



WORLD LITERATURE WITHOUT NATIVE READERS: BORN-TRANSLATED FORM AND RELATIVE FLUENCY IN MOHSIN HAMID'S *THE RELUCTANT FUNDAMENTALIST*

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Abstract

This paper evaluates *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*, written by Mohsin Hamid, through the approach of born-translated literature laid down by Rebecca L. Walkowitz. Rather than emphasizing post-9/11 issues presented in the novel, the study contends that translation is not an addition to the process of novel circulation but a characteristic attribute of its structure, narration, and address to the readers in the opening pages. Using the notion of relative fluency and non-native readership, the article demonstrates how the novel confronts the notion that English is a medium that provides complete linguistic or cultural clarity. By engaging in close textual analysis, the work evidences the ways in which second person narration, the lack of untranslated languages, and narrative uncertainty present the reader as partialized and mediated subjects rather than culturally secure or culturally native readers. The results indicate that *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* is an example of born-translated fiction in that it predetermines diverse international readers, eschews narrative closure, and considers translation as a continuing state of signification. Through the sustained textual analysis as a result of the application of born-translated theory, this paper is relevant to discussions about both world literature and translation studies and is an attempt to view the development of anglophone novels as influenced by global contexts of translation rather than particular national traditions.

Keywords: *Born-translated Literature, Non-native Readership, Relative Fluency, Translation Studies, World Literature*

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1.1. Background of the Study

Translation has turned out to be one of the most ubiquitous and structurally prominent states of modern literary production. In the digital circulation era, the faster publication schedules, and the readerships that span the globe, literary writings are no longer envisioned to be part of one linguistic or national setting. Rebecca L. Walkowitz notes “*translation saturates our everyday culture of reading, writing, and viewing,*” to the extent that being able to access more than one language is no longer a special condition but a basic literary experience (Walkowitz, 2015, p. 1). In the modern novel, the idea of translation is becoming more and more presumed not as a potentiality but as a provenance, as entering various linguistic markets nearly concurrently and targeting heterogeneous audiences even at the time of publication.

This shift is a challenge to the previous models of literary circulation that viewed translation as a secondary phase of the afterlife of a text. According to David Damrosch, as “*not a set canon of texts but a mode of circulation and of reading,*”, (Damrosch, 2003, p. 5) the stress on the fact that literary works acquire meaning when they are transferred out of their points of origin. Nonetheless, although Damrosch anticipates circulation, his model still assumes that there is some point of origin, a dominant language or national origin, where texts then move out of. Walkowitz makes this assumption more complicated by stating that in the modern world, a lot of novels “*do not appear at first only in a single language*” but instead “*start as world literature*” (2015, p. 2). These works are translated consciously and frequently include translation in their form of narrative, voice, and target audience.

The specific implication of this change on post-9/11 fiction and fiction in general is the implication of geopolitical conflict between the Global North and the Global South. What happened on September 11, 2001, did not simply reform international politics, it also rearranged the world of literature, shifting the pressure toward the need to tell stories that would clarify, mediate, or humanize the experiences of cultural difference, Muslim identity, and transnational movement. Authors addressing this situation are frequently faced with a twofold mandate to be loyal to local histories and subjectivities and at the same time to appeal to readers whose familiarity with those histories and subjectivities is partial, mediated or influenced by mainstream global discourses. Consequently, the narrative strategies of many modern novels are pre-emptive of translation, misunderstanding and cross-cultural reading as elements of structure instead of contingency.

This changed literary ecology gives rise to the concept of born-translated literature. Walkowitz introduces the term born-translated novels to describe the novels that “*approach translation as medium and origin rather than as afterthought*” (2015, p. 4). In these texts, translation is not only a theme but also a structural and conceptual tool that

determines the arrangement of the narratives and the interaction with the reader. Novels translated by Born often create the illusion of a language otherness setting, pose as translated, or deprive the reader of the comfort of linguistic or cultural clarity. According to Walkowitz, these works “*block readers from being ‘native readers,’ those who assume that the book they are holding was written for them*” (2015, p. 27).

This disorientation of the native reader is overlapping with more general arguments in the field of world literature and translation studies. Benedict Anderson’s concept of “*imagined communities*” emphasizes the importance of the print culture in generating national collectivity via a unified language and concurrent reading (Anderson, 2006, p. 36). Nevertheless, Anderson’s model presupposes the homogeneity of linguistic as a condition of national imagination. Contrastingly, born-translated literature makes this assumption more difficult by predetermining the circulation of multilingualism and partial fluency. According to Walkowitz, modern fiction is growing less willing “*to match language to geography*”, which disrupts the correspondence of language with nation and collective identity that forms the basis of Anderson’s framework (2015, p. 27).

In a comparable way, Pascale Casanova influential model of “*world republic of letters*” views world literature as a system on the planet organized by linguistic power, prestige, and unequal access to literary capital (Casanova, 2004, p. 11). Although Casanova recognizes translation as a process that enables the peripheral literatures to become visible, her model mostly views translation as an outward movement of a national literary space to the internationalized arena. Born-translated fiction, on the other hand, does not even believe in a consistent national origin. According to Walkowitz, this type of works “*highlight the effects of circulation on production*” which proves that world literary processes influence texts since their inception (2015, p. 5).

The issue of translator invisibility has also influenced debates about the issue of translation, particularly as advanced by Lawrence Venuti. According to Venuti, the prevailing translation practices are biased towards fluency and transparency, which creates the illusion that the translated texts are original and, thus, eliminates the labour of translation (Venuti, 1995). Later, in his work, he stresses that “*translation changes everything*” not only texts but also cultural values and literary hierarchies (Venuti, 2013, p. 3). Born-translated novels react to this criticism by rendering translation visible in the text. Instead of covering up mediation, these works dramatize linguistic displacement, thus prefiguring translation as a productive and constitutive force.

This terrain is also complicated by the question of untranslatability. Emily Apter criticizes the celebratory discourse of world literature by highlighting “*the politics of untranslatability*,” and believes that some language and cultural peculiarities cannot be distributed worldwide (Apter, 2013, pp. 6). Nevertheless, Barbara Cassin provides an important redefinition of the untranslatable, which is not what cannot be translated but

rather “*what one doesn’t stop (not) translating*” (Cassin, 2014, p. xvii). This idea is quite similar to that of Walkowitz on born-translated literature, where translation is understood as a process and not a finished product. In this sense, Born-translated novels can be reinterpreted indefinitely between languages and settings.

Such texts may also be interpreted in the light of the theory of heteroglossia developed by Mikhail Bakhtin, which is dialogic in nature. According to Bakhtin, the novel is made up of “*a multiplicity of social voices and a wide variety of their links and interrelationships*” (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 263). This multilingualism within itself, in the modern born-translated fiction, functions at the global level, taking into consideration not only the regional dialects but also the pre-emptive presence of other languages and the reading audiences. The translation, therefore, becomes part of the dialogic structure of the novel, but not a peripheral addition.

The necessity to examine literature outside national systems is further emphasised by Franco Moretti who calls on the method of distant reading. According to Moretti, world literature should be perceived as “*one, and unequal,*” because it is created by forces of systems and not as a work of a solitary masterpiece (Moretti, 2000, p. 55). Born-translated novels are the best examples of this systemic state because they incorporate the inequalities, pressures, and expectations of the world literary markets into the formal structures of the novels.

In this critical environment, *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* by Mohsin Hamid takes a prominent place. The novel is written in English but is directed to a transnational audience because of a literary context influenced by migration, geopolitical struggle and cultural translation. Its narrative address, tactical ambiguity, and rejection of cultural closure place it in what Walkowitz refers to as fiction “*written for translation*” and cognizant of global circulation at the very beginning (2015, p. 4). Although further textual analysis will be used in the following parts, this paper treats the novel as a born-translated text in the form and address that depict the circumstances of the modern world literature.

The recent academic work also proves the need to consider contemporary novels in the transnational and translational paradigms instead of in national terms. According to such scholars as Susan Stanford Friedman (2015), modern literature should be read by planetary and not national coordinates, focusing on movement, circulation, and scale. In a similar way, Pheng Cheah (2016) defines world literature as a form of world-making, which is influenced by the forces of the world and not only by the language of origin. The subsequent work of Pascale Casanova (2011) on literary authority and the discussion of Nirvana Tanoukhi (2008) on the concept of scale in global fiction confirm the argument that contemporary novels work across more than one interpretive horizon at the same time. All these views confirm the argument put forward by Walkowitz that the literary production in the present day cannot be decoupled of global translation economies, which

further justifies the need to analyse *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* in the context of global translation economies rather than using the monolingual or nationally specific paradigms.

2. Research Problem

Even though translation has taken a central role in the modern literary production, a lot of literary criticism still theorizes it as a by-product or a secondary process. *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* has been largely studied in terms of political, ideological and post 9/11 thematic readings, but the use of translation as a structural condition of its production and reception has been largely overlooked. This is a key fault that is representative of a wider trend in the literary academia to give preference to original language, national origin, and native audience, as these categories continue to become increasingly unstable. Additionally, the prevailing paradigms of world literature do not tend to explain the texts that start in more than one language and cultural situation at the same time. According to Walkowitz, the classical methods focus on the “source”, but not on the “target”, thus blurring the role of circulation on the very form of literature (2015, p. 30). This work responds to the necessity of having a critical framework that can be used to analyse novels that are produced within, and not just distributed through, global translation networks.

2.1. Thesis Statement

The paper argues that *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* is a born-translated novel because translation functions as a constitutive element of its narrative form and global address. By foregrounding translation at the level of structure rather than circulation, the novel disrupts practices of monolingual reading and unsettles the assumption that literary meaning originates from a single, stable beginning.

2.2. Significance of the Study

The research is relevant to world literature and translation studies by foreshadowing translation as a productive power in literary creation. It is an important contribution to a critical methodology, where the national and monolingual paradigms are left behind, by incorporating theoretical insights provided by Walkowitz, Apter, Casanova, Venuti and Bakhtin. The analysis also provides a new paradigm of understanding *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* in the context of the modern discourse of translation, world audience, and circulation of literature.

2.3. Research Objectives

The main aim of the research is to discuss born-translated literature as a characteristic of modern fiction. It seeks to examine the manner in which translation as a state of literary production and not a post-production phenomenon works. The paper further aims to illustrate the ways in which *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* illustrates the formal and conceptual elements of a born-translated fiction in the context of anglophone world literature.

2.4. Research Questions

- I. How does born-translated literature redefine the role of translation in contemporary novel production?
- II. To what extent does *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* mirror the structural and conceptual features of born-translated fiction

2.5. Literature Review

The body of scholarship on world literature and translation has grown significantly over the last thirty years, and to a large part in reaction to the deepening of global literary circulation. Initial preparatory scholarship by David Damrosch defines world writing not as a canon but as “*a mode of circulation, and of reading*” in which texts receive new definitions as they travel past their points of origin (Damrosch, 2003, p. 5). The model developed by Damrosch focuses on reception, mobility, and interpretive changes of the texts that pass through language and cultural boundaries. Although this framework is a productive replacement of strictly national literary histories, it nonetheless assumes a chronological order in which texts are created within a primary language and are then disseminated through translation.

The World Republic of Letters by Pascale Casanova is another conceptualization of literature as a world system, organized through unequal distributions of linguistic power and symbolic capital. According to Casanova, translation is a process by which peripheral literatures are being brought into a global literary economy that is controlled by a limited amount of central languages (Casanova, 2004). Though this model anticipates the relations of power and the politics of literary consecration, it nonetheless persists in viewing translation as a channel between national origin and international presence and not as a constitutive condition of literary production itself.

Rebecca L. Walkowitz, in contrast to these circulation-based models, provides a radical re-alignment in *Born Translated: The Contemporary Novel in an Age of World Literature*. Walkowitz believes that a lot of modern novels “*do not appear at first only in a single language*”, but rather, “*start as world literature*”, i.e. to enter different linguistic and national markets at the same time (Walkowitz, 2015, p. 2). This historical transformation necessitates the re-conceptualization of translation as not the afterlife but a state of origin. Walkowitz coined a term that was born-translated literature to refer to novels that “*approach translation as medium and origin rather than as afterthought*” (2015, p. 4). Within this context, translation is “*not secondary or incidental*” but “*a condition of their production*” (p. 4).

The intervention of Walkowitz, is important, as it undermines the established dichotomy concerning original and translated texts. Walkowitz explains that conventional literary criticism tends to privilege origins by concentrating on the source “*distinct geographies, countable languages, individual genius, designated readers,*” a focus that

ultimately reinforces monolingual literary traditions (Walkowitz, 2015, p. 30). In contrast, born-translated novels unsettle these assumptions by embedding translation within narrative structure, stylistic practice, and patterns of readerly engagement. Such works are frequently “*written for translation*” yet they are simultaneously “*written as translations*” often presenting themselves as if they were situated in languages other than the one in which they are written (Walkowitz, 2015, p. 5).

One of the main characteristics of born-translated fiction is the destabilization of the native reader. According to Walkowitz, “*block readers from being ‘native readers,’ those who assume that the book they are holding was written for them or that the language they are encountering is, in some proprietary or intrinsic way, theirs*” (2015, p. 27). The consequences of this displacement are far-reaching to the imagination of literary belonging. Unlike matching language with geography or nationality, born-translated works “*refuse to match language to geography*” and instead “*occupy more than one place*” or address “*multiple audiences at the same time*” (p. 27). Translation thereby becomes a constitutive and visible aspect of literary form instead of an invisible process of mediation.

This argument overlaps productively with previous theoretical descriptions of language and collectivity. To highlight how the print culture, especially novels and newspapers, facilitated imagined communities, the concept of “*imagined communities*” by Benedict Anderson (2006, p. 36) focuses on how the print culture could allow readers to conceptualize the idea of belonging to a nation by sharing language and time (Anderson, 2006, p. 36). Nevertheless, the model used by Anderson presupposes that the language of the text and the language of the audience are matched. Walkowitz directly questions this assumption, by posing the question, What happens when these languages are not identical? “*Or when there is no original language to speak of?*” (2015, p. 27). Translated literature as born complicates the framework put by Anderson by implying that communities of linguistic practice can be established based on *relative fluency*, translation, and linguistic estrangement instead of collective linguistic property.

The study of translation has also added important insights to this argument. The critic of *invisibility of translators* Lawrence Venuti reveals the domination of translation practices that focus on fluency and transparency; therefore, obscuring the process of labour and cultural mediation of translation (Venuti, 1995). Later, Venuti points out that translation “*changes everything*”, altering texts, values, and literary hierarchies (Venuti, 2013, p. 3). Walkowitz pushes this criticism by exploring novels that do not subscribe to the notion of fluency at all, and in which translation is revealed as part of the text, and its historical and political meaning is front-staged. She states that born-translated novels “*increase translation’s visibility, both historically and proleptically*” by registering their debts to translation even as they circulate globally (2015, p. 6). They have the effect of

expanding the visibility of translation, both in the past and proleptic, by marking their debts to translation, though they are distributed throughout the world

In addition to some traditional concerns about circulation and translation, more recent research in translation studies and world literature has progressively anticipated the instability of linguistic origin. The idea of post-monolingual condition by Yasemin Yildiz illustrates how literary texts challenge the ideological belief in a single language to the subject or nation (Yildiz, 2012). In a similar vein, Rebecca Gould (2014) highlights the issue of translanguaging as a literary practice that disrupts Eurocentric comparison patterns. The politics of language choice in world literature is further complicated by subsequent essays of Emily Apter (2011) about translation zones and a call to linguistic decolonization by Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o (1986). Collectively, these works expand upon the intervention by Walkowitz by placing the born-translated literature in the context of wider discussions of linguistic authority, cultural asymmetry, and world readership.

Controversies involving untranslatability make the field even more complicated. Emily Apter's *Against World Literature* warns against celebratory narratives of global circulation that overlook the "*politics of untranslatability*" and the uneven power relations governing which texts travel and which do not (Apter, 2013, p. 3). Yet, Barbara Cassin rewrites untranslatability as a productive situation, via which the untranslatable is defined "*what one doesn't stop (not) translating*" (Cassin, 2014, p. xvii). The notion of born-translated literature by Walkowitz is closer to the one, which Cassin suggests, and which puts the focus on translation as a process that is continuous and incomplete, not as an action.

Formally, the work by Walkowitz is also echoed by the theory of heteroglossia by Mikhail Bakhtin. Bakhtin (also) is known to maintain that the novel is composed by "*a multiplicity of social voices and a wide variety of their links and interrelationships*" (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 263). Walkowitz expands this observation to an international level, where modern novels, he argues, are produced under the conditions of internal multilingualism which spans past regional or nation-specific boundaries. This internal multilingualism in born-translated fiction is a measure of social diversity and anticipates the existence of other languages and translations into other languages in the future.

Although the theoretical landscape is a rich one, there still exists a synapse separating the theory of born-translations as applied to modern-day anglophone novels, especially those that are read as political or thematic novels. Although *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* has provoked a significant critical interest in its approach to post-9/11 geopolitics, identity, and globalization, little scholarship on the novel has explored the novel in terms of translation as a condition of production. The current literature generally prioritises thematic interpretation over formal analysis so that it ignores the alignment

between the narrative structure, address and ambiguity of the novel and the so-called born-translated strategies identified by Walkowitz.

Furthermore, even though world literature studies have made substantial theoretical efforts to theorize circulation, translation, and global readership, they have not adequately studied how novels written in major world languages, particularly English, engage in the practice of born translations. According to Walkowitz, anglophone authors “*tend to be followers, rather than creators*” in the construction of born-translated fiction, but their writing is increasingly under the influence of the demands of multilingual circulation and heterolingual audience (2015, p. 26). This observation highlights the importance of targeted research that addresses the ways in which English-language novels use translation in a conceptualized manner instead of its institutional advantage.

This work fills these gaps by initiating a long-term conversation between the theory of born-translated literature by Walkowitz and *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*. By placing the novel in the wider academic discussions of world literature, translation visibility, and global readership, the study does not rely on thematic analysis to explore translation as a structural and conceptual state. By doing so it is part of a continued attempt to rethink literature production in an age where texts no longer have to travel nation to world but are written in the world itself.

3. Theoretical Framework

The theory of born-translated literature by Rebecca L. Walkowitz is the main theoretical approach of the current study to analyze *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*. Walkowitz builds up this idea to describe the growing production of contemporary novels in environments of global circulation and multiple readerships, as opposed to its production in a localized and fixed language or national community. In *Born Translated: The Contemporary Novel in an Age of World Literature*, she states that most contemporary “*do not appear at first only in a single language*” but instead “*start as world literature*” (Walkowitz, 2015, p. 2).

According to Walkowitz, born-translated novel is defined as that “*approaches translation as medium and origin rather than as afterthought*” (2015, p. 4). Translation in this model is not an accessory and extrinsic procedure to a completed original; it is a constitutive fact and determines narrative form, voice, address, and positioning of the reader. Born-translated novels are written to be translated and occasionally translated, as though they were already translated into another language or other culture.

One of the key aspects of the theory of Walkowitz is destabilization of the native reader. She says that born-translated texts “*block readers from being ‘native readers,’ those who assume that the book they are holding was written for them or that the language they are encountering is intrinsically theirs*” (2015, p. 27). These texts require partial fluency, interpretive work, and cultural negotiation as opposed to linguistic familiarity.

This aspect is essential in literary analysis as it takes the focus off the text as to what it signifies and instead how it places the reader in world systems of meaning.

Walkowitz also underlines the idea that born translated novels “*do not want to correspond to geography*” and frequently “*inhabit more than a single place simultaneously*” (2015, p. 27). The language in such works is not a marker of national belonging rather, it serves as a place of mobility, displacement and mediation. This viewpoint enables critics to read novels in a way that is not limited to national or monolingual perspectives but rather that global circulation constitutes the way literary form is produced.

Significantly, Walkowitz claims that born-translated literature emphasizes “*the effects of circulation on production*” (2015, p. 5). Instead of considering circulation as a phenomenon that follows the publication of a novel, this framework considers circulation as a force that actively shapes the narrative strategies, such as ambiguity, the address to the second person, cultural exposition, and the intentional lack of contextual clarity.

This theoretical approach applied to *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* allows examining the novel as a work that is created in a global translation economy. The framework informs the focus on the way in which the novel predicts heterogeneous global audiences, unsettles the propriety of cultures and language, and creates meaning based on mediated address as opposed to unmediated representation. Therefore, the theory of Walkowitz represents an accurate and efficient conceptual framework that can be used to interpret the form of the novel, its narrative strategy, and its global orientation.

4. Analysis and Discussion

4.1. Relative Fluency and the Destabilization of the Native Reader

The Reluctant Fundamentalist as a born-translated novel is best approached through the concept of relative fluency introduced by Rebecca L. Walkowitz. According to Walkowitz, “*no one is born a native reader*” because access to linguistic entities is not predetermined by birth or precluded by foreignness (Walkowitz, 2015, p. 164). Fluency, she claims, never exists in itself but is relational, uneven, and socially constructed. This theoretical assumption directly explains the narrative format of the Hamid novel, which systematically exploits the impossibility of the native or intrinsic reading.

The Reluctant Fundamentalist stages linguistic asymmetry as a state of narration since its first line: “*Excuse me, sir, but may I be of assistance? Ah, I see I have alarmed you*” (Hamid, 2007, p. 1). Changez, the narrator, at once establishes himself as linguistically adept in English and at the same time signifies the discomfort and incomplete understanding of the American interlocutor. The novel is written in English, but it is not linguistically neutral. Changez reminds the reader again and again that English is not his native language and that he is speaking it “*for your benefit*” (Hamid, p. 1).

This approach is particularly consistent with Walkowitz, who argues that born-translated novels “*block readers from being ‘native readers’*” but compel them to occupy a relative fluency position (Walkowitz, 2015, p. 27). The reader, and by extension, the American listener, is never given the opportunity to see the narrative situation in its entirety. Urdu continues to exist as an absent language, best exemplified when Changez notes that in the English language, there is no “*a respectful term for the word ‘you’, as we do in Urdu*” (Hamid, 2007, p. 98). This linguistic disjuncture prefigures what Walkowitz defines as the continuation of noncomprehension “*within a single geography or audience*” as opposed to between identifiably distinct language communities (2015, p. 166).

The novel therefore dramatises the main thesis of Walkowitz that fluency is not natural but rather learned, partial, and relational. The reader is compelled to face the boundaries of their linguistic and cultural competence, which places the reader exactly in the role of the so-called “*foreign reader on purpose*” that Walkowitz isolates in modern fiction (2015, p. 165).

4.2. Second-Person Address and the Geopolitics of Reading

The second-person address, sustained throughout *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*, is one of the most peculiar aspects of this novel, which Walkowitz views as a hallmark of born-translated and postcolonial fiction. According to Walkowitz, second-person narration generates “*an ambiguous intimacy between the novel and its interlocutors*” while simultaneously making the reader an audience of an audience (2015, p. 167). This ambiguity is inherent to the design of Hamid.

Throughout the novel Changez refers to an unnamed American interlocutor as you, but the ‘you’ is never fully identified. The reader is pulled into the position of the addressee without losing sight of the fact that the address is not addressed to him or her alone. It is noted, the word ‘you’ appears to exist within and without the text. In *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*, such impact creates an ongoing slide between the fictional American and the international audience of the novel.

This narrative strategy reinforces Walkowitz’s claim that second-person fiction reflects “*the situation of communication itself*” rather than merely representing events (2015, p. 168). What Changez is telling is not as important as how narration circulates, to whom it is told, and in what conditions it is received. The silence of the American listener, his voice is never enacted, further underscores the asymmetry of narrative power. The American is a listener and does not speak; Changez is a speaker and cannot guarantee comprehension.

This imbalance resembles what Walkowitz terms the geopolitics of reading in world literature, where dominant audiences “*expect to be fluent all of the time*” (2015, p. 170). Hamid turns this expectation on its head by putting the American reader in an uncertain and vulnerable state. The fact that the American cannot speak Urdu and depends

on Changez to narrate everything in English reveals what Walkowitz describes as *American native reading* wherein the linguistic entitlement is presumed (2015, p. 170).

4.3. Born-Translated Form and the Circulation of Voice

Walkowitz points out that born-translated novels are not about voice but about “*circulation of voice*” (2015, p. 168). This distinction is essential in the interpretation of *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*. The voice of Changez is dominant in the story, but it is not independent. The existence of the listener, the expectations of the American, and the worldwide dissemination of the tale actually influence his monologue.

The novel predicts itself as a mediated narrative several times. Changez wonders about the interpretation of his words, and he poses such questions as, “*Do not misunderstand me*” (Hamid, 2007, p. 55) and encouraging the listener that “*nothing sinister is meant*” (p. 122). These scenes dramatize what Walkowitz has defined as reading “*subjunctively*” as though other audiences are present outside of the current scene (2015, p. 177).

This is enhanced by the end of the novel. As Changez observes the American reaching into his jacket pocket, he remarks: “*Given that you and I are now bound by a certain shared intimacy, I trust it is from the holder of your business cards*” (Hamid, 2007, p. 184). The ambiguity left open leads the readers to challenge their interpretive assumptions. The violence is neither verified nor rejected; the meaning is suspended.

Such a suspension is the typical example of what Walkowitz refers to as the single most prominent characteristic of born-translated fiction: it “*appears to be written for someone else, from the start*” (2015, p. 168). *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* is therefore not just a novel of globalization or post-9/11 politics; it is a novel of the uneven circulation of stories, the formation of audiences, the distribution of fluency across geopolitical boundaries. The novel imposes the *relative fluency*, the *second-person address*, and the *narrative mediation*, thus, performing what Walkowitz describes as “*the condition of world literature*” where there are both “*readers and nonreaders*” and where no reader can appropriate intrinsic access to meaning (2015, p. 170). The born-translated form of the novel renders translation, not only across languages but also across audiences, the key circumstance of interpretation.

Considering *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* in the context of the relative fluency and born-translated literature as explained by Walkowitz, it becomes clear that the formal strategies used in the novel cannot be discussed without referring to the political and ethical issues it raises. The novel deprives the reader of a native fluency, forcing them to rethink the intersection of language, power, and global audience. The process of translation is not a by-product but the constituent aspect of the production and reception of the novel.

This analysis demonstrates that *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* exemplifies Walkowitz’s claim that contemporary fiction increasingly “*generates world literature*

from the perspective of literacy” rather than territory or nation (2015, p. 170). The lack of narrative closure, the openness of the address, and the insistence on relative fluency place the novel at the center of the born-translated tradition, providing a paradigm with which to interpret how the novels of the anglophone world take part in the global literary systems without creating the sense of linguistic or cultural clarity.

4.4. Findings and Conclusion

This paper examines *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* through the lens of born-translated literature to rethink translation as a structural determinant of literary production rather than a peripheral mode of circulation. The findings reveal that Hamid’s novel unsettles the idea of a native readership, operates through relative fluency, and relies on conscious narrative mediation, extending Rebecca L. Walkowitz’s framework into the analysis of anglophone fiction.

To begin with, the discussion shows that *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* dismantles the supposition of a native reader in a systematic way. The novel is not linguistically or culturally transparent though it is written in English. Rather, it places all readers and in particular the anglophone readers in a context of incomplete understanding. This observation directly confirms the claim by Walkowitz that born-translated novels prevent the readers to be native readers and force them to deal with their own lack of fluency. References to Urdu and cultural difference and linguistic absence repeated throughout the novel are the confirmatory signs that English is a mediated and not proprietary language.

Second, the paper establishes that the continued use of address to the second person in the novel is not only a stylistic device, but a structural mechanism that prefigures the geopolitics of reading. The novel, as it attempts to address an unnamed American interlocutor and at the same time implicates a global audience, performs what Walkowitz refers to as circulation of voice and not the articulation of a fixed narrative subject. This narrative design compels the readers to a mode of interpretive uncertainty, which parallels the asymmetry of power that prevails in the international literary exchange.

Third, the results show that ambiguity in *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*, especially in the unresolved ending, is not a fault in the story, but a born-translation technique. The novel does not offer closure as it attempts to oppose single interpretation, thus maintaining what Walkowitz describes as the unfinished and continuous nature of translation. Meaning is dependent on the readership, context, and circulation, which supports the notion that the novel is addressed to multiple audiences and not a single interpretive community.

Through this investigation, the paper finds that *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* can be fruitfully and critically interpreted as a born-translated novel, which uses translation as a necessary requirement of its narrative form and address to the world. Using the theory of born-translated literature by Walkowitz, the study transcends pervasive thematic

interpretations of the novel and presupposes its formal contact with translation, relative fluency, and reader displacement.

The results add to the literature of the world and translation research by showing that the current anglophone fiction and especially post-9/11 global novels can no longer be satisfactorily examined within monolingual or nationally confined contexts. Instead, these texts require critical practices that view translation as a form of production and not a second life of texts. This research is a direct answer to the challenge by Walkowitz to look at operations that appeared to be secondary as mechanisms of production.

Additionally, the study fills an obvious gap in the current literature, as it demonstrates how born-translated theory could be applied in close textual analysis as opposed to staying at the abstract conceptualization level. By doing so, it sets a methodological precedent of future research of contemporary fiction that circulates worldly and cannot be seen through linguistic and cultural veils.

The Reluctant Fundamentalist is a vivid example of the conditions of modern world literature where translation, readership, and circulation cannot be separated. The experience of reading the novel as born-translated does not only help us understand the devices Hamid uses to narrate the story but also emphasizes the impact that requires us to reconsider the literary analysis in an era where no reader can claim complete fluency and no text is a part of a single language or place.

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