

('and'), but only when the two words are so closely associated by meaning or convention as to form really a single compound, e.g. in no. 23, line 34, *lauh-o-qalam*, but *tabl o 'alam*.

I have thought it helpful to put hyphens between some common prefixes and their nouns (*be-kas*, *be-tāb*, *nā-tawān*); and between one or two suffixes and their pronouns (*mujh-ko*, *jis-se*), though it may be noted that in modern Urdu writing the tendency is to write these as separate words instead of running them together as formerly.

Enclitics are joined to their nouns or pronouns with hyphens, e.g. *safaid-sā* ('whitish'), *chhanakti-hi* (no. 15, line 16); *main-ne*, *ṣabā-ne*.

In the romanized text punctuation is supplied; in the Urdu text no more could be done, without disfiguring the calligraphy, than to make a few tentative insertions. The refined Western art of punctuation has no counterpart in the East; in Urdu verse it must have been discouraged both by the prevalence of the end-stopped line and couplet, and by the habit of listening to poetry rather than reading it. At its present stage of development Urdu would seem to an onlooker to stand in urgent need of a system of punctuation. In the meantime the student of Urdu verse must learn to appreciate the differences between its flow, its natural intervals, its logic of imagination, and those of Western poetry.

## INTRODUCTION

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Poets in this century, like leaders of nations, have emerged from some unexpected nooks and corners. Faiz Ahmed's forbears were Muslim peasants of the Panjab, that green patch between mountain and desert, between middle India and inner Asia. His father, born with the instincts of a wanderer, set off in early life to Afghanistan, where he rose high in the service of the Amir 'Abd ul-Rahman,<sup>1</sup> and acquired some of the habits of a feudal grandee. Having fallen foul of his royal employer and escaped in disguise, he turned up in England, where his advent aroused curiosity in the highest circles: Afghanistan was always a sensitive spot in the perimeter of the empire. Cambridge and Lincoln's Inn, a bizarre exchange for Kabul and Kandahar, made a lawyer of him, and he returned at length to his birthplace to practise: not with great financial success, for lavish habits were hard to shake off, and an old man's tales of bygone splendour fell on less and less credulous ears.

If his son inherited an adventurous bent, his journeys of discovery were more of the mind, and it was not until long after he had grown up that he roamed far from home. It may have been a good thing for him that he did not go to Europe to study, as a young man of wealthier family would have done. Too many Indians of that day came back from the West full of enthusiasms that failed to survive transplantation, or that they could not spread to others. Faiz Ahmed imbibed the ideas of the nineteen-thirties, more gradually but tenaciously, from books or smuggled pamphlets, travellers' tales, and that impalpable genie known as the Spirit of the Age. They rooted themselves in his own soil, he saw them and their shadows by familiar sunlight; they took possession of his imagination, a stronghold from which ideas are less easily dislodged, as well as of his mind.

He studied, chiefly philosophy and English literature, at Lahore, the provincial capital and centre of the network of affiliated colleges making up the University of the Panjab, where a number of gifted young men came by education in the fullest sense of the word. In due course he gained a junior lecturing post in a college at Amritsar, where I first had the good fortune to get to know him, thirty years ago. It was a Muslim college in the city sacred to the Sikhs, where the communal passions already fermenting were strong. But there was no hostile frontier then as now between Amritsar and Lahore, and the Panjab was still in many ways a Sleepy Hollow where life moved at the pace of the feeble cab-horses drawing their two-

wheeled *tongas*; where young men could indulge in old carefree idle ways, with long hours of debate in coffee-houses and moonlight picnics by the river Ravi. In this mode of living, verse-making played a part it has long since lost in the busy practical West. It was a polite accomplishment, a hobby cultivated by men, and a few women, in varied walks of life; often, to be sure, a racking of brains over elusive rhymes not much more elevating than a Londoner's crossword-puzzle. The *mushā'ira* or public recitation by a set of poets in turn, the novice first, the most admired writer last, was a popular social gathering, as it still remains; an audience would often guess a rhyme-word or phrase before it came, and join in like a chorus. Radio, then getting under way, was lending it a new medium, broadening into an entertainment for a whole province what had begun long ago as the recreation of a small Court circle. It might be highly artificial, as when participants were supplied beforehand with a rhyme to manipulate; and a scribbler well endowed with voice could make the most hackneyed phrase or threadbare sentiment sound portentous by delivering them in the half-singing or chanting (*tarannum*) fashion, or the declamatory style of recitation, that many affected. Still, the institution has helped to keep poetry before the public, and, along with floods of commonplace, to make known an occasional new talent.

Faiz Ahmed rhymed with the rest, and unlike some innovators complied with usage by adopting a pen-name or *takhallus*—that of *Faiz*, meaning 'bounty' or 'liberality':<sup>2</sup> looking back one may be tempted to read into it a meaning not yet in his mind, dedication to the service of his fellow-men. He emerged quickly from among the poetasters of whom every year engendered a fresh swarm, though not by dint of cultivating an aesthetic deportment, as some did. To outward appearance he was a good-natured, easy-going fellow, fond of cricket and dawdling, those favourite pastimes of Lahore, and readier to let others talk than to talk himself. It was characteristic of him that when reciting his verses, whether among a few friends or in a crowded college gathering, he spoke them quietly and unexcitedly.

Their quality was naturally mixed. The fine quatrain that stands at the beginning of his first book of verse published in 1941 (no. 1 in this anthology) was not the first to be written. He began with exercises, conventional enough, on well-worn topics, sighing over the cruelty of a non-existent mistress or extolling the charms of the grape. These also were invested with some fanciful attributes, for beer and whisky, not wine, were the liquors that the British presence had familiarized in India, and for literary purposes a beverage had

to be poured not from bottle into glass but from flask into goblet. (*Shīsha*, a classical word, has come to be used for 'tumbler', but there is no term for 'bottle' except the impossible English word, spoken with a long 'o' and rhyming with Indian pronunciation of 'hotel'.)

But if Lahore was still on the surface an uneventful place, the tides of history were washing to and fro in India and the world outside, and their ripples reaching the Mall Road and the Kashmir Gate. Independence was only a decade away, and Faiz's lines were soon being coloured by patriotic feeling: almost as soon, by socialist feeling, for socialism was the new revelation that young idealists could invoke to exorcise communal rancours, by uniting the majority from all communities in a struggle against their common poverty, and to make independence a blessing to the poor as well as to the élite. History was to take a different turning; older forces and allegiances were to prove stronger, for a long time to come at least. But for young poets and story-writers national and social emancipation seemed to go together, and both to go with their own new-found freedom to try new subjects and methods. They were reading, and sometimes imitating (Faiz seldom if ever did this directly) Western writers like T. S. Eliot and Auden and Day Lewis. Their Progressive Writers' Association was a force in the land, and the Panjab had its own branch. Besides taking part in this Faiz, with the realistic sense he has always had that the poet is also a citizen, was getting in touch with groups of workmen, and would spend evenings teaching them reading and writing and the ABC of politics.

Indian marriages were not made in heaven, but arranged, as they still often are, by careful parents, particularly in respectable Muslim families, whose women went out heavily veiled from head to foot. Faiz was once comically indignant at being invited to speak on Shakespeare in a girls' college, and made to address an unseen audience from the other side of a screen. In such an environment there was a double blessing for him in his marriage with an Englishwoman of remarkable character (whom I have the good fortune to have known even longer than I have known him); she has been ever since his best friend and guardian angel, and, with two daughters he is devoted to, has brought into his life a security that nothing else could have given it.

Before 1939 he had made a name for himself in literature; the war and its aftermath made room for him in political history too. This is not the place for a detailed review of his political or civic activities, but it is proper to emphasize that the ideals inspiring them have had a vital part in his literary development as well. They involved

him in dilemmas inescapable in an India verging on revolution or civil war, and then in a raw new Pakistan painfully collecting itself into a nation. No straight road through this chaos was to be found, and every individual had to make decisions of his own. In all that part of the world movements and loyalties have been apt, like its rivers, to come and go suddenly, one day in full spate, the next dried up. Faiz has remained all this time faithful to what might be called an enlightened, humanistic socialism; the kind of activity open to him has fluctuated with circumstances.

After the Nazi invasion of the Soviet Union in 1941, Faiz like many Indians saw the war in a new light, as a contest in which the destinies of mankind were at stake, and with the approval of his associates joined the welfare department of the army; he was to be met with now on the Mall in the uniform of a lieutenant-colonel, solemnly returning salutes from British soldiers. After independence came in 1947, accompanied by partition, he continued to hope, as he has always done, for good relations between the two countries. When Gandhi was murdered by a Hindu fanatic, for trying to protect the Muslim minority in India, Faiz was, as a London newspaper said, 'a brave enough man to fly from Lahore for Gandhi's funeral at the height of Indo-Pakistan hatred'.<sup>3</sup> This hatred had been inflamed by the massacres, most terrible in the Panjab, that raged during the process of partition. To Faiz these horrors could only be expunged by the building of his new nation on principles of social justice and progress. One of his best-known poems (no. 19 here) expressed the tragic disillusionment of finding the promised land a Canaan—or so it seemed to him—only flowing with milk and honey for feudal landowners and self-seeking politicians.

With the removal by death of Pakistan's first and most trusted leaders, and reform and development sluggish, this disillusion soon became widespread. Editor now of the *Pakistan Times* of Lahore, Faiz made use of prose as well as verse to denounce obstruction at home and to champion progressive causes abroad; he made his paper one whose opinions were known and quoted far and wide, with respect if not everywhere with approval. He served as vice-president of the Trade Union Congress, and secretary of the Pakistan Peace Committee. This period ended abruptly with his arrest, along with a number of other figures, civil and military, in March 1951. The Rawalpindi Conspiracy trial unfolded its slow and somewhat mysterious length, during which a death-sentence was a lingering possibility, down to 1953, when Faiz was condemned to four years' imprisonment.<sup>4</sup>

His health suffered, but he was able to read, and think his own

thoughts, and collect materials for a long-promised (but still, alas, unperformed) history of Urdu literature. To him as a poet his prison term might be called a well-disguised blessing. His wartime work had been heavy; he lamented that as soon as a new couplet began to stir in his mind he had to get up and go back to his office. After the war his editorial desk was even more enslaving. He might indeed point to the files of his newspaper, as Lamb did to the ledgers of the East India Company, as his real works. Worst of all has been a social environment prodigally wasteful, everywhere south of the Himalayas, of the time of men whose time is of any value. Far more than in the West a writer's admirers show their appreciation of him by thronging about him and making it impossible for him to write, or to keep to any rational plan of work; custom imposes on all alike the same monstrous proportion of talking to thinking as that of sack to bread in Falstaff's tavern bills. Even Faiz's wife has only been able to rescue him by half or quarter from this asphyxiation. Prison enabled him to write what for him was a considerable number of poems, in which his ideals took on fresh strength by being alloyed with harsh experience, and which were eagerly devoured by the public, in spite of the charges weighing over him.

Released in 1955, Faiz took up journalism again, but this quickly brought another, briefer spell in jail, one incident in a prevailing confusion that political affairs were falling into, and that led to the assumption of power by the army.<sup>5</sup> This did away with political confusion for the next decade, but also with nearly all political life, and it drastically curtailed the freedom of the press. Faiz's health moreover was no longer good, and a habit of perpetual cigarette-smoking, with a marked prejudice against physical exercise in any form, has not in these latter years improved it. He had to look for other kinds of work, cultural rather than political and in a way more congenial. He helped to make a film, which won international awards, about the lives of the fisherfolk, whom he visited and greatly liked, among the rivers of East Pakistan. He had plans for a national theatre, and with his wife sponsored a variety of local dramatic experiments. Drama is an art that found no entry into Islamic countries through the ages, and that Faiz believed might have a serious function in a new nation like Pakistan. In other elements of culture Indian Islam was rich, and it was his design to bring to light all that was capable of healthy growth among them, to help to form them into a modern national culture. He went back to his first vocation, teaching, and undertook the reorganization of a Karachi college founded by charitable endowment for poor students. When politics began to throw off, early in 1969, a long immobility, his

concern for the country's future showed itself as keen as ever. On March 1st he made a long statement, full of practical good sense, to a round-table conference of progressive groups at Rawalpindi.

He has been living of late years at Karachi, that odd medley of Victorian façades and modern industry and spreading suburban villas; always with a hankering for the picturesque dilapidation of the old city of Lahore, and even, in sentimental moments, for his paternal village, where it may be conjectured that he would quickly die of boredom. In these years he has travelled the world a good deal, as his literary fame spread; it was of course in socialist countries that he came to be known first. He has been in China and Sinkiang, and several times in the USSR, where a translation of all his poems in Russian verse was published in 1960; the Muslim areas of Soviet Asia had a special attraction for him, and he for them. He has been in the USA, and Cuba; and in England, though regrettably seldom, considering his English wife and friends and literary connections. Once he was tempted as far north as Edinburgh, where he found that he had miscalculated the temperature of a Scottish winter. Most remarkably, he has made frequent short visits to India. Urdu poetry has been one of the slender bridges left standing between the divided countries, and Faiz's poems are welcomed on both sides of the border. Some of his best poems have been in honour of peace.

Amid these gropings and wanderings Faiz has continued to write the short poems that made him famous. He has written, altogether, too little; a small collection of poems now and then, with gaps of years in between, and a number of essays, collected in 1964 into a volume of literary criticism. Not seldom his talent has been thought to be drying up, though it has always flowed again; not seldom he himself talks of giving up composition, which with him is not facile improvisation but demands long, arduous effort. It may be a related fact that any sort of communication with other minds has become for him, as he once said to me, more and more difficult. Through verse, when he is successful with it, he overcomes this difficulty; at a more modest level an evening's conviviality may transform him from a rather tongue-tied companion (a day with whom once reminded an intelligent young woman, a family friend of ours,<sup>6</sup> of the silences of Colonel Bramble) into a ready and entertaining talker, with a lively sense of humour that finds little or no outlet in his verses.

What he has written, however much less than what he might, has brought him to something like the position of an unofficial poet laureate in West Pakistan, a land where poetry still makes an appeal potent enough to disarm some political and even religious

prejudice. Criticism, even abuse, for his opinions have never ceased to come his way, and there are traces of this to be discerned in some of his poems. To be a nationalist writer is easy, to be a national writer hard. As a poet whom his countrymen are proud of, and at the same time a target of frequent attacks, Faiz's situation has been a contradictory one, reflecting the contradictory moods of a nation still—as Iqbal said of all the East—in search of its soul.

Some of Faiz's poetry is simple and direct, but often it is couched in a literary idiom some knowledge of which is needed for its appreciation, and one more artificial—or artful—than most. Urdu itself as a language might be called a bundle of anomalies, beginning with the fact that this language of many virtues has no true homeland. It originated, from the early stages of the 'Muslim', or rather Central-Asian, conquest of India, as the lingua franca of the 'camp' (its name derives from the same Turki root as the English word *horde*). It was a mixture of the Arabicized Persian used by the invaders, themselves a miscellany of Turks and others, with some of the still unformed Hindi dialects of the upper Gangetic valley, or 'Hindustan'. In verb structure it was native Indian, a fact which entitles it to be classed as an *Indian* language; in vocabulary largely foreign, much as a simplified Anglo-Saxon base was overlaid after the Norman conquest with French or low-Latin words. Urdu and English both began, therefore, about the same time, as pidgin dialects, or hybrids, and gradually evolved into self-sufficient languages, with special qualities derived from their mixed antecedents, qualities of contrast and modulation of great significance for poetry. Some of Shakespeare's effects could only have been achieved in such a medium, and Urdu can combine the harmony of Persian with the energy of Arabic and the simplicity of rustic Hindi.

During its centuries of growth, Persian served as the administrative and literary language of the Muslim ruling circles, Sanskrit continued to be the learned language of Hindus. But Indian vernaculars, including Hindi, hitherto a group of dialects rather than a language, were also taking shape; and when with the crumbling of Muslim political ascendancy in the 18th century Urdu emerged as successor to Persian, it was bound to have to compete, sooner or later, with some of these others, Hindi in particular. Its original function as a lingua franca now belonged to the colloquial mixture often called 'Hindustani', on the level at which modern Urdu and Hindi are virtually identical. Muslims and Hindus had lived side by side for ages (and most Muslims were descendants of Hindu converts), and in humdrum practical matters understood one another well

enough. For more complex ideas—which neither had in fact been cultivating with much freshness for a long time—they had acquired little of a shared vocabulary. Hence when modern conditions brought the necessity of thinking on new lines, an élite culture suffused on each side with religious influences drew them in opposite directions. Learned Urdu has a diction heavily Persian and Arabic, learned Hindi heavily Sanskritic; and their scripts, the Persianized form of Arabic on the one hand, the Nagari or Sanskrit on the other, complete their mutual unintelligibility. It would be like this in English if half its users formed their technical and philosophical terms from Hebrew instead of Greek, and used Hebrew letters instead of Roman. Thus Urdu, originally a channel between older and newer inhabitants of India, in the past century has come to be one of the stumbling-blocks to fellow-feeling.

Urdu had grown not where there were most Muslims, in modern West and East Pakistan, but where Muslim political and cultural ascendancy was firmest, which was always in and round the capital cities—Delhi, Agra, Lucknow, Hyderabad. Muslim civilization everywhere in history has been an urban civilization. This means that today Urdu as a mother-tongue finds itself marooned in the heart of Hindu India, chiefly in the U.P., the old Hindostan, where some nationalists are disposed to question its title to exist, and some of its lovers—not all of them Muslims—regretfully feel it to be doomed to a slow decline; though on the other hand some new opportunities have come its way, notably in the cinema. In Pakistan it is being brought forward as a national language, as Hindi is in India. But East Pakistan has proved faithful to the Bengali that it shares with West Bengal in India. In the western Panjab, nucleus of West Pakistan, Urdu is the vehicle of literature, of the newspaper press, and of formal or ceremonial speech: it is employed for everyday purposes of writing, and is challenging English as the medium of higher education. But all familiar converse is carried on in Panjabi, a vernacular shared like Bengali with a province of India; a language, or as some would say a group of dialects, standing to Urdu in something like the relationship of the broadest of rural Scots to the most refined of Oxford English.

When the Mogul empire faded, and with it the old cultural links with Persia, it was chiefly the poetical part of the legacy of Persian that Urdu fell heir to. For public business, legal or administrative, and higher education, English was the successor. The Muslim community, socially an unbalanced one of feudal cast, with only an embryonic middle class, had few professional or commercial men with reason to write prose; and fallen from power, unable for long to

adapt itself to new times, it had stronger feelings than thoughts, an impulsion towards emotional verse more than towards rational prose. In Ghalib the language found the poet still regarded as its greatest. He belonged, until the Mutiny swept it away, to the shadowy Mogul court at Delhi, with its poignant contrast between present and past to kindle his imagination. Urdu prose on the contrary was virtually making its first start with Sir Sayyid Ahmad,<sup>7</sup> who likewise began in Delhi but shook its ancient dust off his feet and entered English service before the Mutiny; his mental life was one of wrestling with the problem, for Muslim India, of its present and its future. Subsequent progress has been uneven, and since the birth of Pakistan it has been a disputed issue there whether, or how rapidly, Urdu can be made the medium of higher education, scientific included.<sup>8</sup> Faiz is one of those most firmly convinced that it is capable of meeting every modern requirement.

As a poetical medium, Urdu might almost be a language made up by poets for their own benefit; a one-sided benefit no doubt by comparison with Western languages like English whose foremost poets, from Shakespeare down, have so often been first-rate prose writers as well. But this double faculty may be a thing of the past. Modern English may be too far secularized, overloaded with utilitarian burdens, to be capable any longer of poetry. A language like Urdu, with a smaller prose content, has so to speak a lower boiling-point, and boils up into poetry—or vaporizes into verse—more readily. As one consequence of this freedom from dull workaday business, Urdu may have gone on being tied more closely than need be to the apron-strings of classical Persian. This continued to be studied and read after its fall from power in India, and in West Pakistan still is so quite widely. Almost any Persian noun or adjective might be brought into an Urdu verse, just as any Greek word can nowadays be incorporated into English prose. Persian syntax too, notably the use of the *izāfat* (-e-) to join a noun either with its adjective or with its possessive, is retained to a much greater extent than in prose. Until a generation ago a whole Persian line or couplet might be inserted in an Urdu poem.

Between Mutiny and Great War two shifts, not unrelated, were taking place in Urdu poetry. It was coming to be less a lament for a lost past, and more an expression of the sensations of a Muslim community struggling to find its place in a changed world. Secondly, its main inspiration was migrating, with the coming of Iqbal, from the old centres, Delhi and Lucknow, northward to the Panjab; from early in this century to the partition, the two regions disputed the palm warmly between themselves, the older one priding itself at

least on higher polish and technical proficiency. Some analogy may be drawn between them and their counterparts in Ireland. In Hindostan the leading Muslims were gentry of old family, descendants of conquerors from abroad, but becoming in course of time more 'Indian' than the solid mass of Muslims in the north-west; as the Anglo-Irish gentry in southern Ireland were in most ways except religion more Irish than the solid mass of Protestant settlers in Ulster. In Ireland's literary renaissance early in this century Anglo-Irish southern Protestants played a large part. Urdu poets in Hindostan had been playing some such part. The shift northward to the Panjab (which scarcely had a parallel in Ireland) meant in the long run a turning away from India, and presaged the birth of Pakistan—or so we may see it in retrospect—decades before anyone dreamed of such a thing.

On the surface the Panjab might have seemed too dull and torpid to be a nesting-place for poetry. There were only two big towns, and hardly any modern industry; big landlords loyal to the British power, the creator of many of them, held a preponderant influence. Geography has in some epochs isolated the land of the Five Rivers, at other times filled it with vibrations from round about, according to the condition in which neighbouring regions have been. When these have flourished, it has been a meeting-ground of ideas, as of trade-routes, instead of a backwater. It merges south-westward into the Indus valley, south-eastward into the Gangetic; north-east it has had historic links with Kashmir, north-west still closer ones with the frontier, Afghanistan, the roads into Persia and middle Asia. Hardly any other corner of Asia occupies such a focal position. Seldom since early Indo-Aryan times an intellectual leader, it has repeatedly been plunged by forces within and pressures from without into emotional and social turmoil. The coming of Islam, which in the end was to split the province in two, affected all of it in some degree, and helped to generate the ferment out of which came Sikhism, the one new religion that India with all its religiousness has given birth to since Buddhism. But this turned into a military domination, without much cultural vitality of its own; and in the 19th century Persia and central Asia, the old neighbours to the north, seemed to be at long last expiring, while British rule concentrated Indian energies in the seaboard provinces, and treated the Panjab mainly as a recruiting-ground for the army.

By the end of the century, however, Persia was rousing itself again, and Islam in Asia stirring in its sleep; while from southward the European ideas that had long been at home in Bombay and Calcutta were now filtering into the Panjab. As in other ages, these

new currents were to make for bigger upheavals here than elsewhere, among a folk even in their physical proportions larger than life compared with most other Indians. Inevitably old communal jealousies would revive alongside of new things. Altogether it was a land riddled to an exceptional degree with contradictions old and new; one of sturdy peasants as well as landlords, one steeped in rustic humour and realism as well as possessing in Lahore a city which did not forget that it was once the Mogul imperial capital; a province that others seemed to have left far behind, but with lurking energies and untested capabilities waiting to break out, for good or evil, when the sleeping giant should awaken. It might even be said that Urdu poetry was taking wing to the Panjab because here it found most contraries and complexities to stimulate it. All three communities were writing Urdu verse, and in the same idiom; Muslims were easily in the lead, and have provided all the important names. Less at home in the new age than their Hindu neighbours they struck the visitor as having, by and large, less practical capacity, with far more imagination.

Tagore could address his Bengali compatriots in their own language, which besides a very long poetic tradition had also during the 19th century acquired a modern prose. Panjabi was rich in little but folk-poetry, and the chief other purpose it had served was as a vehicle for part of the Sikh scriptures, which invested it as a written language with associations distasteful to Muslims. They relegated it to colloquial purposes for which Urdu was too high-flown—somewhat as Beatrice told Don Pedro he was too fine a husband for her, she would need another for weekdays. For Urdu this was bound to involve a certain removal from actuality, such as Burns's verse underwent when he wrote in English instead of Scots. It brought the countervailing gift of an exotic, romantic vocabulary like a southern breeze laden with tropical scents. Words from far away make a more sensuously thrilling impression on the ear than familiar homespun ones, and through the ear on the fancy. Muslim habits of hearing or reciting Koranic passages in half-understood Arabic must have worked in the same manner. It may be guessed that the Urdu poet does not always have before his mind's eye so lively an image of the things he is speaking of as a European would; his mind is astir with words which are for him sounds, evocations, ancestral memories, less closely tied to tangible objects; of the 'two worlds' he so often sets against each other it is the invisible rather than the visible in which he is roaming.

All this harmonized with the situation of the Muslim class literate enough to have a full command of Urdu—though its poetical appeal

could be felt more widely. It was a narrow middle class oriented by circumstances more towards fantasy than towards reality, overshadowed economically by Hindu competitors with far more capital, and also far more willingness to scorn delights and live laborious days in the pursuit of money. It was chronically pulled opposite ways: it wanted to grow, learn, move with the times—or, impatiently, leave them behind; both from diffidence about its ability to compete, and an inborn distaste for competitive moneygrubbing, it was often apt to shrink into its shell, to retreat along the old caravan trail winding away into the heart of Asia and its luxurious dream-world of shining dome and legend and remote superb names. Ultimately the outcome of these contrary impulses, irreconcilable within Indian horizons, would be the demand for a separate State. In the meantime Urdu and Urdu poetry were, next to religion, the Muslims' lifeline, giving them a sense of identity, a collective vision.

So much of the spirit and tone of Urdu poetry derives from Persian tradition that this ancestry must often be kept in mind, even when a poet like Faiz is alluding to quite contemporary matters. Verse forms and metres, besides diction, have helped to preserve continuity; and, still more strikingly, a common stock of imagery, which can be varied and recomposed inexhaustibly in much the same way that Indian (and Pakistani) classical music is founded on a set of standard note-combinations (*rāgas*) on which the performer improvises variations. All this was part of a culture that, like Europe's later, came into India fully-fledged, acquiring there a fresh colouring, new accompaniments—such as the *mushā'ira*—, yet never becoming altogether Indian.

Persian poetic attitudes were social. Whereas the Chinese poet so often purports to be wandering lonely as a cloud over his mountain, the Persian is to be found reciting in a 'circle', or 'gathering', or 'assembly', or breaking away from it only in a fit of literary frenzy. Behind this fiction lay the reception-room or hall of royal court or feudal mansion, where men of letters competed for the patron's favour and rewards; a rivalry of which today's *mushā'ira* is an imitation. Its setting was nocturnal, lamplit; a reader may call up in his mind the scene that Faiz evokes in a line of poem no. 23, a Mogul chamber with walls honeycombed into small niches, each holding its lighted candle. By time-honoured custom another candle or lamp was placed before each poet in turn as he recited. When we are transported out of doors it is to a garden, the formal garden or rather park with its water-channels running in straight lines from pool to fountain between flowerbeds and avenues, still to be seen in its perfection at Lahore in the Shalimar garden and the precincts of

Jahangir's mausoleum, or at Agra in those of the Taj Mahal: an exquisite oasis in a thirsty land, a paradise shut off from the sorry scheme of things outside by a rectangle of high wall. Here is the Islamic urban civilization refined to the last degree, a haven within a haven. On the scorched plains of upper India, as in inner Asia, Nature itself is man-made, the marble cascade replaces the waterfall, all the vulgar reality of yokel, spade, manure-heap is forgotten. Readers brought up on English poetry have found it easy to enter into the spirit of Chinese poetry, simple and naturalistic, haunted by the sound of rock-perched trees and winds; no poet from the Islamic realm has captivated them so much, except Omar Khayyam, self-banished into the wilderness that came up as close to the gates of the old cities of middle Asia as night in those latitudes succeeds day.

Faiz observed, when asked about this absence of free Nature, that the poets of former days were courtiers, feudal retainers of uncertain rank, whose duty was to be at hand whenever their patron wanted to be refreshed with wit or fancy, not to disport themselves in the countryside. He himself has a love of gardens, fostered by early acquaintance with the classic shades of Lahore, and with a later, less formal park there, the Lawrence (now Jinnah) Bāgh, one of his youthful haunts, for which he has pined during his sojourn in Karachi.<sup>9</sup> He is no gardener, but in jail did make an attempt at growing flowers from packets of seed requisitioned from distant Scotland, while a fellow-prisoner of more mundane tastes devoted his garden plot to rearing chickens.

Feudal patronage was capricious, and the rhymer often, like Shakespeare, in disgrace with fortune and men's eyes. It went with this, and with things deeper in the fibre of Indo-Muslim society, that though habitually addressing a company, he did so as an individual alone in the group: he assumed frequently a tone of repining, lamenting a hard lot in a bad world, the demeanour of a martyr, despised and rejected by men and mistress. This posture too has descended on much Urdu poetry of our time, producing on occasion a disparity almost ludicrous between a writer's heartbroken accents and his jolly countenance off duty. But the poet composing under the eye of an autocratic patron and of an inflexible religion could not give vent to his gloomier feelings in any open manner, or seem to be finding fault with the order of things as by God and the Sultan established. True, in the fiction of these symposia the patron was not supposed to be present in his own person: art requires some, if only fictitious, equality among its devotees, and the patron might be a poetaster himself, and take his turn to recite his own productions under his own pen-name. The last Mogul emperor, who had few cares of State

to oppress him, was no mean performer. It was, then, the 'Saqi' who was supposed to preside, and be the centre of attraction: the wine-pourer, elevated into a mysteriously fascinating woman with whom all present were supposed to be hopelessly in love—an idealized, rarified version of the educated courtesan whose reception-room was the nearest that Muslim India could come to a European salon. It was under colour of bewailing the hard-heartedness of this demi-goddess that the poet could most easily give voice to his grievances against life at large. A true poet would be expressing something deeper than his own private disappointments. Ghalib we may think of as lamenting, in effect, the passing of an empire and a civilization, and generations of Muslim readers must have felt their own nostalgia echoed in his lines.

The oblique allusion, the conventional symbol, could be understood by each hearer in his own fashion, and applied to his own condition; for in that society all, from highest to lowest, were haunted by the same sense of mutability and insecurity, of the need for a protector. Hence evolved a kind of 'metaphysical' style, an elaborate play of fancy and ingenuity; once established, within a pattern of society only very sluggishly changing, this could keep a remarkably tenacious hold. It has kept it even in our changing times: abstracted and generalized in this manner, the perplexities and distresses of man's social being have from age to age a common complexion.

Love might stand for defiance, self-assertion, as well as resigned self-pity. It has played this part in many times and places, under a multitude of guises, always somewhere between life and art; where women went veiled it was bound to stand closer to art and fancy. The poet's world is an imaginary city, like that of Faiz's poem no. 47; Islam had no nations, any more than it had, culturally speaking, villages: as in old Italy a man's native town was his *patria*. In this city there is always a *Kū-e-malāmat*, or 'Street of Reproach': again a poetical depiction of the entertainers' quarter where courtesans and ordinary prostitutes and dancing-girls lived. Here a reckless lover will be carrying on a clandestine affair, heedless of the frowns of dull elders or precisians, the *rumores senum severiorum*. Or he may rush out from the town into the wilderness, and roam to and fro endeavouring to cool his distemper in its blank emptiness.<sup>10</sup>

All this lover's fever might represent, or the hearer was free to think of it as representing, the spiritual seeker's thirst for divine truth; and in this signification in turn, literal melted into metaphorical, and God himself might be either reality or symbol. In a society saturated with religious forms and phrases (though, like

aristocratic Europe, seldom religious in its conduct) poetic imagery was bound to flow very often into their mould. In Islamic orthodoxy, there was small room for anything artistic, except the sublime simplicity of its best architecture. But side by side with it was the mystical cult of the Sufis, who sought through prayer and spiritual exercises, sometimes music and dance—eschewed by the orthodox—, even by means of 'drugs, to soar from the dull earth into contact with, or absorption into, the divine essence.'<sup>11</sup> This cult came from Persia, but helped to make Islam in India more Indian, by its affinity with the *bhakti* stream in Hinduism. In the Panjab more than elsewhere the two escaped from the cloister and joined and fermented among common people, helping to create a body of folk-poetry where the religious brotherhood of man blended with thoughts of social equality, deliverance from feudal bonds.<sup>12</sup> Much of the mood and phraseology of Sufism, its catalogue of the 'states and stages' (*hāl-o-maqām*) of the pilgrim soul, its vital relationship between the spiritual guide and his disciples, was taken over into poetry, and had a further existence there as part of the counterpoint of mask and symbol. When a poet did not picture himself seated in a court circle, it would often be the circle of disciples round their master that he conjured up. Nor were the two so far apart as might seem; mystics had often clothed their thoughts in verse, courtiers and even rulers might also be disciples; a divine Beloved could melt imperceptibly into an earthly one, an ideal feminine, an unattainable mistress who was also the wine-pourer at the never-ending feast, as uncertain, coy, and hard to please as Fortune, dispenser of life's never-ending deceptions.

Love and religion shared besides a common emblem in wine, another refinement of gross fact into ideal essence. If in the feudal courts liquor forbidden to the faithful ran freely, and a Ghalib might be a serious drinker, poetically wine stood for exaltation, inspiration, and the tavern was the abode of truly heart-felt spiritual experience as opposed to the formal creed of the mosque. Drunkenness and madness are near allied, and the later—*junūn*, 'rapture' in the literal sense of possession by a spirit (*jinn*)—retained some of the aura that surrounds it among primitive people; it might be either the passion of the worshipper of beauty throwing the world away for love or the ecstasy of the acolyte despising material success in his heavenly quest.

All this vogue of 'madness' was a recoil from the hard fixity of life, the rigid framework within which man as a social animal imprisons himself, the sordid egotism forced on men who, whether poets or politicians, could only rise at one another's expense. It gave relief



to the vague craving that every society generates, if only in its younger or more idealistic members, for something better, higher, freer. Against the omnipotence of Church and State there could be no rebellion; but veiled protest was allowable, under the form of praise of the individual prepared to defy convention, which as a harmless safety-valve became itself a tolerated part of the convention. Wine, love, mystic flights, were all momentary refuges from the bondage of reality. They fostered some poetry, as well as much literary posturing and affectation; the time would come when a poet like Faiz, standing at a new point in history, would be able to give them a fresh meaning, as symbols of a revolutionary challenge to the social order instead of a merely token defiance of it or a withdrawal from it into fantasy.

Ambiguity belonged to the essence of this style; in its visionary landscape things melted into one another like dreams, and everything had a diversity of meanings, or rather, any precisely definable 'meaning' was lost in a diffused glow. A poet might really have mystic moods, or might really be in love—with a woman, or, as in Greece or Rome, with a man; but for his poetry, for his hearers, that was not the real point, any more than for us when we listen to a piece of music whose composer may have felt religious, or been in love.<sup>13</sup> The most characteristic verse form was the *ghazal*, a string of any number of couplets in any one metre, rhyming AA BA CA DA. . . .<sup>14</sup> These should not aim at any obvious logical sequence, but owe their coherence to the recurrent rhyme and to a stream of association eddying beneath the surface. Its standard topic is love, its tone one of graceful trifling, and in ordinary hands it is not much more than a metrical exercise; so much so that in modern Urdu it constitutes a poetic hemisphere by itself, and a writer may be classed either as a serious poet or, with a touch of disparagement, as a *ghazal*-writer. The form has nevertheless been used by the foremost poets for the weightiest purposes; and it too has helped to provide a rainbow bridge between the impressionism of the past and the realism of the present.

One who notably turned the *ghazal* to new purposes was Mohamed Iqbal (1873-1938), the greatest Urdu poet to arise since Ghalib.<sup>15</sup> Born like Faiz at Sialkot, close to the mountains and close to the religious and cultural frontier that now divides India from Pakistan, he was a Panjabi of the professional middle class who wrote English prose and Urdu and Persian verse; a Panjabi, that is, whose mental horizons were far more expansive than those of his own province, and who as a result in some ways soared above its realities, in other

ways fell short of them. In Urdu he wrote chiefly short poems, lyrical, religious, or satirical; in classical Persian long didactic poems addressed to the whole of Muslim Asia. He went through an early phase of addiction to English models, including description of Nature, and at the same time of attachment to the ideal, of equally Western source, of a free Indian nation with Hindu and Muslim as fellow-citizens. He studied in England and Germany, and was impressed especially by Nietzsche. Later his antipathy to Western imperialism in India and Asia deepened, but there came also disenchantment with the Indian national movement. He found an alternative in the vision, conjured up out of the hopes and doubts of his community, the Muslim middle class of the Panjab, of a grand Islamic revival and renewal, in which all the Muslim peoples should arise from their slumber, at once firm in their ancient faith and strong in modern knowledge. The glorious daybreak he was looking forward to did not dawn; most of the Muslim peoples were not yet finding their way either back to a renewed faith or forward to a modern organization. Even to him it grew clear that Pan-Islamic hopes would not be realized soon, and he turned his attention more to the predicament of his own community, and came to be identified with the programme of a separate Muslim state. He is therefore, though he died a decade before the partition, venerated—often uncritically, as in all such cases—as the moral founder of Pakistan.

Religious enthusiasm led Iqbal regrettably far towards seeing everything as an antithesis between Eastern faith and Western reason, identified with Western materialism and imperialism. Nietzsche too encouraged him to uphold the instinctive against the rational, feeling against thought. It was an antithesis that reflected the historical contradiction of his whole position; the inspiration of Faiz's life has been the hope of overcoming it with the aid of a new synthesis, that of socialism, seen as the reconciler of old culture and modern science in a refashioned society. He too doubtless has found history caught in unexpected crosscurrents, and not always moving as he hoped to see it. And despite the vast distance separating the two men, the prophet and the humanist, Faiz stands recognizably in the same line of succession. Iqbal left no true inheritor either of his philosophy or of his manner. But Faiz, who appeared on the literary scene just when Iqbal was departing from it, is not only the most gifted poetically of those who have come after: he has had all his life the same fundamental sense that poetry ought to be the servant of a cause, a beacon to 'poor humanity's afflicted will', not a mere display of ornamental skill.

Between the two a curious medley of contrasts and resemblances

can be noted. In point of diction they are not very far apart, though Faiz has written verse only in Urdu, being no more drawn to Persian as a medium than, at the other extreme, to Panjabi. At certain moments he has achieved a striking simplification of expression (as in no. 11, a landmark of its period); more often his pen is dipped as deep as Iqbal's in Persian and Arabic. Even while he, along with most of the Muslim progressive writers of his generation, adhered as Iqbal had done in youth to the ideal of a united India, he was repelled by the prospect held up by Gandhi of a united 'Hindustani' language, a nondescript neither Hindi nor Urdu. There were many different roads by which a Muslim might travel to Pakistan. All the same, a fondness for allusion to things Hindu, even religious, has not left him; and it is worth while to observe that whereas Iqbal's great model and master was Rumi, the Persian mystical poet of mediæval Asia Minor, Faiz has looked up above all to Ghalib, the arch-poet of modern Muslim India.

In the colouring of their work there is the strongest contrast between Iqbal and Faiz. At his most natural Iqbal is ardent, impetuous, direct; Faiz more delicately suggestive, and even less easily translated. One paints a picture that seems bathed in sunlight, the other in moonlight. Iqbal's daylight, on the other hand, owes little to our diurnal sun. As Faiz once pointed out in a lecture in London, Iqbal employs surprisingly little imagery of his own, and shows only the scantiest awareness of the physical world about him, no recognition of Nature except in some early poems. To the Western reader, brought up on naturalism, Faiz's own external world may appear stylized enough, like the landscape of a Persian miniature. But his imagery has grown increasingly free and profuse, until some of his later poems almost seem to dissolve in it.

Of his human environment each was keenly aware, each in his own way a 'committed' poet. Both combined older modes, elegiac, romantic, introspective, with a fresh note of criticism of society, and desire to alter it. Because they were animated by faith in something fresh and great, some cause above themselves for which to enlist public support, both were able to make use of the symbols their readers knew by heart, but to lend them fresh significance. Some contemporaries of Faiz, more negative and individualistic in outlook, were inclined to abandon them, in favour of a more direct and 'modern' handling of their subjects. For the poet appealing to collective emotions the symbols could still prove their value, clothing in familiar garb ideas too new and raw to be transformed immediately into poetry; though both Iqbal and Faiz might resort to them more sparingly as time went on.

Both frequently call up the traditional company of listeners, Iqbal—whose public recitations were confined as a rule to religious or political gatherings—assuming at times the figure of the spiritual leader seated among his disciples: Faiz haunted, in spite of republicanism, by whispers of long-crumbled palace halls. Iqbal was fond of the standard image of moth and candle, though his moth might now be a labouring class foolishly bowing before the idols of the rich.<sup>16</sup> Faiz has been loyal to that of garden and rosebed, a rosebed now as likely as not to typify the masses, the poor, buffeted by the rude winds of tyranny. In these literary parks the flowers are always crimson, and their colour carries overtones of passion, suffering, wounds. A comparison would be worth making with the swain and shepherdess and pipe of Europe's pastoral convention. A closer one would be with the use of peacock, deer, red flower, to symbolize longing for the lover in the Panjab Hill paintings of the eighteenth century.<sup>17</sup> In poetry the Western reader may be in danger of visualizing symbols too literally, and may do well to make an effort to see them from an indistinct distance, as things transmuted into thoughts, half-way towards the condition of the fossil imagery that all languages are strewn with.

Iqbal moved towards a Love that was a disembodied force, that meant also idealism, or enthusiasm, or *élan vital*. Faiz began with the stereotype of the cruel beauty, but a stable marriage, and domestic life of more modern pattern than Iqbal's, carried him towards an image more human and companionable, though still only elusively suggested by comparison with Western love-poetry, and, like the ghostly Saqi, interchangeable with other things, not now divine, but Cause, or Country, or People. It has been noted that Faiz has far more than Iqbal of a sort of 'masochism' habitual in Urdu poetry, which seeks the pangs of love rather than its fulfilment.<sup>18</sup> Iqbal's pan-Islamic thinking brought to his mind memories of the Muslim as world-conqueror; Faiz was concerned with the Muslim of his own times, as an underdog, and in some manner was able to fuse sympathy for hard-pressed labourer or peasant with the traditional griefs of the lover. In a society long accustomed to frown on free choice both in love and in political allegiance, each of these represented risk and adventure; and in Faiz's prison poems especially, separation from a woman and from a movement, or homeland, merge into one another. A Western reader may feel that this variant of the old symbolism succeeds better in a short piece like no. 25 than when elaborated as in no. 29; though this may be found interesting as an illustration, and perhaps as a further warning against figures of speech being taken too concretely. In like fashion wine may stand

now for political truth or insight instead of spiritual, madness for the enthusiast's self-sacrifice in a progressive cause. Amid this readjustment or reshuffling, readers the best qualified may disagree about precise shades of intended meaning, as happened with some lines in no. 19 when it came out; or they may discover esoteric messages not intended at all by the author, whose poems are sometimes meant to mean no more than they say. No. 49, for instance, is a pure lyric.

Iqbal and Faiz both looked abroad for ideas as well as at home. Their Panjab has for ages been receiving from outside, from Persian, Greek, Turk, Briton, and yet has remained itself. Iqbal was only going to one more source when he brought Nietzsche into the Panjab, and Faiz when he helped to introduce Marx. Iqbal wrote of the tribulations of the poor majestically, as if looking down on them from heaven; he preached revolt of downtrodden peoples, relief of downtrodden classes by wealthier men infused with Islamic fraternalism. Faiz belonged to a generation that examined poverty at close range, with its dirt and its sores, and he learned its problems in social, economic detail. Still, Iqbal too had known of Marx, and paid tribute to him in more than one poem, and Faiz on his side has written verses religious in complexion.<sup>18</sup> It was not unfitting that in 1968 he helped to design a documentary film about the life-work of Iqbal, even if this aroused some conservative criticism by its emphasis on the radical notes in the elder poet's writings. Iqbal was an Islamic thinker with a strong dash of what has been coming to be known as 'Islamic socialism'; Faiz might be called a socialist with a groundwork of Muslim culture and feeling. He is indeed one of those many 'cultural Muslims' in many lands today who think of themselves not as religious in a specific sense but as heirs to a long experiment in civilization, and to a great ethical tradition which always did homage to truth and justice and to the upright man prepared to uphold them at all hazards. Pakistan's chance of growing into a nation both truly modern and genuinely founded on an Islamic past will depend, it may appear at least to an observer outside, more on the contribution of such 'cultural Muslims' than on anything else.

Iqbal and Faiz both belong very deeply to the Panjab, and when Faiz goes abroad it does not take long for him to begin to wish himself back in his own country. But both needed a world-vision to sustain them, a hope wider than their native limits, those of a province richer hitherto in promise than in fulfilment. Iqbal after his early travels shut himself up most of the time in a small room whence his thoughts could range abroad unchecked, and draw

nourishment from an Orient that he half saw, half imagined. Faiz has had for a second or spiritual home the socialist lands, the socialist world movement, the peace movement. Disappointments with progress abroad as well as at home were bound to befall both. And though both achieved fame in their own country early, each often had occasion to feel misunderstood or isolated. Significantly, more than one poem by each of them has the title 'Solitude', and one of those by Iqbal<sup>19</sup> and one by Faiz (no. 8) are among their very finest. Between these two the contrast also is revealing. Iqbal's is in Persian. He is alone in a universe that still contains a God, though a distant and silent one; Faiz's knows only human beings, and they too are distant and silent. Iqbal as in many short and some long poems pictures himself as a traveller voyaging across immensities of space; Faiz is shut up in a deserted banqueting-hall, and it is night.

It may be remarked that in all this realm of poetry *death* is a far less prominent theme than it has always been in Europe. Exile, separation, loneliness, take its place, in a society more closely knit, in spite of wealth and poverty, than any known to the morbidly individualistic Europe of Horace, or Shakespeare, or our own day; a society of which the literary group gathered round patron or Saqi was the microcosm. Not the disappearance from life, but the banishment of the member from the group, has had, here as in Chinese poetry, the deepest poignancy. In other poems Faiz calls up imaginary companions to converse with in solitude, even (in no. 40) a personified loneliness. Two late poems (nos. 52 and 53) are concerned with illness, but what is uppermost in them is still not the thought of death in itself, but that of separation. Illness, like prison, divides and isolates. Social bonds so close-knit have made for social inertia, but there may be discerned in them now the possibility of transition to a new social order, of socialist character, and with this a survival of many values, human and cultural, likely to wither in a long interval of competitive industrialism, as the common man's feeling for poetry has withered in the West.

What relation there should be between artists and public movements has been the most crucial art-problem of our century. In Iqbal's case it may be open to conjecture that the short poems where he was able to fuse intense personal feeling with public themes will outlive his long didactic works. Faiz too at his best, as in poem no. 19, has succeeded in fusing them. But he has been taxed with trying at times too deliberately to be progressive, and writing verse more political than poetical. Some of this criticism may have been captious, but the risk is a real one. Even in some poems of high

quality may be felt a certain faltering at the close, when he seems to try to resolve his discords without quite finding the right key.

He has been saved from becoming merely, or too facilely, a political writer, like so many others, or as Iqbal was too frequently preacher more than poet, by a strong inner resistance, a matter of both temperament and conviction. All imaginative writers are conscious of divided minds, opposing intuitions, and Faiz more than most. Readers have noticed how often in his earlier and middle work his poems turn—like no. 12, or no. 23, originally entitled 'Two Voices'—on a kind of duality, as if he were struggling to reconcile two contradictory visions of life. He is himself an odd mixture, an Oriental mixture, one is tempted to say, of indolence and energy, an inclination to contemplate existence through a cloud of cigarette-smoke and a compulsion to act. To get him to answer a missive is as nearly vain as any human endeavour can be; the 'violent hatred of letter-writing' that Coleridge found in Wordsworth is at least as strong in Faiz. Yet the spirit of the age has drawn him along a path necessarily toilsome, at times perilous.

Artists everywhere in our age, and the age itself in a vaster, more chaotic way, have faced conflicting claims of old and new, present and future, each right in its way; of Utopia and possibility, emotion and reason, worker and intellectual, individual and society. Perhaps by now we have seen enough to conclude that the artist's true function is not to identify himself too closely with one demand or the other, but to mediate or hold the balance between them. And perhaps it is in this direction that instinct and experience have guided Faiz. Some of his fellow-writers, in India and Pakistan as elsewhere, have withdrawn into ivory towers, some have made themselves mouthpieces of political leaders, some have stopped writing. Faiz's inner divisions, painful as they may have been, were a symptom rather of health than of weakness, of civic spirit combined with an artistic sense too strong to let him be swamped by the tidal force of a movement. Like all great and heroic movements the revolution of the twentieth century has been apt, to its own cost as well as theirs, to reduce individual men and women to units in its army, ciphers in its great account. The individual is nothing, the cause everything, proclaimed the Jacobins of 1793, and all world-overturners since then have echoed them. Accident has helped to save Faiz from being submerged; the absence in his own country of any strong organization with aims akin to his, which has thrown him most of the time on his own resources.

Two other magnets, literary conservatism and innovation, have

exerted their rival pulls on him. His style has been altering in recent years, and becoming in some features more experimental. He has resorted fairly frequently, as he never did in earlier days, to what in Urdu is called 'free verse', which means not prose chopped up into odd lengths, as in English, but lines of varying length in one regular metre, an escape from the end-stopped couplet that has so often shackled invention. This more open manner has been accompanied by a wider choice of subjects, and a more flexible imagery. In other ways—whether or not belief in a planned pattern of society is related to respect for organized patterns of verse—he has remained more conservative, and his influence has been against neglect of the technical side of his art. 'Faiz has brought respectability back to grammatical writing', a friend wrote lately, and has rescued some of his juniors from a morass of incomprehensibility.<sup>20</sup> He himself told me some years ago that he thought the rhyme-schemes in his first volume had been too free and easy, and made young imitators careless; for this reason, and in order to give each poem a more sharply defined form, he had set himself to adhere more closely to fixed sequences. Innovation for its own sake has not attracted him; he has not translated foreign verse into Urdu, as some have done, and has shown no curiosity about possible new metres.

All this may give his mode of writing something of an old-fashioned look, by comparison with the more westernized idiom of so many writers up and down the world who have so obviously read T. S. Eliot and his successors. But such writers are apt to be intellectuals without roots in their native soil, whereas a style like that of Faiz, even though in origin feudal and aristocratic, can awaken a responsive thrill in the common man. No doubt it will be called on to make further changes, in his and other hands, as time goes on. The old symbolism may be approaching the end of its useful life, having performed a final service by helping to launch modern ideas that can now take their own poetic course. Some other time-honoured conventions have more obviously had their day. Complaints have been heard of too much antiquated phraseology, of poets shutting their eyes to the life around them, the changing seasons, the sun and wind and rain of the Panjab. Formerly the old dream-pictures of Persia and Turkestan could serve to express for Indo-Muslims their sense of being a community in, but not of, India. Now most of these Muslims have their own sub-Himalayan homeland, they may well want to hear from their poets about their own skies, flowers, lives, instead of those of the half-mythical native land of their half-mythical ancestors. To go on harping on too many old strings will be as fatal to Urdu poetry as to plunge into unintelligible modernism,

and leave it to linger as a mere ghost of the past, haunting the hall of Faiz's poem where no-one will ever come any more.

Urdu and its poetry have had a strange history; what the future holds for them must be uncertain. It is not out of the question that Faiz may prove to have been the last important figure. Over the language itself a question-mark hangs, though the same is true in one sense or another of every language, including the one most used and most misused, English. Urdu began as the speech of the camp, and became that of the city, but it has still to show that it can become that of a nation, or with what functions—for Pakistan like India is and must remain a multilingual country. In the western Panjab, today its literary stronghold, there are some who are turning their minds to Panjabi as the proper medium for poetry. To hold its ground Urdu will need to show itself able to produce more, and more varied, prose, as well as poetry still able to thrill. So far, in the two decades since independence, its progress has been halting, and poetry—it seems generally agreed among those competent to judge—has not on the whole maintained the standard achieved before 1947. Some gifted writers have flagged, new talents of distinction have been few.

Of the older group, Faiz has gone on writing, and gone on developing, and now links his generation with the younger one where his most responsive hearers are to be found, captivated partly by his romantic note, partly by his idealism. Much remains for him to do; he has done enough to be looked upon as the most significant Urdu poet, in Pakistan or India, of the time since Iqbal, and he and his poems will keep their place as a strand in the history that our epoch has been weaving.