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Self-Translation and the Decentering of Authority: Replacing Eliot with Faiz in Hyder's River of Fire

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Abstract

Qurratulain Hyder translated her own Urdu novel Aag ka Darya (1959) into English as River of Fire (1998), a process scholars have discussed primarily in terms of the removal of an opening T. S. Eliot epigraph and the forty-year gap between the two versions. This article argues that the more consequential feature of Hyder's self-translation is not what it removes but what it installs in Eliot's place: a passage from Faiz Ahmed Faiz's "Subh-e-Azadi" ("Freedom's Dawn," 1947), translated by Hyder herself and placed at the close of Chapter 45. The substitution is the instrument of a broader decentering of authority. Where the 1959 Aag ka Darya centred Western modernist authority at the novel's threshold, the 1998 River of Fire moves that centre, replacing the Anglo-American literary tradition with the Urdu progressive tradition as the novel's governing authority. Crucially, this decentering is made possible specifically by the act of self-translation. Because Hyder held both the author's rights and the translator's choices simultaneously, she was able to revoke an endorsement she herself had made and install a new one in its place. An external translator could not have done this. The article examines the mechanism of this decentering in detail, giving particular attention to the phonemic proximity between Eliot's "fare forward" and Hyder's "face forward!" a difference of one consonant through which the old authority is made audible even as it is displaced. The argument draws on self-translation theory (Grutman, 2009; Hokenson & Munson, 2007; Cordingley, 2013; Oustinoff, 2001), postcolonial translation scholarship (Niranjana, 1992; Tymoczko, 1999; Spivak, 1993/2008), and world literature critique (Mufti, 2016; Walkowitz, 2015), and demonstrates that Hyder's creative self-translation constitutes a precision act of literary repositioning: the decentering of one tradition's authority and the installation of another, performed at the level of two words.

Keywords: Self-translation; decentering of authority; Qurratulain Hyder; Faiz Ahmed Faiz; T. S. Eliot; Urdu progressive literature; postcolonial self-translation; world literature

1. SELF-TRANSLATION AND THE PROBLEM OF AUTHORITY

There is a moment in River of Fire (1998) that no critic has yet examined with

sufficient care. Chapter 45, "The Broken Tanpura of Sultan Hussain Shah Nayak of Jaunpur," ends with a passage drawn from Faiz Ahmed Faiz's "Subh-e-Azadi" ("Freedom's Dawn"), the poem Faiz wrote in August 1947 at the exact moment of Partition. Hyder does not identify these lines as a translation and does not interrupt the chapter to name their source. She translates them herself, turning Faiz's Urdu into English in a way that, for any reader who knows T. S. Eliot's "The Dry Salvages," will produce an unmistakable sound recognition. Where Eliot's poem ends with the imperative "Not fare well, / But fare forward, voyagers," Hyder's English version of Faiz ends with "Face forward! For our destination is not yet in sight" (Hyder, 1998/2015, p. 275). One consonant separates the two commands. That single phonemic difference is the subject of this article, not merely as a formal curiosity but as the precise point at which a large literary-historical repositioning takes place.

To describe what that repositioning achieves, this article employs the concept of the decentering of authority. The term is used in a specific and limited sense. A centre, in the context of literary authority, is the tradition, figure, or text whose presence at the threshold of a work signals the authority by which the work asks to be read. The 1959 Aag ka Darya centred Western literary modernism at its opening: the Eliot epigraph was an act of positioning, a declaration that the Urdu novel wished to be read in dialogue with, and under the partial endorsement of, the Anglo-American literary tradition. The 1998 River of Fire decenters that authority. Eliot's endorsement is cancelled. In its place, through the substitution of Faiz in Chapter 45, a different tradition occupies the position of governing authority: the Urdu progressive literary movement and its most canonical postcolonial voice. The centre has shifted from West to South Asia, from colonial to postcolonial, from Eliot's Anglican-modernist metaphysics of time to Faiz's politically committed mourning of what independence actually delivered.

What makes this decentering analytically significant, and what distinguishes it from any decentering that an external translator might perform, is that it is an act of self-translation. Hyder is both the author of Aag ka Darya and the translator who produced River of Fire. She holds the original author's authority over her text and the translator's choices over its English form simultaneously. This double authority position, which will be examined theoretically in Section 3, is precisely what enables

the particular form of decentering that this article describes. An external translator who removed the Eliot epigraph and inserted a Faiz passage in its place would be performing an editorial act of considerable presumption. Hyder, performing the same operation on her own text, is performing a legitimate act of authorial self-revision. The endorsement she gave in 1959 was hers to give; it is therefore hers to revoke. The decentering of authority in River of Fire is inseparable from the institution of self-translation through which it is carried out.

The theoretical framework draws on four intersecting bodies of work. Self-translation theory (Grutman, 2009; Hokenson & Munson, 2007; Cordingley, 2013; Oustinoff, 2001) provides the analytical category of the self-translator's double authority position. Postcolonial translation scholarship (Niranjana, 1992; Tymoczko, 1999; Spivak, 1993/2008) contextualises the political stakes of translating between colonial and postcolonial literary traditions. World literature critique (Mufti, 2016; Walkowitz, 2015) explains the institutional pressures that make certain authorities necessary in certain historical moments and dispensable in others. Close reading of the phonemic relationship between "fare forward" and "face forward" provides the textual evidence through which the theoretical argument is grounded.

2. CENTERING AUTHORITY: THE ELIOT EPIGRAPH AS INSTITUTIONAL SCAFFOLDING

Aag ka Darya opens with Hyder's own Urdu version of the first lines of Eliot's "The Dry Salvages." The translation carries no formal attribution to Eliot on the page; the original English is not provided alongside it. For a reader approaching Aag ka Darya without prior knowledge of the Four Quartets, the opening lines read as Urdu verse. For the educated, English-aware Urdu-reading public that Hyder was addressing in 1959, the source would have been immediately recognisable. At that time there were no Urdu translations of the Four Quartets, and Mirza (2020) confirms that none have appeared since. Hyder's rendering therefore stands as the only Urdu version of the passage in existence.

The passage Hyder selected was not chosen randomly. "The Dry Salvages" is the most philosophically ambitious of the Four Quartets. Its opening image, "A strong brown god — sullen, untamed and intractable" (Eliot, 1941, p. 23), presents the river as a force that defeats human control, a figure for time pressing against the ambitions

of individuals and civilisations alike. The poem ends with "Not fare well, / But fare forward, voyagers" (Eliot, 1941, p. 32). These ideas of untameable time and forward movement without certain destination are precisely what Hyder's novel enacts structurally through characters who recur across twenty-five centuries and through a view of history that refuses the nationalist narrative of forward progress. The Eliot epigraph in 1959 was not decorative; it announced the philosophical ground on which the novel proposed to stand.

Understood in terms of authority, the epigraph was an act of centering. Genette (1987/1997) analyses paratexts, the title page, the opening quotation, the preface, as the threshold through which a book negotiates its public existence. A book's opening material issues instructions about how to approach what follows. The Eliot epigraph in Aag ka Darya instructed its reader to approach the novel as a text in dialogue with Western literary modernism and, specifically, as a text that had earned the right to that dialogue by demonstrating its familiarity with Eliot's most demanding work. It placed the Urdu novel's authority within a lineage the novel did not itself establish. Niranjana (1992) identifies exactly this mechanism as translation's historically colonial function: the non-Western text made readable, and made authoritative, through Western signposts. Hyder in 1959 accepted this arrangement. The Eliot epigraph was a centering act: it placed Western modernist authority at the threshold of an Urdu novel and asked the novel to be read through that authority's endorsement.

Reshi (2014) notes that Eliot's essay "Tradition and the Individual Talent" (1919) described how a new work positions itself within an existing tradition while departing from it, and that Hyder was performing exactly this manoeuvre. The Urdu novelist was not simply borrowing Western prestige; she was entering a literary conversation in which Western modernism was one voice among several, alongside the Sanskrit philosophical tradition, the composite culture of the medieval Jaunpur Sultanate, Mughal literary aesthetics, and the musical inheritance of the tawaif. Eliot provided entry into the international dimension of that conversation. Without him, the 1959 novel might have been confined, in its international reception, to a self-enclosed Urdu cultural register. What Eliot centred, in other words, was the novel's claim to international standing. The centering was strategic and the strategy was rational given

the available frameworks for literary recognition in 1959.

3. THE SELF-TRANSLATOR'S DOUBLE AUTHORITY POSITION

Self-translation is a practice with a distinct institutional identity, not simply a subspecies of translation. Grutman (2009) defines it as "the act of translating one's own writings into another language" (p. 257) and notes that, unlike external translation, it confers on the practitioner a position of dual authorship over both versions of a text. Hokenson and Munson (2007) develop this point in their historical study of the bilingual text, arguing that the self-translator holds simultaneously the creative authority of the original author and the interpretive authority of the translator: two positions that, in the normal division of literary labour, are occupied by different people. The self-translator need not choose between them and cannot be overruled by either.

This double authority position has a specific and underexplored consequence for the relationship between a self-translated text and the literary traditions to which the original text was affiliated. When an author produces an original text, they make affiliation decisions: they quote certain writers, invoke certain traditions, position their work within certain literary lineages. These decisions constitute a form of endorsement. The original author endorses the authorities they invoke; in the case of an epigraph, the endorsement is particularly explicit. An external translator inherits these endorsements. They translate the epigraph, or leave it in place, or note its removal, but they cannot revoke it on the original author's behalf. The endorsement remains the original author's. The self-translator, however, occupies the original author's position as well as the translator's. The endorsement made in the source text is the self-translator's own endorsement. It is therefore the self-translator's to revoke.

As Cordingley (2013) puts it, “self-translating authors are brokers of their work’s originality because the translation allows the same author to show that he or she produces a book which is both connected to and different from the source book without involving any other author in the process.” It is the brokerage of originality that works as the basis for the decentering of the authority in River of Fire. With her deletion of the Eliot epigraph in 1998, Hyder does not simply correct a mistake made by another person or override his or her decision. Instead, she amends her previous positioning, which makes the decentering clearly authorial and fully justified by the

author's updated vision about where the authority belongs. An external translator would not be able to carry out such action legitimately because the removal of an acclaimed epigraph would be treated as interference with the author's intentions. On the contrary, Hyder's decision to remove her own epigraph cannot possibly be so understood.

Oustinoff (2001) draws a productive distinction between three modes of self-translation. The naturalising mode smooths the source text into the habits of the target language. The foreignising mode preserves the source text's strangeness at the cost of easy readability. The recreative mode uses the act of self-translation as an opportunity to rework the source text's impulses through the specific resources of the new language. River of Fire belongs firmly to the recreative mode. Hyder does not simply carry the 1959 Urdu novel across into English; she uses the translation as an occasion for a systematic revision of the positions the earlier text had taken. The removal of the Eliot epigraph is one such revision. The insertion of Faiz in Chapter 45 is another. Together they constitute a programme of decentering that only the recreative self-translator, exercising full authorial authority over both versions, could have carried through.

4. DECENTERING THROUGH SUBSTITUTION: FAIZ IN THE PLACE OF ELIOT

Unlike the book when published in 1998, the Eliot quote was missing in River of Fire. Hyder's reply to questions asked about this is reported by Reshi (2014) to have an evasive tone. According to her, "chhut gaya hoga," which can be translated as "must have been left out" (p. 8275). Nevertheless, the informality of such an answer seems to be quite out of place given how many times Hyder reiterated that River of Fire was a deliberate attempt at recreating something as an author in full control of the process. It is much easier to explain why the 1959 novel needed the citation than why it did not anymore. According to the decentering approach suggested above, the need for external authority in the form of Eliot arises in situations when the work lacks credibility by itself, that is, when it is insufficiently developed institutionally. This was the case with the 1959 novel; the position of Urdu literature internationally did not afford Hyder the possibility of claiming the same literary merit as modernists of the West. However, this institutional condition has changed by the time of publication

of the English novel in 1998: forty years of Hyder's success as a writer, her major literary prizes in India, Times Literary Supplement's comparison of her literary style to those of Milan Kundera and Gabriel García Márquez, and the mentioning of her name by Le Clézio in his 2008 Nobel acceptance speech constitute the external support regardless of any Western endorsement. It is not necessary anymore since River of Fire establishes its credibility on its own, by the structure of its twenty-five century-long story.

Mufti (2016) describes how the global literary world routinely makes local-language texts readable to English-speaking audiences by attaching them to familiar Western literary markers. An Eliot epigraph in an English translation of a Urdu novel would have performed exactly this service, giving the English-speaking reader a modernist doorway already mapped in their literary education. The 1998 omission refuses this service. What it refuses is not English readership: River of Fire remains in English and is published by New Directions, a press whose reputation is precisely that of serious, internationally minded literary publishing. What is refused is the specific intellectual dependence that an opening Eliot quotation would have enacted: the Urdu novel arriving in English under the protective authority of an English poet. By 1998, Hyder no longer required that protection. The omission is a claim to independent authority.

This absence, however, is merely the first step in the decentering process. The second step would be the substitution; placing Faiz in the place of Eliot. The final section of Chapter 45, titled "The Broken Tanpura of Sultan Hussain Shah Nayak of Jaunpur," concludes with a few lines of poetry taken from Faiz Ahmed Faiz's "Subh-e-Azadi" and translated into English by Hyder herself. This poem was written in August of 1947, during the actual act of partition, and later collected in Faiz's Dast-e-Saba (1952). Translating to "Dawn of Freedom," or "Dawn of Independence," the poem does not celebrate this new day of sovereignty, but rather mourns the dawn that it reveals as one marred by "daag daag ujala, yeh shab-gazida sahar",a murky and beaten dawn, one polluted by the night it was born out of. Much like the narrative of the novel, the political discourse of the poem argues that sovereignty has been achieved, but freedom remains elusive. By situating Faiz's poetic vision at the end of Chapter 45, Hyder establishes the hegemony of the Urdu progressive literary tradition

within the context of her novel, replacing Eliot's presence with her own.

5. THE PHONEMIC MECHANISM OF DECENTERING

The decentering of authority in River of Fire does not operate through explicit statement. Hyder does not announce in River of Fire that she is replacing Eliot with Faiz. She does not flag the substitution or invite the reader to compare the two voices. The decentering operates below the level of explicit reference, through the relationship between two words: "fare forward" and "face forward!" It is at this phonemic level that the most precise analysis of the substitution's mechanism must be conducted.

Eliot's "The Dry Salvages" ends with lines that have become canonical in twentieth-century English poetry. Their ethical meaning lies in the old-fashioned use of the verb "fare," which signifies travel into the unknown without any certainty of reaching a destination. The old-fashioned nature of the word helps in the depiction of time in the poem; the present always carries the burden of the past. The last lines read:

"O voyagers, O seamen, / You who come to port, and whose bodies / Will suffer the trial and judgement of the sea, / Or whatever event, this is your real destination." / So Krishna, as when he admonished Arjuna / On the field of battle. / Not fare well, / But fare forward, voyagers. (Eliot, 1941, p. 32)

Similarly, Hyder's "Face forward!" resides in the phonemic field occupied by "Fare forward." F-A-C-E and F-A-R-E overlap by three phonemes in four. They differ in sound by only one consonant: whereas in "fare" we find /r/, in "face" we hear /s/. In writing, only one letter separates the two phrases. Anyone familiar with the poetry of Eliot can detect in "Face forward!" a faint but unmistakable echo of "Fare forward." The echo was no accident. Hyder could have chosen several alternatives in English, all more or less faithful translations of Faiz's "phir jao" ("Go on"): "Go forward," "Move forward," "Press on," or even "Keep going." She opted for "Face forward!" because it sounded like "Fare forward" without using Eliot's precise phrasing. In so doing, she has deployed a phonemic strategy of decentering: the ancestral literary authority is preserved as a phonetic echo in the utterance that installs a new authoritative voice.

As Mirza (2020) points out, Hyder's choice of words creates a sense of spatial urgency, highlighting links between Faiz's poetic works and Eliot's (pp. 39-40). While

agreeing, the present essay seeks to identify the nature of the linguistic device used. This is not a thematic echo; it is a phonemic echo: one that resonates in the ears of a trained reader familiar with Eliot's poetry. Such an echo activates decentering in the space between recognition and reference: the reader hears Eliot, but the poem is by Faiz.

In metonymic translation (as described by Tymoczko, 1999), a carefully selected detail stands in for the entire culture without ever mentioning it. The closeness of "face forward" to "fare forward" is a mechanism of metonymic decentering. While no quote from Four Quartets appears in River of Fire, a sonic echo summons an entire world of Anglophone literature that is otherwise unrepresented in the book: Anglican conceptions of time, river imagery as divine manifestation, and an ethic of forward motion despite spiritual uncertainty. What is required to achieve Eliotic resonance in the reader is a sonic echo that alludes to the entire tradition without reproducing it. As such, the echo activates resonance precisely in the absence of the totality of the tradition it calls into existence.

According to Bhabha (1994), mimicry describes the way in which the colonized subject appropriates colonial culture "almost exactly" but not entirely so. Thus, mimicry is simultaneously familiar and alien, signaling allegiance but refusing assimilation. Hyder's echo of Faiz sounds "almost exactly" like Eliot, with only one consonant in the difference: here, a poet from a formerly colonized land has deliberately echoed the colonizers' literary canon, thereby expressing awareness of and allegiance to it. Nevertheless, the echo preserves just enough distance for Eliot not to assume center stage once again, maintaining his displacement from authority. This distance is achieved by the phonemic device: should the echo be closer, it would amount to quotation; had it been more distant, it would have ceased sounding Eliotic. The distance of one consonant was sufficient.

6. AUTHORITY, BIOGRAPHY, AND THE PROGRESSIVE TRADITION

Faiz’s role as the new focal point cannot be interpreted as simply a literary decision by Hyder; it is a biographical and political move with its particular consequences in terms of the history of the Urdu literary tradition. Hyder’s circles in the 1940s and 1950s clearly put her among the ranks of Anglicized and elite Muslims, including education in Catholic convents, links to the families of members of the civil service,

ideal Victorian notions of home, and the literary taste formed on the basis of the aesthetics of Mughal art and English Romantic poetry. As pointed out by Mirza (2020) in his analysis of Chughtai's essay "Pompom Darling," this social milieu was sharply criticized because of its focus on Western models, which made Hyder less concerned about the political and economic conditions faced by the common people of India.

Faiz represented the strand of Urdu literary culture from which this class identity had partly separated her. He was a founding member of the Progressive Writers' Association (PWA), the major literary movement in South Asia committed to social reform, political engagement, and the representation of working-class and peasant life. He was imprisoned in Pakistan for his political beliefs and, by 1998, was widely regarded as the defining voice of politically committed Urdu poetry after independence. Mufti (2016) states that "Faiz is undoubtedly the most significant Urdu poet of the postcolonial period" (p. 245). The Lenin Peace Prize that Faiz received in 1962 gave his standing an explicitly international character, one entirely free of colonial literary associations. Where Eliot's international authority derived, in part, from his position within the British and American literary establishment, Faiz's derived from his explicit opposition to political and cultural domination.

By inserting "Subh-e-Azadi" into Chapter 45 and translating it herself, Hyder performs a double act of literary alignment. She affiliates herself, in the English text, with the Urdu progressive tradition she had not fully claimed in 1959, and she does so through the specific poem that most directly confronts the failure of the 1947 promise. "Subh-e-Azadi" mourns the same composite India whose dissolution Hyder's novel narrates. The poem's "spotted light" and "night-bitten dawn" are precisely the conditions in which Champa Ahmed, Kamal, Gautam, and Cyril find themselves in the novel's post-Partition chapters. The political consonance between poem and novel is not incidental: Hyder is recognising that Faiz's diagnosis of 1947 and her own narrative of two and a half thousand years of subcontinental cultural continuity shattered by the partition line share the same fundamental assessment of what independence actually delivered.

The substitution also carries a broader argument about what kind of authority is appropriate for the English text of a Urdu novel in 1998. Eliot's authority in 1959 was partly the authority of the colonising culture's literary tradition: it provided

credibility through the endorsement of a tradition the coloniser had established as the universal standard. Faiz's authority in 1998 is of a qualitatively different kind: it is the authority of the postcolonial Urdu tradition on its own terms, without reference to Western literary hierarchies. Mufti (2016) argues that the world literary system tends to make local-language writing readable by fitting it against familiar Western coordinates, naturalising it into a pre-existing Western literary map. The decentering of authority in River of Fire resists this naturalisation by refusing Western coordinates and installing postcolonial Urdu authority in their place. The English-speaking reader is given something that sounds like Eliot but is Faiz: the familiar sound leads into an unfamiliar authority.

7. SELF-TRANSLATION THEORY AND THE LOGIC OF DECENTERED AUTHORITY

The decentering of authority that this article describes can be placed within a broader theoretical account of what self-translation makes possible that external translation does not. The critical literature on self-translation has identified several features that distinguish it from other forms of literary translation. Grutman (2009) notes that self-translation is characterised by the absence of the authority gap that structures conventional translation: the translator's need to interpret the author's intentions is eliminated when author and translator are the same person. Hokenson and Munson (2007) argue that the bilingual self-translator occupies "the threshold of two linguistic and cultural systems simultaneously" (p. 1), a position of inherent instability that opens possibilities for formal and ideological experimentation unavailable to monolingual authors. Both accounts converge on the self-translator's exceptional position with respect to authority: freer than the original author, less constrained than the external translator, the self-translator is uniquely placed to conduct systematic revisions of the positions the original text had taken.

Lefevere's (1992) account of translation as rewriting frames the self-translation issue with particular clarity. Lefevere argues that all translation operates under two intersecting pressures: the ideological norms of the receiving cultural system and the poetic conventions of the target literary tradition. An external translator negotiates these pressures on behalf of the original author, inevitably shaping the translated text to fit the receiving culture's expectations. A self-translator

negotiates the same pressures in person, without intermediary, and with the additional freedom of knowing the original text from the inside. For Hyder, translating both her own novel and, within Chapter 45, Faiz's poem, this freedom is exercised in both directions simultaneously. The ideology of the world literary system, which tends to favour texts that position themselves within recognisable Western literary traditions, pulls her towards retaining Eliot as the governing authority. Her own reassessed poetic judgment, drawing on the Urdu progressive tradition she had come to claim more fully by 1998, pulls her towards Faiz. Self-translation gives her the authority to resolve this tension in favour of her own judgment. The decentering is the resolution.

The ethics of translation described by Spivak (1993/2008) provide yet another facet of the issue. According to Spivak, the ethical task for a translator involves submitting to the particularities of the rhetoric of the source text instead of making it fit within the frames of the receiving culture. In case of self-translation, the ethical challenge is intensified by the presence of the associations and endorsements formed while writing the original work that may no longer apply at all. Thus, the self-translator faces not only the need to translate the words of the original text but also to translate its positions, to change what it supports. Hyder's redefinition of the authority of Eliot in River of Fire is also an ethical action on top of being a literary-political one, as she declines to translate into English a certain endorsement of the West, which she considers to be irrelevant after her reassessment.

Venuti (1995/2018) argues that translation is always an act of cultural politics and that the translator's choices, whether to domesticate or foreignise, always serve some interest. In conventional translation the translator serves, among others, the interest of the receiving culture's dominant literary norms. In self-translation the self-translator can serve the source culture's own interest without institutional constraint. Hyder's phonemic decentering is precisely this: a choice that serves Urdu literature's claim to authority in the English-speaking literary world without routing that claim through Western literary endorsement. The "face forward" / "fare forward" proximity is not a concession to the receiving culture; it is a Trojan horse within its sound conventions. The familiar phonemic pattern of "fare forward" is activated in the reader's ear, and what fills that pattern is Faiz.

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8. CHAPTER 45 AS THE SITE OF DECENTERED AUTHORITY

The decentering operation this article describes is concentrated at its most precise in Chapter 45, but it must be understood within the chapter's broader formal design. Mirza (2020) describes Chapter 45 as "densely packed with references ranging from Raga Malhar to Colonel Blimp's thora cha, ekdum, jaldi, bandobast, to Beethoven and the Second World War, to Begum Aizaz Rasooi" (pp. 39-40). The chapter accumulates cultural references at a density designed to resist easy comprehension by any single-tradition reader. Hindustani classical music, the mixed Urdu-English speech of British Indian colonial domestic life, European classical music, post-Partition Lucknavi social politics, and the Shakespearean theatrical phrase "end of Act One" are placed alongside each other without hierarchy. No single cultural tradition is permitted to dominate the chapter's surface. The chapter's refusal to translate or explain most of its references constitutes in itself an argument: the English text does not owe its cultural content to the English-speaking reader's comfort. This multi-traditional arrangement constitutes the formal context within which the decentering of authority must be read. The chapter is not a space of Western literary authority; it is a space in which multiple authorities are held in equilibrium without any single one governing the others. The Faiz passage arrives within this equilibrium, at the chapter's close, without announcement. Mirza (2020) observes that the chapter ends with the Faiz translation without identifying it as such in the running text. A reader who knows Faiz will recognise the passage; a reader who does not will encounter it simply as the chapter's concluding voice. This double readability enacts at the local level the same decentering that the removal of the Eliot epigraph enacts at the structural level: those who hold Western literary authority will hear something familiar; those who hold Urdu literary authority will hear something that belongs to them.

The chapter title performs a further dimension of the decentering. "The Broken Tanpura of Sultan Hussain Shah Nayak of Jaunpur" recalls the earlier introduction of Hussain Shah Nayak as a medieval Jaunpur musical figure. The tanpura, the four-stringed drone instrument foundational to Hindustani classical performance, is "broken" by the chapter's position in the novel's post-Partition section. The instrument that sounded in medieval Jaunpur is now damaged, not destroyed. The

composite musical heritage of the subcontinent has survived Partition but only in broken form. The chapter that carries this damaged survival as its governing image is also the chapter in which Faiz's "Subh-e-Azadi" appears, the poem of a dawn that brought bruised rather than clean light. The decentering of authority operates through the chapter's entire formal design: the broken instrument, the disappointed dawn, the Faiz passage at the close, the "Face forward!" that echoes "Fare forward" one consonant away. Authority has shifted, but the trace of the displaced authority remains, in exactly the way the tanpura remains broken, audible and no longer central. Sangari (2011) argues that Hyder's novelistic method is "configural," constructing meaning through the juxtaposition of multiple cultural systems rather than through the linear development of a single tradition's logic. The decentering of authority in Chapter 45 is a configural act: it does not destroy Western literary authority but places it in a configuration where it is no longer at the centre. Eliot's "fare forward" is present in the chapter as an auditory trace, a sound memory activated by Hyder's "Face forward!" but immediately exceeded by Faiz's voice. The configuration holds both authorities without collapsing them, while making entirely clear which one now governs the text's conclusions.

In addition, the chapter title contributes to the process of decentering. “The Broken Tanpura of Sultan Hussain Shah Nayak of Jaunpur” references the prior discussion of Hussain Shah Nayak as a medieval Jaunpur musician. The tanpura, an instrument of four strings vital to Hindustani classical music, is “broken” by virtue of the chapter’s appearance within the novel’s post-partition context. The instrument that had been played in medieval Jaunpur exists only in a broken state now. It has, however, survived Partition, although only in this broken state. It is in the chapter whose central image this broken survival becomes that the passage from Faiz’s “Subh-e-Azadi,” “a dawn that had come carrying bruised light instead of clean,” also appears. In other words, the decentering of authority in the chapter can be perceived through its whole structural organization: the broken tanpura, the disappointing dawn, the Faiz quotation at its end, and the “Face forward!” echoing “Fare forward!” one consonant earlier.

The approach of Hyder towards his narrative writing is what Sangari (2011) terms as "configural," in that meanings arise from placing different cultures next to each other,

rather than developing from the single tradition through its linear development. Decentralizing the Western literary tradition in Chapter 45, for example, is a configural act, as it does not mean the negation of Western literary traditions, but instead, it puts those traditions into such a configuration that they are not centralized anymore. The presence of the Western authority "fare forward" in the chapter appears as an auditory reminder that is surpassed by Hyder's own reminder "Face forward!" and Faiz's speech.

9. WORLD LITERATURE AND THE DECENTERED TEXT

Walkowitz (2015) posits that the contemporary literary text increasingly takes its place in systems of translation and circulation which shape its meanings and authorizations in more basic ways than are normally recognized. River of Fire came into the English-language literary canon via the press of New Directions, a list known for publishing significant international literature and especially for its foreign language editions. By 2015, the New Directions edition offered cover copy describing the work in terms similar to those used to describe One Hundred Years of Solitude, and it names the author of the latter as a reference point in order to direct anglophone readers to Hyder's novel. Such a marketing move is itself a means of centering the text within the Western literary canon – re-centering, even, since this is precisely what the text resists internally.

The tension between the publisher's external centering and Hyder's internal decentering is analytically illuminating. The cover comparison to García Márquez is a commercially rational act that Hyder had no control over and would arguably have found reductive: it re-routes the reader's approach through a Western-validated literary map rather than through the Urdu literary tradition on whose authority the novel internally insists. Hyder's phonemic decentering in Chapter 45 performs the opposite operation within the text itself. Where the publisher uses a familiar Western name to make the novel accessible, Hyder's "Face forward!" uses the familiar sound of Eliot to lead the reader directly into Faiz's authority. The echo is not an accommodation to Western literary expectations; it is an instrument of re-routing: the phonemic familiarity draws the reader in, and what they find inside it is not Eliot but Faiz. The centre has been moved.

The analysis of the world literary system by Mufti (2016) is directly pertinent to this

dilemma. In her discussion of the world literary system, Mufti contends that English is not simply one of several languages used in world literature but rather one that serves as the linguistic medium by virtue of which the value of literary texts from other cultures can be measured. As Mufti puts it, when non-Western works circulate in English, they do so through a translation into Western literary coordinates wherein the non-Western author is paired with Western authors; the non-Western tradition is interpreted using Western genres and forms; and the non-Western canon is defined by its proximity to the Western canon. In River of Fire, Hyder challenges this very logic, albeit from within the English text. Through the shift of the authoritative center to a South Asian authorial figure and in the phonemic form of the English text itself, Hyder subverts the logic of the world literary system without opposing it linguistically.

By 1998, Hyder was seventy years old, had returned permanently to India in 1961, had received the Sahitya Akademi Award in 1967 and the Padma Shri in 1984, and had outlived most of the first generation of post-independence Urdu writers. The creative self-translation of Aag ka Darya into River of Fire was her last major literary undertaking. The Faiz-for-Eliot substitution, read in this biographical context, has the character of a final account-settling: the reassertion, in the English literary world, of the authority that Hyder believed should govern the reading of her novel. The younger Hyder of 1959 reached for Eliot because she needed his authority. The older Hyder of 1998 replaced him with Faiz because she had earned the right to claim Faiz's authority as her own. The self-translation is also a self-correction. The decentering of authority is also a decentering of the earlier version of herself.

10. CONCLUSION

This article has argued that the Faiz-for-Eliot substitution in River of Fire is the most concentrated instance of a systematic decentering of authority that Hyder's creative self-translation performs throughout the English novel. The decentering operates at three levels. At the structural level, the removal of the Eliot epigraph withdraws Western modernist authority from the novel's threshold. At the substitutive level, the installation of Faiz in Chapter 45 replaces the withdrawn authority with the authority of the Urdu progressive tradition. At the phonemic level, the one-consonant proximity between "fare forward" and "face forward!" preserves the trace of the old authority

within the sound of the new, producing a text in which both voices are present but only one now governs.

The analysis has produced four specific theoretical contributions. The first concerns the enabling role of self-translation. The decentering described here is possible only because Hyder was the translator of her own novel. Only a self-translator holds both the original author's endorsements and the translator's choices simultaneously; only a self-translator can revoke an endorsement made in an earlier version of her own text without this being construed as a violation of the author's intentions. Self-translation is not merely the context for this decentering; it is the institutional condition that makes it possible.

The second contribution concerns the mechanism. The decentering operates at the phonemic level, below the threshold of explicit citation or reference, through the trained ear of a reader whose literary formation has included Eliot. This is Hyder's specific formal contribution to the practice of postcolonial self-translation: she performs a large literary-historical repositioning through a two-word sound echo that most readers will feel before they consciously analyse it. The third contribution concerns the ideological stakes. The substitution of Faiz for Eliot is not an aesthetic preference but a deliberate political act, a reassignment of the novel's governing literary authority from the tradition of the colonising culture to the tradition of the postcolonial Urdu progressive movement that Hyder had come, by 1998, to claim as her primary inheritance. The fourth contribution concerns the theory of self-translation itself. River of Fire demonstrates that recreative self-translation can function as an instrument of cultural decentering that a systematic revision of the original text's affiliations, conducted under full authorial authority, resulting in a translated text whose relationship to literary authority has been fundamentally reconstituted.

The self-translation of Hyder’s Aag ka Darya did more than just translate a work of literature; it made a revision within literary history, cancelled out any endorsement of an earlier stance, and established a whole new voice, all by changing one consonant. It was only one sound away from establishing this new tradition from the one she had abandoned. This accuracy was no accident; rather, it was proof of the translator’s realization that decentering authority can best be accomplished with the

tiniest change in sounds.

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