Ali Al-Shamlan

AST20100

Dr. Sue Ann Tretter

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The readings in this chapter changed my view of the effect of language in the experience of minorities in American. It is easy to imagine that all languages are essentially the same that a rose is a rose, regardless of the word you have for it, and the word makes no major difference to how you see the rose, or how you interact with it. The readings, especially the ones by Jamake Highwater and Richard Rodriguez, showed me that this was a very mistaken attitude, and that the language in which a minority operates shapes the world around them in many different ways.

Highwater starts by saying that “the greatest distance between people is not space but culture”. and goes on to show this by talking about how different English felt from the Blackfeet language he was born into, and how it shaped the world in ways that did not make sense to him. He focuses on the English word ‘duck’, which he thinks is non-descriptive; the Blackfeet word *meksikatsi*, instead, held both a meaning that seemed more appropriate to the create that he saw in front of him, and held a poetry that suited the create, whereas duck seemed crude, meaning other things that create an utterly different impression of the bird. In the same way, he bemoans the fact that in English the world for the planet is Earth, which has synonyms that become negative adjectives, such as soiled and dirty. How, he wonders, could such a wonderful thing be so easily confused with dirtiness and sin?

The point he is really making is that in being forced to use English – and, therefore, to see the world through English eyes – his own far more subtle, magical and appropriate world was diminished; that the poetry of the world around him become less, and he was forced into a position of thinking that such a poetic view of the world was somehow ‘wrong’, being inexpressible in English. He talk about the way in which the English version of events is taken to be ‘true’, while the Indian version is taken to be a delusion, a result of mistakes, and wonders if it is not the case that there is multiple truth everywhere, in contrast to the commitment to single perspectives the western world has taken on.

In Gains and Losses, Richard Rodriguez talks about a similar conflict in language, but one which embedded itself far more deeply into his home, invading his life in a way that separated him from his family and clearly caused him a great deal of pain. Like Highwater, he had difficulty with English. However, while Highwater’s difficulty was a matter of disliking the ideas inherit in the English variations of words, Rodriguez had a far more personal problem, feeling that he had no right to use English; that is was the public language that did not belong to him in the way that it belonged to his classmates. His native Spanish would have made him feel comfortable, but the deep divide between its use at home and the use of English at school made him nervous and afraid. The truly telling moment, however, is when the nuns that taught him at school came home and encouraged his parents to speak in English in the home. This pushed the public/private divide even further, directly into his home life, so that he no longer felt like he was part of the group that his family comprised, since the language they spoke to one another and which bound them together as a family was no longer accessible to him; for the sake of his success, his parents accidentally wounded him in giving in to his teachers.

These two articles emphasises to me the extent to which language is more than jst another way of saying something. It showed me that the ways in which minorities use language is far more than just a translation, but is deeply embedded in their culture, and the fact that English is taken to be the only ‘true’ language – something that both of them, in their own way, found and struggled with – creates an additional burden on them. It forced them to choose between the culture embedded in their homes and minds and the one in the public sphere, no matter their own preference or how much it hurt them to have to use English.

Ali Al-Shamlan

Dr. Sue Ann Tretter

AST 20100

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Role models, celebrities, and heroes largely mould people’s desires, dreams, and aspirations. Although a role model is oftentimes used interchangeably with a celebrity or a hero, the three terms are dissimilar. It is therefore in the interest of this paper to give clear divergences between the three terms.

In early eighteenth and nineteenth century, traditional heroes such as King Arthur, AND King Alfred among others, scorned the press. They were popular because of their superhuman powers (“11 Dream Makers, Heroes, and Celebrities,” n.d, p. 340). However, from the 21st century, people became more sophisticated and heroes became anonymous. Today, celebrities have replaced heroes. People such as pop musicians, movie stars, and athletes are considered celebrities. Therefore, one main difference between a hero and a celebrity is on the grounds of era. Traditionally, all popular people were heroes and as people became modernized, celebrities replaced the heroes. Boorstin (n.d, p. 342) asserts that with every decade, heroism is overshadowed by celebrity.

Another difference is based on their roles. Boorstin (n.d, p. 342) argues that the term celebrity in the past was referred to as a condition while today it is a person. He defines a celebrity as a person who is famous for his or her qualities or lack of them. Celebrities are people who are not defined because of their acts but because of their purpose to satisfy people’s biased expectations of what humanity should be (Boorstin, n.d, p. 343). The members of the public make celebrities when they read about them, and watch them in the television. Generally, celebrities are just normal next-door people who have been advertised heavily in newspapers and televisions because of their image, whereas heroes were people who were distinguished among the rest because of their achievements. For instance, Davy Crockett was a hero because he was a good shooter, fought harder, and used to run fast. A man like Joe Schuster was a hero in his era because he created Superman (“11 Dream Makers, Heroes, and Celebrities,” n.d, p. 340). In addition, heroes create themselves, while the media create celebrities (Boorstin, n.d, p. 345).

Additionally, in the past, heroes needed a private secretary in order to keep a barrier between them and the public whereas celebrities today have a press secretary who ensures they are in the public eye (Boorstin, n.d, p. 345). Moreover, heroes were markers of tradition made by sacred texts, myths, folklore, and historical books, while celebrities are modern creatures of public opinion, gossip, and transient images movies (Boorstin, n.d, p. 346).

In addition, unlike celebrities, heroes are found in legends and myths. For instance, Campbell and Moyers (p.348) asserts Telemachus in his search for his father, Odysseus is seen as a hero to most young people as his search is interpreted as the same as finding one’s purpose in life.

Finally, role models are people who are meant to inspire, influence, or motivate other people as far as behaviours, values, and attitudes are concerned. This means that a role model’s behaviour unconsciously or consciously arouses and stimulates other people to desire and follow their trend (Mubiru, 2011, p.29). Role models can influence people negatively or positively for instance the heroes and celebrities. Most young people consider celebrities as their role model because of their images while others considers heroes as their role models because of their positive deeds. Role models do not have to be people in the public domain. Some people consider their family members for instance their parents as their role models because of their deeds and personal affection towards them.

It is apparent that there are clear differences between a hero, celebrity and a role model based on their characters, achievements, era, and how media and the public perceives them. Heroes are well known because of their achievements while celebrities are distinguished because of their image. In addition, heroes make themselves while the media makes celebrities. Additionally, heroes were popular in the eighteenth and nineteenth century whereas today, celebrities have replaced heroes. Finally, role models inspire and motivate people both negatively and positively and can include even family members.

Ali Al-Shamlan

Dr. Sue Ann Tretter

AST 20100

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Going through the selected readings including W. H Auden’s poem The Unknown Citizen, Ellen Goodman’s story The Company Man, and Timothy Egan’s article Turing Our Towns into Private Fortresses, I came to realize that it is society which renders a strong impact on individuals and it is the social forces which shapes individual characters. It is a fact that family plays an important role in shaping up the character of a person and it is also a truth that family forces often are crucial in shaping up the self, but the degree of influence of social forces are greater than that of the family forces.

In Auden’s poem The Unknown Citizen the main character of the citizen is being evaluated under the light of the social roles that the concerned individual played. According to the poem the unknown citizen was a flawless individual as the society doesn’t have any proof about any type of complaint that was ever launched against him and this has been approved by the Bureau of Statistics, and moreover, he was a well-to-do man and must have been satisfied with his life as he owned everything that is necessary for a modern man, a gramophone, a radio, a car and a Frigidaire (Auden, 1939). So, from this angle it can be found that an individual’s state of happiness, his value, and his worth to the human society is actually determined by the social forces like economic status, social relations, and so on. It is a tendency of the human society to measure the wellbeing of a man/woman according to the social role that has been played by the concerned individual. And it is again society that enforces an individual to run after money, gather wealth, and to reach to certain social level that can assure respect from others and physical comforts. Hence, social forces from this perspective too, are the vital forces responsible for shaping individual self.

A man’s professional life is also a vital social force as the job role played by a person, the responsibility carried out by a person in the realm of job, and the remuneration that he/she earns in lieu of his/her services can be considered as pivotal means through which the social value of a person is determined. In Ellen Goodman’s story The Company Man, the central character Phil, served in an important position in his company and he was an workaholic who sacrificed his life and embraced death due to loving work and more work instead of loving or paying a heed to the needs of his family that was composed of his faithful wife and three children. Society measures the success of a man by measuring his job position, his earning, and his professional popularity and these forces of society actually turned Phil into a workaholic to whom work was the only way to sustain his social reputation. It was the social forces which turned Phil into a man who “worked six days a week, five of them until eight or nine at nine, during a time when his own company had begun the four-day week for everyone but the executives. He worked like the Important People” (Goodman, 1979). Hence, from the work schedule of Phil it can be ascertained that for becoming an important individual in the eyes of known population it is the social forces that a man gives importance more than the family forces.

So, it is to be concluded that it is the social forces which shapes the individual self more than the family forces, which are, though needed, are less important, in myriads of occasions, than the social forces.

Ali Al-Shamlan

Sue Ann Tretter

AST 20100

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I belong to the Muslim minority in the United States. I am a follower of Islam and the Islamic culture has myriads of positive features which should be carried by all the Muslims across the globe. In my opinion the most important aspect of Islam which should be followed and sustained by every Muslim is the strong faith on Allah. Our customs, our belief system, our traditions, our celebrations, family connections etc, all are based on our strong faith in the Supreme Power, Allah.

It is the faith and devotion to the commands of Allah that we the Muslims did learn how to differentiate between the material and the spiritual life. And this knowledge has helped us to prevent our transformation into a consumerist group of people although continuing with our religion amidst of myriads of consumerist cultures that can be found within the United States of America. Moreover, it is by having a strong faith on Allah that I have learnt how to forgive the one who has transgressed against me. I have been educated through the doctrines of Islam that forgiveness is the greatest human virtue and it can earn me a place special place in the abode of Allah in the afterlife. Hence, through the true belief in God I have been motivated by my religion, my community, and my family members to forgive others and even my enemies as being a Muslim I believe that to err is human and hence, everyone should get a chance to be forgiven.

Iman or faith or belief is the keystone to understand the religion of Islam and being a pious Muslim I strive to follow the path of faith towards Allah. And by doing so, I have found the way to understand the metaphysical realities of my religion. It is the strong faith in Allah that allows every devoted Muslim to realize the primary objective of a human being and this primary objective is assuring the wellbeing of fellow human beings. In our holy text the Quran it has been described that a person can enter the paradise in the afterlife only by the dint of faith accompanied by evidence of righteous deeds and hence, true Muslims should follow the way of having strong faith in Allah as it is the only way towards deliverance.

Another feature that I would always like to carry on with me as a true Muslim is the allegiance to the practice of Zakat. As stated earlier the true faith in Allah is the pillar on which the edifice of Islam has been built and in accordance to this concept the followers of Islam has to observe the process of Zakat which is a financial responsibility of every Muslim towards the community. It is a kind of moral obligation as well as a celebration through which a true Muslim shares his earthly fortunes with the less fortunate ones as according to Islam wealth are gifts of God and hence, every gift of God should be shared by all human beings irrespective of their social or economic status as a sign of respect to Allah. I should be willing to sustain the tradition of performing Zakat as it is not only a religious obligation for me but is also a humanitarian obligation which I should carry on diligently. If I ever get a chance of becoming wealthy then I will surely try to expand the degree of my donation towards the poor and this I will do in order to perform the most essential duty of mankind which, according to Islam, is helping the another human being to survive in this earth and to support every such ways that are meant for the wellbeing of mankind.