

A Comparative Analysis of Muhammad and Oe's Novels

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ABSTRACT

This is a comparative analysis of two novels entitled "The Son of Mad Mat Lela," which is written by Ishak Hadji Muhammad, a famous Malaysian writer and the other one is "Teach us to Outgrow our Madness," by a Japanese novelist Kenzaburo Oe. This study compared the literary styles of Muhammad and Oe through the lens of their vocabulary and language use. Muhammad's literary styles is simple, clear and vivid. One reads the story with delight because the words that strung together sound on the air like music. He does not use metaphor; his style is still striking in his own way. Many readers still notice his style no matter how plain it is. This is to say that Muhammad could write lucidly, simply and lively by observing grammar rules in writing. He uses common phrases of the day not with artificially but with naturalness. While, Oe's literary style is more of long and complex sentences or two that occupy a paragraph. Most of his passages convey strong emotion describing an intimate knowledge of the lives of the characters.

1. Introduction

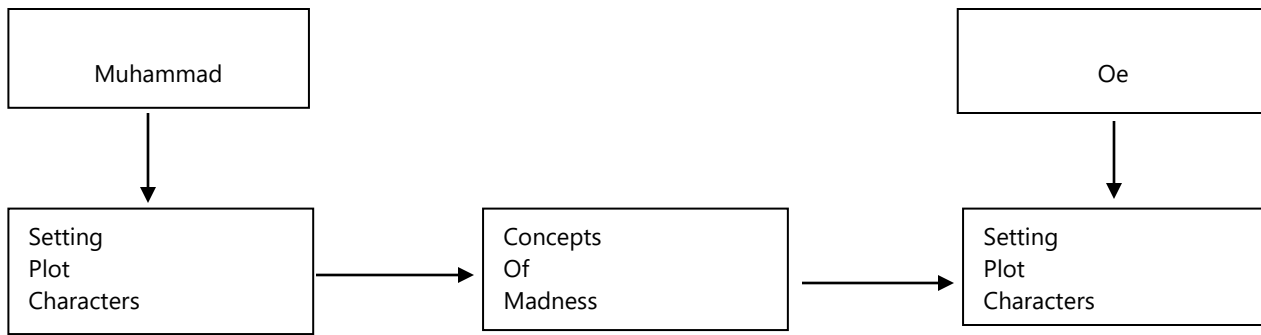
T.S. Eliot once declared that, in approaching a work of literature to write about it, the only critical method he knew was to be very intelligent. Eliot was not boasting about his I.Q.; he was suggesting that to a critic of literature, a keen sensibility is more valuable than a carefully worked out method. Although none of us may be another Eliot, all of us have some powers or reasoning and perceptions. And then we come to a story, a poem, or a play, we can do little other than to trust whatever powers we have, like one who enters a shadow room, clutching a decent candle (Kennedy, 1983).

Emerson makes a similar point in his essay "The American Scholar": "Meek young men grow up in libraries". According to him, "There are excellent old ideas as well as new."

Though T.S. Eliot may be right in preferring intelligence to method, there are certain familiar approaches to stories, novels, poems and plays which critical essays tend to follow. Underlying each of these approaches is a certain way of regarding the nature of a work of literature. Four approaches are identified as follows: (a) The work by itself, (b) The work as an imitation of life, (c) The work as expression, (d) The work as influence.

The work by itself assumes a story, novel, poem or play to be an individual entity, existing on its pages, that we can read and understand on its own right, without studying the life of its author, or the age which it was written, or its possible effects on its readers. In this paper, this is the approach being adopted. However, the lives of the authors were reviewed for better understanding. There are two (2) novels used in this paper. The first one is "The Son of Mad Mat Lela," a novel by Ishak Hadji Muhammad, a famous Malaysian writer. The original story was in Bahasa Malay and was translated into English by Harry Aveling. The other one is "Teach us to Outgrow our Madness," by a Japanese novelist Kenzaburo Oe. This was originally written in Japanese (Nipongo) Language and translated into English by John Nathan. This is a winner of the 1994 Nobel Prize for Literature. The setting, the plot and the characters are used in making a critical analysis of the two (2) novels.

The conceptual framework upon which this paper is based is shown in the figure below.



1.1 About the Authors

Ishak Hadji Muhammad is a well-known Malaysian writer. In a country where writers see themselves and are often seen by their readers as intellectuals who can perceive and who must rectify national problems, it is not surprising that the message of *Mad Mat Lela* has made Ishak one of Malaysia's best known writers. Although his writings were more on the social cancer affecting colonial Malaya, his literary style has reflected his encounter with the literature of the West, the world he considered as the destroyer of Malaya's cultural and religious (Islamic) heritage. He only sees progress if this is under girded with Islamic overtones. Without it, economic progress has no real meaning to Muhammad.

In the case of Kenzaburo Oe, he is one of the famous Japanese writers who grew up during World War II. He was educated in Japan, China and in Harvard, USA.

According to Kennedy (1983), Oe was born in 1935 and one of Japan's most popular novelists. He is a leading member of his country's "New Left." His wide knowledge of Western literature is evidenced in his fiction, which show occidental influences in both its philosophy and style. He is also an editor, short story writer, and a literary critic.

In 1954, Oe was admitted to Tokyo University and left the Island of Shikoku for the first time to go to the big city. He enrolled in the Department of French Literature, the course for serious students at Tokyo, where it was held that American writing was inferior, and became absorbed in Pascal and Camus and Sartre, who were to be the subject of his graduation thesis. He was a brilliant student but he kept it to himself. He was withdrawn by nature, always a loner, and because he was ashamed of his provincial accent, he stuttered. He lived in a boarding house near the campus, and it was there at night, swallowing tranquilizers with whisky, that he began to write the stories which established him in half a year as the spokesman for an entire generation of young Japanese whose distress he identified with. His first published story, "An Old Job," appeared in the May, 1975 issue of the University literary magazine. It was about a bewildered college student who takes a part-time job slaughtering dogs to be used in laboratory experiments.

1.2 The Settings of the Novel

The settings of Muhammad's "The Son of Mad Mat Lela" is the colonial Malaya when it was under the British rule. While Malaya experienced modernization through the introduction of an affluent, aristocratic European society, there was a clash between the native culture and the introduced modern society. However, modernity was only accepted, and hence experienced, by the urban populace. The rural people, unable to taste the introduced modernity, did not accept it and remained clinging to their old-fashioned ways of living. They observed that while modernity has produced conveniences in day-to-day life, it has also made them less Islamic. Thus, while modernity may have improved their economic life, it has also set back their spiritual life. There is a conflict between modernity and Islamic spirituality.

This, in essence, is the social milieu that serves as the backdrop of the story "The Son of Mad Mat Lela."

On the other hand, the setting of Oe's "Teach Us to Outgrow our Madness" is the post-war Japan. However, there are portions of the story that flashed back to the end of the Sino-Japan war. But most often, the story was in the 1960's when Japan had successfully mass-produced and brought to every Japanese home, the radios and the TV's.

1.3 The Plot of Mad Mat Lela

"The Son of Mad Mat Lela" is a novel by Ishak Hadji Muhammad which focuses on the culture of practices observed by the Malaya people who are Muslims. The novel is divided into sixteen (16) short-related stories using the same characters.

The presentation starts with the definition of terms found in the title and then explanation of the major characters. This makes the reader understand vividly or concretely the characteristics of the main characters. This is followed by the discussion of the other elements of the story as implied in the presentation such as the setting and the rest of the elements of the story. It is well-organized and simply narrated that even school graders can understand.

The author gives the reader concrete specific facts. This is a literary method of conveying feelings and ideas and in telling facts.

"The Son of Mad Mat Lela" is a pre-war Malay novel which is both an attack on the inappropriateness of Western culture planted on colonial soil and an antidote to the cultural estrangement that imported colonial values which seem to endanger the values of a colonized tribe. It is a story of an estranged love affair between a beautiful lady (Elis Sakti) from an aristocrat Malay family and an Islamic religious leader (Jaafar). They were married secretly but it was destined to be broken since the parents of the lady wanted her to be the wife of a wealthy but matured man. This resulted in a fight that left the wealthy man dead and the escape abroad of the husband (Jaafar), leaving his wife pregnant with their child (Bulat).

The son Bulat was left by Elis Sakti under the care of a village mad man (Mat Lela) who took good care of the child until puberty. Bulat left Mat Lela to look for his parents. Mat Lela was disheartened when Bulat left him. Mat Lela died looking for Bulat. In the course of his travel looking for his parents. Bulat met and stayed with Mandur Alang, a Malay aborigine who taught him to live a religious but economically sound life. He became a singer and through his songs, he brought salvation and hope to this people as promised by Islam. In other words, he became the modern Adam and a new Prophet Mohammad.

The novel ended with the union of the father, mother and son in Singapore. The happy union is considered a triumph of good over evil, of Islamic culture over Western culture, and of love over wealth. It is also a medication of the Malay "sickness" for Western affluence and the inner craving for eternal peace of mind that only Islam can purely provide.

To understand the importance of Mad Mat Lela is not to assume that the rejection of foreigners through an atavistic return to the jungle as the proper alternative to the status quo. Muhammad did not prescribe a Walden-like life. But rather than simply rejecting western progress, Muhammad redefines progress in such a way that it is synonymous with the development of Malay culture and with the practice of Islam. This is not, however, merely an assertion of religion and culture as they exist. Both must be purified and perfected. Mat Lela collects bricks for a mosque which represent the proper grandeur of his religion, and Bulat must learn the ancient lore forgotten by Malayas but preserved by the aborigine Mandur Alang.

Malays, according to Muhammad, have a "sickness" which prevents them from obtaining progress. Besides having lost control of their economy and government to foreigners, they are unable or unwilling to compete. Others plant acres of land; the Malays have only few plants to satisfy their immediate needs.

When Malays attempt to enter contemporary urban life, they fail like the young couple Bulat meets in the Cameron Highlands. The pretense of sharing modern goods with the foreigners collapses in debt. To combat this sickness, Muhammad proposes through Bulat and Bulat's parents and foster parents a series of remedies. These remedies are symbolized by the name, birth and life of Bulat. But in order to remedy the difficulties of the Malays, it is not enough that the child returns to his parents. A new hero is demanded – one whose birth will simultaneously bind him to Malay cultural traditions and free him from contemporary problems. This is achieved through his status as an infant whom Mat Lela places in a doorless, windowless house until Bulat can be born again as the new Adam and the new Prophet Muhammad. Bulat alone can discover true knowledge and cultural and transmit them to society through his songs.

1.4 "The Plot of "Teach us to Outgrow our Madness"

Kenzaburo Oe's life is very similar to his famous story "Teach us to Outgrow our Madness." In 1964, when Oe was 21 years old, his first child was born with brain damage, and the baby boy, who he called "Pooh", altered his world with the force of an exploding sun. Oe's relationship with the child is similar to Eevore and his fat father. Over the years as Pooh grew up, a fierce, exclusive, isolating bond developed between father and son. In a fervent, painful way, Oe and his fragile, autistic child became one another's best, embracing one another as if they were each other's fate. Shortly after Pooh was born, Oe ordered two gravestones erected side by side in the cemetery in his native village. He told his friends many times that he would die when Pooh died.

Kenzaburo Oe's novel "Teach us to Outgrow our Madness" is composed of four (4) short stories entitled "The Day He Himself Shall Wipe My Tears Away", "Prize Stock", "Teach Us to Outgrow Our Madness" and "Aghwee the Sky Monster." Of the four, the most interesting story is the "Teach us to Outgrow our Madness." This paper has focused on this story.

"Teach us to Outgrow our Madness" tells of a story of a Japanese whose father died while he was still a small boy. His father died while living in a storehouse through self-exile. He searched for the cause of his father's death and attempted to write a biography of his father. His only information was through his aging mother, a story he cannot believe – that is his father was suffering from a Chinese chance (a kind of sexually transmitted disease) he got while serving in the Army in China. He suspected that his father was a psychopathic patient and committed suicide. His contention seems to gain credence when his first-born boy had a congenital brain damage, operated upon, and grew up as an imbecile (low-witted, partially blind and dumb). This awareness frightened him, thinking that his son inherited his condition from him and thus, he is also a psychopath as he inherited it from his father. However, he wanted a confirmation of this possibility and it is only his mother who can give him an answer. At the end, his mother sticks to her original story. The man, although no longer interested in finishing his father's biography, planned to follow the footsteps of his father in self-reclusion. He never learned to outgrow his madness, after all.

2. The Concepts of Madness

Both novels have some concepts of madness. However, Oe's madness is different from Muhammad's. Oe's concept of madness as illustrated by his main character (only known as the Fat Man) is considered as an internal perpetual conflict found only in the mind. While that of Muhammad's was more of an external conflict, a societal upheaval or as he calls it "social sickness." Rizal calls it more poetically as a "social cancer."

2.1 Oe's Concept of Madness

Kenzaburo Oe considered madness as an internal matter, within one's mind. This is illustrated by the insistence of the Fat Man to confirm, through his mother, that his father is a psychopath. The main character of the novel (The Fat Man) is not a psychopath or that of having some psychoneurosis tendencies. This contention is shared by the people around him like his wife, his mother, his brothers and sisters. And maybe the entire members of his social circle, including the policemen, zoo caretakers and even the Secret Service authority. But his obsession is that his father has the indication of a disturbed mind. However, this awareness of being a mad man himself little by little works into his mind. The mental conflict was so severe that he wanted to outgrow his own madness. Growing out of his own madness is a confirmation that he is a lunatic himself. He believes that he is so. In page 210, it reads: *...Mother, now that's all I need to tell me that you don't even believe yourself what you insinuated about my disease and my madness. ...Or have you gone into that old act about being mad yourself? Well the routine is too old, you won't fool anybody that way. And let me tell you something, if you can pretend to be mad enough to fool someone again then you're not pretending anymore, you really have gone mad! ...Mother, why won't you speak? You're hiding my notes because you're afraid if I publish something about father every one who knows the family will think father was mad, and that his blood runs in all the children, and that my son is the living proof of that, isn't that so?...*

However, the people around him never believed that he is mentally defective. He has performed his role in society better than most of them. He is a respected man and even mistaken as an intelligence officer or a spy working for a foreign government. It is only himself who has the inkling that he is a psychopath himself. In the last few pages of the story, it says (pp.213-214)...*If that voice is the voice of the Man (his father), then "our madness" had always meant his own and his son Eeyore's. But now he and the Man were included. The Man had deposited his massive body in the barber chair he had installed in a dark storehouse, covered his eyes and ears, and tirelessly prayed, "teach us to outgrow our madness, mine and his!" The Man's madness is my madness, the fat man stubbornly insisted to himself, his son already banished mother toward the Man's madness? The fat man wasn't weeping any more, but he was trembling so that the sheet rustled, not with cold but with rage alone* (words in parenthesis supplied).

Another way to outgrow madness was to cling something dear to himself. This is illustrated in the obvious dependence of the Fat Man to his mother. In page 178, it reads: *And yet the Fat Man was dependent on his mother to a degree extraordinary for an adult of his age, another truth he was obliged to rely on instead of sleeping pills, he was with a clay dog he had brought from Mexico when he discovered a hole beneath the creature's tail and blew into it hard, as if he were playing on a flute. Unexpectedly, a cloud of fine black dust billowed out of the hole and plastered his eyes. The Fat Man supposed he had gone blind, and in his distraction and his fear he called out to his mother: Mother, oh Mother, help me, please if I should go blind and lose my mind the way father did, what will become of my son? Teach me, mother, how we can all outgrow our madness!*

2.2 Muhammad's Concept of Madness

The madness in Muhammad's "The Son of Mad Mat Lela" is quite different from what Oe understood it. Mad Mat Lela was considered as a village lunatic in the same manner that Filosopo Tasyo was conceived in the Noli of Rizal. Lela was an intelligent man and was only made despondent because of a tragic love affair. This sudden change of actuation was interpreted by his neighbors as a sign of lunacy. He made odd things like sweeping the mosque grounds, clearing away the weeds, cleaning benches and even curved penises out of wood. He is absolutely crazy, the villagers said.

He, however, believed that he is not a lunatic. But his neighbors considered him as so. Thus, he is called the village madman or Mad Mat Lela. Read this portion of the novel (pp.13-14): *...But two things he did convinced them all – young and old, male and female, the pious and the blasphemer alike – that he was absolutely crazy, insane..*

Firstly, he carved penises out of wood. The penises looked real. He made not just sizes. When he offered them to the boys, they were delighted and fought for them. Women swore when they saw them and laughed hysterically. Old men shook their heads. "A real loon," they said.

The other thing he did was quite incomprehensible. They could think of no rational or irrational reason to explain why he did it. They could not even guess why. He made clay bricks. The clay came from the river bank. He made not just one or two bricks, but hundreds and hundreds, and kept them in a covered shed which was surrounded by a fence.

...How did he decide to make bricks, something that neither roots nor turns moldy, nor bums> and why was he making so many of them? But no matter how unusual, how striking or stupid his actions, as long as he neither hurt nor threatened anyone else, everyone ignored him and left him to his own devices.

Muhammad has made a categorization of the madness of people. According to him, there are many causes of madness, some real, some imagined. On page 70-71, he writes: *"Follow the road through the forest. Go down to Goping, then to Batu Gajah and Ipoh, and don't forget to stop at the madhouse in Tanjong Rambutan on the way. There are about three thousand people there, men, women, young and old. Some cry, some chatter, grumble, others sing, recite nursery rhymes; laugh and jump around like children, still others grovel on the ground in prayer. Various things have made them mad – bad advice, the wrong schooling, mistaken ideals, disappointed hopes, searching for things they shouldn't have met, illicit sex. One of the newcomers is a middle-aged man called Johari. He went crazy because he didn't think things through. He should never have divorced his sweet, virtuous wife Permai. This is the man you told me about, who looked after you while you were a child. You also told me that he married Johariah at Bachock, a beautiful woman with a wicked heart. Not only did Johariah not love Johari, she betrayed him by being unfaithful to him and flaunting it. That drove him so mad that he had to be locked up in Tanjong Rambutan. Johariah appealed to the registrar and was granted a divorce because her husband was mad. She's now a prostitute in Ipoh – trash, absolute dirt. But Permai, his Miss Khadijah – she now owns fourteen acres of cultivated land.*

2.3 Literary Style of Oe

Both wrote their novels following some styles on how to present their story effectively. Oe in "Teach us to Outgrow our Madness" is fond of long and complex sentences or two that occupy a paragraph. For example (Oe, p211):

Mother, if I don't find out, I have a feeling that sooner or later I'll confine myself in a storehouse of my own, and one day I'll scream all of a sudden and the next morning my wife will be telling Eeyore just what you once told me and nothing more, your father has passed away, you mustn't cry or spit or make big or little business thoughtlessly, especially when you're facing West... Didn't you ask my wife not to believe for a minute that he'd done that as a protest against the times, because he wanted to deny the reality of a world in which Japan was making war on China he revered?

In page 193, Oe writes: *The doctor loudly assembled his entire staff, and when the young patient had been stretched out on a bare black leather bed, he gave triumphant instructions that all hands were to help to hold the boy down (the fat man just managed to appropriate for himself the task of securing Eeyore's head between his arms and pinning his chest beneath the weight of his whole body), and then jumped ahead to the second, unquestionably more complicated, stage of examination, though it was clear that the first test had not been completed.*

John Bester (as cited in Kennedy, 1983) said that Oe has been accused, with some justice, of writing Japanese that reads like a translation from a Western Language. His long and complex sentences have neither elegant simplicity nor effortless flow, but are knotty challenges for the mind to unravel. Crammed with adjectives and similes, they consciously – occasionally almost self-consciously – prod the reader along, constantly forcing him to make unexpected associations, or emphasizing the author's analytical self-awareness.

Bester continued, in a sense, perhaps, the Japanese Language is made to do something for which it was never intended; one can well imagine some Japanese readers finding the style overlaid or self-assertive. But though it is obvious to the literature of the Western languages – their syntax, vocabulary, analytical approach – rather than to the Sino-Japanese heritage the Oe looks to enrich the expressiveness of modern Japanese. What is still important is that the ideas and, even more, the imagery are consistently and unmistakably his own. The density is an essential part of Oe's artistic fiber, the sense of strain intrinsic to his themes.

Moreover, Oe's most passages convey strong emotion describing an intimate knowledge of the lives of the characters. The author leaves no word betraying the emotions directly. This suggests that he wants the readers to feel whatever the things described.

Further, Oe possesses the basic attitudes, the yearning for concreteness, this lifelong itch to get down to facts, cases, people, things, colors, sensations, sounds, and events just like any professional writer wants his stories to be. He can also make very detailed descriptions of things in the story like foods. In page 181, it says: *As prepared at the restaurant they frequented the dish and ate some noodles in broth garnished with mushrooms and some spinach and a piece of meat from a pork bone fried in a thin batter. When it was finally brought to their table, the fat man would empty two-thirds of the noodles and some of the mushrooms and spinach into a small bowl which he placed in front of his son, carefully watching the boy eating until the food had cooled, and only then he began to eat the pork himself.*

In addition, Oe's words and tone follow in the order of importance. They follow quite naturally in the order to facility. He even makes use of adjectives for support of some words. This is illustrated particularly on page 211:

The fat man was reminded of a line from a wartime poem by an English poet. ...Like the Pure land hymn which...

And the poem itself happened to be a prayer spoken at the height of the very battle in which his father had listed his Chinese friends one after the other.

The author follows the rule that adjectives must precede the noun or else they (adjectives) feel cheated. These are catch words/phrases which exercise fascination. The author also follows unity of action which ties every event (plot) together not clearly but validity. For example (pp.172-173):

The fat man knew his mother was standing at the other end of the line eight hundred miles away with the old-fashioned receiver in her hand. He even concluded unscientifically that he could hear the whisper of breathing into the other phone as distinctly as he did because no one was near the circuits due to the lateness of the hour, and since this happened to be his mother's breathing, the fat man felt his chest constrict.

While the fat man cried himself to sleep that night, his mother, in the village of his birth, was steeling herself for a final battle against her son. Thus the fat man had no reason to weep, at least not out of the frustration of having had his challenge ignored yet another time. As a child, whenever he began to question her about his father's self-confinement and sudden death, his mother had closed the road to communication by pretending to go mad.

These are the reasons that Oe got several awards for this book. His style is unique. He tries to put in extra words than what is necessary. He has an extravagant vocabulary. However, the strength and balance of his sentences are due to an exquisite taste. Once one reads, he feels to go on and on. The images are peculiarly interesting although they seem to be strange. This is illustrated in the peculiar way he treated his only child and in the peculiar way he conceptualizes his father. He seems to have some inkling of making easy facts hard to believe like the cause of death of his father. While one is reading the novel, the reader is tempted to ask the question: "Is he insane / mad?" While there are "portents of madness," there are also signs of superior intelligence such as his finishing the teaching degree (three licenses to teach) from a university and the unique communication the fat man had with his son. Or is he one who cannot outgrow his madness?

2.3 Literary Style of Muhammad

Similarly, Muhammad also is a gifted writer. Although his language is simple, clear and vivid, one reads the story with delight because the words that strung together sound on the air like music. For example (p. 93): "For twenty years you have been searching for you husband and son; they are now both in Singapore and looking for you"

Muhammad is also good in making a description of the setting. The story goes (pp.46-47): *Repeating Bismillah (in the name of Allah) and not A'uzubillah (I take refuge in Allah), he set out with the two women to walk on the beach. Bachock village was almost deserted, most people had gone to the celebration in town. The wind blew gently over the sand, the sea was as smooth as an unrolled carpet. It was about ten o'clock, the sky was not too bright, the moon had not yet come out from behind its curtain of clouds. Johan, despite his wife, child and thirty one years, felt like a youth again. Johairah bloomed anew. The old woman walked along behind them and remembered when she had been younger. She complained of the difficulty of walking on sand, pretended to stub her foot on a rock, told them she had stepped on a slug and that her eyesight was poor. Finally, she sat down and let them walk on without her. Secretly, they both thanked her a thousand times over for her kindness.*

This is an illustration that the appeal is sensuous rather than intellectual, and the beauty of the sound leads the reader easily to conclude that he needs not bother about the meaning of words.

Although he does not use metaphor, his style is still striking in his own way. Many readers still notice his style no matter how plain it is. This is to say that Muhammad could write lucidly, simply and lively by observing grammar rules in writing. He uses common phrases of the day not with artificiality but with naturalness. He also uses shorter and simpler sentences. On page 22, Muhammad writes: *At that time, Johari and Permai did not live near any other people. They had left their old village and house and moved to a new block of land. The seven-acre plot had just been cleared. They had built a small hut of raw wood and bark walls, with a roof of fan-palm leaf, at the edge of the ground. Bulat was now thirteen months old. He had a new home, a different father and another mother, the change of dwelling had not made a new impression on him (it was, after all, night) and his new home was not very far from his old one. But in the morning, he was surprised and upset. There were other people, the air was different, the room was different. But he did not cry, as other children would have done. It was as though he already understood that the world was continually changing and that one must accept the changes with as much patience and calmness as one can, different. But he did not cry.*

Another unique style of Muhammad is that he integrates drama script into the novel. This is not done by Oe. In page 65, Muhammad writes:

But most complicated of all was the problem of why he had been told to study the aboriginal. Alang looked just like a Malay, he wore a fez, a shirt, and checked cotton sarong. He was clean, not infected with ringworm and he spoke a good Malay. Like this, Bulat wouldn't have minded sitting and studying with him – for three years of thirteen. But Alang was no longer an overseer, he wanted to be a bushman and wear a loin-cloth, and carry a blow pipe. What was Bulat made of? He decided to ask a few questions.

BULAT: Why did you resign?

ALANG: It's no fun working for the government. At one time a man could live on less than eight cents a day. Now eighty cents a day isn't nearly enough. Every day it gets worse – you need money to buy this or to do that. Before there was plenty of food in the jungle, I wore bark, and the only things I had to buy were salt and tobacco. But in the end, I found I was buying everything: sarong, shirts, shoes, a fez, cigarettes, coconut oil, this, that and the other as well. And my children have become real townfolk: the boys part their hair on the side, brush it back, and wear suits. The girls wear lipstick and rough; put sandals on their feet and wear dresses. They won't go back to the jungle, won't even think of it. They're too clever, they say.

BULAT: How many children do you have? And where is your wife?

ALANG: I've got four – two boys, two girls. They're all grown up. My wife died two years ago.

BULAT: What are the boys called? Does either of them have a job?

ALANG: The older one's Bujal, his brother is Zainal. They both look after the trout in the Telom River.

BULAT: Trout? What sort of fish is that, sir? I've never heard of it.

ALANG: My gosh, you don't know anything, do you? You've still got a lot to see around here. A trout is a European fish. The English bring the eggs out in a plane and throw them in the river. The fish hatch, they grow, they even lay more eggs. But their eggs are useless, nothing ever happens to them. The government has wasted hundreds of thousands of dollars. Bujal says the British have stopped bringing the eggs now because they're fighting the Germans.

3. Concluding Remarks

Comparing the literary style of Muhammad and Oe, it can be said that the Malaysian novelist prefers familiar words to far-fetched words. He also prefers the concrete to the abstract words and prefers the single words to the circumlocution. Moreover, he makes use of transitive verbs in the active voice. His simple sentences use fewer adjectives. All of these give the works of

Muhammad simplicity, strength and beauty. They are also perceived as more melodious by most readers. In the words of Strandness, et. al (1964), short words are made the backbone of speech and writing. Shortness is simple, strong and beautiful.

On the other hand, Oe has an extravagant vocabulary. He uses long and winding sentences. In some instances, a paragraph is composed of one or two sentences only. However, the strength and balance of his sentences have a unique influence on the reader. Once one reads, he feels the urge to go on and on. The images are peculiarly interesting although they seem to be strange. This is illustrated in the peculiar way he treated his only child and in the peculiar way he conceptualizes his father.

Further, he is fond of using metaphorical rather than literal statements. Thus, the audience could hardly understand what he means of the statements. To understand Oe, a reader should read his novel at least twice to internalize his beautiful messages. This is necessary because Oe is never clear in his words as well as in his ideas.

According to Conesford, the purpose of language is to convey the thought of the writer to another mind. It means that clarity of thought is impossible without clarity of language. Thus, if the language used is so verbose, the reader cannot fully comprehend what the writer wants to convey. There is then a breakdown of effective communication between the writer and the reader (Strandness, 1964).

In the case of Oe's literary works, his verbosity and extravagance of language have produced literary works that are both intriguing and exciting. There is an element of a "hide and seek" excitement that will trigger arousal of interest to re-read the novel to fully understand the series of events that supported its climax.

Comparing the concept of madness of the Fat Man and Mad Mat Lela, it can be said that there are two (2) potent forces that can make a man mad or lunatic. These forces are in your mind and in your society. If you believe that you are insane, you may do odd things and other "portents of madness." In the case of Oe's Fat Man, he believes that he is insane and thus, he is indeed insane although others do not think him to be so.

On the other hand, Muhammad's Mad Mat Lela was considered insane by his neighbors and was indeed insane in the eyes of his neighbors. This includes the lunatics at Rambutan madhouse. However, Mad Mat Lela is not lunatic as far as he is concerned. Madness then depends whether one believes it to be as such.

The mental lunacy of the Fat Man could be considered as more serious than the social lunacy of Mad Mat Lela. To Oe, madness does not depend on how many considered you as lunatic but rather on whether you consider yourself as such. If one believes to be lunatic regardless of scientific and medical facts, then one becomes a lunatic himself, implied Oe. On the eyes of Oe, Muhammad's Mat Lela is not a lunatic, notwithstanding how the villagers conceive him to be. On the other hand, if we will bring Oe's Fat Man to Mat Lela's village, he will be conceived as an intelligent man, a loving father of Eeyoe just as how he is well-conceived in his own place. However, under scientific and medical consideration, the Fat Man is indeed insane, maybe more insane than the odd Mat Lela, if he is such that at all.

Personally, I consider Mat Lela not insane and the Fat Man as really insane. Mat Lela has a deeper view in life that ordinary mortals do not understand. His inventiveness like the mass production of tiles for the mosque and his dedication for the propagation of the Islamic Faith are clear indications of his intelligence and his full grasp of the future.

On the other hand, Oe's Fat Man, notwithstanding his earning licenses to be a teacher and his in-depth analysis of cause of his father's death, belongs to a lunatic parental lineage and thus, he is a high risk as a psychopath. The congenital brain damage of his child is an indication that through heredity, he has the high-risk genes of a psychopath from his father. While Mad Mat Lela has always look forward to a brighter future for Bulat, the Fat Man has devoted his energy and skills to dig into the life of his dead father. He lives in the past rather than for the present and for the future. For the Fat Man, Eeyore is the present but not the future. At the end, he decides to be on self-reclusion like his dead father. These are "portents of madness."

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