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# The Legacy of the "Misfit" Poet: Repositioning Majīd Amjad in the Modern Urdu Canon

کٹی ہے عمر بہاروں کے سوگ میں امجد
مری لحد پہ کھلیں جاوداں گلاب کے پھول

My life, Amjad, was spent mourning the spring seasons
May roses bloom eternally on my grave! [1]

When one thinks of poets who gave a new direction to Urdu poetry in the modern era, the names of Faiz Ahmad Faiz, Nūn Mīm Rāshid and Mīrāji always come to mind.[2] In the ghazal, the slightly younger, extremely talented, Nasir Kazmi (1924–72) began to make a mark soon after Partition.[3] These poets regardless of their politico-literary affiliations ushered in a trend broadly called "the new poetry." The "new poets" pushed the conventional boundaries of Urdu verse to include a variety of subjects that were personal and unorthodox, such as a more direct engagement with love and loss. The loss could be the loss of freedom, and the love could be a yearning for the past. They refurbished and expanded the range of classical metaphors and popularized styles that were idiosyncratic, even whimsical. These poets mostly favored the *nazm* as a mode of expression because it allowed more space for experimentation. In this cluster of dazzling poets, a name that often gets overlooked is that of Majīd Amjad. He was perceived as a "backyard poet," an ascetic, who pottered around with subjects in which a material world was not interested.

According to the distinguished literary critic Muzaffar Ali Syed:

> Majīd Amjad's poetry is undoubtedly an important civilizational (*tehzībi*) force of our time. But perversely, we have made his inconspicuousness and deprived life the focus of our conversation, and not made any concrete effort to measure the spaciousness and depth of his poetry. Perhaps our own shortcomings and denials were the obstacles in the path. **[4]**

Syed's observation is perceptive; it opens prickly questions surrounding the dynamics of canonization, and of literary politics, that were and continue to be embroiled with social status. Why did Majīd Amjad not receive the kind of recognition, the prominence that he rightfully deserved? Why is he not placed along with his great contemporaries, Faiz, Mīrāji and Rāshid? Was his poetry lacking in depth and complexity compared to the big three? In this paper, I will examine the issue of Amjad's marginalization through a detailed examination of the critical writings on his poetry and follow up with my own analysis of his work. I will also address the popular notion whether Amjad's bashfulness and small-town location played any role in his being relegated to the back row of poets who formed the canon of modern poetry. My methodology will stitch together Amjad's background with his poetry in an effort to applaud his existential, experiential modes of creative writing that were not common in Urdu. [5]

**1.**

Abdul Majīd Amjad (1914–74) was born in Jhang, a small ancient town in Punjab on 29th June 1914. His parents were separated when he was two years old, due to a family quarrel and Amjad was brought up at the home of his maternal grandparents.**[6]** His grandfather and maternal uncle were both scholars of repute who ensured that Amjad received a good grounding in classical as well as modern education. After passing high school with honors he went to Lahore for further studies. Upon graduation in 1934, his first sustainable job was

as editor of a weekly journal '*Urooj* that was published from Jhang.[7] Amjad enjoyed the challenge of work that a newspaper demanded and thrived in a job he liked. He had begun writing poetry, some of which was published in the weekly.[8] The weekly flourished under his editorship but an unfortunate incident led to his dismissal. The circumstances under which his job ended are worth narrating here because they shed light on his personality. While Amjad was at an out of town mushā'ira, the material he had earmarked for the forthcoming issue was not sufficient to fill the pages. His assistant panicked, took some of Amjad's poems without permission and used them as fillers. One particular poem titled "Qaisariyat," (Oppressive Governance) that was published on the front page was strongly anti-colonial and annoyed the proprietors who fired Amjad for publishing them.[9] Even though the poems had been published without his permission, Amjad took the blame without a word. The year was 1940. A tumultuous period in India's freedom struggle was unfolding – the Second World War had begun, and the young, sensitive poet was out of work, moving from one job to the next until 1944, when he qualified in an exam for the position of inspector of civil supplies in the Department of Food and Agriculture. After a few years of itinerant postings, he settled in Sāhiwāl, or Montgomery as it was known then, preferring a small town over the big city and spent the rest of his life there.[10]

The unassuming, unambitious, reticent, reclusive Amjad did not belong to any literary group, fashionable or otherwise. Younger contemporaries fondly remember his slight figure riding a bicycle to work in the morning and returning in the evening to hang out with a group of local poet-friends at the Café De Rose. Later on, he preferred the Stadium Hotel. He lived alone. His marriage to a cousin had failed and there were no offspring.[11] Cycling down Canal Road to his office every day, Amjad was deeply attached to the stately trees that flanked the canal. The pain he felt at the cutting

down of those trees for urban expansion was poured into one of the most achingly personal poems on deforestation that I have ever read.[12]

**توسیعِ شہر**

بیس برس سے کھڑے تھے جو اس گاتی نہر کے دوار
جھومتے کھیتوں کی سرحد پر بانکے پہرے دار
گھنے سہانے چھاؤں چھڑکتے بور لدے چھتنار
بیس ہزار میں بک گئے سارے ہرے بھرے اشجار
جن کی سانس کا ہر جھونکا تھا ایک عجیب طلسم
قاتل تیشے چیر گئے ان ساونتوں کے جسم

**Urban Expansion**

They who had stood at the gate of this singing stream for twenty years
Elegant sentinels at the borders of rolling fields
Agreeably dark, shade sprinkling, fruit laden, tall
For twenty thousand were sold away all the verdurous trees
They whose very gusty breath was strange magic
Murderous axes came and split the bodies of those heroes

Although Sāhiwāl was a provincial town, it was not exactly in the literary backwaters as assumed by some critics who attribute Amjad's marginalization to his being too far from the metropolis Lahore.[13] According to Israr Zaidi, who was a frequent visitor there in the 1940s and 50s:

> Montgomery was only second to Lahore as a center for learning and literature (*'ilm-o-adab*).[14]

A very distinguished, younger poet, Munīr Niāzi (1928–2006) was also living there at the time.[15] Niāzi launched a weekly journal, *Sat Rang* (Seven Colors), from Sahiwāl in 1949. Amjad collaborated with Niāzi in the publication until Niāzi moved on to Lahore. Zafar Iqbal (1933–), another younger, talented poet from nearby Okāṛa, often came to Sāhiwāl to participate in the *mushā'iras* and

*mahfils* that were organized there. All three shared the strong, earthy undercurrent of the Punjabi language and culture. Although the bond with Punjabi is evident in their poetry, yet they were very different kind of poets. Munīr Niāzi's images are drawn from childhood memories of an idyllic past that dwells amidst breathtaking natural beauty and invokes an aura of mystery. His poems create a sentimental bonding, an invitation into a nebulous zone of reminiscence. Zafar Iqbal is an admirable ghazal poet who transformed the ghazal to suit the rhythm of modern life. He infused the ghazal with a vocabulary and lightness of style that places him on par with classical ghazal poets. Amjad's poetry has a wide range, but is for the most part, intensely personal and subjective. A deep sense of loneliness and melancholy pervades large sections of his *ouvre*. I will discuss this further in my analysis of his poetry. Besides Munīr Niāzi and Zafar Iqbal, two other prominent writers Mustafa Zaidi and Ahmad Hamesh lived in Sāhiwāl for some years and added greatly to the literary ambience of the place.[16]

In a culture that assigns an immense value to social and familial ties it is not surprising that so much has been written about Amjad's lonely existence; his diffident persona, unpretentious lifestyle, his un-ironed clothes, lack of worldly possessions, and above all his forlorn funeral. One account began:

> Majīd Amjad was a thin, fragile bodied gentleman with bright eyes that could be seen from afar behind the thick lenses of his round framed glasses. He wore wide bottom trousers that were never ironed. His shirt was un-ironed as well. He pedaled so slowly on his bicycle that pedestrians could easily overtake him…He lived in a small, two-room government housing. He spoke very softly; his voice had none of the roar (*ghan-garaj*) of Munīr Niāzi.[17]

Many of the short memoirs I came across in the commemorative volumes published some years after his death

mentioned his reclusive, idiosyncratic lifestyle and ended with a pathetic description of his funeral. The conspicuous lack of family to make funeral arrangements and mourn his death was obviously very shocking for his peers. In the months leading to his death Amjad was very ill and nearly destitute. His eyesight which had always been bad had deteriorated to the point where he could barely see at night. He had retired two years before but not received his pension.

While reading these memoirs/accounts that build on the solitary life of Amjad, one has to bear in mind that we are talking about a poet who was published in all the important journals of his time. Many of his nazms/poems had spilled out of the reified pages of journals to the general public and his voice had begun to reach the mainstream of Urdu poetry. But apparently, Amjad had continued to suffer in a culture where the poetry was not easily separated from the personality of the poet. In mushā'iras the audience was not warmed by his hesitant voice and hands that visibly shook while clutching the piece of paper on which his poem was written. His reluctance to step into the limelight isolated him severely from prominent literary circles of his time. As the eminent fiction writer Intizār Husain wrote movingly in his tribute:

> Chekhov had said that loneliness in the journey of creativity is a painful experience. In our times there was such a poet who had the guts to bear this excruciating pain. Far from literary hubs, indifferent to movements, uninvolved in slogans, theoretical discussions, he made his home in Sāhiwāl and wrote poetry. This lonely man's creative journey came to an end and the journey of his life too. No one bothered to peek onto the deserted house from where this uncomfortably thin man occasionally ventured on his bicycle, slowly, crawling to the Stadium Hotel. Now the door to the house is shut, the cycle is leaning against a wall, the man is sleeping; sleeping forever. Urdu poetry has lost Majīd Amjad.[18]

But the tragic circumstances of Majīd Amjad's death seem to have awakened the Urdu literary community into action. There were a large number of unpublished poems and material lying in his apartment that was gathered and published a couple of years after his death.[19] Subsequent editions of his collected works (Kulliyāt) followed; special editions of journals were brought out brimming with tributes and critical assessment of his poetry. The attention given to Amjad posthumously has helped in revealing many dimensions of this reclusive poet. Because the first collection was titled *Shab-i Rafta* (Nights Past), the second was simply titled, *Shab-i Rafta ke Ba'd* (After *Shab-i Rafta* 1976).

**2**.

When Amjad published his first collection of poems, *Shab-i Rafta* in 1958, it was greeted with mixed reviews: some exuberant, others dismissive. Prominent contemporary poet Faiz Ahmad Faiz is reported to have remarked in an interview (the interviewer saw him holding the book) that he had heard people raving about *Shab-i Rafta* but found it disappointing. "There is nothing in it." But on another occasion Faiz is reported to have said that Majīd Amjad has written everything there was to say.[20]

*Shab-i Rafta* begins with *Harf-i avval* (First Word), a poignant, somewhat long poem by the way of preface; a poem in which the poet has poured out his struggle with thoughts, words and meaning; it is an overview of the 20 years spent in poetic endeavor, of the days and nights spent in finding language, mastering phrases. The poem with its flowing rhythm, direct style and accessible metaphors evokes an emotional thrill of expectation in the reader. *Harf-i avval* broaches his innermost desire: the need for self-expression. I am taking the liberty of quoting at length from this poem because it represents the poet's feelings, consciousness, the arc of ups and downs, in the early period of his career. The poetry is succulent, full of the music of words, combining thought with emotion in a romantic tilt. Amjad restates a vital question

that informs all creative writing particularly poetry: are words and their meanings separate, or are they the same – is what the poet is saying through words the same as the meaning of the poem? Do words do justice to thought? *(sūrat-i maʿni, maʿni-i sūrat*).[21]

**حرفِ اول**

دردوں کے اس کوہِ گراں سے
میں نے تراشی نظم کے ایواں
کی اِک اِک سل،
اِک اِک سوچ کی حیراں مورت
...
تجربہ ہائے زیست کے آرے
...
تلخیِ صد احساس کے تیشے
ان کے مقابل
حرفِ زبوں اک کانچ کی لعبت
...
عمر اسی الجھن میں گذری
کیا شے ہے یہ حرف و بیاں کا
عقدۂ مشکل؟
صورتِ معنی؟ معنیِ صورت؟
اکثر گردِ سخن سے نہ ابھرے
...
وادیِ فکر کی لیلاؤں کے
جھومتے محمل
طے نہ ہوا ویرانہ حیرت!

گرچہ قلم کی نوک سے ٹپکے
کتنے ترانے کتنے فسانے
لاکھ مسائل
دل میں رہی سب دل کی حکایت!
...
بیس برس کی کاوشِ پیہم
سوچتے دن اور جاگتی راتیں
ان کا حاصل
ایک یہی اظہار کی حسرت!

**First Words**

From this heavy mountain of pain
I carved the arches of poetry
One stone at a time
Each thought an image of bewilderment!
...
With saws fashioned from experiences past
...
Axes of a hundred harsh emotions, and,
Facing them
Ineffective words—a marionette of glass!
...
Life was spent in this dilemma
This thing about words and expression
The difficult knot?
Form/image of meaning? Meaning of form?
Often from the dust of speech did not emerge
...
In the valley where creativity played
The swaying camel litters
The wilderness of wonder was not traversed
Although there flowed from the my pen's tip
So many songs, so many stories
A million issues

But my heart's secrets remained in my heart

…

Twenty years of continuous struggle
Of days lost in thought, sleepless nights
And the return:
This longing for expression!

As we read the poems of *Shab-i Rafta* we find that very often Amjad's protagonist is not different from the poet's angst filled self. The protagonist's sorrows are Amjad's own. The tortured "self" that is poured into his poems is not a self that can be easily universalized. There is no attempt to explain or go deep into the psyche of the self either. While the poetry strikes one as honest or heartfelt, it is nonetheless an intensely subjective vision. A well-known poem is "Autograph." The subject of the poem is quite original. A group of young, pretty girls are waiting to get the autograph of a famous cricketer, a bowler. They are excited, smiling in anticipation; the bowler arrives and is surrounded by the lovely girls. At this moment something clicks in the poet's mind. He had been watching the scene unfold but suddenly he becomes envious of the cricketer. The poet also realizes that he has no aspirations to give autographs, nothing to leave behind for posterity. A reader can assume that Amjad is commenting on the comparative low status of a writer versus a cricketer. Was the speaker in the poem jealous of the cricketer? The poem starts off with a lot of energy and zest, and then tapers into a doleful finale.[22]



**آٹو گراف**

کھلاڑیوں کے خود نوشت دستخط کے واسطے
کتابچے لیے ہوئے
کھڑی ہیں منتظر… حسین لڑکیاں

…

مہیب پھاٹکوں کے ڈولتے کواڑ چیخ اُٹھے
اُبل پڑے اُلجھتے بازوؤں، چٹختی پسلیوں کے پُرہراس قافلے

گرے، بڑھے، مڑے بھنور ہجوم کے

**Autograph**

For the sake of cricketer's autographs,
Clutching autograph books,
Pretty girls … stand waiting

…

The massive, undulant gates creaked;
An eager swarm of tangled limbs, snapping ribs boiled over
A falling, moving, turning, whirlpool crowd

According to Riāz Ahmad who has analyzed this poem verse by verse, the poem has a lot of passion and force but ends on a bitter note.[23] The second verse (quoted above), brilliantly encapsulates the urgency of the waiting crowd, expressed through random movements in a small space. The restless energy boils over when the gates open. This contrasts strikingly with the first verse where the waiting girls are tranquil. The next three verses show the poet as a perceptive observer who is admiring the youthful beauty of the girls. When the bowler enters in the sixth verse the tone of the poem changes:

وہ باؤلر ایک، مہ وشوں کے جمگھٹوں میں گھر گیا
وہ صفحۂ بیاض پر بصد غرور کلکِ گوہریں پھری
حسین کھلکھلاہٹوں کے درمیاں وکٹ گری

The bowler was surrounded by a cluster of moon faced maidens
On the notebook's page the pearly pen moved haughtily
Amid the beautiful sound of laughter, a wicket fell

The tone becomes tense, almost foreboding as the bowler puts his signature with a verve and a "wicket falls." We are abruptly pulled from the cluster of youth and beauty to a jarring reflection of the poet's pathetic state. He is unknown, but he has no desire to be known or leave a legacy. The slate

of his heart is devoid of names or images. What made the poet move so quickly from one emotion to another? This self-mocking, self-elegizing suggests a depleted morale. A brilliant poem ends as if all he had to say was reduced to nothing.

میں اجنبی، میں بے نشاں
میں پابہ گل
نہ رفعتِ مقام ہے، نہ شہرتِ دوام ہے
یہ لوحِ دل! یہ لوحِ دل
نہ اس پہ کوئی نقش ہے، نہ اس پہ کوئی نام ہے

I am an outsider, faceless,
With dusty feet
No desire for an exalted place, or everlasting fame
On my heart's slate, this heart's slate!
Nothing is engraved, no names are there

Riāz Ahmad writes that the poet is consumed by a sense of inferiority; compared to the successful cricketer who is sought after by the girls, he feels like a humiliated, crushed person. Unlike the autograph books inscribed with the cricketer's signature, his heart's page is blank. Although the verse by itself is very moving, it does seem like an appendage, and breaks the poem into two somewhat unconnected emotional segments. I agree with Riāz Ahmad that the last verse is so subjective that it fails to communicate with the reader. A good poem should communicate with the reader. One of the important characteristics of the modern nazm is that it draws the reader to share the experience being described. The individuality of experience, its expression in words, gives the modern nazm a continuity that marks it as different from the classical nazm. In Majid Amjad's poem, the poet's feelings become almost claustrophobic; the glut of emotion can shut off the reader. Nonetheless, despite its flaws, the poem is easily singled out by its unique subject, spontaneous rhyme, stunning imagery and innovative phrases.

Two remarkable poems from *Shab-i Rafta*, "Panvāṛi"

(Betel seller) and "Kuṅvāṅ" (Well), illustrate another aspect of Amjad's thought: the relentlessness of time on the human condition. Below is an excerpt from "Panvāṛi":[24]

**پنواڑی**

بوڑھا پنواڑی اس کے بالوں میں مانگ ہے نیاری
آنکھوں میں جیون کی بجھتی اگنی کی چنگاری

...

عمر اس بوڑھے پنواڑی کی پان لگاتے گذری
چونا گھولتے چھالیا کاٹتے کتھ پگھلاتے گذری
سگریٹ کی خالی ڈبیوں کے محل سجاتے گذری
کتنے شرابی مشتریوں سے نین ملاتے گذری
چند کسیلے پتوں کی گتھی سلجھاتے گذری

...

اور پھر اس کے بعد نہ پوچھو کھیل جو ہونی کھیلی
پنواڑی کی ارتھی اٹھی، بابا، اللہ بیلی

**Betel Seller**

The old betel seller, his hair parted with elegance
A spark of life's dying embers twinkling in his eyes

...

The life of this old betel seller was spent in preparing betel
Mixing lime, slicing betel nut, melting *kaththa*
Building castles from empty cigarette boxes
Looking in the eye of so many drunken customers
Untangling knots of a few bundles of astringent leaves

We have here an unusual subject for a poem; a man who makes a living selling *pān*, cigarettes etc. in a small roadside booth. The humble accoutrements of his trade are his prized possessions. The aging pān-seller has spent a lifetime snipping betel nut, stirring lime, melting *kaththa*. He has built

castles from empty cigarette cartons, dealt with drunken customers, untangled the bundles of betel leaf; ultimately the inevitable death takes him away. The choice of a humble subject may remind us of the Progressive-Marxist poetry in Urdu, but the approach here is entirely different. There is a strong empathy between poet and the subject; there is no posturing or lecturing about poverty. The idea is to reflect on human existence. The poem has an embedded, effectual rhythm to convey the slow erosion of the man's life, the mundane tasks he performs and the emptiness of his dreams. The first verse has a springy rhyme*: niyāri, chiṅgāri, almāri, sāri, supāri,* which shows how the old paan-seller still has a spark in him. The second verse with its repetition of *guzri: lagatē guzri, pighlātē guzri,* and so on, starts to build the cadence of a monotonous existence. The third verse rhymes *pahēli, jhēli, undēli, khēli, bēli,* signals the winding up of the innings. The last verse is a commanding crescendo of sounds very much like the frenzied crescendo that heralds the end of a raga: *jhanan, jhanan, than, than,* dovetailed with soothing rhymes: *lahrāē, kho jāē* etc. The last line of the poem reminds one of the *raga dīpak*; the swansong:

ایک پتنگا دیپک پر جل جائے، دوسرا آئے

One moth burns on the candle's flame, another comes

The poem is beautiful; it is complete; I would not call it profound, but it evokes an empathy that lingers.

The poem "Kuṅvaṅ" (Well) is a metaphor for the merciless churning wheel of time.[25] It's a bleak view, a sour song. Once again the perspective is new and the poem's rhythm is remarkable. Noticeably long lines are punctuated to create the musical effect of the water wheel being churned by oxen. But the oxen are weary, worn down by the heavy chains, ruthless whipping, unending labor.

**کنواں**

کنواں چل رہا ہے! مگر کھیت سوکھے پڑے ہیں نہ فصلیں نہ خرمن نہ دانہ
نہ شاخوں کی باہیں نہ پھولوں کے مکھڑے نہ کلیوں کے ماتھے نہ رت کی جوانی
گذرتا ہے کیاروں کے پیاسے کناروں کو یوں چیرتا، تیز خوں رنگ پانی
کہ جس طرح زخموں کی دکھتی تپکتی تہوں میں کسی نیشتر کی روانی

ادھر دھیری دھیری
کنویں کی نفیری
ہے چھیڑے چلی جارہی اک ترانہ
پراسرار گانا

**Kuṅvāṅ**

The well is running, but the fields are dry; no crops, no stacks of harvest, no grain
No arms of stems, no faces of flowers, foreheads of buds, no season's youthful air
The water flows slicing the borders of thirsting beds, sharp, blood colored water
Like some knife carving through layers of throbbing, pulsing wounds
While here, softly, leisurely,
The well's clarinet,
Sings a lilting song
A mystery song

It would be unfair to say that self-absorption and melancholy are the only sources of Amjad's poetry in this period. Some notable poems that break the mold are "Manto" and "Maqbara-i Jahāṅgīr" (Jahāṅgīr's Mausoleum). "Manto," written in 1952 at the great fiction writer Manto's request, presents Amjad an occasion to show his hidden alter ego.[26] Although Amjad wrote about the oppressiveness of existence, he did not rebel against it. Manto is the rebel who is not afraid to accept or denounce the ugliness and squalor of the world as it is; who defies conformity to social norms and rudely

awakens the sluggish conscience of a subjugated society. Perhaps Amjad longed to be as brash in penetrating the psyche of his readers as Manto was. The "Manto" poem could be a fantasy of his self. The last line strikes a majestic, powerful, open ended note: It reverberates the sharp sounds of a whiplash: *tākh-taṛākh*! Who is cracking the whip? Is it Manto? Or is it the world he has upset with his barbs?

**منٹو**

جب وہ خالی بوتل پھینک کے کہتا ہے:
دنیا تیرا حسن یہی بدصورتی ہے!
دنیا اس کو گھورتی ہے
…
لے آیا بن پوچھے اپنے آپ
عینک کے برفیلے شیشوں سے چھنتی نظروں کی چاپ
کون ہے یہ گستاخ؟
تاخ، تڑاخ!

**Manto**

When he tosses an empty bottle and declares:
World! This ugliness is your beauty!
The world glares at him
…
Who brought in unasked
This lash of a gaze shimmering through the frosty lens of spectacles!
Who is this impudent one?
*Tākh-taṛākh*

**3.**

While Amjad's poetry had come a long way from his early efforts, a significant change of tone and technique becomes apparent in the poems after 1958. Whether it can be attributed to the romantic interlude in his life could be an open question. But it must be noted that the presence of Charlotte

(spelt in Urdu as شالاط by Amjad and others), a German woman who spent a brief but intense three months with the poet is expressed through some beautiful poems that are entirely different in mood from the poems in *Shab-i Rafta*.[27] Wazīr Āgha, who has written extensively on Majīd Amjad remarks that the romantic poems Amjad wrote in his early career are simply a longing for a love that he sought; it was "an endless thirst" for a shore that was nowhere to be seen. The poems he wrote after meeting Charlotte are the realization of his longings. The meeting with Charlotte marks a new path in Majīd Amjad's poetry.[28]

Charlotte was studying (or maybe just touring) the ruins of the ancient civilization of Haṛappa near Sāhiwāl when she met Amjad. A relationship blossomed between them.[29] She inspired the poet to translate (for the first time) poems from English to Urdu, which shows that she was interested in poetry.[30] But Charlotte could not stay in Pakistan; she continued onward on her journey. Amjad traveled to Quetta, on the border of Pakistan and Iran to bid farewell to his love. "Quetta tak" (Till Quetta) is a poem written in the train journey back to Sāhiwāl after parting with Charlotte.[31] Although the poems written in the wake of Charlotte's departure are steeped in an emotion so raw, that words are spilling unchecked like tears from Amjad's being, yet they go beyond the personal grief to a wider audience because they resonate with the classical concept of sorrow. Pain is more precious than joy. Sorrow is to be treasured. There is comfort in sorrow. It can give a new meaning to life.

**کوئٹے تک**

صدیوں سے راہ تکتی ہوئی گھاٹیوں میں تم
اک لمحہ آ کے ہنس گئے، میں ڈھونڈتا پھرا
ان وادیوں میں برف کے چھینٹوں کے ساتھ ساتھ
ہر سُو شرر برس گئے، میں ڈھونڈتا پھرا
...

تم دور جا کے بس گئے میں ڈھونڈتا پھرا

...

تری طلب، تجھے پانے کی آرزو، ترا غم

نگہ اٹھی تو زمانے کے سامنے ترا روپ

پلک جھکی تو مرے دل کے روبرو ترا غم

**Till Quetta**

In the valleys slumbering in wait for centuries; you came,
Smiled for a moment and were gone, I searched far and wide
In these valleys with the falling snow
Fire rained everywhere, I searched far and wide

...

You made your home far away, I searched far and wide

...

My desire, the need to find you, the sorrow
When I looked up; I saw your beauty in all places
I lowered my gaze; your sorrow stared at my heart



This nazm, could also be described as two ghazals. The first part when the poet wanders searching for the beloved he knows has gone away, has the *radīf, ḍhūnḍta phira* (kept searching far and wide), that emphasizes the solitude and restlessness of the poet. The second part (*tera gham*) is the bleeding of the sorrow; the wound that will never heal; her fleeting image and the pain that will be reflected in everything from now. Such a direct flow of personal grief is rare in Urdu. More poems followed. "Munich" written on Christmas 1958 is about the tender reunion of Charlotte with her mother when she returns after ten years of travel. Amjad's imagination of the snow covered streets of Munich, the ambience of the holiday season and the lonely mother who does not know that her daughter is on her way has a classic romantic air. But Amjad's description of the meeting between mother and daughter, of the moment when Charlotte puts down the bundle she is carrying

on her head and falls at her mother's feet, turn the poem around to a profound intra-cultural experience. What has Charlotte, a woman of the "first world" to show from her long travel in the East? Among a bunch of touristy gifts is a slender diary filled with poems (*bayāz*) and Amjad's name on it.[32]

Amjad and Charlotte did not know one another's language; they must have communicated in English. But when Amjad writes "Munich" in Urdu, his poem reaches a level of communication that is unique. Amjad finds a new metaphor "snow," that signifies separation, beauty, loneliness.

**میونخ**

دس برس کے طویل عرصہ کے بعد
آج وہ اپنے ساتھ کیا لائی؟
روح میں، دیس دیس کے موسم!
بزمِ دوراں سے کیا ملا اس کو
...
ٹھیکری اک مہنجودارو کی
ایک نازک بیاض پر، مرا نام
کون سمجھے گا، اس پہیلی کو؟

**Munich**

After ten long years
What has she brought with her today?
The seasons of different places in her spirit;
What did she get from her travels?
...
A shard from Mohinjodāṛo
A slender notebook with my name
Who will understand this riddle?

Before 1958, for example in "Autograph," Amjad's image of his self is one of tragic mockery: Who will remember him? Now, there is hope, even joy that someone will; this affirmation of the self seeps into the poetry that flows from him now.[33] He dilated his style to allow more experience in. His

repertoire widened and he experimented with confidence. I have pointed out that the length of lines, their rhythm, and sound, both musical and harsh is an essential part of his compositions. His subjects were generally unusual and original but now they are complex. They become symbols, metaphors for deeper reflections on the meaning of life and civilization. Amjad is drawn to nature; the experience of nature and life work together in his poems and become a metaphor of the age: an age in which the callousness of human beings is wreaking havoc on fellow humans and nature. His poetry is close to earth; its images are drawn not from ambitious projects and formulaic ideologies of change but from moments in daily life that are to be treasured: a bird's plumage in flight, its song, a branch trailing flowers, children walking to school, rice fields brimming with water or parched for rain, the list could go on. Often Amjad contrasts the soothing touch of nature with the harshness of man-made structures.

Trees have a special place in Amjad's poetry. He revels in their shade, admires their stateliness; trees bring him a solace that soothes his tortured mind. "*Yēh sarsabz pēṛoṅ kē sā'ē*" (The Shade of Leafy Trees) speaks of the healing shade of trees growing beside a tarred, heat filled street:[34]



سیہ تنگ تپتی سڑک پر، یہ سرسبز پیڑوں کے سایے
ہوا اس جگہ کتنی ٹھنڈی ہے، جھونکوں پہ سایوں کے دھبے بھی ہیں
کتنے ٹھنڈے
درختوں کے اس جھنڈ سے جب میں گذرا،
خنک چھاؤں کی ٹکڑیاں سی مرے جسم پر تھرتھرائیں
مرے جسم سے گر کے ٹوٹیں

**The Shade of These Verdurous Trees**

Along the black, narrow, burning hot road, the shade of these verdurous trees!
The breeze here is so cool; the gentle gusts are speckled
With patches of shade; so refreshing

When I passed by the row of these trees,
It seemed as if pieces of cool shade slid over my body,
Broke as they fell …

Majīd Amjad wrote these poems long before 'saving the earth' became a fashionable topic of discussion. During the course of his career, he wrote many beautiful, unsettling poems about nature and the disregard of it by humans. In Urdu, especially in the ghazal, there is not much by the way of "nature poetry." Nature is perceived as a unified idea, a metaphor. For example, the idea of *bahār* (Spring) and *khizaṅ* (Autumn) have predetermined significance. There are a host of stipulated themes (*mazmūns*) and corresponding images associated with these seasons through a system of association of ideas, and certain givens in the worldview that permeates the ghazal. The poet's individual feelings and perceptions about the seasons have almost no space, and little relevance, except in specified circumstances. As Muhammad Hasan Askari has explained, this is because the focus of the ghazal is entirely on human relationships; it is the human rather than the nonhuman that counts in this universe. Askari goes on to elaborate that there are other genres in the classical Urdu and Persian classical poetry where the nonhuman, including the phenomena of nature, has an important space. It is in the *nazm*, that is, the non-ghazal poems of the traditional as well as modern types, where a more meaningful engagement with nature is possible. Iqbal, according to Askari, is the only poet who has shown the ability to relate to nature at deeper and more subjective levels. But Iqbal did not believe that man could learn from nature: perhaps he was afraid of immersing himself in intense emotional moods that nature could evoke in the imaginative soul, so he moved away from nature's territory rather too quickly. Still, his poetry had outbursts of genuine intellectual or emotional responses evoked by the experience of nature.

Amjad's involvement with the environment is not static or superficial. He regards nature as an entity that is alive; he

empathizes with trees, rivers, flowers, and birds, with an emotion that one has towards one's own kin. Nature doesn't evoke orneriness, a feeling of smallness in him. Instead, its beauty inspires him to produce language that can convey the succulence of nature. In the poem quoted at the beginning of this essay, the trees are described as living, breathing bodies, which are wounded and ultimately killed by murderous axes. He refers to the felled trees as piled up dead bodies shrouded by the yellow sunshine. The pain of trees being slaughtered is invoked in a remarkable prose poem "Jalsa," in which a body of *shīsham* trees huddled close together, is flayed with saws.

The valorizing of nature in Amjad's poetry can be understood from at least two standpoints. First, as per his own admission, he admired the Romantic poets, Shelley, Keats and Swinburne.[35] The influence of Romantics on his poetry is discussed at length by Nāsir Abbās Nayyar.[36] According to Nayyar, Amjad's nature poems remind us of Wordsworth. Although Amjad's Pantheism is colored by his own lens; nonetheless, it is strongly present in his nature poems. His subjects are not infused with an ontological or deep spiritual power; instead they are connected with the thread of pain. Sorrow binds them and makes them pure; it is also their destiny. Second, is his view of time, which is almost godlike in its manifestation. Nature and time's march are intertwined in his poems.

Amjad experimented with metrical forms and rhythms. In his later poems he liked to step his lines vertically, making the poem seem draftier and longer. He began to prefer free verse.[37] His vocabulary was eclectic. He deliberately slipped in the occasional odd word. An examination of his poems will reveal a matrix carefully stippled with a regional register of words. There is an earthiness instead of polish in his verse, a sense of grounding with the here and now. Below are a few lines from a poem, "Sab kuch rait" (Everything is Sand), that illustrate the slow cadence of his preferred rhythmic style and vocabulary spiced with local flavour.[38] The poem works at

many levels; the ineffable fate of human existence, the metaphysical notion of reality, the oblique reference to the shift and change in relationships, the allusion to the war that the State launched on its subjects.

**سب کچھ ریت**

سب کچھ ریت، سرکتی ریت
ریت کہ جس کی ابھی ابھی مسمار تہیں تقدیروں کے پلٹاوے ہیں
جل تھل، اتھل پتھل سب، جیسے ریت کی سطحوں پر کچھ مٹتی سلوٹیں،
کیسی ہے یہ بھوری اور بھسمنت اور بھر بھری ریت
جس کے ذرا ذرا سے ہر ذرے میں پہاڑوں کا دل ہے
ابھی ابھی ان ذروں میں اک دھڑکن تڑپی تھی [ ... ]

**All is Sand**

All is sand, shifting sand
Sand that holds the ups and downs of fates destructed just a moment past
Half covered with water, disordered, like disappearing creases on the sand's surface
This brown, burnt to ashes, gritty, sand
Whose every tiny grain contains a mountain's heart;
A heart pulsed in those tiny grains just now…

Because Amjad was meticulous in noting the date of his compositions it is possible to get a sense of what themes he favored at different times. During the last phase of his poetic career Amjad preferred to write in a style that is close to prose poems. He felt that what he had to say should not be lost in the flow of rhythm and rhyme.[39] This is significant because he started out as a poet who used rhyme to great effect. In an interview a couple of years before his death, Amjad mentioned that he did not want his poems to be read without pauses. He deliberately inserted breaks in lines to interrupt the flow and make the reader think. For example, in "Kuch Din Pehle", line breaks are used with good effect. The poem speaks about the pollution on the metaled highways, the dust clouds obscuring

the green paddy fields, the smell of burning rubber and blackened food; but in the end there is hope of rain. Here is an excerpt:[40]

کچھ دن پہلے

پکی سڑک پر صدہا پہیے گردش میں ہیں
کالے رزقوں کے سمت، آگ لگی آوازوں کے ساتھ،
اور
اک میں سوچتا ہوں: ہر ایک شے پر گرد کی تہ کیوں ہے
موت پر بھی،
اور زندگی پر بھی
دل کہتا ہے: شاید مینہ پھر برسے گا

On the metaled highway hundreds of wheels are spinning
Towards blackened food, with voices that are on fire
And
I, alone think. Why. Everywhere, on everything there is a layer of dust;
On death,
And on life too…
My heart says:
Perhaps it will rain again.

The breaking away of Pakistan's East wing is a dark, traumatic period in its history.[41] I am not aware of any other Urdu poet who wrote so many poems on the moral, human aspect of this breakup as Majīd Amjad. A poem that is definitely among his best is "Radio par ēk Qaidi":[42] The poem broaches a raw, politically incorrect subject, the humiliating defeat, the prisoners of war, the numbness of the people's conscience in response to the tragic event.

**On the Radio, A Prisoner Speaks…**

On the radio, a prisoner speaks to me: "I am safe
Listen…I'm alive!"
Brother…who is it that you address…? We are not

living.
Having traded your sacred lives for our glittering existence
We died long ago

We are in this graveyard…
…We don't even steal a look from our graves
What do we know of the mourning lamps
Your heartbreaking cries have lit
In whose light the world reads our names on tombstones now.

**4.**

Muzaffar Ali Syed has drawn attention to a remark made by the noted Urdu critic Salim Ahmad: A society that ostracizes Mīr Taqi Mīr must be an unfortunate one, but what does one think of a society that appreciates Ghalib and Iqbal but ignores Majīd Amjad?**[43]** The answer, according to Syed is that society (muʻashira) lacks the courage to accept cultural/historical continuity, and its attitude towards creative arts is not sympathetic because the prescience of artists makes it uncomfortable for the society; art penetrates their complacency.**[44]** Syed also reminds us of the egregious error by editor Mahmūd Ayāz whose special issue of *Saughāt* focusing on *jadīd nazm* (modern/contemporary non-ghazal poetry) did not include Majīd Amjad.[45]

While Syed's statements are sweeping they do direct us to think about the dynamics of canonization especially of those writers whose work has reached the stature of a classic in our time. The fact that Mahmūd Ayāz, a noted modernist poet and strident editor did not include Majīd Amjad's work cannot be overlooked. It is related to the profile of a contemporary writer in the current media. While Amjad was being published in most of the leading Urdu journals, very few critics were writing about him. With the exception of Muzaffar Ali Syed and Wazīr Āgha, hardly anyone wrote about Amjad's exceptional talent. Muhammad Hasan Askari and Salīm Ahmad did not write about him.[46] Even Shamsur Rahmān

Farūqi, who has written a lot on emerging poets and published Amjad's work in "Shabkhoon," did not write about him. Much of the critical writing (although meager compared to the extensive studies on Faiz and Rāshid) on his work was after his death. Many critics feel that if had he found the opportunity to bring out another collection of poems even a decade after the first, his presence in the literary milieu would have been more pronounced.

I began this essay calling into question why Majīd Amjad is not ranked with Rāshid, Mīrāji and Faiz. Unlike the three modernists, Amjad's poetry did not correspond with the current trends of western literature that were reflected in the work of Rāshid, Mīrāji and Faiz. He is not influenced by Ezra Pound or T.S. Elliott or the French Symbolists like Baudelaire and Mallarme; instead he leans towards the Romantics. Both Rāshīd and Mīrāji are stimulated by Symbolism; their poems are obscure and rich with metaphor. Faiz's combination of classicism with a modern ethos and Marxist ideology struck a chord in the minds of a people struggling with the weight of colonialism. Amjad admired Rāshīd's poetry; they met a few times.[47] There are some phrases they have in common, such as *pa ba gil* (dusty feet), *khirqa posh* (one who is dressed in a patched coat), etc.[48] Such a sharing in fact is an essential part of the literary tradition. Mushā'iras were a great source of fuelling the synergy among contemporary poets. However, Amjad's perspective on society and life is degrees apart from those of Faiz, Rāshid and Mīrāji. His world is microscopic in comparison. Amjad is a describer of the uneventful, of commonplace phenomena. The place and pace of his existence enabled him, indeed empowered him, more so than his peers, to access the personal, the local, turning him into an observer of society, even himself, bringing him closer to nature. On the other hand, localization led to his being ignored by the wider world, the arbiter of canons. How then is a literary canon made? Amjad's treatment by critics suggests that a literary canon represents a closed topography, a stage filled with

"stars," a club in the form of a list, whose members are chosen by lesser mortals, influenced by political correctness, ideology, public opinion, the economics of publishing, and the public profile of the "star." In his case, personal history – his childhood and formative years – the innate oddities of his personality, the choices he made in life, his state of mind, all of these factors played a role in constituting his public profile. Then there are the subjects of his poetry and the status of the poet in society, which appear to have contributed to his being marginalized or ignored by the modern Urdu canon.

Life as it is lived is an important concern of Amjad's poetry. His approach was existential; he avoided indulging in philosophical questions or postulations and preferred to delve in his own experience. But subjective poetry especially of the type that critiqued the moral conscience of a society was not in sync with a culture that did not approve of a heightened sense of alienation or individualism. Amjad did not explicitly rebel against society, but he chafed under its impositions. He may have been unassuming and unambitious, but that was a form of protest against the grasping materialism of societal norms. He did not live with his wife but he never married again; his solitary life was his own. It was self-imposed. I think that the self-elegizing strain that haunts his poetry leaves little space for the reader to enter the poem and share the experience. The sad, crushed man who emerges from the poems of *Shab-i Rafta* has had a tenacious hold in the reader's memory. Here we have a poet whose persona and poetic persona are perceived as mirror images. We have been led to believe that he was forlorn, because he lived alone. We have been repeatedly told that he was not handsome nor well-dressed, vivacious and ambitious. He lived in a two room "quarter." His worldly possessions were few. He died alone. What we forget is that he chose this lifestyle. He was a self-effacing personality, an ascetic who embraced uncomfortable subjects before his time, and tragically. Such factors are unkind to a poet in his lifetime, but as times change so do perceptions. The extraordinary

consciousness and emotional weather that is the hallmark of his poetry does not rust with the incursion of calendar time; it shines. The mellowness of Amjad's poetry grows on us. He was a poet who stepped out of the traditional orbit of Urdu poetry. The uniqueness of his poetic subjects is unparalleled in Urdu: As global warming and a deteriorating environment finally penetrate our consciousness, so does Majīd Amjad.

His birth centenary this year (2014) lends an added urgency to the need to read and disseminate Amjad's poetry to a larger international community.

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## NOTES



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1 Majīd Amjad, *Shab-i Rafta*, (Lahore: Hanīf Printers, 2007), p 158.
This is the last poem, a ghazal in the volume. It was composed on October 5, 1956. All translations of poetry except "Urban Expansion" are mine. While all translations of poetry are problematic and are approximations, they also reflect the word choices made by the translator. The fluid, limpid and musical charm of Amjad's verse is lost in English.

2 Faiz (1911–84), Rāshid (1910–75) and Mīrāji (1912–49), Majīd Amjad (1914–74);
There were other distinguished poets such as Akhtarul Īman, Ali Sardār Ja'fri, Mustafa Zaidi, Qayyūm Nazar, who were close contemporaries of the big three mentioned above.
Faiz and Ja'fri were card holders of the Communist Party of India and actively involved in the Progressive Writers' Movement. Rāshid, Mīrāji and Akhtarul Īman while sympathetic to the Marxist ideology were individualists.

3 Nāsir Kāzmi favored the classical ghazal mode. He wrote extremely moving poetry on Partition and showed that the ghazal could be a medium for contemporary themes.

4 Muzaffar Ali Syed, "Majīd Amjad, Bē Nishāni ki Nishāni," (Majīd Amjad, A keepsake from the one without a trace) in *Majīd Amjad ēk*

*Munfarid Āvāz*, edited and compiled by Khvaja Razi Haider (Karachi, 2013): p. 117. This article has been reproduced many times in a number of publications sometimes with a slightly modified title. I have not been able to locate the journal where it was first published because the reprints do not mention the source.

5 I am grateful to Zafar Syed for reading and commenting on this paper and for sharing Nāsir Abbās Nayyar's article on Amjad. I also benefitted from listening to a two part discussion, "Remembering Majīd Amjad," (YouTube) moderated by Zafar Syed.

6 His father had got a second wife. Amjad remained in touch with his father and his two step brothers.

7 '*Urooj* was published by the District Board and was subsidized by the government.

8 This early poetry was of the conventional type reflecting his classical grounding and was mostly on popular subjects.

9 The nazm was a protest against forcing Indians to serve in the War. A court case followed that dragged on for many years. We must remember that arrests and incarceration was common in those years for even the slightest anti-establishment stance.

10 Sāhiwāl, once a small village in central Punjab on the Karachi Lahore railway was named Montgomery in 1865 after the Lieutenant Governor of Punjab, Sir Robert Montgomery. It was renamed Sāhiwāl in 1967.

11 He was married against his will to his maternal aunt's daughter Hamida Bēgam in 1939. Amjad's mother and aunt both lived at his maternal grandfather's house. He thus grew up with his cousin in the same house. His maternal uncle was a dominating figure in the household. Amjad must have had a suppressed resentment against his uncle although he was fond of Sardār Bēgam, his uncle's daughter. Perhaps the uncle did not approve of his attitude.

12 For the full, original Urdu, see *Shab-i Rafta kē Ba'd* (Lahore, 1976), p 81; for the English translation see, *The Oxford Anthology of Modern Urdu Literature*, Volume One, Mehr Afshān Fārooqi (ed.), (New Delhi, 2008), p 43. The English translation is by Shamsur Rahmān Farūqi and Frances Pritchett.

13 The distance between Sāhiwāl and Lahore is only 169 kilometers.

14 Israr Zaidi lists the names of the famous literary personalities who lived in Montgomery or nearby Okāṛa at the time. His essay on Majīd Amjad, "Mehrbān Qurbatēn, Bē Riya Sā'atēn, Chand Lamhē Majīd Amjad Kē Nām," gives a lively account of the literary scene in Montogomery; in *Majīd Amjad, ēk Mutāli'a*, Hikmat Adeeb (ed.), 1994, p 53.

[15] Munīr Niāzi went on to become a distinctive voice in both Urdu and Punjabi.

[16] Mustafa Zaidi (1930–70) was a prominent poet and officer in Pakistan Civil Services. He published many collections of poetry. He was posted as Deputy Commissioner in Sāhiwāl for some years and organized many mushā'iras and gatherings there. Mustafa Zaidi allegedly committed suicide.

Ahmad Hamesh (–2013) was an unconventional, modernist poet and fiction writer who was from Jhang. He is regarded as among the path breakers of the Urdu modern short fiction. His story "Makkhi" (Fly) is a modern classic. He wrote prose poems as well.

[17] *Majīd Amjad, ēk Mutāli'a*, p 68.

[18] Intizār Husain, "Takhlīqi Safar Mēn ēk Tanha Musāfir,"(A Lonely Traveler in the Journey of Creativity), in *Majīd Amjad ēk Munfarid Āvāz*, p 69. Intizār Husain wrote this column on Amjad's death. He had visited the poet some weeks before his death and was disturbed to find him in a bad state. Husain wrote about it, "*Majīd Amjad par parēshāni-o-āshufta hāli*," (I haven't been able to locate the column).

[19] Nāsir Shahzād, *Kaun Dēs Gaiyo, Majīd Amjad ki Hayāt aur Shē'ri Kā'ināt*, (Where did you go?: Majīd Amjad's Life and Poetic World), (Lahore: Al Hamd Publications, 2005). Shahzād's sincere, uncontrived account of his friendship with Amjad is a great source for small details that shed a lot of light on life and times of the poet. Nāsir Shahzād, an aspiring young poet benefited from Amjad's generosity in offering suggestions on his poems. Sometimes he re-wrote entire poems but never took any credit for his help.

[20] Cited from Muzaffar Ali Syed, "Majīd Amjad, Bē Nishāni ki Nishāni," (Majid Amjad: A Trace from the Traceless) in *Majīd Amjad ēk Munfarid Āvāz* (Majid Amjad, A Unique Voice), Khvaja Razi Haider (ed.), (Karachi: Surati Academy, 2013). In the same essay Muzaffar Syed mentions another occasion when Faiz is reported to have said, that Majīd Amjad has written everything there was to say. See, p 130.

[21] *Shab-i Rafta*, (Lahore: Al-Hamd Publications, 2007), p13–16.

[22] *Shab-i Rafta*, p 122–123; composed in 1955.

[23] Riāz Ahmad, "Is Nazm Mēṅ: Autograph," in the special issue of the Urdu Quarterly *Al Qalam*, compiled by Hikmat Adeeb (ed.), (Jhang: Jhang Adabi Akademy, 1994): p 108–110.

[24] *Shab-i Rafta*, p 73–74; composed in 1944.

[25] *Shab-i Rafta*, p 42–43; composed in 1941.

[26] *Shab-i Rafta*, p 107.

[27] The envelope of photographs and letters of Charlotte that was among the effects of Amjad, was passed from hand to hand and was eventually

found to be empty. The letters would have shed more light on the relationship.

[28] Noted literary critic Wazīr Āgha has published a book-length essay on this phase in Amjad's poetry: "Majīd Amjad ki Dāstān-i Mohabbat," This essay has been reproduced in the commemorative volumes published since Amjad's passing. My page numbers are from the volume, *Majīd Amjad, ēk Munfarid Āvāz*. Āgha, p 189.

[29] There is no mention of Shalat's (sic) last name in any of the writings about her. I have presumed she was called Charlotte because of the way Amjad has spelt her name in Urdu. A younger contemporary-friend Shahzād Ahmad mentions a photograph that he has seen of Charlotte sitting in a boat with her feet dangling in the water; that photograph sent by Charlotte forms the subject of a beautiful poem simply titled *Ēk photo* (A Photograph). For the poem, see *Shab-i Rafta kē Baʿd*, p 79.

[30] Amjad translated poems of Philip Booth, Robert Francis, Philip Murray and Richard Aldridge.

[31] *Shab-i Rafta kē Baʿd*, (Lahore: Majīd Amjad Ishaʿati Committee, 1976), p 55–56.

[32] *Shab-i Rafta kē Baʿd*, p 57–59.

[33] For a fuller discussion of the poems written in memory of Charlotte, see Wazīr Āgha's *Majīd Amjad ki Dāstān-i Mohabbat* (Majid Amjad's Love Story) and Nāsir Shahzād, *Kaun Dēs Gaiyo*.

[34] *Shab-i Rafta kē Baʿd*, p 154–55; composed in 1965.

[35] Interview with Khvaja Muhammad Zakariya.

[36] Nāsir Abbās Nayyar, "Majīd Amjad ki Nazmnigāri," (Majīd Amjad's Nazm) in *Majīd Amjad: Fan aur Shakhsiyat*, (Islamabad: Academy of Letters, 2008). p 41–69.

[37] I have not discussed his ghazal poetry in this paper. Because he was a good poet, his ghazal poetry though limited is good but not exceptional like his nazms.

[38] *Shab-i Rafta kē Baʿd*, p 301; composed on December 31, 1971.

[39] Eminent Urdu poet Balrāj Komal remarked that it is possible for a poet to give up the accoutrements (saz-o-sāmān) of poem making only when he/she reaches the height of perfection. Majīd Amjad began his poetic journey armed with the tools of the trade, but he kept dropping them off on the way, as he progressed. See Komal's article, "Majīd Amjad ēk Mutaliʿa," (Majid Amjad,: A Study) in *Gulāb kē Phūl*,(Lahore: 1978), p 113–137.

[40] *Shab-i Rafta kē Baʿd*, p 362, composed July 1973.

[41] The war broke out on 26 March 1971, when the Pakistani Army launched a military operation called Operation Searchlight against Bengali civilians, students, intelligentsia and armed personnel, who

were demanding that the Pakistani military junta accept the results of the 1970 first democratic elections of Pakistan, which were won by an eastern party, or to allow separation between East and West Pakistan. India entered the war on 3 December, 1971. On 16 December, the Allied Forces of Bangladēsh and India defeated Pakistan in the east. The subsequent surrender resulted in the largest number of prisoners-of-war since World War II.

42 *Shab-i Rafta kē Ba'd,* p 300, composed 25 December, 1971.

43 Cited from Syed, p 129.

44 Syed, p 129.

45 *Saughāt* published from Bangalore, India, has been a controversial magazine of exceptional importance, primarily due to its contents, but also because of the unmatched personality of the editor. Mahmūd Ayāz was a tough man, firm in his own opinions. He was perhaps the only editor who included a detailed editorial giving his own opinion about the writings included in the issue. It was not rare to read a note by him expressing his total or partial disagreement or dissatisfaction with an article or opinion presented in the same issue. His editorials are pieces of unique literary criticism. Unfortunately, since his demise a couple of years ago, *Saughāt* has ceased publication.

46 Askari lamented that there were no "real" nature poets in Urdu. It is surprising that he did not write about Amjad.

47 Nāsir Shahzād reports an occasion when Amjad met Rāshid in a train compartment when the latter was passing through Sāhiwāl. According to Shahzād, Amjad was in awe of Rāshid.

48 The phrase occurs frequently in Rāshid's poem "Hassan Kūzagar" and in Amjad's "Zindagi, O Zindagi," "Autograph," etc.

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