

There are adjustments one must make if one comes here from America; a different way of *observing* is required. I recall the Americanness of my own gaze when I returned to Lahore that winter when war was in the offing. I was struck at first by how shabby our house appeared, with cracks running through its ceilings and dry bubbles of paint flaking off where dampness had entered its walls. The electricity had gone that afternoon, giving the place a gloomy air, but even in the dim light of the hissing gas heaters our furniture appeared dated and in urgent need of reupholstery and repair. I was saddened to find it in such a state—no, more than saddened, I was shamed. *This* was where I came from, this was my provenance, and it smacked of lowliness.

But as I reacclimatized and my surroundings once again became familiar, it occurred to me that the house had not changed in my absence. *I* had changed; I was looking about me with the eyes of a foreigner, and not just any foreigner, but that particular type of entitled and unsympathetic American who so annoyed me when I encountered him in the classrooms and workplaces of your country's elite. This realization angered me; staring at my reflection in the speckled glass of my bathroom mirror I resolved to exorcise the unwelcome sensibility by which I had become possessed.

It was only after so doing that I saw my house properly again, appreciating its enduring grandeur, its unmistakable personality and idiosyncratic charm. Mughal miniatures and ancient carpets graced its reception rooms; an excellent library abutted its veranda. It was far from impoverished; indeed, it was rich with history. I wondered how I could ever have been so ungenerous—and so blind—to have thought otherwise, and I was disturbed by what this implied about myself: that I was a man lacking in substance and hence easily influenced by even a short sojourn in the company of others.

Xinyue Selina Xu

ENG 188GF

October 21, 2018

Creative Translation of Mohsin Hamid's *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* (p. 124-5) into The Idiom of Arundhati Roy

It was raining when Changez came back to Lahore. Twenty hours away, New York had been cloaked in swollen sheets of snow, thick eddies falling onto the sidewalks, biting cold to the touch. He had forgotten how humid and wet the winter in Lahore was. Curtains of silver beads pummeled into the loose soil, as he plowed the earth in his Made In America boots. In the rain and the rhythmic squelch of his steps, he heard his heartbeat like gunfire.

The old family house on an acre of land in the middle of Gulberg wore its age like a rag pulled over its ears. It stood swollen and almost shabby in the slush, averting its eyes.

He had thought about the Big Things on his flight back. The war. The armed men who assaulted the Indian Parliament. Erica, who was disappearing into a powerful nostalgia that gripped the city under her feet. But, back in the house he had grown up in, he saw only the Small Things.

Inside, gloom piled itself onto every surface. The walls had streaks of dry bubbles of paint flaking off, like the skin of a burned elder, bulging a little with the dampness crawling in year by year. The electricity was out, so he saw everything in the dim light of the hissing, sputtering gas heaters. But, nothing escaped him, not the swollen cupboards, not the yellow

stains under faulty faucets, not the broken windows rattling with the hammering of the rain, not the grime nesting in chipped edges and splintered ends.

He felt a gaping Hole opening up in him, a sadness that swallowed the impetus behind his return and covered it in a coat of hot, sticky shame.

Years later, he would know what to call it. The American Gaze. It came with a necessary Americanness, an entitled, unsympathetic, elitist lens through which the foreign was always *less* and the world was evaluated according to how *American* it was. It was this Americanness which he had hated in classroom encounters that left a bitter aftertaste in his mouth, staying long after he rinsed his mouth of its coffee residue, and in workplaces thronging with this homogenous, universalizing, essentializing way of viewing the world. He had hated it but it Possessed him. The house did not change in his absence. He had changed.

It occurred to him too then, a few days after he came back. He stared at his reflection in the speckled glass of his bathroom mirror. The high cheekbones, protruding nose and angular lines were still the same. Some things were different. Not just the hard set to his eyes, glinting with anger at an unknown foe (he would soon know), but the Hole watching through his eyes. That was what he wanted to exorcize. In the flecked reflection, someone familiar and unfamiliar looked out.

Only after did he see the house properly again.

It was a beautiful house. Rich with History. Mughal miniatures and ancient carpets knotted with stories and secrets graced its once white-walled reception rooms. A library full of heavy tomes and thin volumes, collected across generations (his grandfather's poetry is in there somewhere), abutted its veranda. Anything but impoverished. There was an idiosyncratic charm

in the lizards resting in the shadows of its dimples, unmistakable personality in the creak and rasp of its lungs, enduring grandeur in the relics of a dreamier world nesting within the hollows of its collarbones.

In these discoveries, he felt the sting of reprise, from ancestors lurking in the papery whispers of old books, the beady eyes of the lizards of Motherland and his own lofty perceptions of self. This sting would stay with him for a long long time.

Analysis of My Translation

I chose the original passage from *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* because of the enduring question resounding in its lines: What happens when your home becomes strange to you? In a matter of three paragraphs, Changez grapples with nostalgia and shame, reflects about the insidious, subconscious change in his gaze, undergoes reacclimatization and reinhabitation, and emerges from the process with a different set of eyes. It is a powerful passage on the fragmentation of his interior life and his identity. A subtle trauma is also at work: the post-9/11 discrimination he experiences, the splintering of his relationship with Erica, and the neo-imperialism of American logics of global capitalism, modernity and exceptionalism. This trauma and the ongoing experience of having survived it constitute a double telling in the passage. There is the adult Changez narrator, who is able to retrospectively diagnose the Americanness of his younger self's gaze, and the younger Changez who reacquaints himself with his family house as he sheds the sensibility inculcated in him by the trauma of being the Other in America in a time of crisis.

At first glance, *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* does not strike the reader as a traumatic narrative. Changez, as a narrator, is assured and knowing, with a mastery of over his chronological narrative of his four years in America. His tone is confessional and nostalgic, eventually becoming more accusatory of America rather than overtly mournful of his loss of Erica. Yet, underneath his controlled, lucid delivery, full of observations of the American who he is addressing (the "you"), Changez remains defined as the Other in relation to his Western audience, a subject position that he struggles to disassociate from throughout the novel. Therein

lies Changez's ongoing trauma—an inability to reconstitute himself as the autonomous being he previously imagined himself to be before heading to America.

Roy surfaced as an exciting choice for translation. Both novels are undergirded by a shared notion of a traumatic neurosis embedded in its characters. Such a traumatic neurosis gestures to a wider suffering of afflicted cultures and histories—in both, collective trauma is reflected in the personal. Both novels have one foot in the past and one foot in the present, with the writing itself deforming and wrapping around the memories, a coexistence and amalgamation put beautifully into words by Changez: “Something of us is now outside, and something of the outside is now within us” (174). Both foreground physical spaces as places where the characters can attempt to come to terms with the unassimilated nature of their traumatic experiences. The uneasy act of homecoming is as anchored in the concrete (the house) as it is in the abstract (the memories). In particular, the family house is a location of reckoning and reinscribing of identity for Changez when he returns to Lahore, as it is for Rahel when she returns to Ayemenem.

Yet, there are also significant differences between the two novels in their treatments of trauma. *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* constructs a largely linear narrative of the traumatic events (albeit disrupted by the “you” who brings Changez's narration back to the present), confining the moments of trauma resolutely in the past tense. In reconstructing a narrative arc, Changez is able to articulate the violence he has suffered and envisions a possibility for healing. On the other hand, *The God of Small Things* reproduces the trauma in its narrative, enacting the memory of trauma through the disjointed, interruptive and repetitive quality of her language. The fragmented, nonlinear time structure of overlaying vignettes functioning like cinematic memory presents a back and forth, a constant returning, and a mute repetition of suffering. The novel demands that we, as readers, inhabit the trauma of its characters.

Bearing these similarities and differences in mind, I made several stylistic choices in the act of creative translation. Firstly, I translated Hamid's first-person monologue into a third-person omniscient perspective. Imitating Roy's free indirect style, the descriptions of Changez's family house are melded with his thoughts, which retain the first-person subjectivity of the original passage (from "shabby" to "rich with history"). Secondly, in rewriting Hamid as Roy, there was also a crossover in genre, from realism to magical realism. Roy's magically real language allows for a certain linguistic expansiveness, flexibility, and most of all an opportunity to unearth the subtle trauma within younger Changez on his occasion of homecoming through the vividness, immediacy and freshness of metaphors. In my translation, I attempted to imitate Roy in weaving together little fragments of ordinary language in unexpected ways, creating a layering of detail that gather, with each repetition, the emotional charge of the narrative. To a large degree, sentence structure and diction were subservient to the affect of traumatic healing. I wanted to show that Changez had the possibility of recovery which eluded Rahel and Estha. In this passage, Changez possessed an uncontested claim to victimhood as well as a justified sense of anger, which provided the outlet for exorcizing the memories that had shaped his sensibility. This tentative healing is expressed in the personification of Changez's family house, which begins with "averting its eyes," and ends with the intimate scrutiny of its "dimples," "lungs," and "collarbones". In the capitalization of specific words in my translation (especially the "Hole"), I wanted to create the visceral affect of allowing the 'wound' to speak for itself,

However, what was difficult to translate into was Roy's unstable, traumatic narrative temporality. Within the span of such a short passage, I could only attempt brief shifts that would maintain the narrative integrity of the original. Apart from the narrative tense of Changez during

his return to Lahore, there were two temporal jumps—one backwards to the flight he took to Lahore (I took an artistic liberty here) and another forwards to years later.

One element in *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* that I find untranslatable is the existence of the “you” in the narrative. While flashbacks and foreshadowing could be translated regardless of the presence of an audience in the narrative, the explicit dialogical relationship could not carry over. Roy’s third-person narrative perspective pivots on reproducing the experience of trauma in its narrative style, which necessitates narrating at a distance. Roy’s language assumes a different kind of “you,” one as a spectator, observer, or even an experiencer of traumatic memory, but stripped of any direct access to the survivors of trauma. Her language depends on authenticity, on the connections between childhood subjectivity and emotional force. To insert an audience via a frame narrative would negate this very intimacy engendered by Roy’s language. The “you” in *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*, therefore, resists translation.

Ultimately, this creative translation offers a different way of identifying with Changez. I would go so far to say that the act of reading itself already assumes a dialogical relationship. As the reader, we are the “you” that a narrative in the idiom of Roy would seek to engage, but, in the case of this translation, the engagement is one that pulls us into his fragmented consciousness, the details of the unfolding of his trauma as it shapes his homecoming, yet still remains performative in how it asks us to inhabit the inexpressible and the incomprehensible.