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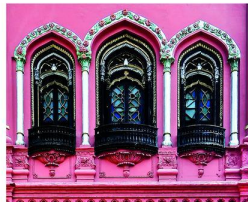
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Edited by Aroosa Kanwal and Saiyma Aslam

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Aroosa Kanwal, Saiyma Aslam

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32

BRAND PAKISTAN

The case for a Pakistani anglophone literary canon

Aroosa Kanwal and Saiyma Aslam

In this culminating chapter we aim to emphasise the urgent need to canonise Pakistani anglophone literature, not only in relation to its (current) production and consumption but also in terms of its dialogical dynamics, operating in four frames of reference: the individual, the national, the regional, and the global. As Pakistani anglophone writers began to be anthologised in Commonwealth, postcolonial, and world literatures, as well as other geographically and ethnically focused collections, which gestures towards an increasing acceptance of Pakistani literature by mainstream institutions, it became important to discuss the ways in which these narratives claim a manifest or implied congruence between the development and evolution of the Pakistani literary trajectory and the development of the nation. Most importantly, acknowledgement of the existence 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, albeit in diverse ways. It is important to emphasise here that despite being organically enmeshed within Pakistan's multilingual traditions and cultures and, at the same time, having already ushered in a stage where it is challenging the curtaining shibboleths of merely writing back to the centre, Pakistani anglophone literature is still struggling, at home, to overcome charges of being elitist and a colonial hangover. This literature, which is a product of multi-ethnic, multilingual, transnational, transcultural, and trans-local literary traditions of Pakistan, the subcontinent, and the Muslim world (and also in dialogue with other anglophone literatures from around the world), is urgently in need of being rescued from reductive misnomers. Cara Cilano recognises, in her essay 'Writing from Extreme Edges', a need to 'identify the variables that can link Pakistani English-language literary production within Pakistan's diverse array of multi-lingual literatures [and] within that subcontinent's English-language traditions' (2009: 195). While not going into the details that warranted her position, our chapter charts the terrain which anglophone literature in Pakistan has trekked over the years as a distinct literary trajectory that is enmeshed in the local and the global.

Our understanding of the Pakistani anglophone literary trajectory matches Dermot McCarthy's observation that 'The gathering of the scattered texts into a "permanent form", the selection and organization of a literary canon, and the ideological program of nation-building and identity-definition, all cohere isomorphically from the beginning in literary history' (1991: 33). In so doing, our discussion of the canonisation of the Pakistani anglophone literary tradition is significantly informed by a historical perspective that aims to reconsider past

documents, including literary texts, which not only document specific ideological biases towards gender, ethnicities, religion, politics, culture, civil war, democracy, consumerism, extremism, and nuclear paroxysm, but also provide a historical and lineal contextualisation of the issues dominating today's public discourse surrounding similar issues.

Therefore, on the one hand, this chapter foregrounds the ways in which our unique literary tradition has always been in dialogue with the contemporary situation; on the other, it rebuts the discourse surrounding the Pakistani anglophone literary tradition which claims that it relies on Western discursive enclosures. We argue instead that while in dialogue with literary trends of Asian, Muslim, and subcontinental cultures and civilisations, it has morphed into a distinct Pakistani idiom. It is precisely against this backdrop that we intend to expand the capability of Pakistani anglophone writing to perform three important functions of canonisation, namely, curatorial (innovations and experiments in genre and style), normative (exemplary attitudes and wisdom), and dialogical (interaction with other literary cultures and textual fields), as we will engage with shortly. In analysing these functions, we see them as being supported by and gaining strength from other canon-making forces, such as anthologies, translations, adaptations, literary inheritances, and the increasing prominence of anglophone writers in syllabi around the world. Moreover, taking cognisance of the diverse categories (Partition fiction, post-independence narratives, post-9/11 fiction, retrospective prologues to post-9/11 fiction, chick lit, nuclear fiction, etc.) of Pakistani anglophone writing, we aim to propose how our literary legacy can 'offer a grammar promising [...] a set of models and provocations and communal identifications enabling [us] to explore new aspects of identity and give rich and contoured explanations for our choices' (Altieri 1991: 27). We cannot ignore the fact that failure to engage with the questions of value and ideals within our literary traditions would result in stasis and complacency; we are sure that as academics, we all reject this stance.

Having said this, we now lay our canon cards on the table, as it is inevitable to overlook certain questions about normative and curatorial functions of literary representations for canon constitution. Pakistani anglophone literature displays a rich kaleidoscope of works exemplifying these standards that Charles Altieri considers fundamental to the canonisation of literature. In its curatorial function, the emphasis falls on how these works exhibit a 'repertory of inventions and a challenge to our capacity to further develop a genre or style' (Altieri 1990: 33). In the normative function, the emphasis falls on studying the 'exemplary attitudes' and wisdom that works reflect. Both curatorial and normative functions address a different dimension of a literary work, and together they help to work towards a contrastive framework that Altieri calls 'cultural grammar for interpreting experience' (1983: 47).

We will now demonstrate how, in the past seventy years, Pakistani literature has expanded dramatically, epitomising normative and curatorial standards while offering what Altieri calls 'a grammar promising [...] a set of modes and provocations to communal identification enabling us to explore new aspects of identity and give rich and contoured explanations for our choices' (1991: 27). By juxtaposing the early development of Pakistani literary works with the contemporary era, we suggest how past and present literary traditions have an inherent relationship. In so doing, we propose claiming a Pakistani canon, not as the result of one or two publications or events but rather of a multitude of publications, events, and contexts interacting with authors and their works, linking both history and aesthetics in a dynamic dialogical relationship. It is precisely against this backdrop that we read our works contrapuntally, inspired by Said's *The World, the Text, the Critic* (1983), to create a distinctive (Pakistani) cultural grammar for interpreting experiences through a repertory of inventions and developments in a genre or style.

For example, it is interesting to see how many writers of Pakistani origin, despite practising their art in the metropolis, are still attached to local cultural, historical, and generic conventions.

Hugely inspired by Taufiq Rafat's notion of the 'Pakistani idiom', Waqas Ahmad Khwaja's experimental bilingual poetry is indeed a recognisable blending of postmodern elements and the Punjabi *qissa* and *dastaan goi* traditions. The cultural delicacy of Khwaja's poetry is evident in his allusions to Baba Farid, Bulley Shah, Bhakta Kabir, and Guru Nanak. Marked by transmutations of similar rich literary traditions of the East, Shadab Zeest Hashmi's dynamic experimentation with the traditional subcontinental poetic form of the *ghazal* is a continuation of the Arabo-Persian origins of the *ghazals* and their subcontinental fruition in the philosophical *ghazals* of Amir Khusrau. Hashmi's writing, under the influence of the vernacular Urdu poetic tradition, is hugely informed by her readings of Allama Mohammad Iqbal, Bulley Shah, and Faiz Ahmed Faiz, masters of blending spirituality with intellect and lyricism with rhetoric. Aamer Hussein's vernacular knowledge of classical Persian and Urdu literature, especially in the Sufi tradition and the verse of Shah Abdul Latif, has enormously shaped his retellings of traditional folklore, immersed as they are in dreamlike magic and mysticism. Suhayl Saadi's narrative voice, subtly melding Scottish dialect, Urdu, English, and Punjabi, reflects different cultures and ethos that include Sufism, Jewish, Greek, and Buddhist legends, Moorish Spain, and Biblical and Quranic stories. It would not be wrong to say that Rafat's coining of the term 'Pakistani idiom' led his fellow poets to seek non-Western models to revitalise the Pakistani anglophone poetic tradition, which is a clear move away from the English canon, and to propose indigenous models and curatorial standards for the formation of a Pakistani poetic canon.

Reflecting on the rich treasure trove of Pakistani anglophone literature and its unique incarnations of craft and wisdom, we are proud to claim that Pakistani anglophone writings also strongly illustrate the normative function of our literary culture, which is not only expansive in its sweep but also dialogic in its engagement. Claire Chambers notes that:

Pakistan's pre-Islamic civilizations (evident in the archaeological sites of Taxila, Moenjodaro, and Harappa), and its shared borders and overlapping culture with India, Afghanistan, Iran, Central Asia, and China 'has given Pakistani writers a particularly rich cultural heritage to draw on'.

(2011: 122)

Absorbing and, in return, enriching its Arabo-Persian, subcontinental, and Muslim literary, philosophical, political, and cultural influences, our proposed canon presents a complex interface to engage with broader questions of identity, belonging, community, social responsibility, self-reflection, ethical challenge, and consensus, which are indispensable to an understanding of peaceful and responsible coexistence in a multicultural, multilingual world. Our writers reflect on the present against the backdrop of larger glocal geopolitical developments and centuries-old Muslim wisdom of inclusiveness and diversity, undermined in the post-9/11 era. The genesis of this debate can be found in Tariq Ali's *Islam Quintet*, written in response to a comment he heard during the 1991 Gulf War – that Muslims have no culture. Ali instead traces the tolerant, pluralistic, and intellectual side of Islamic civilisation in his five novels. Muneeza Shamsie corroborates: 'In Ali's quintet, each novel conveys illuminating insights into European and Muslim history and challenges widespread stereotypes of Islamic culture, as well as the rigid world view of Islamic extremists' (2014: 65). This excavation of the lost glories of Andalusian civilisation, particularly in response to the imperial rhetoric of the alien 'other' and the clash of civilisations, also surfaces in Imtiaz Dharker's 'Remember Andalus (Osama Bin Laden)', Zeest Hashmi's *Baker of Tarifa*, and Aamer Hussein's 'Nine Postcards from Sanlucar de Barrameda'. Similarly, the illocutionary force of the Punjabi poetry of Bulleh Shah and Qadir Yar, as exemplified in first- and second-generation poets and writers, is enormously relevant to a literary

discourse that underscores the climate of fanaticism and bigotry that Zia introduced in the guise of a new (Islamic) nationalism. Nothing could provide a better foil to or a stronger rebuttal of state-sponsored repression than invoking the intertextual tradition of the centuries-old Muslim traditions of tolerance and inclusiveness, as Muneeza Shamsie aptly captures in her *Hybrid Tapestries*:

The message of these mystics transmuted into English verse is not simply an expression of a spiritual experience, nor an attempt to merge the tradition of Pakistan's many literatures with that of English, but is also a challenge to the harsh, fanatical, highly politicized religious extremism which developed in Pakistan and other Muslim countries and communities during the last two decades of the twentieth century.

(2017: 261)

Similar normative expectations are met in fictional works, too. Specifically invoking the Andalusian polymath Ibn Rushd in her epigraph – ‘I believe the soul is immortal but I cannot prove it’ – and occasionally referring to Aristotle, Muhammad Iqbal, al-Kindi, Ibn Sina (Avicenna) and Pascal, Uzma Aslam Khan's *The Geometry of God* contextualises the aesthetic, philosophical, ethical, and epistemological debates surrounding the discord between science and religion within the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, centred on the premise that ‘*there's no marriage between faith and reason. Only Adultery*’ (2008: 114; emphasis original). The very title of the novel, ‘The Geometry of God’, gestures towards man's unique relation to God, a perfect synthesis of the physical and the spiritual. The best way to know God is through *khayal*, ‘the seat of intelligence’, but *zauq* (taste), a more sensual way of knowing God, is even lovelier than *khayal* because ‘It's physical. Not abstract. To understand, first you need a mortal’ (Aslam Khan 2008: 181). Aslam Khan draws wisdom from subcontinental, Greek, French, and Arab thinkers, philosophers, and scientists to reject any exclusivist discourse on the idea of ‘pure’ religion, identity, or origins. Similarly, Nadeem Aslam, in his ‘mausoleum fictions’, a term coined by Madeline Clements (2016: 91) for fiction such as *Maps for the Lost Lovers* (2004) and *The Wasted Vigil* (2008), draws upon Sufi mysticism, Persian, and pre-Islamic Buddhist traditions, as well as South and Central Asian aesthetic heritages. In *Maps for Lost Lovers*, ‘elements from numerous legends and myths of the world have been woven’ (2004 ‘Notes’) to explain the lives of characters in Dasht-e-Tanhaii. Likewise, in *The Wasted Vigil*, Marcus' house appears as the epitome of the enduring power of art in the face of fundamentalists' resistance to arts and artefacts, especially in preserving hundreds of books nailed to the ceiling, a chest full of pictures bearing Allah's names in Arabic calligraphy but surrounded by ‘images not of lovers and vines but of other living things’ (Aslam 2008: 242) or a Buddha head buried under Marcus' perfume factory. In both texts, Aslam underscores the ‘residual shortcoming of [...] knowledge’, unless supplemented by knowledge ‘about history and religions, about paintings and music [...] about ancient and modern events’ (2008: 356). Such a normative depth replete with centuries-old wisdom, arrived at through creative engagement with other literary cultures and traditions, is not only compelling in terms of its cultural diversity and enduring commonalities with global Muslim civilisation and literature, but also reassuring in terms of our claims for canonical status.

After probing this normative cross-cultural intertextuality that echoes dialogues, it should come as no surprise that a similar literary dialogue, which provides contrastive frameworks for analysing the past, understanding the present, and predicting the future, is also manifest within individual narratives and different categories and genres of Pakistani work. These diverse categories (comprising first- and second-generation authors, and the subcategories of second-generation writings) together provide contrasting frameworks and literary critical paradigms

that attest to the deep richness which our literature has already attained. One of the most productive ways to understand the strengths of Pakistani anglophone literature and culture is in terms of the perspectives and contexts that inform their diverse categories and genres; these have stemmed from a series of historical events that have given complex voice to the questions that shape any (literary) culture, from questions of individual identity and belonging to national identity formation and community identification. During the phases of the 1947 Partition and since independence, Pakistan has undergone several severe upheavals in the form of internal and external aggressions, such as the 1971 war, successive military dictatorships, the US-led Afghan *jihad*, the Talibanisation of Pakistan, wars with India, the Kashmir conflict, the war on terror, the rise of Islamic extremism and multifarious ethnic, ancestral, and sectarian crises. All these have played an enormous role in shaping Pakistani literature and literary genres. Siddharta Deb's observation remains relevant: 'The Partition has shown an uncanny ability to replicate itself through the decades, in mini-partitions, mini-massacres, and the marginalization and brutal treatment of minorities that has become the governing spirit of nationalism in South Asia' (qtd. in Kingston 2017: n.p.).

In this vein, the works by first- and second-generation writers provide compelling dialogues around important historical events, such as those in 1947 and 1971. On the events leading up to the 1947 Partition, we see a large corpus developing out of the works of first- and second-generation writers in different times and locations, adding to the 'polyphonous richness with internal divergences, with differences and tensions in evidence' (Narayan 1997: 143). Mumtaz Shah Nawaz's *The Heart Divided* (1957), Abdullah Hussein's *The Weary Generations* (1960), Ahmed Ali's *Ocean of Night* (1964), and Bapsi Sidhwa's *Cracking India* (1998) have been joined by works of second-generation writers such as Aslam Khan's *Trespassing* (2003), Khwaja's *No One Waits for the Train* (2007), Sorayya Khan's *Five Queen's Road* (2009), and Moniza Alvi's *At the Time of Partition* (2013). The importance of this rich and polyphonic legacy lies in the microhistories embedded within the historical events of 1947 and their dialogues among fictional accounts by Hindu, Muslim, and Sikh writers, whose 'unruliness' and 'leaks', as Cilano puts it, enrich, or contradict, the official history, and 'can indicate where and how the power structure that governs the archive is vulnerable' (Cilano 2010: iii). Similar questions can be raised with regard to the multiple perspectives and 'leak(s)' evoked by Pakistani and Bangladeshi writers on the 1971 war.

On the 1971 partition again, we have a rich body of works by first- and second-generation writers, such as Tariq Rahman's 'Bingo' (1975), Adam Zameenzad's *Cyrus, Cyrus* (1990), Mohsin Hamid's *Moth Smoke* (2000), Sorayya Khan's *Noor* (2006), Moni Mohsin's *The End of Innocence* (2006), Shahbano Bilgrami's *Without Dreams* (2007), Roopa Farooqi's *Half Life* (2010), Shehryar Fazli's *Invitation* (2011), and Aquila Ismail's *Of Martyrs and Marigolds* (2012). Providing a panoramic view of the angst that started with the Partition of 1947, and was aggravated in the second Partition of 1971, are works such as Mehr Nigar Masroor's *Shadows of Time* (1987), Aamer Hussein's 'Karima', and Kamila Shamsie's *Kartography* (2002). Post-independence literature is an apt reflection of the crises that continued to surge at different levels owing to internal and external sociopolitical problems affecting the nascent nation state. Ahmed Ali's *The Purple Gold Mountain* (1960), Zulfikar Ghose's *The Murder of Aziz Khan* (1967), Salman Rushdie's *Shame* (1983), Ahmed Ali's *Rats and Diplomats* (1984), and Sara Suleri's *Meatless Days* (1989) capture the post-independence challenges that vexed the country, leaving enduring reverberations that are felt to this day. These novels not only engage with the pathological violence that erupted at the time of Partition but also uncover 'those relations "outside" the "fevered sleep" of Pakistani nationalistic history that affect those who remained in or were born into Pakistan after 1971' (Cilano 2011: 1). It is interesting to note how, even in the twenty-first century,

our second-generation writers are preoccupied with the catastrophic legacies of the 1947 and 1971 partitions, which underscores their 'central role in the making of Pakistani [individual and communitarian] identities in the wake of apparently irreconcilable differences that have continued to exist since 1947' (Kanwal: 2015: 21). For these significant reasons, 1947 and 1971 are important literary phases that are being continually developed by even younger writers.

The last decade experienced a boom in 'post-9/11 fiction' that emerged in response to '9/11-fiction'. Second-generation writers who are significantly writing back to the empire include Hamid, Mohammed Hanif, Ali Sethi, H.M. Naqvi, Kamila Shamsie, Maha Khan Phillips, and Feryal Ali Gauhar. Their work engages with the post-9/11 sociopolitical milieu and its repercussions for Pakistani Muslims both at home and across the diaspora. However, not all writers in the last decade have viewed 9/11 as the only marker for changed perceptions about Muslims. Efforts have also been made by Pakistani writers to trace the historical antecedents that led to the calamitous history of 9/11. Therefore, 'one more arc for the geodesic dome we build as we study the past' (Altieri 1990: 40) (in dialogic relation with the present) takes into consideration the Islamisation policies during Zia's regime and the rise of religious extremism in Pakistan, Afghanistan, and the Middle East in conjunction with the rise of Islamophobia in the West. This subgenre is labelled 'retrospective prologues to post-9/11 fiction', a term coined by Aroosa Kanwal (2015). Such literary efforts tend 'to disclose the intrinsic principles of the circle of values we inhabit' (Altieri 1990: 40), especially in the highly charged and turbulent first decade of the twenty-first century. While 'post-9/11 fiction' focuses on the impact of the September 11 terrorist attacks on the lives of Pakistanis in the diaspora and at home, and includes works such as Hamid's *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* (2007), Naqvi's *Homeboy* (2009), and Aslam's *The Wasted Vigil*, the 'retrospective prologues to post-9/11 fiction' use pre-9/11 settings in texts such as Aslam Khan's *The Geometry of God*, Kamila Shamsie's *Broken Verses* (2005) and *Kartography* (2002), and Aslam's *Season of the Rainbirds* (1993) to explore indigenous sociopolitical scenarios that, in a post-9/11 world, embroiled Pakistan in the war on terror. The two categories together provide 'a space of reevaluation' (Bromley 2000: 1) to better contextualise multifarious tensions that are local in their roots and global in their reach, or vice versa.

Recapitulating the diverse challenges that Pakistan faces today, our writers expand the canvas of their fictional worlds to provide a grand sweep of the history of 'moral dioramas [...] of unscrupulous multiplicity' (Walter Benjamin qtd. in Zevin 2005: n.p.). We call these narratives 'panoramic fiction', inspired by Walter Benjamin's panoramic literature. Panoramic fiction takes a broader perspective on the different turbulent phases in our history, such as Aslam Khan's *Trespassing* (2003), Kamila Shamsie's *Burnt Shadows* (2009) and *A God in Every Stone* (2014). Shamsie is interested in the broad sweep of history and uses the trope of archaeology as a unifying factor in *A God in Every Stone*: from ancient Persia between 485 and 515 BCE to the dissolution of the Ottoman state; from the First World War to the decline of British rule in the then Indian city of Peshawar in the 1930s. Shamsie's epic *Burnt Shadows* tells the stories of three generations marching tenaciously across Japan (1945), India (1947), Pakistan (1980), Afghanistan (1979), and America (2001). Recapitulating the mayhem and violent stories of the 1947 Partition of India and Pakistan and Pakistan's involvement in the Afghan *jihād*, both of which have had serious implications for Pakistan, the novel leads us to a 1980s Karachi plagued by sectarian violence. The final section of *Burnt Shadows* is set in Afghanistan and New York and events are framed in such a way that, through interactions between Afghan tribesmen and American mercenaries, and foreigners and the US, respectively, Shamsie reflects on post-9/11 Islamophobia in the US. Similarly, although Aslam Khan's *Trespassing* is set in the Karachi of the late 1980s and 1990s, the novel extends the debate about ethnic and sectarian crises to the wider

subcontinent and the Middle East by introducing its readers to Pakistan's political, social, and religious reconfigurations during the Zia era, along with the writer's perspective on American attitudes during the Gulf War. In so doing, *Trespassing* provides a panoramic view of the expansion of Islamic practices and policies during Zia's military dictatorship by linking these to US interference in the Arab world's internal affairs during the Iran-Iraq War, and later during the First Gulf War.

In the past couple of decades, Zia's Islamic resurgence has remained popular, albeit contentious, fodder for Pakistani poets and novelists writing not only in English but also in Urdu. Given that this era is represented by many second-generation writers' fictional narratives as a turning point in the political history of Pakistan, we can identify and label these narratives as the 'legacy of Zia'. These dissident narratives of the legacy of Zia include, but are not limited to, Rushdie's *Shame* (1983), Suleri's *Meatless Days* (1989), Javaid Qazi's 'President Sahib's Blue Period' in *Unlikely Stories: Fatal Fantasies and Delusions* (1998), Aslam Khan's *Trespassing* (2003), Hanif *A Case of Exploding Mangoes* (2008), Sethi's *The Wish Maker* (2009), and Aslam Khan's *The Geometry of God* (2009). This textual corpus on the Zia regime is enormously pertinent in terms of the legislative measures and political climate that continue to implicate Pakistan, even today, in the war on terror, in human, religious minority, and women's rights debates. The measures taken by Zia under his Islamisation policy, in particular the enforcement of the Hudood ordinance and the Blasphemy Law, not only introduced religious and gender bias into Pakistani law but also had a far-reaching impact on Pakistanis abroad, bringing into the spotlight issues of racism and cultural violence. It is also important to note that honour killings, forced marriages, and women's rights gained significant public attention in the UK from the early 1980s (see Phillips 2010: 111–119; Gill and Anitha 2011). A complex concurrence of challenges afflicting Pakistan in the wake of Zia's interventions have led to tensions and differences that will likely never be reconciled. So many conflicting positions and interests have sat unevenly since then, surfacing in the tensions between Islamists, secularists, and moderates.

Just as multiple contending and conflicting positions mire Pakistan and Pakistanis in domestic and world politics, a range of genres and categories addressing these enigmas (interestingly in just as diverse a manner) have surged up in Pakistani anglophone writings – making our literature an apt register of the pulse of our changing lives and national legacies. The ghosts of the past have continued to make their presence felt in the lives of the people of Pakistan and India to this day. 'The nightmarish horrors of India's partition by the British seventy years ago on August 15, 1947, cast a long shadow into the 21st century [...] The festering wounds of hastily drawn borders remain geopolitical flashpoints that have sparked wars and terrorism' (Kingston 2017: n.p.). Most significantly, Kashmir happens to be another anomalous result of Partition, turning this region into the one such flashpoint, over which four major wars have been fought between Pakistan and India. These tense relationships and the nuclear arms race between the two countries are captured in 'nuclear fiction', such as Hamid's *Moth Smoke* (2000) and Kamila Shamsie's *Burnt Shadows*, as well as in two recent thrillers, Akbar Agha's *Juggernaut* (2015) and Munir Muhammad's *India Pakistan Nuclear War* (2016). The sociopolitical mayhem due to foreign interventions and local corruption finds expression in Karachi-based thrillers such as Hanif's *Our Lady of Alice Bhatti* (2011), Bilal Tanweer's *The Scatter Here is too Great* (2013), and Omar Shahid Hamid's *The Prisoner* (2013), *The Spinner's Tale* (2015), and *The Party Worker* (2017).

In addition to the major categories discussed above, which unequivocally gave a boost to Pakistani anglophone literature, there are numerous other genres that are exceptionally rich and vigorously engage with glocal tensions, but with nuances that are altogether different and

require distinct sensibilities. For instance, comedy as a genre displays multiple variations: on the one hand, we have acerbic engagement with post-9/11 Islamophobia in Naqvi's *Homeboy*; on the other, undercutting complex geopolitical, national, and social issues, Hanif's *A Case of Exploding Mangoes* is a fine example of ebullient humour. Surprisingly impressive and notable is the chick lit genre which has blossomed over the last decade or so, gleefully captures the increasingly contentious issues of feudalism, women's agency, fundamentalism, Islamophobia, tribal customs, and forced marriages. It would not be wrong to say that:

The light-hearted tone that is a key feature of chick lit (problematic though that term may be), is also positive in its efforts to work against the portrayal of misery and to demonstrate something light, breezy and undeniably engaged in the pursuit of happiness.

(Chambers et al. 2018: n.p.)

For example, Ayisha Malik's *Sofia Khan Is Not Obligated* (2015) and its sequel *The Other Half of Happiness* (2017) engage with humorous subversions of Islamophobic stereotypes in the diaspora. Moni Mohsin's trilogy, *The Diary of a Social Butterfly* (2008), *Duty Free* (formerly *Tender Hooks*, 2011), and *The Return of the Butterfly* (2014), focuses on social chatter amidst political mayhem in contemporary Pakistan. Even 'romance fiction' comes laden with penetrating views of love, romance, and longing within the feudal structures of Pakistan, such as in Qaisra Shahraz's *The Holy Woman* (2002) and its sequel *Typhoon* (2007).

Azhar Abidi's *Passarola Rising* (2006) is highly experimental in terms of linking science and historical fiction in tracing the European past, an effort that parallels yet differs from the track taken by Tariq Ali in the *Islam Quintet*, with its emphasis on the Muslim past. Linking the private and the public in literary dialogues are autobiographies that provide important clues to local as well as global sociopolitical developments in the different phases of our national history, such as Tariq Ali's *Street Fighting Years: An Autobiography of the Sixties* (1987) and Rafia Zakaria's *The Upstairs Wife: An Intimate History of Pakistan* (2016).

Multiple sociocultural and politico-religious factors shaping the lives of women from diverse backgrounds, both at home and in the diaspora, which include but are not limited to patriarchy, misogyny, forced veiling, and wounded yet resilient subjectivities, are reflected in works such as Rukhsana Ahmad's *Song for a Sanctuary* (1993), Dharker's *Purdah* (1988), Shaila Abdullah's *Beyond the Cayenne Wall: Collection of Short Stories* (2005), Kyla Pasha's *High Noon and the Body* (2007), and Rukhsana Ahmad's *The Gatekeeper's Wife* (2014). This list of categories is by no means exhaustive, but it does indicate the vast range of genres which make up the Pakistani literary tradition and thus compel us to emphasise the canonisation of this rich and diverse literary treasure trove. What a remarkable variety we have been able to accumulate, despite the fact that our literature is still in its infancy compared to centuries-old European, British, and American traditions. What laurels we would win in the canonical inventory!

No wonder then that our writers have continued to be anthologised across the globe. While their scope and quality may vary greatly, many anthologies, collections, and literary histories include writers of Pakistani origin. For example, we find Sara Suleri, Kamila Shamsie, Bapsi Sidhwa, and Hanif Kureishi in Ato Quayson's *The Cambridge Companion to Postcolonial Novel* (2015); Rukhsana Ahmad, Tariq Ali, Nadeem Aslam, Sara Suleri, Bapsi Sidhwa, Musharraf Farooqi, Mohsin Hamid, Uzma Aslam Khan, Hanif Kureishi, Maki Kureishi, Zulfikar Ghose, Taufiq Rafat, Daud Kamal, Salman Tarik, Kaleem Omar, and Shahid Suhrawardy in Eugene Benson and L.W. Conolly's *Routledge Encyclopaedia of Post-colonial Literatures in English* (2004); Ahmed Ali, Moniza Alvi, Zulfikar Ghose, Alamgir Hashmi, Taufiq Rafat, Kaleem Omar, and

Shahid Hosain in Jahan Ramazani's *The Cambridge Companion to Postcolonial Poetry* (2017); Rukhsana Ahmad, Tariq Ali, Moniza Alvi, Nadeem Aslam, Mohsin Hamid, and Hanif Kureishi in Deirdre Osborne's *The Cambridge Companion to British Black and Asian* (2016); Mohsin Hamid, Kamila Shamsie, and Sonia Shah in Crystal Parikh and Daniel K. Yim's *The Cambridge Companion to Asian American Literature* (2015); Nadeem Aslam, Mohsin Hamid, Aslam Khan, Kamila Shamsie, Mohammed Hanif, Maha Khan Phillips, Feryal Gauhar, Sorayya Khan, and Abdullah Hussein in Janet Wilson and Chris Ringrose's *New Soundings in Postcolonial Writing: Critical and Creative Contours* (2016); Daud Kamal, Salman Tarik Kureshi, Alamgir Hashmi, and Mansoor Y. Sheikh in Peter Dent's *The Blue Wind: Poems in England from Pakistan* (1984). In addition to these foreign anthologies, our writers have appeared in anthologies compiled by Pakistani critics, such as Alamgir Hashmi's *Pakistani Literature: The Contemporary English Writers* (1987) and *The Worlds of the Muslim Imagination* (1986), Muneeza Shamsie's *A Dragonfly in the Sun: An Anthology of Pakistani Writing in English* (1997) and *Leaving Home: Towards a New Millennium: A Collection of English Prose by Pakistani Writers* (2001), Shahid Hussain's *First Voices: Six Poets from Pakistan* (1965), Yunus Said's *Pieces of Eight: Eight Poets from Pakistan* (1971) and Kaleem Omar's *Wordfall: Three Pakistani Poets* (1975). These are just a few examples of Pakistani authors' canonical itinerary. Foregrounding the prominence of Pakistani anglophone writers in the global literary market, Dent states that 'One commends these writers without reservation: they are no "backwater", but *mainstream* and affording us all valid and fruitful directions' (qtd. in Benson and Conolly 1994: 55; emphasis original). This means that as a morphing episteme, Pakistani anglophone writing has entered into pedagogical negotiations with world literatures, encouraging and promoting critical thinking among students who read canonical authors of diverse literary traditions on various university courses. William Casement's *The Great Canon Controversy: The Battle of the Books in Higher Education* (1996) usefully examines the significance of exposing students to such pedagogical negotiations that offer 'new perspectives' on and 'new ways of thinking' about questions of religious, cultural, social, gender, and national identities on the cultural battlefield. But it is important to note, as Casement does, that such 'new ideas are not preached or covertly pressured upon students; nor are they denounced. They are simply added to an already existing corpus and afforded the equal status of being deserving of consideration' (1996: 102). While Casement's idea about introducing readers to diverse perspectives is indubitably important, the notion of 'an already existing corpus' sounds generalising, especially in contemporary debates on canonisation, when literatures from around the world are being discussed primarily as part of their indigenous canon before their placement within the polymorphous richness of postcolonial, world literatures in general. We similarly view the Pakistani literary tradition as a distinct set of literary values, as well as writing with a distinct sense of a society that has to be seen for itself and that has proven its potential to echo dialogues within and across cultures and genres.

David Fishelov's dialogic approach to literature remains relevant here, according to which, great works generate dialogues with readers, writers, critics, translators, adaptors, and artists and 'a work's reputation is an institutionalized result of [...] accumulating dialogues' (2010: ix). Our preference for the term 'dialogic' is also informed by its insistence on a generous 'principle of diversity'; by focusing on Pakistani anglophone literary genres and traditions, we suggest the ways in which their "'echoes" are heterogeneously distributed' (Fishelov 2010: 47) across genre, period, and culture, both locally and globally. If, according to Fishelov, the idea of the greatness of any literary text is tied to the vagaries of its reception and dissemination across genres, which he refers to as the echoes it generates, Pakistani anglophone writing has continued to 'echo-dialogue' through adaptations and translations. This is not only a 'sign of the vitality of a literary system, but when a specific book evokes such blooming or procreation it is [also] the hallmark

of its greatness' (Fishelov 2010: 24). Sidhwa's *Cracking India* (adapted as *Earth 1947*), Hamid's *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* and *Moth Smoke* (adapted as *Daira*), Hanif Kureishi's *The Buddha of Suburbia*, *My Beautiful Launderette*, and *My Son the Fanatic*, Shahraz's *The Holy Woman* (adapted as the screenplay *Dil hi tu Hai*), and Saba Imtiaz's *Karachi, You are Killing Me!* (adapted as *Noor*) are a few examples of novels adapted into films and screenplays. Despite the risk of film-makers having drastically different ideological concerns and the loss of the essence of the original, adaptations certainly have offsetting gains in terms of the size of the diversified audience and of understanding the text and its adaptation. Through diverse audience engagement, adaptations tend to reject any homogenising impulse to encourage what Fishelov describes as a 'whole range of attitudes' so that the present audience can 'adopt towards works of the past' (2010: 48). This textual re-creation and procreation tends to 'empirically test a few hypotheses about the correlation between a canonical status assigned to a work and the generation of echoes and dialogues' (Fishelov 2010: 48) over the years. Such is the case with many Pakistani novels and their adaptations.

For example, this simultaneous loss and gain in the meaning or essence of a text in the adaptation of Sidhwa's *Cracking India* into Deepa Mehta's film *Earth* is aptly captured by Rani Neutill: 'Mehta's traditional feminist perspective of representing women's subjugation obscures her ability to represent Sidhwa's novel beyond the heterosexual matrix of nationalist violence. As a result, Mehta misses the radical sites of queer and feminist resistance that Sidhwa's narrative offers' (2010: 1). Nevertheless, what needs to be emphasised here is that an adaptation is always another interpretation, in this case, of the momentous event of Partition. By juxtaposing the latter with Holocaust trauma, Mehta gives interreligious violence a global significance and reach; in other words, Mehta's adaptation recognises culturally specific as well as culturally diverse experiences of such traumas. Similarly, in adapting Hamid's monologue *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* into a political thriller, Mira Nair completely transforms Hamid's deliberate understatement and ambivalence about his protagonist's fractured identity, about his unnamed American interlocutor and the novel's structure and ending into a clear statement. As a novella, *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* was conceived so as to 'leave space for [the reader's] thoughts to echo', but its film adaptation 'collapses in a heap of wool-gathering humanism that feels warm to the touch, yet fatally hedges its political bets' (Taylor 2013: n.p.). But this is bound to happen when a text reaches a wider audience. Its dialogic dimensions also expand with the expansion of dialogic echoes. The English translation of Abdullah Hussein's short story 'Wapsi Ka Safa' ('The Journey Back') was adapted by Robert Buckler into a teleplay called 'Brothers in Trouble' for the BBC and by director Udayan Prasad as the film *Brothers in Trouble*; and together, the echoes they generated led Hussein to write a complex novel in English, *Emigré Journeys* (2000).

In addition to adaptations, when a literary work begins to circulate in translation, it demonstrates 'its openness to new sensibilities, and ensures a dynamic growth of horizons and repertoire' (Fishelov 2010: 23). We have no hesitation in claiming that Pakistani anglophone literature is not under-represented in translations, and hence is not cut 'off from the cultural capital of international recognition' (Thomsen 2017: 64). This is supported by the fact that Aslam Khan's *Trespassing* has been translated into fourteen languages in eighteen countries. Similarly, following its release in India, Aslam Khan's *The Geometry of God* was published in Spain, Italy, France, the US, the UK, and Pakistan. Hamid's three novels have been translated into more than thirty languages, ranging from Catalan to Chinese. Sidhwa's novels have been translated into Urdu and several other languages. Tehmina Durrani's *My Feudal Lord* has been translated into many languages, including an international edition co-written with William and Marilyn Hoffer. We tend to agree with Mads Rosendahl Thomsen that the 'figures that arise from

translations, references and sales are not facts about the canons or an exact science, but they can be helpful in tracing changes over time and how the current interest is shaped' (2017: 56). This is indeed hugely significant in accentuating the canonisation of Pakistani anglophone literature by opening up the space required for any work to echo reverberations in other textual fields.

With reference to Pakistani anglophone writing, this is also supported by the fact that works by writers of Pakistani origin are widely taught in various disciplines across the world. Let us take a cursory look at some of the courses that have been taught in British and American universities, at different times, even reformulated in certain cases with new titles: 'Postcolonial Studies' and 'Imagining Muslims: Representations of Muslims in Britain' at the University of York, 'Fictions of Terrorism' at Durham University, 'Founding Fictions: Writing in English from Pakistan' at the University of Leeds, 'Asian Literature in English' at Michigan State University, 'Pakistani Literatures and Cultures in the South Asian Context' at Jadavpur University, India, 'Postcolonial Theory and Literary Studies' at the University of California, 'Postcolonial and the Study of English' at the University of Pennsylvania, 'Contemporary South Asian Studies' at Kennesaw State University, 'Post-9/11 Fiction' at Wilfrid Laurier University Waterloo, Ontario, 'British Muslims in Contemporary Fiction and Film' at Teesside University, UK, 'Pakistani Writing in English' at Western Illinois University, USA, 'Contemporary Pakistani Fiction in English', 'Pakistani Literature in English', and 'South Asian Fiction in English' at the International Islamic University in Islamabad. This testifies to Pakistani writers' admission into what James Atlas describes as the 'battle of the books' (1993: n.p.). Once it ascends to a sanctioned list, such as anthologies and collections, a 'work gains pedagogical value through repeated inclusion in anthologies' (Barbara Herrnstein Smith qtd. in Di Leo 2004: 91) and authors themselves become brands. On the basis of the global circulation and supranational significance of Pakistani writing in English, anglophone Pakistani writers can rightly be called the 'custodians of brand Pakistan' as they are by *Granta's* 'How to Write about Pakistan' (n.d.: n.p.).

The literary value of Pakistani anglophone writing is also authenticated by the high visibility of Pakistani writers in the media. These authors have continued to be short-listed, long-listed, and winners of prestigious international awards, such as the Man Booker, Commonwealth, Orange, DSC Prize for South Asian Literature, Anisfield-Wolf Book Award, Windham Campbell Literature Prize, and many other international awards. No wonder then that works that achieve meritorious status and recognition through awards and prizes win over a constantly changing community of readers, which also includes academic researchers and literary critics, who are considered to be major forces in validating the canonical status of any work. Therefore, literature as a corpus or a body is created and shaped by such highly institutionalised and cultural forces.

Although it would be unfair to say that there is a dearth of literary criticism on Pakistani anglophone writing (since quite a few book-length studies, a large number of research papers, and significant numbers of anthologies and edited collections are now available tracing the trajectory of this literature's development), debates on the canonical status of any literary system as a preserver of culture can only be fuelled by literary critics. There is no denying that we have great writers and poets, we have a history of political contestation, we have a dynamic aesthetic and cultural heritage, our writers are winning acclaim and fame, and there are voices everywhere. The issue is not the absence of creative potential and a cultural reservoir, it is the absence of any critical impulse to let all the discordant chords be heard and form a unique canonical symphony. We highly regard the indispensable role that critics from outside Pakistan (such as Cara Cilano, Claire Chambers, Madeline Clements, and Rehana Ahmed) have played in the recognition of our work, signifying the many chords that enrich our literary output. Complementing the West-centric critical consciousness of our literature due to its affiliative bonds premised on 'guild consciousness, consensus, collegiality [and] professional respect', we

urge more and more voices to join the scene from indigenous peoples in their filial relationship with their literature, and to be ‘historical and social actors’ (Said 1983: 20, 15). We urge a ‘historical resituation’ of our anglophone literature by ‘critics who are themselves historical subjects’ (Louis Montrose qtd. in Drakakis 2013: 22). This critical vacuum is chiefly responsible for the delayed efforts (such as this one) to canonise Pakistani anglophone literature. One of the best ways to strengthen the social capital required for the canonisation of Pakistani anglophone writing is to encourage our academics and research community to publish their dissertations as monographs (since many theses remain unpublished in our universities). Yet another move to strengthen this social capital is to introduce Pakistani anglophone literature as a separate discipline across all Pakistani degree-awarding institutions. We believe this vacuum can be filled by cultural idioms, competences, and dispositions, and by revitalising the critical scene with voices from within.

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