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Espousing Stakeholder Engagement for Enterprise Growth: Ali Jimale Ahmed's Art of Language Manipulation in Critical Thought and Analysis

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Article Info	Abstract
  	Language is the primary vehicle writers use to present their views in the ideological transactions they have with their audience over a particular subject matter. However, a variety of other factors such as context, social environment, creative imagination, ideology, style, critical outlook, and mastery of the medium influence the writer's work. Although these are common features available in every writer's stock, authors differ in the skills they use in representing multiple abstract phenomena. More importantly, authorial difference is demonstrated in each writer's ability of manipulating language to present his thoughts. This includes but not limited to the appropriate selection of the features of language, the writing style, cohesion and logical flow of ideas, and the narrative flow to capture the readers' attention as key stakeholders in the writing process. This article presents an overview of how Ali Jimale Ahmed, a Somali-American academician, poet and literary critic, uses language to communicate his thought in prose and poetry. It shows how, while delineating his argument and crafting his subject matter, Ahmed espouses various stakeholders in his creative works through a careful and artful manipulation of language for effective and emphatic communication.

I. INTRODUCTION

Interrogating language is an interesting subject of discussion that cannot be taken too lightly. This is because questions such as "What is the word?" and "What is in the word?" alone can expand the dimension of language study into misty horizons: theoretically, philosophically, anthropologically, historically, and linguistically, to mention just a few examples. The strong nexus among language, its functional role, and its power has been an interesting but controversial subject of discussion among leading experts from different scholarly backgrounds who interrogated language from multiple settings (Chomsky, 1957; Halliday, 1994; Bernstein, 1990; Bourdieu, 1991; Fairclough, 1993, 1996, 2010, 2016). On the functional aspect, Halliday (1994) argues, "all languages are organized around two main kinds of meaning, the

'ideational' or reflective, and the 'interpersonal' or active," further acknowledging how "combined with these is a third metafunctional component, the 'textual,' which breathes relevance into the other two" (p. 39).

Thompson (1996) asserts, "in using language, we organize our messages in ways which indicate how they fit in with the other messages around them and with the wider context in which we are talking or writing" (p. 28). Thus, discourse of any kind cannot be explained as an isolated entity on its own with structures of words but without a context to align that conversation to. The preceding comments corroborate Ahmed's (1996, p. 2) critical ideation of two supreme facts about language: 1. That language is "the medium through which the poet's or the novelist's artifact comes into being"; and 2. That due to the complexities within itself and the more complexities surrounding the versatile interpretations the audience attaches to it, language "is not neutral or value-free."

In several authored and edited books on the debate surrounding the relationship between language and power through the lens of critical discourse analysis (CDA), Fairclough introduces pertinent sociological discussions that portray language and power as twins at the center of our daily social communication. Critical discourse analysis is aimed at interrogating the affiliation between power and language; in other words, it examines "connections between language use and unequal relations of power" (Fairclough, 1989, p. 1) in society by way of linking theory to method.

Closely observed, we realize scholars' engagement with CDA and that it draws upon the views of scholars like Halliday (1978), who describes language as a social phenomenon that is contrary to theoretical assumptions that consider the study of discourse mainly from a biological perspective (Chomsky, 1957) or psychological undercurrent (Clark and Clark, 1977). Although Fairclough's work is heavily influenced by Gramsci's theory of social analysis, other scholars, in the realm of Bakhtin (1981, 1986), Foucault (1972), and Halliday (1978), have nevertheless had significant impact on his theorization of discourse from a critical social viewpoint of the phenomenon. However, as

Ahmed (1996) argues, neither the writer's trope nor the cultural intellectual's subject of discussion occurs without an appropriate context portraying an imagined or a consciously observed social concern.

According to Liu (2014), context is a theory inherited from contributions "chiefly from B. Malinowski, J. R. Firth, and M. A. K. Halliday" (p. 1239), while Martin (1992) relates context to four factors consisting of "the participants in the situation, the action of the participants, other relevant features of the situation, and the effects of the verbal action" (p. 497). Bourdieu (1991) disagrees with scholars who, despite appreciating the relevance of context in discourse and language function, tend to "fail to go beyond the actions and reactions apprehended in their directly visible immediacy." Instead, Bourdieu furthers the discussion by framing the theory of language within the locus of power that, as he says, depends on the "different agents' linguistic strategies [and] their positions in the structure of the distribution of linguistic capital." Bourdieu's view resonates with the side of the argument that considers language as an essential tool even in philosophy, despite the problems surrounding its description (Ferber, 2015).

Analyzing works by numerous scholars, Eno et al. (2016) denote how contemporary scholars, among them Ahmed (1996), Auerbach (1995), Fairclough (1996), Pennycook (1995), Shohamy (2006), and Tollefson (1995), critically interrogate the use of language beyond the often-unnoticed or barely-suspected functions of the device. In fact, Eno et al. (2016, p. 14) reveal in their analysis how, in certain countries, languages can be classified as "dominator and dominated or superior and inferior as determined by the powers that be," thereby performing, maintaining, and/or replicating the ideological role of imperialism (Galtung, 1987; Phillipson, 1992, 1996). Language is so important that it mediates every genre of thought from the source to the audience while bearing in it a hidden but crucial characteristic—the power with which "it also formulates the socio-political and economic definitions" of any society (Ahmed 1996, p. 3) .

More significantly, the stylistic manner in which language is used elucidates the users' artistic skills and proficiency in handling their operational tools. Poetic as well as prosaic language requires such skill that is not common to all users of language but appeals only to its community of lovers. The brevity of the wording in poetry, the artful use of metaphors, smooth mediation of thought, selection of words, generic stylistic tools, and the comparatively more elaborate presentation of text in prose make language a peculiar instrument unique to humans, the only gifted creatures on earth bestowed with versatile modes of communication via language, its variations and varieties.

II.   BIOGRAPHY

Ali Jimale Ahmed was born and brought up in Mogadishu by parents whose cultural knowledge and art of storytelling made him fall in love with the aesthetics of culture and literature while yet at a tender age. After completing his elementary and intermediate school studies, he joined 15 May Secondary School where he met renowned Somali novelist Nuruddin Farah who taught him English language for a while. At that time, Ahmed was fond of writing short stories and admirable compositions. With his enthusiasm for language, Ahmed pursued and earned a Bachelor's Degree majoring in English and Literature from the prestigious College of Education at Lafoole, near the agricultural town of Afgooye. Upon completion of his studies, he was offered a managerial post in the Cooperatives, one of the few most-sought-after parastatals during the military regime. His proficiency in the English language was conspicuously impressive that he was invited to become a member of a team assigned to write the biography of Mohamed Siad Barre, the then President of Somalia, although the project was not implemented.

In spite of his busy schedule at the Cooperatives and continuous travels across regions in the country, Ahmed was also a regular contributor to the weekly *Heegan* (Vigilance) *Newspaper*, the only English language paper in the country at the time, wherein he published some very controversial articles. More significant among his articles were two stories that challenged the effectiveness of the military regime's policy of social equality in the face of the visible discrimination against ethnic minorities and marginalized groups in the country. In addition to his contribution to *Heegan Newspaper*, Ahmed was simultaneously directing and presenting "Writing and Writers," an interesting weekly program with a large audience on Radio Mogadishu, the national broadcasting corporation, where some of his featured stories were not favorable to the regime. Because he was an active young man with access to some key personalities, he used that influence as an appropriate avenue to get a recommendation to pursue further studies. In late 1982 he traveled to the United States on scholarship where he joined the University of California at Los Angeles (UCLA) in early 1983 for Masters in African Studies and then PhD studies in Comparative Literature.

Currently, Ali Jimale Ahmed is a Professor of Comparative Literature at Queens College and CUNY Graduate Center in New York. He is a multitalented scholar who plays roles of a poet, short-story writer, essayist, and literary critic. Twice he has served as the Chair of the Department of Comparative Literature at Queens College. Prof. Ahmed has several dazzling works to his name including anthologies, monographs, edited and co-edited volumes, and a large number of articles and book chapters. Some of his creative works have been translated to Danish, Japanese, Portuguese, and Bosnian.

III.   THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This essay is couched on the principle of the sociology of literature which teaches us that, "To know what a book is presupposes a knowledge of how it has been read" (Escarpit 1971, p. 91). Fundamentally, it draws from the understanding that literature originates from society and foregrounds aspects that inter alia draw from and interact with social realities in consciously imagined and observed circumstances. It is influenced by the relationship between sociology and literature as advanced by Goldmann (1975), Schram and Steen (2001), and Sapiro (2023). These societal realities and relationships are experienced relative to a given social context in

which a writer would delve into problematizing the significance of the mode of communication engaged, the analyses and interpretations attached to it by society and its diverse structures, and the enduring impact it might result within society. Thus, this approach aims to analyze the interconnections that bring together the author as a conscious member of the society, the language the author uses to present the textual product, the textual content as a presentation of social problems and therefore an objective raw material for literary discussion, and how individual members of the wider society are affected by the literary product available in the social domain.

IV.   LANGUAGE AND POETRY

Language use in communication and interaction among interlocutors is supposed to be a normal function of language, as explained above. However, language choice and wording also set the tone for what is coded and articulated to fulfill both purpose and context. Of these varieties of modes of language function, poetry, as a genre, is one of the most artistic ways to employ and exploit language. The language in poetry (or the language of poetry) is adored for presenting human emotions and feelings in diverse circumstances and in myriad idiomatic, poetic, proverbial, and therapeutic forms. Accordingly, language occupies a high rank in the poetic world as acknowledged by a section of experts. For example, in his article "The Language of Poetry," Glenn Most (1993) contends that in addition to its other functions, "poetic language seems also to play an important social role as a self-referential mechanism, whereby the complexity of a fundamental social institution (in this case language) can be reduced by its being doubled as an object of self-reflection" (p. 559).

Other critical scholars believe that "the language of a poem invites attention to itself," because no amount of elaboration, paraphrasing, interpretation, or presentation can accurately demonstrate the original framing of what is contained in the theoretical, semantic, and syntactic arrangements formed in a poem (Lamarque, 2017, p. 6). Conversely, Lamarque cautions us that "to try to capture in different words what the poem is saying would be to abandon precisely what gives the poem its interest and its very identity" (p. 6), a practice that may dilute traditional and communal thought, the imprint of the philosophical texture that engrains a society and its cultural civilization.

In the article "Sowing Seeds of Subalternity in Somali Studies," Mohamed Eno (2017) explains how African literary scholar Emanuel Ngara (1982), three decades and half before Lamarque's study, lamented over the same notion of translation, interpretation, and paraphrasing of poetry as factors adulterating the original form of the material art contained in the aesthetic beauty of the versal text. Although writers like Hamburger (1957) note that "the intense formality of poetry is motivated by its expressive rather than referential focus" (qtd. in Cureton, 2003), it is my contention that the "expressive" or expressiveness (alone) would not deliver the poetic objective in the absence of the "referential," in the sense that the characters, metaphors, allusions, imaginations, experiences, and other tools/elements of abstract characterization in a poem give direction to the poet as well as the reader—thus aligning trope, context, audience, and all the pertinent ingredients espoused into the aesthetic mix in that interplay all of which lead to the end product which finally comes to us as a written poem that we read or a recited poetic text that we hear.

Notwithstanding the varying contestations in the genre, and literature in general, critics like Currie (2014) condemn literature for its lack of institutions to streamline the dimensions of its epistemological objectivities towards truth, thereby suspecting it of contamination with falsehood and a considerable degree of lies and absence of "epistemic reliability" (qtd. in Paul & Kaufman, 2014). In contrast, Martin Heidegger (1971) and Ahmed (1996) praise the indelible truth in poetic verses as truth of exploring and revealing what is known environmentally and has been undergone experientially—hence knowledge of environment and personal experience as two interlaced phenomena whose separation would render each pointless/ meaningless in discourse in its distinct nature in the absence of the other. In

fact, Heidegger's view of truth in poetry is also in agreement with Gibson's (2015) assertation of the relationship of poetry to truth. And as Lamarque (2017) notes in the article "Philosophy and the Lyric":

> The emphasis on experience, subjectivity, expression, and content-under-a-perspective suggests in the lyric a different kind of 'truth' from that sought by systematic philosophy or even the 'truth' claimed for narrative fiction where the actions of characters invite moral, political or even metaphysical appraisal. (p. 9).

Although Lamarque's informative piece is appreciable for the depth of its discussion, it was Ahmed who, in 2012, about half a decade earlier than Lamarque's work, critically and theoretically contextualized in his poem "The Crest of Time," an elaboration of 'truth' through the reflections of lived experience. Ahmed's versified confessional statement, "In my quest for truth," and the perceptions developed thereunto through the experience in the process of the "quest", make refutation of such an experiential truth difficult in the application of any measured or measurable scientific epistemology (Ahmed 2012, p. 50). For, in his imagination, the poet Ahmed prefigures a real situation in which "...a crystal palace/ Is no better than a chicken coop," within the context of the matter under his poetic deliberation. His experience of the social reality, which he is part of, gives him the assumption that: if the trait of the humans living in the so-called "crystal palace" rates below the bar of desirable humanly attributes, then the dazzling beauty of the structure per se does not make the palace a better dwelling than a coop; hence his judgment (by experiential and observational imagination) that, "Both nothing more than jerky meat to sustain the gaze."

Through his observation and subsequent logical reasoning he arrived at, Ahmed is expanding the depth and breadth of the discussion about truth in poetry to wider horizons of unparallelled philosophical dimensions. Describing the philosophical dimension of poetry, Kant states that several values are attached to poetry and that a poem has the potential to create more provocation than can be executed in words narrated in our usual conversation (qtd. in Gosetti-Ferencei, 2018). It is a potential which enables the poet and the society to expose intent, agree on substance, and eventually overcome misinterpretations as well as misconceptions. According to Gosetti-Ferencei (2018) such misrepresentations are occasioned by "The difficulty for human perception, thought, or language, to grasp reality as it is—a difficulty that is overlooked by the habitual pragmatism of everyday experience and the methodological assumptions of scientific thought."

V. POETRY AND THE POET IN AHMED'S THOUGHT

A critical approach to Ahmed's works enables the reader to realize the versatile methods and mechanisms the poet/essayist Ahmed employs and how he sheds light on a type of literary learning foreign to some of us, as his arguments often draw on an elucidation of the intersections between the epistemological (which almost every author focuses on) and the gnoseological (which Ahmed analytically but also logically derives his observation from) with the facts arrived at in his critical analysis in the arguments he raises in both prose and poetry, such as the example highlighted in the last paragraph of the preceding section. In many of his works, whether of prose or poetry, Ahmed's texts are inimitable in their flow of sagaciously articulated codes that elevate the tenor of the discourse he is engaged in, including critical analysis of social phenomena, illumination of facts of a missed gap or point of concern, recommendation of an alternative approach to the solution of a problem, and enlightenment of where a controversy or self-contradiction has been an issue in other authors' works (Ahmed, 1987, 1996, 2004, 2012, 2015).

It is not unusual for Ahmed to present his points in prosaic allegories as much as he uses complex metaphorical paradigms in his poetry. For instance, on the interconnections between the poet, thought, and the poetry genre, Ahmed (1996) writes about how, in Somalia, like other countries in Africa and the world, and particularly in dissident poetry, "the poet ... unveils his version of the truth at whatever cost"

(p. 19), alluding to the fatal risks involved in confronting despotic leaders. The main reason for the unveiling is due to the fact that the gifted bard has multiple eyes to see and envision hidden realities prevailing in the social environment because, according to Ahmed, "beneath surface reality, the gifted poet could always see a different reality" (Ahmed, 1996, p. 117).

Ahmed (1996) tries to reason with the reader that what makes the poet's intervention more appealing to the community is not only the gift of creativity bestowed upon the bard but equally, and even more so, the wisdom that embodies the message, which justifies his assertion when he says "The poet [...] ruminates on the cud of wisdom" (p. 2), an attribute that enables the traditional wordsmith to sometimes "get away with things that, had he delivered them in prose form, would have put him into trouble" (p. 10). The poet Ahmed here imagines how cultural intellectuals from a range of the imaginative arts in Somalia managed to miraculously get away with their taunting of the military regime of Siad Barre at a time when any kind of dissidence to that rule was unthinkable and certainly a blatant risk to take. Yet, the work of many prominent poets, dramatists, and playwrights, as Ahmed narrated in his volume *Daybreak Is Near*, saw the light of day because of their "employment of an anagrammatic ingenuity" (p. 119), which helped them escape the otherwise deadly wrath of the military regime.

Through the annals of the same volume, *Daybreak Is Near*, Ahmed (1996) articulates that the poet is a revered celebrity, and that his art represents "the repository of national consciousness in its different ecological, linguistic, and ecumenical forms" (p. 12). Although Ahmed acknowledges the indispensability of their role as the repository authority of the national cultural treasure, he nevertheless censures the national cultural and literary scholars for their prejudice and docility. While they create a valuable portion of the archival documents that embody the national heritage and conscience of each segment of the diverse cultures and ethnic entities, literary and cultural scholars, according to Ahmed, have failed to explore factual evidence before giving

the flawed "assumption that there is no poetry" in some parts of southern Somalia "simply because the cultural intellectual could not speak the languages spoken in the different regions."

Ahmed daringly condemns such misperceptions as ethnically motivated prejudice of the other, which, "to say the least, [remains to be] spurious by nature" (1996, p. 10). And to deliver the message home, he exploits both prose and poetry as an effective medium of communication to his intended and unintended audience to share his ideas and selected topics of discussion. He admits the efficacy of the versified word as he writes, "oral poetry ... has both pedagogical and epistemological import ..." (Ahmed, 1996, p. 12), in the sense that it can be used and has been employed to deal with addressing various social and communal complexities.

Indeed, it is in his quest for an efficacious social unity through communal diversity that Ahmed references when he writes: "Somali poetry, whether it is in *Maay* (the language spoken in the riverine areas) or *Maxaad* (the official language) or *Kizigula* (spoken by some members of the Bantu segment of the population), is an important and multiaccented forum for airing divergent views" (Ahmad, 1996, p. 10). Exclusive to his work is the illumination of the dark spots pioneering Somalia as well as Somali scholars have missed to introduce and inject into Somali Studies. Although this is not intended to offend any scholar, I feel tempted to articulate that before Ahmed's critical observation, never has a cultural, ethnic, or linguistic topic acknowledging other than the pastoral nomad, his culture, and 'Arab' origin ever been possible for a Somali scholar to mention in the context of Somalia and Somali Studies. The cultural entities Ahmed unravels to the surface for recognition and interrogation of their communities, represent the denigrated, degraded subaltern groups, those often dominated and not allowed to claim an identity beyond the pastoral—the dominant tutelage that enshrines the camel complex.

By delivering such straightforward statements as in the preceding paragraph, Ahmed encourages the expansion and spread of our culturological knowledge outside that which

has been a biased traditional focus uncritical of the social reality in Somalia. In fact, that is why after a careful analysis of his works, one can safely claim that Ahmed advocates for a transformative pedagogical understanding of society and the fundamental responsibility which informs that before anything else "the poet must be in tune with the group's realities" since in most cases "the community relies vicariously on the poet's enunciations" (1996, p. 11) that justify their collective action to respond to his call for rebellion against the regime or any other authority or institution. With his prominence and powers, the versifier can incite the masses toward the defetishization of all state strategies and plots that condone the creation of political unconsciousness (Ahmed, 1996). The revering attributes and communal responsibilities placed upon their shoulders make the poet a leading figure who "strives for the perseverance of the ideal, thus encouraging others to follow him" (Ahmad, 1996, p. 42) for the good of society.

The reader of Ahmed's poems sometimes feels cautioned against taking solid positions on the points and counterpoints concealed in the verse on whether poetry is thought and vice versa or whether language is poetic or that the language of poetry is superior to the language used in other forms and genres of writing. This caution is necessitated by the fact that an examination of the titles of Ahmed's anthologies and books of essays shows the manner in which he infuses new ironies, idioms, and heavily metaphorized phrases into the literary field; for instance, in volumes such as *When Donkeys Give Birth to Calves*, *Fear Is a Cow*, *Diaspora Blues*, *Daybreak Is Near*, and *The Invention of Somalia* as well as poems such as "Forked Tongues," "Blitzkrieg," "Heidegger in Reverse," "The Crest of Time," and "In the Shadow of the Ellipsis."

These ironic or otherwise allegorically bulged statements and idiomatic expressions, prosed or versified, as well as the poetic expressiveness in delivering the intent of his message, constitute the concealed raw materials processed in the textual content we read in Ahmed's prose and poems, which are the end product that envisage the imaginative genius of the producer. With the assembled raw materials and his creative genius, Ahmed demonstrates the social-temporal connection of his focus by featuring them in a way that appeals to the general and specific targets he selects as the audience of his creative works. Ahmed's audience is comprised of readers whom he selects not for the simple reason of convenience but rather for their relevance to and participation in the debate and dialogue in which he is the mediator and sometimes the advocator for those with grievances on whose behalf he engages society into a genuine discussion.

In effect, purposity, or rather purposiveness driven by curiosity in intellectual inquiry influences Ahmed to create a single poem of a few words or a title consisting of a single word or phrase. Yet, despite the terseness, these otherwise isolated-looking phrases and single words may be laden with substance and substantive ideological frames through which the reader should ponder and grapple with. In general, a pattern of developed consciousness becomes necessary in order to enjoy a holistic comprehension of the variant stakeholders Ahmed espouses in the enterprise of his versified story including: contextualized discourse, artful language use, economized phraseology, critical thought, concealed wisdom, and poetic intellect. Nevertheless, a comprehension of these stakeholders and the course of their ideological direction may not be thoroughly grasped without consideration of the intentions and operations of the linguistic subtlety the poet/author has furnished through "the word" as a medium of communication and, as he calls it, "a tool of expression" (Ahmed, 2012, p. 1).

A coalition of these significations mediated through the revered wisdom of the poet, in this case Ahmed, makes language a mere servant, a prodigious tool at the service of the wordsmith. For, the poet possesses the art of magnifying or mitigating the explosive tenors imbued in language implicitly and explicitly with all the theoretical and philosophical assumptions censoriously appended to them not just by the average person but particularly by scholars from the diverse disciplines we cherish. From these broad dimensions and purposes, as well as context and type of language utilized, the poet, through his protagonist/narrator, prefigures something: thought, contemplation, phenomenon, context, imagery, and imagination as triggered by experience, environment, or plain

imagination developed out of the thinker's solitude at the time of creating a given piece of art that focuses on the unraveling of the unspoken or unspeakable matters consuming society.

Every poet's critical thought is laid out in his discourse and from the perspective of a linguistic phenomenon that is cautiously foretold not simply by the somewhat dubious characteristics of the text but equally by the solitary journey of thought and contemplation they must have embarked on to later arrive at the crossroads of theorizing their world. In this process, the imaginative appraisal occurs in such a way that the keen reader can assess the poet's linguistic capability, maneuverability of semantic choice, and ability or inability to domesticate the art and science of language use in a given setting and genre of literary work. Isolation during the process of contemplation and incubation of thought is best described by Heidegger (2001), who writes, "To think is to confine yourself to a single thought that one day stands still like a star in the world's sky" (p. 4), while at the same time negotiating carefully through the intellectual pathways as well as intercultural marketplaces of what Heidegger called the "three dangers threatening thinking" (p.8), in which:

> good and thus wholesome danger is the nighness of the singing poet. The evil and thus keenest danger is thinking itself. It must think against itself, which it can only seldom do. The bad and thus muddled danger is philosophizing. (p. 8)

Fostering thought and intellectual pedagogy through prose and poetry drive Ahmed into the depth of the kind of argument that Achebe explains as "a view of the world and of the whole cosmos perceived from a particular position," (1988, p. 63)—meaning, the positional viewpoint of the author/poet. That is "a view" which the poets theoretically perceive and observe in their contemplative mind in a period of isolation and through the reflection of experiences and observatory journeys into society, social environment, and the world at large. However, this is not meant to entirely disagree with Ferber's (2015) argument on the impossibility of creating concepts on "pure

observation" alone, "even in empirical science," as both theory and observation "merge into one" (p. 58).

From the elements discussed in the preceding paragraph, we can understand that confining oneself within a single thought does not separate the thinker from the world or social environment that is the very subject of one's thinking. It is a factor of observation, a reality occurring in one's mind that does not imply one's fixation on and exploration of a subject outside one's society or worldview. Rather, it implies a confinement within one's phenomenon of interest and thought horizon—so it implies an informed focus, a deep reflection, an epistemic inquiry in which one produces a piece of knowledge/ concept out of one's expedition in that confinement which is within the perimeters of one's thought journey.

Despite the etymological definition of the terms "confine" or "confinement," Ferber as well as a cross-section of literary theorists and social scientists would agree with Ahmed's notion of someone "crisscrossing the earth and carried on the crest of time" as a confinement—an isolation and therefore limitation and narrowness of space at a thought-proving moment in the thought-journey, when evaluated from the complexity of the functions in thought and concentration; but it nevertheless utilizes creativity as an endeavor to expand our understanding of a subject matter of which we do not know sufficiently enough (Ahmed, 2012, p. 50). Hence, it is a confinement in which one is preoccupied with one's investigation/imagination focusing on that one single study, that particular case study or "case study dilemma," (a variable or phenomenon of the thinker's interest) dealt with in the thinker's scheme of thought-processing without interference from other engagements (avoidance of bias), (Eno and Dammak 2014).

From whatever perspective, we should realize that the nature of confinement under discussion is preceded by an objective commitment to enhance human civilization by augmenting human learning for innovation and ultimate transformation in which people from distinct ethnic, racial, and cultural background will be inspired to form a lasting unity harmonized, while yet in the context of their

diversity. The creative confinement and the foregoing intellectual commitment are the fountains fueling life into the philosophical doctrine Ahmed seeks in his prediction of: "isku dume" [inseparably enmeshed], "isu dume" [enmeshed for the sake of each other]; so that each unit of the isku-dume-isu-dume enmeshment is equally appreciated as part of the whole that Ahmed has been aspiring for over the years to have them transformed into a "Molder of nations," (Ahmed, 2012, p. 17).

Note that Achebe's perception pertaining to "the whole cosmos" from an African perspective legitimizes Ahmed's philosophical excursion of viewing his world within the context of his problematization of the African, and, even more so, of the world society that shares something in common with him as a poet and a member of the African and global community of scholars. Not only that, but Ahmed's aim for using the poetry genre as a strong and preferred vehicle of communication is rooted in the African theory, philosophy, and values which attribute a unique incentive to poetry as an authentic form of delivering serious but also valuable messages vertically and horizontally, within and beyond the habitat (a reminder here of what we mentioned above about Ahmed's parents related to literature and culture). Commenting on the role of literature in African societies, which recognizes poetry as among the major stakeholders, prominent Kenyan writer Ngugi wa Thiong'o (1981) provides an elaborate description of literature as an institution which shapes and envisions "our attitudes to life, to the daily struggle with nature, the daily struggles within a community, and the daily struggle within our individual souls and selves" (p. 6).

From this critical view of concern, Ahmed, like any other serious, fact-oriented, but also inquiry-driven scholar, endeavors to "probe beneath the cover of things in an attempt to apprehend their reality in as far as humans are capable," to invoke Okolo (2023, p. 116). In fact, Okolo's notion of advising scholars to "probe beneath the cover," reverberates well with Ahmed's (2004) earlier call urging intellectuals to seek "answers to our troubled world in places unlit by early epistemological expeditions," (p. 887). In more critical terms, Ahmed's captivating statement, "We have come to an epistemological

dead end," sounds both alarmingly disquieting and inspiringly conscious. In both cases, Ahmed's solemn declaration cannot be underestimated as it heightens the concern towards an urgent redirection of the course of our intellectual engagement in order to "re-examine and rethink the terms and assumptions that dot the landscape of our syllogistic propositions" (Ahmed, 2004, p. 887).

For instance, a keen student or follower of Somali Studies need not spend much time to discover Ahmed's defiance (partially though, not entirely) against the primordialist tutelage of an all-encompassing Somali homogeneity (ethnically, culturally, linguistically, etc.) and the she-camel, the rhetorical symbol that represents independence of the country and has dominated Somali cultural and literary production only from the perspective of pastoralism. By dissenting the traditional course of Somali Studies, Ahmed successfully circumvents views like Okunoye's (2004) criticism accusing writers of "an uncritical acceptance of the nation-state as a category for the analysis of cultural production …"—a disastrous negligence that runs the risk of displaying "a distorted picture" that ignores the history, culture, and literature of vital segments of the society (p. 775).

In an essay on the preservation of the Tiv community of Nigeria's poetry in digital technology, Ikyer (2017) postulates that "conceptualization of oral texts propels the researcher to look beyond the strictly old and oral forms to their enduring qualities and reach" (p. 199). According to Ikyer, the intellectual concept transmitted through the text should be approached in such a careful manner so that it appeals to society across its generational intersections. Therefore, the proposal that scholars adopt a new approach is intended to usher in a new outlook such as envisaged in most of Ahmed's prose and poetic deliberations. Fundamental to the implementation of such a ploy is adoption of a strategy that permits intermarrying the traditional ways with the viewpoints of the current generation, without leaving any culture offboard and in the philosophy that each entity constitutes a potential part of the whole.

VI. CONCLUSION

Couching its theoretical framework on the principle of sociology of literature, this essay highlighted the importance of medium in relation to the writer's work, whether in prose or poetry. The significance of the medium is more elaborated and relevant to how scholar Ali Jimale Ahmed, a poet, essayist, and literary critic who writes primarily in the English language, employs his medium in the various contexts of his discursive and versal orientations. The study further attempted to provide a short biography of Ali J. Ahmed as well as made a general coverage of how, as a lyricist, he perceives poetry and the poet as written in selected sections of the numerous works he published. Throughout its analysis, the paper presented characteristics of Ahmed's publications particularly looking at them from the general view that captures the relationship between language of poetry, and how creative imagination alone, though an essential component of creativity, cannot deliver the message in the absence of other vital stakeholders that are part and parcel of the creative art enterprise. The paper further confirmed that whether oral or written, a work of creative art cannot be delivered as a self-contained production without deploying a feature of the language that is appropriate to the subject of discussion, the context of the environment, and the social world that consists of the readers who make use of the message in the variety of ways at their discretion.

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