Panini: NSU Studies in Language and Literature Vol 9: 181-196

Against "Combat Gnosticism": Female War Poetry in WWI

Anika Saba
Ateef Rashid

Abstract

As one of the deadliest conflicts in human history, the First World War has occupied an inexorable space in the British literary scene. Poets like Wilfred Owen and Siegfried Sassoon have immortalised the ethos of war in their verses. When we think of WWI, their poems are mostly what we study even to this day. Commenting on their works, scholars like Paul Fussell have produced a long-standing discourse of what James Campbell calls "combat gnosticism." The phrase translates into knowledge of war that is associated with men only. As a response to this dialogue, our paper will analyse poems of three female writers from Tim Kendall's contemporary anthology Poetry of the First World War (2013). The selected poets are May Sinclair, Mary Borden and May Wedderburn Cannan who assisted in the war services and lived to write about their experiences. While Sinclair is relatively known, the other two live in obscurity when it comes to poetry study of WWI. This paper will do close readings of one poem of each of these poets to show how women have been involved in the war and thus challenge the idea of "combat gnosticism."

Wars and conflicts have existed among human beings from prehistoric times, the earliest dating back to the Mesolithic period. In the West, from as early as Homer's Iliad and Odyssey, war has been the most dominant subject in literary works and, "[i]t may be argued further that, except possibly for the theme of love

… no other literary rendering of human experience has exercised such an extensive influence on human behavior" (Brosman 85). The art of war had evolved throughout the ages and each type of war, although different from each other, had its own sense of destruction. Modernity, which came as a result of Enlightenment in the Western world, saw the rise of nation-states and the advancement of technology. Consequently, the development and use of WMD (weapons of mass destruction) changed the face of warfare and resulted in the massacres of the twentieth century, among which the Great War (or later called the First World War) was the earliest occasion. The scale of death and destruction that occurred in the First World War was unprecedented at the time and so it caused an indelible breach in the psyche of the modern man. The resulting sense of loss and fragmentation produced passionate poetry in the first half of the twentieth century as we see in the works of modernists like Eliot, Pound and Yeats. Besides the modernists who made indirect references to the war, there were many war poets like Wilfred Owen, Siegfried Sassoon, Robert Graves who had participated in the war and wrote about their experiences in the battlefield. Owen, who died only a week before the Armistice, is particularly famous for his vivid works such as "Dulce et Decorum Est," "Anthem for Doomed Youth,"etc. Owen and the war poets wrote about the true horrors of the war which the British state hid from the people at home. Sassoon even wrote a letter of protest about the prolonging war and it was read in the House of Commons. However, while these male poets and their works were widely read and still are, very little is said about the women writers of the First World War besides Virginia Woolf who was part of the Bloomsbury group and one of the modernists. Woolf was specialized in writing prose, but it was poetry which was considered the best form of expression when it came to war. Tim Kendall writes:

The close identification of war poetry with a British national character persists to the present day. Its origins can be

found in the belief that the writing of verse was a patriotic act because it celebrated and (at least potentially) enhanced the nation's cultural ascendency. (Introduction, xv)

Female poets are not discussed when war poems of the First World War are examined. Their works hardly appear in the academic curriculum and little research is done in this field. This paper, therefore, will try to address this gap by analyzing the selected poems of three female poets of WWI from the anthology Poetry of the First World War (2013) by editor Tim Kendall. The three poets are May Sinclair (1863-1936), Mary Borden (1886-1968), and May Wedderburn Cannan (1893-1973). All three worked as nurses or attendants at hospital units of the Western Front, either in France or Belgium, and their poems reflect the pathos of wartime much like their male counterparts.

Since the First World War, there have been many historical and literary works published on the subject. In fact, in modern times, no other event had such an immense impact on British life and its cultural scene as the Great War. The years following it saw an abundant publication of memoirs and journals by soldiers because people at home wanted to know what happened in the frontlines. Robert Graves's Goodbye to All That (1929) and Edmund Blunden's Undertones of War (1928) were among the most popular autobiographical memoirs which contributed to the earliest collection of Great War books. Besides the autobiographies, poems were also reprinted, with Wilfred Owen's work being the most popular among them. The war had turned many into writers, whereas, many writers had become soldiers. Both produced a vast body of literature that called for new aestheticism and awareness from critics and readers alike. Apart from this retrieval of literary works, there came academic studies, and among them, the most notable was Paul Fussell's The Great War and Modern Memory (1975). It talked about how the memory of the Great War determined the mind of the modern man and thus the meaning of his life. Fussell draws the events of the war in detail and

chronologically, from the British point of view, and at each stage he analyzes the responses of poets such as Blunden, Graves, Owen, Sassoon and others. Like most scholars of his time, Fussell also wrote about the male experience of the war and ignored the women because war is traditionally considered a man's domain, whereas, home a woman's. Thus, most anthologies at the time contained poems by men and had no or little inclusion of women.

Criticizing Fussell and the likes of him who created a gendered discourse of war literature, James Campbell says that war literature is characterized by "combat gnosticism" that is, knowledge of fighting in the war, which is a male experience. He singles out Fussell's famous book for cementing the idea of war experience as trench experience. Therefore, for understanding the impacts of the First World War, we must rely on the Man as with almost everything else in Western culture and tradition. This men-only concept of the Great War came under scrutiny when in 1977, the Imperial War Museum held an exhibition of the women's contribution to the war (Tylee 8). The war had given women a certain sense of freedom and they expressed great joy and exhilaration of gaining this liberty in many of their poems and journals. Among these female writers, none is probably as important or famous as Vera Brittain whose Testament of Youth (1933) was widely popular for years. However, it was not until the late 1970s that the female dimension of the war was considered seriously by scholars and researchers. Scars Upon My Heart: Women's Poetry and Verse of the First World War was published by Catherine Reilly in 1981 and it had works by 79 women, including the esteemed Edith Sitwell (Tylee12). Other important and contemporary works on this subject are The Great War and Women's Consciousness (1990) by Claire M. Tylee, Lines of Fire: Women Writers of World War I (1999) by Margaret Higonnet and Women Writers of the First World War (2000) by Sharon Ouditt.

Claire M Tylee's book is much like Paul Fussell's book but here the female perspective takes dominance. Its subtitle

Images of Militarism and Womanhood in Women's Writings, 1914-64 indicates two things - first, it is limited within a fixed timeframe and second, it focuses on the military spirit experienced by the women in the war. Therefore, it focuses on women like Vera Brittain, May Sinclair, Mary Borden who have seen death and destruction of the war more closely than their peers back home. Like Fussell, Tylee maps the events of the war and its influences in the lives and writings of these female writers. This book has proven most helpful for this research and has been widely used for reference. Next, Margaret Higonnet in her book Lines of Fire, reiterates how the Great War was a violent introduction to the twentieth century and that it was done from a male perspective. Her book is a heavily researched one containing reports and writings from a wider range of women than we find in Tylee. Whereas Tylee's work is focused more on British women, Higonnet goes global by bringing in the experiences of European and Asian women who were victims of the war as well. From familiar names such as Virginia Woolf, Edith Wharton, Katherine Mansfield to lesser-known writers, suffragettes, nurses, the book is rich in the diversity of female experience of the First World War. On the other hand, Sharon Ouditt's Women Writers of the First World War is a bibliographical work that outlines names, with brief descriptions, of women's fictions, diary entries, journals, letters, autobiographies, etc. Ouditt talks about women in different professions like civil service, domestic employment, and munitions offices. She had compiled a great deal, but was criticized for presenting alimited view of women's war writings. All three works contribute crucially to the literature of a significantly burgeoning field. Campbell expounds how thesef eminist studies of war literature question the concept of "combat gnosticism." On this point, he says, "many critics have recently reopened the question of women's reaction to war and the legitimacy and multifariousness of its poetic expression" (205).

Therefore, this paper will revisit and contribute to this discourse by bringing more attention of readers and scholars to female war poetry in WWI. This is not a comprehensive study on women's poetry of the First World War, but part of an ongoing investigation by authors who are keen on this subject and want to find out more. The methodology of the study is qualitative where a single poem of each poet has been randomly chosen from Kendall's anthology. The rationale for choosing these three female poets from the anthology is that they have been close to the battlefields. In contrast, other female poets in the anthology such as Charlotte Mew and Mary Postgate Cole, have been at home in England during the War and thus their verses contain the general feeling of sadness. The close-reading method will be applied in finding deeper meanings as well as poetic qualities of the chosen poems. The objective is to show how women too had knowledge of the war, and their poems, in containing vivid images of those experiences, prove the idea of "combat gnosticism" wrong.

During the war, industrial factories needed workers in running machines, and since majority of the men had gone away to war, women took up their jobs. This had increased women's position in the workplace, and they played an active role. A large portion of women were brought out of domestic life and put into theindustrial zone. They were also hired in hospitals as nurses and, on some occasions, medics in the battlefield. Women also took to writing in magazines and newspapers for they could actively document the war experience from both home and battlefield. The British government used women's literature as means of propaganda to sway popular opinion before enlisting became mandatory. Thus, women's poetry had the theme of heroic patriotism that helped reinforcing positive attitudes towards the war. However, much like the men, soon they realized the futile brutality of the war and changed their opinions. We see these traits in the poems of May Sinclair, Mary Borden and May Wedderburn Cannan who worked near the war zones.

May Sinclair was a feminist, novelist and poet who was born in Cheshire, England. When the war started, she volunteered as a medic and was posted in Flanders. It was there that she was inspired to write her popular poems such as "Field Ambulance in Retreat." The poem starts with an epigraph where the Latin words "Via Dolorosa" meaning the "path of grief" refers to the road through which Christ carried his crucifixion cross, and the other part "Via Sacra", also translates to "sacred road" which probably refers to the same thing. With these references, Sinclair is trying to say how the roads through which the wounded soldiers are taken, resemble the sorrowful path of Christ. This analogy in the beginning sets the tone of the poem which is going to be sad and serious. The poem, is divided into three parts with an increasing number of lines and with that an increasing sense of distress. In the first stanza, Sinclair begins with an image of a road in a countryside that has not been touched by war yet. The initial image is one of beauty and serenity with "tall trees," "flat green land," "plots of flowers," and "black canals" beside the road (lines 3-4). It is quite like any ordinary road with rural surroundings.

In the second stanza, the speaker goes on to describe the farmers working on the field and the domestic animals that help them carry the harvest through the road. The road contractors are praised for their fine work since the roads are "strong for the feet of the oxen and of the great Flemish horses" (line 6). The reference to the "Flemish horses" gives the road a specific geographical location which has been unclear till now. It also indicates that Sinclair wrote this during her time in Belgium. Then suddenly the workers stand aside, and there is a loud "passing of the guns," "rush of armoured cars," and "tramp of an army" breaking the peace and quiet of the countryside (10). Next, an ambulance is seen coming and it is the main subject of the poem as suggested by the title. It is compared with a cart that is carrying wounded soldiers just like the oxen carts carrying

harvest. The ambulance's harvest is called "red and white" meaning that the soldiers are a pool of blood and bandages (12). The ambulance meets the retreating army in the middle of the path, reminding the soldiers that they might have survived for now, but duty and danger remain.

In the third stanza, it is seen that the soldiers stand aside proudly to make way for the Red Cross Ambulance, which is a sign of both safety and danger. Seeing the mixed feelings of "beauty" and "desolation" in the faces of a retreating army, is claimed to be the most unique experience, one that few like Sinclair had the chance of witnessing. The speaker, who we can assume is a nurse like Sinclair, claims that it is a joy to gather the wounded like a harvest, for soldiers feel safe in her hands. The safety is described as "hard and strange" because it is difficult to keep the soldiers safe and it is a new experience for these women who have the responsibility of saving the soldiers; this is emphasized by repeating the words almost immediately but by changing the syntax and writing "stranger and yet more hard." The work of the nurses becomes more difficult as the war keeps going on and thenumber of injuries and causalities keep rising:

> As, league after dying league, the beautiful, desolate Land,
> Falls back from the intolerable speed of an Ambulance in retreat
> On the sacred, dolorous Way. (lines 24-26)

The poem ends with the image of the road where the adjectives "scared" and "dolorous" bring back the notion of the Latin phrases. The capitalization of the "Way" particularly makes the road special despite its initial ordinariness. The road transforms into something more meaningful because of the passing of the ambulance where the journey of the wounded soldiers parallels that of Christ. Thus, Sinclair through the voice of the speaker in the poem captures two things at once - her experience of nursing in the war, and her religious reverence for the distraught soldiers. With its long lines, the poem almost

resembles the road that is its subject; therefore, the form compliments the content. Also, the diction changes with the shifting tone and image of the poem. In the beginning it is light and colorful, but then it adopts heavier and darker words as the army intervenes bringing with it an air of death and despair. The poem captures the complexity of wartime experiences where women like Sinclair were initially thrilled by what they saw and did, but then gradually they realized the immense futility of death and destruction.

Mary Borden was an Anglo-American novelist and poet, who volunteered as a nurse for the French Red Cross but did not like how the hospital was running, so she established her own hospital under the French military. Her hospital had the lowest mortality rate, but she needed to relocate near Somme, and it was there that she wrote her most famous poem "At the Somme"(Kendall 75). "At the Somme" is divided into three parts, which can be read as three distinct poems on their own. This paper will look at only the second section "The Song of the Mud" because it contains some of Borden's iconic verses giving a haunting view of the warzone. This section echoes the title and style of Walt Whitman's "Song of Myself" exhibiting Borden's American upbringing.

The section is divided into five stanzas with distinct purposes. In the first, the mud is described as something "glistening" and "silvery" covering the hills and valleys; whereas, the common concept of mud is dull and dark, the poetic persona here qualifies it as shiny and, using similes, she compares it with "satin" and "enamel" (lines 2-3). Next, it is portrayed like a river or stream with "frothing, squirting, spurting liquid" as we move from visual to auditory images (4). These positive connotations make the mud appear friendly and almost desirable at the beginning. This is contradicted by the last line of the stanza where "the invincible, inexhaustible mud of the War Zone" is introduced. The second stanza has an extended metaphor of the

mud as clothing for soldiers in a war because it covers them from head to toe sometimes. The blue uniform of the soldiers become grey due to the mud as it seeps into their "trousers and boots" staining their faces, beard and hair (11-14). In a mocking tone, the speaker compares the muddy clothes to the royal attire of a king and says that the soldiers have "introduced the chic of the mud," that is, a new form of fashion (16-18). The third stanza takes on a serious tone as the speaker shifts to images in the battlefield where the mud becomes "slimy inveterate nuisance" finding its way almost everywhere starting from the trenches to the "food of the soldiers" (21-23). The mud is almost personified with animal or humanlike qualities where it "sucks the guns… in its slimy voluminous lips" and "has no respect for destruction…" (26-27). These choices of words draw an image of the mud as a living being which has its own will and power over the actions and events of the war; and, yet this power is so subtle that it does not need to use force or coercion to overcome, rather it "slowly, softy, easily" takes over everything (28). This subtlety is the most dangerous thing because when we think of war calamity, we imagine guns and tanks but forget about the mud which has been one of the deadliest forms of obstacle for soldiers in the First World War, as expressed by many male soldier-poets in their letters and journals. Wilfred Owen, for example, wrote to his mother about the long miles of wading and trudging through mud that they had to do at Somme in early 1917 (Fussell 48). Borden ends this stanza with a frightening image of how the mud consumes everything:

> Soaks up the fire, the noise, soaks up the energy and the courage,
> Soaks up the power of armies,
> Soaks up the battle-
> Just soaks it up and thus stops it. (lines 29-32)

The repetition of the word "soaks" visually shows how the mud is everywhere. There is a sense of finality in the last line where it is indicated that the only winner in a war is the mud.

The fourth stanza mostly speaks of how the mud is a "vast liquid grave" (line 34). It continues with grim images of how the mud devours fallen soldiers in its "monstrous" belly and thus it has a bad smell of "the undigested dead" (36). The animal of the previous stanza has now taken the shape of a beast. The olfactory image makes it livelier and closer to readers. Next, Borden writes how "the men have gone down into it, sinking slowly, and struggling and slowly disappearing" (37). This long sentence with the repetition of "slowly" and consonant sounds of "s" relate to the lengthy and tiring process in which the mud kills the soldiers, thus making their deaths more painful. The next lines show how the mud does not discriminate its lethal attack as soldiers, young or old, brave or otherwise, all kinds are taken by its force. Once again, the poetic persona speaks of the subtlety with which it destroys everything, making no sound and leaving no trace. Thus, Borden ends the stanza saying:

> There is not a trace of them-
> There is no mark where they went down.
> The mute, enormous mouth of the mud has closed over them. (lines 46-48)

The consonant sound of "m" with its softness adds to the silent killing of the soldiers. The verse also contains a gustatory image with reference to the "mouth" and its "enormous" nature reaffirms the mud as beastly. From this horrific image, we are brought back to the beauty and serenity of the mud in the last stanza. The fifth and final stanza is short with the first three lines echoing that of the first stanza where the mud is "glistening" and "silvery" (lines 51-52). This is contradicted by the next three lines, which are short, each starting with capitalized "Mud" and followed by phrasal adjectives; they summarize the main themes of the second to the fourth stanza. Thus, "the fantastic disguise" corresponds with the clothing metaphor in the second stanza, "the extinguishing mantle" refers to the destructive nature in the third stanza and, finally, "the smooth fluid grave" restates the killing force of the mud in the fourth stanza (53-55).

The poem is an accomplishment of the highest kind with its synthesis of vivid images, meticulous structure and important message. In listing the qualities of the mud, the poem appeals to all our senses - sight, smell, sound, etc. The tone is celebratory like Whitman's, but the content is grim which is where the irony lies. Like Sinclair's, this poem proves Borden's proximity and awareness of the state of war and, also showcases her brilliant poetic craft which is not known to many, unfortunately.

May Weddenburn Cannan was a contemporary of Vera Brittain and like Brittain, May Cannan was excited with state preparations of the war in which women were closely involved. Cannan was the daughter of the Dean of Trinity College, Oxford, and consequently grew up in a literary household. When the war began, Cannan helped her father with cataloguing but she desperately wanted to be in France where the real action was going on. In May 1915, she crossed the Channel and worked in a canteen serving soldiers. There she started writing poems, including her most famous work "Rouen" which appeared in her first collection In War Times. In the anthology, she referred to Rupert Brooke emphatically. Brooke "was the poet who above all expressed the glamour of war for the War Generation" and May Cannan strongly supported his view (Tylee 77). We get a glimpse of this war frenzy in Cannan's "Rouen."

"Rouen" is a long poem with thirteen stanzas of four lines each and in each of the stanzas, the second line and fourth line rhyme; thus, it has a traditional form. It is about the early enthusiasms of war than the horrors which were realized later. The poem is written in a nostalgic manner where the poetic persona uses the rhetorical device anaphora to refer to past shared experiences with a friend whom she calls "you" throughout. The very first lines give an impression of energy and positivity with the words "hopeful, high, courageous," which are used to describe the start of day at Rouen (line 1). For girls like Cannan who spent most of their lives under the protection of parents in conservative

British households, the war gave an opportunity to come out of those comfort zones and explore the world. They came to new places in Europe and met different people. Thus, the poetic persona describes how the work gives them "laughter of adventure" away from their earlier mundane lives and a sense of participation in the war (2). Cannan recalls the routine of young girls at canteens -how they start their early morning with anticipation of "unfamiliar faces" and "coming of provisions" - and she describes the overall work as full of "freshness and glory" (7-8). She goes on to describe the hot weather in which they work every day. The mention of Rouen connects to the title, as well as gives the actions of the poem a specific location. Interestingly, even though the setting is in France, Cannan mentions "the voices of Indians" which reminds us that this was a world war and people from different parts of the world were involved, particularly the Indians who were British subjects at the time and were brought to fight on the Western Front (11). The images of enjoying hot "coffee" in the afternoon, having "crushes" on the good-looking soldiers and waiting for "letters" from home, give a touch of naivety and domesticity to the lives of girls amidst the dangers of the war (13-16). The night-time is described differently with more focus on the soldiers now. Cannan calls the soldiers "the youth and pride of England" who enjoy their dinner with "gay, heart-breaking mirth" despite knowing that these may be their last meals (18-20). Though the poet speaks of war with fondness in this poem, we see that she acknowledges the sacrifices made by the soldiers. She realizes the bravery needed for these men to smile while grim uncertainty hovers over their heads.

In the next stanza, the use of the first person "I" brings subjectivity to the tone of the poem, reminding us that this is the view of one person not necessarily shared by others in the same place. The reference to "the khaki Red Cross train" further specifies where the poetic persona works and what she is describing in the poem. The first images of war brutality come in

this stanza with "truck train full of wounded", but this is again neutralized by the "weariness and laughter" in the same lines (line 23). Clearly, the poet's experience of the war had not been unpleasant for she paints pictures of soldiers making jokes and laughing at each other's expenses despite their severe injuries. Thus, the poetic persona recalls the sweet farewell where the soldiers express their gratitude towards the girls and, in contrast, the sad "empty yards" after they leave (24). A part of their job is also to prepare "parcels" for the soldiers and often these packages contain so many things that they are "bulging" and require to be "held together by strings" (25-26). This evokes the idea of the stitches holding together the soldiers. Next, the speaker alludes to the national anthem that fill the soldiers with both "agony and splendor" (28). More images of goodbyes are given with "the cheering and the waving" as the soldiers are drafted to their destination (29). Once the soldiers leave, the shelters are haunted with "sudden awful silence" and "lonely desolation" (31-32). The next stanza describes the nighttime with "footsteps of night watchers" and "shadows on the rail-lines" which indicate the need for security from the lurking danger in war zones; this shows that the lives of these girls are at risk too (33-35). That is why they prefer the morning which brings "promise of the daylight" with its sense of safety and duty (36). These mornings are "still and solemn" as they wait for new "Drafts just out from England" (37-40). The soldiers from England would stop at different bases around the coast of France before going further into the mainland, and this Red Cross at Rouen was one such place where May Cannan worked. As these soldiers arrive in "white-decked Red Cross barges," the girls are eager to hear news from home, and thus ensues "the search for English papers" (42-43). The ship and the sea make the poetic persona more nostalgic as she recalls "the evenings and the sunsets" listening to "distant call of bugles" which signal the arrival and departure of soldiers. The last stanza with its ellipses in the beginning marks, how there are endless

memories she has from her time at the war; however, these memories are not dreadful but about "Adventure" (53). The speaker is not blind to the sacrifice of the soldiers or the challenges these men face; she considers it an honor to serve food and drinks to these men as she does her part.

The aim of this paper was to understand how female poets contributed to the poetry of the Great War and from the analysis above, we can see how vividly they captured their experiences of the war in verses. Their works are just as rich with images of war as their male counterparts. All three women, particularly, Sinclair and Borden who acted as nurses, were close to the soldiers and the battlefields. Their poems are evidence of the initial excitement about the war, as we see in Cannan's poem, and the ultimate despair of the soldiers, as we see in Sinclair and Borden's poems. Even though these women did not fight in the war, they were affected by the war, because an event of this scale is not limited with the warfare. It intrudes into the lives of everyone in the society. On this point, Campbell says, "Women's lives are affected, even destroyed by war; culture involves women as well as men, and if war helps to construct a culture, as Fussell indeed seems to argue, it constructs feminine as well as masculine subjects" (207). Thus, a holistic study of the Great War's impact on British culture must include experiences beyond the battlefield; it encompasses the lives of people back home where families were scarred, and economies hampered. Female poets like Charlotte Mew and Mary Postgate Cole who stayed home, wrote poems on the general suffering and loss of men during wars. Their works can give us another perspective of war, away from the battlefield. Since it is not within the scope of this study, Mew and Cole have not been included in the above discussion. However, their absences open avenues for more research in this field. More enquiry of female war writing will continue to prove how the idea of "combat gnosticism" is unwarranted and this brief study has been an earnest contribution towards that goal.

Works Cited

Brosman, Catharine Savage. "The Functions of War Literature." *South Central Review, vol. 9*, no. 1, 1992, pp. 85-98. JSTOR, www.jstor.org/stable/3189388. Accessed 4 Feb 2019.

Campbell, James. "Combat Gnosticism: The Ideology of First World War Poetry Criticism." *New Literary History, vol. 30*, no. 1, 1999, pp. 203-215. JSTOR,www.jstor.org/stable/20057530. Accessed 30 Jan 2020.

Fussell, Paul. *The Great War and Modern Memory*. Oxford University Press, 1975.

Higonnet, Margaret Randolph. *Lines of Fire: Women Writers of World War I*. Penguin, 1999.

Kendall, Tim. *Poetry of the First World War: An Anthology*. Oxford University Press, 2013.

Ouditt, Sharon. *Women Writers of the First World War: An Annotated Bibliography*. Routledge, 2000.

Tylee, Claire M. *The Great War and Women's Consciousness: Images of Militarism and Womanhood in Women's Writings 1914-64*. Macmillan, 1990.

Anika Saba is a Senior Lecturer in the Department of English and Humanities at BRAC University.

Ateef Rashid is an English Teacher at Bangladesh International Tutorial School.