



<INSERT HEADLINES>

Thank you for the headlines, Media
For yet another startling story of
dying Rohingyas; what about the Rakhines?

Let us celebrate with Henry V
At Agincourt's bloody fields, where
Dying breaths of imprisoned Frenchmen curse.

Follow our grandparents, shout
Against Fayadh; we're first in line
For our Day of Judgement.

Show me the cracked camera of
my eye — this shard, I chose.
Which side do we pierce?

Al Lim

al.lim@u.yale-nus.edu.sg
The Eloquent Orifice Volume 4, Issue 1
E-published July 2016; e12-14



Poet's Exegesis

The poem opens with sarcastic gratitude towards the Media. Here, "<INSERT HEADLINES>" takes a jab at our headlines today — the ones we are inundated with on a daily basis; events like the Rohingya migrant crisis are flashed continuously.

The first three stanzas evoke allusions to contemporary and historical events, namely the Rohingya crisis, the Battle of Agincourt and Ashraf Fayadh's predicament. The personification of the Media as being fallible and skewed is further developed through the poem's depiction of the Rohingyas as the victims, as the only ones needing help. While the plight of the Rohingyas is true, the Media rarely tells the story of the other side — the Rakhines — or explores the possibility that there may have been injustice on both sides.

The contemporary Rohingya issue is then juxtaposed with the historic Battle of Agincourt. The second stanza calls the reader to celebrate with *Henry V*, a renowned play by William Shakespeare. The play portrays King Henry V as a true and rousing leader, whose army won the Battle (a major victory for the English in the Hundred Years' War). But it must be remembered that beyond Henry V's glory, the Battle of Agincourt was a cruel battle that saw the longbow massacre of French soldiers on the battlefield, ending in the unchivalrous execution

of French soldiers who were held as prisoners. Here, the poem's call for the reader to celebrate with Henry V makes the reader complicit in the king's cruelty, while the French soldiers who have been massacred curse to the last of their "dying breaths". The reader's complicity in choosing a side further compounds the poem's message: should we be taking sides, especially when we rarely see the whole truth?

Coming back to the present day, the third stanza is inspired by renowned poet Ashraf Fayadh's initial death sentence by a Saudi Arabian court on grounds of apostasy (McDowall). Despite the international outcry supporting Fayadh, there must have been a group of conservatives in Saudi that championed his arrest by the *mutaween* (religious police) and the subsequent sentence. The third stanza of my poem thus questions how much of an impact family has in determining our political stance. Furthermore in this third stanza, "our Day of Judgement" is specifically mentioned to: (a) develop the theme of complicity by introducing the notion of a supreme judge that could judge the courts and its supporters, and (b) and contextualise the stanza to religious spirituality.

The last stanza of my poem implies that everyone sees through a cracked lens, taking snapshots of what they want to see. The lack of

Poet's Exegesis, continued

capitalisation of the word "my" in the line break and indentation emphasises the complicity of the reader and poet as opposed to the flashiness of the Media, departing from the style of the previous three stanzas. Inaction (i.e. the inability to deviate from familial influence; the inability to choose) here is action — not acting on something is in fact acting and taking a stance. One cannot be opinion-less, including the speaker. The use of the first-person singular, "I", also implies the individual nature of critical thinking. This stanza forces the reader to confront the headline issues we encounter in the news everyday by asking the reader which lens is to be pierced, instead of whether the reader will pierce or not.

Ultimately, my poem seeks to ask ourselves this question: how do we convince ourselves that the side we choose is the right one, and is that even the right question to ask in the first place?

Work Cited

McDowall, Angus. "Saudi Arabian Court Sentences Palestinian Poet Ashraf Fayadh to Death for Apostasy." *The Independent*. 20 Nov. 2015. Web.

