



WHEN MEANING TRAVELS: HERMENEUTICS, UNTRANSLATABILITY AND THE ETHICS OF INTERPRETATION IN WORLD LITERATURE

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Abstract

This article discusses the issue of translation as a hermeneutical and moral practice within the world literature since meaning is not transferred in a unitary way across language but is constantly being reconstituted by interpretation. The paper examines untranslatability as the fruitful location of meaning-making by employing the fusion of horizons, a key concept of most other theorists, and by Hans-Georg Gadamer, and the linguistic hospitality, a prominent concept of Paul Ricoeur. The paper establishes that silence, ambiguity, and cultural memory oppose the equivalence-based models of translation by conducting a close comparative analysis of three Urdu short stories translated into English, namely, Naiyer Masud, *The Essence of Camphor* (trans. Muhammad Umar Memon, 1996), Intizar Husain, *An Unwritten Epic* (trans. various, 2011), and Qurratulain Hyder, *Sita Betrayed* (trans. various, 2000). It holds that translators are moral interpreters and their choices are active in the global distribution of meaning. Viewing translation as philosophical engagement and not technical transfer, the work has a role to play in the current discussion of ethics, translation, interpretation and semantic mobility in world literature and translation studies.

Keywords: *Ethics of Translation, Gadamer, Hermeneutics, Ricoeur, Untranslatability, Urdu Fiction, World Literature.*

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1. Introduction

As David Damrosch defines it has come to be popularly known, world literature includes literary works that circulate out into a wider world outside the linguistic and cultural location at which they originate (Damrosch 2003: 6). Never, however, is this circulation neutral and transparent. Literary works are not just transported, they are carried with the help of translation, which unavoidably changes the meaning (Venuti 1995: 17). Cross-linguistic texts are moved into new frames of meaning in which their meanings are negotiated but not maintained (Apter 2013: 3). It is especially this semantic instability that is acute during the translation of fiction that is deeply infused with cultural memory, philosophical ambiguity, and narrative silence, which cannot be captured by the equivalence-based models that prevail in the traditional theory of translation.

The classical theories of translation, including the dynamic equivalence outlined by Eugene Nida as well as the early linguistic theories, assume that meaning is constant and transferable (Nida 1964: 159). These assumptions do not work when used on literary texts that turn their strengths on what has been left out. Urdu short fiction of the mid twentieth to the end of the twentieth century provides especially fertile soil to these questions. Authors like Naiyer Masud, Intizar Husain and Qurratulain Hyder created stories that are not based on the plot but rather on atmosphere, absence, and dislocation of time-space elements, known to defy even the possibility of direct translation.

The paper presents an argument that translation should be perceived as a hermeneutic process and not a linguistic replacement (Gadamer 2004: 385). The theory of understanding (a dialogic interaction between horizons, the past world of the text, and the current situation of an interpreter) is based on the philosophical hermeneutics of Hans-Georg Gadamer. In this perspective, recovery of meaning is not achieved but created in the process of interpretation (Gadamer 2004: 390). The notion of linguistic hospitality by Paul Ricoeur also sheds light on translation as ethical position: the accommodating of the foreign text to the own tongue coupled with the destruction and loss involved and the denial of the dream of the ideal correspondence (Ricoeur 2006: 23).

Translated works have a reputation of carrying the national culture to the readerships of the world (Damrosch 2003: 15). This weight of representation bestows moral obligations on the translators whose interpretations determine the perception of literary traditions in other countries (Venuti 1998: 1). This paper explores how meaning is transmitted, and at times resisted across languages, interrogating the limits of translatability and framing translation as an ethical engagement with cultural difference. Drawing on close readings of three Urdu short stories translated into English, it analyzes the movement (and non-movement) of meaning across linguistic boundaries (Apter 2013: 34).

Although World Literature has attracted sustained scholarly attention, the philosophical dimensions of translation remain insufficiently examined. Much of the existing scholarship prioritizes circulation and access, often overlooking the interpretive labour that makes such circulation possible (David Damrosch 2003: 4; Pascale Casanova 2004: 11). This article addresses that gap by positioning Hermeneutics as a critical framework for understanding how meaning is constituted and negotiated within world literature.

1.1. Research Problem

Although there is an increased institutionalization, world literature study pays little attention to the interpretive and ethical aspects of translation, though the emphasis is on circulation, accessibility, and global reach (Damrosch 2003: 4). The translation is usually seen as a means of communication and not as a place of meaning production (Jakobson 1959: 232; Venuti 1995: 8). In turn, untranslatability, i.e. those elements of a text that cannot be linguistically transposed, have not been theorized extensively, especially in the context of contemporary translated fiction (Apter 2013: xi). There are no focal researches that investigate the issue of translation as a hermeneutic process of rearranging meaning, memory, and cultural depiction in world literature (Gadamer 2004: 385; Ricoeur 2006: 10). This shortfall is treated in this paper through exploring the inability of current paradigms in translation to explain the presence of ambiguity, silence and cultural specificity in translated Urdu short fiction (Venuti 1998: 24).

1.2. Thesis Statement

Translation in world literature is a practice of hermeneutics and ethics where meaning is never transduced through different languages but generated during the process of its continued interpretation. Using the example of modern Urdu short fiction in English translation, this paper will prove that untranslatability is not a type of linguistic failure but a productive and ethically important space.

1.3. Purpose of the Study

This research is aimed at analyzing translation as hermeneutical negotiation in the world literature in terms of meaning interpretation, transformation and ethical mediation in modern Urdu short stories translated into English.

1.4. Significance of the Study

The significance of this study can be understood along several interrelated dimensions. First, it contributes to World Literature scholarship by shifting the critical focus from circulation and accessibility to questions of interpretation and ethical responsibility. Second, it advances Translation Studies by foregrounding Hermeneutics as a central framework for conceptualizing the transformation of meaning across languages. Third, it expands the corpus of world literature beyond dominant canonical texts by engaging with modern Urdu short fiction, thereby diversifying the field's textual and

cultural horizons. Finally, the study reconceptualizes untranslatability not as a limitation but as a productive and ethically significant dimension of the translational process.

1.5. Research Objectives

1. To examine translation as a Hermeneutics process through which meaning is interpreted and transformed in World Literature
2. To analyze the function of untranslatability in modern Urdu short fiction in English translation, focusing on ambiguity and cultural specificity as challenges to equivalence
3. To evaluate the translator's ethical responsibility as a mediator of meaning, culture, and representation in world literature

1.6. Research Questions

1. What role does translation, as a Hermeneutics activity, play in shaping the flow of meaning in World Literature?
2. How does untranslatability influence meaning in the English translation of modern Urdu short fiction?
3. What ethical obligations do translators bear when culturally embedded texts enter the global literary marketplace?

2. Literature Review

There is a paradigm shift in the fields of World Literature and the Circulation.

The theory of world literature has fruitfully prefigured the transnationalism of texts. The definition of world literature as a form of circulation and reading that is introduced by Damrosch makes translation the process that enables texts to obtain a global meaning (Damrosch 2003: 5). Nonetheless, this paradigm presupposes a relative stability of text in circulation and has little to do with transforming meaning in translation. Critics observe that circulation-based practices have the problem of being instrumental in their approach to understanding translation instead of acknowledging translation as an interpretive act that remakes literary meaning (Apter 2013: 2).

The World Republic of Letters (2004) by Pascale Casanova shows the inequitable relations of power that encompass the circulation of literature. To Casanova, translation is more of a gatekeeping process, which grants legitimacy in the world literary markets (Casanova 2004: 11). However, her model prioritizes structure rather than textual interpretation and does not consider the translation of texts as meaning negotiation, silence and ambiguity in the textual talk of the text. Translation is mostly instrumental and not hermeneutic in the structure of Casanova.

2.1. Untranslatability as Critique

A major intervention in critiquing the universalizing tendencies of World Literature is offered by Emily Apter in *Against World Literature* (2013), where she theorizes untranslatability as a counterforce to the homogenization of global literary

circulation. For Apter, untranslatability marks those moments when language resists semantic transparency, thereby exposing the limits of cross-cultural comparison (Apter 2013: 3). Drawing on Barbara Cassin's *Dictionary of Untranslatables*, she further argues that untranslatability is not merely a lexical obstacle but a philosophical resistance, an instance in which meaning cannot be seamlessly transferred because it remains embedded in specific linguistic and cultural worlds (Apter 2013: 16).

Despite its theoretical sophistication, Apter's work remains largely abstract, offering limited engagement with close readings of translated literary texts. This study builds on her framework by grounding the concept of untranslatability in detailed textual analysis of Urdu, English translation. In doing so, it also underscores the importance of Hermeneutics approaches, arguing that translators must engage interpretively and ethically to sustain the trust of their intended readership.

2.2. Hermeneutic Approaches to Translation

Philosophical Hermeneutics offers a fundamental critique of circulation-based models in World Literature. The concept of *fusion of horizons* (*Horizontverschmelzung*), developed by Hans-Georg Gadamer, challenges the notion of fixed meaning by positing that understanding emerges through the interpreter's engagement with the historical horizon of the text (Gadamer 2004: 390). Applied to translation, this framework suggests that meaning does not precede translation; rather, it is constituted within the translational act itself. Despite Gadamer's wide citation, however, his hermeneutics have not been systematically applied to the analysis of literary translation.

In *On Translation* (2006), Paul Ricoeur further develops this hermeneutic perspective by conceptualizing translation as *linguistic hospitality*. Ricoeur acknowledges the inevitability of loss in translation and the consequent abandonment of the ideal of perfect equivalence; yet he reinterprets this loss as an ethical mode of engaging with alterity (Ricoeur 2006: 23). While his ethical framework remains highly relevant, it has rarely been operationalized in detailed literary case studies, particularly in the analysis of translated fiction. This study addresses that gap by applying Ricoeur's ethical model to the close interpretation of translated texts.

2.3. Ethics and Domestication in Translation

The contribution of Lawrence Venuti to the study of domestication and fluency has formed the argument in ethics and power in translation. Venuti illustrates how the standards of mainstream translation that lay emphasis on fluency over cultural difference, influence the way that readers anticipate and how literature is received (Venuti 1995: 1; Venuti 1998: 11). Venuti preempts ethical issues even as his analysis is concerned more with the issue of visibility and publishing as opposed to the hermeneutic process of making sense of the translated text. The paper will bring the ethical issues that Venuti is concerned

with into the sphere of interpretation by studying the meaning negotiation at the language level.

2.4. Urdu Translation Studies: Unattended Corpus

In South Asian literary scholarship, research on Urdu translation has predominantly centered on canonical authors and historical periods, often privileging cultural transmission over interpretive transformation (Rahman 2015: 45). As a result, the English translation of modern Urdu short fiction remains a relatively underexplored area within World Literature. When such texts are examined, they are frequently framed as cultural representatives rather than as sites of hermeneutic complexity (Asaduddin 2016: 112).

This study addresses this lacuna by situating contemporary Urdu short fiction within a sustained dialogue with Hermeneutics and the ethics of translation, thereby foregrounding translation as an interpretive and philosophically charged act rather than a merely representational one.

3. Theoretical Framework

3.1. Translation as Hermeneutical Encounter

This paper adopts a theoretical framework grounded in Hermeneutics, which conceptualizes translation not as a purely linguistic operation but as a hermeneutic and ethical encounter (Hans-Georg Gadamer 2004: 385; Paul Ricoeur 2006: 10). The framework synthesizes Gadamer's and Ricoeur's philosophical hermeneutics with contemporary theories of untranslatability in World Literature (Apter 2013: 3; Damrosch 2003: 4).

This integrative approach enables translation to be theorized as a site where meaning is actively produced, negotiated, and ethically mediated as texts move across linguistic and cultural boundaries.

3.2. Gadamer: Fusion of Horizons

The philosophical basis of this study is the fusion of horizons of Gadamer. To Gadamer, understanding is not a process of reclaiming some original and fixed meaning but a dialogic process where the historical horizon of the text and the current horizon of the interpreter meet each other (Gadamer 2004: 390). Meaning is never absolute, permanent but arises during this encounter, as manifested by history, language and the situatedness of the interpreter.

In reference to translation, this model criticizes the one-to-one assumption; that, there is an equivalence between the source and the target texts (Nida 1964: 159). Interpretation is bound to be influenced by the linguistic, cultural, and historical horizon of the translator (Gadamer 2004: 395). The translator is not an external presence who looks into a text like a neutral conduit but gets involved in the production of meaning (Venuti 1998: 24). This mixture becomes even more dramatic in the world literature: not only into

a different language but also into another interpretive universe which has been created by the academic discourse, publishing traditions, and standards of expectation of readers (Damrosch 2003: 15; Casanova 2004: 11). The paper works out the insight offered by Gadamer by exploring the way meaning is produced by the interpretive process of the translator working with the Urdu texts.

3.3. Ricoeur: Linguistic Hospitality and Ethical Responsibility.

Paul Ricoeur extends Hermeneutics into an ethical framework through his concept of linguistic hospitality. In this model, translation is conceived as an ethical act involving the reception of the foreign text into the translator's language, alongside the renunciation of the illusion of complete equivalence (Ricoeur 2006: 23). For Ricoeur, translation is inevitably structured by loss; however, this loss does not signify failure but rather constitutes the very condition of an ethical relation to alterity (Ricoeur 2006: 10).

Building on this ethical orientation, this study conceptualizes the translator as a responsible interpreter whose decisions shape how World Literature represents cultural meaning across linguistic boundaries. The translator's choices, what to explicate, what to silence, and what to leave untranslated, carry significant ethical implications (Venuti 1995: 19), particularly when translated texts function as cultural mediators for international readerships (Damrosch 2003: 18).

Ricoeur's framework thus enables this research to move beyond questions of technical accuracy and equivalence, toward a more sustained ethical evaluation of interpretive responsibility in translation.

3.4. Impossibility of translation as Hermeneutic Space

Drawing on Emily Apter, this study conceptualizes untranslatability not as a linguistic impediment but as a hermeneutic space in which meaning remains open, provisional, and continually produced rather than conclusively fixed (Apter 2013: 34). From this perspective, so-called "gaps" in translation are not deficiencies to be resolved; rather, they function as sites of interpretive productivity, manifesting as silence, ambiguity, culturally embedded metaphor, and narrative discontinuities (Gadamer 2004: 385; Ricoeur 2006: 15).

Untranslatability, therefore, emerges as a constitutive feature of translated fiction that both signals the limits of linguistic transfer and calls for ethical interpretive engagement. In this sense, it requires not only critical awareness but also moral responsiveness from both translator and reader. The model advanced here understands untranslatability as generative: the tension between global circulation and cultural specificity becomes visible precisely at the point where meaning resists assimilation (Apter 2013: xi; Damrosch 2003: 5). Meaning is thus not erased in translation but reconfigured through traces of difference that cannot be fully absorbed into the target linguistic system.

4. Methodology

The research design used in this study is a qualitative and interpretive research that is based on the philosophy of hermeneutics and ethics of translation (Gadamer 2004: 385; Ricoeur 2006: 10). Translation is not seen as a technical linguistic transfer, but as hermeneutic and ethical practice in which meaning is read and re-analyzed in world literature (Venuti 1998: 24; Ricoeur 2006: 23).

The research makes a close comparison and contrast of a few pieces of Urdu short fiction and its English translation with reference to the ambiguity of the stories, silence in them, and cultural hidden meanings. Purposive selecting of the text was used: the selection of works which distinctly argue against translation as based on equivalence and address issues of untranslatability and interpretation were selected (Apter 2013: 16). The three texts include the Naiyer Masud (trans. Muhammad Umar Memon, 1996) *The Essence of Camphor*, Intizar Husain (trans. various, 2011) *An Unwritten Epic*, and Qurratulain Hyder (trans. various, 2000) *Sita Betrayed* are three texts which constitute different forms of narrative opposition to translation: atmospheric silence of Masud, temporal fragmentation of Husain and mythic-gendered density of Hyder.

5. Analysis of the text: Untranslatability in Action

The section is a close comparative analysis of translation of three Urdu short stories and their English translations that address aspects of meaning movement and its inability in translation. It is shown in the analysis that silence, narrative fragmentation and cultural density do not serve as a deterrent to translation, but serve as places where untranslatability is hermeneutically fruitful.

5.1. Naiyer Masud, *The Essence of Camphor* (1996)

Original Context Naiyer Masud (1936-2017) was a Urdu author, who wrote his elliptical, atmospheric fiction through finding the meaning in what is not said. An example of his style is *The Essence of Camphor* (Kafur ki Khushbu): a narrator comes to a strange house just in order to see nothing significant there, but due to the power of the nothingness, the story creates its emotional impact. An English translation by Muhammad Umar Memon was published in *The Annual of Urdu Studies* (1996) and then was published as a collection in *The Essence of Camphor* (1998).

5.1.1. The silence as Structure Principle

The beginning of the story recalls stillness which makes the silence a narrative technique of the story. The Urdu text reads:

Urdu: "بو۔ گیا تھم وقت جیسے لگا ایسا ہی ہوتے داخل اندر تھا۔ خاموش بالکل مکان وہ"

Transliteration: "Woh makan bilkul khmush tha. Andar dakhil hoti hai aisa laga k waqt tham gayaa ho.

Direct Translation: That house was totally quiet. The minute I had entered it was as though time had come to a standstill.

Translation of Memon: The house was dead quiet. I entered and got the impression that time had stopped at the moment I entered it (Masud, trans. Memon 1996: 1).

This may sound easy at a glance. But there is more than English "still" or "silent" about the Urdu "khāmosh," connotation. Based on Persian, khamosh means not only the absence of sound, but a kind of attentive silence - the silence of a listener. The fact that Memon uses still to mean the time suspension and loses the personification of silence as presence. This losing is not the failure and it is the necessary sacrifice: English does not possess one word which can join the absence auditory with attentional presence. Selection of meaning is an activity that requires the translator to make choices, which create meaning in different ways.

More importantly the silences of the story have built up by way of what has not been said. This passage is about the encounter the narrator had with an old woman:

Urdu: "کہا۔ نہ کچھ لیں۔ پھر آنکھیں پھر رہی۔ دیکھتی تک دیر بہت دیکھا۔ طرف میری نے اس"

Transliteration: "Us ne meri taraf dekhah. Bahut der tak dekhtī rahī. Phir ānkheñ pher leñ. Kuchh na kahā."

Literal: "She looked at me. Kept looking for a long time. Then turned away her eyes. Said nothing."

Memon: "She looked at me. She continued to stare at me very long. Then she looked away. She did not utter a single word of it (Masud, trans. Memon 1996: 4).

The Urdu kuchh na kahaa (said nothing) is constructionally simple, but descriptively rich. The silence after such long gazing has some meaning that cannot be expressed through words. The fact that Memon expands to the conclusion of the phrase to say that she did not say anything is a minor over determination, highlighting the lack of words. But this growth does not lose the moral charge of the speech of refusal-the understanding that there are experiences that go beyond language. In this case, untranslatability is not the lexical but the level of narrative structure: the meaning is in what the text does not say.

5.1.2. Metaphor and Sensory Memory

The catchiest figure by Masud is that of memory itself:

Urdu: "ہیں۔ سکتی جا کی محسوس مگر سکتیں، جا نہیں دیکھی ہیں۔ ہوتی طرح کی خوشبو یادیں"

Transliteration: "Yaden khushbu ke tarah hoti hain. Dekhī nahiin ja saktie , nagar mahsus kii jha saktie ha."

Literary: Memories are flowers of smell. They are invisible, however they can be experienced.

Memon: "Memories are like perfume. They are not visible, but rather felt" (Masud, trans. Memon 1996: 7).

The Urdu "mahsust karnaa" is the feeling with the body and feeling with the heart and includes physical sense and emotional sense. This ambiguity is partially captured by

English "sensed" but is lost to the Sufi philosophical echo that resonates in the word whereby Sufi spiritual intuition and sensory perception are united. The strength of the metaphor is based on its rejection of semantic reduction: memory is like smell, it cannot be captured or stored; it can only be experienced. This quality of experience is beyond translation, which merely establishes the circumstances of a rough sense of it. The Economy of the metaphor is kept by the succinctness of the translation by Memon, but the philosophical richness is lost an ethical compromise that does not deny the loss of the form.

5.1.3. Narrative Indeterminacy

The lack of resolution in the story represents the most radical opposition of translation. The narrator reflects:

Urdu: "سکتا۔ بتا نہیں میں یہ کیا؟ لیکن ہے۔ گئی رہ ادھوری چیز کوئی کہ لگا مجھے"

Translation: "Mujhe lagah ke nai suth adhuri rah gaie hai. Lekin kyā? Yeh main nahīn batā saktā."

Literary: I had a feeling that I had not finished something. But what? This I cannot tell."

Memon: I was impressed that something unfinished has happened. But what? I can't say" (Masud, trans. Memon 1996: 11).

The adhūrī (incomplete/unfinished) of Urdu is echoed across the entire fiction of Masud, referring to a state of being, not a weakness of narration. And the non-specification of the first person, main nahīn batā saktā (I cannot tell) is not evasions, but rather a philosophical position: the meaning is not, but rather felt as non-existence. This indeterminacy cannot be solved without treachery of the text by translation. Memon is faithful to the syntax of the original so that she maintains the openness, and thus English readers are able to be in the same interpretive uncertainty as Urdu readers. This loyalty is moral: it will not yield to the temptation to make sense of what the text intentionally leaves unclear as a way of respecting the aesthetic of incompleteness developed by Masud.

5.2. Intizar Husain, An Unwritten Epic (2011).

Original Background: Intizar Husain (1925-2016) was one of the most renowned fiction writers in Urdu who was known to twine together the history, myth, and personal memory. *An Unwritten Epic* (Jo Likha Nahin Gaya) is an exploration of the effects of Partition in terms of the presence of fragmented temporality and narrative incompleteness. It was translated into English by different translators and it was published in *A Handful of Dust* (Penguin, 2011).

5.2.1. Temporal Fragmentation

The start of the story breaks the linear time:

Urdu: "گیا۔ نہ لکھا اور ہوا یا گئے۔ بھول ہم اور ہوا یا نہیں۔ بی ہوا کبھی وہ شاید گیا۔ نہیں لکھا جو قصہ وہ"

Transliteration: Woh qisṣah jo likhah nahi ng gayah. Shāyad woh kabhī huā hī nahīn. Yā huā aur ham bhūl ga'e. Yā huā aur likhā na gayā."

Literary: That tale which was not composed. Maybe, it did not happen at all. Or it happened and we forgot. Or it was and has not been written.

Translation: The unwritten story. Perhaps it never happened. Or it happened and we forgot. Or it happened and has not been written down" (Husain, trans. various 2011: 1).

The Urdu qisṣah can be translated as English story lacks the weight to bear--it is an Arabic word meaning not narrative, but chronicle, tale that has a historical or moral meaning. The repetition of the word huā (happened) and the passive form of lkhaka gaya (was not written) are a rhythm of uncertainty which forms the ethical attitude of the story to history. The Partition cannot be told in the traditional way, the reality is in what has not been written. This rhythm has been retained in the translation by the use of parallelism, yet the English language is unable to reproduce the Quranic echoes of likhā na gayā the meaning that which is not written is also that which is not written in the book of the deeds belonging to the Divine. This loss is necessary, translation can only point at the missing resonance.

5.2.2. Mythic Consciousness

The story of Husain is a mix of the personal memory and the Islamic and pre-Islamic mythology. The narrator recalls:

Urdu: "ابھی کو سسی اور تھا۔ آیا نہیں واپس سے سفر اپنے ابھی سندباد تھے۔ زندہ افسانے بنوز جب زمانہ وہ" "تھا۔ انتظار کا پنوں"

Transliteration: Woh zamahah jab hanuz afsana zindah the. Sindbada uthi apne safar wapasi nahi ay. Aur Sassi ko Abhiz kar tha.

Meaning: The era of living stories. Sindbad was yet to come back with his journey. And Punnu was yet to meet with Sassi.

Translation: That was the period when people still told stories. Sindbad had just not got back to his journey yet. And Sassī was yet to wait on Punnu" (Husain, trans. various 2011: 4).

Sindbad and Sassi-Punnu are shorthand names that serve as cultural abbreviations of full narrative traditions into a single word. To Urdu readers, Sindbad reminds of the Arabian Nights and the genre of Islamic travel writing; Sasssi-Punnu is alluded to the Sindhi tragic romance of social-boundary love, which is the theme of the folk consciousness of the region. The translation keeps and preserves the names but fails to give them their cultural networks. Something could be explained in a footnote, but there is no difference between explanation and resonance. The translator must make an ethical decision of whether or not to translate the names, to be obscure, or gloss and to be able to turn myth into information. This translation follows a minimum-interventionist approach and relies on the readers to be exposed to the names as opaque signifiers, a choice that does not render the names global legible, but rather recognizes the constraints of global legibility.

5.2.3. Memory as Rupture

The most effective excerpt in the story deals with the effort of the narrator to reclaim lost time:

Urdu: "گزر صدیوں کہ بے لگتا کبھی اور ہے، بات کی کل کہ ہے لگتا کبھی نہیں۔ بھروسہ کوئی کا یاداشت" "نہیں۔ ہی یاد کچھ کہ ہے آتا یاد کبھی اور گئے۔"

Translation: "Yadast-asht kii koiī bharosaa nahie. Kabhī lagtā hai ke kal kii baat hai, veh kabhīī lagtas hai ke sadidyoñ guzar ga'e. Aur kabhī yad ata hai ke kuchh yad Higaee nihing."

Verbatim: There is no reliability to memory. It is as if it happened yesterday, and at times it seems centuries have passed. And there is a time that I remember nothing comes to mind.

Translation: Memory cannot be trusted. Nowhere does it seem like centuries have passed, but there are moments when it seems that it was yesterday. And even I think I recall that I do not recall anything at all (Husain, trans. many 2011: 7).

The Urdu is based on (yad) (memory/remember) and incantatory repetitive. The last sentence is paradoxical in nature, as it has the term kabhī yadaatahai ke kuchh yadaatahai nahieging, which translates to remembering that one is not remembering. This cannot be logical contradiction but phenomenological accuracy: the structure of trauma, in which the lack becomes present. In the translation of I remember that I remember nothing the paradox is reflected but the rhythmic insistence of yad repeating against itself is lost. No sonic density of the memory itself can be reproduced in English that conveys the self-canceling movement of memory in Urdu. Translation in this case is a process of mourning: the recognition of the fact that something vital is not able to cross over.

5.3. Qurratulain Hyder, *Sita Betrayed* (2000).

Qurratulain Hyder (1927-2007) was the foremost novelist of Urdu, with modernist experimentation of history and mythology. *Sita Betrayed* (*Sita Haṛa*), an excerpt of her masterpiece *River of Fire* (*Āg kā Daryā*, 1959), is a retelling of the Ramayana as told by Sita, with a foregrounding of gendered silence and moral renouncement. The English translation, which was done by several translators, is found in *River of Fire* (Oxford University Press, 2000).

5.3.1. Gendered Silence

Sita by Hyder is mostly spoken by what she chooses not to say. At one point when Rama asks her to show evidence of her purity, we have the following:

Urdu: "کا کودنے میں آگ نے اس پہر رہی۔ چپ تک دیر بہت رہی۔ چپ وہ دیا۔ نہیں جواب کوئی نے سیتا" "کیا۔ فیصلہ"

Transliteration: "Sitā ne koiī jawab na diya. Woh chup rahī. Bahut der tak chup rahī. Phir us ne socha k usay aag ma qoud jana chaiye."

Literal: Sita gave no answer. She remained silent. A long time she made no reply. Then she thought she would jump in the fire.

Translation: Sita made no reply. She remained silent. There was a long silence on her part. then she resolved to go in the fire" (Hyder, trans. various 2000: 12).

The Urdu "chup rahī" (remained silent) is used with the meaning of emphasizing but the repetition is a sign of silence, it is not absence but a kind of action. The silence of Sita is her speech, the only reply that a woman can give to words that are meaningless. The repetition is reproduced in the translation; centrality of the structure of silence is preserved. But the gendered grammar of the original cannot be translated into English: "rahil" (feminine plural continuous) identifies silence as maintained feminine action, unlike the speech of Rama, who speaks as a male. This form of gender grammatical marking cannot be translated to the ungendered unpast tense of English. The fact that even when the gendered marking has been removed, only silence remains visible due to the choice of the translator to preserve the repetition somewhat reparates the loss.

5.3.2. Mythic Dissonance

The most radical step that Hyder takes is to place the episode of Ramayana in the context of modern history, which results in the dissonance of time. The narrator comments:

Urdu: "مزدور میں فیکٹری کی رام سیٹھ ہے۔ رہا ہو شاید یا ہے۔ ہوا ابھی شاید یا تھا۔ ہوا پہلے بہت سب یہ۔"
"ہیں۔ رہے کر ہڑتال"

Transliteration: Yeh sab bahut pahle hu. Yā shāyad abhī huā hai. Yā shāyad ho rahā hai. Seth Ram kī factory me mazdur hartal kar rahay hayn.

Literal: All this happened long ago. Or perhaps it just happened. Or perhaps it is happening. Workers are on strike at Seth Ram's factory.

Translations: All this was already a long time ago. Or perhaps it just happened. Or is it that it is underway now. Employees are striking in the factory of Seth Ram" (Hyder, trans. various 2000:15)

The Urdu breaks the time lines: the mythical past and the colonial present are placed side by side in the same line. The title of the epic hero as well as a modern-day industrialist sets up the name of the hero as Seth Ram, compelling the reader to carry two meanings of the hero at the same time. The translation does not lose the juxtaposition of time, but passes the entire resonance of the word "Seth", which means rich merchant that carries.

6. Findings

Silence and absence is a fruitful force of the narrative. In Masud and Hyder, the meaning is created in the form of what is not said, implied, or retained. These silences are not erased by translation but given greater interpretive salience. This indicates that untranslatability is not incidental but that which is structural to these stories, which confronts models that rely on equivalence in search of semantic closure.

Temporal instability is one of the primary locations of interpretive change. The fragmented temporality of Husain and the mythic simultaneity of Hyder show that without

any tremendous change the historical and cultural memory does not cross the languages. These temporal breaks are mediated by translation instead of transcended and meaning transverses as trace instead of totality. This enhances a hermeneutic interpretation of translation as dialogic and historically oriented as opposed to just being transferential.

The cultural density increases the ethical stakes of translation. The socially and historically laden narratives written by Hyder show that meaning is not just linguistic but also hidden within the class formations, cultural codes, and historical consciousness. The choices of the translators concerning what is to be retained, clarified and what is opaque directly influence the way these texts are disseminated in world literature. The analysis proposes that ethical translation rejects over-domestication and makes culture specificity somewhat closed.

Untranslatability is constructive as opposed to restrictive. The cases of semantic resistance, affective ambiguity, and narrative incompleteness do not hinder the circulation on a global level; they recreate the conditions of readability. The flow of meaning is not even but it forms interpretive openings as opposed to global transparency. This questions circulation based models of world literature that place more emphasis on accessibility over interpretation.

The translator is ethical mediator. Translators are not the conduits but are active participants in the creation of conditions of meaning to come to light. They determine the state of ambiguity or ambiguity brought to light, cultural specificity or erased cultural specificity, silence or explained silence. This moral aspect makes translation a responsible practice to both the source text and the world audience.

7. Conclusion

This paper has discussed mobility and immobility of meaning in world literature where literary works cross language barriers due to translation. Through the treatment of translation as hermeneutic practice and ethical activity as opposed to linguistic replacement, the study has shown that meaning is not retained in translation, but must be recreated in interpretation with silence, cultural density, and narrative indeterminacy.

Using philosophical hermeneutics and translation ethics, the close comparative study of three short stories in Urdu translation into English has demonstrated that untranslatability is not a barrier to the circulation of the world, but rather a characteristic feature of the world literature. In Naiyer Masud, Intizar Husain, and Qurratulain Hyder, that is, frequently is in what is not said, what is discontinuous, what is historically congested. Translation does not solve these aspects, but accentuates their interpretive power having placed the readers in an ongoing conversation instead of presenting the final meaning.

As also shown by the analysis, translation foreshadows ethical responsibility in a way that equivalence-based models mask. Translators become moral interpreters, the

judgment of which determines the way cultural memory, ambiguity, and silence gain importance in the world literary space. Ethical translation is not trying to achieve transparency or fluency as its main objectives but rather accepts loss and difference. According to this meaning, translation is a linguistic hospitality, a hospitability to the foreign which does not cancel its foreignness (Ricoeur 2006: 23).

This work will benefit the world literature research by changing the emphasis on circulation to interpretation, accessibility to ethics. Translated works are spread throughout the world, and they come along with echoes of cultural particularity, semantic opposition, and history erasure. This recognition of this imbalance redefines world literature as the space of encounter and not consumption, where readers perceive difference in its interpretation and not assimilation.

The contribution of the paper is related to the synthesis of the philosophy of hermeneutics, the theory of untranslatability, and the theory of translation ethics into a complex analysis framework based on the close reading of the text. The study presents both theoretical and aesthetic value of these texts by concentrating on modern Urdu short fiction in English translation; a corpus that lacks the representation it merits in the world literature discourse.

Lastly, the paper presents research implications. The patterns of circulation in world literature should be analyzed together with the ethics of interpretation that are relevant to the circulation. This model can be further developed in other languages or genres or translation scenarios by future researchers to better comprehend the ways meaning flows, evolves, and fails to establish itself within the multilingual literary space.

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