From Agha Shahid Ali, *The Rebel's Silhouette:*Selected Poems by Faiz Ahmad Faiz Cambridge, MA: Massachusetts University Press, 1995.

- 1. Huzr karo mere tan se (Stay away from me Bangladesh 1)
- 2. Bangladesh II
- 3. Dhaka se vapsi par (On my return from Dhaka Bangladesh III)

Editor's Note:

The selected translations from Faiz are on the spoken and unspoken subject of Bangladesh's war of independence from Pakistan in his poetry. The first two poems were written in March and April 1971 and the third in 1974. The focus on a Bangladesh trilogy of poems by Faiz echoes an intertextual comparative subject of Ali's poetry in English – Kashmir – as the lost beloved. There is also an intertextual connection with an earlier issue of *Pakistaniaat* edited by Cara Cilano on the 1971 Indo-Pakistan war that gives us a deeper historical context to the poems.

Agha Shahid Ali's translations of Faiz represent a comparative literary perspective that is well attuned to narrating cross-cultural encounters in a cosmopolitan metropolis. In the introduction to *The Rebel's Silhouette* Ali captures the essence of his task as a translator in a written communication to Faiz:

"I wrote to Faiz in 1980 in Beirut, where he was living in exile, into which he had been forced by the military regime of Zia ul-Haq. He had "found a welcome of sorts in the ruins of Beirut. His closer friends were Palestinian" (Said, 50). Besides asking for permission to translate him, I told him that I would be taking liberties with the originals. But what I really did was to bribe him with a sort of homecoming. I reminded him that he had, years before my birth, stayed in our home in Kashmir. I created nostalgia".

Ali thus self-consciously recreates an autobiographical and comparative nostalgia in his translated selection of Faiz's poems on Bangladesh.

عذر کروم بن سے

ہے توکیے سے قتل عام کا میسلہ كي بهائ كالمسرب بوكا واويلا مرے تزار برن میں ہوہی کتناہے يراغ موكونى روشن مركونى جام بحرب زاس سے اگرہی بھڑکے ذائس بیایں نیکھے مرے نگار بران میں کہوہی کنتاہے مگروه زمریالابل بحواہے نس نس میں جے بھی جیسے در ہراک بوند قررانی ہے ہراک کشیدے صدیوں کے دردو حراکی ہراک میں تہر بلب غیظ وغم ک گرمی ہے حذر کروم سے تن سے برئم کا دریا ہے مدر کرو کر مراتن دہ پوسیسرا ہے جے جب لار تو حون جن میں رہیں گے بجائے مردوس میری ٹریول کے بول راس بجيراتو دشت ودمن بس بكوس كى بجائے متک صبائیری جانباری دھول حذر کرو کہ مرا دل ہو کا بیاسا ہے

اربي الملكائم

Stay Away from Me (Bangladesh I)

How can I embellish this carnival of slaughter, how decorate the massacre? Whose attention could my lamenting blood attract? There's almost no blood in my rawboned body and what's left isn't enough to burn as oil in the lamp, not enough to fill a wineglass. It can feed no fire, extinguish no thirst. There's a poverty of blood in my ravaged bodya terrible poison now runs in it. If you pierce my veins, each drop will foam as venom at the cobra's fangs. Each drop is the anguished longing of ages, the burning seal of a rage hushed up for years. Beware of me. My body is a river of poison. Stay away from me. My body is a parched log in the desert. If you burn it, you won't see the cypress or the jasmine, but my bones blossoming like thorns on the cactus. If you throw it in the forests, instead of morning perfumes, you'll scatter the dust of my seared soul. So stay away from me. Because I'm thirsting for blood.

تربة ول كى كدورت مرى أنكول يس أمند أن توليه جاره رتها چاره گرکی ال لی اورمی ف گرد آلود آنھوں کولہوسے دعولیا یں نے گرد الود اکھوں کو ابوسے دھولیا ادراب برکل دصورت عالم موجود کی ہرایک شنے مِرِی آکھوں کے ہوسے اس طیح ہم دنگ ہے برشجرمينارفول بريمول فونس ديره ٢ برنظراك تارخول برعكس خول اليده ب نورستيدكا كندن لهو متہاب کی چاندی کھو موع فول جب مک روال بی ہے اس کا سُرخ رنگ صبحل كالمنسناجهي لبو جذبه تون شهادت درد عيظ وغم كاربك راتون كارونا بحلى لمو ادر تھم جائے تو کلاکر فقط نفرت كالشب كالموت كال ہراک رنگ کے ماتم کا رنگ چاره گر الیا مر ہوئے دے كہيں سے لاكوئى سيلاب افتك جس مي دهل جائي تو شاير دهل سك ميري أنكول ميري كرد الود الكهول كالبو مرايريل ملكانع

Bangladesh lI

This is how my sorrow became visible: its dust, piling up for years in my heart, finally reached my eyes,

the bitterness now so clear that I had to listen when my friends told me to wash my eyes with blood.

Everything at once was tangled in blood—each face, each idol, red everywhere.
Blood swept over the sun, washing away its gold.

The moon crupted with blood, its silver extinguished. The sky promised a morning of blood, and the night wept only blood.

The trees hardened into crimson pillars. All flowers filled their eyes with blood. And every glance was an arrow,

each pierced image blood. This blood
—a river crying out for martyrs—
flows on in longing. And in sorrow, in rage, in love.

Let it flow. Should it be dammed up, there will only be hatred cloaked in colors of death. Don't let this happen, my friends,

bring all my tears back instead, a flood to purify my dust-filled eyes, to wash this blood forever from my eyes.

وصاكرسے واليي ير

ہم کہ پھرے اجنبی اتنی مداداتوں کے بعد

بھر بنیں گے آخناکتنی ملات توں کے بعد

کب نظریں آئے گی بے داغ برنے کی بہاد

نون کے دھبتے ڈھلیں گے کتنی برماتوں کے بعد

تھے بہت بے درد لحے خستم درڈ بنتی کے

میں بہت بے مہر صیبیں مہرباں داتوں کے بعد

دل تو چالا پر شکت دل نے مہلت ہی ردی

بھی گلے شکو سے بھی کر لیتے مناجاتوں کے بعد

اکن ہمی ہی رہ گئی دہ بات رب باتوں کے بعد

اکن ہمی ہی رہ گئی دہ بات رب باتوں کے بعد

اکن ہمی ہی رہ گئی دہ بات رب باتوں کے بعد

On My Return from Dhaka (Bangladesh III) *

After those many encounters, that easy intimacy, we are strangers now—

After how many meetings will we be that close again?

When will we again see a spring of unstained green?

After how many monsoons will the blood be washed from the branches?

So relentless was the end of love, so heartless— After the nights of tenderness, the dawns were pitiless, so pitiless.

And so crushed was the heart that though it wished, it found no chance—
after the entreaties, after the despair—for us to quarrel once again as old friends.

Faiz, what you'd gone to say, ready to offer everything, even your life—
those healing words remained unspoken after all else had been said.

^{*} Revisited after the massacre.