological interpretation, which sees the novel as making directly accessible the emotional world of the subaltern and of wider rural society. The "structure of feeling" (Williams) staged by the novel is far more complex than such a fantasy of unmediated contact with subaltern worlds and mind-sets allows.

7. Vološinov's term for free indirect discourse (in the translation) is "quasi-direct discourse," defined as the "interferential merging of two differently oriented speech-acts" (137).

8. Vološinov regards the antagonistic voices as markers of social antagonisms, class struggles, not simply as reflections of already secured class positions. "In the vicissitudes of the word are the vicissitudes of the society of word-users" (157). One must look at language not only as the "*medium for ideological reflection of existence*" but also in the light of the enigmatic and difficult project of a "*history of word in word*" (158).

9. The repetitive, refrainlike glossary device of *arthāt* developed for this novel does not occur in other works by Tārāshankar. The history of the standardization of Bengali is too complex to enter into here. Modern standard Bengali developed in a tacit and fragmentary way during the nine-

teenth century and was primarily activated through and for literary production. Intimately linked to the response of the Bengali Hindu middle class to colonial intervention, the changes wrought on the language had primarily to do with an attempt to excise its many Persian and Arabic lexical elements, as well as to regularize grammatical forms. The best accounts of this process to date are Ānisuzzāmān; S. De; Mannan, *Ādhunik* and *Emergence*; and D. Rāy.

10. A comparative study would be worth undertaking. For example, Raja Rao's *Kanthapura* (1938, notes 1963), John Masters's *Night Runners of Bengal* (1951), and R. K. Narayan's *Malgudi Days* (1972) would each yield very different considerations of the relation of the glossary to the main textual body.

11. The earlier *Ānanda bāzār* version conveys more explicitly that Suchand addresses the narrator in person: সুচাঁদ এই উপকথা বলেছে আমাকে ... পার তো 'নিকে একো' 'Suchand told me this story. . . . "If ya can, keep it in writin'" (78).

12. "To write is to produce a mark that will constitute a kind of machine that is in turn productive" (Derrida 314).

13. Many Indian novels mark a similar affiliation with preexisting narrative or lyric forms by adopting generic names as titles. Some famous Bengali examples contemporary with Tārāshankar are Bibhutibhusan Bandopādhyāy's *Pather pānchālī* (পথের পাঁচালী 'The Song of the Road'; 1929 [*pānchālī* is a type of ballad]); Manik Bandopādhyāy's *Putul nācher itikathā* (পুতুলনাচের ইতিকথা 'Puppet Dance Fable'), and Satinath Bhaduri's *Dhorāi caritmānas* (টোঁড়াই চরিত মানস 'Biography of Dhorai'; 1949–51) which invokes Tulsidas's sixteenth-century *Rāmcāritmānas* on the epic character of Rama.

14. I am not necessarily endorsing these predicates of the novel, merely iterating the terms used in Bengali and anglophone discussions of what defines one.

15. "Of all the new kinds of literature that have been produced in our country under the influence of English literature, the novel [*upanyās*] is foremost" writes Sriku-mār Bandopādhyāy (1). He argues that *upādān* (উপাদান 'ingredients') for the novel are to be found in a variety of ancient literary forms, which combine with the English novel (*upanyās*) to produce the "rise" of the Bengali novel (*upanyās*; 2–16, 21–34).

## WORKS CITED

- Anderson, Benedict. *Imagined Communities*. New York: Verso, 1983. Print.
- Ānisuzzāmān. *Muslim mānos o bānglā sāhitya* মুসলিম মানস ও বাংলা সাহিত্য [Muslim Mind and Bengali Literature]. Dhaka: Munir Chaudhuri, 1964. Print.
- Austin, J. L. *How to Do Things with Words*. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1975. Print.
- Bandopādhyāy, Pārthapratim. "Hānsulī Bānker upakathār jagat" হাঁসুলী বাঁকের উপকথার জগত [The World of *Hānsulī Bānker upakathā*]. Pāl, Dās, and Rāy 1–16.

- Bandopadhyay, Siraj. "The Novel in Bangla: The First Steps." *Early Novels in India*. Ed. Meenakshi Mukherjee. New Delhi: Sahitya Akademi, 2002. 27–40. Print.
- Bandopādhyāy, Srikumār. *Bangasāhitye upanyāser dhārā*. বঙ্গসাহিত্যে উপন্যাসের ধারা [The Development of the Novel in Bengali Literature]. Kolkata: Modern Book, 2003. Print.
- Bandopādhyāy, Tārāshankar. *Āmār sāhitya jiban* আমার সাহিত্যে জীবন [My Literary Life]. Kolkata: Paschim-banga Sahitya Akademi, 1997. Print.
- . *Hānsulī Bānker upakathā* হাঁসুলী বাঁকের উপকথা [The Tale of Hansuli Turn]. *Tārāshankar rachanāvalī* তারশঙ্কর রচনাবলী [Collected Works]. Vol. 7. Ed. Ganjendrakumār Mitra, Sumathnāth Ghosh, and Sanatkumār Bandyopādhyāy. Kolkata: Mitra, 1999. 138–408. Print.
- . "Hānsulī Bānker upakathā" হাঁসুলী বাঁকের উপকথা [The Tale of Hansuli Turn]. *Ananda bāzār patrikā* আনন্দ বাজার পত্রিকা Dec. 1946, Puja spec. issue: 20–78. Print.
- Barthes, Roland. *S/Z*. Trans. Richard Miller. New York: Hill, 1974. Print.
- Bhadra, Gautam. "The Mentality of Subalternity: *Kantanama* or *Rajdharmā*." *Subaltern Studies*. Ed. Ranajit Guha. Vol. 6. Delhi: Oxford, UP, 1989. 54–91. Print.
- Chatterjee, Partha. *The Nation and Its Fragments: Colonial and Postcolonial Histories*. New Delhi: Oxford UP, 1993. Print.
- Chatterjee, Suniti Kumār. Letter to Tārāshankar Bāndopādhyāy. Pāl, Dās, and Rāy 4.
- Dās, Dhananjay, ed. *Mārksbādi sāhitya-bitarka* মার্ক্সবাদী সাহিত্য-বিতর্ক [Marxist Literary Debates]. Kolkata: Karuna Prakasani, 2003. Print.
- Das, Sisir Kumar. "Western Literary Terms and Their Indian Adaptations." *Jadavpur Journal of Comparative Literature* 18–19 (1981): 13–30. Print.
- Dasgupta, Subha Chakraborty. "Issues in Reception: A Case Study of the Early Bengali Novel." *New Comparison* 23 (1997): 54–65. Print.
- De, Āshok Kumār. *Bānglā upanyāser utsa sandhāne* বাংলা উপন্যাসের উৎস সন্ধানে [In Search of the Sources of the Bengali Novel]. Kolkata: Jiggasha, 1974. Print.
- De, Sushil Kumar. *Bengali Literature in the Nineteenth Century*. Calcutta: Firma KLM, 1962. Print.
- Derrida, Jacques. "Signature, Event, Context." *Margins of Philosophy*. Trans. Alan Bass. Hemel Hempstead: Harvester, 1982. 307–30. Print.
- Devy, G. N. *A Nomad Called Thief: Reflections on Adivasi Silence*. Hyderabad: Longman, 2006. Print.
- Elwin, Verrier. *The Aborigines*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1943. Print.
- Freud, Sigmund. "The Uncanny." *Art and Literature*. Ed. Albert Dickson. London: Penguin, 1990. 335–76. Print.
- Fürer-Haimendorf, Christoph von. "The Position of the Tribal Populations in Modern India." *India and Ceylon: Unity and Diversity*. Ed. Philip Mason. London: Oxford UP, 1967. 182–222. Print.
- Galanter, Marc. *Competing Equalities: Law and the Backward Classes in India*. Berkeley: U of California P, 1984. Print.
- Gandhi, Mohandas Karamchand. "Speech at Minorities Committee Meeting, November 13, 1931: Indian Round Table Conference (Second–1931 London)." *Proceedings of the Federal Structure Committee and Minorities Committee*. London: HMSO, 1932. Print.
- Ghurye, G. S. *The Scheduled Tribes*. Bombay: Popular Prakashan, 1963. Print.
- Glissant, Édouard. *Poetics of Relation*. Trans. Betsy Wing. Ann Arbor: U of Michigan P, 1997. Print.
- Goldman, Robert P. *Gods, Priests, and Warriors: The Bhrgus of the Mahabharata*. New York: Columbia UP, 1977. Print.
- Guha, Ranajit, ed. *Subaltern Studies*. Vol. 1. New Delhi: Oxford UP, 1982. Print.
- Harder, Hans. "The Modern Babu and the Metropolis: Re-assessing Early Bengali Narrative Prose, 1821–1862." *India's Literary History: Essays on the Nineteenth Century*. Ed. Stuart H. Blackburn and Vasudha Dalmia. New Delhi: Permanent Black, 2004. 358–401. Print.
- Hardiman, David. *Gandhi in His Time and Ours*. London: Hurst, 2003. Print.
- Ives, Sumner. "A Theory of Literary Dialect." *A Various Language: Perspectives on American Dialects*. Ed. Juanita V. Williamson and Virginia M. Burke. New York: Holt, 1971. 145–77. Print.
- Lukács, György. *The Theory of the Novel: A Historico-Philosophical Essay on the Forms of Great Epic Literature*. Trans. Anna Bostock. Cambridge: MIT P, 1971. Print.
- Majumdār, Pareschandra. "Tārāshankar: Bhāsājagat" তারশঙ্কর: ভাষাজগত [Tārāshankar: Language-World]. *Tārāshankar: Desh, kāl, sāhitya* তারশঙ্কর: দেশ, কাল, সাহিত্য [Tārāshankar: Place, Time, Literature]. Ed. Ujjvalkumār Majumdār. Kolkata: Pustik Bipani, 1998. 216–23. Print.
- Mannan, Quasi Abdul. *Ādhunik bānglā sāhitye Muslim sādhanā* আধুনিক বাংলা-সাহিত্যে মুসলিম-সাধনা [Muslim Projects in Modern Bengali Literature]. Dhaka: Student Ways, 1969. Print.
- . *The Emergence and Development of Dobhasi Literature in Bengal*. Dhaka: U of Dhaka P, 1966. Print.
- Michael, S. M., ed. *Untouchable: Dalits in Modern India*. Boulder: Rienner, 1999. Print.
- Miller, J. Hillis. *Reading Narrative*. Norman: U of Oklahoma P, 1998. Print.
- Mukherjee, Meenakshi. Introduction. *Early Novels in India*. New Delhi: Sahitya Akademi, 2002. vii–xix. Print.
- . "Epic and Novel in India." *The Novel*. Vol. 1. Ed. Franco Moretti. Princeton: Princeton UP, 2006. 596–631. Print.
- Mukhopādhyāy, Pūrṇendusekhar. *Mārksiya dristikone Tārāshankarer upanyās* মার্ক্সীয় দৃষ্টিকোণে তারশঙ্করের

- উপন্যাস [Marxist Perspectives on Tārāshankar's Novels]. Kolkata: Pustak Bipani, 1994. Print.
- Mukhopādhyāy, Ranjītkumār. *Tārāshankar o Rārḥ-Bānglā* তারাশঙ্কর ও রাঢ়-বাংলা [Tārāshankar and Bengal's Rārḥ Region]. Kolkata: Nabark, 1987. Print.
- Pāl, Rabin, Nimāi Dās, and Anil Rāy, eds. *Prasanga Hānsulī Bānker upakathā* প্রসঙ্গ হাঁসুলী বাঁকের উপকথা [On Hānsulī Bānker upakathā]. Kolkata: Chatterjee, 1996. Print.
- Pandey, Gyanendra, ed. *The Indian Nation in 1942*. Calcutta: Centre for Studies in Social Sciences; Calcutta: Bagchi, 1988. Print.
- Parasher, Aloka. *Mlecchas in Early India: A Study in Attitudes towards Outsiders up to AD 600*. New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, 1991. Print.
- Pollock, Sheldon. *The Language of the Gods in the World of Men: Sanskrit, Culture, and Power in Premodern India*. Berkeley: U of California P, 2006. Print.
- Rāy, Ālok. "Hānsulī Bānker upakathā" হাঁসুলী বাঁকের উপকথা [The Tale of Hansuli Turn]. *Ebang musāyera* এবং মুশায়েরা 10.2–3 (2003): 66–74. Print.
- Rāy, Debesh. *Upanibeshher samāj o bānglā sangbādik gadya* উপনিবেশের সমাজ ও বাংলা সাংবাদিক গদ্য [Colonial Society and the Prose of Bengali Reportage]. Kolkata: Papyrus, 1990. Print.
- Ray, Rajat Kanta. *Exploring Emotional History: Gender, Mentality and Literature in the Indian Awakening*. New Delhi: Oxford UP, 2001. Print.
- Risley, H. H. *The Tribes and Castes of Bengal: Ethnographic Glossary*. 2 vols. Calcutta: Bengal Secretariat, 1892. Print.
- Schneider, E. W., and C. Wagner. "The Variability of Literary Dialect in Jamaican Creole." *Journal of Pidgin and Creole Languages* 21.3 (2006): 45–96. Print.
- Sen, Sukumār. *Bānglā sāhityer itihās* বাঙ্গলা সাহিত্যের ইতিহাস [History of Bengali Literature]. 5 vols. Kolkata: Ananda, 2002. Print.
- Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty. *Outside in the Teaching Machine*. New York: Routledge, 1993. Print.
- . "Scattered Speculations on the Subaltern and the Popular." *Postcolonial Studies* 8.4 (2005): 475–86. Print.
- Stoler Miller, Barbara. *Theater of Memory: The Plays of Kalidasa*. New York: Columbia UP, 1984. Print.
- Vološinov, V. N. *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language*. Trans. Ladislav Matjeka and I. R. Titunik. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1986. Print.
- Williams, Raymond. *Marxism and Literature*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1977. Print.
- Zelliot, Eleanor. *From Untouchable to Dalit: Essays on the Ambedkar Movement*. Delhi: Manohar, 1998. Print.

employed in preparing indigenous texts for publication often embodied the political relation between imperial states and indigenous polities. (JG)

606 **Scott MacKenzie**, "Stock the Parish with Beauties": Henry Fielding's Parochial Vision

The parish and the social systems it sustains are prominent in Henry Fielding's *Joseph Andrews*. His parochial vision, formulated across the range of his literary, critical, and juridical writings, constitutes an intricate scheme of surveillance, discipline, and care that Fielding hoped to see applied throughout the nation. He combines a plan for reforming oversight of the poor (from the intimate confines of parish management through the supervisory offices of the county and the magistracy) with a heuristics of judgment and discrimination, based on the visible authenticity of poverty and verified by the ridiculousness of affectation, which he exemplifies through the antiromance of *Joseph Andrews*. Romance, for Fielding, is the literary version of affectation, a transgressive masquerade that belongs to social emulation and that can be unmasked by a "test of truth," derived from the third earl of Shaftesbury's *Characteristicks*. (SM)

622 **Benjamin Conisbee Baer**, Creole Glossary: Tārāshankar Bandopādhyāy's *Hānsulī Bānker upakathā*

Tārāshankar Bandopādhyāy's novel *Hānsulī Bānker upakathā* 'The Tale of Hansuli Turn' (1946–51) straddles the period of independence and partition in India. Its literary staging of the creolized Bengali spoken by a marginal, untouchable, semiaboriginal group is both formally innovative and politically imaginative. Tārāshankar disperses the book's glossary throughout its text, and the workings of this glossary embody an unusual perspective on class and caste segregation in modern India. The novel's historical narrative tells of the disintegration of a rustic, semifeudal Kahar community under the crises of war and modernity in the 1940s. While this history says that proletarianization and loss of idiom are inevitable for such figures of the rural margins, *Hānsulī Bānker* elaborates a counterfactual possibility. This alternative history is not simply a romanticized novelistic preservation of a dying way of life but a minimal imagining of a different line of connection between the realm of subalternity and the public sphere. In its reimaging, *Hānsulī Bānker* also rethinks and prefigures modern India's other internal partitions, internal diasporas, and emergent political dilemmas and the history of the Bengali novel itself. (BCB)

640 **Haiyan Lee**, Enemy under My Skin: Eileen Chang's *Lust, Caution* and the Politics of Transcendence

Emmanuel Levinas's ethical philosophy, particularly his notions of transcendence and the "face of the other," illuminates Eileen Chang's short story *Lust, Caution* (*Se, jie*) and, to a lesser extent, Ang Lee's film adaptation. *Lust, Caution* tells of an assassination plot against a collaborator with the Japanese during the second Sino-Japanese War in which the heroine's fatal decision to let go of her enemy results in the deaths of herself and her comrades. The story problematizes the status of the personal and ethical in times of war, occupation, and resistance through the heroine's path from the collective anonymity of national salvation to the theatrical solitude of underground activism and the intersubjective encounter with the face of the other. Also relevant is Hannah Arendt's theory of the (bourgeois) social, which in conjunction with its feminist revision prompts reflections on women's space of action in "dark times." (HL)