

The Task of the Translator: Cultural Translation or Cultural Transformation?

By Faisal Nazir

Abstract

This paper critiques the concept of cultural translation as theorized and used in postcolonial studies. Taking contemporary Pakistani anglophone fiction as an example, the paper considers the use of the concept of cultural translation in postcolonial theory as a strategy for legitimizing and valorizing a specific kind of sensibility and literature, the 'migrant' and/or cosmopolitan sensibility and literature, produced almost exclusively in/for metropolitan locations and in European languages by postcolonial migrant writers. This literature, the paper argues, overturns and subverts the concept and practice of linguistic and textual translation proper as theorized in the discipline of translation studies in which the source culture of the translated text exercises a certain priority over the target or receiving culture and the key concern is about what transformations the target language and the receiving culture undergo in the practice and process of translation. In postcolonial literature, the paper contends, it is the source culture and text that are transformed to suit the expectations and literary taste of the readers in the target language and culture. In this sense then, postcolonial cultural translation actually signifies a transformation of the native culture of the postcolonial writer, a transformation that is manifested in the specific migrant and cosmopolitan sensibility represented in his or her work. To construct the theoretical framework for this discussion, the paper establishes two positions on the concept of cultural translation, one from Homi Bhabha and Robert Young, the other from Gayatri Spivak and Edward Said. In light of the contrasting views of these theorists and critics, the paper discusses the work of four Pakistani anglophone writers, two from the first generation, namely Ahmed Ali and Bapsi Sidhwa, and two from the second generation, namely Musharraf Ali Farooqi and Mohsin Hamid. The paper sees their work in relation to the concept of cultural translation and highlights their distinct position with regard to this concept.

Key Words: culture; domestication; foreignization; hybridization; migrant; postcolonial; transcoding; translation

In recent years, the discipline of postcolonial literary and cultural studies has increasingly engaged with the concept, practice and processes of translation. In postcolonial studies, through, a specific use of the concept of translation has become dominant, a concept defined as ‘cultural translation’. The discipline has adapted the concept of translation as a metaphor for describing the processes of cross-cultural interaction, which make up one of its key concerns. Cultural translation thus does not mean any actual translation but rather stands as a framework for representing the postcolonial experience, particularly one that is reflected in postcolonial europhone (mostly anglophone) literature. The metaphor of translation is apt for describing this experience, as theorists of postcolonial cultural translation claim, because the postcolonial experience is shaped by the interaction between two cultures, native and foreign, just as the work of translation involves a similar interaction between two languages. Moreover, this cross-cultural interaction produces a new hybrid culture characterized by the mingling of both constituent cultures just as a translated work involves a creative mingling of two languages in which the target language is sufficiently ‘foreignized’ to incorporate the otherness of the source text. In this way, textual translation and cultural translation are seen as analogous processes of hybridization, both cultural and linguistic. Anglophone postcolonial literature, in this sense, comes to exemplify both textual and cultural translation, as postcolonial writers writing in a European language necessarily translate their source/native culture and language into a European language but in doing so they ‘foreignize’ the European language to maintain cultural difference.

The concept of cultural translation, however, has also received sustained critique from many angles, particularly from critics working in the discipline of translation studies. In his essay “Translating Culture vs Cultural Translation”, Harish Trivedi strongly criticizes Homi Bhabha’s views on cultural translation as articulated in the essay “How Newness Enters the World: Postmodern Space, Postcolonial Times, and the Trials of Cultural Translation” in *The Location of Culture* (1994). Trivedi very accurately sums up Bhabha’s views on cultural translation as exclusively referring to “the process and condition of human migrancy” (Trivedi n.p.). Trivedi is unhappy with the use of “translation” in this sense as, for him, cultural translation does not involve any translation at all, and he sees the term “cultural translation” as an misappropriation of the concept of translation by the discipline of cultural studies without any acknowledgement of the concept’s real provenance and home in translation studies.

In this paper, I aim to highlight two opposite directions in Pakistani anglophone fiction in relation to the concept of cultural translation: one, a backward-looking, resistant and ‘foreignizing’ direction, and the other forward looking, optimistic, and ‘domesticating’ direction. I argue that the use of the concept of cultural translation in postcolonial theory is a strategy for legitimizing and valorizing a specific kind of sensibility and literature, the ‘migrant’ and/or cosmopolitan sensibility and literature, produced and consumed almost exclusively in metropolitan locations and in European languages by postcolonial writers (who are or who have been migrants themselves). My strategy is to first discuss Bhabha’s concept of cultural translation and its elaboration by Robert Young and then to critique it in light of Gayatri Spivak’s views on translation and Edward Said’s views on the linguistic experience of a native speaker of Arabic. After establishing these contrasting Bhabha-Young and Spivak-Said positions on cultural translation, I will discuss the fictional works of four Pakistani anglophone writers and try to establish which position, Bhabha-Young or Spivak-Said, their works align with. In doing so, I will highlight how the use of the English language by each of these writers indicates their deep embeddedness within the culture they represent or their distance and aloofness from that culture. Through this analysis and discussion, I aim to argue that the term ‘cultural translation’ in the sense of cultural representation in a foreign language is only appropriate for texts that show a writer’s firm rootedness within his or her native culture and literary tradition. When applied sweepingly to all postcolonial literature, the term becomes misleading and confusing as it lumps together all the works of postcolonial literature without distinguishing the different ways in which this literature engages with issues of cultural identity and representation.

Translating Culture: Postcolonial Writing and Translation Theory

The affinity between linguistic and cultural translation and their interrelationship was noted by pioneers of anglophone writing in South Asia long before Bhabha confined it to migrant literature in *The Location of Culture* (1994). One of the finest articulations of this close relation between textual translation and cultural translation comes from Raja Rao in the “Author’s Foreword” to his 1937 novel *Kanthapura*: “One has to convey in a language that is not one’s own the spirit that is one’s own” (vii). However, Rao quickly revises his definition of English as an ‘alien’ language and claims that it is the language of the “intellectual make-up” of the Indian writer but not the language of his or her “emotional make-up” (vii). Indian writers, according to Rao, are “instinctively

bilingual” as many of them write in both an Indian language and English. Yet, for Rao, this problem of representing the ‘spirit’ in an ‘alien’ language necessitates the creation of a new ‘dialect’ of English: “We cannot write like the English. We should not. We cannot write only as Indians. We have grown to look at the large world as part of us. Our method of expression therefore has to be a dialect which will some day prove to be as distinctive and colorful as the Irish or the American. Time alone will justify it” (vii). To render the Indian ‘spirit’ in English, not only is a new dialect needed but also a new style: “After language the next problem is that of style. The tempo of Indian life must be fused into our English expression” (vii). Thus, the Indian spirit can only be rendered into English in the form of translation, a translation for which the English language will have to be customized to the Indian spirit.

Several interesting points relevant to the theme of this paper can be derived from this “Foreword”. Indian anglophone writing is an attempt to represent the Indian experience (or ‘spirit’) in English. This experience is, however, not exclusively ‘Indian’ but is already shaped by a cosmopolitan vision and sensibility (“the large world as part of us”). The Indian writer is bilingual, able to write in two different languages, yet these languages do not just represent two different cultures but two different parts of the Indian psyche, intellectual (English) and emotional (Indian). The Indian anglophone writer is, therefore, a split subject who has to negotiate and mediate between two halves of his or her own self. At the cultural level, Rao’s “Foreword” seems to suggest that this mediation is facilitated by a cosmopolitan vision. At the psychic level, though, this requires the creation of a new dialect that fuses the emotional (or the unconscious) half of the psyche with the intellectual (or the conscious) half, or at least makes the conscious half bear marks of the presence of the unconscious through linguistic trans- or even deformation. In other words, rendering the Indian experience or spirit in English is only possible through an act of creative translation.

In translation theory, this creative restructuring of the receiving language is described as the strategy of ‘foreignization’. According to translation theorists, there are two kinds of translation: ‘domesticating’ translation that imposes the structures of the receiving language on the source text, and ‘foreignizing’ translation that restructures and re-forms the receiving language to preserve the otherness of the source text. If postcolonial anglophone writing is to be seen as an act of translation that preserves the ‘spirit’ of the original culture even when represented in a foreign language, it can only be defined as a foreignizing

translation. This kind of translation can only be produced by a bilingual writer who has had sufficient exposure to the 'spirit' of his native or source culture, and who preferably has a kind of attachment to the native culture so that it is part of his or her 'emotional make-up'. According to Paul Ricoeur, "It is here that there is need of translators from culture to culture, of cultural bilingualists capable of attending to this process of transference to the mental universe of another culture, having taken account of its customs, fundamental beliefs and deepest convictions; in short of the totality of its significant features" (quoted in Maitland, 8). While emphasizing the need for extensive knowledge of the receiving culture on the part of cultural bilingualists, Ricoeur seems to assume that they have accurate knowledge of their own 'source' culture. Questionable in itself, this assumption gives rise to further scepticism when the role of cultural bilingualists is exclusively assigned to migrants in the cultural theory of Bhabha.

Cultural Translation: Bhabha and Young

According to Bhabha, the role of 'cultural bilingualists' can only, or most effectively, be played by migrant writers. For Bhabha, "postcolonial migration" is not just a "'transitional' reality but also a 'translational' phenomenon" (320). Bhabha's theorization of cultural translation is very different from a general understanding of translation. Traditional translation theory regards language and culture as repositories of stable, standardized meanings in both the source and target languages and cultures. In opposition to this view, Bhabha brings the philosophy of poststructuralism to bear upon the concept of translation. Language and culture are not stable sites of meaning but are characterized by deferral, displacement and dislocation. Meanings are contingent, identities are fluid. Moreover, as Said states in *Culture and Imperialism*, all cultures have become hybrid after the colonial experience (xxv), and it is from this position of hybridity, in-betweenness and indeterminacy that Bhabha conceptualizes translation.

These marks of hybridity and indeterminacy are most visible, according to Bhabha, in the character of the migrant. The migrant occupies a position that cannot be reduced to 'native' or 'foreign' and, therefore, complicates the understanding of translation as occurring between two fully constituted separate entities (source and target languages and cultures). For Bhabha,

The migrant culture of the 'in-between', the minority position, dramatizes the activity of culture's untranslatability; and in so doing, it moves the question of culture's appropriation beyond the assimilationist's dream, or the racist's nightmare, of a 'full transmissal of subject-matter': and

towards an encounter with the ambivalent process of splitting and hybridity that marks the identification with culture's difference. (321)

For Young, the recognition of the hybridity of cultures, with its exemplification in the figure of the migrant, raises this question: "If cultures are always already hybrid and diffuse, what would it mean to talk about the idea of cultural translation?" (Young 165). Young's answer is that cultural translation is to be conceptualized as a "failure of translation" (166). Where translation is supposed to be successful when a text in one language has been completely and faithfully rendered in another language, the concept of cultural translation makes us recognize those elements in cultures that cannot be translated (Young 171-2). Far from being a term that signifies cultural representation, the term actually "is the name we give to the axis within translation of the impossibility of translation" (172). Thus, Young seems to endorse Bhabha's theorization of cultural translation as a reflection of the migrant's interaction with the host culture in which the migrant is able to intervene to produce a state of estrangement and hybridity.

Translation as Culture: Spivak and Said

In her essay "Translation as Culture" Spivak presents two approaches to translation: a backward-looking, nostalgic, translation as reparation, and a forward-looking, optimistic but perhaps also opportunistic, translation as transcoding. Where the former is characterized by an attempt to hold on to cultural memory through language, even a foreign language, the latter is characterized by an attempt to create a space and construct a 'new' identity (hence Bhabha's title, "How Newness Enters the World"). In translation as reparation, a feeling of loss and nostalgia dominates, in translation as transcoding, a feeling of gain and adaptability dominates. To understand the difference between the two approaches, and to acknowledge the significance of this difference in relation to the concept of cultural translation, it is helpful to see how Spivak establishes this difference between translation and transcoding.

Spivak, in fact, creates a tripartite structure of "culture as translation", textual translation, and translation as transcoding, and then goes on to critique the practice of transcoding. With reference to the psychoanalytic theory of Melanie Klein, Spivak considers translation first as a basic constitutive element of the human subject, playing a foundational role in subject formation. For Spivak, language is not just a system of rules and regulations that one learns to use, but has to be seen as a "concept-metaphor ... for that word which names the main

instrument for the performance of temporalizing, of the shuttling outside-inside translation that is life” (245). When performed at the secondary level, at the level of reading and writing, translation is “the most intimate act of reading” and requires the translator to “have the most intimate knowledge” of a culture, but s/he “must also become responsible and accountable to the writing/translating presupposed original” (242). In contrast to these primary and secondary levels of translation, transcoding is a manipulative act in which is located the “recognizable violence of the recognizably political” (244). For Spivak, the practice of transcoding is based on the assumption of the translatability of all languages and cultures into English, an assumption that has given rise to a booming translation industry. In this tripartite structure, textual translation is located between the two extremes of translation as subject formation and translation as political violence: “At one end, the coming into being of the subject of reparation. At the other end, generalized commodity exchange. We translate somewhere in between” (Spivak 247). It is when translation becomes a “generalized commodity exchange” that it is to be seen as transcoding and not the “most intimate act of reading” which for Spivak is translation proper.

Spivak uses this difference between translation and transcoding to develop a critique of the concept of cultural translation, as devised by Bhabha in *The Location of Culture*. For Spivak, the act of transcoding is a deliberate manipulation of the experience of cultural uprooting and discrimination undergone by people who have experienced colonization. It is turning the *experience* of uprooting and dislocation into a *discourse* of uprooting and dislocation so as to construct a distinct position and identity. Constructing a discourse in this sense is a conscious act of self-empowerment which is, paradoxically, based upon an assertion of powerlessness and victimization. The theorist or translator/transcoder of the experience of discrimination becomes necessarily separated from the victims of discrimination and the identification of one with the other becomes complicated. As Spivak states, “When we establish our reputations on transcoding such resistant located hybridity [of the natives], distinct from the commonly noticed migrant hybridity, we lose the privilege of the loser because we claim that privilege” (246). Here, Spivak is clearly referring to postcolonial writers and theorists who have built their literary and academic careers and reputations on the practice of representing and theorizing the experiences of postcolonial dislocation and discrimination. Her ire, though, is particularly directed against those writers and critics who have constructed a discourse of “migrant hybridity”, as in this way they have privileged the migrant’s

experience over the experience of “located hybridity”. In her view, the discourse of migrant hybridity cannot repair the loss undergone by colonized people, a loss that they register in knowing the difference between an ‘originary translation’, subject formation within culture, and a secondary translation, negotiation of meaning with European cultures and languages. As Spivak states:

The bad-faith, hybridistic essentialism of discovering diasporic hybrids and offering that transcoding of the popular as in itself a radical gesture cannot bind that wound of history ... What I am objecting to is the kind of silencing that is operated when the transcoding of diasporic cultures mingling becomes in itself a radical gesture. It’s that claim to effortless resistance, short-circuiting efforts to translate where “languages have been lost,” about which I feel dubious. (247)

Spivak, thus, disapproves of the use of translation as a metaphor exclusively for the diasporic experience. Translation for her takes place at many levels and in many forms and a selective focus on the diasporic, international context of translation limits the understanding of cultural and linguistic experiences that people undergo in this globalized world. The translation industry has endangered the existence of many languages and cultures because of the dominance of a single language – English – facilitated by this industry. In such a situation, which may be defined in the words of Robert Phillipson as a situation of “linguistic imperialism”, translation should be carried out with great responsibility towards the source language and culture.

Spivak’s views on translation are also reflected in Said’s distinction between knowing a language and actually living in it, made in his article “Living in Arabic”. For Said, anyone who has the experience of living in Arabic-speaking societies knows that there are two idioms in which the language is used, one elevated and rhetorical, the other colloquial or demotic. In Said’s view, even regional Arab writers are able to write in the classical idiom, resorting to the colloquial mostly when staging a dialogue among characters and moving back to the formal and elevated form on all other occasions. Said criticizes academic scholars, both European/American and Arab, for not bothering to learn classical Arabic and yet claiming to know Arab culture. This is because, according to Said, “classical Arabic, like Latin for the European colloquial languages until a century ago, has maintained a living presence as the common language of literary expression despite the lively and readily-available resources of a whole host of

spoken dialects which ... have never attained much currency beyond the local” (Said “Living” n.p.).

In Said’s view, a perfect bilingualism between English and Arabic is impossible, not only because they are very different languages but also because the “idea of eloquence is not the same as in the other”. Bilingualism, Said acknowledges, has been studied deeply and widely by scholars but, in his view, this research has not addressed the difference between ‘knowing two languages’ and ‘actually living in’ them, particularly when they come from “two different worlds and two different linguistic families”. For Said, it is more appropriate to acknowledge the incommensurability of Arabic and English and accept differences than to achieve “a frozen, completed but in the end only theoretical attainment such as the kind professional interpreters and translators seem to have but in my opinion don’t since they cannot by definition be eloquent” (Said, “Living”, n.p.). A similar situation exists in Urdu literature. The Urdu literary tradition has retained a strong connection with classical literary works in the language. The tradition is still dominated by such great literary figures as Mir, Ghalib, and Iqbal and the more modern figures of Faiz and Rashid. Though there is a long tradition of prose fiction in Urdu, it is poetry that has maintained its authority. Thus, for any Pakistani writer to be considered culturally bilingual, and to approach Pakistani anglophone fiction as an act of cultural translation, the nature of the relation of the writers and their work to the Urdu literary tradition, both classical and modern, will have to be analyzed.

Through this discussion, two contrasting approaches towards the concept of cultural translation have emerged: a forward-looking, optimistic, domesticating translation based on the views of Bhabha and Young, and a backward-looking, resistant, foreignizing translation based on the views of Spivak and Said. In the remaining part of the essay, I seek to highlight the relevance of these two approaches to the reading of Pakistani English fiction by discussing the works of four Pakistani writers and by showing how their own reflections on their work, particularly on their use of English, align them with either the Bhabha-Young position on cultural translation or the Spivak-Said position.

Pakistani Anglophone Fiction: Two Directions

Seen from the perspective of cultural translation, Pakistani anglophone fiction represents the conflict between the local and the foreign pointed out by Rao in his “Foreword”: the Pakistani anglophone writer faces the challenge of representing the ‘spirit’ of his or her own culture in an alien language. In other

words, the challenge for the writer is to *translate* the native spirit into a foreign medium without misrepresenting it. The word ‘spirit,’ used by Rao, is important as it suggests not just a set of manners and customs but a cultural sensibility that is reflected in the local literary traditions of any culture. For any writer to be in touch with the spirit of his or her culture, it is essential that he or she is deeply immersed in, or at least familiar with, the native literary tradition in which is manifested the local spirit or cultural sensibility. It is this familiarity and attachment to the native culture and its literature that enables the postcolonial writer to translate sensitively, to represent the local culture in a foreign language while preserving the spirit of the local culture. A cultural translation produced in this way is a foreignizing translation in which the target language is reconfigured to accommodate cultural difference. This approach to cultural translation is theoretically elaborated by Spivak and Said, as discussed above. Both the critics stress the need for considering translation as a backward-looking textual and cultural practice anchored in a writer’s experience of his or her native culture. In the following analysis, therefore, ‘foreignizing translation’ will refer to the Rao/Spivak/Said position on cultural translation.

On the other hand, lack of familiarity and attachment to the native culture, one sign of which is lack of familiarity with the native literary tradition, produces only a ‘nativizing’ or ‘domesticating’ translation. In this form of translation, the native culture of a writer is forced to fit into the idiom and rhetorical structures of a foreign language and to conform to its aesthetic and cultural norms. Thus, despite Bhabha’s emphasis on the “‘foreignness’ of cultural translation” (227), his approach to cultural translation, based upon the experiences of migration, represents translation as a ‘forward-looking’ textual and cultural practice not anchored in any language or culture, native or foreign. In fact, in using the concept of cultural translation, Bhabha’s aim is not to represent any actual experiences of migration but to conceptualize a migrant sensibility which has no deep sense of association with any ‘original’ culture. This sensibility is characterized by a sense of in-betweenness and hybridity and, instead of being gripped by a feeling of loss of the intimacy with the native culture, it expresses satisfaction and joy in its liberation from the limiting conditions of cultural identity. This migrant sensibility feels at home in the foreign language but not in the native one (hence the irony in the theoretical valorization of cultural bilinguals who are linguistic monolinguals) and does not feel any obligation towards the native culture and language. Thus, the writing that manifests this migrant sensibility may be considered as a nativizing or domesticating translation, one that may have a sprinkling of native words and expressions, but which remains firmly

embedded in the forms and structures of the literature and culture of the target language.

In Pakistani anglophone fiction both these foreignizing and domesticating approaches to translation are present and different writers take either of these directions according to their own understanding of their role as a Pakistani writer writing in English. To illustrate the two directions taken by Pakistani Anglophone writers, foreignizing or domesticating, the following discussion takes up the work of four Pakistani writers, namely Ahmed Ali, Bapsi Sidhwa, Musharraf Ali Farooqi, and Mohsin Hamid, seeking to align them with one or the other of the two directions. Several Pakistani writers such as Ahmed Ali, Aamer Hussein, and Musharraf Ali Farooqi, and some writers who have translated their own work into English such as Quratualain Haider and Abdullah Hussein, may be seen to practise a foreignizing translation. Similarly, several Pakistani writers, in fact, majority of them, may be seen to practise a domesticating translation. These include the likes of Bapsi Sidhwa, Kamila Shamsie, Mohsin Hamid, Nadeem Aslam and Uzma Aslam Khan. The advantage of choosing two writers from the older generation (Ali and Sidhwa) and two from the younger generation (Farooqi and Hamid) of Pakistani writers to represent the two directions is that it shows the sustained presence of the two directions in Pakistani anglophone writing since its inception.

Foreignizing Translation

Ahmed Ali's novel *Twilight in Delhi* is his self-confessed loving tribute to Delhi Muslim culture which, as he says in the introduction, he saw with his own eyes die away, due largely to British colonial policies and interventions. In the introduction to the novel, the author explains the reasons for writing the novel and for doing so in English. By the time Ali wrote *Twilight in Delhi*, he was already an accomplished writer in Urdu and known particularly for his contribution to the revolutionary volume of Urdu short stories, *Angaarey* (the title translated by himself as 'Burning Coals'). As he states in the introduction to *Twilight in Delhi*, his "purpose in writing the novel was to depict a phase of our national life and decay of a whole culture, a particular mode of thought and living, values now dead and gone before our eyes" (Ali xxi). He was not, however, just an observer, an outsider, but a person who had experienced the culture first-hand: "Seldom is one allowed to see a pageant of History whirl past, and partake in it too" (xxi). As the author describes, the Delhi that the novel describes "has changed beyond

nostalgia and recognition” (xxi). It is therefore as an act of cultural memory that Ali wrote this novel.

Ali has also shared his reasons for his decision to write the novel in English. The decision was conscious and deliberate, as he could easily have written it in Urdu. Ali states in the introduction that writing the novel in Urdu would have meant a limited audience for the novel and also one which was unable to do anything about the injustices described in the novel. However, the author had hoped that if published in English, the novel could have made some impact upon the British government so as to move it to intervene in the administration of Delhi on behalf of the Muslim population residing there. The author then claims that his “decision to write *Twilight in Delhi* in English ... turned out to be right”, as the novel’s reviewers praised the novel for enabling the European people to understand India and, along with the works of such Indian writers as Mulk Raj Anand and R.K. Narayan, for carrying out masterfully the job of “interpreting” India, not just for outsiders but for Indians themselves. It is, therefore, with a specific audience and purpose in mind that the novel was written and it achieved its purpose successfully (though it did not bring about any drastic change in British colonial policies).

A number of critics have commented on the language of the novel since its publication and the author reproduces some of the comments by reviewers in the introduction. When the novel was translated into Urdu by the writer’s wife, critics said that it appeared even more natural in Urdu than it did in English (Ali xviii). However, as the author describes, “Those who read it in the translation said it could not have been written in English, while those who had read it in the original English said it was untranslatable” (xviii). This suggests that the original English version of the novel was already written in a language that was thoroughly ‘foreignized’ so as to keep the English as close to the tone and tenor of the Delhi culture that the novel aimed to represent. The renowned linguistics scholar Tariq Rahman has described this stylistic innovation as a practice of “linguistic deviation”. In his view, Ali, along with Zulfiqar Ghose and Bapsi Sidhwa, largely uses standard English but with lots of creative translations which, in Rahman’s terminology, “nativize” the English language, that is, give it native colour and flavour. This is done because the writer is “concerned with communicating culture-bound experience through a foreign language” (Rahman 5). The critic Muhammad Hassan Askari has also noted Ali’s creative use of English to depict life in Delhi. Asserting that English was not “cut out for this depiction”, Askari praises Ali for creatively molding the English language to suit his purpose: “The problem the author faced in this context was to create a style which, being

English, was not English and at the same time adequate to transfer the atmosphere and harmony of life in Delhi into a foreign language, even though he had to twist and turn it to suit his purpose. Ahmed Ali has been most successful in this endeavor and has made a foreign language subservient to his artistic will” (Askari 31).

One element in the use of English by Ali in *Twilight in Delhi* that has not been paid much attention is the author’s frequent use of translations, done by himself, of classical Urdu and Persian poetry in the novel. Almost every chapter begins with an epigraph from classical Urdu poetry. There are translations of Ghalib and Mir and even of Hafiz, the Persian poet. This shows that Ali was not just a native speaker who could translate colloquial and idiomatic Urdu expressions into English, but he was also well versed in the classical Urdu literature. He practised translation not just in an implicit sense as is done in *Twilight in Delhi* but in the more standard sense of translating a foreign text into English, in his case, no less than the holy Quran itself. It is this characteristic that distinguishes Ali from other Pakistani English writers. While other writers are able to translate idiomatic and colloquial expressions from their native language, Ali was able to translate, and translate well, classical Urdu poetry. And this translation is not limited to actually translated verses but the language of the novel throughout gives the impression of translation, as Ali’s prose maintains a lyrical style and the emotional sensitivities of Urdu classical verse. In this sense Ali’s novel is a work of foreignizing translation in which English is creatively modified to represent South Asian Muslim culture.

Musharraf Ali Farooqi, like Ali, is an accomplished translator and also a writer of English novels. His translations include one of the classical Urdu narrative *Tilism Hoshurba* by Munshi Muhammad Hussain, translated as *Hoshurba: The Land and the Tilism* (2009), and *The Dastan-e-Ameer Hamza* by Maqbool Jahangir Siddiqui translated as *The Adventures of Amir Hamza* (2007). He has also translated selected verses of the contemporary Urdu poet Afzal Ahmed Syed (*Rococo and Other Worlds*, 2010). Apart from translations, Farooqi has also published several novels in English, including *The Story of a Widow* (2009) and *Between Clay and Dust* (2012). While *The Story of a Widow* is written in an elegant urban style, reflecting the middle-class manners of the characters, it is in *Between Clay and Dust* that Farooqi shows his ability to mould the English language for his purposes. Interestingly, the theme of the novel is the decline and decay of values and cultural norms, which brings it close to Ali’s concerns in *Twilight in Delhi*. Farooqi also adopts a style that is suitable for his subject, theme

and setting. Despite dealing with characters from a rural background, the language of the novel is stately and formal, keeping in line with the sensibility of the main character, Ustad Ramzi. Ustad Ramzi is an old wrestler who believes in the continuity of tradition but is saddened by the steady decline in values and norms. Another central character in the novel is Gohar Jan, a courtesan, who is also aggrieved at the decline and threatened closure of her artistic tradition.

Though Farooqi's prose in *Between Clay and Dust* does not have the lyricism of Ali's in *Twilight in Delhi*, it is still close to it in mood and tone. There are only a few Urdu words used in the novel, and most of the novel is written in standard English. There are also no allusions to the Urdu literary tradition, even in the character of Gohar Jan, who, as a courtesan, must surely have been familiar with poetry. Farooqi has admitted that his knowledge of the tradition of *pehelwani* (wrestling) comes solely from books and that he has never visited any *akhara* (ring or arena) (the same may be assumed about his knowledge of the *kotha*) (Bilal 56). The reason why Farooqi chose to write about these two traditions is not that he had any special attachment to them but because they helped him bring out the intensity of feelings experienced in human relationships. Where for Ali the culture described in *Twilight in Delhi* had intrinsic value for him, for Farooqi the culture and traditions described in *Between Clay and Dust* are valuable only because through these is he able to highlight universal human characteristics and traits. This is why there are no detailed cultural descriptions in Farooqi's novel. His aim is not to represent South Asian culture but to represent human nature. For this reason, we also find that the spatial and temporal setting of the novel remains vague, though the reference to Partition at the beginning of the novel does give us some sense of the novel's spatio-temporal setting.

Farooqi also does not consider his role as a translator of Urdu texts in terms of cultural translation. He is the founder of the Urdu Project (www.urduproject.wordpress.com), an enterprise seeking to facilitate the translation of Urdu works into English and their publication. The reason for launching this project is not that Farooqi wants to represent South Asian culture through the project, but rather to broaden the exposure of readers of literature to human experience. Thus, in both his translated and original works Farooqi attempts to celebrate literature itself, to widen its circulation and access, and to expand the boundaries of human experience.

When seen from the perspective of cultural translation, Farooqi's English language works do not appear to be works of cultural representation. Culture in itself plays a negligible role in these works as no detailed cultural descriptions are included. The focus is always on the inner dimension of human experience, the

inner struggles and conflicts faced by characters. Farooqi has, thus far, not made cross-cultural conflict the main theme of any of his novels, and he has kept his novels enclosed within the South Asian cultural context. However, he has still faced the challenge of representing the experiences of South Asian characters in a European language. His strategy has been to keep the language of his novels consistent with their themes and characters without unnecessarily introducing native words and expressions. Yet, since the characters and themes of the novels all come from a South Asian context, consistency with their social and cultural background has compelled Farooqi to practise stylistic innovations. The language of his novels, though English, does reflect the foreign sensibilities of his characters. Thus, there remains a foreignizing element in his English novels. even though it is not as pronounced as it is in Ali's novel.

Domesticating Translation

A Pakistani novelist from the first generation of writers, Sidhwa, has several novels to her name, all of which have received considerable critical acclaim. However, her most critically appreciated novel remains *The Ice-Candy Man* (also published as *Cracking India* in the US). In contrast to Ali, Sidhwa has produced all her creative work in English, and her use of English is also very different from Ali's lyrical prose. Though she includes translations of some classical Urdu verses in *Ice-Candy Man* (perhaps translated by herself), she has never produced a fully-fledged translation of any work into English. Sidhwa writes mostly in standard English dialect and uses literary devices from within the English literary tradition to narrate her stories. Her writing is marked by the use of puns, irony, understatement/overstatement, and allusions. However, she also uses local expressions and idioms occasionally in the original and sometimes in translation.

In her article, "Creative Processes in Pakistani English Fiction", Sidhwa gives an extensive account of her use of local expressions in her English novels. First, she adopts an unapologetic stance towards writing in English. While "Chinese Arabic, Italian or Portuguese [are all] fine languages, with the dazzle of genius in their written tradition" Sidhwa is "content to be landed ... with English" (231). Moreover, English is no longer subject to the "monopoly of the British" as "we the colonized have subjugated the language, beaten it on its head and made it ours!" (231). This is clearly a claim about the 'foreignization' of English in her works. Unlike Ahmed Ali, though, the foreignization in her novels is mainly at the level of words and expressions and not at the level of structure, syntax and

tone. She describes in the rest of the article the various strategies she has used to foreignize English, language which include the use of original Urdu words, giving English translation in brackets immediately after an Urdu word. After discussing these strategies she concludes the article by insisting upon the difference between her own distinct use of English “as a Pakistani vernacular”, and how English is being used by a “new crop of British writers of South Asian origin who have spent most of their lives in England and its educational institutions and who have absorbed the traditions of the language together with the thought patterns of the British” (239). According to Sidhwa, “English as spoken and written by [these new writers] is indistinguishable from that of the native population of England” (239).

With reference to the concept of cultural translation, Sidhwa’s creative use of English shows her wide exposure to the local culture and language, of both the elevated and the colloquial variety. However, as she has pointed out, it is the “vernacular” form of the language, both local and foreign, that she uses extensively in her novels. Thus, despite occasional references, allusions and translations of classical Urdu poetry, particularly in the *Ice-Candy Man*, and her use of local expressions, Sidhwa’s remains a domesticating cultural translation. The sensibility expressed in her novels is very different from that exhibited in Ali’s novel. She expresses a certain concern for, and a kind of deference towards, her “Western” readers whom she does not want to burden with too many local expressions: “I feel that the poor Western reader has a hard enough time absorbing the different cultures, values, religions, and alien cast of characters – not to mention the subtleties and complexities of their relationships to one another – without being burdened with strange words and tricky sentences as well” (233). Keeping in mind that her “primary responsibility is to the reader, Western and subcontinental”, she is “very selective and careful with the use of native words” (233). If the function of foreignizing words and expressions in her novels is not to jolt the Western (and Westernized) reader’s cultural complacency, then what exactly is the function of these words and expressions? It seems that these local words do not foreignize the English language in her novels but they only exoticize it. Most of the time, these expressions are used to introduce or produce humour or irony in the novels. They give a sense of exoticism to her readers, who may be too bored with texts written in standard English. They also help Sidhwa to maintain her own identity as a “South Asian” writer through what may be called ‘linguistic exoticism’. As Said has pointed out, it is the ability to use both elevated/poetic and the colloquial dialects that differentiates a person who has the experience of living in a language from those who only “know” a language. Sidhwa’s exclusive

use of vernacular and colloquial dialect shows a marked difference of sensibility between herself and Ali. If Ali quotes and translates classical Urdu and Persian verses, his own prose is not very far from their poeticism and tone, suggesting a sensibility commensurate with the classical literary tradition. However, in Sidhwa's case, the sensibility has become incommensurate with the classical literary tradition and has entered what may be defined as a 'modern' sensibility, privileging the vernacular over the classical. In terms of cultural translation, then, Sidhwa's work can be described as a domesticating translation confident in its ability to use English to represent local culture and experience.

Mohsin Hamid is currently one of the most critically acclaimed and highly popular novelists from Pakistan. He has published four novels to date, and also a collection of journalistic essays. Though all his novels have enjoyed popularity and warm critical reception, his most famous novel remains *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* (2007), a novel that engages with themes of globalization, terrorism, fundamentalism, and nationalism. Hamid's literary talents are at their best in this novel, showing his masterful use of narrative technique, irony and parody. The novel has been praised by critics for deconstructing the discourse of the 'war on terror' through the use of parody and unreliable narration. Hamid himself has described Changez, the narrator and main character of *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*, as disrupting this discourse by challenging the binary oppositions of East and West upon which the discourse is based (Bilal 164). After his stay in America, claims Hamid, Changez does not remain a pure Pakistani but turns "partly American" (Bilal 164). He even goes on to suggest that contrary to the impression given by the novel that Changez is addressing a real American, Changez might be addressing "the American within himself" (Bilal 165). In this way, Changez does not fit the narrow definitions of national identity that have become dominant in the post-9/11 world but deconstructs them. It is for this reason that he not only becomes a threat to American security concerns but also to the Pakistani authorities who, therefore, keep him under surveillance.

What Hamid is emphasizing about Changez is his hybrid identity and how this hybridity provides an alternative to the purist and exclusionary narratives of identity. In the introductory section of his non-fiction work, *Discontent and Its Civilizations*, Hamid not only gives a high value to hybridity but also describes it as a universal phenomenon. In the context of globalization, hybridity is experienced by a large number of people and, consequently, most people are "coming to feel at least a bit foreign" towards themselves (xvii). Far from being a problem, this universal experience of hybridity may be the solution to the

conflicts faced by the world today, as the “empathy that arises from such a shared experience” may make us more open to others (*Discontent* xvii). In this globalized world, “to be a human being and to be a hybrid being are the same thing” (*Discontent* xviii). And Hamid considers himself such a human being. In response to Mushtaq Bilal’s question about the effect of his “experience of living as an immigrant in the West” upon his “literary and cultural sensibilities”, Hamid replies that he regards himself as an “immigrant everywhere” (Bilal 171). What Hamid claims to have is a migrant sensibility that makes him feel like an outsider or “half-outsider”, everywhere (*Discontent* xiii). Hamid regards this feeling of being an outsider as something positive and healthy, as it enables him to notice and question things that an insider would not be bothered about (Bilal 171).

While hybridity and the migrant experience have a direct relevance to the concept of cultural translation and Hamid’s views on these issues are very helpful in defining his position in relation to the distinction between ‘migrant hybridity’ and ‘located hybridity’, his views on language and his admission of a lack of familiarity with the classical Urdu literature and language are even more enlightening. He claims that his unfamiliarity with Urdu does not delegitimize his Pakistani identity. In the past he used to be “discomforted” by this unfamiliarity, as it seemed to “reveal [his] non-local-ness” (Bilal 171). But now he is not only not bothered by this exposure of his limited knowledge of literary Urdu, he even questions the idea that “Urdu is a more Pakistani language than English is” (Bilal 171-172). To stress this point, he goes on to say, somewhat exaggeratedly perhaps to make his point, that “there is no such thing as a Pakistani Language. There is no such thing as Pakistan” (Bilal 172). What Hamid is claiming here is that Pakistani identity is conceived in very narrow terms and is in this way made to deny or exclude the rich cultural and linguistic diversity found in the nation.

Hamid’s defensiveness about his (lack of) relation to Urdu literary tradition and his claim of having a hybrid identity and migrant outlook places him clearly in the ‘diasporic hybridity’ group of Pakistani writers. If the example of arguably the foremost anglophone literary writer from Pakistan is taken as symptomatic of the larger cultural and literary conditions prevailing in Pakistan, the dominant tendency is not towards cultural and linguistic bilingualism but towards monolingualism. In this situation, cultural translation has become cultural transformation. It is this situation that Trivedi finds alarming in “Translating Culture vs Cultural Translation”. The dominance of the theory and practice of cultural translation in cultural studies means that “those of us still located on our own home turf and in our own cultures and speaking our own languages can no longer be seen or heard” (Trivedi n.p.). Indigenous languages have become

endangered by the dominance of “one all-devouring, multinational, global language, English” (Trivedi n.p.). Writers like Musharraf Ali Farooqi are perhaps fighting a losing battle in trying to keep Urdu alive, if only through translation. There is, thus, a greater need to cultivate and express a ‘resistant located hybridity’ through translation than to follow the trend of ‘diasporic hybridity’ conceptualized as cultural translation.

Conclusion: Cultural Translation or Cultural Transformation?

From this discussion of four Pakistani English novelists, cultural translation seems a vague expression to apply to Pakistani anglophone writing. It does not refer to textual translation but to translation or, it is more appropriate to say, transformation at a more intimate ontological level. Its exemplary figure is the figure of the migrant who is not just a strange being but an estranged one. The migrant represents an ontology of dislocation and displacement, these experiences shaping and transforming his personality beyond recognition. The migrant inhabits a third space between two cultures not identifiable with either. The migrant’s sensibility is not characterized by any guilt or indebtedness but by a highly creative and adaptive attitude. In this sense, the migrant fits neatly into the framework of postmodern theory into which he has been ‘transcoded’ by postcolonial theorists like Bhabha. However, since postmodern theory has a strictly European or Western provenance, we can say that cultural translation is a transcoding of the postcolonial experience into postmodern theory. All the Pakistani writers discussed in this paper have had the experience of living outside Pakistan, but only Ali has had the experience of being exiled from India (he was on a teaching assignment in China when Partition took place and upon his return he was not allowed to enter India). Yet it is Ali who seems to have the closest connection with the culture and literary tradition of the Indian subcontinent. Farooqi comes close, being a translator of classical Urdu texts. Sidhwa and Hamid have a more complicated relation with the local culture and literary tradition. For after all, it is not just words and expressions of the native language that contribute to foreignizing the target language, it is also the native ‘spirit’, as Rao puts it, or the native sensibility, as this paper has argued, which needs to be represented in the foreign language. And to that end, the foreign language and therefore also foreign sensibility needs to be foreignized from itself, captivated by the beautiful otherness of the translated text and culture.

About the Author:

Faisal Nazir is an Assistant Professor in the Department of English, University of Karachi, where he teaches courses in Literary Theory and Criticism, Postcolonial Literature and Criticism, and World Literature. His research interest is mainly in Pakistani English fiction and its critical reception around the world, but it also includes the relation between religion, culture and literature, and generally the academic study of literature in the 21st century. His doctoral thesis analyzed the influence of orientalism on fictional representations of Islam in post-9/11 Pakistani English fiction. He is currently working on the possibility of developing a specifically Pakistani Muslim literary-critical discourse based on Pakistani sources.

Works Cited

- Ali, Ahmed. *Twilight in Delhi*. New Delhi: Rupa Books, 2007. Print.
- Askari, Muhammad Hasan. "A Novel by Ahmed Ali". Trans. Carlo Coppola. *Annual of Urdu Studies*, Vol.9 (1994), pp. 27–38. Print.
- Bilal, Mushtaq. *Writing Pakistan: Conversations on Identity, Nationhood and Fiction*. Noida, Uttar Pradesh: HarperCollins Publishers India, 2016. Print.
- Bhabha, Homi K. *The Location of Culture*. London and New York: Routledge, 2004. Print.
- Farooqi, Musharraf Ali. *Between Clay and Dust*. New Delhi: Aleph Book Company, 2012
- Maitland, Sarah. *What is Cultural Translation?* London and New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2017. Print.
- Phillipson, Robert. *Linguistic Imperialism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992. Print.
- Rahman, Tariq. "Linguistic Deviation as a Stylistic Device in Pakistani English Fiction". *The Journal of Commonwealth Literature*, Vol. 25 No.1 (March 1990), pp. 1–11. Print.
- Rao, Raja. *Kanthapura*. New York: New Directions, 1963. Print.
- Said, Edward W. "Living in Arabic". *Al-Ahram Weekly*, Issue No. 677 (16-18 Feb, 2004). Web, 15 April 2018
- Said, Edward W. *Culture and Imperialism*. New York: Vintage Books, 1994.

Print.

Sidhwa, Bapsi. "Creative Processes in Pakistani English Fiction". *South Asian English: Structure, Use and Users*, ed. Robert Baumgardner. Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1996, pp. 231–240. Print.

Sidhwa, Bapsi. *Bapsi Sidhwa Ominbus*. Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2001. Print.

Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty. *An Aesthetic Education in an Era of Globalization*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2012. Print.

Trivedi, Harish. "Translating Cultures vs Cultural Translation." *91st Meridian* Vol 4. No. 1 (2005). Web, 6 March 2018.

Young, Robert J.C. "Cultural Translation as Hybridisation". *Trans-Humanities*, Vol. 5 No. 1 (February 2012), 155–75. Print.