THE NATION AND ITS OTHERS: PAKISTANI ANGLOPHONE POETRY IN THE POSTCOLONY

by

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DISSERTATION ABSTRACT

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What is the place of poetry in a postcolonial state? How does the antagonistic relationship between the postcolonial state and colonial language inform the poetics of anglophone and regional poetry? Starting from these basic questions, this dissertation argues that anglophone poetry and Punjabi poetry offer sites of resilience in the poctcolony called Pakistan. Locating the state of Pakistan in the history of its language politics, I argue that anglophone poets in the country move from "closure" to "anti-closure," which are productive ways of writing and reading multiple nationalisms and languages in a country where a unified nationalism and a solitary national language have been forcefully imposed on the citizens. Following from this idea, I read a loss in the ontology of Punjabis in Pakistan, which the Punjabi poet in the postcolony addresses through a symbolic expenditure. Thus, I discover a sense of "disclosure" in Pakistani Punjabi poetry where the poets recover a resilience that is integral to Punjabi identity. This dissertation challenges the singular, unitary and isolationist narrative of unquestioned allegiance to ideas of one nationalism and one language. English and Punjabi, therefore, do not pose a threat to Urdu, which is ironically a language with its own colonial baggage. Poetry in Punjabi and English makes it evident that there are many "others" of the idea of the "nation," and that there is something primal in the art of poetry that marks the potentiality of multiple existences, whether in language or in nationalism. This dissertation performs a recovery of

anglophone and translated poetry as neglected art forms which demonstrate the resilience of postcolonial subjects despite the binary politics of postcolonial states. As such, I move beyond ideas of the subaltern citizens' inability to make their voices heard, and of orientalism as the only way to read the postcolony.

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To

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and

For

Tahir Kamran

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

FRAMING A REVOLUTION: PAINTING THE POSTCOLONY 'RED'

The setting is a literary/cultural festival held annually in Pakistan to commemorate a Marxist journalist and activist, who in life, and since his death, has been celebrated as a national icon and universally admired Urdu poet. In one of the lawns of the auditorium where this festival takes place, a few young activists, students, and teachers stage a short performance to announce and advertise an upcoming event. A young woman, dressed in a black leather jacket, passionately chants at the top of her voice – and is joined by other young women and men – two couplets from a popular revolutionary poem which had at one point in the history of British colonial India been popularized by a militant revolutionary who was eventually executed as a terrorist by the colonial regime. "*Sarfaroshi ki tamanna ab humaray dil mein hai/ dekhna hai zor kitna baazoo-e-qaatil mein hai/ lo aaj phir maqtal mein qaatil keh raha hai baar baar/ ayen who shauq-e-shahaadat jinn kay jinn kay dil mein hai*," she chants, accompanied by her equally charged colleagues. The lines can be translated roughly as "in our heart is the desire to sacrifice our lives/ let us see the strength in the arm of the assassin/ here today the assassin again calls out repeatedly in the field of killing:/ 'come all who desire martyrdom in their hearts'." The chanting and "performance" are staged in preparation for the Students' Solidarity March of 2019. The young woman's "performance" goes viral on the internet within hours.

The reaction to the video clip, originally uploaded to Twitter by a journalist in November 2019, was not unexpected. While a section of social media users and mainstream media celebrated the fervor and passion with which Arooj Aurangzaib had articulated the political awakening of a youth otherwise constrained by the patriarchal and militarized state and society, the majority of commentators chastised her. Criticism inevitably focused on the phenomenon of

the young woman in a black leather jacket claiming a public space and chanting a revolutionary anthem. Social media users criticized her for wearing a "leather jacket," implying that her choice of clothing indicated a privilege that could not be considered typical of the students whom she was claiming to represent. She was called a "foreign agent," and was castigated for brandishing what the critics dismissed as her 'elitism.' Other people highlighted the fact that students' unions have been banned for over three decades, and were initially outlawed by a military dictator, so the students' demands for their restoration was not only justified, but essential for the strengthening of democratic institutions in Pakistan. When asked how she responded to the public reaction, Aurangzaib aired her frustration at various forums. "Everything about these slogans is being looked at through a sensationalist angle," she is quoted in one published interview. "Since it's all just happened now and we hadn't thought about – the questions or concerns now are how we can work through this, since I have only interacted with broadcast media now" (Naseer "The Face of Student Protest"). It is clear that she was frustrated with the misdirected and misguided focus of the popular response to the video.

What's in a Jacket? Agency!:

The popular public reaction to Aurangzaib's call for students to unite against oppression took the predictable form of a critique of her dress. This obsession was deeply rooted in the patriarchal insecurity of a woman claiming the otherwise masculine public space. Aurangzaib and her comrades, of all genders, represented a face of society that is generally suppressed in public discourse. It is a side where young women and men interact freely, independent of the social conventions that inhibit male-female interactions. "The first question that I am asked is about the leather jacket. There is some level of fame which also can act as bait, but there must be accountability. What audiences fixate on, if it is reported as it is, without determining the angle

then that is sleepwalking. This is what we are trying to fight against," she says (Aurangzaib). In a patriarchal and religious-ideological postcolonial state, the female body remains a contested and taboo object of public scrutiny and debate. The ostensibly western and secular outlook of the moment highlighted by this performance and its reaction reflects the attitudes of society at large.

The body of the activist, here amplified in her choice of a leather jacket, is thus an important site where societal inequalities and power imbalances are both confirmed and contested. Ambreen Hai's *Making Words Matter: The Agency of Colonial and Postcolonial Literature* examines the relationship between bodily agency and literary agency. Hai locates expressions of literary agency articulated through the materiality of the body in the literary texts of Rudyard Kipling, E. M. Forster, and Salman Rushdie. She draws a vital link between the body and human language in these authors, arguing that "the human body becomes central to the imagining of the text in the world because it uniquely concretizes a three-fold instability about human agency: it is at once the site of autonomy, instrumentality, and subjection" (Hai 6-7). The body, the text, and literary agency thus have a sustained relationship in Hai's reading of these three canonical writers of the colonial-postcolonial paradigm. Agency is a fraught, and as Hai points out, instable word (8). It simultaneously implies independence in that the agent can act on their own, and subservience in that they are an agent of someone. The duality and ambivalence of the term call into question the power of agency to destabilize hegemonic narratives. For Perry Anderson, the idea of agency implies both "active initiator and passive instrument" (Anderson 18). Following from both Hai and Anderson then, the human body is simultaneously independent of and dependent on the social formations that link it to its surroundings. Aurangzaib's contested body, expressed in her passionate chanting while wearing a sexy leather jacket, scares the patriarchal critics precisely in its assertion of an agency that is autonomous in exerting its

individuality, but also subject to criticism from the forces of a masculine, postcolonial, and religious-ideological state-society paradigm. The postcolonial subject's body – synecdochical in the chanting mouth, and metonymical in the leather jacket – as the female subaltern of Gayatri Spivak's conception, challenges the agency of the state, and expresses its own agency in this act of challenging (Spivak 'Can the Subaltern Speak?'). Thus, it is hardly surprising that the organizers and participants of both the students' movement and the women's movement in the nation-state of Pakistan are routinely labelled foreign agents. As Paulo Freire remarked, "The defenders of this 'democracy' speak often of the need to protect the people from what they call 'foreign ideologies' – i.e., anything that could contribute to the active presence of the people in their own historical process" (Freire 11). The link between "agency" and the "body" is a "protest" that is "foreign" to the "nation-state."

"A woman," Laura Mulvey writes in her influential analysis of the gaze in cinema, "stands in patriarchal culture as a signifier for the male other, bound by a symbolic order in which man can live out his fantasies and obsessions through linguistic command by imposing them on the silent image of woman still tied to her place as bearer, not maker, of meaning" (Mulvey 15). Aurangzaib was making meaning in that moment captured and uploaded to the internet by a journalist, and reclaiming a woman's role as maker of meaning independent of the symbolic order. The woman was no longer a silent image, but rather asserts linguistic command. In that sense, it is doubly significant at a symbolic level that while Aurangzaib led the chants, her male colleagues followed her lead. The shifting of power from the phallocentric to the woman-chanting-slogans-and-claiming-space unsettled those social media users who uncritically accept the social construction of binaries, and this fact empowered Aurangzaib and her colleagues to upset the social equilibrium on display through the expression of bodily agency discussed above.

Thus, she was attacked for her attire, with the assumption that the leather jacket is a typically liberal and western symbol of sexual emancipation. Scopophilia for the mainly male viewers of this scene focuses the act of looking for pleasure on the physical attributes of the woman, represented in this instance in a leather jacket.

Poetry and Revolt:

In addition to the power of gender to disrupt hierarchies in the Pakistani public space, Aurangzaib's chanting of two couplets from the revolutionary poem "*sarfaroshi ki tamanna ab humaray dil mein hai*" (in our heart is the desire to sacrifice our lives) was a performance that mirrored the Tahrir Square protests by Egyptians held earlier in this century. Writing on the website *Jadaliyya*, Elliott Colla has identified the poetry chanted by Egyptians during their protests as one of the galvanizing and moving forces for the Egyptian revolution. "The prosody of the revolt," as Colla calls it, is "an act in and of itself." The couplet-slogans chanted by the protestors in Tahrir Square are not just the "soundtrack" of the revolution, but also possess "the power to express messages that could not be articulated in other forms." This dissertation is a reading of some examples of anglophone poetry from Pakistan as it performs the act of expressing such messages, which are not always those of revolt, but as I argue, show the resilience to express alternative and powerful voices within the paradigm of the nation-state. I claim that Pakistani anglophone poetry, both in English and in translation from regional languages like Punjabi, expresses and defines the contours of an alternative nation that is inclusive and tolerant as compared to the chauvinistic and exclusionary politics of the postcolonial nation-state. I read poetry here as a mode of revolt and resilience.

In its performance of the revolutionary agency of students, led by a young woman, the poem "*sarfaroshi ki tamanna*" signals the advent of a revolutionary idiom unprecedented in a

country where street protests are almost exclusively led by middle-aged men. This students' movement is now simultaneous with a similar movement in India, which has a distinctly Marxist orientation. While many political protests in Pakistan are staged by political parties, the most organized and sustained protests and rallies are held by religious parties which maintain the largest potential to mobilize the public. Their followers are men, and while some political right-wing parties do manage to stage segregated rallies organized by their women's wings, the phenomenon of the all-male political protest symbolizes the exclusively patriarchal structures of the state and society.

The Context of Arooj Aurangzaib's Anger:

Thus, unsurprisingly, at the other end of this spectrum of agential power, in sharp contrast to Arooj Aurangzaib, we have the phenomenon of Khadim Hussain Rizvi – addressed in Urdu media and public discourse with the honorific prefix "Allama" meaning an exalted scholar – a cleric with mass support among the Barelvi sect of Muslims, who, while he was alive, repeatedly choked the national capital as a show of strength, allegedly at the behest of members of the state apparatus, to destabilize democratic governments and terrorize the general public. While Aurangzaib and her fellow students at the Faiz Mela (Faiz International Festival, named after Faiz Ahmed Faiz, one of the most celebrated and beloved Urdu poets of the twentieth century) in 2019 chanted slogans for the restoration of student unions which they believe are essential to the democratic functioning of society, Rizvi and his followers in 2017 pressurized the democratically-elected government into removing its law minister for his alleged attempts to reform long-misused anti-blasphemy legislation. Thus, the goals of these two moments of public protest were diametrically opposite. Rizvi died in November 2020, and despite the coronavirus pandemic, tens of thousands attended his public funeral in Lahore, underscoring the massive

appeal of his message of murderous hatred and the state's refusal, unwillingness, and/or inability to stem the flow of such hatred.

"Hatred," Audre Lorde said famously, "is the fury of those who do not share our goals, and its object is death and destruction." As opposed to this hatred, "anger," – and Lorde meant the specific anger of women of color – "is a grief of distortions between peers, and its object is change." The students' movement, memorialized in time in the image of a fierce Aurangzaib in a black leather jacket angrily chanting a revolutionary verse, represents the anger that intends to change. Rizvi's blockade of ordinary life in Pakistan, his virulent and abusive diatribes, and his incredibly large funeral, represent the hatred of those who aim to divide and destroy. Unfortunately for Pakistan, it is the latter that has come to be the constitutive reality of the lived everyday experiences of its citizens.

This comparison between Aurangzaib and Rizvi is, in real terms, out of proportion. The postcolonial state of Pakistan provided far more space and sanction to Rizvi, and continues to do so for his followers and others of the same orientation, to exercise their agency than it does to women, students, transgenders, and other marginalized segments of the society and the polity. The agency allowed by the postcolonial state is, following from Hai, masculine and patriarchal agency when enacted in physical acts like street protests. The woman is denied any corporeal agency. Over the past half-decade, the state has moved to silencing dissent by regulating social media, and initiating cases of sedition against the organizers of the students' march. Despite this, the annual recurrence of the students' march and the women's march – called the Aurat March and held annually on March 8, hint, however dimly, that at some level the state recognizes and allows some dissent and agency to nurture within some prescribed limits, in continuation of the idea discussed above that agency is two-pronged. The Aurat March keeps expanding every year,

and its challengers also keep finding new ways to reiterate their vocal opposition. In 2021, for example, while the Aurat March organizers chose to focus on the sexual and menstrual health issues of women (considered largely taboo in print and electronic media), the ideologically-motivated women's wing of the Jamaat Islami (Pakistan's largest and most organized religious political party, though with little electoral success) launched a simultaneous, and counter-, movement to spread the message of "*istihkaam-e-khaandaan*" (strengthening of the family) with the attendant slogan of "strong family, strong woman, stable society." This same brigade of women ideologues strongly opposes the women's march, declaring it a western conspiracy to liberate women and cause a breakdown of the nuclear family system in Pakistan. Since the last few years, for example, they have been holding an annual "hayā day" (shame/modesty day) on February 14 as a counter to Valentine's Day. Thus, having conceded that a space now exists for women, transgenders, non-binary people, and students to protest for their rights, one has to underscore and emphasize the fact that the corresponding space and sanction available to those who do not agree with the demands of these repressed segments of society is far larger and more effective in controlling the public sphere. The necessity of reading such protest as a minority narrative, and its literature as a minority literature, can thus help underscore the majoritarian politics of the state. However, as I will show later, insisting on this literature as a minority literature beyond the first site of analysis is misleading.

The Agency of Choosing a Language:

Despite the disproportionate representation accorded to these two moments of public representation, in one aspect at least, I find the comparison and contrast between them to be crucial to and symptomatic of the concerns I am addressing in this dissertation. For me, the stark divergence between these two moments lies in the choice of language at these sites of protest. It

is this question of the language of protest that I address, though not resolve, in this dissertation. The striking thing about Aurangzaib's choice of reciting a century-old Urdu anthem in the heart of the province of Punjab is that it reinforces the status of Urdu as *the* national language, as the language that unites various ethnic identities and provides them with a platform to express a single and singular desire and demand. Meanwhile, Rizvi was well-known for resorting to a rustic Punjabi idiom in moments of great passionate appeal to his followers, especially when using polemic and invective aimed at what he viewed as the liberal, un-Islamic segments of Pakistani society.

This Urdu-Punjabi divide is a controversial topic. Since the Faiz Mela is held in Lahore, the center and capital of the province of Punjab, the larger ethos informing the sensibilities of those on the peripheries of the event is a Punjabi ethos. However, the Faiz Mela is an exercise in intellectual freedom, and an expression of non-populist, leftist politics, so its stewardship is commandeered by those with an elitist standing in society, whether through their access to financial means of production or to the world of ideas. The audience is mostly those members of the polity who have access to a more comfortable lifestyle than the majority of those who form the core support group of the right-wing parties led by the likes of Rizvi. There is a problematic relationship between the intellectually liberating ideas discussed at the Faiz International Festival – ideas which are not available for discussion even in most university settings in Pakistan – and the language of these discussions. Most of these discussions are conducted in Urdu, the language of Faiz's poetry, and the ethos informing these discussions is one transmitted through the anglophone media, of which Faiz was once a part. So, they assert an English/western ethos mostly in a subcontinental language identified with Muslim nationalism, and tend to ignore the larger Punjabi ethos at the background of the cultural milieu in which they stage their event. In

this dissertation, the issue of postcolonial anglophone literature in the nation-state of Pakistan is framed and read within the politics of postcolonial language and nationalism. I argue for the place of English within this nation-state as a means of challenging the hegemony of the singular conception of the nation-state. I also argue for the place of anglophone translation in highlighting the plural nationalisms inherent to ethnic and regional literatures, with the example of Punjabi literature being my focus here.

Questions:

The first question that prompted the discussion in this dissertation is: Why was "*sarfaroshi ki tamanna*" an appropriate choice for expressing the revolutionary resentment of the Pakistani youth demanding that student unions be restored? In similar vein, and following from this seminal question, the following questions form a sequence of inquiries that I find provocative and productive: Why did Aurangzaib, and those around her, not choose an anthem in one of the regional languages of Pakistan, perhaps in the Punjabi that has been vilified as a language in the very city where the students were protesting, and which is often categorized as the language of invective given the examples of Rizvi and Punjabi stage dramas? Given the baggage of Urdu as a colonial language – a baggage that is seldom recognized, and rarely acknowledged – how correct is it to posit it as the grand anti-thesis of the much-maligned colonial legacy of English as the lingua franca of postcolonial globalization? Since Punjabi is ambiguously and contradictorily both neglected by the Punjabis, and mistrusted by the other ethnic nationalities as the language of those in power, could a verse in Punjabi have realistically replaced the Urdu verse as the revolutionary anthem for the youth? What is the relationship of the postcolonial nation-state of Pakistan with its many languages, particularly with the nationalisms expressed in the "imagined communities" of Urdu, English, and Punjabi? Finally, is

English as a global language able to mediate between all these conflictual and contradictory national spaces?

These questions lead to questions of form and genre: Is poetry really the most appropriate site for the "performance" of revolt? Given the political nature of protest theater, and given the nation-defining "epos" of the post-9/11 anglophone novel, does postcolonial anglophone poetry still represent a unique site where resistance can be negotiated? Again, given how the contemporary anglophone novel has been cast as a map for the "othered" nations in the nation-state of Pakistan in relation to the global forces of capitalist production, does Pakistani poetry in English provide any particularly nuanced insights into the mapping of these alternative nationalisms that the novel fails to capture? Finally, in the context of debates around world literature, can English be a mediating space for the rediscovery of Punjabi poetry as a sight of resistance or "resilience"? While I will not be able to answer every single one of these questions sufficiently or satisfactorily, together they are important in driving the theoretical and methodological thinking behind this dissertation.

Aims and Claims:

My argument is that poetry offers a site for articulating, reading, and recording alternate conceptions of the nation even in postcolonial contexts where the nation is always fragmented, and the state is always oppressive as a necessary consequence of the colonial experience. Having framed my discussion with detailed histories of the place of English, Urdu and Punjabi in Pakistan, I argue for a multilingual approach to questions of individual and national identity in the postcolonial setting. The case of Punjabi identity in Pakistan in this larger matrix is a case of schizophrenic identity where Punjabis have become schizophrenic citizens of a state that has imposed on them several conceptions of identity that all lead to the Punjabi citizen's language

and culture becoming sources of paranoia and self-hatred. The split self thus created always looks outside, but I read for a "resilience" in those Punjabis who do not suffer from this phenomenon, and who have rooted themselves in their linguistic and cultural capital. Similarly, with English being reviled in the postcolony, I read Pakistani anglophone poetry as a site for expressing comfort with the colonizer's language based in the background understanding that Urdu as replacement for English is an ironic choice because of the role played by British colonial administrators in creating its identity as the language of Muslim nationalism in colonial India.

I use the theoretical framing of closure and anti-closure leading to disclosure to argue my case. Closure for me brings a sense of finality with history where one moment ends in a definitive way while anti-closure is the moment after that when a fresh relationship with history is started after having passed through the moment of closure. Disclosure then is the necessary state of postcolonial subjecthood and citizenry because it entails a discovery of the self in a way that is previously unexperienced. The Punjabi poet's disclosure of resilience is the constitutive element of their identity as a separate nationalism. These are important arguments because what is considered a minority literature in a postcolonial society is then viewed as a threat to composite enforced unitary nationalism and thus considered separatist or anti-national. Challenging this conception of the postcolonial nation-state is essential to understanding that though orientalism has lingered in postcolonial societies there is enough anticolonial resistance to challenge the ironic universalism inherent in readings of orientalism's permanence.

I am making several important interventions within both postcolonial studies, and within the emerging field of Pakistani anglophone literature. I am simultaneously engaging with translation studies as a field necessarily connected with these two fields. In addition, one of my main aims in writing about the issues here is to bring into focus certain texts and authors whose

scholarship has not been sufficiently recognized. In using sources that are not widely quoted in mainstream academia, I am following the example of feminist scholars, most recently that of Sara Ahmed, whose work is inspirational in every way, even when the sources I cite are not by feminist scholars. In *Living a Feminist Life*, she refuses to cite "any white men" (Ahmed 15). Detailing the politics of citation in the academic world from a feminist perspective, Ahmed explains her decision by reminding her readers that "citation is how we acknowledge our debt to those who came before; those who helped us find our way when the way was obscured because we deviated from the paths we were told to follow" (15-16). So, the choices I make as an academic in this dissertation are governed by a citation policy that emphasizes indigenous and multidisciplinary scholars you would not normally see in the 'Works Cited' lists of most literary journals, or if you do, they are either brushed aside or not read in depth. Two such scholars whose work I engage critically with in some detail here are Tariq Rahman and Tahir Kamran. For example, though Rahman's history is the most comprehensive history of Urdu's development in colonial India, I do not use it alone in understanding the role of Urdu in postcolonial Pakistan. I also quote some scholars and writers, and two journal editors, whose work is present in Urdu, and remains uncited even in Rahman's meticulous work. By bringing these Urdu sources into the English historiography of Pakistani literature, I am arguing against the partitioning of linguistic spaces according to the politics of citation. In one chapter, I briefly write the history of a college magazine which I find integral to the development of a network of anglophone poetry. Most importantly, when I translate and close-read Pakistani Punjabi poetry in English, I attempt something that is almost absent. I am, hopefully, showcasing a methodology borrowed from historians, anthropologists, and sociologists, of using sources in various

languages, which is I believe limited in the Pakistani context largely to when we write about an Urdu text in English, or an English text in Urdu.

Language, genre, form, nation: these are the parameters that provide exciting and provocative complications and complexities in mapping and defining the features and boundaries of the postcolony called Pakistan. This dissertation treats the question of Pakistan's relationship with the English language, and with the formal and thematic concerns of anglophone poetry, as the launching pad for the discussions I wish to initiate. Thus, my dissertation intervenes in the recent global focus on Pakistani anglophone literature in four main ways. Firstly, I demonstrate the importance of employing the framework of understanding language, and its politics, as the source of national identification in postcolonial states. The language politics I examine here are not only limited to the global status and colonial legacy of English, but underscore the colonial legacy of its postcolonial "other," Urdu, and then crucially places Punjabi, powerless language of those in power, within this problematic to complicate the inter-relationship of colonial and postcolonial policies. Secondly, through my reading of seminal Pakistani anglophone poets, I show not only the stark neglect they have suffered, but also their nuanced understanding of their political and social context, and through them I describe the epos of a postcolonial nation. Thirdly, by translating the neglected Punjabi poetry of post-independence Pakistan into English, I demonstrate the ways in which the Punjabi poet, marginalized in comparison to both English and Urdu writers, articulates a sensibility that is both postcolonial and global. Placing Pakistani Punjabi poetry in conversation with the world literary space is a significant step in advancing the cause of a language which suffers from its ethnic speakers' inferiority complexes. Finally, I also intend to demonstrate the ways in which reading poetry against form can be productive today. My analysis is thus both formal and *para*-formal. Thus, I argue for a multilingual and not a

monolingual or even bilingual approach to postcolonial nationalism, challenging the understanding of postcoloniality as a binary existence. The dissertation brings renewed attention to the Pakistani anglophone literary space by incorporating hitherto unexplored areas of that space.

The Importance of Class:

I now return to a discussion I initiated at the beginning of this introduction. The three chapters of analysis, discussion and close reading, and the conclusion that follow will not address the phenomenon of the Students' March beyond what I have said here. So, I want to complete this framing with a few necessary observations on class as a factor in describing and defining the politics of identity in Pakistan. While detailed analysis of the ostensibly leftist orientation of the Students' Solidarity March and the Aurat March is beyond the scope of this dissertation on postcolonial poetry and language politics, the Arooj Aurangzaib protest event mandates some observations on the complex nature of leftist politics in Pakistan. The reaction to Aurangzaib and the supposed elitism of her "leather jacket" especially underscore the urgent need to address the question of class in Pakistan. So, let me begin with seminal observation prompted by Tahir Kamran that the question of class has not yet been sufficiently, or even satisfactorily, analyzed in the context of post-partition politics. When I add to this my questions about nation-formation in the postcolonial polity, and the literary realizations of that nation-state, the complex reality of Pakistan's class structure having a direct relationship with the nation-building process becomes necessary, thus mandating a Marxist analysis of the class politics of Pakistan. A comprehensive analysis of this sort is indeed missing. However, there are some notable works on class-based analysis of various sectors of Pakistani social life that are pertinent here, and I want to briefly introduce them to stress the need to understand this current moment in the political scape of

Pakistan's urban youth as a question of both class and gender, since my dissertation eventually addresses it primarily through the lenses of language and form. These sources and the questions they prompt will be relevant to anyone who wants to take this discussion further.

In what is one of the first studies of its kind, Bangladeshi Marxist historian and political activist Badruddin Umar looks at the emergence of Bangladeshi nationalism from 1947 to 1958 through the lens of class struggle in what was then called East Pakistan. Locating the language movement that was a major contributing factor in the separation of Pakistan in middle-class politics, Umar also traces the dissatisfaction of peasants and the formation of trade and workers' unions in East Pakistan as the forces behind the organizing of East Pakistani political consciousness in a decidedly Marxist idiom that eventually led to a separatist demand for a new country. In a less academic and less conclusive study published as two newspaper articles, Tahir Kamran has made the truly remarkable and shaking observation that the separation of East Pakistan as Bangladesh in 1971 might have been triggered by the largest class-based peasants' movement in the country that happened in 1970. The Kissan Conference (Peasants' Conference) of 1970 was held in Toba Tek Singh, a small town in the Punjab province in what was then West Pakistan, with the star speaker being then East Pakistan's firebrand Maulana Bhashani. The momentum generated by the massive gathering of leftist political organizations from both West and East Pakistan coming together and presenting a unified front under the banner of the conference was such that, in Kamran's opinion, there is a possibility for historians to explore if it was "the established rural and newly established bourgeoisie and aristocracy who deliberately catalyzed the process of creating Bangladesh to divide this vibrant and threateningly united peasantry" (Kamran "A Missing Link"). As these two writers have shown, if Pakistani historians employ class as an important, and perhaps central, category of historiography, the potential of

finding radically new ways of understanding the national character is immense. With their focus on the seminal episode of the separation of East Pakistan as Bangladesh, they have demonstrated the way in which the class question complicates the more ordinarily available ways of reading the history of Pakistan.

Ammara Maqsood's *The New Pakistani Middle Class* stands out for its sustained study of class-based identity formation in Pakistan, serving as a model for the kind of class study that needs to be done today. The book draws on recent changes to the composition of the urban middle class in one of Pakistan's largest cities, Lahore, the capital of Punjab. Maqsood traces the rise of a new religious, ideological, and upwardly mobile middle class that is becoming part of the established urban middle class in the city. These ascendant groups in the middle class desire a recognition in the modes of modernity. The interface between "the politics of modernity" and the "practices of piety" identifies the two major components of middle-class identity formation in contemporary postcolonial Pakistan (Maqsood 2). An analysis on this model could yield revealing insights about the students' march and the public reaction to it. Other examples of forays into class studies are available, but none as sustained as Maqsood's model. Anita Weiss, for example, brings the lens of gender to the study of class, tracing how the division of space in Lahore's old Walled City is gendered, and how it limits access for working-class women.

Given the leftist orientation of the organizers of both the students' movement and the women's movement in Pakistan, as well as the simultaneous farmers' movement in India, the paradigm of class for studying postcoloniality in the region, particularly in Pakistan, becomes increasingly relevant and necessary. One of the questions I do not address in this dissertation is the possibility that the Left in Pakistan is, to borrow from Marxist criticism itself, a 'false consciousness,' implying that the obfuscation of class parameters in academic studies aids and

abets the classes that are hegemonic in their access to the means of production. Thus, Aurangzaib can chant Urdu couplets at the *peripheries* of the ostensibly leftist Faiz International Festival, but not *inside* the halls.

Why Poetry:

I am often asked about the relevance of postcolonial poetry to my analysis of the postcolonial nation. Jahan Ramazani, perhaps the leading poetry critic of our times, is inarguably the leading commentator on poetry and poetics within postcolonial studies. In 2017, as editor of *The Cambridge Companion to Postcolonial Poetry*, he confirmed something that I had earlier explored during my M.Phil studies at the University of the Punjab in 2011-2013. Access at my Pakistani public-sector university was limited to only books available in the library, which, as a strange and ironic echo of Lord Macaulay's assertion of one shelf on a Western library being superior to the entire bibliographic stock of the East, did not stock many recent books of criticism. Journal access was limited to JSTOR.com, and that too was available only partially on the single computer in the department library. Oh, and the library books were not to be issued to students, who could only ask for expensive photocopies if they wanted to read the books! Nevertheless, in line with the research interests of the department's faculty, this small library was quite densely populated with books of European, American, and postcolonial poetry and drama. There was relatively less fiction, and there were only a few of the better-known postcolonial readers available in the theory section. My instinct, despite these limitations, and despite the greater presence of poetry in this library, was that poetry was a less explored field within postcolonial studies, and that postcolonial poetics was somehow overshadowed by postcolonial fiction. Within that edifice though, I knew for a fact that compared to postcolonial poetry and poetics from India, the Caribbean, and Africa, Pakistani postcolonial anglophone poetry was

virtually neglected in theory and poetics, both locally and globally. This led me to write a thesis on Pakistan's first major English poet, Taufiq Rafat, who also first theorized the "Pakistani idiom." This long digression is nevertheless relevant because Ramazani remarks as recently as in 2017, that "with some exceptions, poetry has been largely ignored in postcolonial studies" (Ramazani 5). Making a case for increased interface between poetry studies and postcolonial studies, Ramazani specifies that "poetry's formidable strangeness, deliberate artifice, and literary self-consciousness have made it less amenable to the historical and political imperatives of postcolonial studies than more seemingly documentary or socially mimetic genres" (5). Poetry can be a productive site for exploring postcolonial concerns, he argues, because it responds to, "and emerges out of, social and political realities such as global inequalities, racial oppression, and imperial violence" (6). Meanwhile, in *Poetry and Its Others*, Ramazani posits and answers the question of "What is poetry?" and compares it to news, prayer, and song as a dialogic form.

His most recent work *Poetry in a Global Age* came out during the pandemic in 2020, and sums up his theory of poetry in a passage that is worth quoting in full:

> …*poetry* can be thought of as interlocking discursive practices such as lineation, sonic repetition, and lexical heightening that, while neither exclusive to poetry nor transhistorically consistent, have been perpetuated and remade for millennia, partly through remembrance of past examples, and partly through self-defining interactions with other genres and discourses, such a song, prayer, the law, philosophy, and science. The term *poetry* selects certain ever-shifting generic features for attention but shouldn't be hypostasized, lest we obscure poetry's historical changes and inconsistencies. *Poetics* focus above all on how this made thing, *poiema*, works – its textures, elements, and

techniques – in this case, with particular consideration of how form and history speak to one another in a time of globalization. (20-21)

Poetry is a powerful site for staging the alterity of nationalisms that I read in Pakistani anglophone literary sensibility. Given its neglect in comparison to the relevantly contemporary phenomenon of the anglophone novel, Pakistani poetry is particularly fertile for exploring these alterities between languages and between genres. Following from Ramazani's work, poetry is now considered in its hybrid, transnational, and global terms.

Similarly, path-breaking work has been done by two recent postcolonial scholars. Omaar Hena reads the poetry of four postcolonial poets to show how their interactions with form, particularly older poetic forms, inform their understanding of the political realities of their condition in the larger paradigm of modernity. While I do not read poetry in this dissertation entirely for form, it is one of the tools that inform my close readings, and Hena provides a model for its relevance within postcolonial poetics. Nathan Suhr-Sytsma, meanwhile, charts the print networks that postcolonial poetry participates in. I briefly engage with the history of a college magazine where some of the Pakistani anglophone poets I read were published, and in charting the decline of that magazine, I argue for the changing space of poetry in society. These important analyses situate postcolonial poetry in its contexts, and provide models for reading. Since none of these writers have read Pakistani poetry (Ramazani's reading of Agha Shahid Ali and Hena's reading of Daljit Nagra are the closest they get to South Asia), my contribution here is to locate Pakistani anglophone poetry within this larger network of recent developments in the field of Pakistani poetics.

The relationship between poetry and the epos of a nation is perhaps older than might seem obvious. The canonical structures of most literature programs (whether in the global North

of former-colonizers and neo-colonizers or the global South of the former-colonized and neo-colonial subjects) include introductory material and texts from the era of Greek and Roman dominance, and these inevitably include the epics of Homer and Virgil. Both poets marked distinct concerns of nation-thinking and nation-formation in their epics. Tom Paulin's forgotten *Minotaur: Poetry and the Nation-State* charts the presence of the nation-state across the Anglo-American canon, from John Milton to Peter Reading. Paulin's readings show how the tension and conflict between individualism and state power shape the poetics of major canonical poets, thus providing a useful model for the kind of readings I attempt here. Thus, in bringing the lens of a postcolonial nation's language politics to the reading of its anglophone poetry and poetics is a necessary and relevant intervention at this point.

The Lay of the Minstrel:

This introduction has identified and discussed the concerns and imperatives that drive and govern this dissertation. Following this, I have divided the main discussion analysis in this dissertation into three parts. The first chapter lays down the theoretical framework and historical background of the questions I will read through Pakistani anglophone poetry. The first section of the chapter recalls, in some detail, the history of Urdu as a colonial language in British India, its selection as the national language of post-independence Muslim Pakistan, its conflicting relationship with Bengali leading to the separation of East Pakistan as Bangladesh, and more recent, and yet unread developments in trying to enforce it as the official language of post-independence Pakistan. I claim that Urdu's role is colonial like that of English, so its primacy in describing Muslim nationhood in South Asia is a project of colonial heritage. I also bring to this section some discussions originally conducted in Urdu that have been hitherto not incorporated in the historiographies of the Urdu language debates. The second part of this chapter offers a

framing of the question of language in postcolonial settings, from the seminal debate channeled by Chinua Achebe and Ngugi wa Thio'ngo, to more contemporary ways of looking at the global English and anglophone phenomena, through critics like Simon Gikandi, Aamir Mufti, and Akshya Saxena. By arguing for English in its global setting, and against Urdu as the sole national language, I propose a multi-lingual language policy in Pakistan. The third and final section of this chapter will then briefly list the arguments for why the post-Westphalian conception of a nation-state is a "concept metaphor" in the Spivakian sense, finally arguing that the nationhood of postcolonial Pakistan exists in "fragments" (Partha Chatterjee) which the "imagined community" of linguistic homogeneity (Benedict Anderson) fails to depolarize. Indeed, the example of the various language movements shows that the ethno-nationalism of the various constitutive entities of postcolonial Pakistan seriously questions the conceptions of a nation-state. Thus, what I claim by the end of the chapter is that the "worldly anglophony" (Saxena) constituted by "provincializing English" (Gikandi) creates a space where articulating the postcolonial state in English becomes not just possible but in fact becomes a requirement necessary for mounting a challenge to the "monolingualism of the other" (Jacques Derrida).

Following closely from this discussion of English as a contemporary language, the second chapter close-reads some Pakistani anglophone poets whom I consider to be seminal to charting the hitherto unwritten history of Pakistani English poetry and poetics. For my readings, I follow the lead of Ramazani, Hena, and Suhr-Sytsma. The chapter is divided into two sections based on what I call a chronology of closure, divided between first-generation and second-generation poets, though my classification of these poets is not always chronological. Borrowing from Barbara Herrnstein Smith's study of the ways in which poems perform their closure (formal or otherwise), I argue that the postcolonial state of existence is reflected in these two generations

of poets in their attitude to post-independence nationhood, with each generation reflecting a different level of acceptance. The first generation, I argue, represents a struggle culminating in closure, both formally and ideationally, of the process of partition. The second generation, having accepted independence, produces the poetry of what I call "postcolonial anti-closure," which is a state of renegotiating identity in its post-independence rootedness. The first section of this chapter reads first-generation poets of closure. I will read their poetry for their understanding of the postcolonial condition, as articulated through treatments of land(scape), language, and history. The poets' relationships with these metaphors, images, and themes are, I contend, markers of a postcolonial consciousness, and through their representation of these concerns they articulate the contours of a nation that is secular and imagined not through similarity and homogeneity (as in the case of Urdu-led Muslim nationalism) but through diversity and difference. Though a more detailed history of publication and production that identifies the networks that enabled postcolonial poetry to emerge and gain an identity (Suhr-Sytsma) will be beyond the scope of this chapter, I will discuss the college magazine *Ravi* (published by Government College, Lahore) where some of these poets were published to indicate how networks of print and publishing shape the demand for literary postcoloniality. I will conclude this discussion by reframing the idea of a "closure" (Barbara Herrnstein Smith), articulated not through form, but through a sense of a period of history coming to an end. The second section focuses on second-generation poets of anti-closure, who represent a more experimental interaction with identity and form. It speaks more directly to my objection to the *Routledge Companion's* canonization of post-9/11 fiction as the focus of Pakistani anglophone literary studies. Having established a distinct national literature in English, as detailed in the first section of this chapter, I move to close reading what I call the second generation of Pakistani anglophone

poetry. These are poets who benefitted from the trails blazed by the first generation and moved beyond concerns of establishing a canon to experimenting and consolidating their own tradition in a poetics that was distinct from the imagination of national history. The poets I will read in this section participate in, and benefit from, the multicultural environment of a globalized world, and from the networks of world literature. Thus, the concerns of these poets are wider than their predecessors. I will read their poetry for a sense of a nationhood that has come to terms with its independence but not with its existence as a post-independence state. In contrast to the previous section, this section will conclude with what I call "postcolonial anti-closure" which I will argue is a definitive identity marker of postcolonial nations, states, and subjects.

The third and final chapter of close readings and discussion is one in which I have the most emotional investment. It moves the debate from a purely English ground to a multilingual one. The neglected status of the Punjabi language is now inarguably established (Rahman, Ayres). I will briefly record important facts about the history of Punjabi in South Asia, and highlight its neglected status today in postcolonial Pakistan. It follows from that debate that Punjabi literature is therefore marginalized and its discussion with regards to the postcolonial condition of Pakistan is starkly ignored and absent. Punjabi language is doubly marginalized, even though Punjabi identity is crucial to the imagination of nationalism in the country (Kamran, Rahman, Ayres). This chapter therefore offers readings of some major Pakistani Punjabi poets, in anglophone translation, to argue that their awareness of postcolonial national concerns is starkly pronounced and their relationship with their history and historiography belies any possible claims of ethnic secessionism. Through my translations and readings of these poets, I intend to capture the essence of a literary tradition that I think is always-already performing the dual Saidian ideal of "contrapuntal reading" and "oppositional criticism." These contrapuntal and

oppositional translations, rooted in the secular and pluralistic ethos of global English (Mufti, Saxena, Gikandi), thus present an alternate history of the Pakistani *nation*, a history I am sure is present in the other mother tongues as well, and participate in the enterprise of world literature (Franco Moretti, David Damrosch, Pascale Casanova, Michael Allan). The chapter also participates in conversations between postcolonial studies and translation studies. Punjabi postcolonial identity, thus, I argue, presents a site not merely of anti-closure, but of *disclosure*, a term I argue is of great productivity in postcolonial literary studies. I find Georges Bataille's conception of a global economy of loss to be particularly useful for this last section, and will read this poetry as both a poetry of loss and gain.

These three chapters are followed by a brief concluding chapter, in which I read some contemporary postcolonial anglophone and Punjabi poetry as a challenge to Mufti's conception of "partition-as-method." I also offer some thoughts on the contemporary phenomenon of the post-9/11 Pakistani Punjabi film, stage drama, and television infotainment show, locating Punjabi's resilience in its less salubrious avatars. I demonstrate how the physical border of partition is challenged and resisted in the intellectual, mental, and spiritual space of poetry.

This dissertation argues for a renewed focus on poetry, especially regional and global, and not *national* poetry, as a site for locating the resilience of the ordinary citizens of a state, ignored by the processes of history. It is I hope one of the many steps we need to take in Pakistani academia to perform the work of recovery, both emotional and historical, intellectual and private.

CHAPTER II

WHY FORGET ENGLISH? LANGUAGE AND NATION, COLONIAL AND POSTCOLONIAL

> "You talk to me of nationality, language, religion. I shall try to fly by those nets."
>
> -- Stephen Dedalus

One Nation, One Curriculum?

The government of Pakistan proposed a so-called "Single National Curriculum (SNC)" after much fanfare and controversy in 2020. The designers of this SNC envision "one system of education for all, in terms of curriculum, medium of instruction and a common platform of assessment so that all children have a fair and equal opportunity to receive high quality education." The declared objectives of the SNC include ensuring that "all children have a fair and equal opportunity to receive high quality education," "social cohesion and national integration," "alleviation of disparities in education content across the multiple streams," "equal opportunities for upward social mobility," "equity in education," "holistic development of children in the light of emerging international trends and local aspirations," and "smooth inter-provincial mobility of teachers and students." The most important considerations that have influenced the development of the SNC are the "teachings of Quran and Sunnah [the life example of the Prophet Muhammad]," the "vision of Quaid [Muhammad Ali Jinnah, the founder and first governor-general of Pakistan] and Iqbal [Muhammad Iqbal, poet and philosopher who envisioned a separate Muslim state in the subcontinent]," the "constitutional framework," and "national policies, aspirations and national standards" among other factors. According to the federal minister for education, the SNC "will eliminate individualism and will aim to bring about

equality in the sense that madrassah (seminary) students and students of elite schools and colleges will enjoy the same facilities."

Objections to the SNC:

Most of the criticism aimed against the SNC is based on the increased component of religious education, which has already had a dubious history in polarizing the Pakistani state, society, and politics. Critics of the SNC have pointed out the increased dangers of further schisms in a divided society. Pakistan's leading sociolinguist, academic, and educationist Tariq Rahman has particularly criticized the SNC for providing "no incentive for critical thinking," and foresees "an increase in intolerance, sectarianism and discrimination against religious minorities" as a result of its implementation (Rahman "A Single Curriculum is No Solution"). Pakistan already has a terrible record on minority rights, especially in the cases of religious discrimination ("2019 Report"). Similarly, historian Tahir Kamran has argued that in implementing the SNC in a hurry, the government is reinforcing the policies of the 1980s and 1990s that had led to increased militarization and sectarianism in society. Kamran writes against the insistence on Urdu as the solitary national language and the only medium of instruction, and emphasizes the role of several languages, including English, in promoting diversity. "An isolationist policy, based on hyper-nationalism," he argues, will only make Pakistan regress. The religious emphasis as well as the emphasis on Urdu will further alienate Pakistani youth in the global job market where the postcolonial identity of the Pakistani state in a globalized world necessitates interactions between cultures (Kamran "The Single National Curriculum").

In the same vein, physicist and educator Pervez Hoodbhoy has gone so far as to say that the SNC will create deep-seated societal fissures at an unprecedented scale in Pakistan. Like Kamran and others, he highlights that the SNC is aimed at bringing madrassah (seminary)

education in line with modern and secular educational standards, which has been an ongoing concern of the state since 9/11. However, he believes this is a doomed project as the two systems are incompatible: madrassah education does not allow critical thinking whereas modern education rests on the assumption of encouraging such modes of inquiry (Hoodbhoy "Education: PTI's Plan"). In another scathing critique, authored as a policy paper by the Women's Action Forum (WAF) Lahore, an organization working for women's rights, two educationists have argued that the SNC is "gender-biased, sectarian and class-based." Neelam Hussain and Rubina Saigol believe that contrary to the stated objectives of achieving social equality through education, the SNC will instead "sharpen social differences, undermine minority religions and sects, and violate the principles of federalism." They point to the lack of funding, infrastructure, and teacher training as major hurdles to the successful implementation of the SNC, emphasizing the need to focus on improving the existing educational infrastructure rather than homogenizing curricula.

The most detailed critical analysis of the SNC comes from A. H. Nayyar, a retired university educationist. He points to the false claim that a singular curriculum is necessary for a single nation to survive. Nayyar argues that the reasons for social chasms lie outside the school curricula. Like the authors of the WAF policy paper, Nayyar also highlights the glaring lack of funding and the absence of regular teacher training programs as the real causes of Pakistan's abysmal and substandard public-sector education, one of the sectors that the SNC aims to address. How a single curriculum can remove the problems caused by the differentiated infrastructure and resources available to schools across the social divide is a question that the SNC does not contemplate. School students will now have to read, and rote memorize, even more religious content than is expected of their peers in religious seminaries. Madrassah

graduates will make their way into secular educational institutions, creating several social problems, a concern also expressed by Rahman, and Hussain and Saigol. Nayyar also explains that given how the SNC has been imagined by its creators, it will force non-Muslim students to either study Islamic content by force, or leave the classroom setting, and this could only increase Muslim teachers' bias against them in a society already plagued with issues of minority rights. Not paying any heed to these concerns, the senate of Pakistan, the highest law-making body in the country, approved early in 2021 a bill mandating the teaching of Arabic in all schools in the federal capital, Islamabad. Only one senator objected to the bill. It was left to Hoodbhoy again to point out the obvious fact that if Arabic were to promote unity and piety in the Muslim world, the Arab states would not be as bitterly divided as they have always been (Hoodbhoy "Making Arabic Compulsory").

The "Educational Apartheid":

The Single National Curriculum, set to be implemented later in 2021, is ostensibly aimed at bridging the social divide created, magnified, and maintained through the discriminatory access to education available to different segments of society, which the government of populist prime minister Imran Khan insisted on calling an "educational apartheid." Western secular education, as envisaged in the "English-medium" British O' Level and A' Level streams (of which Khan is a product due to his class privileges, having progressed from Pakistan's elitist grammar school Aitchison College to Oxford University), is expensive, and a very small section of the populace can acquire it. In return for the heavy investment made by parents, this pricey education opens the door for their children to university admissions in developed countries in Europe and North America as well as in Australia. The ultimate promise that students' families invest in is that these exclusive opportunities will bring them lucrative job offers in those

developed countries, ultimately resulting in citizenship rights. When coupled with the abysmal ranking of the Pakistani passport as a marker of identity, the possibility of acquiring a nationality that will bring one a respectable and comfortable lifestyle makes parents believe that their investment in the western educational stream will lend dividends that justify the sacrifices they inevitably end up making. Thus, parents who can afford to provide such an education to their children, do so at considerable cost. However, it must be underscored that the section of society that has access to even the option of studying in schools that offer O' Level and A' Level education is limited by spatial concerns as well. The stream is only offered in the major urban metropolitan cities like Lahore, Karachi, Islamabad, and Peshawar. Ammara Maqsood's model of rising urban middle-class piety which I have discussed in the introductory chapter can perhaps be replicated in these other urban centers with similar results, indicating that the urban middle-class strives for commercialized religious piety as well as western secular education simultaneously. While some of these aspects have been discussed in the light of class as a marker of identity and analysis, comprehensive studies of the class problem have still to be written.

Unable to invest in this costly venture, most Pakistani parents send their children to public and private schools that offer "Urdu-medium" education designed around the national curriculum of matriculation and intermediate examinations. Students in this stream mostly end up in local public-sector colleges and universities where they study in a BA/BSc (Honors) system modelled on western education, but with serious and documented flaws in curricula, lack of rigor, and a general apathy to education. As a result, they end up in unsatisfying, low-paying careers which do not promise a fruitful life. Placed in this vicious circle, most people end up leading depressed and unfulfilling lives. As Markus Daechsel has noted in his study of the Urdu-speaking middle class in South Asia, the "politics of self-expression" in mid-twentieth century

South Asia gave rise to a depoliticized but violent and exclusivist political culture. The rhetorical devices of Urdu particularly accentuate the identarian politics of exclusionism. Similarly, Mubarak Ali has argued that Urdu is a class-based language, first adapted by the Muslim nobility in India, and has decidedly elitist tendencies. The system of education that caters to the overwhelming majority of Pakistani students creates a depressive tendency to exclusionism, and a resistance to critical thinking.

The third stream is madrassah education. After the events of 9/11, international focus turned towards regulating religious seminaries in Pakistan due to their reported role in training religious fanatics. The religious seminaries provide boarding and food for the students who are mainly from poor families, and cannot afford to attend even government schools. These seminaries provide mainly religious education, training their students to become clerics, prayer leaders, and seminary teachers. Kamran has in fact suggested that the government should take on the role of the madrassah and streamline it not through the SNC but by founding boarding schools where students from underprivileged backgrounds can find education and board, and that their families be provided a stipend to encourage them to send their sons to these state-owned schools (Kamran "SNC"). The contrast between the madrassah education system and the western educational paradigm is, to quote Michael Allan's reading of the Egyptian model, a "putative opposition between a practice of reading based on memorization, embodiment, and recitation in Qur'anic schools…and another practice based on reflection, critique, and judgment" (Allan 3). As the critics and scholars cited in the SNC debate have argued, the hallmark of the madrassah system is rote learning and an unquestioned obedience to the dictates of religion and the teacher. In contrast, the western model encourages conceptual learning and questioning of authority. The local system of government schools straddles both systems, but relies heavily on rote

memorization, reproduction of previously available material, and subservience to the ideological moorings of the nation-state, whether religious or regional. Thus, the madrassah system indirectly influences even the Urdu-medium government school structure that is the leading provider of education in the country.

Given these tensions and inconsistencies, when the government envisaged a single *national* curriculum that addresses and removes these disparities in education to aim at a more equalized social formation, its intentions were laudable. The concerns cited above regarding religious polarization are genuine and would need ironing out with more thought and sensitivity. However, one can at least empathize with the need for a singular educational model given the context. Despite the obvious benefits of homogenizing education, this chapter will address the feasibility of a singular national thought frame and argue that the fragmented nature of the polity and society seriously problematizes a universally applicable system of education. I do this through a long history of Urdu and its ineffectuality as a unifying language in post-independence Pakistan.

The Desire for "Equality" and the Perils of "Populism":

Part of the problem can be accessed through what Talal Asad has listed as the "threats" unfurled when pursuing "equality." The desirable notion of equality, he says, brings with it "populism," "irrationality," "intolerance," and "the refusal to recognize 'talent and innovation.'" (Asad 48-49). In its desire to impose "equality" through a unified educational model, the state of Pakistan – led by a confused populist who both celebrates the West for its institutions and social justice, and denigrates it for its lack of a moral compass – replicated its earlier model of forcing a national language which has still not worked as I show later in this chapter. This top-down equality assumes the willing participation of the public in the desire to change the system.

However, the social media reaction to the government's decision, as well as the critique in popular print media discussed above, show that a large number of the educated subjects of the state do not endorse the plan. Partha Chatterjee follows Asad's example to chart the "moral decline of the nation-state" (Chatterjee 31). In his critique of populist regimes, Chatterjee shows how the state has lost its moral authority over the people that inhabit the nation-state. Because the nation-state in the postcolonial setting has lost the legitimacy derived from public support, and in an effort to bridge the gap between the state and the people, populist regimes and leaders have sprung up in countries like Pakistan and India. The analysis of class as a category thus becomes even more important in this backdrop. The gimmickry associated with seemingly populist demands to reform the class-based and inequal education system through a singular curriculum is the consequence of such populism. Thus to stem the moral decline of the state's and government's authority, the government imposed what it thought would be a popular measure for addressing the class divide in Pakistan.

The Question of Language:

The other problem highlighted with the SNC is central to my dissertation. That issue concerns the problems of language and medium of instruction as imagined in the SNC. The SNC does not entail any changes in the existing language policy, which privileges Urdu as the national language and accepts the social capital of English as well. Given the problematic history of Urdu as the national language of Pakistan, it is important to look at the parameters of this debate. Urdu's status as *national* language of Pakistan has such a problematic history that it has a direct bearing on Pakistan's attempts at unified nationhood. Nationalism in Pakistan is embedded in the question of language, which the SNC manages to elide. This chapter's central concern is with the Pakistani nation-state as conceived through its historical and social relationship to the Urdu

language. For this, a detailed recounting of the history of Urdu in South Asia is required. The following section recalls some of these significant moments in the long history of Urdu, focusing on some aspects more than on others, before moving to its colonial other, English. The purpose of this detailed history is to link it with current debates about anglophone literatures, a link that has not been explored adequately. While a comprehensive history of Pakistani anglophone poetry is also missing, most urgent is an adequate framing of Pakistani anglophone literature within the language politics of the postcolonial nation-state. The following discussion aims to do just that.

On the Origins of Urdu:

The twin linguistic complex known as Hindi-Urdu has existed for close to a millennium, if not longer. Early names of the language included "Hindvi" and "Rekhtah" among others. The name "Urdu" itself seems to have come into vogue around 1780 (Faruqi 806). Its full name in practice was *"zaban-e-urdu-e-mualla-e-Shahjahanabad"* (the language of the exalted court/city of Shahjahanabad). Shamsur Rehman Faruqi conjectures that the language meant by this appellation was the court language Persian and not the vernacular Urdu-Hindi as it is known today. The title was shortened first to "*zabān-e-urdu-e-mualla,*" then to "*zabān-e-urdu,*" and finally, Urdu (807). Hafiz Sheerani, a scholar of Urdu in colonial India, wrote a comprehensive history of Urdu claiming that it originated in Punjab, whereas Faruqi finds it origins in the United Provinces. Sheerani was motivated by a need to find Urdu's place in the largest province, a need which had a later relationship with statecraft in Pakistan. Scholars like Faruqi and Tariq Rahman are important in their challenging of the myth of Urdu as a language of Punjab. As will be shown later, Urdu has subsumed Punjabi's identity as a language and participated in its colonial and postcolonial erasure.

The British and the Communalizing of Language:

The question of Urdu as a Muslim language was raised during British colonial rule. Colonial encounters with local languages were intensely significant. John Gilchrist may be credited with investing the Urdu and Hindi complex with the languages' now widely accepted communal identities. He published a grammar of the "Hindoostanee Language" in 1796, wherein he included samples from what he described as "the best poets who have composed their several works in that mixed Dialect, also called Oordoo, or the polished language of the Court, and which even at this day pervades with more or less purity, the vast provinces of a once powerful empire" (qtd. in Faruqi 809). The mixed dialect that Gilchrist associated with the Hindustani language or Urdu was, thus, in the eyes of the readers and students of his grammar, the language of the former Mughal empire, which was Muslim in its overall orientation. Gilchrist divided the Indian language(s) according to the religious identities of their speakers, and the following long passage from his description is critical in understanding the colonial baggage that I am addressing:

> This name of the country ["Hindoostan"] being modern, as well as the vernacular tongue in question, no other appeared so appropriate as it did to me, when I first engaged in the study and cultivation of the language. That the natives and others call it also *Hindi*, *Indian*, from *Hind*, the ancient appellation of *India*, cannot be denied; but as this is apt to be confounded with *Hinduwee*, *Hindooee, Hindvee*, the derivative from *Hindoo*, I adhere to my original opinion, that we should invariably discard all other denominations of the popular speech of this country, including the unmeaning word *Moors*, and substitute for them *Hindoostanee*, whether the people here constantly do so or not: as they can hardly

> discriminate sufficiently, to observe the use and propriety of such restrictions, even when pointed out to them.
>
> *Hinduwee*, I have treated as the exclusive property of the Hindus alone; and have therefore constantly applied it to the old language of India, which prevailed before the Moosulman invasion; and in fact, now constitutes among them, the basis or ground-work of the *Hindoostanee*, a comparatively recent superstructure, composed of Arabic and Persian, in which the last two may be considered in the same relation, that Latin and French bear to English. (qtd. in Faruqi 809)

Faruqi points out that Gilchrist did not know that Hindvi was not a distinct language but an earlier name for Hindustani/Urdu (810). The British also proposed the popular definition of Urdu as a camp language (811). The passage shows how Gilchrist's orientalist project delineated the Indian language into communal components. In alluding to a period before the Muslim invasion of India, however, he succumbs to the same lure of a precolonial purity that is assumed in the postcolonial state by those who argue for abandoning English. Gilchrist, however, does appear correct in identifying the formation of a new linguistic culture in Mughal India through the infiltration of Persian and Arabic vocabulary. This new Persio-Arabic infused literary and linguistic culture is what is known today as Urdu.

Gilchrist taught at Fort William College, established in 1800 in Calcutta by the East India Company. The college was first founded to teach local languages to British officers, and later introduced a program to teach Indians working for the Company. Gilchrist was hired to teach Hindustani in the Arabic script. The college later hired a Brahmin to teach Bhaka in the Nagari script, thus laying the foundation for "Hindi as the language of the Hindus" (Dalmia 166). In 1837, when the British replaced the court language Persian with vernacular languages,

Hindustani became the dominant and state-patronized language in Northwest India. With the simultaneous movement for Hindi publications in a different script, a demand was being made to accord Hindi the same status as Hindustani/Urdu (Ayres 21-22). This happened in the later part of the nineteenth century, while reformist movements within Islam and Hinduism were also popular, thus equating the "defense of Urdu" with "defense of Muslims" and heightening the communal bifurcation of India under colonial rule. In fact, the argument for language being constitutive of religious identity was so conclusive that Chris Bayly has argued that the associations formed for the protection of Urdu later turned into the Muslim League, the party that led the movement for an independent Pakistan (Bayly 222).

Another source for understanding the British colonial attitude to the Urdu-Hindi communal identity is *Hobson-Jobson*, a dictionary which became the lexical source for the British to understand Indian English. Subtitled "*A Glossary of Colloquial Anglo-Indian Words and Phrases, and of Kindred Terms, Etymological, Historical, Geographical and Discursive,*" *Hobson-Jobson* defines "Hindostanee" as:

> the language that the Mohammedans of Upper India, and eventually the Mohammedans of the Deccan, developed out of the Hindi dialect of the Doab chiefly, and the territory around Agra and Delhi, with a mixture of Persian vocables and phrases, and a readiness to adopt other foreign words. It is also called *Oordoo*, i.e., the language of the Urdu ('Horde') or Camp. This language was for a long time a kind of Mohammedan *lingua franca* over all India, and still possesses that character over a large part of the country, and among certain classes. (417)

Col. Henry Yule and A. C. Burnell, the compilers of this dictionary, emphasized in 1886 the Muslim identification of the language called Urdu. The *Oxford English Dictionary* in 1993

described “Hindustani” as “the language of the Muslim conquerors of Hindustan, being a form of Hindi, with a large admixture of Arabic, Persian, and other foreign elements; also called Urdu, i.e. *zaban-e Urdu,* language of the camp, sc. of the Mughal conquerors.” Thus, the understanding of Hindustani/Urdu as the language of the Muslims and Hindi as the language of the Hindus was propagated by the British colonial machinery. Gyanendra Pandey has offered other evidence for the colonial intervention that heightened communal differences between Muslims and Hindus in British India, but that is not the subject of this work.

The codification of language into Muslim and Hindu identities was also mirrored in the codification of law into Muslim law and Hindu law. Under Warren Hastings as governor-general of Bengal, Islamic criminal law was applied to all citizens in continuation of the Muslim practices of Mughal rulers, but the civil law was divided into Hindu law for the Hindus and Muslim for the Muslims. The British replicated this practice across India during their rule. Thus, in addition to their efforts to learn Persian, the court and official language of Mughal/Muslim India, the British also started to learn Sanskrit for understanding both ancient knowledge and the Hindu judicial code (Cohn 25-32).

A recent field-defining work by Manan Ahmed Asif charts the European imagination of India into a Hindu state, and shows how before this conception, India had been imagined as Hindustan where the followers of all religions considered themselves Hindustani. Asif refers to Alexander Dow’s eighteenth-century translation of a seventeenth-century Persian history of Hindustan as the beginning of the historiography by British colonial historiographers that posited Muslims and Hindus as two nationalities within the Indian nation. It was this British military officer who “delineated the history of Hindustan from the history of India,” with the historical consequence that for all future European (and under their influence even South Asian) historians

of the subcontinent, "the former [Hindustan] belonged to the Muhammadans, or the Mughals, and the latter [India] to the Hindus" (Asif 17). Swayed by his belief that the Muslim writer of *Tarikh-e-Firishta*, which he had translated into English, could not have represented the Hindus adequately, Dow added to this translation his own "dissertation concerning the religion and philosophy of the Brahmin," thus cementing the idea of India as a Hindu land where the foreign Muslim invaders had imposed a concept of a unified Hindustan. As Asif has shown, this was ironically the same claim that was made by Savarkar, the progenitor of the violent Hindutva concept that is now the basis for the anti-Muslim politics of the Bharatya Janata Party in India, and which in the 1920s and 1930s provided the impetus for *Hindu* separatists to demand that Muslims be recognized as a separate nation from them. These changing realities of the perception of India as a Hindu state where the segregationist and separatist agenda of pure Hindutva was to be implemented alerted the All-India Muslim League to the need for autonomy for Muslims in India. The initial form of the demand was for a Muslim India within India, but the ideologue who presented this demand, poet-philosopher Muhammad Iqbal soon realized that the Hindu separatist demand was a manifestation that required two separate states.

Asif traces Dow's influence in misrepresenting Firishta's history in subsequent European historiography of *India* and in the philosophy of history that Mill, Kant, Hegel, Herder, and other European canonical thinkers formulated from this communal distortion of the history of *Hindustan*. Two of the most telling, and for me as a post-*colonized* subject in Asif's formulation, the most traumatic, observations that this line of history-writing produced must be quoted here to stress the importance of this point. First is Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel: "The Hindus have no historical perspective and are incapable of any historiography….Because the Hindus have no history in the subjective sense, they also have none in the objective sense. Precisely because the

Hindus have no *historia*, they have no authentic history" (qtd. in Asif 20). With this perceived absence of history among the Hindus came the simultaneous belief for these European thinkers that "the history of India could not be found in any Muslim text" either (Asif 20). The second telling, and traumatic, observation comes from Friedrich Schlegel: "Of the political history of India, little can be said, for the Indians scarcely possess any regular history….The more modern history of Hindostan, from the first Mahometan conquest at the commencement of the eleventh century of our era…is unconnected with, and incapable of illustrating the true state and progress of the intellectual refinement of the Hindus" (qtd. in Asif 20-21). These are clearly provocative statements, denying the history of Hindustan (India in European conceptions) to *both* sets of its inhabitants, the Hindus and the Muslims. The Hindus, *original* locals according to this myth of European historiography of India in Asif's contention, and the Muslims, *invading* foreigners who interjected with a Hindu golden age, were both cast as incapable of either producing their own history, or of being reliable historians. This can now, in the age of global social media cancel culture, and in light of the giant leaps taken in academia to address the racism inherent in the language of our disciplines, be easily deconstructed as an obvious colonial racist construction of the natives as inherently incapable of telling their own stories. The *narration* of the *nation,* in Homi Bhabha's famous formulation, could therefore *only* be done by the European historian, philosopher, artist, and administrator who had so generously agreed to bring *his* own civilizational and educational ideals to the *existing-outside-of-history* natives of India. Asif shows how the *Hindustan* where various communities existed together, in Firishta's history, thus became the *India* of an unbridgeable binary of Hindu and Muslims in the European imagination. The colonizers thus imposed the racist trope of an absence of history to *write* a new history of

India. This is also true of the irrevocable division by the British of an Indian language into a Muslim Urdu and a Hindu Hindi.

In British colonial India, Urdu acquired the status of a "language of command" (Cohn). The primers that taught Urdu to the British colonial officers emphasized the power of the British to issue a command and the duty of the locals to obey it. Tariq Rahman has shown how the British colonial administration promoted Urdu through its patronage of the print culture in India, and by making it the language of court and employment during their rule. His detailed description of British acceptance, propagation, and promotion of Urdu as the language of official and communal discourse in colonial India, at the expense of other vernacular and regional languages, is essential in showing how Urdu acquired the status of a language with colonial patronage, if not an outright colonial language. Urdu became a mode for social ascension for the colonial subjects of UP, Bengal, Deccan, and Punjab, just as Hindi and other vernaculars became languages of the lower levels of bureaucracy in British India. The British imposed English in the higher domains of power but patronized vernaculars in the lower administrative structures. British support of the spread of Urdu in these Muslim-dominated regions of colonial India led to Urdu being invested with social capital, especially for the Muslims. Thus, when the independent nation-state of Pakistan was carved out of the Muslim majority areas of India in 1947, the newly founded state inherited Urdu and imposed it as its national language.

Urdu as National Language in Independent Pakistan:

Immediately after the partition of the subcontinent, Pakistan announced Urdu as its national language. One month before independence, in July 1947, Dr. Ziauddin Ahmed, then vice chancellor of Aligarh Muslim University – which had been at the forefront of redefining Muslim identity and nationalism in the colonial context – had announced that Urdu would be the

medium of instruction in independent Pakistan (Rahman 84). In response to this, Bengali linguist Dr. Shahidullah stated that "if Urdu or Hindi instead of Bengali is used in our law courts and universities, that would be tantamount to political slavery" (qtd. in Rahman 84). This strong statement indicates that the position of Urdu as national language, and indeed as the language of all Indian Muslims, was already contested and controversial in colonial India before independence. The struggle for Bengali identity articulated through the Bengali language, was however, a more organized demand than has been seen in other parts of the subcontinent. The third chapter of this dissertation locates the sharply contrasted absence of an organized linguistic identity in the Punjab as a counterpoint to this aspect of resistance to nationalist hegemony.

Bengali Language Movement and Resistance to Singular Nationalism:

The Bengali Bhasha Ondolan (Language Movement) had thus started before independence with its major demands being the institution of Bengali as language of instruction, juridical and public administration, and mass communication in East Bengal. The Tamaddun Majlis which presented these demands also called for the mandatory teaching of Bengali to all officials posted in East Bengal, and most significantly that Bengali should be made "*one of the national languages of Pakistan alongwith Urdu*" (Rahman 84 emphasis added). "If Urdu is made our state language then the educated people of East Pakistan will become illiterate overnight and they will also become disqualified for government service," wrote a prominent critic of the Muslim League for the Tamaddun Majlis. Rahman has traced this emphasis on Bengali ownership of the cultural capital of their language to the shifting dynamics in colonial India whereby the predominantly Hindu identity of Bengal had been subsumed by the Muslim elite (called *Ashrāf*) through their promotion of Muslim culture associated with the literary and linguistic heritage of Urdu. With the partition of India into India and Muslim Pakistan

(containing East Bengal) imminent, there was no longer any perceptible threat to Muslim identity politics in South Asia, and the Bengalis now realized that Urdu was no longer the political necessity in their region that it had been in the colonial era.

After partition in 1947, when Pakistan became an independent nation-state, the question of a national language was of great interest and controversy. The first education minister Fazlur Rehman was a Bengali. The first education conference of the newly-independent state was held from November 27 to December 1, 1947. While this conference agreed that the primary education of children would be in the mother tongue, the organizers did privilege Urdu and English over the regional and native languages. The Bengali education minister claimed that "there are unassailable grounds for its [Urdu's] establishment as the *lingua franca* of Pakistan" (Rahman 85). The Bengalis started to protest the institution of Urdu as the only state language of Pakistan. Many Bengalis, led by university students, ramped up the demand for Bengali as official language and medium of instruction in East Bengal, and additionally demanded that their language be recognized as one of the official languages of the newly founded nation-state. Bengali students' agitation against the non-implementation of Bengali as state language only grew with time as administrations made false promises but official and state documents of all kinds were still written in English and Urdu. The local anger against Punjab-dominated national politics in Pakistan was manifested in the Language Movement. Rahman quotes a telling passage from a British guest lecturer at Dhaka University who recorded an exchange with a Bengali lecturer at the university whose students were at the forefront of the language protests:

> "I believe you'd rather have Hindus in control than Punjabis," I said to a young lecturer who was raging over some provocation. He retorted at once, "We would indeed, for at least they're our own kind of people. We didn't get rid of the British Raj to be bossed

> about by these new imperialists." And on the way to college one morning, two students just in front of me were talking earnestly in a less heated mood: one was saying to the other, "I am first of all a Bengali, then I am a Muslim, then Pakistani." (Stock qtd. in Rahman 86)

Although Rahman observes that "it would not be fair to make much of these casual remarks," they do merit some comment outside the larger recorded history of state policies regarding language. This striking account records how the average educated Bengali youth viewed the issue of Urdu being accorded the status of the only national language of Pakistan as the attempt of a Punjab-led Pakistani elite to eradicate their cultural identity and enforce a homogenized version of nationhood on them, which they did not ascribe to despite having had leadership roles in the movement for creating Pakistan. Critically, the young Bengali lecturer quoted by Stock thought Hindus were more "our own kind of people" than Punjabi Muslims, thus calling into question the separatist Muslim politics of Bengal in colonial India. That the Bengalis became the leading lights of a movement to create an independent Muslim nation-state seems contradicted by this sentiment expressed by the young people that Stock encountered. Something more than religion was at play. The answer lies in the class-based peasant agitation of 1970, discussed in the introduction. The Language Movement likely became a vehicle perhaps for expressing more deep-rooted resentment against class-based oppression in the feudal structures of colonial and postcolonial Bengal.

A few other facts, already noted by others, need to be reiterated here to establish my case about the otherness of the state's language policy regarding one national language before I move on from the Bengali Bhasha Ondolan. In the 1948 Constituent Assembly of Pakistan, in response to a Hindu Bengali member's question about the use of Bengali alongside Urdu and English, the

then prime minister Liaquat Ali Khan, himself a native Urdu speaker and a member of the Muslim Ashrāf, emphatically stated, "Pakistan has been created because of the demand of a hundred million Muslims in this subcontinent and the language of a hundred million Muslims is Urdu" (Rahman 86). The finality and absolutism of this statement by the country's first prime minister, and one of its founding fathers, hints at the exclusionary tendencies of the nation-state as conceived by the first generation of its political leaders. The unequivocal correlating of Muslim India with the Urdu language demonstrates that the founders of Pakistan considered Urdu to be the coalescing glue that held their newly-founded nation together with a role secondary only to the religious identity of the Muslims. The founding prime minister's categorical assertion that every single Muslim in the subcontinent spoke and read Urdu, and identified Urdu as the language of choice for the Muslims, underscores the integral role Urdu had, and continues to have, in imagining the Muslim nationalism of Pakistan.

The enforcement of Urdu from the state down to the ordinary people, and the Bengali Language Movement's resistance to this relegation of the mother tongue of a majority of the population, charts the course of a nation-state that became fragmented with its very inception. Even the Bengali chief minister, Khwaja Nazimuddin, who later headed the state of Pakistan as governor-general and then prime minister, also announced that the people of East Bengal wanted Urdu as their language and not Bengali. This was met with a wave of protests, until the chief minister had to capitulate and concede to the students that the East Bengal Legislative Assembly would move a resolution asking that Bengali be recognized as one of the state languages and be accorded equal status to Urdu in the National Assembly as well as for the purpose of government examinations (Rahman 87). However, this gesture failed to bring the Bhasha Ondolan to an end.

On March 19, 1948, Muhammad Ali Jinnah, the founding governor-general of Pakistan and the 'Father of the Nation,' himself arrived in Dhaka to address the Bengalis. On March 21, he addressed the public and claimed that "ultimately it is for you, the people of this Province, to decide what shall be the language of your Province." However, he went on to definitively declare the status of Urdu as national and official language:

> But let me make it very clear to you that the State Language of Pakistan is going to be Urdu and *no other language*. Anyone who tries to mislead you is really *the enemy of Pakistan*. Without one State Language, no nation can remain tied up solidly together and function. (Rahman 87 emphasis added)

These are strong words indeed. In this speech, I read two important aspects of the language question which I believe have a bearing still on the postcolonial state of Pakistan and its relationship with language(s). For one, the founding father of the state, a constitutional lawyer and statesman of great standing and repute, argued that a homogenized and rationalized single language was necessary for holding the disparate nations within Pakistan together, thus actually acknowledging the ethnonationalist understanding of Pakistan as a multilingual and multinational nation-state, while also providing a framework for discouraging that multiplicity. His thinking then anticipates and is consistent with what the SNC projects under its purported aim of "One Nation, One Curriculum." Overcoming multiplicity of *nationalisms*, and forcing them into one single nationalism, was at the very heart of the politics of Pakistan's founders. Secondly, as the country's first head of state, Jinnah provided the context for branding all ethno-nationalisms, particularly those resisting Urdu as the national language, as anti-state or as the "enemy of Pakistan." This trope has been widely used and continues to be used unfortunately in dealing with all opposition and public protests to this day. Jinnah, though not a native or even

fluent speaker of the language, did not mince any words in declaring Urdu as the only national language, thus encouraging the reading of Pakistan as an exclusionary state where absolute conformity to the state's narrative is mandatory for citizenship. Despite the protests held against Jinnah's declaration, and in spite of a student delegation calling on him to reconsider his statement, the governor-general insisted on his stance. Thus, when the recently deposed prime minister and his regime refused to acknowledge the genuine concerns raised against their proposed project of unifying the nation through a singular, overwhelmingly religious curriculum in the form of the SNC, they were fulfilling the role defined for them by the founding fathers. The wave of regressive, divisive, and exclusionary populism that has gripped much of South Asia demands precisely the kind of stubborn adherence to forceful nationalism that we are witnessing in the region.

Idealizing Urdu's Common Appeal in Some Unexplored Sources:

In this section, I initiate a dialogue between certain sources from Urdu that have not been explored in the canonical anglophone histories of Urdu cited above. Even Rahman's authoritative *From Hindi to Urdu* does not explore these sources. By bringing them into the ambit of my dissertation through my translation, reading, and commentary, I hope to highlight the gaps that these debates can fill in our understanding of the history of Urdu in postcolonial South Asia.

In 1961, the vehement idealization of Urdu as the language *of* the nation was articulated by a prominent Urdu critic Maulvi Abdul Haq, fondly called the 'Father of Urdu,' when he stated that "neither Jinnah nor Iqbal had made Pakistan: rather, Urdu had made Pakistan. The real reason for the opposition between Hindus and Muslims was the Urdu language" (qtd. in Ayres 16). While this critic stressed on the commitment and duty that he believed the Pakistani state

owed to the Urdu language, I will cite key examples of the debate around Urdu as a Muslim and Pakistani cultural language in post-independence Pakistan: they are important additions to the history of the Urdu debate in independent Pakistan. As they show, Urdu's colonial baggage has been conveniently ignored by the state and its policy-makers, as well as by civil society at large. Recovering the colonial baggage is an important task so that academics at least can have a better understanding of the problematics of ethnicity, nation, and language than ordinary citizens do.

Muhammad Hassan Askari, who might be considered Urdu's first literary critic of note with training in western literature and criticism, became the first writer who contextualized Urdu literature in Pakistan in an Islamic characterization. Writing in 1948, he states that in every nation, the role of prophets, politicians, and artists and writers is to educate the nation about its mental and inner state, and to tell it "*what it wants*" (Askari 312 emphasis added). I think Askari means here the ideational and ideological elements that the nation *needs* to define its national priorities. He presumes that the nation needs to be guided because the multiple nationalities that compose Pakistan do not know what they want, which for Askari is clearly Islamic nationalism. He laments that the "distance" between the Muslim nation and the Muslim writer has kept increasing (313). He then argues that some Muslim writers in Pakistan have even become "puppets in the hands of strangers," mocking the progressive writers' movement which had been demanding a socialist understanding of the Pakistan question (316). This recalls Jinnah's assertion, cited above, that those opposing Urdu are enemies of the state. Askari urges Pakistani writers to visit those parts of the country where literacy is low and educate people about the reason for Pakistan's creation, which in his estimation is the assertion of a separate Muslim identity and culture (340). Askari's influence on the first two generations of Urdu writers in Pakistan was tremendous. In charting a hyper-nationalist, religious-ideological agenda for Urdu

writers in post-independence Pakistan, he plotted a course that was travelled by some of Urdu's best-known writers across genres. That Askari's expression of intent for Pakistani writers encompassed Urdu as the only national language helps underscore the importance of reviewing his impact on the literary and linguistic history of Pakistan.

Jameel Jalibi was another prolific and prominent critic who spent a lifetime theorizing Pakistani culture and literature. A staunch supporter of Urdu as the definitive marker of identity for Pakistanis, Jalibi has not been as influential as Askari. However, his work in defining Pakistani culture offers another unexplored source for describing the Pakistani nationhood that is inscribed in the Urdu language debates. In *Pakistani Culture,* he demonstrates an advanced knowledge of linguistics and semiotics, arguing that language is a system of signs that produces meaning in the context in which words are used (Jalibi 212). "Since language is a social act," he states, "the entire culture of a society weaves its threads in [through] language" (213). In a chapter titled 'Shared Culture, Shared Language,' Jalibi argues that language is a vehicle, to be used for creating a "community of thought and action" and "cultural solidarity" among the people who use it, and that language derives from culture (213). Jalibi implies that rich, established, or high-brow cultures will be expressed in high-brow linguistic traditions, while low-brow languages will express low-brow cultural traditions. However, he also emphasizes that in the larger system of language use in a society, the various classes and segments of that society participate according to their various needs. "A shared national culture is *always* founded on a shared language" (214 emphasis added). This is his central argument for why Urdu is a necessary vehicle for the promotion of a shared and common *national* culture in Pakistan. The SNC detailed above envisages a similar project through its increased emphasis on religion, and Urdu, as vehicular necessities for the creation of a shared and unified culture that the SNC's authors

believe is necessary for national cohesion. “Who controls the past controls the future: who controls the present, controls the past,” runs the Party’s slogan in George Orwell’s *1984*. What ideologues of Urdu’s power as a shared language of a shared Islamic South Asian culture, reflected in the demand for and realized in the creation of Pakistan, envisaged was a shared ground where the present is a revision of the past. By controlling the present through Urdu-as-only-national-language, Jalibi, Askari, and others presented Urdu as the force that united the past of Muslim India, reflected in the first prime minister’s assertion quoted above. Those who have created the SNC are now using these paradigms to control the future.

Elsewhere, Jalibi comments on another issue still relevant today. I have stated earlier that the government of Imran Khan, in a bid at legitimacy, promulgated Arabic as a compulsory subject in schools in the federal capital. The call for Arabic as the national language of Pakistan is not a new one. Only three years after the creation of Pakistan, in 1950, a slogan was raised to declare Arabic as the national language of the country by the then governor of the State Bank of Pakistan, as it would bring Pakistanis “close to Islam,” and help realize the “ideal of pan-Islamic unity” (Jalibi 363). Jalibi rebuts this demand by arguing that Arabic-speaking Muslims are not the only inhabitants of the Islamic world, and that pan-Islamism includes the multiple languages spoken by Muslims (364). He argues that if Pakistan were to adopt Arabic as the national language, it would sever the Pakistani Muslims’ ties with the Muslims in post-independence, post-partition India, “and erase the name of Islam from India,” because “Urdu and Urdu alone can keep their [Indian Muslims’] civilizational and cultural sensibilities intact” (365). Notice the paradox in appealing to the pluralism of pan-Islamism and the exclusionism of arguing for one national and cultural language, positing the latter as the sole language of Indian Islam. He proceeds to claim that Urdu will always remain “the link language [he uses this English term] of

the subcontinent," with this language having fulfilled the need of the subcontinent's residents for a common, shared language, "and there was no language other than Urdu that could have met this need" (365-366).

Crucially, Jalibi goes on to address the anti-Urdu sentiment in the regional languages' movements that had sprung up. The people who proposed Arabic as the unifying language of Pakistan did so in the hope of ending political opposition to Urdu. To Jalibi, however, people proposing Arabic as a way to meet the political agenda of a unified language "erase the distinction between provincial language and national language" (367). He points to the fact that when Punjabis and Bengalis meet each other, or Sindhis meet Balochis, the language they use to communicate is Urdu. "One quality of Urdu is that wherever it went, it made its home there," he says (368). He points to Urdu's ability to incorporate words and word-roots from other languages, including Arabic, but also Persian, Hindi (which, following from the discussion above, had been advocated as a separate Hindu language by British colonials), and English, and so "preferring Arabic and English as official languages and not working for implementing and promoting Urdu will be a national misfortune" (371). Jalibi does not comment on the ability of regional languages like Punjabi and Sindhi to incorporate foreign influences. This shows the advocate for Urdu refusing to engage with the regional languages and believing them to be inherently inferior and without the ability to adapt in a new world. This attitude is precisely what alienates the regional languages in the postcolonial state.

The debate around language never subsides and for critics like Jalibi, the need to validate Urdu remained a lifelong project. In an essay titled "Pakistan mein Urdu ka Masla" (The Issue of Urdu in Pakistan), published thirty years later in 1980, Jalibi claims that of the almost eighty thousand words used in the Qur'an, there are about two thousand that are of a critical and

integral nature. “Of these two thousand words, almost 80 percent are a part of Urdu,” he says, suggesting that Urdu has an inalienable link with the religio-cultural identification of South Asian Muslim (373). He laments how the Pakistani nation is no longer united, but divided into multiple nations (374). Jalibi states that in order to become one nation, four elements are needed simultaneously: “a geography within defined boundaries; a single religion for a majority of its population; its own shared national history; its own national language” (374). He draws on the authority of the nineteenth-century French orientalist Garcin de Tassy, who had argued that multiple languages divide nations and a single language unites them (375). Jalibi then proceeds to regretting the dual Urdu-English medium of instruction, claiming that students do not succeed academically and in job interviews because of this divide between Urdu and English (375-376). Similarly, in 1985, in a pamphlet about the movement to impose Urdu as official language in Pakistan published by the Muqtaddara Qaumi Zabān (National Language Authority), academic and critic Waheed Qureshi writes about Urdu’s “literariness” as a major hurdle in its acceptance as a language of practical use (Qureshi 5). The other factor he considers important is that those tasked with implementing Urdu as official language – officers and bureaucrats, come from a privileged background, and are beneficiaries of the British system of education that privileges English (6). These seem to be the same concerns driving the state’s agenda for a unified curriculum.

As these key examples demonstrate, the insistence on Urdu as national language was an idea that critics explored in depth in the literary sphere. Other examples can be found in literary journals as well. Urdu has a strong tradition from the 1920s onwards of literary journals, where the most prominent works by contemporary writers are published. While some critics might argue that the quality of journals has fallen, with many of the big-name literary journals having

gone out of publication and circulation, the present-day phenomenon of the magazine that has replaced the journal shows that the market for literary magazines still exists and is, in fact, flourishing. I hereby look at the example of some debates around Urdu in one such prominent journal as a way of understanding the importance of these journals as a little-explored source for the debate around language politics in Pakistan.

*Nuqoos*h started publishing in 1948 under the editorship of two prominent Urdu writers, Ahmed Nadeem Qasmi and Hajira Masroor. In 1951, its publisher Muhammad Tufail took over as the editor, eventually becoming synonymous with the literary journal. The journal was known for its high-quality fiction, poetry, and literary debates. Tufail became a master at publishing "special issues" of the journal. One such two-part issue is titled *Adabi Maarkay Number* (Literary Debates Numbers). This special issue is a treasure trove for Urdu's historiography, hitherto unexplored. For example, it begins with debates about where Urdu originated, its place in post-independence "Hindu" India, and its role as an indigenous language and a national language. In another section, the journal records debates about Urdu's presence in different regions of the subcontinent: in Punjab, Deccan, Gujarat, Madras, Delhi, Bengal, Bihar, and Mysore. The archive of *Nuqoosh* is available at GC University, Lahore, whose own magazine *Ravi* I briefly write about in the following chapter.

Tufail's regular editorial was titled "Tulū," which means 'dawn.' In each of these brief pieces, he would introduce the particular issue's contents, and occasionally comment on contemporary issues. In issue 97, published in March 1963, he writes exclusively of the state of Urdu, prompting much debate. He begins by exhorting his readers to "expand their hearts" for what he is about to suggest. He praises Urdu for its adaptability, which like other great languages, can absorb words from other languages, including regional ones. "How could a

language grow if it believes in untouchability?" he asks. Contextualizing the fall of Urdu's literary quality from the times of its classical poets (the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries), he states that the contemporary needs of Urdu have changed. The old models can no longer suffice, he explains, because when those models were prevalent, "Urdu had not been kicked out of its own house, and had not needed to take refuge in Pakistan." This is a strong statement, which also indicates the perception that Pakistan was conceived as some kind of safe state where Urdu, as cultural language of the Muslims of South Asia, was to be preserved. Tufail then makes some crucial observations about the future structure of Urdu given its limitation to West Pakistan (thus conceding indirectly that the Bengali Language Movement in East Pakistan treated Urdu as the unacceptable 'other'). So, Tufail believes that the Urdu-e-mualā (Urdu of the court) of old can no longer survive the ethnic diversity in modern Pakistan. So, "Pashto, Punjabi, Sindhi, and Balochi words will have to be accommodated in the Urdu of the future." Arguing for Urdu's interaction with regional languages, Tufail wants Urdu to not be parochial, and not insist on its purity. "All I ask for," he says, "is that unnatural fences should not be erected against the growth of this free-growing flower [Urdu]." Since Urdu's centers have shifted from Delhi and Lucknow (now in India) to Lahore and Karachi (in Pakistan), changes in the structure of language are inevitable: "when centers change, languages also change." Thus, he believes Urdu, once the language of the Red Fort, Delhi, would have to adapt, and become "the language of the streets and alleys of West Pakistan." This is a remarkably progressive attitude to the development of the language, challenging the rigidity of those who believe in Urdu's purity.

This editorial initiated much debate and comment. In issue 98 of *Nuqoosh*, published in June 1963, Tufail published the responses of major critics. The editorial of issue 98 notes that the previous editorial has created a stir, but he goes on to address a different problem. "It has been

sixteen years since the English left. However, our minds have not changed. We consider it a distinction to speak English. We deliberately avoid speaking Urdu. The signs of living nations are their own traditions, lifestyle, and culture. My advice to my friends is: if someone speaks English needlessly, *stay quiet, do not reply*." So, in these two editorials, while Tufail argues for respecting regional languages and creating a hybrid space with them, he categorically and aggressively dismisses English, even arguing to deny it space within the discourse by silencing a response to it. As I argue later in this dissertation, a more productive approach is to find interactions between regional languages and English.

In the previous editorial, Tufail had called for the evolution of an "Urdu of the future" where Urdu interacts with regional languages, and absorbs their influences, so that it is not left behind, and is de-centered from its older homes, and is no longer bound by the examples and certification of a few families who stake ownership over it. As stated earlier, there were several responses, one of which was particularly detailed and powerful. This came from Shahid Ahmed Dehlavi, himself the editor of a major literary journal *Sāqi*, and scion of a famous family. His grandfather, Deputy Nazir Ahmed Dehlavi is credited with being the first Urdu novelist for the novels that he produced under the patronage of the British colonial government, and he also translated the Indian Penal Code into Urdu for the British government. Nazir Ahmed was a close associate of Sir Syed Ahmed Khan, the late nineteenth century reformer who urged Muslims to learn English and benefit from European educational models to compete against the Hindus for government jobs in British India. Sir Syed established the Muhammadan Anglo-Oriental College in Aligarh, which became the Muslim University Aligarh, and was the leading European-style educational institution for the Muslims of colonial India. He also initiated public educational institutions for Muslim women, as well as a movement for bringing European literary influences

to bear on India's Urdu and Persian literary tradition. Nazir Ahmed took up this mission. Thus, his family was held in great esteem in the social circles of Muslim India. Shahid Ahmed himself was a writer of note, and his journal published some of the leading writers of the day. He moved to Pakistan upon partition.

In his response to Tufail's *Nuqoosh* editorial, Shahid Ahmed writes: "Urdu is a unique language, for the Urdu spoken by men is different from that spoken by women [Urdu has gendered verbs]. The language of women is progressive too" (5). Shahid Ahmed intends this as a strength of the language. However, a more contemporary analysis empowered by gender theory might find new insights into the patriarchal subjection of women as gendered subaltern subjects through this vehicle of a gendered language. Responding to Tufail's suggestion that Urdu has to overcome its elitist attitude, and allow regional languages in, Shahid Ahmed strongly disagrees that Urdu has such an isolationist tendency, pointing out that no modern language can survive without incorporating regional and international influences (5-6). The following few lines are remarkable, and surprisingly have not been recorded in the authoritative histories of Rahman and Faruqi:

> How could you have stopped the growth of [a language] when she [I am using this pronoun to stress that the feminine pronoun is used for Urdu in Urdu] was born among the public, stepped into offices and courts, became a favorite disciple of kings, received the blessings of saints and men of God, and even became patronized by the British? That is why it kept growing, and crossed even the borders of Hindustan to reach other continents. Now, wherever you go in the world, you will find its speakers. (6)

Urdu is presented here as lover, mistress, concubine, courtesan, and wife, all at once. This is consistent with Urdu's predominant literary idiom: the ghazal tradition, Urdu's main poetic form,

is primarily about sexual love, although not always heteroerotic, and its language is dominated by feminine imagery. Even more significantly, Nazir Ahmed's novels center strong women characters, with the reformist agenda of becoming better managers in the domestic sphere. Concurrently, Mirza Hādi Hassan Ruswa's *Umrāo Jān Adā* presents the story of a courtesan, and is alternatively considered Urdu's first novel. Apart from this fact, the passage above charts a remarkably honest and accurate picture of Urdu's history in Mughal and British India, in its progress from language of the streets to that of the court, and its patronizing by Sufis and the British colonials alike. This particular issue of *Nuqoosh* contains other letters that address Tufail's editorial, which together form a necessary archive for writing a new history of the language in post-independence South Asia.

To sum up, the importance of Urdu's religious identification is reflected in the debates around its status, and more so in what Alyssa Ayres describes as "the contradictory roles that language plays in the creation of national identity in modernity" (Ayres 3). Muzaffar Alam has shown how Persian was a language used for the relaying of Islamic thought in India, and how Hindavi and Urdu – marked by a cultural character that was distinctly Persian – started emerging as the languages of choice in north India in the eighteenth century. As the language attributed to the unifying linguistic and religious identity of the Muslims of north India, Urdu was naturally assumed to be the language inherited by the citizens of the newly-created state of Pakistan in 1947. Nevertheless, the historiography of Urdu has always been politicized, first because the British promoted it to counter Persian as the lingering official language of Mughal India, and secondly because of its status as Hindi's religious other in post-independence India. In independent Pakistan, it was adopted as the national language, but never implemented until a Supreme Court order reminded the state that it had promised to promulgate Urdu as official

language in the unanimous constitution adopted in 1973. Even before that, though, the separation of Bangladesh from the union of Pakistan in 1971 over the language issue indicated how fraught the decision to enforce Urdu had always been. The residents of the erstwhile East Pakistan had been agitating since 1952 for the recognition of the Bangla/Bengali language as a national language in acknowledgment of their numerical majority, alongside the state-declared Urdu, which they considered to be the language of a minority. This agitation, and the subsequent language movement in what was East Pakistan, which led to the declaration of independence of Bangladesh, highlighted the instability and unpopularity caused by the enforced choice of Urdu as the language of official and state discourse. This led to the state proclaiming both Urdu and Bangla/Bengali as state languages for a few years starting in 1956, bringing the language movement to an end, but the seeds of separation had been sown (Rahman 95). The answer to such a polarizing language is a multiplicity of national languages, including English, to which I now turn.

Thinking in Binaries:

The logic of language politics in postcolonial states like Pakistan is the logic of binaries. The postcolonial state thinks of its existence in binaries, leading it to either own or reject identities. In 2015, a three-member bench led by the then chief justice of the Supreme Court of Pakistan passed a landmark judgment, ordering the federal and provincial governments of Pakistan to ensure that "the provisions of Article 251 shall be implemented with full force and without unnecessary delay." Article 251 of the Constitution of Pakistan, which the judgment decreed to be implemented, reads as thus:

> (1) The National language of Pakistan is Urdu, and arrangements shall be made for its being used for official and other purposes within fifteen years from the commencing day.

(2) Subject to clause (1), the English language may be used for official purposes until arrangements are made for its replacement by Urdu.

(3) Without prejudice to the status of the national language, a provincial assembly may by law prescribe measures for the teaching, promotion and use of a provincial language in addition to the national language.

The Constitution was enforced in 1973, and Urdu was to be adapted as official language within fifteen years. However, as was evident in the discussion above, the language was never actually implemented as language of official state business, thus prompting those defenses of Urdu which I have enlisted earlier.

The Supreme Court's 2015 order points out the failure of successive governments to implement this constitutional requirement. Two points in the judgment are particularly relevant to underscoring the postcolonial state's binary attitude to English as the 'other' and to the national (and regional) language(s). I produce them here in full:

17. In the governance of the Federation and the Provinces there is hardly any necessity for the use of the colonial language which cannot be understood by the public at large. Even for many civil servants and public officials, who may have received education in English, this language would in most cases, not be the language most used by them. Many officials are therefore forced to spend time on attempting to initiate and take decisions in a language which they are not entirely comfortable with. The time thus spent is quite wasteful because a lot of energy is dedicated to deciphering the language of the noting (which could have been easily drafted in the Urdu language) itself rather than understanding its content or substance. This wasteful exercise at times results in absurd and farcical outcomes which would be wholly avoided by use of the National language.

> 18. It is not at all the object of this judgment to denigrate the importance of English as a language used in international commerce and other activities which require the use of that language. The point before us as noted above is very different. Article 5(2) of the Constitution commands that "[o]bedience to the Constitution and law is the inviolable obligation of every citizen …". We are tasked to both obey the Constitution and to enforce it, and we cannot shy away from our obligation to the same while the nation suffers even if some may (from habit or training) find it more convenient to continue using the colonial language. (Judgment in Constitution Petition No. 56 of 2003)

To analyze this passage, a very brief theoretical digression is necessary. It is important here to consider the concept of otherness as it applies to language, particularly in the postcolonial context of Pakistan. In his response to Fredric Jameson's classification of Third World literature as a national allegory, Marxist critic Aijaz Ahmad questions the stability of Jameson's neat division of the world into three parts. Jameson essentializes the character of "third-world literature" as "non-canonical," which I read as an effort to recognize this "third world literature" as anticolonial (Jameson 65). Ahmad, meanwhile, reads this as an aporia of definitions. Ahmad considers as his example the history of Urdu in India to assert that the rise of the Urdu novel form in British India did not address issues of colonialism and imperialism, and as such these novels were not allegories for nationalism as Jameson assumes them to be (Ahmad 21). Jameson valorizes the resistance inherent in such literatures, and his categorization of it as "third world" does not appear derogatory to me. In fact, he specifically acknowledges the limitations of his classification (66-67). For example, the Progressive Writers' Movement in Indian literatures, especially in the Urdu short story and poetry, was a movement that had a Marxist, nationalist, and anti-imperialist ideology. It was the predominant representative literary movement of the

1930s to the 1950s, and most of the recognized Urdu literati of that period were adherents to this ideology in some form or the other. The evidence of anticolonial and anti-imperial awareness in the well-known and widely-read (at least in the Urdu speaking population of South Asia, and also in anglophone translation) short stories of Saadat Hasan Manto and the revolutionary poetry of Marxist activist Faiz Ahmed Faiz would at least seriously dispute the claims of Ahmad (and later Aamir Mufti) about the absence of anticolonial consciousness in Urdu literature. Perhaps Ahmad, himself a noted translator of Urdu's classical verse, has misread the importance of these counter-examples.

Anachronistically, and ahistorically, the Supreme Court judgment employs the Jamesonian argument of an inherent other in calling English the "colonial language," and ordering its replacement in official discourse with Urdu, which has its own history of being implemented as a colonial language, as the previous discussion demonstrates. The learned judges urge the conducting of official business in Urdu, assuming the same universality that Urdu's religious identification with South Asian Islam engendered in the leaders of Muslim South Asia. Yet, as I have been arguing, this identification itself was a colonial project, and any debates about the spatial and temporal origins of modern Urdu are inconclusive. This same universalism was assumed by those who argued for Urdu as the representative and only language of all Indian Muslims, whether it was the first prime minister, or critics like Jameel Jalibi and Shahid Ahmed Dehlavi. This universalism governed the founding governor-general's assertion that opponents of Urdu were enemies of the state. The court judgment reflects these sentiments and carries them into the twenty-first century. In this sense, both this judgment, and the recent intentions of the Single National Curriculum discussed above, present a continuum with colonial concerns in a

postcolonial setting. With this, I move to making the case for English as a language of mediation in this setting.

English in the Postcolony:

Even though most Asian and African colonies won independence after the Second World War, seventy years later the question of English in the postcolony is still relevant and controversial. Chinua Achebe provided the framework for those arguing in favor of retaining English in his very influential essay "The African Writer and the English Language," albeit in rather unfortunate words: "those of us who have inherited the English language may not be in a position to appreciate the value of the inheritance" (Achebe 96). While this seems to echo Lord Macaulay's assertion about the superiority of European learning and knowledge, enacting an epistemic violence, Achebe is far more attentive to the reality of colonial violence. "I have been *given* this language," he concludes, "and I intend to *use* it" (Achebe 102 emphasis added). Achebe does not in any way presume any inherent superiority of English but rather makes a case for its functionality as the most widely-understood language in "the country which we know as Nigeria today [but which] began not so very long ago as the arbitrary creation of the British" (94). Arundhati Roy, Indian writer and activist, and one of the most prominent stars of the post-9/11 boom in South Asian anglophone fiction, says something similar about English in the Indian context today: "India as a country, a nation-state, was a British idea," she states, and therefore, "the idea of English is as good or as bad as the idea of India itself." This obviously also recalls the discussion on the British idea of India replacing the idea of Hindustan initiated by Manan Asif, quoted earlier. Crucially, for Roy, the choice of English by writers "is not a tribute to the British empire," but is rather the "practical solution to the circumstances created by it" (Roy 15). Thus, when Achebe advocates for the acceptance of English, he is arguing for a "new

English, still in full communion with its ancestral home but altered to suit its new African surroundings" (Achebe 103). He is also quick to express his admiration for those writers who insist on writing in ethnic tongues (102). This attitude to the forced and continued presence of English in the postcolonial setting is progressive and revolutionary. The "given" of the language, paired with the postcolonized intellectual's "intent" to "use" it also recalls the dualism of agency discussed in the introduction. Akshya Saxena argues that the adapting of English in India during Jawaharlal Nehru's prime ministership was a functional solution, emphasizing the understanding that the language was being *used* "as an object that could be utilized to produce whatever effects one desired" (Saxena 111). So, in Achebe's acceptance of English, despite its colonial baggage, English becomes a tool, much like Heidegger's hammer, which can now be used in the post-independence setting in whichever way the postcolonial state, subject, writer, and intellectual desire. Following from Achebe, I believe that to divest English of its colonial baggage happens only when the postcolonial subject starts to assert ownership of the language. Thinking of English as a tool for functional communication, and then bending it to make it distinguishably different from colonial English is the productive work done by postcolonial writers like Achebe, Roy, Salman Rushdie, and many more. The evidence thus indicates that rather than thinking of English as the binary other, an Achebean approach provides a site for fresh creativity.

This functional *use* of the language, which Saxena traces in Nehru's attitude to English as one of the languages of postcolonial India, finds a simultaneous resonance in Sara Ahmed's recent work in tracing the history of the word "use." Strangely, Ahmed does not explore the archive of "use" as a verb for language itself, although she does recover the colonial archive of "use" in the monitorial school system, which traveled from the colony to the center, suggesting against Bhabha that the colonizer himself was at times the "mimic," and builds on Benoy Kumar

Sarkar's work on "how ideas travel back from India to England" (Ahmed 110). Ahmed then goes on to discuss the role of the monitor, a student who taught other students, as that of "mediator" (122). This, I suggest, is the role of the English language in the fraught postcolonial context. English is "mediator." The monitor-as-mediator, Ahmed explains, "functions as a *go-between* between the teacher and the taught, and by implication, between the governor and the governed" (122 emphasis original). English-as-mediator, as I will demonstrate in my close readings of anglophone poetry and translated poetry, also serves as go-between between the former colonizer and the colonized in the evolving space of world literature. To add to Ahmed's analysis, the monitor decenters the power of the teacher, while always remaining accountable to the teacher. English similarly decenters the power of the colonizer, and the global North, by becoming a language of the global South.

To highlight the contrast with Achebe, and to underscore that his attitude is not one of blind subservience to the colonial legacy, I quote here from Nirad C. Chaudhuri, an Indian anglophone writer of some repute. His *Autobiography of an Unknown Indian* is an interesting record of the intellectual and cultural journey that Chaudhuri had to undertake as a citizen in British colonial India. The book's dedication is remarkable in summing up the stakes of the postcolonial debate: "to the memory of the British empire in India which conferred subjecthood on us but withheld citizenship; to which yet every one of us threw the challenge: 'civis britannicus sum' because *all that was good and living within us* was made, shaped, and quickened by the same British rule" (emphasis added). "All that was good and living within us" is clearly in contrast to Achebe's understanding that English, now a part of the African literary and linguistic landscape, needs to be evolved and made "new" according to the African (and postcolonial, in more general terms) requirement. Chaudhuri, indeed, echoes Lord Macaulay's

famous 'Minute on Education,' and represents "a class of persons Indian in blood and colour, but English in tastes, in opinions, in morals, and in intellect" (Macaulay 237).

Repudiating this ideal creation of Macaulay's, and as a counterpoint from the same African tradition as Achebe, Ngugi wa Thiong'o resists the hold of English on the African (and in my analysis, all postcolonial) literary tradition. In *Decolonizing the Mind*, he states that "the choice of language and the *use* to which language is put is central to a people's definition of themselves" (Ngugi 4 emphasis added). In the same book, he announced his decision to eschew writing anything further in English, and insisted on writing in his native Gikuyu. This very strong statement provided a pivot to the postcolonial debates around English as a language in the independent former colonies throughout the 1980s and the 1990s. However, as Simon Gikandi has pointed out, Ngugi had to return to English given the "reality of exile and American professional life" (Gikandi 194). Achebe reiterated his stance on the language question in 1989 in these words: "the difference between Ngugi and myself on the issue of indigenous or European languages for African writers is that while Ngugi *now* believes it is *either/or*, I have always thought it was *both*" (Achebe 222 emphasis original).

Ngugi's stance on English in the African context after independence was recently highlighted again in his paper titled "The Politics of Translation: Notes Towards an African Language Policy." Ngugi recommends at least three languages for each child in Africa, a suggestion I borrow at the end of this dissertation in arguing for a multilingual postcolonial policy in Pakistan. However, Ngugi still insists on the differential power relations between African languages and English, saying "the language of power is a dictatorship of the monolingual on a plurality of languages and it negates the human right to one's language"

(Ngugi 126), and recommends that "language policies and actions should empower Africa by making Africans own their resources from languages" (131).

In my reading of postcolonial Pakistan, as indicated by the lengthy discussion in the first part of this chapter, as well as in the recent Supreme Court decision, Urdu is the new language of power, which imposes a "dictatorship of the monolingual on a plurality of languages." It acquires a similar monolingual power as English. In response to Ngugi, Biodun Jeyifo asserts that "English is an African language," and goes on to exclaim "Ka Dupe!" in his title, which is a Yoruba phrase meaning "let us give thanks" in its simplest translation. Jeyifo critiques the principle of autochthony that Ngugi assumes in his denunciation of English as an inherently foreign language. The principle of autochthony becomes critically important to me later in this dissertation when I write about Punjabi poetry. "Absolute autochthony" limits the geographical, and thus, *national* boundaries of languages by limiting them to a certain group of people as indigenous speakers. Thus, Ngugi's insistence on the *foreignness* of English is based on this conception of "absolute autochthony" which Jeyifo challenges. I read this autochthony itself *through* English translation later, thus arguing both for and against Ngugi.

Salman Rushdie, too, has written about the presence of English as a "world language." He locates a remapping of the colonial frontiers by the postcolonial subjects who "are domesticating it [English], becoming more and more relaxed about the way they use it" (Rushdie 64). Pointing to the comfort of Indian youth (at least in 1983) with the language, and to the resentment against Hindi in South India, Rushdie argues that English can be the only language that allows Indians to converse with each other without communal linguistic hatred (65). I follow Achebe and Rushdie in arguing that English, despite its colonial legacy, is a language which *mediates* between the postcolonial subject and the nation-state which, for all its anti-colonial

bravado, exists in a globalized space where isolationism is not a viable position for any nation to insist on. However, differing from both Achebe and Ngugi, I do not find a national literature articulated in *either* English *or* a regional language. Rather, I argue for the multiplicity of national languages that produce multiple literatures that represent the nation in its pluralities, and not its myopias.

The Worldly and the Provincialized of the Anglophone:

Commenting on Kenyan nationalists' apparently ironic resistance to being denied education in English by the colonial administration, Simon Gikandi has noted that "for the colonized, having access to English was akin to coming up for air, pulling out from under the weight of colonial governmentality" (Gikandi 9). However, the emergence of a distinctive African canon in English literature did not settle the debate around language. For Gikandi, the issue goes beyond the choice of language, becoming rather about "the possibility and impossibility of producing a literature to celebrate the autonomy of an African self in the language of the colonizing other" (9). Significantly, Gikandi claims that the opposing approaches of Achebe (English as universal language) and Ngugi (English as perpetrator of imperialism) "endowed the language with a singularity and power that it didn't have" (10), which he believes reflects a "confusion between English as a language and Englishness as a way of life" (11). The solution Gikandi offers to resolve the "anxieties" around English is one that I heartily endorse: "represent it as one language among many," and "provincialize it," so "English can be celebrated not as part of a global drive toward monolingualism but as part of the diversity and plurality of world languages" (13). Gikandi builds on Dipesh Chakrabarty's work, identifying both the weakening and decentering of English's power, like Europe's, but also thinking of subaltern histories, here those of English in the postcolony, as sites of plenitude. Robert Phillipson argues

in *Linguistic Imperialism* against the notion that English is a prerequisite for modernity. He warns against what he calls "linguicism," which "occurs, for instance, if there is a policy of supporting several languages, but if priority is given in teacher training, curriculum development, and school timetables to one language" (Phillipson 47). The postcolonial state's insistence on what it perceives as a precolonial language is the manifestation of such linguicism, which finds an alternate and pluralistic counter in Gikandi's call for provincializing English.

In his social history of Latin, Nicholas Ostler makes an important point about the significance of a certain language in determining, defining, and describing the social world inscribed by it:

> Languages create worlds to live in, not just in the minds of their speakers, but in their lives, and their descendants' lives, where those ideas become real. The world that Latin created is today called Europe. And as Latin formed Europe, it also inspired the Americas. Latin has in fact been the constant in the cultural history of the West, extending over two millennia. In a way, it has been too central to be noticed: like the air Europe breathed, it has pervaded everything. (Ostler 20)

The conflation of Hebrew with identity in Israel or Persian with Shi'a Muslim identity in modern Iran are other examples of this phenomenon.

Language rationalization with Urdu, however, has only underscored the deep schisms in Pakistani society. As I have argued, the relationship between Urdu, English, and the regional languages/mother tongues/ethnic languages is an intensely fraught one. The deep-set linguistic hierarchies, embedded in colonial prejudices, and in postcolonial insecurities, as well as in neocolonial orientation, only underscore the multiplicity of linguistic nationalisms in Pakistan. There are thus multiple "imagined communities" within the nation of Pakistan.

On the Nation as a Category:

Benedict Anderson famously described nations as "imagined communities." People who live in a nation seldom have things in common, but they horizontally imagine commonalities in history and mannerisms by *imagining* these common traits. The nation is "an imagined political community," "*imagined* because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members…yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion" (Anderson 6 emphasis original). Anderson echoes Ernest Gellner, who claimed that "nationalism…invents nations where they do not exist" (Gellner 169). The nation, in this analysis, is not a pre-existing community, but is imposed from above. The SNC discussed above presents a revived attempt to impose a singular understanding of the Pakistani nation conceived through religion and language, and imagining the nation as such. As a counter-point, the following chapters show how the other postcolonial languages also contain nations within the nation-state.

The story of nationalism within postcolonial studies is now well-documented. The Subaltern Studies project placed great emphasis on the study of nations as a legacy of the European Enlightenment brought to India. Both Partha Chatterjee and Dipesh Chakrabarty have drawn important relations between postcolonial historiography and the conceptions of the nation. Chatterjee's *The Nation and Its Fragments* charts the ways in which anticolonial nationalism in India and Africa was different from the western model of nations popularized in Benedict Anderson's idea of "imagined communities," thus challenging the universalized western conception of the nation-state. For Chatterjee, the material and spiritual domains were distinct, with the colonized asserting a protective adherence to their inner or spiritual domain which they believed to be as developed as the colonizer's material or outer domain. I critique this inner-outer

domain dualism in the chapter on Punjabi poetry, to argue that the inner core does retain its alterity in the postcolonial context. Chakrabarty's *Provincializing Europe* challenges the concept of Europe itself, and posits it as an imaginary within European social science. Europe's expanding colonial empires, as well as capitalism's reach, brought Europe to the margins of the postcolonial world, thus necessitating alternative histories of Europe told through provincial perspectives. The conceptions of nation, nationalism, and nationhood, thanks to postcolonial discourse, have become deeply fraught and provocative, providing fertile sites for exploration of the creation of national consciousness among colonial, postcolonial, and neocolonial subjects.

Language and Nation:

With its antecedents in African, Caribbean, and now South Asian literary, linguistic, cultural, and social life, the question of language as a defining factor within postcolonial historiography and postcolonial literary studies is now the most important national question. In Pakistan, this question remains surprisingly under-addressed, and has exploded into prominence and relevance as the consequence of a historical occurrence in the form of a reaction to the events following 9/11. With Islamophobia becoming simultaneous to the increasing global visibility of the South Asian anglophone novel, Pakistani fiction suddenly found a willing and ready audience in the global North. The networks of western production and publication embraced the rising phenomenon of the Pakistani anglophone novel, creating what Sushil Sivaram, writing about the Jaipur Literature Festival in India, has called "a network of legitimation for literary production" (Sivaram 334). Sivaram, in fact, goes so far as to claim that the Jaipur Literature Festival between 2008 and 2011 "instituted" the Pakistani novel as the other of Indian literature, thus emphasizing the regional divide that underscores the otherization done by what Graham Huggan has called the "alterity industry" in South Asia (Sivaram 335). Another

critic has linked the "exploding markets" of South Asian literature to those of Latin America, learning from the latter ways to read South Asian literary "booms" through the political conditions in which they were created (Kantor). I offer similar readings here.

Western recognition for Pakistani fiction has been followed closely by awards and acceptance, with participation in international literature festivals leading to the institution of multiple such literature festivals at home. The Lahore Literary Festival now even has a London version. Critical attention has also shifted to the Pakistani anglophone novel, and often in relation to it, the Urdu novel. The international acceptance of Intizar Hussain, and the spate of translations into English of Urdu novels ranging from the works of Hussain to those of Fehmida Riaz and Mirza Athar Baig must be seen within this context. Strangely, though, anglophone poetry from Pakistan remains utterly invisible or absent despite this surge in interest. As I will discuss later in the dissertation, the recently-published *Routledge Companion to Pakistani Anglophone Writing* recognizes the newly-formed canon of Pakistani prose at the expense of a rich and vibrant tradition of anglophone poetry. The *Companion* unfortunately makes it appear as if Pakistani anglophone writing is a post-9/11 phenomenon limited to fiction and prose non-fiction only. Given how other South Asian anglophone poets, a notable example being Agha Shahid Ali, remain as visible as their contemporary novelists, my question about the concealment of Pakistani anglophone poetry becomes doubly significant.

The dual relationship of Urdu and English in postcolonial Pakistan is both binary and non-binary. This is a rather unique paradigm because both languages found patronage in colonial India at the behest of the British imperial administrators. Crucially, Urdu and English are binary because in the matter of the state's official language they act as binary opposites to each other, with one claiming precedence over the other. They are simultaneously non-binary because they

are also a part of a complex paradigm in relation to the regional languages, mainly Punjabi, Sindhi, Pashto, and Balochi. Urdu, in several ways, complements the regional languages in its role as the national language, and as the marker of identity for Pakistanis in official spaces. It also forms an important link with speakers of the Urdu-Hindi linguistic pair from the larger subcontinent in the diaspora. As the language of Bollywood, Urdu-Hindi has a wide reach outside its immediate audience as well.

The issue of the Punjabi language, which I address in part in this dissertation, is inextricably linked with the identity of a majority of Pakistanis. According to the most recent census document, out of a total population of 207.77 million people, Punjab has a population of 110.01 million. Of course, this includes the many non-Punjabi residents living within the administrative boundaries of the province, but most of them are actually domiciled in their native districts in other provinces. Nevertheless, their presence in Punjab is defined by being non-Punjabis and so their identity is dependent on a negative assertion. In fact, I will be so bold as to assert that outside of the Punjab province too, the power dynamics of Pakistani nationhood have necessitated that the other ethnic nationalities also define themselves in relation to Punjab and Punjabi identity, often in resentment and negation of that identity. As I will show in my readings of Punjabi poetry from Pakistan, the site of anglophone translation showcases the powerful dynamics of ethnicities and languages colliding and colluding in shaping identity within the nation-state. I have earlier focused on the struggle for Urdu as national and official language, with a counter-point in the Bengali Language Movement, and will later focus on Punjabi. However, movements for recognition and status have also been staged in other regional languages of Pakistan, particularly Siraiki and Sindhi. The answer to the postcolonial state's relationship with languages, then, lies not in fewer languages, but in more; not in the binaries of

Achebe and Ngugi's original positions, but in the pluralities of the multi-lingual policy most recently argued by Ngugi.

A Failed Nation-State?

Pakistan is "nationalism without a nation," so proclaimed the title of Christophe Jaffrelot's 2002 book. For Jaffrelot, Pakistan's identity as a nation is not "positive," but "negative" since it is based in a binary negation of India. Farzana Shaikh asserts in *Making Sense of Pakistan* that the national identity is "uncertain" due to an "ambiguous relation to Islam." Faisal Devji has called Pakistan the "Muslim Zion." Farah Jan has called it a "struggling state." Dennis Kux thinks it is a "flawed, not failed state." Salman Rushdie had to imagine it in a magic-realist novel to make sense of it. In *Shame*, he famously called it "insufficiently imagined." Of Pakistan, he writes in the novel:

> So, it was a word born in exile which then went East, was borne-across or trans-lated, and imposed itself on history; a returning migrant, settling down on partitioned land, forming a palimpsest on the past….It is the true desire of every artist to impose his or her vision on the world; and Pakistan, the peeling, fragmenting palimpsest, increasingly at war with itself, may be described as a failure of the dreaming mind….Perhaps the place was just insufficiently imagined, a picture full of irreconcilable elements….a miracle that went wrong. (Rushdie 87-88)

Of course, this passage also ties in with the earlier discussion on a single national curriculum being conceived by a populist regime in Pakistan. The "peeling, fragmenting palimpsest" is being "imposed" on the possibly positive plurality of "irreconcilable elements" as an "insufficiently imagined" project of national cohesion. Following from Rushdie, Philip

Oldenburg finds in the separatist movement that culminated in the creation of Bangladesh evidence that Pakistan was indeed insufficiently imagined.

Venkat Dhulipala, meanwhile, contests these set notions, by arguing that the idea of Pakistan was a substantial reality in the UP, even though the residents knew their province was not going to be part of Pakistan's geographical nation-state. Dhulipala argues that the nation was indeed imagined properly in its contexts, but that its failures as a postcolonial state to meet the expectation imagined for it are due to the "plenitude" of those ambitions. Saadia Toor challenges these popular narratives of a crisis state, countering the "insufficient" paradigm by positing that its supposed opposite of "authentic" nationalism is itself a debatable idea, and argues that what appears as complex and irreconcilable histories are really vibrant spaces in postcolonial Pakistan. A recent collection of essays on "alternative imaginings" of Pakistan also argues against notions of insufficiency. Building on Toor's work, the volume explores narratives of struggle and crisis as spaces of potentialities, finding in vernacular literatures and ethnographic studies the contours of multiple and alternate imaginaries of the nation-state. This is work that the ideologues of the SNC would find challenging their narratives of "one nation, one curriculum." I add to this alternative imagining of the nation-state through my readings of anglophone poetry, as well as of Punjabi poetry in anglophone translation.

Recent developments like these have been challenging the notion of Pakistan as a state in perpetual crisis. While Imran Khan's government's initiative of a single nationhood imagined through a unified curriculum might enhance the crisis, literary spaces – from the anglophone to the regional – provide ample evidence of a vibrant nationalism, which is diverse, and does not imagine itself in the state's singular and exclusive terms. Mohsin Hamid, the star of the post-9/11

rise of the Pakistani anglophone novel (his *Reluctant Fundamentalist* is now a movie on Netflix, the ultimate sign of arrival in our times!), wrote in 2010:

> As I see it, the Pakistan project is a messy search for ways to improve the lives of 180 million very different citizens. False nationalism won't work; we are too diverse to believe it. That is why our dictatorships inevitably end. Theocracy won't work; we are too diverse to agree on the interpretation of religious laws. That is why the Taliban won't win.

A decade down the line, with a divisive agenda being implemented by a populist regime, it is difficult to hold on to the hope Hamid saw. However, as the vibrant students' and women's movements show, and as both this dissertation's chapter on Punjabi poetry and its epilogue on contemporary anglophone and Punjabi literary spaces demonstrate, there is hope that the "alternative imaginings" of the nation-state will not be subsumed by the over-arching narrative of a nation with a singular imagination.

Partition-as-Method:

One final and important lens for understanding the language divide in Pakistan is border theory. When the Indian subcontinent was declared independent of British colonial rule in August 1947, India achieved its independence while also being partitioned into two separate states – India and Pakistan. Independence was thus simultaneous to partition which became the defining feature of post-independence national definitions in the now independent India and the newly-created Pakistan. Only twenty-four years later, Pakistan was further divided into Pakistan and Bangladesh in 1971. Thus, the event of independence from British colonial rule in 1947 led to a division into three independent and distinct nation-states. The second division highlighted the unstated fact of India's first partition: in 1947, the brunt of partition was faced by the Punjab

and Bengal provinces of British India, which became two different Bengals and two different Punjabs in the aftermath of a rather casual drawing of a line on a map by a British administrator. This fact does not underestimate the reality of migration from other parts of India to the newly defined states, most significantly from the United Provinces of British India (mostly today's Uttar Pradesh thus retaining the acronym UP) to Pakistan. A case can also be made that negligible migration took place in South India, thus making partition an almost exclusively North Indian phenomenon. The impact of the migration was felt most in Punjab and Bengal which were physically divided into two: Muslim Punjab for Pakistan comprising West Punjab and a Hindu and Sikh Punjab for India in East Punjab. Bengal was similarly carved up, and it is a lasting legacy of the separatist logic of partition in 1947 that the Bengalis of East Pakistan did not choose to become part of India again when they seized independence from West Pakistan with the help of Indian military intervention, but instead created a separate Muslim state in Bangladesh. Nevertheless, there is far easier commerce, trade, and human movement between Bangladesh and India than there is between India and Pakistan. Thus, Bangladeshi Bengalis and Indian Bengalis can interact and collaborate more often and more comfortably than the Punjabis on both sides of the India-Pakistan border. While admitting the tremendous pain felt by all of India and Pakistan at partition, I want to underscore that the division of Punjab was particularly hard on the inhabitants of this large and fertile plain, and that this pain is reflected in the language politics of the Pakistani state. Thus, the binary of Urdu-English in Pakistan becomes, in my dissertation, a ternary of Urdu-English-Punjabi, which I examine through the postcolonial anglophone poetics of the nation-state.

This division of languages and nations is integral to my analysis. The partition of the subcontinent is the legacy of colonial rule. The colonial masters divided the colony into two (and

ultimately three) postcolonies. This simple fact has given birth to a fourth nationalism in the form of the unresolved problem of the State of Jammu and Kashmir, claimed by both Pakistan and India, and considered the unfinished business of partition. With so many partitions happening in the region as his theoretical framework, Aamir Mufti has argued for partition-as-method in his analysis of the contemporary state of world literature, especially in the context of the subcontinent. In *Enlightenment in the Colony*, he compares the partition of India to that of the Jews from Christian Europe and the partition of Palestine, suggesting powerful corollaries between these three partitions as a twentieth-century phenomenon. In his recent book *Forget English*, with which I engage in greater depth in the following chapter, he has suggested that partition should be looked at not only as an event, but as a method for understanding contemporary social, cultural, and literary phenomena, particularly within the paradigm of the nation-state. Partition for him is "the very modality of culture, a political logic that inheres in the core concepts and practices of the state" (200). What Mufti calls "nation-thinking" is thus enforced within the borders of the state, and "world literature" only reinforces this kind of thinking where literary cultures become inscribed within national boundaries. Thus, Mufti is able to make his larger claim of the persistence of orientalist thinking in the edifice of world literature. The modern nation-state, as Mufti points out, "is majoritarian," and establishes "*some* set of social and cultural practices as normative and representative of the people as such" (200). Thus, society is always partitioned into discourses of majority and minority (201). The long history recounted above shows how these partitions continue to inscribe the lives of the postcolonial subjects of this region.

Finally, I want to add to the discussion of partition and border an anecdote which is integral to my theorization here. Upon my various entries to the US, I have been stopped on three

different occasions, at three different airports, for what is known as "random secondary inspection." On three other occasions, I have been let through without being detained. On two occasions when I was stopped, the immigration officials told me that my name is a common Muslim name, and so I get mixed up with people on watch lists. I have pointed out on all occasions that I am a Fulbright scholar, and that I find it deeply ironic that one branch of the State Department chooses me for a prestigious state scholarship while another branch suspects me and stops me at airports because they believe I might be someone else. These experiences have relevance to language and border regimes. Borders are no longer merely physical in the sense of the US-Mexico border or the border between Pakistan and India. Borders now exist inside airports, and are manifested through passports and visas. An embassy, for example, is sovereign territory located within another country's physical borders.

As a postcolonial subject who at times could be easily accused of being an anglophile, I had assumed I would not need translation to communicate with the immigration staff, and my supposed fluency would convince them of my defying the border regimes that have determined me as the other of the English-speaking West. I had assumed that by not needing to translate through an interpreter, which I must stress is how most of the other detainees were communicating in my two earlier experiences of being detained and made to miss my connecting flights, I would be treated as an equal, and my identity would not be determined by my name or my passport, but through the implied monolingualism (expressed in the universal value called "English") of my multilingual education. As it happened, in the apparently borderless liberal humanist ethos of the West, the post-9/11 rarefication of the Muslim Orient and the US-led Occident is a reality that stresses and reimposes those borders. Sandro Mezzadra and Brett Neilson have argued that despite the celebrations of a "borderless world," there is in fact a

proliferation of borders, and that borders are now a universalized phenomenon that does not "necessarily display the continuity or boundedness of territory." As Etienne Balibar notes, borders serve the purpose of "world configuring," and define the points of beginning and ending of different nations. The post-9/11 scenario of border creation I am describing here is as much the creation of borders in the imagined sense as it is in the real sense of national sovereignty violations by all parties to the conflict, for example in the violation of Pakistani sovereignty by US drone strikes during successive regimes, just as the nation is an imagined community but also a real one. So, I want to propose two things: 1) the borders implied in the imagined communities of passports are the determinants of identity in the apparently borderless area of an airport; 2) the border, airport, or a more visible land border, is a space that both defies and reinforces translation.

In this chapter, I have recovered the history of Urdu as a colonial language as a point of entry into the status of languages in a postcolonial state. The Pakistani state's insistence on Urdu as its *only* national language led to a language movement in what was once East Pakistan, culminating finally in its secession as the independent state of Bangladesh. Ideologues, founders of the state, literary critics, and editors of journals, all came together to stress that Urdu was the only way to unite the nation after independence. They ignored the colonial history of Urdu and overlooked the fact that the implementation and recognition of Urdu as an exclusively Muslim language was a project carried out by the British orientalists themselves. The Pakistani nation exists in various fragments, each with a different linguistic and cultural identity. The state's insistence on binding these disparities through the conflation of religion and language, as seen most recently in the SNC, demonstrates the necessary binary thinking of postcolonial states and

governments. The chapters that follow this discussion provide ways to challenge this binary logic, and recover sites of alternative nationalisms made invisible by this logic of hatred.

CHAPTER III

FROM CLOSURE TO ANTI-CLOSURE IN PAKISTANI ANGLOPHONE POETRY

Desi Masala

The banyan tree, the gulmahor,
and all mem-sahibs of Lahore –
I sing of you, for love and cash
(for poets need a place to crash,
in Islington, if not Mayfair –
Please God, not Newham is my
prayer).
Lahore is fine in winter time,
but when the temp begins to climb
we brave the food on PIA
to pen our eclogues far away.
So, gentle reader, do not stray,
I promise you that same bouquet,
the one I sold you once before,
the spice and smells of old Lahore,
and chauffeured cars and so much
more.

> "We have no need of poetry here. It would have been better if you'd studied agriculture, engineering or medicine." – Mustafa Saeed

In the second quotation cited above, Mustafa Saeed, the central character of Tayeb Salih's *Season of Migration to the North*, addresses the narrator of the novel, and questions his devotion to poetry. The narrator has just returned to postcolonial Sudan after writing a Ph.D. thesis on the life of an obscure English poet. Mustafa's exterior persona of a farmer is betrayed as a farce when, after a night of drinking, he bursts into a recitation of Ford Madox Ford's poem "Antwerp," which alerts the narrator to the irony of Mustafa's earlier comment about poetry. The reader discovers later that Mustafa himself, as the product of colonial educational policies, has a degree in economics, which he once taught in London, and that his familiarity with English poetry is a necessary outcome of the British education that he received. Mustafa's comment on the *need* of poetry in postcolonial Sudan later becomes not just a metaphor for the English language, but a metonym for all western education in a postcolonial society. Mustafa and the narrator are both torn by the dualism of identity that their colonial and postcolonial education has imposed on them in juxtaposition against their postcolonial subject position. A manifestation of the postcolonial state's relationship with the *need* for English, or western education, has been discussed in the previous chapter. In this chapter, I discuss the specific case of anglophone poetry in Pakistan, always keeping in mind the integral nature of Mustafa's assertion, which in the case of this chapter becomes the question: what is the Pakistani anglophone poet's relationship with the postcolonial state and the postcolonial experience? In a postcolonial society like Pakistan, much like Mustafa's Sudan, the study and teaching of literature and poetry are always posited as needless activities, with the general attitude prevalent in literature classes

encouraging a misogynistic view of what is perceived as an effeminate art, as well as a utilitarian view of its impracticality. This is partially due to the religious-ideological orientation of society, and partially due to the societal attitude of viewing medical and engineering sciences as the most important stepping-stones to achieving social mobility. It is deeply ironic that the Arabic-Persian-Turkish Muslim cultural milieu which gave birth to Muslim nationalism in north India was constructed partly through the embracing of poetry as a social device. Poets received courtly patronage, and were considered honorable members of society. Ali Khan Mahmudabad has recently explored the relationship between poetry and the articulation of an Indian Muslim identity, tracing how intellectuals, particularly poets, charted evolving ideas of nation and belonging in colonial north India. Indeed, it is a poet-philosopher, Sir Muhammad Iqbal, called Allama (exalted scholar) Muhammad Iqbal in reverence, who is considered to be the visionary dreamer of the idea of Pakistan, and his poetry is credited for engendering nationalist and communal reformation among South Asian Muslims. In post-independence Pakistan, while Urdu poetry has flourished and keeps flourishing, English poet Maki Kureishi had to observe in the 1990s that "she had a sense of 'not being'" as an anglophone poet, while another anglophone poet Adrian Husain observed that "We live in an ontological haze…It is a miracle we write at all" (qtd. in Shamsie 295).

In addition to this, the first epigraph I have quoted is a poem titled "Desi Masala," both South Asian words that are now familiar to English-speaking audiences through their incorporation into diaspora discourses. The poem is from a brief piece titled "How to Write about Pakistan," which comprises four short, humorous takes by four of Pakistan's best-known post-9/11 anglophone fiction writers. The poem mocks the perception among Pakistani audiences that the anglophone writers exoticize their own settings and cultures to gain a western audience,

apparently responding to the accusations levelled against post-9/11 anglophone Pakistani fiction of pandering to the West. Interestingly, while the other three sections of this piece are in prose, this section is a poem, thus underscoring the choice made by the anglophone writers of this period to prefer fiction as their medium. While poetry, especially Urdu poetry, plays a prominent role in several places in the writings of novelists Nadeem Aslam and Kamila Shamsie, the absence of poetry as form in this historical moment remains an unexplored question.

More recently, the editors of *The Routledge Companion to Pakistani Anglophone Writing* "emphasize the urgent need to canonize Pakistani anglophone literature" since the mapping of "a national literary canon would strengthen the textual and institutional basis for Pakistani anglophone literature becoming a medium of cultural memory and a vehicle of national identificational patterns" (Kanwal and Aslam 381). In tracing and acknowledging this canon of anglophone writing, however, the *Routledge Companion* focuses almost exclusively on prose writings. This is not surprising, given the post-9/11 rise of Pakistani anglophone fiction as the most prominent space where an alternate Pakistan has been imagined, articulated, and expressed, ignoring the rich history of anglophone poetry, especially in its pre-9/11 moment. The lone essay on poetry in the *Routledge Companion*, by Waseem Anwar, does a decent job of emphasizing the importance of historical recall by partially reading the seminal essay "Towards a Pakistani Idiom" by pioneering poet Taufiq Rafat, but Anwar's essay itself focuses on contemporary Pakistani diaspora poets in making its claims. The *Companion* thus asserts that the Pakistani anglophone canon is located more in prose than in poetry, in fact almost exclusively so, which I contest as a misleading assumption. The post-9/11 emphasis by the US-led West to understand Pakistan led to the Pakistani state and society's urgent need to participate in the task of, on the one hand, projecting a "soft image" while, on the other, resisting the reorientation of the country

into a more tolerant polity. These contradictory, though simultaneous, moves underscore "the effect of colonial power" which manifests in the "*production* of hybridization" (Bhabha 112 emphasis original). Hybridity is "the strategic reversal of the process of domination through disavowal (that is, the production of discriminatory identities that secure the 'pure' and original identity of authority)" (112). Crucially for Bhabha, "hybridity represents that ambivalent 'turn' of the discriminated subject into the terrifying, exorbitant object of paranoid classification – a disturbing questioning of the images and presences of authority" (113). The postcolonial Muslim state, in its post-9/11 positionality with regards to the West, thus views *itself* as its hybrid other, carrying within it both its tolerant and intolerant subjectivities, becoming "terrifying" and "paranoid" in the classification of its self. This duality has indeed been represented quite prominently in the fiction from this period, as the various analyses in the *Companion* show.

Fiction having become an established site for reading this hybridity and the "turn" of images of authority into colonial representations of discrimination, Jahan Ramazani contrapuntally presents a model for exploring hybridity as a productive space in reading postcolonial poetry. Questioning the lack of attention paid to poetry compared with fiction and drama within postcolonial studies, Ramazani recalls T. S. Eliot for an explanation:

> "No art," he [Eliot] said, "is more stubbornly national than poetry." For Eliot, "Poetry is much more local than prose," partly because "poetry has primarily to do with the expression of feeling and emotion." (Ramazani 2)

Eliot locates the nationalism of poetry in its lyricism. For Ramazani, "poetry – a genre rich in paradox and multivalent symbols, irony and metaphor – is well-suited to mediating and registering the contradictions of split cultural experience" (6). These "split" sites of experience make poetry "much more local" and emphasize the hybridity lens for reading poetry by

underscoring the ambivalent nature of the split between colonial and postcolonial cultures, languages, and subjectivities. The locality of poetry has, in the two decades since the publication of Ramazani's *The Hybrid Muse*, become part of the transnationality and now the globality of poetry in Ramazani's own work. This period has also seen greater attention being paid to postcolonial poetry than before.

The partition of the subcontinent upon independence from colonial rule in 1947, as suggested before, resulted in various other partitions as well. To recall briefly, the partitioning of Bengal and Punjab, in particular, did not stop with the British departure, and in 1971, a further division between Bengal and Punjab happened in the formation of the independent state of Bangladesh. Laetitia Zecchini has described the act of India's division in 1947 as the "partitioning of literary cultures that share cultural, linguistic, religious, and social features, as well as a common past," and that this division leads to "a partitioning of the mind" (Zecchini 47). Zecchini identifies in this partitioning process the reason for why the literary output of writers from Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Sri Lanka appears as "mere footnotes to the larger history of Indian literature – *when they are not expunged altogether*" (46 emphasis added). This example of Pakistani (and other South Asian) literature, especially poetry, remaining invisible in comparison to Indian literature highlights the importance of what Aamir Mufti has suggested in his idea of "partition as method," whereby partition becomes a way of thinking about the permanent ruptures in society.

Mufti has described this phenomenon in telling words. In a striking image of the commercial success of the South Asian novel, Mufti describes how "British and American editors now routinely descend on the major cities of South Asia" in their search for the next great debut novel from the subcontinent (158). The image of editors *descending* after having travelled

by air is remarkable because it evokes the colonizing sense of a swarm of locusts descending on a field, or of colonial armies disembarking from ships in the nineteenth century. It is also remarkably evocative of American and British soldiers *descending* in Iraq and Afghanistan to advance the neocolonial imperial agenda, a comparison imminently relevant to the context of Mufti's work given his description of the acceptance of the South Asian novel by the globalized Western press, and in the case of Pakistani anglophone fiction, he notes that "the specter of jihadi Islam provides a certain frisson in the global reception of these works" (174). If 9/11 helped demarcate national boundaries in a renewed sense, Mufti, unsurprisingly, reads in the rise of the Pakistani anglophone novel the possibility of this group of writers of fiction "collectively producing in English an epos of the nation" called Pakistan (177).

While Mufti finds an epic possibility, or at least the beginnings of one, in the contemporary post-9/11 anglophone novel from Pakistan, he does not comment on anglophone poetry from the country. He discusses in some detail Kashmiri-American poet Agha Shahid Ali's postcolonial, and significantly, anglophone reinvention of the Arabic-Persian-Turkish-Urdu complex of the *ghazal* form, and it is true that the ghazal in its Urdu avatar has found its home in the poetic traditions of Pakistan. However, as if to stress the importance of the contrasting fates of poetry and fiction in South Asia, he does not read the same epic-creating possibilities in the works of any Pakistani anglophone poet. Pakistani anglophone poetry has remained marginalized and invisible, even more so than other postcolonial poetry as highlighted by Ramazani.

The editors of the *Routledge Companion*, in calling for the canonization of Pakistani anglophone literature, emphasize what they consider the increased visibility of this writing by cataloguing a few important places where it has been recognized and anthologized. This listing is very important in highlighting that Pakistani anglophone literature is now indeed visible, but it

again brings out the lack of critical attention paid to poetry, with most poetry being either self-published or locally published. Just one example will suffice. The editors list the names of poets who have been discussed in *The Cambridge Companion to Postcolonial Poetry*, edited by Jahan Ramazani. This seems a significant achievement, but the editors do not acknowledge that these poets are all listed in a solitary essay on South Asian poetry by Laetitia Zecchini, quoted above, and that while their names are indeed acknowledged – thus also conveniently appearing in the index, Zecchini does not pay them the attention that Indian poets find throughout the *Cambridge Companion*. They are mentioned, but not read. In the rest of the edited volume too, while African and Caribbean poets find recurrent mentions and readings, as do Indian poets, there are no Pakistani poets who are actually *read*. Moniza Alvi and Imtiaz Dharker, diaspora women poets, are read, but exclusively in a chapter on gender in postcolonial poetry. This neglect is also unfortunately true of the *Routledge Companion* itself, as pointed above. This neglect underscores the fact that within the anglophone world, fiction has a magnified visibility as compared to poetry, and this is particularly true of Pakistani anglophone poetry from before the epochal moment of 9/11.

Challenging the "repetitive reliance on fiction" in studies of post-9/11 literature, Nukhbah Taj Langah reads a documentary film and a memoir by a Pakistani Sufi rock singer, as well as a play, for portrayals of Islamization within Pakistan, and of Islamophobia as the dominant western lens for viewing Pakistan. Langah, however, herself falls for the "repetitive reliance on fiction," with a detailed reading of Mohsin Hamid's novel *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*, thus emphasizing the inability of critics to look beyond fiction for analyses of identity and nation, whether through the lens of religion or through any other lens. This reflects the neglect of poetry as both a source for mapping the canon and of understanding the national character and identity.

Thus, Langah's essay falls short of its claims for expanding the inter-generic understanding of responses to 9/11. Though the rest of the volume brings focus on non-fictional sources for reading the post-9/11 moment, the conspicuous absence of poetry from these readings again underscores the invisibility of poetry in postcolonial, and now neocolonial, discourse.

In what follows, I dedicate the first half of this chapter to charting a history of the important moments in Pakistani anglophone poetry, with a discussion of the issue of the idiom, as well as writing about two issues of a college magazine which published significant work on these issues. The second half of the chapter performs some readings from key works of anglophone poetry to demonstrate the Pakistani poet's attitude to the nation. I argue that the first generation of poets grappled with the issue of what I am calling "postcolonial closure" while after achieving this sense of "closure" with the new nationhood, the next generation explored ideas of "anti-closure." Pakistani anglophone poetry is, for me, a site for reading the dual tension of the nation's "closure" and "anti-closure" as a productive way to realizing the alternative nationalisms that are subsumed within the postcolonial state's binary logic of unification.

The Realization of an Idiom:

Taufiq Rafat is considered the first poet who endeavored to create a Pakistani autochthonous sensibility in English. Deviating from Ahmed Ali and Shahid Suhrawardy, the first Muslim anglophone poets in pre-independence India, Rafat stressed a localization of idiom, breaking away from Victorian and Romantic verse models. Perhaps as important as his poetry, and his translations from Punjabi, is his critical lens, which he brought to the issue of a Pakistani "idiom" in a solitary essay that has since gained iconic status within Pakistani anglophone literature. However, this essay does not find echoes and mentions alongside the similar works of Chinua Achebe, Ngugi wa Thi'ongo, Derek Walcott, and Kamau Brathwaite, to name just four

writers who have also written about the language politics informing their work. In its essence, and for generating debates among Pakistani writers to date, Rafat's essay is close to both Ngugi's *Decolonizing the Mind*, and Brathwaite's idea of a "nation language," though admittedly it is a less intensely argued piece of writing. Perhaps a generous way of explaining the absence of Rafat's essay in anthologies alongside such work is that he did not fully develop the idea and did not work on it academically in the way that Ngugi and Braithwaite have done. A more disturbing explanation would be consistent with the argument that within postcolonial criticism, anglophone poetry, and especially Pakistani poetry, has been neglected, due to its distance from what Pascale Casanova has called the "Greenwich Meridian of literature," an imaginary but very real western lens for determining literary success, as "the aesthetic distance of a work or corpus of works from the center may thus be measured by their temporal remove from the canons that, at the precise moment of estimation, define the literary present" (87-88). Waseem Anwar's contribution to *The Routledge Companion to Pakistani Anglophone Writing* mentioned above is one serious but incomplete effort to engage with the essay, but his jump in reading contemporary diaspora poetry causes a historical discontinuity that I will briefly address here. My argument for reading Pakistani anglophone poetry through the dual matrix of closure and nation provides a way of taking Rafat's argument further. Anwar is right in pointing out that Rafat's essay is titled "*Towards* a Pakistani Idiom" (emphasis added), emphasizing the idiom not as destination but as direction and path. Thus, the idiom must lead to a discovery of the voice of the poet's own self, the "nation voice" articulated in Brathwaite's influential analysis of Caribbean poetry. Senior poet Alamgir Hashmi believes that the impetus gained by the idiom debate in the 1960s fizzled out in the 1970s and "liberal thinking and a national-cosmopolitan outlook" led to poets writing "less apologetic" work in the late 1970s and the 1980s (270). Hashmi dismisses the idea of

"groupies" in the 1970s and onwards, claiming that there was no formal association of writers, even though Tariq Rahman, Waqas Khwaja, and others have enlisted the existence of such groups where poets met and published together.

For Rafat, writing "Towards a Pakistani Idiom" in 1969, the first important question is the desirability of English as a medium of expression for creative writers. This tension of course was important at the time, as it is now, due to the postcolonial state's relationship with English as detailed earlier in this dissertation. Rafat understands English as a postcolonial language, not a colonial one, "because the language no longer carries with it the taint of imperialism," an argument similar to the one made by Achebe. Noting the historical trajectory whereby earlier writers who made a mark in English – with the notable exception of Nobel laureate Rabindranath Tagore – were mostly writing in prose, Rafat draws a contrast in postcolonial Pakistan, where he claims that "the writers who are shaping the destiny of the English language in Pakistan are doing so in the more rarified atmosphere of poetry." For him, the requisite to great poetry is not "familiarity" with the language itself, but rather "the ability to mold it." Rafat considers the American and Irish traditions as the representative traditions in English literature and points to the reshaping of the language in these regions as a phenomenon distinct from that of British writing. He also highlights West Indian and African writers for their contributions to "evolving a native idiom," an idea akin to Brathwaite's "nation language" but predating it.

Rafat's understanding of the idiom is nuanced. "It is not by the use of Hindi or Urdu words," he says, "that you can create Indian or Pakistani English." Dismissing this approach as "mere superficialities," Rafat defines an idiom as "a characteristic mode of expression; a vocabulary of a particular dialect or district." This definition itself seems restrictive to particular dialects, or mannerisms, which can evoke the charge of mimicking the self, whereas Rafat has

already qualified that the imitation of British and American idioms will not help create a new mode of expression. For Rafat, the idiom or expression reflected in poetry is "the total us: our heritage, our environments, our myths, our legends, our climate, our culture, our art, our music," and in the younger poets writing at the time, he sees the potential to write poetry of a kind where "from the old myths new myths will be born, till every object around us is raised to the level of a myth." Myth-making is the task of the new nation's poet, which Rafat describes as the search for an idiom.

As an example of what Rafat argues here, the second section of his long poem "Reflections" is a poignant comment on the frayed relationship between the postcolonial state and the anglophone poet. The poem can also be read as a rather understatedly scathing critique of language politics in the postcolonial state. Alternately, the section – as indeed the entire poem – might well be a reflection on the search for a postcolonial idiom and a postcolonial identity that acknowledges what Ramazani calls "hybridity," Mufti calls the "others of global English," and Tamara Chin calls "anticolonial metrics":

> Must a man waste half a lifetime
> and a million words
> before he can say things
> the way he wants to say them?
> And is this harmony, when it comes,
> a fluke? Look quickly, there,
> and you will see the rounded pattern
> hinted at by the winking eel.
> There can be no evasion now.

The definitions that made us uneasy
and were put aside,
must be faced with words.
For words are our element,
a responsible air
without mercy or luck, or only,
for those who hone technique
till the craft flows into the substance
like water into sand;
till each word is irreplaceable,
but slips into the landscape of a poem
as casually as the startled snipe
plummets to a cool anonymity. (23-44)

Rafat invites his reader to "look, quickly, there," an act of intimacy which incorporates the reader into the task of making myths and finding closure. This invitation is not just to an implied reader, or to the poet himself who sits reflecting on his life's work, but also to the postcolonial state which has existed in an antagonism and defined itself in opposition to history. In the search for an idiom, he believes he has squandered "half a lifetime/ and a million words" (23-24). While Rafat here appears to be distancing himself from his lifetime's work, it shows that he is comfortable enough to contemplate this distancing, a sign of closure, which, in contrast, the postcolonial state has not yet found. The distance is deceptive, for it indicates quite the opposite of the surface meaning. By grounding himself in this comfortable sense of belonging, Rafat achieves what he terms "a responsible air" (36). It is the evolution of his perspective, a

development of his poetic ethos that makes him realize that he bears a responsibility as a poet writing in the former colonial master's language in a postcolonial environment, which I describe here as the attaining of closure. His perspective has evolved so much that he can now confront "definitions that made us uneasy" (32). These definitions are the postcolonial perspectives that confronted an English language poet in the newly-independent state, and which still continue to cause discomfort to the postcolonial state. Rafat clearly made a choice when he adopted the language of the departing colonizer, and this choice entailed its problems, as pointed out by Rafat himself in "Towards a Pakistani Idiom." These definitions now "must be faced with words" (34), words that have helped the first generation of anglophone poets led by Rafat to finding their closure with and within the postcolonial state.

Closure leads to a newer understanding of this postcolonial identity. By re-defining his perspective, Rafat has become "articulate again" (12) and so he begins "my second pilgrimage" (22). If the pilgrimage is a metaphor for the work the poet has undertaken, particularly in terms of modelling the Pakistani idiom, then the poet is now better placed to understand the mechanics of this idiom. He has moved beyond the earlier existential conflict with the postcolonial state. Having found this closure, "There can be no evasion now" (31). The task of creating an idiom through poetry in the colonial master's language is now almost like the task of a prophet, a pilgrimage on which the postcolonial state as his implied reader must join him.

Even more important for this theorization is senior poet Waqas Khwaja's introduction to his collection of essays *Mornings in the Wilderness*. Like many others, as discussed in the previous chapter, Khwaja can see the obvious problem of Pakistani nationhood which successive governments, and the state, fail to grasp: Pakistan is a "conglomeration of people dubbed as a nation but without two essential ingredients of nationhood – one language and one culture"

(Khwaja 17). The authors of the Single National Curriculum, as well as those who argue for Urdu as the single national language, as discussed earlier, want to impose the idea of "one language and one culture" on this polity. For Khwaja, "a struggle between estrangement and intimacy" lends credibility to the work of Pakistani writers who write "in a society essentially hypocritical and imbalanced" (23), creating exciting and productive tensions both in content and form (24-25). From this discussion about Pakistani writing in general, Khwaja moves to a discussion of anglophone writing from the country, observing that the exercise of choice of medium is a crucial question that the writers address, with those who choose to write in English "damned in their very choice of language." Not only are they labelled "anachronistic left overs of the British Colonial period," but also face a "lack of readership." Yet, for Khwaja, those who have made this choice of the English language, despite criticism, "have wrested a new idiom from it and localized it" so that it is "both relevant and responsive" to the Pakistani postcolonial condition. Choosing English "alienates the writer," but this linguistic "distance" creates "immediacy" (25-26). Noting that "the readership of English is woefully limited," Khwaja observes bizarrely that "the English text's potential to influence or harm is consequently severely impaired" (27). After all, if there are very few readers of English poetry, what possible influence could it have on the social fabric at a large scale? One final important observation that Khwaja makes is that Pakistani anglophone writing is impaired by "the lack of a relevant tradition" (33). He credits Rafat as being a pioneer in "adapt[ing] the acquired idiom to the [local] environment," so that at least within anglophone poetry, he sees a "hardy, flourishing poetic tradition" (33). Similarly, Alamgir Hashmi – perhaps Pakistan's most internationally-recognized anglophone poet, has opined that "Pakistani literature in English has been responsive, increasingly and *almost inevitably as a national literature*, to the society in which it is created, and to the

sensitivities that the society engenders" (Hashmi 110 emphasis original). Like Rafat – although he does not invoke him, Hashmi believes that Pakistani anglophone literature "has outstripped its colonial origins and developed a new personal identity of its own" (111).

The observations of these three major poets show that the Pakistani anglophone poet is not merely creating poetry in a vacuum, but actively thinks of the critical and social stakes of his life's work. Like the celebrated postcolonial poets of Africa and the Caribbean, the Pakistani postcolonial poet is aware of the imperatives of nationhood, language, and creativity, and responds to them with a literary and critical lens that is derived from a political understanding of the society in which he/she operates. The neglect of Pakistani anglophone poetry is consistent with the neglect of the Pakistani poets' critical theorization, and the performance of recovery which I undertake here thus assumes great significance in addressing the colonial and postcolonial baggage of this neglect.

Networks of Publication:

In an important recent contribution to postcolonial poetry studies, Nathan Suhr-Sytsma reads poetry in print as a means of understanding the currents of decolonization in anglophone poetry. Suhr-Sytsma's premise is that "poetry had a surprisingly prominent role in cultural institutions during an era commonly associated with nation-building and the novel," when acquaintance with anglophone poetry brought "cultural capital" and "postcolonial poets could present themselves as continuing indigenous traditions even while writing in English" (10). Suhr-Sytsma reads Derek Walcott, Christopher Okigbo, Seamus Heaney, and Geoffrey Hill in his work, but even in Pakistan, poetry remained the dominant genre in anglophone literary production for a long time. For Suhr-Sytsma, "the materiality of poetry in print" foregrounds poetry's anticolonial role, and these material networks "include universities, festivals, publishing

houses, and periodicals" (10). This is certainly true of Pakistani anglophone poetry. Following Suhr-Sytsma, I briefly recall some of the important ways in which Pakistani anglophone poetry has appeared in print, specially before the post-9/11 prominence of fiction. This recovery brings to light the critical ways in which Pakistani anglophone poets and their print networks have engaged with the task of creating poetry in the postcolonial nation-state. Since the history of Pakistani anglophone poetry is told only in bits and pieces, if at all, this task of recovering the networks of publication is crucial to tell an initial history of genre and form in Pakistan. Detailed histories of the origins and contemporary lives of Urdu poetry are available in abundance, but nobody seems to care for locating Pakistani anglophone poetry in its historical, theoretical, critical, social, and political contexts. Therefore, as with the seminal essays discussed before, it is essential to locate some of the print magazines where anglophone poetry has been published so that the immediate contexts of this poetry can then be brought into historical conversations with anglophone poetry across the postcolony.

Pakistani English poetry first came to the forefront with the publication of three anthologies over a decade by the Oxford University Press (OUP) as part of its sustained efforts to publish Pakistani poetry. The first of these anthologies appeared in 1965, the year of Pakistan's war with India. It was titled *First Voices: Six Poets from Pakistan*, and was edited by Shahid Hosain. The six poets published in this pioneering anthology were Ahmed Ali, Zulfikar Ghose, Shahid Hosain, Riaz Qadir, Taufiq Rafat, and Shahid Suhrawardy. Of these, Ali and Suhrawardy were considered senior poets, having already become established as writers before independence. The rest were newer voices, but together they formed the first generation of anglophone poets to be published as part of a collective project in Pakistan. OUP published the second anthology in 1971, before the secession of Bangladesh. Titled *Pieces of Eight: Eight Poets from Pakistan*, it

did not have an editor, but contained an introduction by Yunus Said, whose poetry was not included in the collection. The eight poets published in this second anthology were Zulfikar Ghose, M. K. Hameed, Shahid Hosain, Adrian Husain, Nadir Hussein, Kaleem Omar, Taufiq Rafat, and Salman Tariq Kureshi. Ghose, Shahid Hosain, and Rafat had already been published in *First Voices*. Adrian Husain, Omar, and Kureshi were significant new voices in this second anthology. The third such anthology was published in 1975, and was titled *Wordfall: Three Pakistani Poets*. Edited by Kaleem Omar, it contained his work alongside that of Rafat, by now an established poet and theoretician of the "Pakistani idiom," and a new poet Maki Kureishi, the only female poet to be published in any of these anthologies.

Twenty-two years after *Wordfall*, OUP marked the golden jubilee of Pakistan's creation in 1997 by publishing individual selections from seven of the most well-known anglophone poets in the country, as well as an anthology of some lesser-known poets. The seven poets chosen to mark half-a-century of Pakistani anglophone poetry were Taufiq Rafat, Maki Kureishi, Salman Tarik Kureshi, Daud Kamal, Adrian A. Husain, Alamgir Hashmi, and Shuja Nawaz. The eighth book in the series, an anthology of younger and lesser-recognized poets, included sixteen poets. Of these, Shahryar Rashed, Shahbano Bilgrami, and Mansoor Y. Sheikh did go on to have short-lived careers as poets, but the others did not leave a mark. The exception was Athar Tahir, who is now one of Pakistan's senior-most anglophone poets. These small selections also included critical introductory essays for each of the volumes, thus generating literary momentum of the kind that Suhr-Sytsma considers essential for understanding poetry's impact. The most important critical mass that the OUP golden jubilee selections triggered came in the form of a review article by Carlo Coppola, which is a starting point for any discussion on Pakistani anglophone poetry. While Pakistani writers and scholars themselves had written about Pakistani

writing in their anthologies and in literary magazines, this was the first time that a "foreign" scholar highlighted the achievements of Pakistani poetry. Coppola's readings of these poets are generous and suggest initial ways in which Pakistani students could productively read their work. He concludes his review by calling the poets published by OUP "a talented lot, working hard at their art," "deserving of critical attention and appreciation," and considers the poetry found in these selections "a veritable embarrassment of riches" (Coppola 220). Coppola basically echoes what Shaista Sonnu Sirajuddin had already observed in her 1991 study of Rafat, Tahir, and Hashmi, lauding the "richness and diversity" of Pakistani anglophone poetry: "It possesses both the ingredients necessary for cultural survival in the world context – the power to hold together, and the innovative thrust into new frontiers that heralds creative growth and change" (Sirajuddin 63).

The first history of Pakistani literature in English was written by Tariq Rahman in 1990 and covered the period until 1988. It was later republished by OUP in 2015. This history included biographical details and some readings, and provided a historical view of various genres, but was still dominated by a history of fiction. There were individual chapters on Ghose and Ahmed Ali, but they focused on them more as novelists than as poets. Similarly, a chronological account of literary developments was provided in the form of chapters divided by decades, but this too emphasized the production of fiction. This "history" includes only one chapter on poetry! Nevertheless, the book remains significant as the first such book to claim the role of historiography, thus acknowledging a tradition of anglophone writing in Pakistan. While other critics had previously written about Pakistani literature in journals, periodicals, and anthologies, Rahman outlined the contours of another canon, however sketchy his attempt might have been. This has since been followed by a few detailed studies of Pakistani fiction, but poetry

remains neglected even now. David Waterman, Cara Cilano, Madeline Clements, and Aroosa Kanwal are among those scholars who have written detailed and important studies of Pakistani fiction. No such study of Pakistani anglophone poetry has been done. Only scattered essays – and very few of them – in journals, and the occasional essay in books about South Asian poetry otherwise dominated by Indian writers, can be found. A recent work that has attempted a more detailed history of Pakistani literature in English than Rahman's is Muneeza Shamsie's *Hybrid Tapestries*. At home, then, OUP seems to be the only publishing house with a commitment to promoting Pakistani anglophone poetry. Internationally, Routledge and Palgrave Macmillan are two major publishing houses currently encouraging studies of Pakistani anglophone literature, but with a decided bias towards fiction, particularly post-9/11 fiction. Smaller local publishers like New Line and Saanjh have also published some anglophone poetry, but their contribution is negligible given that the self-publication scene requires the author's own financial investment and scant editorial insight. If editors are involved, their training and qualification is often not suited to identifying important young poets from those who are simply able to participate in the networks of publication and dissemination by virtue of paying for the publication of their poems. Thus, in charting these networks as I briefly have here, I follow Suhr-Sytsma's lead in tracing "the institutional and material life of poetry" (Suhr-Sytsma 13). Not only does Pakistani anglophone poetry confirm what Suhr-Sytsma calls "the kind of literary temporality implied by book publication," (116), it also defies the same temporality by not always having found the kind of metropolitan acceptability that poets like Walcott and Okigbo received. Thus, Pakistani anglophone poets struggle against the invisibility of their existence by formulating networks that are already decolonized. Delayed western recognition is thus a kind of blessing for Pakistani anglophone poetry's internal networks of growth, with distance from what Pascale Casanova has

called the “Greenwich Meridian of literature” ensuring a small but sustained, indigenous network of production.

The phenomenon of the literary festival is also important in understanding how the networks of literature’s projection exist not only in print, but also across other media. A recent phenomenon, which has grown over the past decade, annual literature festivals are now regular events in Pakistan, and have expanded beyond Pakistan’s borders. Pakistani writers first started being invited to literature festivals in India, with the Jaipur Literature Festival being one major attraction. Then, in 2010, Ameena Saiyid, then the managing director of OUP, collaborated with prominent literary critic and writer Asif Farrukhi and the British Council to launch the first Karachi Literature Festival (KLF). The KLF was then replicated in other cities. In 2013, the KLF added the Islamabad Literature Festival (ILF), while a different group of organizers launched the Lahore Literary Festival (LLF) which in turn has now added a London version. In 2016, the Afkar-e-Taza (New Ideas) ThinkFest was launched in Lahore. Meanwhile, a Punjabi Sulekh Mela in Faisalabad, and smaller regional festivals in Sindh have also become part of the scene. Mushtaq Bilal has argued that these festivals are “staged” for an “imagined audience” to promote a soft image of the country. The festivals showcase the same set of writers, settling increasingly for more international panels, with English dominating the discourse, even where Urdu literature is being discussed.

One thing that is evident is the relative obscurity of Pakistani English poetry from these sessions, with fiction, and political and social writing taking center-stage. The few sessions where poetry has been discussed lack any political nuance. At the ILF in 2013, a panel titled “Pakistani English Poetry: Alive and Well” comprised a conversation with three poets simply on their inspirations and when and how they started writing. The session, nevertheless, underscored

that Pakistani anglophone poets were writing "in isolation." The KLF in 2019 hosted a session titled "Pakistani English Poetry: Shifting Perspectives," and stressed the continued isolation of young poets. The recent digital edition of the KLF 2021 featured a session of poetry readings by both established and young poets writing in English. Clearly, Pakistani anglophone poetry is still not gaining any critical or canonical grounds even among its practitioners and advocates. A more political and critical approach to the study of poetics is required to place Pakistani anglophone poetry in its rightful contextual lineage.

A Century-Old College Magazine:

In an offhand remark in an essay mentioned above, Laetitia Zecchini mentions the college magazine *The Ravi*, published by the Government College University Lahore (previously Government College Lahore), and claims that it was at one time published by Taufiq Rafat (46). This claim is factually incorrect and is perhaps motivated by a cursory and uninformed reading of some issues of the magazine since Rafat, along with several prominent poets, was a frequent contributor to the magazine in the 1970s. A short discussion on this magazine, which has a significant history in the literary scene of Lahore, is relevant here to chart the ways in which anglophone poets have theorized the critical and social contexts of their work. This is important for the task of recovering lost nationalisms in the poetic traditions of Pakistan. Mapping the networks across time and space allows the critic to step back and discover patterns that then aid in following the critical historiography of a poetry that is neglected but clearly has a connectivity with its surroundings. Additionally, while individual theses at the university have assessed the Urdu and Punjabi sections of *The Ravi*, the English section so far has not been the subject of any detailed study. Even though Government College Lahore was founded in 1864 by the British government, the college did not have a magazine until 1900, when an annual publication was

started, but with the intention only of keeping the records of the university. The first literary magazine *The Ravi* was started in 1906. Its first issue spanned only twelve pages and was written entirely in English. It was meant to be a monthly publication. Over the years, Urdu, Hindi, and Punjabi sections were added to the magazine. After partition, the Hindi section was removed. The English section, meanwhile, was managed and edited by some stalwarts on the faculty and from among the students, who became leading social lights. Unfortunately, over the last two decades, the English section of the magazine has deteriorated considerably, and it is no longer a literary magazine of much worth. The magazine, however, appears especially attentive to talking about Pakistani anglophone literature in critical terms specially during the 1960s and 1970s. Two issues in particular stand out: the first was published in September 1968; the second, published in 1974. Both issues carry extensive essays on Pakistani anglophone poetry, as well as strong selections of poetry.

The editorial of the 1968 issue, penned by Samina Hosain, debates the acceptance of English as a medium of creative writing for poets in Pakistan. The editor notes, "To be brutally frank we must acknowledge that the person writing in Pakistan in English today, does so because he cannot express himself in any other language – *least of all his own*" (i emphasis added). However, the acknowledgement is followed by a call that this bitter truth "should be dispensed with" (i). The question of which language an artist chooses is, to the editor, "provincial and parochial to an appalling degree" at a time when "the barriers of nationalism" are being removed (ii). Hosain goes on to argue that Pakistani anglophone poets "must create an audience, if not at home then wherever English poetry is read and appreciated" (iv). The editorial, published a year before Rafat's essay on the Pakistani idiom, theorizes why Pakistani readers do not accept English poetry by their compatriots, suggesting that "it goes counter to our temperament" (iv),

because we are attuned to the "luxurious flamboyance of the Urdu 'ghazal'" and thus we lack "the passionless restraint and discipline that modern English poetry demands" (iv). This particular observation can be critiqued for the kind of orientalist thinking that Lord Macaulay's Minute promoted in the colonized subjects. However, Hosain's remark, though not very carefully worded, does not presume some form of superiority in the English poetic tradition. Rather, what the editor hints at is a different attitude and approach to poetry. Finally, Hosain theorizes the issue of the idiom before Rafat does, without calling it an idiom, thus indicating that anglophone poets in Pakistan have always been aware of the critical questions confronting them and have been aware of charting a tradition for themselves:

> A final word: the exploitation of folk-culture, folk-language and customs is not poetry. To feel that oriental settings and traditions lend a distinction to poetry is incorrect: it is a falsification and a dishonesty to seek to arouse interest in a foreign country by being 'pseudo-folksy.' As far as it legitimately affords insight, one's own environment should speak, but it should mold and form unobtrusively, never brashly intruding to arouse comment or excite an interest that is often superficial and short-lived. (vi)

Clearly, for the editor, there is value in understating the local. She warns anglophone poets against the possibility of an orientalist over-emphasis on merely representing the indigenous as exotic, an accusation often leveled against the internationally successful Pakistani anglophone novelists in the post-9/11 era. Although it does raise some of the important issues in discussions regarding anglophone poetry in Pakistan, the editorial appears confused in subscribing to some inherent superiority of the English model of poetry while arguing for molding a new idiom that is not limited to indigenizing locales in poetry. This is understandable given that it is a college

magazine, and unlike Rafat and Khwaja, the author did not have the advantage of several years of being a successful practicing poet. Nevertheless, the editorial highlights the position in which the anglophone poet in Pakistan is placed: a difficult choice of language, a resisting audience, the expectation to emulate a foreign tradition, and the need to forge a new and local poetry from these various pressures.

The 1968 issue of *The Ravi* is also crucial to this tracing of the canon because it contains several essays on Pakistani anglophone poetry. One of the writers, Riaz Hassan claims that "one can be quite sure that Pakistani English poetry will rarely get audience abroad," although he does not identify the reason for this. However, for him, poets emulating the British and American tradition are doing a disservice to Pakistani anglophone poetry because producing poetry in the Anglo-American tradition blocks the "opportunity to present refreshing new suggestions in experience and diction" which would be peculiar to the Pakistani poet's experience (9). Against what he considers the "sterile" quality of modern (Anglo-American) English poetry (9), Hassan argues Pakistani poetry can contribute two things. The first of these is "a romanticism as deeply embedded in our literary natures as classicism is in the West." Secondly, the Pakistani poet can offer a "variety of metrical forms" (10). Because there is a "miserable paucity of accepted meters in English," and "our English poetry will be mainly for Pakistani ears," Hassan advocates "introducing the several metrical possibilities of the East" into Pakistani anglophone poetry, giving examples of Persian verse meters for this purpose (10). Later experimentations in the ghazal by Agha Shahid Ali and others have of course proved this to be a productive methodology. In another essay in this issue, A. Aziz Butt laments the presence of sex in the contemporary Pakistani anglophone poet's poetry, urging young poets to write about social issues rather than focusing on the self. Shuja Nawaz, who would go on to become a poet of some

note, argues for the institution of courses in Pakistani English poetry at the university level, as well as poetry-writing workshops at the school level. He also urges the established poets to form a "Writers' Circle" to encourage, teach, and publish younger poets.

While other contributors are more positive, Ayub Qutub's attitude to young anglophone poets is characterized by contempt. He "suspect[s] the purity of the reasons" why a Pakistani poet chooses to write in English. If the poet does so because his education in English-medium schools has not equipped him to write in any other language, Qutub has "only pity for the chap…as a victim of his parents' short-sightedness," because "no one will hear" this poet's voice (43). Meanwhile, if the poet is capable of writing in one or more of the native languages of Pakistan, Qutub is even more unkind in his estimation of such a poet's motives: "I think their motives are to join, to gain admission into that select literary group of what Kenneth Galbraith has called the dominant strata, but which is *as isolated as it is select* and more social than literary" (43 emphasis added). For Mahboob Ghani, the way for Pakistani poets finding receptive audiences in Europe and America is to become a-national, "to continue to feel as a Pakistani" as individuals, but as poets, to "transcend all national limitations of theme and metaphor and write in human terms about human situations for human beings of perception the world over" (50). Ghani thus advocates for poets to break the trap of nationalism and expressing more universal themes and forms in their work, and he prescribes this not only for poets writing in English, but also for those composing in Urdu. The 1968 issue of *The Ravi* features poems by Taufiq Rafat, Kaleem Omar, Shahid Hosain, Khaled Ahmed, Navid Rehman, and Shuja Nawaz. The student poets it features are Samina Hosain, Javaid Qazi, Mahboob Ghani, Ahmad Rashid, and Tariq Yazdani Malik, all of whom also contributed essays to the magazine, thus becoming critics of the art they practiced. This list shows that senior poets were publishing alongside younger poets,

thus forming networks that have a resonance for charting the canon of Pakistani anglophone poetry. As a site for reading the Pakistani anglophone poetry, these histories and catalogues are critical as they highlight the existence of a tradition.

The other issue of *The Ravi* that focuses on Pakistani anglophone poetry is the 1974 issue, edited by M. Athar Tahir, who is now one of the senior-most anglophone poets of Pakistan. These two issues together form one of the rare instances where anglophone poetry was theorized and criticized as part of a systemic and sustained effort in Pakistan. Tahir claims that "the work presented here does not attempt 'to purify the dialect of the tribe'. It makes an effort, sincere and original, though small, to add a new, local sensibility to poetry written in English" (6). Unlike the 1968 special issue, the 1974 issue of *The Ravi* begins not with essays but with poetry. The poets featured here are Taufiq Rafat, Maki Kureishi, Kaleem Omar, Ahmad Jamal Rashid, Khaled Ahmed, Shuja Nawaz, Yesmine Kaikobad, Zaheer Kazim, Mahboob Ghani, Alamgir Hashmi, Naseer Ahmad, Tariq Masood Khosa, M. Athar Tahir, Ken Hylton, Waqas Ahmed, Nasim Akhter, Fahim Ahmed, as well as translations of a Punjabi poem by Bulleh Shah, and an Urdu poem each by Allama Muhammad Iqbal and Faiz Ahmad Faiz. These are followed by two essays on Pakistani anglophone poetry, Shuaib bin Hasan's long essay "Pakistani Practitioners of English Verse," and Riaz Hassan's "More Pakistani English Poetry." I will briefly summarize these essays before moving on. These essays present the initial contours, like the ones in the 1968 issue, of a critical history of anglophone poetry in the country, and are precursors to the work I am undertaking here.

Shuaib bin Hasan provides a brief history of colonial intervention in India, efforts for decolonization, and the presence of English as a colonial legacy in the postcolonial state. He then argues that Urdu as national language can be supplemented by English as a second language

since Urdu has absorbed all the Persian and Arabic influences that it could, but can still "take more" from English, which as a language has a "greater future," he believes (54). Giving the examples of Iqbal and Faiz as Punjabi-speaking poets writing in Urdu, Hasan defends young anglophone poets against those criticizing them for writing in their second language, and crucially argues that "Urdu and English both are second languages" to the Punjabi-speaking writer (55), an argument I have also advanced in the previous chapter in claiming that Urdu is as colonial as English. Hasan eventually praises the English poetry of Taufiq Rafat, Kaleem Omar, Shahid Hosain, Tariq Yazdani Malik, Alamgir Hashmi, Athar Tahir, and Zahid Murad. Hasan also singles out *The Ravi* as a place where many young poets have published, but points out that they have not gone on to develop their craft beyond the college magazine (70).

Riaz Hassan's short essay begins by celebrating the abundance of "More Pakistani English Poetry": "Maki Kureishi describes it as the swan-song of a dying sub-culture. Let us hope that she is wrong, because I, for one, am encouraged by what I see" (72). Hassan encourages the inclusion of Pakistani poems in English courses taught in the country, something that is still resisted at most educational institutions in Pakistan. Describing the images of British poetry as alien to the Pakistani reader, Hassan argues that "we should be looking at Pakistan most of the time, not at Britain," echoing the question of idiom raised by Rafat (72). For him, the apparently inferior command of English by Pakistani practitioners is not a deterrent.

The above discussion shows that the impetus for generating critical mass around Pakistani anglophone poetics has been a productive task, especially for those involved with its practice and publishing. However, the lack of critical depth in addressing anglophone poetry in postcolonial Pakistan has meant that while small and minor networks of print and publication exist within the country, poetry does not find a place on the global scene. In contrast, Pakistani

anglophone fiction has generated enough critical mass to make its presence felt on the landscapes of world literature. However, with the neglect of poetry, important representative aspects are being neglected, to which I now turn through the lens of 'closure.'

Closure and Anti-Closure:

Barbara Hernstein Smith's influential work on closure in poetic texts frames my idea of closure in postcolonial poetry. Smith defines closure as "a modification of [poetic] structure that makes *stasis*, or the absence of further continuation, the most probable succeeding event," a device that "creates in the reader the expectation of nothing" (34). The anticipation of closure is associated with ideas of "stability, resolution, or equilibrium" (34). Instability built into the text of the poem lends structural development to it, while closure at the end of the poem allows the reader to "re-experience the entire work, not now as a succession of events, but as an integral design" (36). One of the distinguishing features of modern poetry for Smith is "anti-closure," an "effort toward poetic realism, where structural or other features that mark the work as a verbal artifact – rather than a direct transcription of personal utterance – are avoided" (238). Anti-closure is not just a strategy for how a poem ends, but for "how and whether" it is organized (242-243).

In an essay titled "The Rejection of Closure," Lyn Hejinian explains the insufficiency of language in capturing our multitudinous experiences of the world. This "incapacity of language" excludes the possibility of a truly "closed text" that "contains everything." Hejinian employs Luce Irigaray's idea of a woman's body having multiple centers of sexual pleasure to suggest that the desire for closure is a linguistic desire to create the subject. Meanwhile, Hélène Cixous describes the "feminine textual body" as "endless, without ending," where "there's no closure, it doesn't stop" (Cixous 53). The rejection of closure then is the assertion of a feminist politics

balancing the desire for language to contain and define with the desire for language to be unlimited.

In postcolonial readings of texts produced in formerly colonized spaces like Pakistan, I propose the idea of closure as a way of coming to terms with the reality of the postcolonial experience. The postcolonial state's binary logic of hating English, and enforcing Urdu, reflects the national binaries of describing narratives and nationalisms as pro-state and anti-state, creating fissures out of a fear of ethno-nationalisms. Postcolonial English poets of the first generation appear to me to be searching for a closure in terms of acceptance of their urge to express themselves in an English which they now consider their own; meanwhile, later English poets, assuming closure to have been achieved, desire anti-closure in their poetry to discover the explosive potentialities of recognizing the multiplicity of the national space. In the works of Punjabi poets in Pakistan, I propose as a continuation of this theme, the idea of the nation comes to a point of 'dis-closure,' a revelation of the postcolonial self in its hybrid ambivalences.

Reading the Canon:

Stressing on the "world anglophone" as "a potential mode of inquiry," Akshya Saxena has urged for "locating English and its speakers *in* the world" (318 emphasis original). The world of the Pakistani anglophone poet has been described above. It is a world of conflicts, and constant need to justify one's choice of language and idiom. The following readings place these poets in their own world, before moving to placing Pakistani poetics in the world at large.

Taufiq Rafat, as described earlier, was the pioneer of a Pakistani idiom or sensibility in English poetry. The poem "From A Train Window" involves some of the central images that Rafat employs which can be read as his appropriation of the English idiom in a space where anglophony performs what Saxena describes as an act that "refuses – in a much-needed critical

gesture – to cede power to dominant frames of analysis in the study of Anglophone postcolonial literature" (Saxena 323). Rafat's simultaneous negation and assertion of identities creates a dialectical movement necessary for closure to offer the illusion of predictability. His countryside is not made of "pine-forest or paddy-fields" (2); rather, "it is miles and miles/ of sand and nameless scrub" (4-5). He dismisses the palm trees that wear "a whipped and sorry look" (6), as well as the "glossy shishams" (8) as being "not our trees":

> In this scorified land,
>
> only the skeletal cactus
>
> is wholly at ease (10-12).

The cactus can belong only when it depicts closure, a ready sense of finality which the poet does not feel in the rejection of anglophone practice by the state. The search for an idiom becomes the search for the culture and customs of the autochthonous inhabitants of the land. So, 'his' women "have hairy legs" (28) and "lack grace" (30). These are obviously not those British women who wore full-length frocks in the sweltering heat of India, tempting the desiring gaze of Indian men. There is a contrast being implied here, and this contrast is between the apparent grace of the White woman and the rustic gracelessness of the local woman. However, to the poet celebrating the indigenous, the native woman is more attractive and graceful than the foreigner, despite the native's apparent lack of attention to hygiene as understood by a western and westernized audience. Of course, this stereotypical representation itself is problematic and reasserts the (post)colonial subject's interpellation into the symbolic order where he recognizes whiteness as the transcendental signifier of superiority. Embracing the local, and proclaiming the colonized self as the ideal, the poet finds closure by challenging western standards of beauty and femininity. The "scorified land," the "skeletal cactus," and the women with "hairy legs" together

represent the moment when the postcolonial anglophone poet, uneasy in his need to justify his choice of language (as witnessed in his essay "Towards a Pakistani Idiom"), achieves a state of closure in his association with rediscovering the local, and celebrates it in a matter-of-fact tone. Thus, the dialectical movement from negation and distancing of the other to assertion and embracing of the self brings a sense of finality, a closure that moves beyond masculine ideas of pronounced endings.

In "From A Train Window," Rafat appropriates vocabulary and imagery from the days of the Raj to create this distance of the colony from the postcolony. This constitutive appropriation is critical for the poet's sense of closure, which entails not just the acceptance of history as continuum but also recognition of its structures. This "abrogation and appropriation" is critical for the poet to create a new idiom. Though now dated, the duality of this movement is still important for understanding postcolonial language politics. "Abrogation" is:

> a refusal of the categories of the imperial culture, its aesthetic, its illusory standard of normative or 'correct' usage, and its assumption of a traditional and fixed meaning inscribed in the words. (Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin 37)

"Appropriation," the next step, is defined as a process which takes language and makes it "'bear the burden' of one's own cultural experience." In the words of Raja Rao, it is "to convey in a language that is not one's own the spirit that is one's own" (38). The postcolonial state's relation with the English language in Pakistan is one of abrogation, while the anglophone writer searching for an idiom has appropriated the language, and thus found a closure which leads to the possibilities of developing the language as a local possession, devoid of its colonial baggage.

Rafat initially abrogates the language of the Raj, and the Romantic imagery dominant during that period, and appropriates the English language to create a subcontinental idiom, which

he then adapts to a Pakistani sensibility. He abrogates not just colonial legacies, but also colonial stereotypes of the exoticized colony, rejecting even the "shisham." Abrogating prior to appropriating creates a parallel context, a move that takes the poetics of postcolonial anglophony beyond closure:

My tenement is not

a bungalow

in a seven-acre lot;

but an ancestral hovel

with a roof

which has snouts for the wind. ("From A Train Window" 33-38)

"Bungalow" is a word that evokes images of the British Raj, of spacious mansions spread over acres of verdant lawns, and of the indigenous elite who first became part of the colonial setup and later perpetuated colonial structures in postcolonial societies. Meanwhile, a contrast is always available in the "ancestral hovel" (36), the thatched roofs of village homes which become the metaphor for a presumed precolonial past of plenitude and liberty. Thus, abrogation leads to appropriation as a strategy for finding closure in the postcolonial state:

Senses are ravished by

a lady-of-the-night, unseen,

on a midnight walk. (49-51)

"Lady-of-the-night" is the literal translation of a flower's local name, "raat ki raani." Not translating "shisham" but translating "raat ki rani" is a choice on the poet's part which indicates how he is constructing the idiom, localizing and foreignizing simultaneously. The "implied reader" "imagined" here "assents" to the "epistemico-epistemological transformations" that are

"mediated by the new vernacular literatures" created by the interaction between colonial and colonized cultures and languages (Spivak 37-41). Spivak reads her example from vernacular Bengali, but I see in Rafat's move between the local "shisham" and the *translated* "lady-of-the-night" a mediation of the vernacular that assumes the implied reader to know both English and Urdu (and Punjabi or any other regional language, despite the historical neglect). The choice between translating and not translating manifests closure of colonial legacy. Rafat plays with the language precisely because it is his own! This sense of closure comes only after the poet has first distanced himself from the center's language:

> And if I were asked to chalk
>
> an emblem none could doubt,
>
> it would not be:
>
> a wild boar rampant
>
> or a crouching tiger,
>
> but a goat –
>
> resting its forefeet lightly
>
> against a shrub. (55-62)

Rafat denies the English landscape as inspiration and moves beyond it. Instead, to him, the rural landscape of the subcontinent offers images that are emblematic in nature, and comparable to the ancestral banners of British nobility. The anglophone poet is not pandering to the British legacy and has found closure in accepting the locality of his symbolism, a charge often leveled against postcolonial anglophone writers and teachers. The colonial language loses its baggage and becomes one of the poet's own languages. Rafat appropriates the imagery of the Indian subcontinent and makes it specific to Pakistan as the next step in his outlining of an idiom. Rafat

exercises here what Tamara Chin calls the "contrapuntal metrics of colony and metropole" (Chin 1030). In his editorial essay in PMLA in 2014, Simon Gikandi calls for "provincializing English." He argues that the first step for understanding that global English is not a monolingual phenomenon is "the recognition that there are many varieties of English, each with multiple registers" (Gikandi 13). In locating this multiplicity of English *languages* in the common versions of English spoken by postcolonial citizens outside of literary and academic discourse, Gikandi posits the kind of mutually informed existence of colonizer-colonized languages that the postcolonial anglophone poet celebrates in his work, and which the postcolonial state, in its paranoia of existence, fails to recognize as a powerful subsuming of the colonizing other into the colonized self. The poet rejects the English landscape as his inspiration and discovers emblematic images in the rural landscape of the subcontinent. However, within the matrix of this decolonial rebellion, he joins a minority by choosing English as his medium of creative expression. The subversion of this contrapuntal metrics is manifested in his use of the foreign language to express a pride in native imagery and landscape.

One important question that these passages raise is this: is the anglophone poet's rejection of Jamesonian otherness an act complete in itself? While Rafat rejects the otherness of English and adapts it to his needs in the passages I have read above, there is, however, another kind of otherizing that the poet implies here. Since Rafat is self-consciously creating a Pakistani idiom, and since his relationship with the postcolonial state's linguistic identity is already antagonistically ambivalent, he must necessarily repress some aspect of the past to assert an individualized state identity. In appropriating English colonial history, then, he chooses here to abrogate Hindu mythology. There are "no god or milkmaids out there" (63), he writes, refusing the context of thousands of years of interactions with Hinduism, and is left with "only the dust-

devil" (64) from which he seems to build a new imaginary. The image may evoke a desert and a wasteland, but it is from this wasteland that Rafat proceeds to construct a different language and a set of new images rooted in the poet's own locale. This may be considered an important decision on the part of the anglophone poet. In the context of post-independence Indian vernacular literature, Harish Trivedi recognizes that indigenous literature had "nowhere now…to go vis-à-vis English literature except away from it and beyond" (192). Trivedi catalogues Hindi translations of Eastern European literatures as an example of the kind of movement beyond English that Mufti has called "global English and its others." Trivedi's intervention emphasizes the abrogative and appropriative duality of postcolonial poetics that Ramazani and Chin understand as the hybrid and anticolonial potentialities of this poetry, as discussed earlier.

In the section I have read here, Rafat moves away from and beyond both English and Hindi mythologies, a move that should help the postcolonial state feel less threatened by the anglophone poet's unsettling embrace of the colonizer. The specificity of this abrogation is rooted in the logic of the postcolonial state of Pakistan which registers itself as a Muslim state carved out of India, and therefore as its ontological opposite. The idea that partitioning is a method for reading the postcolonial context thus finds an interesting echo here. The dual rejection of the myths of empire – the modern influences of colonialism, and the myths of antiquity, a precolonial indigenous Indian culture rooted in Hinduism – lead to the creation of a new set of mythologies based in the history of the new land, a history created by the state *in its only official language Urdu*. For Roland Barthes, "one can conceive of very ancient myths, but there are no eternal ones," and even the myth of "Woman" in Baudelaire is not a myth in its very existence (Barthes 108). The western woman, the symbols of ancient Hinduism, and the seeming eternity of colonialism, are all myths that Rafat moves beyond in his creation of a new

mythology – a mythology that he manifests in his defining of a Pakistani idiom and in his assertion of postcolonial *closure*.

Closure entails rejecting myths of history inherited from the past. In "Reflections," Rafat challenges the eternal myths of civilization and colonial modernity:

> When a primitive who grunts and gestures
> is persuaded to wear
> clothes to hide his nakedness,
> he loses identity at once (57-60).

The "primitive" tongue of the postcolonial writer "loses identity" in its confrontation with the "clothes" of 'civilized' languages. Rafat contends the opposite: that there is a primitive identity in the symbols and markers of the host culture (its language, imagery, metaphor, landscape, flora, fauna, culture, customs, and people), and that these native markers are not to be considered shameful. His essay on the Pakistani idiom claims that English has lost its colonial baggage in the post-independence context, and consequently there is no loss of identity. The postcolonial writer must not dress his native idiom up because he fears an inadequacy in it. Rather, he should combine the two to create a new dress-code in the idiom, which appropriates the language but brings in its own cultural influences. This movement beyond the colonial baggage is made possible only by finding closure with it.

In section four of this long poem, while the poet sits in his garden, "the red-arsed bulbuls" (69) come to him. Rafat again chooses the vernacular to name the bird. This can now be contrasted with the rejection of even the local "shisham" in "From A Train Window." It shows the achievement of a state of closure with the anglophone poet's place in a postcolonial state. For an earlier generation of Indian anglophone writers, "The flashing of kingfisher's wings/ against a

brooding tree" (76-77) provided space to participate in the center's hegemony over language. This led to the abrogation of the indigenous inspirations available:

> Impossible then to see
> how the laburnum follows
>
> its own seasons, and swings its lamps
> outside our reckoning (79-82).

Rafat discovers closure in recognizing that keeping the local idiom "outside our reckoning" (82) is the first thing that the postcolonial writer needs to abrogate before he can appropriate the language with enough felicity to reach the harmonious syncretism of the "red-arsed bulbuls" (69), where "red-arsed" (69) is a very British expression that is used as an adjective for the "bulbul," a word from the vernacular. Unlike the translated "lady-of-the-night," the bulbul belongs in the postcolonial idiom.

In the sixth section of this poem, Rafat's journey "towards a Pakistani idiom" reaches a stage of incorporation:

> A twisting goat-track in the hills
> saturated with pine-smell
>
> is remembered, or a path
> through the ricefields long ago (119-122).

In "From A Train Window," Rafat negated the symbolism of representation when he said that his countryside was not "pine-forest or paddy-fields" (2). The sole emblem he wanted for his people was "a goat" (60) with its feet perched on a shrub. All these images, in evolving with Rafat's

idiom, combine in the above lines from "Reflections." Now, the emblematic goat that Rafat embraces as his own can finally become one with the pine forests and rice-fields that he had rejected earlier. The influences of the center and the margin, the host culture, and the foreign language, are not influences that are incongruent. They can survive together, in four lines combined through enjambment. Indeed, like with Spivak, the center and the margin can now exchange places. This recognition brings closure.

Section eight of "Reflections" raises another important issue in the search for an idiom, which is the role of mythology. In "From A Train Window," Rafat had abrogated the Hindu mythology which has governed Indian society for millennia when he had said, "No god or milkmaids out here," referring to Lord Krishna and his entourage of milkmaids (63). "Reflections" contends that myths are created by a poet, and "he must be their destroyer" as well (78). Rafat creates an interesting metaphor for this evolution of an idiomatic mythology. The "hairy predecessors" (79) saw "the first volcano" (81) erupt and:

> such shrill, empurpled imagery
> burst from their lips, that the sky
> became a madhouse. (82-84)

In the absence of an indigenous myth that to account for the Biblical Tower of Babylon, Rafat finds the locals discovering language in its colonial encounter, with the interpretative possibility being both the gift of language by the colonizer and the existence of a precolonial linguistic heritage, which in turn led orientalists to find a common root for Indian and European languages, the philological moment which included the "invention of the linguistic family tree" (Mufti 58).

The sense of belonging to an ancient culture and civilization is embedded in Rafat's work. In "The Mound", he stands on the ruins of a 5000-year-old town: "Archaeologists say the

town/ had a highly developed culture" (5-6). To the archaeologist, the emblems of this "highly developed culture" (7) are the "tools littering the museums" (9) that have been discovered from the ruins. To the archaeologist, the artefacts and ornaments discovered from the ruins indicate that the people who lived in the ancient city "were a peace-loving people,/ tillers of the soil,.../their only enemy the drought" (14-17). Rafat, as the observer of not just the ruins, but also of the process of historiography and archaeology, can meanwhile offer a word of caution when he dismisses the archaeologist's view as "mere hypothesis" (28). He is not pleased with the historian who has "by-passed the mound" (29) and not accorded it the attention it deserves. The historian, the archaeologist and the excavator have all failed to have "reconstructed here/ another Mohenjo Daro" (22-23). The poet as historian discovers in the neglected archives of history the foundations of a nation. He sees:

> The wide lanes and sensible houses,
> and a marvellous system of drainage
> that did not poison the rivers and the sea;
> and, miracle of miracles,
> only the one temple for the populace. (29-33)

The existence of a simpler society not divided by religious differences points to a pre-Islamic India where one religion would suffice for the populace. Since the logic of partition was rooted in religious binaries, the "miracle of miracles" of just one place of worship offers a negation for that particular logic. It raises the question of how reinforced the partitionings of the mind are. With the Muslim nation-state of Pakistan emphasizing ever-increasing singularity in pursuing a religious agenda, with sectarian partitions in society necessitating multiple mosques in one small locality, and the larger politics of South Asia focusing on exclusionary populism, a common

place sounds almost secular, and this is the alternativee nation possible within the historical palimpsest of Pakistan. The oppositional relationship of the postcolonial state with those aspects of its history that it considers to not belong to the myth of nation-making has led to the neglect of the mound, and "water-logged fields/ have pushed to its very hem/ a village of two-score houses of mud" (40-43). The poem closes with a striking image of squalor and disgust: "A sluggish drain runs down its middle/ into which all the children defecate" (43-44). The scatological image recalls the postcolonial nation-state's defecation on history itself, erasing those parts that do not fit into the project of defining an identity of the unified self. Closure here is not an end, but a movement beyond the moment of recognition. The state fails to achieve this closure, and thus the postcolonial squalor and defecation. However, the anglophone poet finds closure and can reflect on the mound of history while looking towards the future.

In a polyglot nation like Pakistan, the realization of a colonial hangover leads to interesting fractures in the social fabric. The work of anglophone poets like Rafat highlights the divisive nature of such debates. In light of the Supreme Court decision to implement a constitutional requirement, Rafat's idiomatic experiments and his incorporation of the indigenous and the foreign as one is an important political statement on the dangerous possibilities of otherness. While the postcolonial state is, in the last instance, always dependent on its conception as an 'other' liberated from a colonized past, the anglophone poet reconciles the problems inherent in conceiving of this otherness as definitive. While Rafat never claims that the otherness does not exist, he nevertheless attempts to highlight that it is part of the selfhood of the postcolonial nation. As such, the postcolonial poet as a subject of the postcolonial state, can never really *forget English* in Mufti's words, but can find *closure* in poetry.

Similarly, Imtiaz Dharker's "They'll say, 'She must be from another country'" captures the dilemma of the postcolonial anglophone poet in most settings, particularly in the India-Pakistan subcontinent with its multiplicity of languages and literary cultures. Dharker's identity is contested as she was born in Pakistan but has lived in Britain and is identified as a British poet. Her experiences then offer insight into the diaspora's relationship with the nationalism articulated as singular and mandatory. So, if the poet cannot "comprehend/ why they're burning books/ or slashing paintings," (1-3) an unspecified "they" reply by conjecturing that "'She must be/ from another country'" (10-11):

Maybe there is a country
where all of us live,
all of us freaks
who aren't able to give
our loyalty to fat old fools,
the crooks and thugs
who wear the uniform
that gives them the right
to wave a flag,
puff out their chests,
put their feet on our necks,
and break their own rules.

But from where we are
it doesn't look like a country,

it's more like the cracks

that grow between borders

behind their backs.

That's where I live.

And I'll be happy to say,

'I never learned your customs. I don't remember your language

or know your ways. I must be

from another country.' (50-73)

In an obvious reference to Pakistan's struggle with martial laws, oppressive nationalism dictated from the top, and the logic of border thinking, Dharker's resistance manifests in her deliberate forgetting of the language of the state. She does not "remember your language" (71) and this alienates her, but if she "must be/ from another country" this can only happen after she finds closure on her previous national identity (72-73). The disavowal of the language that defines that identity in the postcolonial context is therefore an essential step, one that creates "freaks" (52) who do not belong in the analysis of "fat old fools" (54). However, Dharker recognizes the presence of an alternate space where this unconventional nationalism of "freaks" can be articulated as a communal identity. That alternative space in this context is the space of anglophone poetry.

Zulfikar Ghose, established now as an American poet, is often anthologized as a Pakistani poet, though his identity as such is often contested. He remains nevertheless an important reference point for Pakistani anglophone literature. From his poems published in *First Voices*, in a poem addressed "To My Ancestors," Ghose asks:

What lands did you husband with ox and plough

before you came to bed by the Five Rivers
of the Punjab? I have heard stories, how
the Greeks and Moguls and other invaders,
Genghiz Khan, Tamurlaine, found the green, low
plains of the Indus a comfort from their wars. (7-12)

Even though the poet's father moves from one city to another, from one continent to another, "my grandfather lives where he was born,/ in Sialkot," in post-independence Pakistan (25-26). The postcolonial setting is reflected in this old man's condition. While he is "building houses, carving wood," (26) the grandfather is his grandson's "one image of permanence," (29) although "all his children/ are abroad as though a curse had compelled/ them to move to colder climates" (32-34). So, addressing the ancestors, the postcolonial subject, dislocated to the diaspora, observes "we are not settled,/ not where you pitched your tents, where you sowed corn" (36). Following from Smith, the desire for closure is a desire for permanence, and in this case the "one image of performance" contrapuntally defies closure. As the grandfather's family scatters across the postcolonial globe, the only permanence available to them exists in the hybrid spaces that defy closure but whose acceptance creates (en)closures where the postcolonial subject/poet discovers that identity is fluid and language is mythological. The question of where 'home' may be located spatially and temporally challenges the idea of an 'end' that necessitates closure. Instead, all ends, all closures become sites of contestation and continuation, of anti-closure, and as I argue in the next chapter, disclosure.

In "This Landscape, These People," Ghose's poetic persona is now displaced in England, in his "eighth spring," but "being stranger," he does not feel he belongs, and "only the earth/ permits an attachment" (1-5). He is confronted by the existential dilemma of his postcolonial

invisibility: “And do they notice me, I wonder, these/ Englishmen strolling with stiff country strides?” (7-8). For him, England is “an exhibit within a glass case” (13-14). The poet cannot belong, “only pace/ its frontiers” (16-17). Back in Bombay, in India, the poet remembers “with the impudence/ of a native tongue, I cried for independence” (23-24). He remembers a troupe that travelled through villages and towns until “The troupe, grown/ into a nation, halted, squirmed” (39-40), and “An epic turned into a monologue/ of death” (45-46). For him, in this postcolonial dislocation of moment, closure is attained in realizing the continuum of history and time. As he notes that “the road from Putney Hill/ runs across oceans into the harbour/ of Bombay” (69-71), he recognizes England is now home: “To this country I have come” (71). He finds postcolonial closure in the closing line of the long poem: “Stranger or an inhabitant, this is my home” (72). The finality of postcolonial identity is in its porousness, its logic of enforcing “partition-as-method,” its fluidity in the globalized world. The anglophone poet is in a unique position to provide “assent” in Spivak’s formulation, and to read the text of this world in its multiple, hybrid, and transnational languages, to paraphrase Ramazani.

The second anthology in this series, *Pieces of Eight: Eight Poets from Pakistan*, was published by OUP in 1971, the year of Pakistan’s second partition into Pakistan and Bangladesh. By now, Ghose’s vision had progressed to exploring the closure further. In a poem titled “One Chooses a Language,” the poet observes the multilingual slot-machines at Petrarch’s memorial in France: “One chooses a language, puts in a coin,/ and understands” (7-8). This prompts the poetic persona to remember his childhood in Bombay, a recurrent motif in Ghose’s poetry. This time, he remembers it through the metaphor of language: “The English alphabet dangled its *A*/ *for Apple* when I was eight in Bombay” (9-10), he remembers, and describes the colonial subject’s initial encounter with the master’s language: “My tongue, rejecting a vernacular/ for a

new language, resisted utterance" (12-13). Learning language initially through mimicry, "I imitated the accents/ of English soldiers, their pitch and their tone./ They were the mouths to my tongue's microphone" (14-16). The tourist, a postcolonial subject dislocated in the diaspora, closes the poem on a note of skepticism:

> There's England, my dictionary my ignorance
> brings me back to. I give poetry readings
> where people ask at the end (just to show
> their interest) how many Indian languages I know. (29-32)

The postcolonial anglophone poet finds the foreign audience more interested in the exoticism of his native language(s) than in his mastery of their own idiom. England, and by implication the English language, reminds him of his "ignorance," becoming a metonym for the ways in which the colonizer's language brought western notions of modernity to the colonized, affirming the assumed superiority of European knowledge manifested in Macaulay's "Minute on Education." The metonymic presence of England/English is juxtaposed against the "Indian languages I know," with the poet's act of composing verse becoming a metaphor for the postcolonial nation's struggle to find its existence in language. The Pakistani state's rejection of English is one example of how Ghose's "poetry readings" – where people feign interest – fail in their formal embracing of the language. Similarly, while Ngugi theorizes in English about abandoning English, as mentioned earlier, he is also performing the limitations of language.

Sitting in a foreign locale, Ghose the poet can afford to detach himself from the political landscape of the postcolonial nation. "A Short History of India" traces the historical trajectory from "Asoka's wheel" – a reference to the monarchy of Asoka the great, who ruled almost the entire subcontinent in the third century BCE – to the postcolonial state where modern western

democracy has become the form of government. “Look now at the enfranchised people,/ the spoiled votes of a democracy” Ghose says, and in frustration observes that this state of “passivity can never be ruled,/ nor a wheel negotiate a ditch” (9-12) as evidence of democracy’s failure to provide even paved and maintained roads to the citizens. Though the poem is a short history of India, Ghose here addresses the entire subcontinent. The framing of the noun “wheel” as a reference point in the opening and closing lines evokes the image of the circular motion of history, and of its repetitiveness. Closure too follows the circular motion of the wheel, which then becomes a transcendent signifier for Indian history itself. Closure’s cyclical nature necessitates a move to anti-closure, and eventually to disclosure.

Shahid Hosain’s “Across the Indus,” also published in *Pieces of Eight*, represents the movement from one moment of history into another, finding closure in the spatial travel from one bank of the river to the other. The life left behind, or the city on the other side of the river, is marked with images jammed into each other, verbs becoming participial adjectives: “That crowded, festering, insistent city” (2) has “ruined houses leaning to each other” (5). These houses are “Disgorging naked, unappealing children,/ Playing their games in self-created filth” (6-7). The surfeit of images continues in the action of the “rising, waiting, casting” (8) of “The suffocating, obliterating dust” (9) that blows across the poet’s vision. This stanza, rich in the bustling and crowded images of a city along the Indus River, gives way to another kind of scenery in the following, concluding stanza, which opens with the poet observing “But I have crossed the river/ Placing the deep and easy flow of green/ Between that life and this” (11-13). Now, “in the distance” (14), the city left behind loses the urgency of its adjectives, and becomes “Quiet, pure and captivating” (15), and the houses described as “ruined” and “leaning” previously “gracefully” (16) “Jostle each other to the river’s brink” now (17). The aggression of

the verb "jostle" is the only image of intense labor in this stanza as opposed to the previous, which was laden with activity. The Indus, representing the inevitable passage of time and the changing perspective of space in a developing urban setting, brings a closure to the poet: "And the ugliness I saw and came away from/ Along the placid water flows away" (20-21). The adverb "away" carries the poem's subject-matter into a distance along with the flow of the river, with the stretched vowel sound mirroring the water's motion. History here becomes a matter of perspective for the postcolonial poet, whose understanding of his position in his native land is influenced by which side of the river (history) he is located on. "But I have crossed the river" provides not only a statement signaling the beginning of a new stanza, but also represents the moment of realization for the poet of his standing on the other side of colonial history in a post-independence nation-state (12). The metamorphosed perspective is simultaneously the act of the poet embracing the nation-state as his own. This virtue of ownership is what he expresses in the opening line of the poem, which stands apart from the two stanzas as a single line of verse, but which enjambs into the beginning of the first stanza: "How beautiful it seems" (1). The state of postcolonial closure then is a state of enjambments where the duality of appearance and reality are not an end in themselves but points of initiation into the postcolonial subject's creation of a new self.

Taufiq Rafat's "Thinking of Mohenjo-Daro" was also published first in *Pieces of Eight*. The poem's title refers to the name of the archeological site found in the province of Sindh. Considered one of the earliest major cities of the world, and one of the major sites of the Indus Valley Civilization, the ruins date back to around 2500 BCE. The name Mohenjo Daro literally translates as "The Mound of Dead Men." As such, the poem obviously harks back to a past that predates colonialism of all shades in the Indian subcontinent. This short poem is representative

of the kind of postcolonial closure I am reading in Pakistani anglophone poetry, so it merits being produced in full here:

> Thinking of Mohenjo-Daro
> Alexandria and Rome,
> I note how time curves
> back upon itself
> like an acrobat.
>
> This year's harvest is late.
> The archaic sun
> has been playing
> like a poem
> on the farmer's nerves.
>
> The ink dries slowly
> on the half-written page.
> Who will read this?
> Stranger, the crumbling fort
> you pass is your home. (1-15)

The realization of the familiar noun and place-marker "home" is the final closure of the process of history. This returns the poet to the precolonial past of plenitude ("harvest"). The poem's simplicity, reflected in the three images contained in its three compact stanzas, is also a reflective recalling of the poet's understanding of his task in the nation-state. In the previous chapter, I

have quoted critics who have read Pakistan's post-independence history as a struggle to chart an identity that is necessarily a negation of everything 'Indian.' Here, the postcolonial anglophone poet asserts a different understanding of his nationality, by incorporating the ancient civilization of South Asia as his reference point, as the self-reflexive acrobatics of time curling on itself. Against the exclusionary state's reconfiguration of its history to detach it from the Indus Valley, Rafat the anglophone poet recounts a history that celebrates Pakistan's origins in the Indus Valley civilization. The anglophone poet does not look at history through the simplifying binaries of the postcolonial state. For him, the past is a complex construction. It includes the colonial experience with its various burdens, and while he reconstructs the precolonial era, it does not signify a transcendental plenitude to him. With time, the postcolonial writer reconciles the movements between a supposed precolonial plenitude, colonial violence, and the stark hybridity of postcolonial time. This poetic sense of closure eludes the state itself, which exists in contradictory logics and reinforces them.

Another poet whose vision of history develops in negotiation with the postcolonial state is Daud Kamal. Tariq Rahman's reading of Kamal emphasizes a historical link with both the imagist poets and Urdu ghazal poets. Rahman over-emphasizes "the voluptuousness of tender emotions, the soft melancholy of regret, and the subtle pleasure of nostalgia" (viii). The very first poem in OUP's *A Selection of Verse* presents a poet scratching the surface of history to discover the palimpsest of the many influences that inspire him:

> Reproductions
> of Mogul miniatures
> cut out
> from last year's calendar

and fragments

of Gandhara sculpture

bought for a song.

Prince Siddharta

gone into the night

with Channa,

his charioteer,

and old Tajiks

in their tents

drinking China tea.

Almond-blossoms

fall

and a crow–

carved out of ebony–

pushes itself through the rain.

I sit scraping

the rust off my ancient coins. (1-21)

The opening stanza lacks any punctuation apart from the period at its end. By this move, it connects the span of history from the ancient Gandhara civilization (first millennium BCE – second millennium CE) through Mughal rule in India (1526-1857) and finally to the contemporary twentieth century world of wall calendars depicting the miniatures from the

Mughal era. This span of history also includes the various empires while the poet scrapes "the rust off my ancient coins" (21). The precision of Kamal's images suggests the possibility of an epic cataloguing with the various historical moments becoming characters, both connected and separate from each other. Similarly, in "The Leap," Alexander "leapt over the Indus here" (2) and listened "in rapt attention/ to a naked sadhu/ talking of immortality" (7-9). The expansion of Alexander's empire form Macedonia to India replicates the galloping pattern of the tercet which in three stanzas discovers a moment of closure when the great conqueror in confounded by the mystique of the Orient.

Kaleem Omar edited the third OUP anthology, titled *Wordfall: Three Pakistani Poets*, published in 1975. Rafat's "Circumcision," included in this collection is a poem that cannot be taught in a Pakistani classroom since it would require talking about male genitalia, and that is a taboo subject, even though the act of male circumcision is a religious obligation and compulsion. The poem serves not only as a prosaic recounting of a painful childhood experience, but the act of circumcision also serves as a metaphor for the 1971 secession of Bangladesh. The poet finds closure in settling for the disappointments that life brings:

> they prepare us for the disappointments
> at the absence of golden birds
> life will ask us to look at
> between our circumcision and death. (43-36)

The state still aggressively asserts its language and education policies which alienated the eastern part of the country until it seceded, but the anglophone poet finds closure in the inevitability of the act.

Rafat's "The Stone-Chat" is a poem that celebrates the fertility and abandon of the landscape of Punjab. Of uneven meter, the poem is composed of long prosaic sentences, divided into lines connected by enjambment. "Surfeit has cloyed my vision," the poet observes, and proceeds to find an epiphanic revelation when his gaze finds a stone-chat in the fields. The bird reminds him of the need to come to terms with ideas of home:

> Surfeit has cloyed my vision. To understand
> this waste, I must try and know myself
> as I must once have been, and become,
> and become, why even be….even if I have
> to become…that, that stone-chat there,
> almost lost against the no-colour background. (13-18)

The stone-chat appears content with its surroundings, and "bursts into song":

> Intolerant of excuse, he calls
> this place home, has learnt to distinguish
> between the various shades of grey
> till the neighbourhood is a riot of colour,
> and a ragged patch of wheat sufficient
> cause to be mellifluous about. (26-31)

The stone-chat celebrates its surroundings, which appear dull to the poet. The bird's song becomes the poet's realized poem, "mellifluous" (31) and embracing the here-and-now of the postcolonial nation-state crippled through the dual partitions that first created it from a division, and then divided it further. Like "Circumcision," "The Stone-Chat" also roots the poet in the moment where he accepts the inevitability of the nation-state's division as a legacy of the

colonial. If the stone-chat is a migratory bird, it has embraced its new home, its new surroundings. The poem is thus the poet's own song about the new landscape of the postcolonial country. In "Circumcision," the inspiration for this acceptance is internal and intimate, with the physical act of male circumcision leading the poet to his epiphanic realization. In contrast, "The Stone-Chat" provides an external and distant stimulus for the poet's closure of nationhood. While in "Circumcision," the barber renders a natural object from a child's body as an act of purification, in "The Stone-Chat," nature's "surfeit" cleanses the poet's vision without any forceful physical act.

Maki Kureishi's "Cripple" is a poem about a girl whose body is deformed, and so she is tied to a chair. While the poem may really be about the grief of this girl, who is ignored by those around her, it can also be read as a poem about the postcolonial nation-state of Pakistan rendered a "cripple" by the secession of Bangladesh in 1971. The neatness of the poem, spread over five quintains (a total of twenty-five lines), also recalls that it was almost twenty-five years after Pakistan's creation in 1947 when Bangladesh seceded in 1971. Thus, the uneven meter and lines belie the internal rhythm of the poem, the internal rhymes and half-rhymes recalling the logic that necessitated Bangladeshi secession (for example by the state's refusal to grant Bengali the same status as Urdu, as discussed previously). How does the poetic persona, or the postcolonial subject of the independent nation-state resolve the specter of the crippled girl or the divided state? The choice is between confronting the ugliness of the past (and admitting that the state denied rights to its Bengali citizens thus forcing them to secede) and pretending that the unsavory does not exist. The poetic persona, the unnamed audience in the poem, the nation and state captured precisely and eloquently in the collective pronoun "we" decides to take the latter course and pretend that history did not shape the nation-state: "Nagged by an odd discomfort/ we

resolve not to visit her again" (24-25). Just like that, an ostrich-like attitude closes the door to the past. Closure is forced, but is final and decisive.

Kureishi's "Christmas Letter to my Sister" is another poem that narrates the nation in its postcolonial moment. The experience is one that can be argued to exist peculiarly for the anglophone reader/writer. It can be safely assumed that a Christmas letter from a Pakistani Parsi woman to her sister who is settled abroad would inevitably be written in English as a testimony to the historical processes of empire and colonization. The unrhymed couplets evoke images that trace the journey of the nation in its current moment. With this poem, Kureishi seems to turn to a moment of anti-closure, an exploration of the uncertainties of not being moored in a setting. The Christmas tree in the opening couplet, set in Karachi, is decorated "with trinkets from Bohri Bazaar, Germany, Japan" (2). A popular street market in Karachi, a European country known as a tourist attraction for its rich culture and history and an Asian economic superpower known as the 'land of the rising sun' are brought together to adorn a tree which marks the celebration of a Christian holiday, Christianity having been brought to the subcontinent by its European colonizers. Kureishi, from the small minority Parsi community, finds a natural affiliation with the colonizer's holiday. The sister, settled abroad, tries to recreate a subcontinental "home" in Europe and elsewhere. She "plant[s] spices in Cologne" (14), which will not settle in the foreign soil: "Your backyard's fertile as a flower-pot,/ they'll not grow native; yet are native" (15-16) to the landscape that the sister has left where, in their childhood, the two sisters were "alien and homegrown" (18). The juxtaposition of the foreign and the local underscores the "alien" nature of the "native," which has to "*grow* native" (emphasis added) as a process of belonging and finding closure in the politics of postcolonial identity. The minority subject of the state, existing in English due to class privilege, recognizes the differences she inhabits: "I teeter safe, and

braced to my uncertainties/ survive, Anglo-Indian as a dak bungalow" (23-24). Dak bungalows were rest-houses constructed by the British officers for their stay during hunting trips. These dak bungalows then became symbols of the bureaucracy's power and prestige in post-independence South Asia, with Bollywood cinema using these bungalows in the mountains, on tea estates, and in forests, as a romantic trope. The "dak" also evokes the linguistic possibility of "dark," after the retainers who served the white masters at these rest-houses. The sister, meanwhile, settled abroad, "play[s] house – never at home" (26). While one sister finds her nationality in her Anglo-Indian, native-alien otherness, the other sister must enact belonging in a metropolitan setting, but being reconciled to being "never at home," "homesick and not/ eager to come home," and "foreign everywhere" (37-38). Both these postcolonial subjects "stay haunted by the image of/ that makeshift geography we share" (39-40). Closure is thus unsettled here by the intrusions of the postcolonial identity, which forces an interrogation of an enforced sense of belonging.

Kureishi also describes the unique postcolonial legacy of the convent school, which is an essential part of the differentials of class-based education contextualized earlier in the dissertation. Desirable for the training it provides, and its English medium of education, administered by Christian missionary nuns, the "Convent School" remains to date a prestigious institution in Pakistan. The students "walked across two continents to school" (15), a striking image of the (post)colonial subject's journey. The missionary educator, called "Mother" by her pupils, "embarrassed us/ inverting history" (17-18). She describes "Battles we never won" (18), implying the colonial subject's reconfiguration in history told by European historians, reducing the subject to passivity:

> where starched with good intention often you
>
> embarrassed us

inverting history. Battles we never won. I grew tired of

apologising to myself. You implied,
in language, creed
and table-manners it's best to be near-white. (16-21)

The student wonders if the colonial, missionary educator can be certain of the finality of the "exclusive/ geography" she taught as part of her civilizing mission (22-23), and if she can chart "where its boundaries lie?" (25). The postcolonial nation-state inherits the inequalities and violence of the colonial state:

…Mother, your work here
is nearly done.
Your apt pupils take it from your hands,

repeat after you all your mistakes,
let fall and smash
the world you gave us on a tenuous axis,

and don't know what to do…. (25-31)

As the postcolonial state becomes more exclusionary, it echoes the colonial mistakes of alienating the various others that exist within the nation, thus carrying on the mission bequeathed by colonialism.

In "Kittens," Kureishi presents a choice between two equally desperate options to deal with the problem of postcolonial cultural identity. In the new nation, the articulation of this

identity presents a choice that is unique and difficult. The poem is one of the finest by a Pakistani poet, and merits being produced in full here:

There are too many kittens.
Even the cat is dismayed
at this overestimation
of her motherhood
and slinks away.
Kind friends
cannot adopt them all.

My relations say:
Take them to a bazaar
and let them go
each to its fate.
They'll live off pickings.
But they are so small
somebody may
step on one
like a tomato.
Or, anxious not to smear
his polished shoe,
kick them from his path
fastidiously.

If they survive the dogs,

they will starve gently,

squealing a little less

each day.

The European thing to do

is drown them.

Warm water

is advised to lessen the shock.

They are so small it takes

only a minute.

Hold them down

and turn your head away.

Then the water shatters.

Your hands are frantic.

Oddly like landed fish,

their blunt pink mouths

open and shut.

Legs strike out,

each delicate claw is bared.

They are blind and will never know

you did this. Let the water

compose itself.

Snagged

by two cultures, which

shall I choose?

The cultural choices confronting Kureishi become a metaphor for the larger dilemma of her life i.e., the European influences of her ancestry and the localized Indo-Muslim ethos of her lived circumstances. The contrast between the indigenous way of getting rid of excess kittens by dumping them by the wayside, leaving them to fend for themselves, is contrasted with the European way of drowning them in "warm water" "to lessen the shock." Either way, the essence of the act is a reinforcement of violence reminiscent of the choice of aborting an unborn fetus. "Kittens" presents the actions of the British administrators at partition as a botched up abortive practice. The inherent thematic of violence, which is immanent to the very act of partition/abortion/getting rid of the kittens, is presented in the poem as the inevitable state of postcolonial existence. The kittens are "blind and will never know/ you did this." The colonial subjects were similarly blindsided by the actions of the colonizers who divided them. This translates into the logic of partition violence which has over time necessitated violent and coercive states in India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh. Irene Gedalof has argued that "the exclusionary and absolutist models of community belonging that fuel ethnic and racialized conflict are underpinned by a notion of reproduction-as-stasis that ties female embodiment and women's reproductive activities to a logic of sameness" (Gedalof 92). The woman's body does not only physically reproduce offspring but also crucially participates in the reproduction of national, ethnic, and racial identities. The cat's profuse litter represents the reproductive potential of the female being circumscribed by the family and society at large in exercising their

regulatory right over her and her children. Thus, Kureishi's choice in exercising the biopolitics of two different cultures on her kittens becomes a metaphor for the colonial state's exercise of the power to reproduce multiple national, geographical, and communal postcolonial states from the colonial state. While Kureishi is forced to choose only one option, albeit violent, the postcolonial subject is forced always to embody two or more cultures. The combined history of the Indian subcontinent – though divided into Hindu and Muslim periods, and medieval Mughal, British, and postcolonial chronologies – represents a palimpsest of historical influences that have merged with each other and exist simultaneously. So, Kureishi's choice, though cruel, is a simple one. The postcolonial subject, unfortunately, faces a far more complicated set of choices.

The final poet whose work I look at in this chapter is Alamgir Hashmi, perhaps the most recognized Pakistani anglophone poet for an international audience. In 1990, Hashmi had made the bold claim that "some of the best English verse today is being written in Pakistan." Hashmi premised his argument in the evaluation of a distinct Pakistani voice in anglophone poetry, a voice that "carries both the responsibility and the authority of an ancient civilization recomposed part by part in its newer settings" (Hashmi 50). As an anglophone poet, Hashmi realizes the great burden and responsibility that comes with the appropriation of various influences, and the creation of a hybrid, transnational idiom, and linguistic capital. The poet assumes the authority and responsibility of creating such a hybrid space, where the *natural* others – whose immanence the postcolonial state presupposes – commingle and coexist. The state fails to understand the complexity of this hybrid creation and calls for a reversion to Urdu, which it erroneously assumes to be a precolonial language. However, Hashmi, like Rafat before him, realizes the great subversive power of not adhering to a precolonial conception of purity, and stress the importance of a postcolonial transnational hybrid.

Hashmi's "America is a Punjabi Word" is the most sustained engagement with anti-closure. The juxtaposition of the "Punjabi" language and ideological world on "America" provides a unique site for exploring the way Hashmi's verse engages with the postcolonial poet who moves between a postcolonial home and a state of neo-colonial temporary exile. The poem is composed of thirty short parts with a prologue. The title itself explores the impossibility of finding a final answer to the problem of postcolonial identity, with both America and Punjabi forming the irreconcilable opposites that nevertheless come in contact. The title is ironic because in Punjabi, America is popularly morphed into "Amrika," which through its absence as a word used in the poem indicates the un-Punjabi nature of America. This is because "Punjabi is not the tongue/ for truth whose subject/ is dubious" (6-8). The poet asks, "What is it I utter in this/ dream of language," not specifying whether the "dream" is of the English language or of Punjabi (11-12). This ambiguity is a deliberate imposition into the poem, because it allows the reader to wonder which language the poet really dreams in. The question of language, as already seen, is a crucial one to the anglophone poet, who asserts the alienation of Urdu by not including it in the juxtaposition of irreconcilable identity politics. Thus, while the language of the poem is English, the poet dreams it in Punjabi, where "America" can be as much a Punjabi word, as the word "Punjabi" written on the page is an "English" word, or a word existing in English. The ambiguity is essential to Hashmi's worldview because his world could be either of these. In fact, he finds a remarkable image for the postcolonial world meeting the neocolonial superpower: "A camel could as easily/ be it." That the camel could be a "world," an "alphabet," or a "word" is also left ambiguous to develop the failure of closure in one perspective meeting another worldview (17-18). The "clash of civilizations," from Samuel Huntington's notorious thesis of cultural clashes based on religious identities – mainly a perceived challenge from the Islamic world, becomes an

ambiguous and ungainly camel, an animal which does not seem to belong in the poem's setting somehow. The poem's first section, merely three lines long, but not arranged as a tercet, with a space dividing the first line from the other two, announces the setting:

I was in New York.

I went up an
updated pyramid.

The spatial and temporal jump from ancient Egypt to upscale New York in the 1970s (the book was published in 1979) is achieved through two prosaic statements and by recalling the "camel" trudging through a desert setting, in stark contrast to the urban upscale American metropolis. Underscoring this irreconcilable meeting of old and new, the poetic persona's encounter with the hotel receptionist prompts him to protest: "I am not your hieroglyph" (21). The transition between various settings moves beyond New York's "updated pyramid[s]" to the poet's own country in section four. The smoke from his cigarette "became a camel/ freed from/ a U-Haul cart/ in Karachi" (23). The U-Haul cart, a typical image marking the certainty of location, as with names of US cities in other parts of the poem, becomes a part of the rushing scenery that passes by the viewer's eyes as he rides his camel across the country. That the camel could possibly be a car is only briefly hinted at in section nine, as the traveler buys "some new seatbelts" (28). Section thirteen simply notes:

Here I am tying
my camel to a tree.

This is Louisville

in Kentucky. (32)

The camel as a possible figment of the poet-traveler's imagination, conjured as a metaphor for his unbelonging in the US, is finally made concrete in section twenty-two, when he meets a woman, who remains "unaware/ of our quadruped/ companion" (41). The camel thus serves as the metaphor of a moment where Hashmi rejects closure, not settling either in English, or in Punjabi (and definitely not in Urdu). Having travelled across the US on this metaphorical "camel," in section twenty-seven the poet arrives home: "Missing my camel,/ I go to the Punjab." The Punjab is "no thoughtless desert," but "No camel is like him," with the camel now morphing into a memory of the US, the poet assuming the role of exile from both cultures, belonging to none. His fellow citizens in Punjab do not recognize his loss, as they "still use" other camels, metaphors for other identities and cultures, "to convey/ the watermelon of doubt/ from house to house" (46). So, in section twenty-nine, the poet addresses "Happy New Yorkers," who might encounter his camel, now a metaphor for the alien self, separated from the poet and left behind in his exilic past, and tells them to approach the camel and "give him a nosegay of marigolds,/ and you will know what to make/ of a camel" (48). This fondness for the camel, ambiguously a metaphor and perhaps even a metonym for exile and journey, for the uncertainty of identification, and for the irreconcilability of civilizations, translates in the final, thirtieth section of the poem into the poet's rejection of closure. The final section provides an anti-closure of the poet's sustained journey for an identification, from the Punjab to the US, across the US, and finally back to Punjab:

The mayor
beams down the street,
reading a new sign:

SPEED LIMIT

5 MPH

CAMEL CROSSING

Camel Crossing? (47)

The uncertainty of the italicized ending, and the interrogative at the end only show that there is no end to the poem. The poem, as an exploration of the poet's journey in, through, and since America, is a metaphor for the way in which the postcolonial identity of a Pakistani is irreconcilable in the world of neocolonial America. There is no definite closure in even the sense of irreconcilability, though, with the title of the poem suggesting the possibility that even at their separate poles, the two worlds can co-exist. Thus, what Hashmi rejects is the postcolonial attitude to accepting the "clash of civilizations" as an inevitability, and charts the postcolonial anglophone poet's journey from one end of the colonial divide to another. 'Does he belong in the English language or not?' is precisely the unanswerable question that the final words of the poem echo: "*Camel Crossing?"* can thus be read as the postcolonial anglophone subject's "crossing" from one tradition to another, with all the attendant questions of whether he can belong in the adopted tradition or not, his discovery of the "anti-closure" of cross-national identities.

The canon of Pakistani anglophone poetry has not yet been charted. Whereas a definite canon of Pakistani anglophone fiction exists and has generated sustained critical studies, English poetry in the country has not received academic attention except for scant and superficial readings. In this chapter, I have offered some initial readings of some seminal poems which I contend are canonical in understanding and mapping the critical history of Pakistani poetry.

Comparisons with Urdu poetry and its role in nation-making will cement the place of this poetry as an alternate site of marking the nation. With the history of language politics in Pakistan and the lack of literacy in general, Pakistani anglophone poetry's future looks bleak. However, more sustained and developed readings of this canon, and addition of more texts into it, will help place postcolonial anglophone poetry from Pakistan into its rightful comparative stature in relation to the general canon of postcolonial anglophone poetry.

CHAPTER IV

RESILIENCE AND DISCLOSURE: RECOVERING PUNJABI POETICS IN PAKISTAN

Today I call out to Waris Shah:
"Rise, speak from within the graves,
And today explore the next page
Of the book of passion.
One daughter of Punjab had wept,
You penned and penned laments;
Today millions of daughters weep
And call to Waris Shah:
'Rise, sympathize with those in pain,
Rise and look at your Punjab;
Corpses are spread out in the forest
And the Chenab is full of blood.'"

This translation is from what can well be classified as the most popularly known, recognized, and remembered Punjabi poem of the latter half of the twentieth century. Titled "Ajj Aakhaan Waris Shah Noo(n)" (Today I Call to Waris Shah), it was written by Amrita Pritam (1919-2005), the most well-known woman Punjabi poet of the twentieth century. Pritam witnessed partition, and settled in East Punjab, or what is now Indian Punjab. The reason for the poem's universal and lasting appeal is that it captures the pain and grief of the partition of the Punjab province in 1947, which forms the necessary backdrop to understanding the post-independence experience of

being Punjabi in Pakistan. As Sara Kazmi states, Pritam "reconstitutes Waris Shah to implicate regional and nationalist patriarchies in the gendered violence of the partition of Punjab in 1947" (2). In this chapter, I read Pakistani Punjabi poetry as a site for challenging these "regional and nationalist patriarchies" which are entrenched in the postcolonial state of Pakistan. Punjabi poetry, despite its neglect, offers a site for the enactment of what Farina Mir has described as "resilience."

While partition as an event happened for two whole nations, the impact of human migration was felt most bitterly in the province of Punjab. Pritam's lament, which takes the form of an elegy, is also a dramatic monologue addressing the classical eighteenth-century Punjabi poet Waris Shah, whose long narrative poem Hir is a point of reference in Punjabi literary history and is considered the greatest text in the language. The pain suffered by Punjabi women at, during, and after Partition is the untold aspect of this event. Urvashi Butalia's *The Other Side of Silence* chronicles a few such stories emphasizing the human angle of the event extracted from the political fact of partition. Butalia notes that it is a "collection of memories, individual and collective, familial and historical" which constitute the fullest sense of the "reality of partition" (Butalia 10). The readings in this chapter recover the voices of ordinary citizens in Punjab, lending a voice to the subaltern who cannot speak.

I will read texts from a range of Pakistani poets writing in Punjabi. Some of them, for example Najm Hosein Syed and Nasreen Anjum Bhatti, have received critical attention over the years and have been the subject of academic work. However, others like Sara Shagufta have not yet found a place in the academic sphere due to linguistic and political limitations that I will highlight here. I present translations of a few poets, and readings of their selected work, as a point of entry into the matrix of regional poetry that forms an alternative to the "one nation, one

curriculum" critiqued previously. In the work of these poets, I read for an economy of loss that then translates into a postcolonial site of what I am calling 'dis-closure.' These readings are framed within the unequal space of "world literature" as a way forward for reading Punjabi citizenhood in the Pakistani postcolonial state's setting. I argue here that Punjabi poetry in Pakistan offers a site for reclaiming a loss imposed by the historical process described in this dissertation. In the face of a unifying and unitary idea of the nation advanced by the state itself, Punjabi poetry read in translation emphasizes and repairs this loss, thus underscoring the "resilience" of the "inner domain" of Punjabis.

Georges Bataille's "principle of loss" states that the various forms of expenditure "constitute a group characterized by the fact that in each case the accent is placed on a loss that must be as great as possible in order for that activity to take on its true meaning" (Bataille 169). In the arts, Bataille considers literature and theatre as examples of "symbolic expenditure" (171). On the relationship between poetry and loss, Bataille says:

> The term poetry, applied to the least degraded and least intellectualized forms of the expression of a state of loss, can be considered synonymous with expenditure; it in fact signifies, in the most precise way, creation by means of loss. Its meaning is therefore close to that of sacrifice… The poet frequently can use words only for his own loss; he is often forced to choose between the destiny of a reprobate…and a renunciation whose price is a mediocre activity, subordinated to vulgar and superficial needs. (171)

Bataille seems to think of poetry as an unproductive expenditure, but the idea of a principle of loss always operating in poetry is important for my reading of Punjabi in the postcolonial state, where the Punjabi poet is always at a loss. I am arguing here that Punjabi poetry in Pakistan "takes on its true meaning" because the loss felt by Punjabi poets (in the form of the partition of

Punjab, and of the subsequent language and identity politics in the newly independent county), detailed in the first section of this chapter, is "as great as possible." So, I claim that reading Punjabi poetry in Pakistan is a "symbolic expenditure" whereby poetry's "creation by means of loss" is the very site for poetry to reclaim the loss that creates it. In the case of partition, the loss of Punjabi identity is the precise stimulant for poetry. Thus, expenditure becomes a form of saving. However, arguing against Bataille, I show how the poet's work is not for "vulgar and superficial needs" but can be read to understand the concerns of the 'nation' and the poet's words are not "for his own loss" but for the larger loss of a national identity. This "symbolic expenditure" of "loss" creates what I am calling postcolonial disclosure, a productive and explosive potentiality in postcolonial poetry that moves beyond ideas of closure and anti-closure to emphasize reading poetry as reclamation. By disclosure, I do not mean just the act of revealing a hidden (or obvious) fact, or the fact itself, but a mode of approaching a text for its relationship with questions of identity that are always lost. An emphasis on loss in creating and writing poetry is thus a revelatory act for a postcolonial subject/scholar.

Itamar Even-Zohar argues that translated literatures should be read for their relations in the "literary polysystem" and for their role in shaping this larger system. The readings I perform here are all connected to each other thus showing the polysystem as it exists within the source literature in Punjabi and how it can be read in correlation to itself and other literatures when it is translated into a target language like English.

To understand the fullest significance of this disclosure, it is necessary to relate a brief history of those forces that create it. Punjabi remains a widely-contested identity formation in both postcolonial Pakistan and India. Whereas in what is now Indian Punjab, there is ownership of the language, and it has become associated with a distinct Punjabi Sikh identity, in Pakistani

Punjab the language has been treated with an ambivalent neglect by both state and intellectuals. There is some scholarship on the history of the language and the politics around it in post-independence Pakistan, but there are still many gray areas. Divided into two scripts, and various dialects, the language remains contested even in India where it is nevertheless far more acceptable than it is in Pakistan. Anne Murphy has said that "to write in the Punjabi language today is therefore to engage directly with the religious and national implications of script and language choice, as well as a national border" (Murphy 70). The choice of script, language, religion, and nation while writing in Punjabi is an exercise in "loss," for each option preferred emphasizes the one not chosen. Thus, when Pakistani Punjabi writers choose to write in the Arabic-Persianized script called Shahmukhi, they underscore the loss of Gurmukhi, which is adapted by writers on the other side of the border. The Pakistani identity formation's embracing of Urdu as the only national language marks a necessary link between the 'paganism' of regional languages, particularly making Punjabi synonymous with the Sikh religion, thus underscoring the "loss" of the secular precolonial identity of Punjab. Gurmukhi and Shahmukhi, the two competing scripts of Punjabi, were established as religiously identified scripts during the colonial regime, with Persian-based Shahmukhi gaining a dominant position. Mahmood Awan has stated that at the time of partition, the writers who settled in East Punjab, now in India, knew both scripts, while those who settled in West Punjab, in Pakistan, knew only Shahmukhi. So, Awan argues that "distances furthered, common literary heritage faced existential threat and coming generations of Punjab got alienated from their collective ethos." This alienation from the "collective ethos" of a pluralistic Punjabi identity and cultural formation leads to the loss of an ancient part of the Punjabi identity, which is reflected in the Punjabi poet's "symbolic expenditure" leading to the disclosure of what is often misread as postcolonial 'melancholia.'

Alyssa Ayres points out that in Pakistan, the Punjabi language movement "emerges from a region of Pakistan [the most densely populated province of Punjab] that has been widely assessed as holding all forms of political, economic, and even military power," thus pointing to the paradox inherent in an ethnic majority demanding language right (Ayres 12). When other regions of Pakistan accuse Punjab of exploiting the resources of the smaller provinces, they ignore the fact that a in their push for power, Punjabi elite have "lost" their own language and its cultural ethos as detailed previously in this dissertation. Loss thus becomes the central motif of Punjab's ascendancy and dominance. Unsurprisingly, the reclamation of Punjabi is done in circles that do not subscribe to the exclusive political domination of Punjabi elite. Sara Kazmi has argued that the Punjabi movement in Pakistan during the 1960s and the 1970s combined "Marxist ideology with a historical argument about the colonial hierarchization of South Asian languages, to link language with class instead of ethnicity" (Kazmi 228). She highlights the lack caused by "academic work [which] has rarely combined progressive politics and language activism…for studying literary and cultural movements in South Asia" and traces this lack mainly to the "enduring influence of the colonial categorization of languages" (228). The lack of academic work, whether driven by progressive politics or not, only accentuates the loss of an understanding of the complex nuances of Punjabi identity in Pakistan, marked both by political domination, as well as linguistic and cultural self-cannibalism. Julien Columeau has also identified a Marxist resistance to Urdu as national language in Punjab whereby Urdu was contested as the language of the hegemonic rulers, while Punjabi was presented as the language of the people. However, as Columeau posits, the Marxist articulation of Punjabi was itself in reaction to calls from within Punjab for cementing the place of Urdu as the language of Punjab. A group of Pakistani nationalists, who did not identify with the Marxist strain, also advocated for

Punjabi in this scenario, arguing that Punjabi was part of the autochthonous identification of the local people while Urdu was the language of settlers. Meanwhile, in Indian Punjab, a Maoist rebellion against the state influenced a variety of poets who became identified with the creation of a revolutionary literature in the language.

The loss of Punjabi linguistic identity is a colonial phenomenon that was a consequence of British administrative policies in the region. As Kazmi shows, the colonial administrators perpetuated the myth of the various South Asian languages being hierarchically superior or inferior to each other. In an official letter addressed to the undersecretary of the education department on September 1, 1894, the British commissioner and superintendent of the Rawalpindi division, Lt. Col. J. A. L. Montgomery took up the issue of the teaching of Punjabi as a language in the schools of Punjab. He built his arguments based on the opinions of J. Wilson, the deputy commissioner of Shahpur who had recommended that "in all primary schools, education should be carried on only in the Punjabi language written in the Roman character" (Chaudhry 177). The commissioner of Rawalpindi division provided a detailed response to Wilson's proposals for promoting Punjabi. He called Wilson's aim to formulate "a common Punjabi language and its general introduction as the language of the primary schools and the courts" "an impossibility" (168). Compared to Punjabi, he argued that Urdu was a language "with a large vocabulary and a wide literature." In contrast, he described Punjabi as "a practically unwritten language, with such a poor vocabulary" (168).

The commissioner's view is based in the loss of a language's cultural and symbolic capital, a loss emphasized by the postcolonial state's replication of this argument of the language's apparent lack of an orthographic tradition. The British administrators advocated this lack as a measure under their policy of dividing Punjab and quelling resistance to colonial rule.

The postcolonial state's continuation of this policy then requires the poet's intervention through the "symbolic expenditure" of poetry, with the poet addressing the lack through creation. Wilson had argued that the rural and agricultural population of Punjab resisted education because it was imparted in Urdu, a language foreign to Punjab. For Montgomery, responding to Wilson, the reason why these classes resisted education was because "there is at present no desire for education for its own sake; it is regarded generally only as a means to Government employment." He did not think that the compulsory teaching of Urdu offered any impediment to the spread of education, going so far as to suggest that introducing Punjabi "would not be popular even among Punjabi villagers" (169).

In his earlier correspondence dated April 21, 1894, Wilson had made some very interesting observations regarding the politics of Punjabi and Urdu in the colonial educational administration. Some of his observations need to be reproduced here to emphasize that the colonial attitude to Punjabi was an active choice made by the administration to alienate Punjabis from their language. Wilson believed that the ordinary Punjabi rural student found Urdu as alien as an English rural student found French and that Urdu "too often makes use of unfamiliar, pedantic words drawn from Persian, Arabic or Sanskrit, which *require to be translated into Punjabi* before they are understood by the school-boy" (170 emphasis added). This is still largely true of school education in rural Punjab, where the language of discourse in the classroom is Punjabi, and effectively all subjects are translated into Punjabi before the schoolteacher teaches them. Drawing a historical parallel with the tradition of providing education in England only in Latin and later in French, Wilson pointed out that Persian remained the official language of Punjab until the British enforced Urdu as the official language:

> And it will not be until we offer education to the people in their own familiar Punjabi that we shall succeed in inducing the masses to take advantage of it. There are in the Punjab nearly sixteen millions [sic] of people whose mother-tongue is Punjabi. Is it to be imagined that we can in the course of several generations, teach any large proportion of this vast number to read and write a language so foreign to them as Urdu? (171)

Of course, as it transpired, the government did not follow Wilson's advice to provide primary school education exclusively in Punjabi written in the Roman character. Instead, the British chose to promote Urdu. Perhaps, if they had listened to Wilson and implemented Punjabi as the language of instruction in Punjab, its social status would have been as privileged as Urdu and English, and it would have become the language of official use in the province. Retrospectively, colonial patronage of the Punjabi language, as advocated by Wilson, would have been the tool that would have helped in 'manufacturing consent' for the social ascension of the language complex of Punjabi. The 'ideological state apparatus' of schools that promoted Urdu as the medium of instruction created the social terms for its acceptance and desirability. Wilson proposed the creation of this consent for the language of sixteen million people. The rejection of Wilson's proposal by the British administrative functionaries underscores the colonial subjugation of Punjabi and the colonial patronage of Urdu.

The government made its choice instead based on the suggestions of several British colonial administrators who participated in the debates around Wilson's suggestions. One of these, W. S. Talbot, the deputy commissioner of Jhelum, in a letter dated June 26, 1894, endorsed Wilson's proposal in principle. However, he pointed out that to implement the scheme "would involve the supersession of Urdu by English or Romanized Punjabi in the Government offices" (189). To him, this would be difficult because officials, especially those in the lower

grades of the service, had only received education in Urdu. Thus, the replacement scheme would take a while. Talbot crucially pointed out that if the change to Punjabi were to be made, it would lead to the "isolation of the province, or rather of the Punjabi districts" (190). Wilson had anticipated this objection by arguing that English was already becoming the language of communication between the different regions of India (172), but Talbot believed that it would take a long time for English to replace Urdu as the general language of everyday use (190). Another official, the inspector of schools of the Rawalpindi circle, disputed Wilson's (still contestable) claim that Urdu was foreign to Punjab. Displaying standard colonial attitude to indigenous languages, the inspector remarked in his memorandum dates June 23, 1894, that Urdu and Punjabi "appear to be dialects of the same language" (191). Quoting the previous census, which had listed the speakers of Urdu at 17 percent of the population while Punjabi speakers formed 62 percent of the population, the inspector pointed out that the report did not reflect what percentage of the Punjabi-speaking population were also conversant in Urdu, with the supposition that such statistics would support the belief that Urdu was a widely-spoken language in Punjab (192). In another classical example of British colonial attitude, the inspector of schools stated that "Urdu has now become literate; and it would take many years before any dialect of the Punjabi could arrive at the same stage of development" (192-193). The contradiction between the British language policy and the administrative expediency in implementing Urdu as the official language of the British government in Punjab was the reason that in colonial Punjab, Urdu became the language of educated and affluent classes while Punjabi became the language of "peasantry and lower classes in towns only" (Rahman 216). The loss of linguistic capital gets translated into a loss in social status.

In his study of language movements in the Indian states of Punjab and Uttar Pradesh, Paul Brass finds a vital link between language and the articulation of a national identity. For Brass, the political elite of these regions play a pivotal role in standardizing a popular dialect. The elite, political and intellectual, participate in "internal value creation" whereby cultural production emphasizes and valorizes a mother tongue glorifying the cultural symbols of a forgotten but perfect past (Brass 11). The translation of value creation into linguistic hegemony has thus been the hallmark of Punjabis valorizing Urdu. As the correspondence quoted above shows, the Punjabi elite actually participated in an internal devaluation of their language due to colonial policies and pressures.

Kazmi argues that work on the Punjabi literary and cultural movement in Pakistan has "reproduced the themes of regional assertion and ethnonationalism" (229). For example, Christopher Shackle highlights the role of the federal government in the 1960s in promoting inter-provincial ethnic rivalries which led to the formation of several Punjabi literary societies in Lahore. But as Kazmi points out, the Pakistani state is a predominantly Punjabi institution, a fact that has led to the solidification of anti-Punjab sentiments in Balochistan, Sindh, and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Ayres has also highlighted the inherent contradiction of a language movement rooted in ethnonationalism emerging in Punjab whose "well noted dominance in Pakistan" makes it difficult to understand the language movement as "an effort by political entrepreneurs seeking advantage through incorporation with, or resistance to, the 'center' (Ayers 69). Similarly, Tariq Rahman has argued that "Punjabis already have power which ethnicity would threaten." For Rahman, the appeal of the Punjabi movement is "sentimental" rather than "instrumentalist." As he states, the purpose of the Punjabi movement is to emphasize "the pre-modern sentimental attachment to a distinctive way of life, conveniently symbolized by Punjabi"

(Rahman 209). Contrary to Rahman, Ayres argues that the movement generates "symbolic capital" becoming "a struggle for recognition – a struggle for a particular language tradition to gain acceptance as a legitimate language" (Ayres 935). So, while the appeal of Punjabi might not be ethnic, it is definitely emotional and addresses the formation of a canon. Sara Ahmed has noted that the expression "use it or lose it" applies to minority languages as well as to other things. "Not using a language," Ahmed says, "not exercising a spoken tongue, can mean to participate in its extinction" (Ahmed 4-5). The productive exploration of the idea of "use" juxtaposed against the idea of "expenditure" highlights how the refusal to use a language can reduce its symbolic value and cultural capital.

Abbas Zaidi has described the alienation suffered by Punjabi in Pakistan as "the diasporification of Punjabi in Punjab," arguing that "despite being Pakistan's overwhelmingly majority language and having no threat from another language or ethnolinguistic group, Punjabi is facing diasporification within its own homeland" (Zaidi 210). Using a sociolinguistic research paradigm called Ethnolinguistic Vitality Model, Zaidi demonstrates the "extreme marginalization" of Punjabi in Pakistan. For example, in response to the postulate that "Punjabi is taught in schools," he finds that Punjabi is not taught in Punjab at any level and that official correspondence in Punjab cannot be carried out in Punjabi. For Zaidi, it is the attitude of the Punjabis to their language which is causing its "diasporification." He argues that the derogatory attitude of Punjabis to their language is partially due to an "Arabist shift" in the postcolonial politics of Pakistan. The other reason that Zaidi offers is far more interesting and unconventional. Since Punjabis are the dominant ethnic, political, and economic group in the country, Zaidi sees the vilification of Punjabi by the Punjabis as a political move whereby "by denigrating their own language, they have denigrated all the indigenous languages of Pakistan" (220). The ingenuity of

this political move is that the Punjabi elite cash in on the Islamic identity of Urdu as Pakistan's national language and have "monopolized the national-Islamic language which has helped them in perpetuating their hold on the rest of the ethnolinguistic groups of Pakistan" (220). Haneef Ramay, a former chief minister of Punjab whose book *Punjab Ka Muqaddimah* (The Case of Punjab) is ironically written in Urdu, has also argued along the same lines that the Punjabi elite abandoned Punjabi after partition to consolidate their political ascendancy in Pakistan.

Julien Columeau argues that in post-partition Lahore, three distinct linguistic ideologies emerged. The first was advocated by Molvi Abdul Haque and Molana Salahuddin Ahmed which propagated Urdu as the single language of the nation. For example, Columeau quotes Salahuddin Ahmed's work arguing for the implementation and promotion of Urdu in Punjab. In a remark that echoes British colonial attitudes to indigenous languages as articulated in Macaulay's infamous Minute, Salahuddin Ahmed wrote that "all the literature [of Punjabi] would only fill a cupboard" (qtd. in Columeau 6). The loss I am charting here is a continuum that connects the colonial period to the postcolonial. The postcolonial experience is characterized by an expenditure aimed at redressing the loss, during which the loss gets heightened. The understanding of the Punjabi literary tradition as inferior or insufficient contributes to the economy of loss in which Punjabi always remains secondary in the "world republic of letters." The second linguistic ideology that Columeau identifies is a Marxist ideology that, according to him, led to the beginning of the Urdu-Punjabi controversy. In the first Progressive Writers' Conference, held in Lahore in December 1947, the organizers proposed a resolution asking for the use of regional languages as mediums of instruction in Pakistan. Punjabi was showcased by the organizers to underscore its value. Columeau quotes Punjabi poet and activist Sharif Kunjahi who questioned the vehement opposition against Punjabi. Kunjahi argued that the opposition to

the regional language was strongest in Punjab, highlighting the role of British colonial administrators in engendering communal hatred between Sikhs and Muslims through an emphasis on Punjabi as a Sikh language. Thus, for Columeau, "the criticism of the hegemony of Urdu and plea for Punjabi are a manifestation of the language ideology of the Marxist intellectuals" (Columeau 10). Limiting language activism to a political ideology however seems counter-productive. The loss of language and identity is not a political loss only, but a social and ontological one as well. So, the symbolic expenditure that will redress this loss will not exclude the poetry of those writers who do not write with a Marxist ideology.

The third language ideology that Columeau identifies is the ideology of a group he describes as "Pakistani nationalists." This group believed that in post-independence Pakistan, Urdu and Punjabi did not need to be antagonists and could coexist. Thus, they differed from the earlier pro-Punjabi articulations of the Marxists. This perspective is the most productive because it allows for a bifurcation between a national language whose domain is the public sphere, and a regional language whose domain is both private and public. It also allows a global language like English to exist in this paradigm. Thus, it reclaims Punjabi on equal footings with the national language and allows it to participate in debates on world literature not as a minority language but as one with its own standing as the language of a nation.

Returning to Pritam's poem quoted at the beginning of this chapter, in Kazmi's reading of this poem, Pritam "underlines the destructive and interrelated role of colonial complicity, nationalist ideology, regional patriarchy, and religious identity in creating a situation in which ordinary people turned to killing their own neighbours" (Kazmi 9). For Farina Mir, Pritam's "elegiac" poem laments that "the ethos of the Punjabi literary formation" has arrived at a standstill and appears "to wane at the cusp of independence and diminished further during the

postcolonial period" (Mir 183). The loss of the literary formation is as deeply set in the Punjabi psyche as the loss of unified Punjab at partition. Ironically, the postcolonial Punjabi citizenry incorporates itself into the state in a way that necessitates its self-cannibalism, as explained earlier. The readings that follow attempt a recovery of the Punjabi literary formation in the postcolonial state.

One paradigm that is relevant to framing the discussion here is the relationship between what Partha Chatterjee postulates as the "inner domain" or "the domain of the spiritual" and the "outside" which denotes the material world. For Chatterjee, in the domain of the "outside" the West has assumed supremacy over the East. For him, the domain of the "spiritual" represents "sovereign territory" so while the Western colonizer has assumed dominance in the domain of the "outside," he cannot intervene in the "inner" domain. Contesting against Chatterjee's notion, specifically in the context of colonial Punjab, Tahir Kamran argues that in fact the "inner" domain of Punjabi socio-cultural life was affected markedly by the British colonizers. Kamran follows K. N. Panikkar who argued that "there was no sphere of culture, inner or outer, which remained beyond colonial reach" (qtd. in Kamran 12). Hussain Ahmad Khan has followed Kamran in showing that a "nomos" between the native Sufis and the artisans of Punjab resisted colonial architectural models instituted through the colonial institution of the art school.

Though Kamran's argument is largely true, I contest his claim partially because the "inner" domain of the Punjabi literary and cultural sphere, as demonstrated by Farina Mir's influential work, did retain some elements of resistance to colonial power. Mir has called this phenomenon "resilience." Mir emphasizes "resilience over resistance" because she argues that the Punjabi literary formation developed independently from the colonial state. She explains how despite colonial intervention favoring Urdu, Punjabi language and the Punjabi "literary

formation" survived and thrived during colonial rule. Mir argues that "important realms of activity in Punjab's society remain relatively unaffected" and that "the Punjabi literary formation reveals a different history of social and cultural relations." For Mir, "the Punjabi literary formation demonstrates important cultural continuities in colonial Punjab and suggests that older ways of being remained immensely important to its inhabitants" (Mir 24). Mir's work thus provides an important counterpoint to Kamran's claim that the "inner" domain of Punjabis was manipulated by colonial intervention. The Punjabi poets who write in Pakistan resist any influence on their "inner" domain from the state and society.

Two recent works that highlight the importance of reading alternative conceptions of the nation deserve special mention here. Anita Weiss's book *Countering Violent Extremism in Pakistan: Local Actions, Local Voices* provides an insight into alternative spaces where resistance to religious extremism and violence is performed. These include, among other spaces, schools, and comics. Weiss also performs readings of Pashto and Sindhi poetry as sites of resistance to violence and extremism. Weiss finds peripheral voices in these regional literatures that articulate a more secular, inclusive, and grounded understanding of regional identity articulated within the paradigm of a notion-state struggling against violent extremism. Meanwhile, *Pakistan: Alternative Imag(in)ings of the Nation State*, edited by Jurgen Schaflechner, Christina Oesterheld, and Ayesha Asif, argues for a multi-faceted and pluralistic understanding of Pakistan as a state comprising multiple nationalities and not just one nation. What has once been called "a state insufficiently imagined" is really one with several "counterpublics" which "makes alternative images and imaginings of the nation state possible" (viii). The book contests the discourse which classifies Pakistan as a "crisis state." Significantly, the first three chapters of the book focus on Urdu literary texts. Both these recent significant

works do not address the Punjabi alternative imaginary of the nation-state due to Punjab's image as the dominant political sphere in Pakistan. This lack underscores my claim that the Punjabi literary formation remains neglected in mainstream literary and cultural analysis. This chapter recovers contemporary Pakistani Punjabi poetry from discourses of power and neglect.

The two most famous works on Punjabi poetry published in English in Pakistan are Najm Hosain Syed's *Recurrent Patterns in Punjabi Poetry*, and Shafqat Tanveer Mirza's *Resistance Themes in Punjabi Literature*. With such expansive names, one would expect these titles to contain a panoramic view of Punjabi poetry from different eras. However, both Syed and Mirza write exclusively on classical poetry. Syed does not trace the recurrent patterns of classical poetry in contemporary poetry while Mirza also fails to read for resistance in contemporary Punjabi poetry. This highlights the fact that studies of Punjabi poetry remain limited mainly to classical poets like Bulleh Shah, Waris Shah, and Shah Hussain. Punjabi poetry in the postcolonial era, therefore, remains doubly marginalized. Oppressed thus, Punjabi's "diasporification" places it in a position where it is always othered by both the dominant discourse of Urdu-as-national-language and of Punjabis-as-oppressors-of-other-nationalities. Thus, when Weiss reads Sindhi and Pashto poetry as sites of resistance against violent extremism, it builds on an understanding of Sindhi and Pashtun ethnonationalists being marginalized by a Punjabi-dominated state which patronizes Urdu for the purpose of nation-building. Punjabi's speakers have failed to share their political power with their language and with those who participate in the literary formation.

Disclosure and the Poet:

In the introduction to this dissertation, I have mentioned Pakistan's most famous and popular Urdu poet Faiz Ahmed Faiz. I had briefly underscored the irony that a Marxist Punjabi

chose to express himself exclusively in Urdu. Faiz did, however, write a handful of poems in Punjabi, which only increases the critic's belief that if he had chosen to express himself in his mother tongue, he would have contributed some truly beautiful and important poetry to Punjabi's corpus. Faiz's "symbolic expenditure" in Urdu highlights the loss of an expenditure in Punjabi which he chose not to do. By not using the language as his medium, Faiz helped force the mother tongue into disuse and extinction. Thus, the idea of using a language to keep it relevant is essential to not losing it and expending it to keep it becoming richer. This is unlike his predecessor, Muhammad Iqbal, who chose to abandon the language in his literary work. In fact, in the case of Iqbal, a popular story, though not corroborated by historical evidence, suggests that in a meeting with Rabindranath Tagore, the Bengali Nobel laureate asked him why he did not write in his mother tongue Punjabi. The so-called "poet of the East" is rumored to have replied that he did not feel Punjabi to be as well-developed as a literary language as Bengali. The story, even if unconfirmed, rings true because it demonstrates the attitude of Urdu-speaking Punjabi elite and intelligentsia to the Punjabi language which developed through successive colonial regimes, Mughal and British. The Punjabi elite themselves have chosen to discredit the linguistic and symbolic capital of their language, marking the devaluation of their own linguistic currency. Faiz too was colored in the same ethos as Iqbal. Trained in Arabic and Persian, with fluent command over English, Faiz wrote Urdu verse while being the editor of a leading English newspaper. However, the very few Punjabi poems of his that have been published are worthy of attention. Given the language politics at work in Faiz's own lifetime and his own personal case, it is important to start with him to underscore the issues at stake in this dissertation.

In the collected works of Faiz, titled *Nuskha Hāye Wafaa*, there are a total of seven Punjbi poems. Of these, "Rabba Sacheya" (O True Lord) is the most revolutionary, and contains

Faiz's favorite theme of a secular and socialist nationalism with guaranteed access to means of production for all citizens of the nation-state. It provides a site for the postcolonial state of disclosure. Addressing God, Faiz reminds Him of His promise made to Adam at the moment of Original Sin. The banishment of humans from the Garden of Eden is the loss of an idyllic homeland, replicated in the worldly displacement from Punjab upon partition. In the Abrahamic tradition, man was deputed to Earth as God's representative who was to have access to the bounties of life on this planet:

Saadiya(n) naimataa(n) teria(n) dolataa(n) nay(n)

Saada nayb tey aalijaah hai(n) tu(n)

[Our bounties are thine wealth

Thou art our deputy and lord on Earth] (Faiz 594)

To this promise the speaker of the poem replies now with an accusation that God has abandoned him after banishing him from His heaven:

Kaddi saar vi layi-oo rabb saaiyaa(n)

Tere shah naal jag ki kitiyaa(n) nay(n)?

[Have You ever taken note O my Lord

What this world has done to your king?]

Displacement from the rooted comfort of Eden leaves the human as "lost" in the world. Faiz proceeds to list the problems faced by the ordinary citizens of the South Asian postcolonial state:

Kithay dhauns police sarkkar di aye

Kithay dhāndli maar patwaar di aye

[Sometimes it is the police and government that bully me

Sometimes it is revenue and land officials who loot me] (Faiz 595)

Stating that all he wants is “izzat da tukkar” (respectfully earned bread), the poetic persona challenges the Creator:

Meri mannay(n) tay teriaa(n) mai(n) manna(n)

Teri saunh jay ik wi gal morhaa(n)

Jay aih maang nai(n) pujdi tey(n) rabba

Fer mai(n) jaawaa(n) tay rab koi hor lorhaa(n)

[If You listen to me, I shall obey You

I swear on You I will abide by all commands

If this demand doesn’t agree with You my Lord

Then should I go and find another god?] (Faiz 596)

Faiz captures the dilemma of an ordinary man encumbered by an oppressive postcolonial nation-state’s repressive apparatus. While Faiz’s Urdu poetry also articulates similar concerns, the Punjabi poem acquires apocryphal status for articulating the concerns of the peasantry in its own language. The ordinary peasant, laborer, brick kiln worker, and other disenfranchised social groups find an articulation of their dissatisfaction with the nation-state that has failed to fulfil its promises to its citizens in the colloquial language that is spoken in the fields, workshops, factories, roadside food stalls and even in most homes in Punjab.

Even though Faiz has a similar and a very popular poem in Urdu, titled “Intesaab” (Dedication), that poem does not challenge the authority of the nation-state represented in “Rabba Sacheya” in the person of God. God here represents the religious, patriarchal, and ideological structures of society and state, which contribute to the oppression of ordinary citizens. God’s authority represents the loss of human agency in the postlapsarian world. In mounting a challenge to the authority of the state and by extension the authority of religion,

Faiz's Punjabi poem marks a unique site for resistance against an all-encompassing nationalism which his Urdu poem fails to address. Thus, it discloses the presence of a resilience within the patriarchal and ideological nation-state, whose citizens, though they are formed by it, question their own formation as subjects. The question of subject-formation does not, however, challenge the existence of the nation-state. It rather asks for the incorporation of multiple subject formations within the larger nation-state. It can be argued here that the Urdu poem cannot mount such a revolutionary challenge precisely because of Urdu's participation in the formation of the nation-state of Pakistan. "Rabba Sacheya" showcases the alternative nationalisms articulated in the regional languages of Pakistan, similar to Weiss's readings of Pashto and Sindhi poetry. As this dissertation shows, in English and Punjabi, these nationalisms acquire the character of resilience. So, the poem does not offer closure, but in its almost playful challenge to the figure of God, it presents an eternal state, a disclosure, a revelation which is postcolonial in its essence since it depicts the legacy of colonial institutions. Disclosure brings loss.

The case of a folk tradition, particularly in music and poetry, provides greater evidence for this phenomenon of regional literatures' challenge to repressive structures. Regional languages in South Asia have a very strong and vibrant folk tradition, which has always provided an alternate repository for registering, recording, and reinforcing regional nationalisms. So, even during colonial periods, folk songs told the tales of local heroes' resistance against colonial oppression. Punjabi, Sindhi, Balochi, and Pashto folk music have a trans-regional presence and popularity in Pakistan. Punjabi music is especially popular all over the country. Urdu, meanwhile, as a national language, has a limited folk tradition of its own. Its folk literature is borrowed from regional sources. Its poetry and music include elements of the classical but not of the folk. Punjabi folk is particularly rich in the many forms that it employs. The forms of songs

for birth, marriage, fertility festivals, etc. are all different and varied, thus creating a very rich folk tradition. Challenges to Punjabi's vibrancy and sophistication as a language do not take into account the vibrancy and richness of the folk tradition and its universal appeal. Studies of Punjabi folk can reveal insights about Punjabiyat (being Punjabi) that will provide new ways forward for research in the humanities and social sciences.

Kalra and Butt demonstrate how poetry became a site for expressing public discontentment against General Zia-ul-Haq's oppressive regime (1977-88). They show that the resistance of Punjabi poets transcended barriers of class and social standing in this period. Ustad Daaman (1911-1984), perhaps the most popular Punjabi poet of the period, wrote a famous poem against Zia's martial law, which acquired proverbial status in Punjab. The poem highlights the anger and rebellion that was felt by all segments of society and carries a revolutionary challenge, much like Faiz's "Rabba Sacheya":

Mere mulk de do khuda,

La illah te martial law

Ik rehanda ai arshaan ute,

Dooja rehanda farshaan ute

Uhda naa(n) aye Allah mia(n),

Ehda naan aye general Zia

[My country has two gods,

La Ilah and martial law

One lives in the sky,

The other on the earth

The first one's name is Allah,

This other is General Zia] (qtd. in Kalra and Butt 1055-56)

Zia's regime was predicated on his exploitation of religious sentiment, with the military ruler often claiming that God himself had entrusted the government to him. Daaman's juxtaposition of the concept of God's unity and oneness against the military ruler's self-centered regime brought charges of blasphemy against the poet for expressing the sheer frustration of all citizens against their exploitation in the name of religion. Religious oppression enacted through scriptural laws was the hallmark of Zia's dictatorship, and Daaman reminds the military ruler that he is playing god in the name of religion. The rhyme scheme of this stanza in Punjabi is a-a-b-a-a. The second stanza follows a-a-c-c-b-a-a-a:

Wah wah be wah general Zia

Kaun kehnda tenoon aithoon ja

Saday des ich maujaan ei maujaan

Jidher wekhoo faujaan ei faujaan

Lakhaan bande qaedi ho ke

Adhah dendey mulk gawaa

Wah wah be wah general zia

Kaun kehnda tenoon aithoon ja

[Wah Wah General Zia

Who says to you go from here?

In our country, it is all fun and barmy

Wherever you look, the army, the army

Hundreds and thousands jailed

Half the country derailed

Wah Wah General Zia

Who can say, go, go!] (Kalra and Butt 1056)

The strict metrical pattern in the original evokes a lyricism peculiar to the Punjabi language. The rhythm of the poem evokes the singsong quality of an anthem, akin to the "soundtrack of the revolution" which Elliott Colla has called "the prosody of the revolt" in the context of the Tahrir Square protests by the Egyptians earlier in the century. Like the slogans chanted by the Egyptian protestors, Daaman's anti-martial law anthem emphasizes the couplet form as being peculiarly appropriate to a revolutionary chant. The poem clearly mocks the military's failed adventures, especially in erstwhile East Pakistan, and laments the militarization of the Pakistani state and society. It was revolutionary anthems of this kind that led to Daaman and other Punjabi poets being labelled "anti-national, due to the association of the language with Sikhs and therefore India" (Kalra and Butt 1057). As I highlighted in the introduction to this dissertation, the irony of Arooj Aurangzaib's chanting of a popular Urdu revolutionary poem in the cultural capital of Punjab begs the question of why the language of resistance is equated with the national language in this case. As Weiss has shown in the case of Pashto and Sindhi poetry, and as Kalra and Butt have shown in this case, the potential of reading the Punjabi "literary formation" as a site of resistance and "resilience" is immense and in the case of Pakistani Punjabi poetry, only very initial steps are being taken for recovering this space.

Ustad Daaman's poem on the partition of the subcontinent demonstrates the dis-closure of the postcolonial state's political distance from the postcolonial subject. The ordinary Punjabi citizen, forced into migration, does not find absolute closure on the logic of partition. Rather, for the Punjabi on both sides of the border, the uprooting from centuries of being settled and prosperous is the defining identity marker underscored by loss:

Laali akhān di payi dass di aye

Roye tussi we o, roye assi we aa(n)

[The redness in our eyes reveals it all:

You have wept, and so have we!] (Daaman 98)

The loss of a shared experience of a pre-colonial antiquity in Punjab informs the tears of the Punjabi poet. Daaman does not reject partition, but it is the scale and cost of the human tragedy that moves him to weep over the division without mourning it. The verse identifies the loss by first recognizing that the "tussi/you" and the "assi/I" may be separated, but are united by their tears. The poem offers a site for "resilience" where the "inner domain" of Punjabi identity stays intact despite colonial and postcolonial interventions. It remembers the shared trauma of partition and its aftermath as a way to disclose these tears to each other.

Ahmed Rahi (1923-2002) was one of Punjab's most recognized voices. As a film lyricist he acquired legendary status in Punjabi cinema, but as a literary poet too he holds a special place. Rahi's poetry evokes Punjabi classical poetics in bringing the domestic life of a woman to the stage. Rahi employs the classical poetic idiom of Punjabi to represent continuities between precolonial and postcolonial Punjab where the representation of women's voices requires the vehicular appropriation of a feminine idiom by male poets. Classical poets like Bulleh Shah, Waris Shah, and Shah Hussain often wrote in a feminine idiom expressing a spiritual quest through the metaphor of a woman's search for love. Feminine personae in classical Punjabi poetry, though bound by patriarchal society, appear surprisingly liberated and fierce. In the postcolonial ethos of Rahi's Punjab, the female characters become more confined by their patriarchal, rural society but the poetry reflects a continuation of the "resilience" which Mir has read in the persistence of the Hir tradition. In a poem titled "Trinjan" (a place where women

gather to weave the spindle, sitting in a loose circular formation), the legend of Hir engages with postcolonial concerns with gender roles in society. The poem is told from the perspective of a young woman sitting at the spinning wheel addressing her mother and expressing her deep-set grief which is inherent to her subjective position as a woman in a patriarchal society:

Jaavan kerhay paasay

Aggay, picchay, sajjay, khabbay

Yaa(n) kedo yaa(n) kherhay

Jinhaa(n) nay lakhaa(n) hiraa(n) luttia(n)

Lakhaa(n) ranjhay saarhay

Kinoo(n) sunavaan haarhay

Hanjoaa(n) waliye maaye

[Where should I go?

North, south, east, west

It's either Kaidos or Khairaas

Who have robbed a million Hirs,

Burnt millions of Ranjhas.

To whom should I sing of my grief?

O my mother, I see tears in your eyes] (Rahi 63)1

The eternal tears of the mother form a recurrent motif in Punjabi poetry, classical and contemporary. The Kaidos and Khairaas everywhere (Hir's uncle and in-laws instrumental in her oppression and murder) are the patriarchal and ideological state enforcing a unified and singular narrative on Hir and her mother – the citizens and their multiple nationalisms and languages. Ranjha, Hir's lover, is the mediating space of the "resilient" literary formation, and the poet who

represents the regional literary heritage, lost during multiple iterations of colonial rule. Thus, the legend of Hir also becomes a site of disclosure for the postcolonial state's failure to incorporate Hir and her mother, the alternative nationalisms based in languages, cultures, and gender. The state's abdication of its role is another form of the loss that requires symbolic expenditure from the poet. Identification with a female hero from Punjabi's classical and folk mythology allows the poet to recover the lost link with history which roots him in his resilient literary formation. Hir's tears are the tears that Daaman sheds in his poem for the loss of a cosmopolitan Punjab where the primary marker of identity was being Punjabi and not being Muslim, Sikh, Hindu, or Christian. Like Daaman's Punjabis at partition, Hir too has lost direction in Rahi's poem, looking everywhere, but not locating stability. This lostness is the characteristic postcolonial state where citizens oppressed by a narrative of unified nationalism feel like they have lost their bearings. So, the mother's tears express a loss that is not redressed except in poetry. The disclosure – that a poetry considered inferior by national narratives shaped in colonial discourse leads the poetic persona and the reader to discover the loss of their location – is a monumental revelation, and contrasts against the national poetics of rootedness.

Safdar Mir (1922-1998) was a revolutionary professor, poet, and critic. Mir became one of the forerunners of the free verse movement in Urdu poetry and wrote extensively in English and Punjabi as well. In "Nikkay Nikkay Sukh" (Small Joys), Mir displays an understanding of the passage of time which centers human "resilience" as the counterpoint to the inevitability of temporal decay, a loss that is natural and irreversible. The poem's opening line describes those who lament the passage of time as "jhallay" (idiots), explaining that the fast-paced world does not have time to cater to individual grief because "sabhna(n) dey dil dard bharey ne(n)" (everybody's heart is full of sorrow), and nobody can fight the fate that decrees misery as the

inevitable reality of human life: “Maut day parchawe(n) tou(n) odher/ Jitt na haar kissay di” (on the other side of death’s shadow/ nobody wins, nobody loses). Mir’s existential attitude to misery and sorrow being the inevitable realities of human existence underscores what he views as the futility of crying about life. The poem, appropriately in free verse, is neither fatalistic nor revolutionary. It is resilient. It does not mount a challenge to any supernatural force that has decreed the inevitability of suffering, which Faiz does, but the title suggests that resignation to fate is not the underlying message of the poem. Rather, the unstated message of the poem is that in the tiny joys of everyday life, a human being can find a counterbalance to the sorrows and losses of life. This attitude of resilience is characteristic of survival in the postcolonial state, where the shadow of death is the partitioning of Punjab, signaling the death of its culture and unity, and on the other side of this death is a zero-sum situation of postcolonial ‘melancholia.’

Centered around the narrative of partition, Mazhar Tirmazi’s (b. 1950) poem “Umraan Langhiaa(n) Pabhaaa(n) Bhaar” (Lifetimes Spent on Tiptoe) has acquired a legendary status among Punjabi speakers in Pakistan, India, and the diaspora, largely due to its famous rendition by the singer Asad Amanat Ali Khan. A scathing comment on the division of the Punjab, the poem reflects postcolonial angst and the pains of Punjabi citizenry and the continued politics of oppression, all framed within a sense of loss that is futile:

Umraa(n) langiaa(n) pabhaa(n) bhaar

Kaddey na sukh saneha ghalleya

Phulla(n) dey rang kaalay

Surkh gulabaan day mausam wich phullan day rang kaalay

Rirhday rirhday maut dey shoh dariyawaa(n) andar

Kaddi(n) na kandhay laggay

Andro andri waghda rehnda

Pani darad hayati da

Saddiaa(n) umraa(n) tou(n) wi waddi umar aeey teri

Hallay na wass we kaleya!!!

[Lifetimes spent on tiptoe

Never have you sent word of yourself

The flowers have turned black

In the season of red roses, the flowers have turned black

Rolling on the tides of death's deep seas

We have never reached the shores

Inside us keep flowing

The waters of life's grief

You have lived before us and will live after us

What's the hurry? Do not stay here yet] (Tirmazi 235)

Tirmazi addresses the flow of history, symbolizing it in the timeless flow of the river, and he wants the tide of history to not stop in its course but to continue. The postcolonial subject spends their lifetime on tiptoe, evoking both a sense of urgent anticipation and an organic link to the bare earth which burns the feet of the people who walk on it. The color black evokes death which contrasts with the life of the red roses reminding the poet-observer that the perpetual spring on the fertile fields and lands of Punjab has been darkened by the specter of Punjab's partition along communal lines. The red roses in a sense have been lost to the permanence of a black decay. The countless, nameless hordes, who were displaced at partition in 1947, have not found a final "shore" or destination, and despite crossing the physical borders enacted at partition, they are

still looking for a final home. This is evocative of the experience of those generations who witnessed mass migration in Punjab. Oral histories have recorded the continuing disbelief of Punjabis at being forced to leave their ancestral homes. Class and rural background particularly become markers of ancestral identity in such narratives, and the loss of an ancestral home and identity is the lingering 'melancholia' of partition's legacy. So, the continuous flow of life's grief is a permanent feature of the postcolonial Punjabi imagination, an imagination defined by loss. Thus, when Tirmazi asks history to "still not stay" but to go on, he represents the continuity of the Punjabi imagination starkly at odds with the Urdu literary imagination which takes partition as an inevitability and the postcolonial state as a finality. This sense of not settling down but of a constant flux lends itself to disclosure. The flux in this sense is a masculine phenomenon, with the feminine principle being a constant. There is also a disclosure of the anthropocene having interfered with the climate of the planet, with flowers turning black in the season of red roses, indicating the loss of a natural environment to a built environment. There is a physical transformation in the flowers, which corresponds to the withering of an otherwise fertile soil, and the barrenness of Punjabiyat (literally "being Punjabi" in all its ontological iterations) creates the unease of no longer belonging anywhere, a disclosure of loss that is permanent and irreversible. The insistence "halay na wass we kaaleya," the imploration to "not stay" and to keep moving underscores the sense of not belonging.

Najm Hosain Syed (b. 1927) is widely considered the most revolutionary and important Punjabi poet in post-independence Pakistan. Like Daaman and the others discussed before, Syed also faced the atrocities of the martial law regime of General Ziaul Haq because of his democratic and secular stance which in the context of his own theorization is rooted in the ethos of Punjabi culture. For Syed, the first recurrent pattern in Punjabi poetry is that classical poets

imagined form and content to be interdependent (Syed 19). The second recurrent pattern he identifies is the use of imagery that emanates from the immediate environment and personal experience of these poets (Syed 20). The most recurrent pattern that he finds in Punjabi poetry is "the poet's intense and unwavering concern with the ultimate and the eternal" (Syed 21). For him, the artist's vision of history is characterized by "movement" among past, present, and future (Syed 77). The "inexhaustible continuity" of the movement of human history dictates that "no action is decisive, no ideology is absolute." "A complacent belief in the solidity and permanence" of the poet's environment and experience determine his "rigidly conditioned emotional reflexes" which provide him fixity (Syed 78). The study of history, according to Syed, challenges these fixed notions of the self. So, the poet's historical vision is "both an index of, and a primary factor in, the spiritual makeup" of the poet (Syed 79). While society's collective vision of history is necessarily limited, the poet's individual vision is complete because he envisions past, present, and future time as a continuum. While social groups remain embedded in either the past or the present, the poet manages to see all three as a continuous process. Syed reads classical poet Bulleh Shah's iconoclastic poetry as the site for the performance of this complete historical vision of the Punjabi poet. The postcolonial subject (poet) inhabits multiple socio-temporal spaces, with precolonial tradition, colonial subjecthood, and postcolonial citizenship existing simultaneously within the ambit of his vision. Syed himself embodies the person of the poet whose diction, style, and subject matter all represent this complete vision of history.

Syed writes extensively in tradition Punjabi poetic forms like the '*waar*' and the '*kaafi*.' Saeed Bhutta has pointed out that while there is no one definition of *kaafi*, it is recognized as a distinct Punjabi poetic form which relies on musical composition, and is composed to the meters of the various ragas. The *kaafi* is normally a short poem of five or seven or sometimes more

lines. There is an emphasis on rhythm and musicality so there is a recognizable and prominent rhyme scheme. *Kaafi*s also often contain a climactic line which repeats and reinforces the central idea of the *kaafi*. The *kaafi* became distinctly synonymous with Muslim Sufi poetry in India during the Middle Ages. For Asif Khan, "each line gives its full meanings when read with the climactic lines" (qtd. in Bhutta 225). Meanwhile the *waar* combines "the millennia old history of Punjab, its landscape, its culture, and the lifestyle of its inhabitants" (Bhutta 11). The *waar* is an epic and oral form, which in classical times, was sung and composed by specialized poets who recited the exploits of Punjabi surmas (warriors) when they came out to battle.

In a *kaafi* titled "Lori" (lullaby), Syed echoes the platonic conception of a city's guards and guardians being akin to watchdogs whose one job is to protect the home/city against intruders. Thus, Syed addresses the city's guardians by reminding them to wake up: "Uth we kutteya jungle sutteya/ jungle payi larhayi" (wake up o dogs sleeping in the jungle,/ a fight has broken out). The jungle really is the postcolonial metropolis where those who are entrusted with the governance of the country have become oblivious to their duty to protect the citizenry: "Baag bageelay shehar ich warh gaye/ lukkday mori o mori" (the lions and the wolves have entered the city/ surreptitiously hiding from you). The poem ends with a rhyming couplet, which recalls Bulleh Shah's famous classical verse: "meri bukkal day which chor" (the thief is hidden in my cloak). "Aapay Ranjha aapay Kaido Hir baari choun wekhay" (herself Ranjha, herself Kaido, Hir looks out from her window). Syed's "complete vision of history" provides him with a unique lens where the characters of Punjab's most well-known qissa (narrative tale), the star-crossed lovers, Hir, Ranjha, and Hir's deceitful uncle Kaido who conspires to make sure that the lovers meet a tragic end, all become citizens and functionaries of the postcolonial state. The collection of poems which contains this lullaby was first published in 1965, which is the year of Pakistan's

first full-scale military war with India, thus hints that, in the poet's vision, the postcolonial state failed to protect its citizens against the enemy. What is lost then is the promised security of an independent country, and what is disclosed is the inability of the postcolonial state in sufficiently realizing itself as an independent state. The site of disclosure is the discovery that a historical continuum has been broken.

In the same collection, a short poem, "Yatri" (pilgrim), captures the uncertainty faced by Punjabis after independence, with those who had experienced partition and migration remaining perennial visitors in their new homelands:

Menu aaya(n) chokha chir hoyea aaey

Haali tekar koi awaaz khraak nai sunneya

Khabray saaray suttay huay nay(n)

Keh ghar koi nai, pher sahi

Chalo ghar nai koi

Pher sahi

[It has been a while since I arrived

Yet I have heard no voice, no sound

I wonder if everybody is sleeping

Or if nobody is actually home, oh well, some other day then

Let's go, there is nobody at home

Maybe some other day then] (Syed 20)2

The postcolonial Punjabi subjects on either side of the border, having migrated from their ancestral homelands, find it hard to belong in the new setting, thus challenging the very logic of partition. The uncertainty of "some other day," an anticipated return in an unspecified future,

challenges the notion of a home itself, with the possibility that the journey is towards an interior, discovering that there is no recognizable 'self' left inside this fractured identity. In the polysystem of interconnected literariness, the loss of home and identity for Punjabis at partition echoes as a site of postcolonial disclosure for all these poets, whether in Daaman's realization of the tyranny of tears, or in Syed's recognition of a city abandoned by its guardians. Like Tirmazi's unsettling call for the Punjabi postcolonial citizen to "not stay as yet" but to continue their search for an identity, Syed's resigned "maybe some other day" discloses that the Punjabi self in the postcolonial setting is a schizophrenic self, with an identity that will find expression at some unspecified time in the future. The disclosure of a schizophrenic self in the Punjabi postcolonial identity and literary formation is an essential moment in understanding the Punjabi subject's relationship with the postcolonial state and its linguistic/cultural matrix. Though not a minority literature in terms of the population who identify ethnically as Punjabi, like all regional literatures in Pakistan, Punjabi too has a minority status in relation to the hegemonic status of Urdu as national literature. Unsurprisingly then, the appeal of regional folk, especially that of Punjabi folk music, challenges the powerful national barriers created by Urdu's state-enforced hegemony. The expenditure of Punjabi's folk in the polysystem of Pakistani music is an example of the powerful way in which a resilient literary formation recovers the loss of its symbolic and cultural capital.

Another poem in this collection, "Parohnaa" (Guest/Outsider) can be read as a companion poem to "Yatri." In this case, the person inside the home addresses the outsider who has come inside and wants to know "ennu pucho kerha aeey" (ask him who is he). This longer poem posits the insider-outsider binary as an already unsettled relationship in which the person

on the inside, rather than belonging, is uncomfortable with the specter of the "other." The poem concludes with:

> Ennu puchho
>
> Edda naa(n) ki aeey
>
> Tey kerhay rabb ennu ghalleya aeey kahnu ghalleya aeey
>
> Peya apnay aap nu kaafir kaafir aakhay
>
> Tussi gal na golna
>
> [Ask him
>
> What is his name
>
> And which god has sent him and why
>
> He calls himself an infidel
>
> Don't pay attention to what he says] (Syed 25-26)

In the identarian logic of the ideological postcolonial state, the state and its allied citizens have often brandished the title of "infidel" against their opponents as a tool to crush dissent. Similar titles include "traitor" and "anti-state," both of which have a long history of being abused in Pakistan. A "guest" who identifies as an "infidel" challenges the state's binary logic and wrests power from the state by pronouncing this alienating verdict against the self. It discloses that the guest, therefore, is not external, but an internal one. The person on the inside, asking for the identity of the outsider sounds tentative, because the state in which they explore identity is a state of uncertainty. The loss of certainty requires that the subject expends on the exploration of identity. For the poet, this happens in the creative expenditure of participating in the polysystem of literary production, and through translation, Punjabi poetry can communicate with global

literatures in challenging the hegemonic narratives of nationalized literary traditions, despite Punjabi's relative lack of capital in the world republic of letters.

The 1994 collection *Aam Dinaan Dey Naa(n)* (The Names of Ordinary Days/ To Ordinary Days) shows Syed becoming more contemporary with his subject-matter and thematic concerns as he progresses from the anger exhibited in the previous collection *Kaafian*: "Aam dinaan dey naa(n) nai honday" (Ordinary days have no names or titles) (Syed 9). The poem challenges the conventional historian's emphasis on studying dates and significant days in an event-based understanding of history. These ordinary days, ignored for the perceived importance of significant days, are however the days where ordinary people live and spend their ordinariness. Bataille's "principle of loss" would suggest that the loss of these ordinary days is what really makes ordinary lives special, since the loss has to be great for the activity to be characterized as fully realized. In that sense, the loss of ordinary days as "their numbers fall from the calendars" is the greatest loss suffered by citizens who spend ordinary lives in the midst of extraordinary events. As the translation suggests, the title can also be interpreted as an ode to these ordinary days.

Another poem in this collection, "Omnibus Wich Ayyaana" (A Child in the Omnibus) recounts an incident inside an omnibus where a child riding alone in the bus gets scolded by an older man, sitting next to him, as the child excitedly looks outside the bus window. The older man reminds him to be careful and scolds him for his carelessness. As the child falls asleep, the man shakes him awake and tells him that sleeping in a moving bus is not a good idea. As the light goes out form the child's excited eyes, or as the child loses interest in discovering his whereabouts – the postcolonial subject losing interest in exploring the identity matrix in the new state – the poetic persona addresses the older man and says:

Saaday joga baahir hun wekhan waala kujh nahi bhai jee

Razam razam kar saadeya(n) waddeya(n) jerhay patthar jorhay

Oho chatdeaa(n) saadia(n) akhiaa(n) patthar ho chukkia(n) ney(n) bhai ji

Jerhiaa(n) shaieea(n) assa(n) na takkia(n)

Eh taa(n) wehnda

Kharveeyeaa(n) rukhaa(n) dey koolay pattar

Jhakhraa(n) andar lor udaari ilaa(n) di

Din day taanay wich unendi kaal peeta

Jerhiaa(n) galla(n) assa(n) na puchiaa(n)

Eh taa(n) puchda

Sarkaa(n) uttay janday loki ik doojay naal hasday kyun nai

Waddia(n) waddia(n) kothiaa(n) andar banday taaway taaway kyun nai

Bohtia(n) battia(n) wali sarak tay dar kyun bohta lagda aaey

Ehda bhai ji haali soun da wela nahi(n) si hoyea

Hun jerhay kawelay so gaye uhnaa(n) noo(n) jaag kawelay ei aaoni aaey

[There is nothing outside the window which would interest men of our age, brother

Our elders slowly collected stones

Which we have been licking and our eyes have become stony

The things which we could not see

This child sees them..

The questions we did not ask

He asks those:

“Why do the people walking on these roads not laugh?

Inside these huge mansions why are the people such pygmies?

Why is it so scary to travel on roads with so many lights?"

Brother it is still not time for this child to sleep

Those who have slept at an odd time will wake out of time.] (Syed 13-14)

The child as transcendent symbol of change and freshness and of lost innocence brings in a new set of questions, which the older man as symbol of tradition and the state suppresses, forcing the child to sleep. Sleep is a state of disclosure where the suppressed thoughts can be realized, and lost memories can be reclaimed. The elders accepted the world (or the postcolonial independent state) as it was handed to them. The younger generation questions its strict modes of unquestioned loyalty, exclusionary nationalism, and ideological oppression. So, the elders simply ask the younger generation to "sleep" as a convenient way of not answering the questions that challenge the postcolonial state's self-sufficient narratives. The absence of laughter from people's faces indicates the unhappiness of the citizens at large. The child's questions juxtapose petty-minded people as "pygmies" occupying large houses, and fear of the dark against well-lit roads. The state's abdication of the rule of law contrasts against the promise of an independent identity, and one of the self-serving arguments advanced in all postcolonial societies is that the colonial era was a safer and happier time. The poem does not advance this narrative at all. Instead, the poetic persona's intervention between the child's eager questions and the elder's snubbing of them is meant to emphasize the postcolonial state's abandonment of its duties. It is the ordinary citizens' moment of disclosure when they address (not confront) the state and ask for the basic promises of independence to be fulfilled. Like the previous poets, whether Daaman, Rahi, Tirmazi, or Faiz, the state's role in postcolonial Pakistan remains a central question connecting Syed with the larger polysystem in which his poetry participates. The urgency and

insistence of the question and its repetition in passing from one generation to the next, leads to the disclosure of the postcolonial self's schizophrenic search for definitions of the complex relationships between nationalist hegemony and ethnonationalist resilience.

The final poem by Syed that I will look at in this section is a dramatic poem titled "Company Baagh Di Waar" (The Epic of the Company's Garden). As quoted earlier, *waar* combines "the millennia old history of Punjab, its landscape, its culture, and the lifestyle of its inhabitants" (Bhutta 11). The title itself suggests an engagement with British colonial rule, referencing the many gardens that the East India Company's officers established in the subcontinent. Located in the here and now of the poet's world in the 1990s, the poem's epic possibility arises from its engagement with the problems of the postcolonial state. Uniquely for a Punjabi poem, it contains passages in Urdu incorporating the postcolonial problem of national language and regional language into the structure of the epic itself. As the poetic persona sits in the Company Baagh, he hears the sermon delivered with the Friday prayers. The sermon in the poem is quoted in Urdu, highlighting the urban Punjabi milieu where Urdu as the language of Muslim South Asia, discussed earlier in this dissertation, has supplanted Punjabi as the language of ordinary discourse. It must be noted here though that in the backward rural areas of Punjab, sermons in the mosque are almost exclusively given in Punjabi. While the subject in the poem listens to the sermon, a retired government officer walks past him reminding him of the bureaucratic structure inherited from the colonial period and preserved in the postcolonial state as a systemic continuity with history. The poem transits to a part of the sermon in which the cleric presents the religious and capitalist understanding of economics in Urdu, the national language of religious sermons in urban settings:

Jitni kisi mein istedaad hai paidawaar karay daulat paida karay. Koi hadd muqarrar nahi hai

Iss kisam ki hadd khilaf-e-fitrat ho gi lehaza fasid ho gi. Iss mein

Koi kalaam nahi hai. Kisi kisam kay shak o shubha ki koi

Bhi gunjaish nahi hai qattan

[Whoever has potential should produce, produce wealth. There are no limits.

Any limit will be unnatural and harmful. Therefore it will be sinful. In this

There is no argument. Of any kind of doubt

There is no possibility. Absolutely none.] (Syed 24)

Islam played a dominant role in rallying the anti-Soviet force in neighboring Afghanistan in the recent past. Syed's incorporation of this Friday sermon advocating that western capitalism is consistent with Islam – later repeating the cleric's claim that given Islam's moral vision, capitalism in an Islamic country will be a balanced system – serves as a reminder that the ordinary citizen remains disenfranchised from the political process during a dictatorial regime, and that religion in the colonial and postcolonial contexts is often used as a tool for justifying political and economic oppression. The irony of religion being a capitalist institution is expressed through the Urdu quotation because Urdu as national language helps to protect the socio-economic and political interests of the Punjabi feudal elite who have helped to promote the language as national language and cashed in on its religious and symbolic capital.

The poem proceeds to incorporate some passages from the school textbooks of a younger character who might be presumed to be the poetic persona's grandson. The first of these is in English. This section describes Pakistan's standard time: "When Radio Pakistan broadcasts the news bulletin it is 1 PM and 8 PM/ All over Pakistan." This is significant in that the subject of

social studies at the school level has traditionally been taught in English and Urdu depending on the medium of the school. The deeniaat (religious studies, in Pakistan synonymous with Sunni Islam) section of the schoolbook, quoted in the poem, is predictably in Urdu, consistent with the discussion conducted earlier. The various boards on display in the garden, reminding visitors to be careful lest they damage the property, are also in Urdu to underscore that the public space is a nationally owned area where the state's writ enforces Urdu as the national language. However, the various characters, including the poetic persona, who enter dialogues, do so in Punjabi, emphasizing the existence of an alternative nationhood where the language of the ordinary citizen is the regional tongue. English as the medium of global education, Urdu as the medium of national and state identity-building, and Punjabi as the language of the ordinary person observing both from the outside, combine in Syed's vision of history as a continuum. However, the poem's center in the poetic persona's thoughts articulated in Punjabi is never lost. The passages not requiring translation underscore that where it is required, translation is not elevating a minority literature, but recognizing it at a similar level as hegemonic literary formations. Thus, resilience and expenditure continue to address the loss of symbolic capital.

I conclude these close readings with the poetry of two women poets who I consider to be especially productive in exploring the issues I have raised here. Nasreen Anjum Bhatti's "Neel Karaaya(n) Neelkaa(n)" (Blue Cloth Dyed Blue) is an important poem which has previously been read by Sara Kazmi. I want to focus on the color blue here as a site for disclosure of loss. In the cosmopolitan world of Hindu-Muslim civilization in India, Krishna is a supreme god and is the muse of romance as well as war. He is epitomized in Hindu devotional poetry as the divine lover of Mira, a princess who abandoned her marriage and throne for his love. Mirabai was a devotional poet whose poetry is addressed to Krishna as the human form of her lover. Thus,

dying the cloth blue is a revolt against the Islamic identity of the patriarchal postcolonial state, where the color blue then becomes a vehicle for depicting the woman-as-citizen's body as a site for contestation. As Kazmi points out, Bhatti provides a voice to Bhaag Bhari, the supposed muse of Waris Shah, the poet of Punjab's most famous epic romance. When Bhatti poses the question "who are you, where are your heirs?" through Bhaag Bhari, the classical poet's role as arbiter and chronicler of a historical narrative is called into question. Playing on the name Waris, which means heir, Bhatti challenges the denial of inheritance and heirs to women in the militarized patriarchal culture of an Islamist state:

> Kon ai, tere waris kithai ne?
>
> Mein tandoorai baethi ne virasata(n) saarh chadia(n) ne(n) Warisa!
>
> Kehri virasat asi(n) te pakhi vas honai a(n)
>
> Par tu(n) kon ai(n) chora? Nivi(n) payi baitha ai(n), ilm da chatta peya marna ai(n)
>
> [Who are you, where are your heirs (your "Waris")?
>
> Oh Waris, I sat at the hearth and burned all my inheritance
>
> We have no possessions; we are nomads after all
>
> But you, who are you, thief? Throwing the weight of your knowledge about?] (qtd. in Kazmi 12-13)

The burning of inheritance is a powerful symbol of rejection and denial of the legacies of the postcolonial state. Similarly, the poetic persona addresses her mother (another transcendent presence in all Punjabi poetry, from classical to contemporary, as a symbol of the eternal constant of femininity): "Baraf barhi tatti aye…meriaa(n) doway(n) taliaa(n) sarh gayaan nay/ Talli tey Quran na chukaa" (The ice is very hot…both my palms are scorched/ Do not make me lift the Quran on my palm). The heat of the ice is like the scorching earth on which Tirmazi had

advised the postcolonial subject to not settle but to keep moving. Ice loses its cooling properties and acquires a new power in this way. The daughter's refusal to lift the Quran is a refusal to give evidence of her innocence (the woman's evidence holds half the weightage of a man's testimony in Islamic jurisprudence) in the face of a society that points a finger at her. The person of the woman in Pakistan is the site of contestations over a patriarchal, masculine, and ideological notion of 'honor' often resulting in 'honor killings.' In the context of Bhatti's own leftist activism, it represents a rebellion against the state's attitude of distrust towards any dissenting voice, leading to the revelation or disclosure that "Main tey edhay kolon we waddia(n) waddia(n) kitaaban chukia(n) hoiyaan nay/ Par mera qadd nikka hoi jaanda aye" (I have lifted even heavier books than the Quran/ But I am losing my stature). The loss of height/stature is the loss of identity, which elsewhere in the poem comes as a challenge to the "military office" which ideologically suppresses women, workers, and all other alternative expressions of identity-based community (Kazmi 12).

In a short poem called "Watani, Khol Patola, Bhora Bhukh Lah Layiye" (My Fellow Citizen, Open Your Tiffin, Let's Do Something About Our Hunger), Bhatti addresses a fellow traveler, but gendering her as a woman, she also addresses "watan" or her homeland. She identifies with her homeland as a familial relation: "Nerhay ho, khushbu tey meri maa(n) dey hathaan di aye/ Tey swaad peyo dey pasinay warga" (Come near, your fragrance is that of my mother's hands/ And you taste like father's sweat) (Bhatti 37). This identification carries a subtle comment on the state as father, and on the nation as mother. Bhatti stresses ownership of the mother's scent ("meri"/my) but does not use a possessive pronoun for the father. The father's sweat is not recognized through smell but as a taste. This suggests the oppression of the patriarchal structure, and of a state that quells alternative nationalisms/identities. The metaphor is

understated and implies a force akin to rape. Bhatti then implores "Meray watan dey baalaan(n) da aye/ Watni aih sikka chalan dey" (This damaged coin which my country's children are playing with/ Let it carry some value in the market). This appeal to the country (the state, patriarchy, religious ideology, and all that the dominant and unitary nationalism represents) is an appeal for the future, and not to the future. The expression "khota sikka" or damaged coin implies something that is useless in commercial/social terms. In this context, Bhatti regrets the state's dismissal of its youth demanding multiple nationalisms and multiple identities and urges the nation to recognize these alternative voices and spaces. In the larger context of Urdu poetics in Pakistan, this is an appeal to recognize regional literatures – ironically reduced to a minority status, as national literatures. Thus, Bhatti's gendered appeal in her avatar of woman-as-mother for her posterity to be allowed to "cash" on its regional identities carries within it the rejection of those borders that exist between state-approved nationalism and alternative nationalisms.

Sara Shagufta's (1954-1984) biography often gets in the way of reading her poetry. Four of her five marriages ended in divorce, and her first husband took her children from her and never let her meet them again. She suffered a miscarriage during her second marriage and had an abortion each during her second and third marriages. She was admitted to a mental asylum for a while. Shagufta jumped in front of a train a few months short of her thirtieth birthday. An intensely passionate woman, who bore the fullest brunt of a patriarchal and ideological society, Shagufta's young suicide fascinates her readers, particularly young women tired with the oppressive atmospheres of their patriarchal homes. Teaching Shagufta's poetry in class, whether in Urdu or Punjabi, is therefore a deeply moving and educational experience for students and teachers who are products of the toxic masculinity of the religio-ideological and patriarchal nation-state. I conclude this chapter with a reading of her most powerful poetry as a move to an

understanding of gender as a constitutive element of the nation-state, and as an exemplar of how the female textual body performs a disclosure of the postcolonial.

Shagufta's prose poems in Urdu offer a challenge to the established masculine idiom of metered poetics in the language, a perceived loss of the stability of the metrical tradition. In Punjabi, it seems more natural that Shagufta's imagery is prosaic because she elevates the prose word and its associated image to a metaphor and symbol that are, in their essence, transcendental. "Main Koi Nahi Nachna" (I Shall Not Dance No Matter What) evokes one of the most well-known classical Punjabi metered poems, eighteenth-century Sufi poet Bulleh Shah's "Teray Ishq Nachāya Ker Thayya Thayya" (Love Makes Me Dance to Its Beat). Bulleh Shah dressed as a *kanjari* (a professional dancing woman) and danced to please his Sufi master, inviting the ire of the entire society, but Shagufta radically refuses to enact any such performativity in the patriarchal backdrop. Having spent her life in "sabar di jail" (the prison of patience), she resolves that when she is dead, and her tormentors visit her grave:

Tey main koi nahiyoon bolna

Main koi nahiyoon tuttna

Tey main koi nahiyoon nachna

[Then I shall not speak

I shall not be broken

And I shall not dance no matter what.] (Shagufta 194)

`Shagufta's refusal "to dance" or to be "broken" shows that the system itself is shattered. Speech is a privilege that is repressed by those around Shagufta who deny her this right because of her gender, but also by the complex of poetic tradition. Shagufta's prose poems were denounced as non-poetry by her fellow poets, even the women poets around her. Appropriating this power

from the masculine state to assert that her silence is by choice is an assertion of the alternative space of poetry where Shagufta can disclose this revolutionary potential. Wresting speech and transferring it to the act of writing, and then claiming that she will "not speak" also challenges the binary of speech/writing. In saying she will not speak, Shagufta chooses to lose language, rather than be forced to lose it as seen in previous examples in this chapter. Denied the right to "speak," she writes, and her writing then becomes a speech that cannot be denied. In this disclosure of the space where the woman poet can express herself regardless of repression, Shagufta is comparable to Punjabi poets Amrita Pritam (Indian Punjab) and Nasreen Anjum Bhatti (Pakistani Punjab) only. Indeed, even within feminist poetry in Urdu, Shagufta stands out as a singular voice, unacknowledged and unemulated. Shagufta is also often compared to Sylvia Plath since her poetry has a confessional mode, a deep lyricism which I consider essential to disclosure. By looking inwards and considering the intensely intimate as a site for poetry, the poet expresses an individuality that is an alternative space for expression.

The opening line of "Koorhay Kaprhay Tey Mitti Rung Mera" (My Clothes are Dirty and My Complexion is like the Earth) is one of the most striking in all Punjabi poetry: "Chaanwai(n) beh gaye assi tey darakhat koi lai gaya" (we sat in the shade and someone took the tree). The postcolonial feeling of being directionless despite the "shade" of independence is ironic. The loss of the shade brings exposure to the sun, which discloses itself in its presence as a source of intense light and heat: "Sooraj ghar rakheya/ Tey raatee(n) koi lai gaya" (We placed the sun at home/ and at night someone took it). Shagufta's poetry often engages with treating the sun as an object that the woman can take in her hands and mold according to her needs. The sun does not remain the masculine source of life that impregnates the feminine earth. Rather the woman can take the sun and keep it at home, and someone can even come steal it. Both the shade and the sun

are losses that the poetic persona encounters. The reduction of the sun from a transcendent symbol to an object is the site for disclosure since it allows the word's crystallization as an image only. This divests the word of its 'meaning,' thus allowing the image to become supreme, and to challenge rational reality, thus making it possible for the explosive revolution whereby someone can keep the sun at home, and someone else can take/steal it. For the poet, the symbolic expenditure of this image addresses the loss of meaning imposed by the loss of cultural and symbolic capital.

Finally, Shagufta's long poem "Main Nangi Changi" (I am Better Naked) explodes the myth of the nation-state as a site where democratic norms are enacted to protect human dignity, regardless of gender, regardless of religion, regardless of sect, and regardless of one's place in relation to the nation-state's ideological underpinnings. Shagufta describes through six uneven stanzas how this nudity as a woman is a more desirable existence than being 'covered' by the proverbial chaadar (head covering) of a religio-ideological and patriarchal nation-state and its existential contradictions. As she previously insisted on losing speech voluntarily, Shagufta now insists on removing the clothing of society's sanctions. The images transcend the woman's bodily experience to become the expression of a people's resilience:

Saarh deeweyan naal daryawan noo(n)

Saarh chhaa(n), saarh meri guddi

Sarh jaaway gi meri guddi dey naal agg we

Agg nangi changi

[Burn the lamps with the rivers

Burn the shade, burn my doll

The fire will burn alongside my doll

The fire is better off naked] (Shagufta 228)

Stripping the flame of its power to consume what is thrown into it, Shagufta makes it combust alongside the doll, setting fire to rivers with tiny clay lamps. The flame's loss is the creative gain made by the poet's image-making. The feeling of constant burning and being scorched is common to the experience of the Punjabi poets in the postcolonial state which has caused the "diasporification" of their identity and language, for example in Tirmazi's. The woman subject of this state, the female subaltern who "cannot speak" finds a voice in Shagufta's poems, and it is a voice that is resilient, naked, and burning. The woman poet's voice is not lost in a wilderness; rather, it asserts its ability to manipulate language through creative expenditure that leads to refreshed myth-making. It is the voice of the Punjabi who has been told that the Punjabi language is inferior and that an alien language is their own. In this case therefore, burning the "shade" of the composite national identity is the answer that the poet finds. The subaltern's final assertion is that she is "better off naked" since the state that denies her the dignity of her identity will not be able to confront the starkness of her nudity. Shagufta's exclamation then becomes a revolutionary answer to Spivak's assertion regarding the gendered subaltern's permanent loss of voice and brings the Punjabi identity out of its double shadow, stripping it and exposing it to the oppression of the postcolonial condition as a final act of reclamation. Beyond this, there is only Tirmazi's "do not stay as yet," and the Punjabi subaltern, disadvantaged in the patriarchal discourse of the nation-state, can rest their case that this bare, stark, naked person is the ultimate site of disclosure. Nakedness is the final disclosure.

The World of World Literature:

In Michael Allan's definition, world literature is "the emergent distinction between those deemed literate, cosmopolitan, and modern, and those others who are not." It is not "the all-

inclusive meeting place of national literary traditions." So, what world literature does is that it "transforms textual practices, defines the borders of a world republic of letters, and distinguishes the literate and the illiterate, the modern and the traditional, the tolerant and the intolerant, the ignorant and the enlightened" (Allan 3). For him, "the world of world literature is not solely a matter of national and political boundaries, but a matter of the sensibilities embedded in the value attributed to literary reading" (9). Pascale Casanova has charted a "Greenwich Meridian of literature," an imaginary western lens for determining literary success, as "the aesthetic distance of a work of corpus of works from the center may thus be measured by their temporal remove from the canons that, at the precise moment of estimation, define the literary present" (Casanova 87-88). Within the world of literature in Pakistan, this inequality manifests as both a "partition" between Urdu and regional languages/literatures and as a local meridian ascribing literary and symbolic capital to literatures. Thus, this impedes the participation of Pakistani regional literatures in the marketplace of world literature, further enhancing the distance between Pakistani cultural identities and the "Greenwich Meridian of literature." Casanova has shown that the "world republic of letters" is an unequal space where writers from minority languages and literatures are ignored by the networks of production and publication. Casanova argues for a literary history that includes those who have been marginalized "by taking into account the unequal status of the players in the literary game and the specific mechanisms of domination that are manifested in it" (352). "Political dependence, internal translations, national and linguistic concerns, the necessity of constituting a patrimony in order to enter into literary time – all these things that constrain the purpose and the form of literary works from the margins of the republic of letters are at once denied and disregarded by those who lay down its laws in the center" (353). A literary space that is dominated by one literary culture can also be dominated "linguistically

and politically," specially in postcolonial countries where political domination is often exerted by linguistic means" (115). World literature is no longer just a canon of texts but "a mode of circulation and of reading," (Damrosch 5). David Damrosch argues against the assessment criteria that contextualize a text as a "world" text, and instead suggests that a text participates in the "world literature" paradigm through the ways in which readers encounter it.

How else do readers encounter the world except through translation? Part of what I have done in this chapter is to translate from a language which is mine but denied to me by history, to a language which is also mine but which I cannot own as mine because it has been forced on me by the same historical process. To argue that translation is border crossing is too simplistic. I do not think borders can be dismissed from translation theory, or that alternatives may be found to borders. At the airport borders where I was stopped, translation did happen, but not through language; rather it happened first in the image of a green passport that stated my citizenship as a Pakistani and my name as Muhammad Mahboob Ahmad, and secondly, this translation happened in the form of computer algorithms which were translated by machines to first raise the possibility that I was on a watch list, and later affirm that I was no threat, a fact, I must stress, in that particular border setting, language was unable to express. Despite linguistic interpreters aiding movement between language borders, the borders of nation-states require translation in a non-lingual, or I would argue, para-lingual form. I think the notion of a "borderscape" (Mezzadra and Neilson) captures the complexities of how borders and the areas surrounding them present various struggles and theoretical possibilities, and I propose that the interaction between a borderscape and translation is the site where the nation-state is reinforced. The need for translation at a border, thus, as well as how the translation regime is implemented determines the contours of nationhood in the borderscape. The Punjabi poetry I have read in this chapter

challenged the bloody and well-defined border between Pakistani Punjabi and Indian Punjab by resiliently stressing identity in its Punjabi formation and not in its South Asian nationalist formation.

Punjabi identity in Pakistan is proscribed within the larger borderscape of world literature. Translation into world languages remains one integral way of recovering the resilient space of this poetic expression of an alternative national identity. The loss of power that regional literature faces in the nationalist interface of postcolonial state-formation finds a recovery through the resilience of the Punjabi poet whose participation in the literary formation creates an alternate idiom, an alternate nationalism which is not necessarily a challenge to the state but to its conception of a singular, unprobed nationhood. In the polysystem of world literary production, Punjabi literature in translation stands to converse with national and international literary traditions. Its loss thus becomes its greatest asset.

CHAPTER V: CONCLUSION

"So if you want to really hurt me talk badly about my language."

-- Gloria Anzaldua

In 2009, journalist Aftab Iqbal launched his TV show "Hasb-e-Haal," a title translatable as "appropriate to the situation." Iqbal hosted the show alongside a female co-host. The star of the show was Azizi, a character representing an ordinary Pakistani man, created originally by Iqbal for his Urdu newspaper column, and played on TV by Sohail Ahmed, one of the most admired and respected names of the Punjabi stage as well as of Urdu TV drama. The show's format was infotainment, and it relied on caricature, parody, and comedy. In 2010, Iqbal left the show to launch a larger show called "Khabarnaak," which is a coinage implying newsworthiness, punning on "khatarnaak," the Urdu word for dangerous. With a larger cast, the formula also changed. Parody and caricature remained integral to the show, but the comedy became more robust and boisterous. From "Khabarnaak," Iqbal went on to launch first "Khabardaar," or "beware," and then "Khabarzaar" and "Khabaryaar," both coinages that do not necessarily have meaning except to emphasize the infotainment format of the shows. His most recent show is called "Khabarhaar." Ostensibly, the purpose of all his shows is political satire and social commentary with a mediated reformist agenda consistent with state narratives.

The language spoken in all these shows is Urdu mixed with a considerable amount of Punjabi. Several characters/actors often start speaking spontaneously in Punjabi, and it frequently becomes the dominant language spoken on these shows. Two things must be noted about this phenomenon. For starters, the host of these shows almost never speaks Punjabi and on the few occasions when he shifts to Punjabi, it is either to deliver a witticism directed against one

of the cast members or to mock a character by copying him or her. However, while this chapter was being written, he launched a show exclusively in Punjabi: "Sub Rung Punjab Dey" (All the Colors of Punjab) which addresses these concerns and has the laudable agenda of promoting all the dialects of Punjabi in one show. For his larger project of shows though, most of which are available on YouTube, the reliance is on televising the erstwhile phenomenon of the Punjabi stage drama which remained extremely popular not only in Punjab but elsewhere in the country as well across the border in Indian Punjab, and among the Punjabi diaspora during the late 1990s and the first decade of the twenty-first century.

The structure of the Punjabi stage drama, and its reiteration in the television sector during the last decade, is based mainly on the institution of the *juggat.* The *juggat* can be translated variously as a joke, a pun, a witticism, etc. The *juggat* comprehensively contains shades of all these forms of linguistic mockery. The character of the Punjabi *juggat* became a personalized, often sexual, repartee because of the popularity of the Punjabi stage drama which brought this kind of *juggat* to a mainstream viewership. *Juggat*-based dialogue became synonymous with "jokes" aimed at the mothers and sisters of the characters at the receiving end, thus objectifying the female body as a site of contesting male "honor," an unfortunate reinforcement of the social order that militarizes female bodies through the institution of "honor killings." The sexual character of this kind of linguistic witticism was transferred to the national television even though it has been considerably toned down to cater to the censorship needs of the medium. However, Iqbal's shows always seem to be excused some obvious content that would be considered objectionable on other television programs. It is also important to note that apart from women, it is transgenders who are the greatest target of ridicule and mockery of this kind of wordplay conducted mainly, and unfortunately, in Punjabi.

Simultaneous to the rise of the Punjabi stage drama at the beginning of the twenty-first century was the phenomenon of the Punjabi stage dance. While music and dance were not alien to the stage, the rising popularity of the drama form at the turn of the century coincided with a liberalization of society under the military regime led by Pervez Musharraf. The regime actively pursued an opening up of Pakistani society as part of its post-9/11 strategic realignment. Ironically, Pakistan's decision to side with the US in its "War on Terror" led to two contradictory but parallel phenomena taking root in Pakistani society. On the one hand, Pakistan became even more radicalized, which was depicted in popular culture through the influx of religious symbolism, religious tropes, religious fashion, and religious celebrities finding an increased space on national television. On the other hand, for the first time since the 1970s, a more relaxed attitude to public behavior, sexuality, and individual freedom became acceptable in society. The Punjabi stage drama became a conduit of depicting a liberal agenda through its allowance of Bollywood-inspired revealing dresses for women and the vehicle of the stage dance. The dance became increasingly more sexual. Eventually, away from the urban centers like Lahore, in smaller cities of Punjab, particularly Gujranwala, Faisalabad, and Multan, the stage dance turned into a nude dance with an audience comprising exclusively of semi-literate and illiterate Punjabi men from all segments of society and of all ages. It became a common sight for stage dancers to flash their breasts and thighs while performing to entice the male audience. Nude and semi-nude *mujra* dances became the hottest selling items not only on stage, but also in Punjabi films, and in CD markets across the country. The phenomenon is akin to the institution of the strip club in the US and represents the only public assertion of a pseudo-pornographic moment in the public cultural space in Pakistan. The *mujra* has antecedents in the courtly tradition of the Mughals in India, with courtesans performing it as high art form. The *mujra* had an intricate network of

high-society patrons, artistic training, and finesse, and was closely linked to the institution of the *ghazal*, the highest poetic form in the Persian and Urdu literary traditions. Its debasing as a vehicle merely of sexual excitement, set to the background score of non-literary and vulgar Punjabi film songs is an academically neglected but extremely important backdrop to understanding the social formation of post-9/11 Pakistan. Its link specifically with the discourse of Punjabi's inferiority is a very productive potential site of inquiry.

Farida Batool's unpublished Ph.D. dissertation on the construction of masculinity through the production and dissemination of soft porn mujra videos in Pakistan is the only available study that discusses the phenomenon in detail. Batool finds new media to be a powerful tool for the expression of sexual agency in a society governed by ideological discourses of piety. Batool highlights the many contradictions in the production of sexual desire in a religious society, but her subject-matter does not address the predominantly Punjabi language of the stage drama and stage dance. Similarly, Claire Pamment's *Comic Performance in Pakistan: The Bhānd* discusses issues relevant to my dissertation but focuses mainly on the person of the traditional comic actor/character in the production of comedy. Pamment contextualizes the production of stage comedy within the language politics of Pakistan, arguing that the comic performers "use Urdu and English only for comic effect, reversing the linguistic hierarchy" (11). However, Pamment also does not develop a thesis on Punjabi language outside of these popular depictions. The phenomena of the vulgarized *juggat*, the sexualized *mujra*, and the quasi-Punjabi infotainment shows on national television together have reinforced the identity of Punjabi as a language for expressing the unrefined, thus unfortunately confirming colonial and postcolonial attitudes that have contributed to its continued marginalization.

Most importantly in recent scholarship, Gwendolyn Sarah Kirk's Ph.D. dissertation explores the marginalization of Punjabi cinema in Pakistan as a function of perpetuated colonial linguistic hierarchies. She identifies that the discussions around reviving Punjabi have an elitist tinge in their recourse to classical texts, and that in these discussions Punjabi cinema is portrayed as inherently inferior in its depiction of the language and culture of the region. Kirk argues that cinematic Punjabi is a site for performing possible resistance against the state by the underprivileged masses of Punjab disenfranchised by the Punjabi elite whose acquisition of Urdu and English makes them complicit with the repressive postcolonial apparatus. Kirk's study of dialect variation and the *barhak* (a 'roar' or a 'challenge') in cinema also provides a model for reading Punjab's contemporary poetry, particularly in that Punjabi poetry builds on a classical linguistic and literary tradition contrasted against the colloquial and vulgarized cinematic and theatrical Punjabi cultural production used to denounce the language and its speakers.

In contrast to the situation of Punjabi in popular culture on the Pakistani side of the border, Indian Punjabi cinema has contributed to a resurgence of Punjabi as a language of artistic expression. Over the past decade, Punjabi cinema from East Punjab has focused on social issues like drug addiction among rural Punjabi youth, oppressive state policies that lead to suicide among Punjabi farmers, and the formation of a distinct Punjabi identity that is inextricably linked to Jutt Sikhs and their socio-religious cultural articulation. Movies like *Carry On Jatta* (2012), *Angrej* (2015), *Nikka Zaildar* (2016), and *Manje Bistre* (2017) have elevated the status of Punjabi comedy from its vulgarized avatar in Pakistan to a sophisticated level of comedic performance which relies on Punjabi rural identity as the site for enacting the comedy of everyday life. Pakistani Punjabi cinema meanwhile has faced what is often termed as a decline. In Kirk's words:

> Widely held notions about the Punjabi language—that it is crude, rural, backwards, and invariably loud—resonate inextricably with the onscreen portrayal of Punjabis and Punjabi culture. The films are loud, rough, violent, predominantly set in rural settings, or if in urban settings, then often revolve around the lives of anti-hero gangsters and thugs. They appear in stark contrast to many Urdu films, which historically tend towards urban-set social dramas featuring upper class heroes and elegant heroines, although there have been some Punjabi films that try to break this mold (in particular some of the recent films of Syed Noor and Shahzad Rafique). (Kirk 25)

The conflation between violence, toxic masculinity, and Punjabi language and culture has further entrenched Punjabi as (the) undesirable in postcolonial Pakistan.

As I have discussed earlier in this dissertation, partition-as-method provides a productive methodology for discussing South Asia, particularly its literatures. The binary logic of postcolonial statehood and nationalism alienates any language/ethnicity/culture except Urdu as the binary other of the nation-state. Thinking of the binary as a partition and then creating partitions within the binary enables a new, more inclusive, and more pluralistic reading of the religious-ideologic postcolonial state. However, the existence of partitioned borders, which is the unfortunate reality of South Asian history, underscores fissures that result from the existence of those boundaries. As Amrita Pritam's "Aaj Aakha(n) Waris Shah Noo(n)" demonstrates, the Punjabi imagination has not reconciled with the communal division of Punjab. The massive popularity of Pritam and Shiv Kumar Batalvi across the border in Pakistan where they are recited and sung, coupled with the dedicated Pakistani audience of contemporary Indian Punjabi cinema provides the blueprint for interrogating, challenging, and overcoming the necessity of partition as a method. Punjabi movies like *Chal Mera Putt* (2019) and its 2020 sequel *Chal Mera Putt 2* have

brought together Indian and Pakistani Punjabi actors for shooting in the UK, thus emphasizing that the Punjabi literary and cultural formation is now the only available site for cross-border interactions at a time when relations between the two countries are at a historical low. I am arguing here not for the limitations of partition as methodology but for employing partition gainfully to break those limits. Mazhar Tirmazi's "Umaraa(n) Langiaa(n) Pabhaa(n) Bhaar," as shown previously, transports Pritam's reading of partition in 1947 to postcolonial diaspora Punjabi identity. By virtue of living in the Punjabi diaspora in the UK, Tirmazi's audience is not limited by the geographical borders of the contemporary nation-state, or indeed by the orthographic border of colonially communalized scripts. Thus, his idiom resonates with the idiom of Pritam and Batalvi, and together these postcolonial poets of partitioned India and Pakistan create a literary formation and a poetic space which is the "other" of the "nation."

In my introductory readings of Pakistani anglophone poetry, it might have appeared that, with the exception of Maki Kureshi, the prominent Pakistani anglophone poets are exclusively men. To all intents and purposes, this is factually true. However, since 9/11, the Pakistani anglophone space has been transforming continuously. Not only are there a significant number of women writing fiction and criticism but, in my opinion, it is the women poets who are the most prominent in anglophone poetry since 9/11. Ilona Yusuf, Mahvesh Amin, Shadab Zeest Hashmi, Hera Naguib, Ramsha Ashraf, Afshan Shafi, Mina Malik-Hussain, Momina Mela and others have dominated the anglophone poetry scene and provided a vibrancy and voice that are unique, and challenge all the settled narratives of nationhood.

Arguably, of this group of poets, Shadab Zeest Hashmi is writing the most significant poetry by bringing the formal elements of the Indo-Islamic tradition with its Arabic and Persian

inheritance to English poetry, reinvigorating the *ghazal* and the *qaseeda* (ode) by transmuting them to English. "Qasida of the Last Chai" (Ode to the Last Tea) goes thus:

> My Himalayan salt has a sadness hard to lift,
> chimerical joy in beads of sweat on my forehead
> when you play Khusrau's sitar. Your hair is combed back
> and knotted, covered with Dhaka muslin.
> We must be our mothers in our laugh, shaking out arrows
> that pierced us on the map. But we don't laugh
> because someone handed us separate keys and your door
> became an unnamable distance. Our last chai has our salt,
> our silica, our duet of *Malhaar* against the blind new borders.

The daughters' inherited trauma of multiple partitions – ostensibly here the 1971 partition of Bangladesh; the displaced, commercialized and fetishized "Himalayan salt" available in supermarkets in the US; the lingering notes of the sitar and the "*Malhaar*" composition; the familiar "Dhaka muslin" head covering; the realization of permanent separation where once there had been coexistence; and, finally, "chai" – the most British of interventions into colonial India which has now become synonymous with *being* South Asian – these are all familiar postcolonial tropes of course. The condensed images, the felicity of language, and the recall of an oriental form place Zeest Hashmi in the moment of postcolonial "disclosure" which I have argued, is the productive space of articulation. She does not challenge the "blind new borders" in her postcolonial world, but her wistfulness is a moment neither of closure nor of anti-closure. Indeed, the *qasida* form itself is one lent to poetic closure, like that of the *ghazal*, but the genius

of the postcolonial anglophone poet is to create the possibility of a move "beyond" in this moment of apparent finality.

Zeest Hashmi's poetry evokes the kind of poetic brilliance and reimagination which has set apart her predecessor Agha Shahid Ali as the most prominent South Asian anglophone poet over the past two decades. Ali, a Kashmiri-American poet, is widely recognized in anthologies and criticism originating in the western academy. For example, Jahan Ramazani writes extensively about his poetry. Ali's work transcends both national and diasporic boundaries as he moves from his native Kashmir, under Indian occupation, to the United States and translates and references Pakistani Urdu poet Faiz Ahmed Faiz and classical *ghazal* singer Begum Akhtar. The cultural ethos of Urdu's literary formation is perhaps Ali's major inspiration as he brings the ghazal form to English and makes it local to anglophone poetry more successfully than any other poet. The tropes of "hybridity," "transnational poetics" and "globalilty" make him the ideal postcolonial poet for Ramazani's analysis. In similar fashion, Zeest Hashmi flirts with form and creates a hybrid poetic space reflecting the multiplicity of identities and sources that inspire her. For example, in three poems titled "Terms of Tea Tasting from The *East India Company,*" the opening lines establish a contrapuntal inversion of classical colonial tropes. The lines evoke colonially-owned tea plantations and introduce the person of Mowgli from Rudyard Kipling's *The Jungle Book*. Appropriating both form and colonial stereotype, Zeest Hahsmi presents Mowgli as:

> Budding Mughal prince swathed in silver
>
> and gold
>
> When you see your reflection
>
> you see an unclothed jungle boy

recalling the colonizers' gaze in which the colonized saw themselves as uncivilized and backward. Ironically, this is not unlike the male gaze in an ideological and religious patriarchal state as evident in the public reaction to Arooj Aurangzaib's black leather jacket which frames the introduction to this dissertation. Intertwining various adjectives used for describing the appearance of tea, Zeest Hashmi juxtaposes colonial stereotypes powerfully upsetting the balance of the English language within which those stereotypes were originally enacted. So, the "wiry" appearance of tea makes her address the colonial subject to ask the question:

> Remember twisting
> those Enfield cartridge ends
> with the teeth?
> Your *sepoy* blood boiling over paper
> greased with beef tallow and pork lard
> Taste of sacrilege
> in your brown mouth
> wired to orders in your ears

recalling the Indian war of independence in 1857, called a mutiny by the British, where Indian military personnel revolted against what they considered an affront to their religious sensibilities. Thus, through a simple strategy Zeest Hashmi creates a space for anglophone poetry to represent subjective reaction to the colonial legacy. *The Jungle Book* has a canonical status in South Asian literature departments, while the history of 1857 is taught as the history of native resistance against foreign rule. Zeest Hashmi thus, underscores the multiple times of the postcolonial experience: colonial biases and the colonial view of the native are perpetuated in postcolonial

imagination even as the postcolonial subject remembers the postcolonial era as an era of suppression.

Alongside the recent developments at the various literary festivals, as detailed previously, the institution of a recent literary journal, *The Aleph Review*, has brought the focus back to poetry. These important developments show how, simultaneously with the critical mass generated by Pakistani anglophone fiction, poetry too is beginning to find purchase. Both the festivals and such journals as *Aleph* are justifiably criticized for being elitist and reproducing already existing markets rather than providing platforms for newer and younger writers. Such platforms do emphasize the "Greenwich Meridian of literature" that Casanova has identified, and thus perform a sort of self-cannibalism on other segments of literary production in the country. Nevertheless, the discussions around Pakistani anglophone poetics that are now happening, if they are coupled with proper academic impetus, will hopefully open new ways for Pakistani anglophone poets to engage with their world. I have attempted here only a beginning sketch for addressing the neglected space of Pakistani anglophone poetics. Detailed studies of this genre will hopefully follow within Pakistani academia and especially inside English literature classrooms. The bias against the supposed inferiority of Pakistani anglophone poetry is now slowly being questioned. Hopefully, over the next decade, poetry written by Pakistanis in English will find its rightful place alongside other forms, genres, and other media of literary and cultural production.

One phenomenon which has not been the subject of my dissertation but which I find integral to contextualizing post-9/11 Pakistan is the resurgence of Urdu television drama over the past decade. Several plays have found an audience across borders and in the South Asian diaspora. My concern here is not to catalogue the dramas but to give a few brief examples of

what I consider are the salient tropes that contribute to the success of these plays. It is by understanding these tropes as a common thematic that a reader of these plays can understand them as forming a continuum in the Pakistani public imagination. The first two such plays to find a wide audience (signaled by their recent arrival on Netflix) were *Humsafar* and *Zindagi Gulzar Hai*. Both dramas play on a Cinderella fetish where a rich and handsome Prince Charming (played in both cases by singer-actor-heartthrob Fawad Khan) gets married to a simple middle-class girl with a quasi-religious morality determined by the patriarchal state. In *Humsafar*, the main protagonist, Ashar, is forced into sudden marriage with his simple and poor cousin, Khirad (played by Mahira Khan). The play follows the trajectory of Ashar falling in love with Khirad, being misled by his other westernized cousin who wanted to marry him, and eventually realizing that Khirad is his one true love. *Zindagi Gulzar Hai* meanwhile shows the male protagonist, Zaroon, being rejected for a long time by the simple and conservative female protagonist Kashaf (played by Sanam Saeed), until finally she agrees to marry him. Their marriage passes through the predictable roller coaster until eventually they both realize that they love each other and spend their lives happily ever after.

The significant aspect of both these plays is that the female protagonist in both cases dresses simply and modestly in ordinary shalwar kameez with Kashaf being particular about covering her head with a dupatta. In both cases, the challenge to the female protagonist comes from the male protagonist's former girlfriend, who in both dramas is dressed in fashionable western attire and is not averse to seducing a married man. In both these dramas, the home wrecker is westernized and from the upper class, and is *fluent in English as her language of discourse*. The confluence of dress, class, and sexuality provide the perfect recipe for an exploitative and negative female character, consistent with the imaginings of the religious and

patriarchal society in Pakistan. In contrast, Khirad and Kashaf, members of less-privileged strata of society are home makers, dressed in *Pakistani* and *decent* clothes, which to the Pakistani imagination translates into plain shalwar kameez, and speak chaste Urdu. As the country's recently removed prime minister Imran Khan's remarks on rape and women's clothing unfortunately show, the majority of Pakistani men and women believe that women who do not dress in socially sanctioned clothing are tempting men to rape them. This unfortunate social attitude therefore considers any women wearing western clothing as temptresses. Though the link might not seem natural, previous discussion on the Single National Curriculum and Khan's personal valorization of Urdu as national language and his public ridiculing of English are consistent with the logic of considering all western dress as sexually inviting. Thus, Khirad and Kashaf with their austere shalwar kameez, their embracing of pristine Urdu, and their fulfilling the role of dutiful and subservient wives confirm the social norm of what a good Muslim and Pakistani woman's role should be. It is also important to underscore that the good Pakistani woman in all these cases is from a lower social class and that the other woman, the temptress, is always rich. In similar vein, Khalil-ur-Rahman Qamar's notorious but extremely popular drama, *Meray Paas Tum Ho,* garnered tremendous controversy for depicting a woman searching for social mobility as a cheater and as morally susceptible by virtue of her gender conflated with her class. At one point the husband who has been cheated on, warns the other man that he is wasting his time on a "Do takkay ki aurat" (a woman worth only two pennies). The husband dismissing his wife as morally susceptible reflects general social attitudes in a society where women are not considered equal citizens and where a former head of the state's Council of Islamic Ideology once labelled all women "haram (unlawful)" and where heads of state are known rape apologists.

One of the most significant developments in the contemporary history of Punjabi language and culture in Pakistan has been the launch of a YouTube channel by the Lyallpur Young Historians' Club (LYHC). The LYHC is a forum initiated by young historians, Tauhid Chattha and Khola Cheema. While the coronavirus pandemic was at its height in summer 2020, the LYHC YouTube channel was launched as a platform for the promotion of academic discourse in Punjabi focusing on the history, culture, and politics of both Indian and Pakistani Punjab. The organizers of this forum have already been busy in staging an annual Punjabi Sulekh Mela (Punjabi literary festival) in the city of Faisalabad. The city was initially established as a canal colony by the British colonial administrators in 1892 as part of their canal colonization project. The city was name after the British lieutenant-governor, Sir James Lyall. In 1977, the government of Pakistan changed the name of the city to Faisalabad in honor of king Faisal of Saudi Arabia, as part of the Islamization project under General Zia's military regime. Ironically, the organizers of the LYHC reject what they view as the Arabization of Pakistan by shunning the name Faisalabad and insist on calling the city by the name given to it by its British colonial masters. It is important to remember that since the British first established the city, it did not have a precolonial name that can be reclaimed as part of the decolonization project. Thus, the harking back to the colonial past forms an unfortunate and ironic background to an otherwise revolutionary decolonial project, suggesting that the definition of "decolonial" in South Asia needs to be revised.

The LYHC reclaims the history of Punjab as an indivisible region, despite partition, united by the common forces of language and culture. One of the group's most powerful decolonial projects is to try and indigenize the concepts of social science, which exist in English. With presenters speaking in Punjabi, the forum makes the very powerful argument that Punjabi

can be as much the language of academic discourse in Pakistan as English and Urdu. Given the history of language politics in Pakistan, particularly the attitude to Punjabi by the political and intellectual elite of the province, Punjabi academics reclaiming their language is a refreshing occurrence. For example, the forum features presentations by Nain Sukh, a Pakistani Punjabi poet, novelist, and historian, and by historians Pippa Virdee and Priya Atwal, both university professors in the UK who publish academic work in English. There are presentations on the Sikh ruler, Maharaja Ranjit Singh, as a hero for all Punjabis across the religious divide, as well as on the forgotten hero of the 1857 resistance, Rai Ahmad Khan Kharral, who even Pakistani official history does not acknowledge. While some academics clearly struggle shifting between their languages, and others speak a pristine dialect of Punjabi, what is most commendable is that everyone adheres to the forum's insistence on owning Punjabi and employing it as the language of Punjab's cultural and intellectual life. Given the history of Punjabi's marginalization in Pakistani Punjab, this initiative is remarkably revolutionary and promises to unsettle the colonial legacy of considering Punjabi an inferior, underdeveloped, and non-literary tongue. The LYHC also includes presentations and lectures on the post-independence politics of Indian Punjab, thus defying the limitations of "partition-as-method." For instance, the forum has engaged student activists involved with the protests by Punjabi farmers against the Indian government, and it has also held an academic lecture by the curator of an Indian museum dedicated to the partition of Punjab.

It is crucial, of course, to remember that the forum's revolutionary cross-border politics has been enabled by the pandemic-era necessity of conducting all activities online. It is through technology that scholars from all over the world can come together on one platform working for Punjabi and Punjab, and that given strained relations between the neighboring countries, visa

regimes would not allow many of these sessions to be held in-person. YouTube's mass accessibility makes it possible for Punjabis sitting anywhere in the world to benefit from the research available on this platform. The LYHC functions outside the state's patronage systems, thus allowing it the freedom of independent research which is not available to researchers working in the university sector in Pakistan. Thus, the secular, democratic, and decolonial ideal espoused by the LYHC's reclamation of a cosmopolitan Punjabi identity is made possible by the relative independence of YouTube.

In Chapter II of this dissertation, after framing omy questions and motivations in the Introduction, I have argued that Urdu is a colonial language as much as English, and the postcolonial state's preference of Urdu over English is due to the former's identification with a distinct Indian Muslim identity that was formed due to a historical process. The history of Urdu as a "language of command" in British India and in independent Pakistan was a key factor in forcing the secession of Bangladesh. English, in this postcolonial space, offers a mediatory role, given that it was British colonial intervention that first relegated regional languages like Punjabi to an inferior status in comparison to Urdu. Reclaiming Punjabi via English is thus a revolutionary possibility enabled by postcolonial politics.

Chapter III offers readings of selected Pakistani anglophone verse as a point of entry into the acceptance of English as one of the languages of the postcolonial state. Tracing the state of "closure" as a productive space for the postcolonial anglophone poet, I have argued that this poetry provides an alternate space for reading the nation-state, which, in its insistence on Urdu, appears to exclude all other nationalisms. Pakistani poets move from a sense of closure with the past to a state of "anti-closure" where they probe the postcolonial state and its political, social, cultural, and historical bearings through their own relationship with language.

In Chapter IV, I have translated and read Punjabi poetry from Pakistan, arguing that it is a site for "dis-closure," or a state of revelation of the postcolonial identity matrix. The Pakistani Punjabi poets' practice of "resilience" places them in the matrix of world literature, and it is through translation into (unfortunately, through colonial and neocolonial necessities) global languages like English that Punjabi's denial within the state of Pakistan can be reclaimed. The Punjabi poet has always operated at the peripheries of Pakistani intelligentsia, so he or she always speaks from a position of relative disadvantage despite the province's huge share in the power structures of state and society. Highlighting these Punjabi poets as not merely regional writers but as actors on the stage of "world literature," I have attempted to perform an initial recovery of their writing despite the postcolonial politics that denies them recognition as "equals."

What does the "postcolonial melancholia" of a middle-aged man transported across a spatial and temporal divide due to the necessities of an academic career produce? For one, I believe that this melancholia is not a regressive or negative state of being. Indeed, being a postcolonial subject, aware of the baggage of colonialism and of neo-colonial cultural imperialism, is an existential reality for those who come from subaltern spaces and want to return to them. While not a political activist in any sense, I am nevertheless a teacher in undergraduate classrooms in a conservative, patriarchal, religious, underdeveloped, and underprivileged social setting. Political uncertainties plague the subaltern's postcolonial experience, and so a state of brooding about one's status as subaltern is not an unacademic pursuit. Instead, it is the academic necessity of an active engagement with history as it happens. This dissertation has offered insights into sites of literary production, cultural experience, and academic inquiry, which unfortunately remain unexplored in the inner domain of Pakistani academia. One has to literally

fly to another climate, to look at clocks twelve hours *behind*, and live through the unsettling experience of looking at time in parallel and simultaneous ways before one can appreciate the urgency of recovering the resistance or resilience inherent in alternative conceptions of the nation, language, and identity. After all, we are only as important as we can think ourselves to be.

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