

Talking Back to the Empire of Science in Postcolonialism: The Autistic Poet Tito Mukhopadhyay as a Model

Dina Helmy Shalaby

Assistant Professor,
Faculty of Arts,
Menofiya University,
Egypt.

Abstract

This study explores the persistent, and eternal attempt of some of the neurotypicals who belong to the West or those who could be called as "the neurotypical occidentals" to stabilize the differences between them, and "the autistic Third World immigrants". In the era of colonialism, and even after it, there has been multiple paranoiac, and imperialist Western medical debates which have objectified the disabled Third World immigrants including the autistics. This study examines two selected poems by the autistic Third World immigrant, and Hindu poet Tito Mukhopadhyay (1988-). His poems, namely, "*Misfit*" (2010), and "*Poem I*" (2013) talk back to the Western empire of

science, and its paranoiac medical myths concerning autism. In these poems, Mukhopadhyay portrays his suffering from the elite Western medicine in the United States which has only spotted the autistic Third World immigrants, and pursued to cure, and normalize them. He has realized that such process of normalization is only an imperial strategy to exclude, and objectify him, and his likes because, basically, they do not belong to the West. That is why in these poems, Tito Mukhopadhyay attempts to resist the colonial medical hegemony of the West, and reconfigure some of its myths concerning autism.

Keywords: autistic, immigrant, neurotypical, occidental, normalization

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Postcolonialism is a critical theory which mainly examines the differences between West, and East (Ashcroft et al 3). The critics of Postcolonialism have always attempted to view, and explore these differences. Investigating the scientific superiority of the West which the excolonizers used in order to set a border line between them, and the excolonized is one of those differences. In fact, through such superiority, the dominant Western science adopted, and attempted to impose a very humiliating scientific vision concerning the disabled Third World immigrants especially the autistics. Such humiliating vision which spots autism in only the Third World immigrants, and ignores that it is generally a common human disorder is the core of this study.

West\East, or First\Third world, these terms are very familiar in the field of the postcolonial studies. As a matter of fact, they are considered the most common binary opposites in the theory of post colonialism. These terms became common with the outbreak of colonialism around the world when some of the White colonizers who belong to the West determined to lead military campaigns to occupy the others` lands, and exploit their wealth. Apparently, their success to control whole countries, and large areas of the globe makes the White men suffer from what Edward Said has referred to as the "paranoia" of the West (72). This psychological disorder makes them according to Said "invent" these binary opposites (1) which certainly succeeded in setting false, and ethnocentric hierarchy which differentiates between the people according to their origin. According to this

hierarchy, the White men are viewed as the most elite race who must enjoy the most typical cultural, and physical features of humanity. Thus, he/she who belongs to the West is the symbol of all what is positive, always civilized, educated, and able bodied physically, and mentally, while the other is "the image of every negative quality" (Ghai 282), a barbarian, an ignorant, and disabled. He/she who belongs to the Third World is even viewed as a "degenerate type" (Bhabha 70) of humanity, or "not fully human" (Smith 100) according to this ethnocentric Western stereotyping.

Such paranoiac differentiation of the humans led to horrible consequences in the era of colonialism, and after it. It made some of the colonizers claim that their colonialism is a "social mission" (Spivak 56), and "an inevitable and natural evolutionary act" (Wagner 5) which generally aims at "righting" (Cornell 105) everything related to the other races, bringing them "progress, achievements," and "curing their diseases" (Cesaire 62). As a matter of fact, the colonizers did not want to introduce any kind of aid to the pathetic other races from their point of view. They did not want to elevate them, or bring progress to them at all. Rather, they wanted to stabilize their unique, and superior position in comparison to the others in the hierarchy of power. That is to say the West wanted to remain always the most superior race in opposition to the other inferior races who certainly belong to the Third World. In order to fulfill such paranoiac, and ethnocentric aim, the colonizers extremely endeavoured to find anything which could prove their being an elite, and superior race. That is why they

used their advanced knowledge "as a form of power" (Foucault 69). That is to say they exploited their advancement in knowledge in order to "impose Eurocentric and Westocentric knowledge" (Meekosha 12) which includes some false, and ethnocentric scientific facts on the Third World's people. For example, some Western scientists adopted racial scientific views about the dark skin colour of the Third World people, and the spread of AIDS mainly among some of them (see later p 4-5).

That colonial strategy is described as the "epistemological domination" (Grech, Disability and Majority 65) of the West. It enabled the old colonizers to exploit their superior, and dominating knowledge in order to subjugate the other races who do not have similar advancement in knowledge. Probably that is what made the Western medicine in the eighteenth century jump to mythological, and not scientific debates concerning the issue of race, and skin colour. These debates allowed some of the White scientists especially in the field of medicine to raise humiliating, and marginalizing questions which aim only at objectifying those who do not belong to the West. For example, this question has been always repeated in the Western scientific debates in Europe: "was blackness a product of climate and environment, or was it a God-ordained sign of sinfulness?" (Loomba 70). In fact this question gives the reader the impression that all who enjoy a black skin must be sinners who got their skin colour as a punishment from God, and that they deserve to be treated as objects by the elite White man, and that is absolutely not an objective scientific fact.

Apparently, the Western medicine did not only attempt to show the pretended, and false superiority of the White man through the issue of differences in skin

colour, it also spotted any other difference which the First World could position as a standpoint for their superiority. For instance, it strangely spotted the physical, and neurological abnormalities which are common in all races, and highlighted it only in the Third World people. Thus, some of the Western doctors in the era of colonialism, and after it, they rudely spotted these abnormalities only in the Third World people as if they are the only race who suffer from what the West considers as the negative qualities of man. For example, some Western doctors believed that the Third World people are the only people who are afflicted with AIDS, and that they are responsible for its spread (see later p 5). These ethnocentric doctors have totally ignored the fact that some people of their superior race are afflicted with these physical, and neurological abnormalities. Certainly, they have ignored this fact because displaying the White man's abnormalities, or disabilities would destabilize the myth of the most typical man which the West has endeavoured to keep forever.

Although dehumanizing, and humiliating the disabled is generally a worldwide phenomenon, yet it is "the Western medicine" which has mainly developed it (McRuer Disability Nationalism 170). Through its "compulsory system of able-bodiedness" (McRuer *Crip* 35), "the able-bodied-disabled binarism" (McRuer Disability Nationalism 170) has been held as a parameter of difference between What the West called as the abled White man, and the disabled others. In the era of colonialism, generally, the imperial power viewed the "black and African bodies as 'disabled bodies,' [who are] unfit for anything other than the most brutal forms of labor" (Kennedy 2). That is to say, the African slaves were considered as

people who enjoy the least mental abilities. It seems that even this underestimating colonial vision of the mental abilities of the African slaves did not satisfy the colonizers because it, as well, implied a clear, and direct confession of their physical strength. Certainly, this is what made some of the colonizers attempt to "reconfirm Whites` dominion over blacks"(Kennedy 7) by disabling their physically strong, and able body. That explains why the White traders who looked for the fittest African slaves, have later "forced[them] into a system of enslavement that disabled their body"(Kennedy7).

After the end of colonialism, the dominating White man insisted on playing the same old role of the colonizer by attempting to keep the privilege of his\her being always the eternal able bodied White man in comparison to the disabled other. That is why some of the Western scientists ignored that diseases, and disabilities afflict them like the Third World people. Further, they, sometimes, jumped to false, and ethnocentric scientific conclusions without true examination. For example, in 1982 and when AIDS appeared as a disease in the United States, some American scientists at "The Centre of Disease Control, and Prevention" or the (CDC) in the United States claimed that it is only the inferior immigrant Haitians who were responsible for the outbreak, and spread of the AIDS (Pape et al 1). Remarkably, such: "accusations and blame [were] directed towards Haitians before any detailed epidemiological studies" (Sherry 17). Even later after making true scientific examinations, some Western scientists like Dr Jacques Pepin, the author of *The origin of AIDS* (2011) (HIV/AIDS 1), and Professor Michael Worobey, (the assistant professor of biology in Arizona University) believed that the Haitians are responsible for

the spread of AIDS in the United States (Jensen 1). Apparently, these scientists forgot that their ancestors, or the old colonizers have been responsible for importing new diseases which have not been common in the colonies such as measles, small pox, and the plague (Grech Eurocentric Disability 9).

Such deliberate forgetting of realities, and paranoiac sense of their being the only able bodied race on the earth have been accompanied with what can be described as the most repulsive, and disgraceful act of the White man through colonialism, and after it. In the era of colonialism, the White doctors endeavoured to subjugate the disabled slaves by forcing them to be enrolled in what can be called as their "medical normalization" (Thomson 53) project. This project is in reality a colonial "form of governance" (Titchkosky and Aubrecht 4) which aims at forcing the disabled slaves to adopt a "*colonial normativity*" model (Grech Eurocentric Disability 10). Through having the cure in the Western medical institutions, and hospitals in the colonies, only the disabled slaves were forced to commit to this colonial model which makes them attempt to oppress their abnormalities, or disabilities, and instead burn to mime the White man`s able body. Indeed, this ethnocentric model of normativity produced a "restrictive version of the [disabled other] human" (Titchkosky and Aubrecht 4). This human has always struggled to peel off her\his skin in order to become "the 'ideal' colonised body" (Grech Eurocentric Disability 10) or even close to the West`s "normative model of humanity" (Bergenmar, Rosqvist, and Lonngren 215).

Though the West`s medical normalization project could be described as an illusionist colonial strategy which has been difficult if not impossible for the

colonizers to succeed in fulfilling it especially in some of the physical, and neurological disabilities, it has not stopped. In fact, this constraining, and imperialist project kept going on even after the end of colonialism because the West kept attempting to "absorb, cancel and reduce the strangeness" or the negative qualities of the inferior other (Said 87). In the nation states, the "Questions of able, fit, disciplined bodies and minds, [have been very] vital" (Soldatic 54). They have been always raised by the able bodied First World scientists to only the disabled Third World immigrants. As a matter of fact, the imperialist nation state spotted, and exploited the negative qualities, or the disabilities of those immigrants in order to objectify them. So, it could be said that othering the disabled immigrants has not been because they are mainly disabled. Rather, it has been because they originally belong to the Third World.

That is probably why the autistic immigrants have been extremely humiliated, and excluded from the nation states which attempted "through a system of medical knowledge and Western treatment protocols" (Titchkosky and Aubrecht 12) like that which has been used in the era of colonialism to normalize them. Indeed, such normalization project which has been, and still a worldwide procedure to treat the difference of the autistics (Autism and Normaliation 1), and "mind their minds" (Titchkosky and Aubrecht 4), aims at controlling, and changing only the strange autistic mind of the Third World immigrants by forcing them to abandon their strange autistic behavior, and behave instead like the "neurotypical First world man", or the "neurotypical occidental". As a matter of fact, the autistic immigrants who accepted this system which the West called a "cure system", have to behave against their nature, modify, and normalize their behavior

according to the imperialist medical criteria of the nation states. That is to say, they have to attempt to mask their autism, and "situate [themselves in order to look] normal and human" (Bergenmar, Rosqvist, and Lonngren 203) like the neurotypical First World man.

In fact, Tito Mukhopadhyay refuses to normalize his behavior according to the imperialist medical criteria. Mukhopadhyay is originally an Indian poet who has been diagnosed with autism since he was eighteen months old. His mother, Soma, who noticed that he does not respond like other children, attempted to modify his behavior through special educational techniques which she invented, and that is probably what made him unexpectedly become able to read, and write poetry. In fact, such extraordinary abilities especially for an autistic, made Richard Mills, the autism researcher, who met Tito Mukhopadhyay in India invite him to visit the United Kingdom in order to be assessed by the scientists in "the National Autistic Society". Later, at the age of thirteen, he, and his mother moved to the United States because some social foundations invited them to come in order to help the autistic children like him to adapt. Mukhopadhyay has written several books which include poetry, prose, and philosophical views such as "*Beyond the silence*" (2000), "*The Mind Tree*" (2003), "*How Can I Talk If My Lips Do Not Move*" (2011), and "*I am Not a Poet but I Write Poetry*" (2012) (Wikipedia 1).

Since his feet touched the land of The United States at the age of thirteen, Mukhopadhyay, and his mother lived a life which is "marked by exclusion and degradation" (Savarese 276). He left his homeland in order to "help other nonspeaking children with autism learn to communicate" (Savarese 276) as he does¹.

This has been the declared purpose for inviting him to go to the USA as Portia Iversen, the co-founder of (CAN)² claims. After forcing him to cure, and normalize his autism by medicine, and the publication of Iversen's autobiography, *Strange Son*³, (2007) where Iversen described Mukhopadhyay as a "beast", and an "alien being" (qtd in Khan 6), and ignored to mention that her White autistic son is a similar autistic beast, and alien being, Mukhopadhyay realized that he has fallen as a prey to only an ethnocentric imperialist foundation, and people. They wanted to show Mukhopadhyay's inferior "positionality [and his being] not-quite-subject"(Khan 6), because he is mainly a Third World immigrant. That is why they spotted his autism which they consider a negative quality which only the immigrants are afflicted with.

In fact Mukhopadhyay's response to CAN, Iversen, and generally the imperialist society in the nation state has been very strong, and challenging. In his reply on Iversen after the publication of *Strange Son*, he said:

Madam Iversen continues to dedicate herself in some other cause of science and cure...I personally do not believe I am sick and need cure. So I am not a co-dreamer of Iversen's dream. I am proud to be what I am. Call me Strange or whatever.... 'Strange Son' felt like a slap on my face...getting recorded in a way like that 'hurts me more than my autism'. 'May the writer find whatever she seeks...we do not respect the 'acts' of being taken for granted. (Portia Iversen- *Strange Son* 1)

Mukhopadhyay's reply clearly shows that he refuses to be described as a sick person

because he believes that his autism does not make him sick. Also, it shows his recognition of the true intentions of the Iversen, CAN, and generally the imperialist medicine of the neurotypical First World man. In fact, it is that recognition which "hurts him more than his autism" because it makes him become quiet sure that the neurotypical occidentals do not want to really cure him. They just spotted his autism, and wanted him to submit to their "medical surveillance" normalization project (Khan 6) only to objectify him for his being mainly a Third World immigrant, and that is what Mukhopadhyay described as "acts of his being taken for granted".

As a matter of fact, Mukhopadhyay has written poetry which clearly resists the imperialist Western medicine, and its normalization project which "alienates" (Khan 6), and "dehumanizes" (Smith 101) Mukhopadhyay, and his likes. Through his poetry "he has begun talking back to the empire of science" (Savarese 276), or to the paranoiac Western medicine and all who have supported it including CAN, Iversen, and some of the neurotypical occidentals in the nation state. He attempts to challenge, and "resist [its] environment [which is] structured upon the erasure of one's agency and personhood [by] "reconfiguring [its] prevailing epistemologies, undoing [its] medical norms"(Khan 10), and "dethroning [its] privileged neurotypicality" (Savarese and Zunshine 20). That is why, Mukhopadhyay does not portray his autism like the imperialist medicine has viewed it as a negative quality which inferiorizes only the Third World immigrants. Rather, he sketches his autism as another different version of normality, or neurotypicality and that certainly does not make a Third World immigrant like him an inferior.

That is absolutely what makes his poetry praise the strange symptoms of his disorder. In fact, Mukhopadhyay considers these symptoms quite normal acts, and that the West has no excuse to place him in the position of the object only because he suffers from these symptoms. It is true that his nodding, and hand flapping which are "repetitive routines of autism," (Mckenna 409) make him look strange according to the imperialist empire of science, and its ethnocentric medicine, but he believes that they are only a different version of normality. Thus "To stop them means to stop existing, to lose the feeling of certainty and ease which the movement granted him"(Boldsen 901).

As a matter of fact, normalizing what is viewed as abnormal for the neurotypical occidentals has not been the only way which Mukhopadhyay used to resist, and dethrone the neurotypicality of the imperialist empire of science, and its hegemonic medicine. He has another strategy which depends on showing the neurotypical occidentals that he owns their same abilities, and that he is not disabled as they view him. He has an imagination which completely resembles their imagination. Indeed, this is something which marches against the facts of the Western medicine, and its compulsory system of able bodieness which has completely denied the existence of this ability generally in the autistics. According to Uta Frith the autistics suffer from "impairments in imagination"(2). Though the West ignored that generally the autistic patients do not have an imagination, yet Mukhopadhyay has realized that CAN, Iversen, and generally the nation state spot this disability only in the autistic immigrants in order to other them. That is why, Mukhopadhyay portrays in his poetry several images which do not only prove his having a different version of normality, but

also builds an imaginary world which he could inhabit whenever he wants in his dreams. It is a world which is not constrained by the imperialist background of the Western medicine. Through this magnificent, and colourful imaginary world, he could easily "transform his environment" (Khan 9) or the nation state which he inhabits to another place which is more tolerant, and embracing. It is where he could feel and enjoy his being only a different version of humanity without being dehumanized by the neurotypical occidentals, and their ethnocentric medicine.

In spite of his using of strategies of resistance against the empire of science, Tito Mukhopadhyay has an inward pursuit as well to have a negotiating zone in between his autistic Hindu identity, and this imperialist empire. Like Homi Bhabha's inbetweenness, which is simply defined as an "intervening space to reinscribe humans"(Bhabha 7) regardless of their cultural, or racial differences, Mukhopadhyay has drawn a platonic in between world which respects his neurological difference, and embraces him exactly like the neurotypical occidentals. This world has been sometimes only a future wish, and some other times a dream which he inhabits whenever he wants.

"*Misfit*" by Tito Mukhopadhyay portrays his resistance of the empire of science or the Western ethnocentric medicine as well as his pursuit to have an inclusive "in between zone" (Bhabha 7) which tolerates, and accepts his difference. Belonging to the Third World makes Mukhopadhyay a person who must have "negative qualities" (Ghai 282), and nothing is more negative than his strange autistic symptoms especially his "repetitive" nodding, flapping hands (Mckenna 409), and his "impaired imagination"(Frith 2).

Such heavy dose of negative qualities are extremely spotted in Mukhopadhyay by the imperialist Western medicine, and some of the neurotypical occidentals. They ignored that Mukhopadhyay, and his likes enjoy the very pure side of the human nature for they unlike the neurotypical occidentals "accept the difference and love people for who they are without caring about colour, race or social status" (The Positives 1). That is why Mukhopadhyay attempts through this poem to directly "talk back to the empire of science" (Savarese 276), and to "reconfigure its prevailing epistemology" (Khan 10) which led him to be diagnosed as a disabled immigrant.

From Mukhopadhyay's point of view he is very normal: "I personally do not believe I am sick" (Portia Iversen- Strange Son 1). Tito Mukhopadhyay is only a different version of humanity which he is "proud to be" (Portia Iversen- Strange Son 1). In *Misfit*, he views his strange body movements as only an echo to the movements in the universe which nobody can control, or submit to a "medical normalization" project (Thomson 53) like that which he has suffered from. Also, Mukhopadhyay believes that his imagination is not impaired, and that he completely resembles the neurotypical occidentals, and could draw multiple images which prove his normality. Thus, there is no need to cure him. Mukhopadhyay's point of view which directly challenges the Western medicine is what he confirms from the first line in "*Misfit*": "There was the earth, turning and turning". In this line, he clearly says that his flapping hands are normal, and that they will never stop going backward, and forward like the earth which has a normal rotation that will never stop. In fact, this rotation is a phenomenon which has never stopped since the universe has been created. If there is a resemblance between Mukopadhyay's

flapping hands, and the earth's rotation so how Mukhopadhyay's hands movement is exploited to inferiorize him? Nobody has ever denied that the earth turns so why the neurotypical occidentals deny Mukhopadhyay's hand movement. Strangely, the routinely, repetitive, and endless rotation of the earth has never annoyed Portia Iversen, CAN, and the ethnocentric neurotypical men in the nation state. They have never considered it a negative quality of the universe like Mukhopadhyay's flapping hands which these imperialists do not only consider as a negative quality, but also extremely exploit it in order to prove the otherness of the Third World immigrant Tito Mukhopadhyay. Absolutely, the neurotypical occidentals can not attempt to interfere, change, or even reduce a very normal movement like the earth's rotation. Like the earth's turning which is very normal, and can not be controlled by any different neurotypical occidental, like Mukhopadhyay's autistic flapping hands which can not be forced to stop by the normalization project of the empire of science, and its ethnocentric medicine.

Mukhopadhyay continues in the next line in the first stanza: "The stars receded, as if finding no wrong with anything" to challenge the empire of science, and its ethnocentric medicine by proving the normality of his hand flapping. He believes that those autistic hands echo not only the earth's rotation, but also the constant movements of the stars which continually rush away, and recede from the earth⁴. This movement can not be reduced, changed, or controlled by the empire of science exactly like Mukhopadhyay's flapping hands which he believes that it is impossible to change them through the neurotypical occidentals' medical normalization project. Like the stars which "receded, as if finding no wrong with

anything", like Mukhopadhyay who believes that there is no wrong in his hand flapping. In this line, and in many other lines which the reader will notice later, Mukhopadhyay uses images, and personifications in order to prove his having a very normal imagination. He uses a personification in this line, and compares the stars to a person like him who completely enjoys the rational thinking of the able bodied humans, and thus able to determine that the movement of his hands is definitely right, and that there is no wrong in them.

In that refrain, "find no wrong" which Mukhopadhyay keeps repeating at the end of each stanza, there is an emphasis on his belief in his being completely equal to the neurotypical occidentals who claim that they are very normal in comparison to the autistic others. In the next stanza, Mukhopadhyay again attempts to challenge the empire of science by proving the normality of his hand flapping which he compares to the birds` fly at the morning: "Birds flew by all morning". Like the birds which never stop flying at the morning till they sleep at night, like the poet who never stops the flapping of his hands from the morning till he sleeps at night. This systematic, and fixed routine of the birds` movement is also a phenomenon which no neurotypical occidental could control, change or reduce. Why Iverson, CAN, and generally some of the neurotypical occidentals in the nation state find no wrong in the birds` systematic fly everywhere, while they extremely endeavour to normalize Mukhopadhyay`s autistic hand flapping which is very normal?

By providing the third, and last challenge of the empire of science, and its ethnocentric medicine, Mukhopadhyay determines to recall his first challenge again. Probably, this is because he believes that the

earth`s rotation is the most great phenomenon which could challenge the ethnocentric medicine of the empire of science. Nothing is greater than the repetitive rotation of the earth. It is an inevitable, and pivotal movement which guarantees the universe`s eternity, and the continuation of the life cycle. It is simply what makes the sun rise everyday: "The sky lit from the earth`s turning and turning". Through this line, the poet uses a magnificent metaphor. Mukhopadhyay compares the earth`s inevitable turning to a fire which lightens the sky daily, and makes everything return to life after long sleep at night. It resembles Mukhopadhyay`s inevitable, and pivotal flapping hands which should be kept because it is what "makes him feel that he exists" (Boldsen 901). Thus, for him the imperialist attempt of the Western medicine to cure, and normalize his autistic flapping hands is without doubt a threat to his existence, and that makes it an impossible to fulfill process.

If his hand flapping is very normal, and inevitable so, there is no need to exploit it pretending that it is a negative quality which inferiorizes, and objectifies the Third World immigrant, Tito Mukhopadhyay. In the next stanza:" The birds knew I was Autistic\ They found no wrong with anything", the birds in the empire of science who resemble Mukhopadhyay not only because they have a fixed, and daily routine of flying, but also because they are immigrants who have no fixed home, are able to realize this fact. Through the personification in this line, Mukhopadhyay compares the birds to the immigrants in the nation state who as it seems have generally accepted, and tolerated his strange hand flapping, and find no wrong in it. They believe in his being only a different version of humanity unlike most of the neurotypical occidentals in the nation state. In the next

stanza, Mukhopadhyay has suffered a lot from not only the neurotypical occidental scientists, but also the neurotypical occidental public. It seems that they support their imperialist medicine, and its "compulsory system" (McRuer *crip* 35) which propagates for the superiority of only the neurotypical occidentals (Titchkosky and Aubrecht 4). That is why they spot, as well as their empire of science not only the most strange body movements of the autistic immigrants but also their least strange, and abnormal autistic movements. The neurotypical occidental ordinary men, and women consider "nodding" a negative quality which perfectly proves Mukhopadhyay's being an inferior race who is "not fully human" (Smith 100). Though it is rarely noticed in comparison to hand flapping, yet they strongly stare at Mukhopadhyay whenever he makes a nodding: "Men and women stared at my nodding". Also according to Mukhopadhyay, they have no problem in clearly stigmatizing him by calling him a misfit: "They labeled me a Misfit".

Though Mukhopadhyay feels extreme suffering, and pain for his being stigmatized, yet he knows quite well that it is the ethnocentric medical strategies of the empire of science which make the ordinary neurotypical people in the nation state inferiorize the autistic Third World immigrants. Also, he knows that he is just a different version of humanity, and that there is nothing wrong in his hand flapping, and nodding as the empire of science attempts to mislead its people. That is why Mukhopadhyay swears not ever to repress his nodding or hand flapping, or to submit to the Western medical normalization project. He will be like the wind: "And then I was the wind, blowing/I found no wrong with anything". In this metaphor, Mukhopadhyay compares himself to the wind which

naturally, and relentlessly blows everything in its way, and finds no wrong in its strange nature.

Though his persistence to resist the empire of science is impossible to negotiate, yet it seems that he longs as well to have an "in between zone" (Bhabha 7) which tolerates his different version of humanity in the future. In the next, and last stanza, Mukhopadhyay tells the readers that he has a wish: "Somewhere a wish was rising, Perhaps from between my laughing lips". This wish might be impossible to have at the present time because it rises physically from between Mukhopadhyay's laughing lips, and this is impossible to some extent because Mukhopadhyay is a "non verbal autistic" (Wikipedia 1). This means that there is no speech which could come out from his in between lips.

Though this wish is somehow impossible to take place now, yet it is not impossible to take place in the in between zone in the future. In fact, the space between Mukhopadhyay's lips carries a symbolic meaning in this poem. Generally, in the body of man, the mouth includes two lips which need to work together in the space between them in order to make the human speak, eat and drink. The space between Mukhopadhyay's lips symbolizes the contact zone, or the in between zone where Mukhopadhyay wishes to live peacefully with the others in the nation state regardless of their neurological, or cultural backgrounds in the future. If that wish came true, that would be certainly the moment when his lips laugh. It might be also the miraculous moment when his lips move for the first time, and raise this philosophical question which has always irritated him: "Why stop turning and turning when right can be found with everything?" In fact this question uncovers Mukhopadhyay's deep

belief. He believes that everything in the universe is perfect, and that is why nothing is wrong in the earth's rotation, and his flapping hands, or nodding. All are normal movements.

"*Poem I*" by Tito Mukhopadhyay is certainly not very different from "*Misfit*" because according to Anicca Abhishek generally "Tito's poetry breaks rules of the normative society, destroying all the questions on ability that is often posed for persons with disabilities" (102). It just has a slightly different beginning, and draws another route of challenge against the empire of science, and its ethnocentric medicine. Unlike "*Misfit*" which begins with the persistent, and direct challenge of the empire of science, "*Poem I*" begins with a description of Mukhopadhyay's awful feeling before falling as a prey to the stigmatization of the empire of science, and then attempting to challenge it. Also, in "*Poem I*" Tito Mukhopadhyay does not attempt to prove that he is normal by normalizing any particular strange autistic symptom. Instead, he challenges the empire of science by showing it that he has a similar imagination to the imagination which is enjoyed by most of the neurotypical occidentals. Through his imagination which the ethnocentric medicine of the West has firmly negated that it exists (Frith 2), Mukhopadhyay could create an imaginary world which enabled him to talk back, and challenge the empire of science. Also, it enabled him to create an "inbetween zone" (Bhabha 7) which embraces Mukhopadhyay, and generally the neurotypical occidentals in the nation state.

The poem begins with a meticulous description of how some of the neurotypical occidentals in the nation state view Tito Mukhopadhyay especially after he has refused to be cured through their imperialist

"normalization project" (Thomson 53), and its ethnocentric medicine (Titchkosky and Aubrecht 4). In the first stanza, it seems that most of the ordinary men, and women in the West have been prey to the propaganda of CAN, and Iversen. That is why they adopted the ethics of the ethnocentric Western medicine, and began to treat the autistic Mukhopadhyay as an inferior and "not-quite- a subject"(Khan 6) for his being mainly a Third World immigrant. They did not want to confess that he is only a different version of humanity, and that is why they could not accept his strange autistic behavior. They could not hide their sense of astonishment, and uneasiness when they saw Mukhopadhyay's strange autistic behavior which made him look like, according to Portia Iversen, "beasts", and "alien beings" (qtd in Khan 6): "Men and women are puzzled by everything I do". Also, most of the First World doctors show similar reaction. Instead of treating Mukhopadhyay as only a different version of humanity, they have been competing in examining his strange disorder, and giving it different terminologies as if he is an alien being: "Doctors use different terminologies to describe me".

It seems that the ethnocentric medicine of the West has succeeded in exterminating Tito Mukhopadhyay from the nation state. According to "the compulsory system of ablebodieness" (McRuer *Crip* 35), Mukhopadhyay's being an autistic makes him a "degenerate type" of humanity (Bhabha 70) who lacks some of the perfect qualities of the neurotypical occidentals, and that is why he has been positioned as inferior and "not-quite-a subject"(Khan 6). Indeed, that is what makes him feel a great sense of alienation, and dehumanization. His life has become unbearable, and awful, and his mind has been crowded with a lot of horrible thoughts, and fears which he

describes in the second stanza as: "bigger than I can express". Also, Mukhopadhyay has become involved in a daily ordeal because according to him: "Every move that I make shows how trapped I feel/Under the continuous flow of happenings". Every strange autistic behavior is certainly a step which delays Mukhopadhyay's belonging to the elite neurotypical occidental society. It is a step towards the continuous labeling, stereotyping and refusal of him which is repeated daily. Thus, for Mukhopadhyay, his ordeal becomes very close to the impossible to solve mathematical formula which contains related, and consequent causes, and effects: "The effect of a cause becomes the cause of another effect". That means that the un acceptance of Mukhopadhyay by the neurotypical occidental society which is an effect of one cause that is his being mainly an immigrant, is further the cause of another effect which is Mukhopadhyay's sense of "dehuminaization, and exclusion" (Smith 101).

Though this has been a very real torture which Mukhopadhyay has to deal with daily but strangely, it did not make him surrender to the normalization project of the empire of science, and to its horrible, and inferiorizing circle of cause, and effect. Rather, he determined to resist that imperialist empire by talking back to it (Savarese 276), and reconfiguring its prevailing epistemology (Khan 10). Through portraying magnificent images which indicate that Mukhopadhyay owns a fertile imagination like the neurotypical occidentals, Mukhopadhyay could "undo one of the medical symptoms of autism" (Khan 10) which the empire of science spotted only in the autistic immigrants. The ex colonizers always confirmed that the autistic immigrants suffer from "impairment of imagination" (Frith 2) which is " a negative quality" (Ghai 282) according to

the "compulsory system of ablebodieness" (McRuer *Crip* 35).

How could he lack the ability to imagine? In the next stanza, he says that it is the only thing which enabled him several times to transform his marginalizing, and dehumanizing society which has been saturated with the ethics of the empire of science, and its ethnocentric medicine: "I think about the times when I change the environment around me". In this new, impressive, and embracing imaginary zone, Tito Mukhopadhyay could go whenever he wants to a world which does not only resist the empire of science, but also tolerates his being different, and never sees him as an inferior, or "not fully human" (Smith 100). It is exactly his pursued "in between zone" (Bhabha 7) which he compared in a simile to a beautiful dream in the next, and last stanza: "With the help of my imagination/I can go places that do not exist/And they are like beautiful dreams". Though he likes his imaginary world but he knows that he can not stay there forever because it is not a real world. That is why the poem ends with his hope that everything will change, and that his beautiful dream might come true one day. For Tito Mukhopadhyay, the "world is full of improbabilities/Racing towards uncertainty", and that is why everything could change including the hierarchy of power, and the ideology of the ethnocentric medicine of the West.

Briefly, the invention of the Western binarism which divides the people to the First World's able bodied versus the Third World's disabled, is a paranoiac colonial strategy which has been motivated by the West's advances in sciences, and medicine in order to stabilize the superiority of the occidental. The dominating, and superior First World's medicine which ignores that autism is a human disorder regardless of

where you belong, has stipulated a compulsory system of ablebodiedness which aims at normalizing only the autistic immigrants by curing them, and making them attempt to resemble the neurotypical occidentals. Tito Mukhopadhyay does not believe that he is sick, or in need of a cure. Also, he realizes that the ethnocentric Western Medicine has only spotted his autism because they consider it a negative quality which allows them to inferiorize the Third World immigrants. Through two selected poems in this study, Tito Mukhopadhyay outrageously rushes into a grinding confrontation between him, and the neurotypical occidentals who believe in the ethnocentric medicine of the empire of science. In these poems, Mukhopadhyay clearly talks back to, and challenges the empire of science symbolized in CAN, Iversen, and some ordinary neurotypical occidental people by his insistence on reconfiguring its prevailing epistemology and science, undoing its medical norms, and dethroning the mythological perfect neurotypicality of the West. In "*Misfit*", he insists on keeping his nodding, and hand flapping which he considers very normal movements, and ignores the Western medicine which spotted his autism in order to inferiorize him. He uses what the Western medicine has called as his impaired

imagination in creating multiple images in that poem. Also, in "*Poem I*", he uses his imagination, and creates an imaginary place where he could feel equality with the neurotypical occidentals who view him as a stranger autistic because he belongs to the Third World.

Notes

1. After Mukhopadhyay has been diagnosed with severe autism at the age of three, his mother Soma attempted to use a different technique to make him communicate with the normal, write and read. It is called "the rapid promoting method of teaching". In fact it has been a successful technique and facilitated his communication.
2. CAN or (can autism speaks) is a foundation which Portia Iversen has started with her husband in order to fund autism's researches around the world.
3. "*Strange son*" is an autobiography which includes Portia Iversen's narration of her experience of the strange behavior of the autistics. She has written this autobiography after she stayed for some time with Tito Mukhopadhyay, and noticed his behaviour.
4. Edwin Hubble (1889- 1953) is the first astronomer who described the phenomenon of stars' receding. He said that the universe is expanding and that makes all galaxies including stars rush away from the earth.

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