



## Contemporary Engagements with Decoloniality: Tracing Epistemic Disobedience and Decolonial Aesthetics in Pakistani Anglophone Literature

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### ABSTRACT

This paper seeks to discover epistemic reconstruction and reconstitution in Pakistani Anglophone literature to identify epistemic disobedience that confronts the rigidity of Western canons. In a so-called postcolonial age, the integration of indigenes with decoloniality weaves an indigenous knowledge tapestry that may challenge hegemonic intellectual imperialism. In the last few decades, there has been a surge of interest in decolonizing epistemology. The native epistemological quest offers alternative knowledge claims that can replace hegemonic epistemology in the colonial matrix of power. It may be used to challenge the lionized image of various Western epistemologies ingrained in indigenous thinkers' minds over history. The central thesis of this paper is to examine the role of Pakistani indigeneity in providing a locus of enunciation, a context, or situatedness for Pakistani Anglophone literature to question Western canonization to decolonize indigenous epistemology. To accentuate epistemic disobedience that occurs in the wake of epistemic decolonization, this study explores *Straggling through Fire* by Gulam Murtaza Aatir by placing it in the theoretical framework of decoloniality by Walter Dignolo. Walter Dignolo's discernments on epistemic disobedience, locus of enunciation, and decolonial aesthetics provide a central theoretical framework for this paper to analyze *Straggling through Fire* by Gulam Murtaza Aatir. It paves the way for Pakistani researchers in the future to insert the versatility and novelty of our indigenous Anglophone writers in the mainstream of English literature to confront Western canonization.



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## INTRODUCTION

This research investigates the possibility and status of indigenous knowledge claims that can be an alternative to Western hegemonic epistemology in the colonial matrix. The coloniality of power/ colonial matrix is different from colonialism that is one of the expressions of coloniality and is associated with a particular historical period (the colonization of Asia and Africa). The coloniality of power persists in various forms, and colonialism is one of them.

Mignolo (2021) poses that the coloniality of power is like a matrix that offers no outside operating in three significant domains; coloniality of being, coloniality of thought, and coloniality of knowing. He states that by integrating these three aspects, Quijano (2000) first comes up with the phrase coloniality of power, which Mignolo names the colonial matrix of power. Decolonization as a process of acquiring land freedom from the colonizers is not sufficient to address the coloniality of being, mind, and thought. To confront the coloniality of power, Mignolo introduces decoloniality that can engage this unending process by de-linking with Eurocentric epistemology and encouraging native epistemic reconstitution. While decoloniality is a critique that takes into account the darker sides of modernity, the current capitalist system, and global hegemony in order to address the ongoing phenomenon of the coloniality of power, decolonization is primarily based on nation-state formations that resulted from political and economic anti-colonial struggles recently emancipated from Asia and Africa. To negotiate and confront Western knowledge traps from a particular geopolitical position or locus inside the colonial matrix of power, decoloniality incorporates decolonization of epistemology as well. Just as colonialism invades native territories, it also intrudes into local epistemology. Nonetheless, decoloniality questions these hierarchies of civilization brought about by colonialism. It challenges the idea of universalism connected to Eurocentric discourse to reconstruct, renovate, and rectify subalternized epistemology. The indigenous intellect of the former colonies searches for the roots of Western epistemology, which they found local, but imposed on them as universal to support coloniality. Native critical thought aims to dispel the previous vicarious imagination that dismisses indigenous epistemology as an antiquated, pointless heap of tales.

Decoloniality, according to Mignolo (2012), can restore the destituted and subalternized epistemology. Decoloniality produces a colonial difference a site where subaltern knowledge may be restored when it meets coloniality of power. It is at this intersection when border thinking and epistemic disobedience are engendered by native intelligentsia. It happens if local or native intellectuals yearn for multiple forms of expression from literature and art that can express their lived experience, as imported epistemology, literature or art fail to represent it. However, the hegemony of capitalist academia tends to control native intellectual creation that manages to produce a form of native rhythm, theory, or other creative endeavors. The epistemic hierarchy is developed deliberately by colonial actors to control minds and prevent critical thinking by undermining the local knowledge claims of the indigenous societies of the former colonies. Mignolo argues, "Who, when, and why is constructing knowledge? Why did Eurocentered epistemology conceal its own geo-historical and bio-graphical locations and succeed in creating the idea of universal knowledge as if the knowing subjects were also universal? Epistemic disobedience means de-linking from the zero-point epistemology" (Mignolo, 2012, p.160). The colonial difference is a site where traveling epistemology is received by the host culture to negotiate and dialogue with. The outcome of this critical interaction is epistemic disobedience. Moreover, the knowing subject's locus of enunciation or geopolitical position within the colonial matrix of power also engenders epistemic disobedience; that endeavors to decolonize knowledge.

### **Purpose Statement**

This research paper checks the possibility of contesting Western ways of canonizing literary genres in Mignolo's theoretical framework of decoloniality. It brings attention to evoke native reasoning when epistemology is received with a colonial difference. Also, the study encourages to create literature beyond the Western literary canons for an epistemic reconstitution of native intellect by analyzing Murtaza Aatir's work *Straggling through Fire*.

## **Research Questions**

**Q1.** How does a decolonial reading of the selected primary work result in intervening and decolonizing intellectual imperialism to expose the hegemony of canonization?

**Q2.** How far de-canonization of multiple genres help to accentuate indigenous epistemological formations to enunciate native living experience (social, political, ideological)?

## **Significance of the Study**

This research extends the work that is engaged with the decolonization of knowledge. Also, it offers decolonial reading of Gulam Murtaza Aatir's book *Straggling Through Fire*, highlighting the colonial difference, and unearthing epistemic disobedience. It investigates how far the epistemic insight from an indigenous locus enunciates and intervenes in Eurocentric epistemology to confront canonization. This research illuminates how the writer updates imperialist inherited epistemology in terms of his local knowledge formation by deploying the famous literary genre poetry.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

Colonialism in the sub-continent was a series of insatiable Othering and undermining of the native intellect. Western literature was one of those grand institutions that worked to sustain a mental superiority over the indigenous population. Nayyar (2020) gives an account of this particular era by quoting a poem by Saleem Ahmad's Urdu poem, East got defeated.

—Kipling said

"East is east

And

West is west

And

Both can't meet."

But West has entered the compound of East

My servant listens to the news on BBC

Instead of Bedil and Hafiz

I read Shakespeare and Rilke (p.38).

It tells the tale of when "East was made the other of the West... If the first phase of othering possesses epistemological character, the second one is inundated with a kind of act, i.e., replacing Eastern things with Western ones, pushing Eastern authors and their texts to the margin...on a canonical and psychological level alike" (Nayyar, 2020, p. 38). But with decolonial thinking, native writers can free themselves of the baggage of Othering. After the dissolutions of settlements, writers from Asia and Africa produced literature in the English language with an insatiable desire for self-representation, politically and socially. This metamorphosis from the intellection of the former colonies further develops into the literature and theory comprising original articulations more appropriate to their indigeneity and culture in the medium of the English language. This intellectual protest extends further to unearth

native epistemic foundations in literature and other epistemes, such as history, philosophy, cultural studies, etc., to question the ever-privileged Western knowledge claims. In her work *Decolonizing Methodologies*, Smith discusses the concept and meaning of indigenous. She describes:

Indigenous peoples... as a relatively recent term, emerged in the 1970s out of the struggles primarily of the American Indian Movement (AIM) and the Canadian Indian Brotherhood. It is a term that internationalizes the experiences, the issues, and the struggles of some of the world's colonized peoples to self-determination. (Smith, 2021, p. 7)

She discusses how colonizers continue research projects on native habitats by institutionalizing many disciplines, including history, theory, science, etc., using different institutions of knowledge to develop a discourse of their own choice and conduct research on the indigenous population. However, the other side or native's point of view is silenced during this process. With the help of these so-called research projects, an outsider researcher studies them with biased lenses to draw the least beneficial results for the indigenous population. While discussing the role of writing, history, and theory in the lives of colonized indigenous people, she opines that:

Writing has been viewed as the mark of a superior civilization, and other societies have been judged by this view to be incapable of thinking critically and objectively... Writing, history, and theory are key sites in which Western research of the indigenous world has come together...writing, and writing theory are very intimidating ideas for many indigenous students. (Smith, 2021, p.29)

Like many disciplines, theory is considered worth devising only by the West, the most civilized people, supported by their hegemonic academia. Decolonality also encompasses questioning the significant trend of researching native people and their societies by Western Other, including writers, researchers, intellectuals, and theorists, by maintaining the traditions of "researching back, writing back or talking back" (Smith, 2021, p, 7).

She continues discussing, "colonialism and native intellectuals are included within the rubric of intellectual by liberation writers such as Frantz Fanon are also artists, writers, poets, teachers, clerks, officials... engaged in producing culture... to legitimate a new national consciousness" (p. 29). At the same time, this indigenous intellect, on the one hand, legitimizers of national consciousness, is more aligned with colonizers regarding their values, interests, and their way of thinking. This nexus and allegiance of ideologies between the native elite and colonizer create complexities. Colonizers once again try to maintain their positional superiority by devising different disciplines of civilization, philosophy, and knowledge to legitimate and continue intellectual imperialism. When a native comprador becomes their spokesman and a promoter of imperialistic ideology, the colonizer sarcastically asks what is indigenous and shakes the confidence of native intelligentsia to suspect themselves, their knowledge claims, and epistemic sources.

Conversely, the colonizer is defining for us what is Aboriginal or indigenous. Smith (2021) quotes Spivak in her work, who argues:

The third world intellectuals remain the problem of being taken seriously... for me, the question 'who should speak' is less crucial than 'who will listen, I would say that if one begins to take a whack at shaking the structure up, one sees how much more consolidated the opposition is. (p.35)

Decoloniality conjoins indigenous knowledge claims and emphasizes pluriversality and alterity of indigenous societies instead of binaries, polarities, or dichotomies of West/East, Oriental/occidental, white/black, etc. This locality, with its pluriversality, is essential to dialogue with the epistemology received with a colonial difference to make it adaptable in a condition different from the condition it is devised. Mignolo (2021) poses, "... theories constantly reveal that the ground for theories is not universal subject places in the local history of the West but located in specific languages and local histories... it is the local that calls for thinking, not the universal..." (p.190). When local knowledge claims of indigenous culture are not entirely compatible with Western epistemology, epistemic disobedience is attained in the wake of negotiation with Eurocentric epistemology. In an interview with Ruben, Mignolo (2014) rejects the traditional understanding of universalism and emphasizes the differences between truth in parenthesis, which encourages decolonial thinking as a choice rather than a mission to reject abstract universalisms, and truth without parenthesis, which emphasizes the ideas of essentialism or universalism.

Decoloniality promotes decolonial aesthetics, epistemic disobedience, and pluriversalism to give space to indigenous intellection in the colonial matrix of power. Mignolo (2014) suggests, "We, decolonial thinkers, have to delink from that legacy, the legacy of modern aesthetics, and its Greek and Roman legacies" (p.201) to delink all epistemes originated by the West. The concepts from Greek and Latin vocabularies became "universal due to the historical foundations of Western Civilization since the sixteenth century, the global, political and economic expansion of its vocabulary" (p.203). For instance, Mignolo links the Greek term *Aesthesis* to the origin of the word aesthetics. This word alludes to the senses and emotions, and it was eventually adopted into the contemporary lexicon of European philosophy in the seventeenth century. Kant expands this concept into a branch of philosophy, the theory of the sublime and the beautiful or Philosophical Aesthetics. This legacy is further transferred to postmodern and altermodern aesthetics that propagates universality of ideas, and develops hegemonic epistemology to represent universal subject.

This is also the origin of the epistemic colonial wound, the arrogant intellectual hegemony of the West inculcated in the rest of the world; for instance, Gupta and Mohanty (2000) comments that in the Western academia the expression of Western philosophy is tautologous, and the expression of non-Western philosophy is oxymoronic. Bernasconi (1997) quoted Levinas, "I always say ... that the Greeks and the Bible are all that is serious in humanity. Everything else is dancing" (p.185). Rorty (1992) claims that it is insane to claim philosophy outside of the West since it is unique characteristic of Western culture only. Eventually, epistemology becomes one of the significant pillars that buttresses coloniality and causes colonial wound. However, healing is possible if one becomes a decolonial subject. With decolonial art, native artist, creative writer or theorist may express their annoyance and discontent. Native intelligentsia start the process of curing the colonial wound when work to free their body, mind, senses, institutions, languages, music, etc. from a particular location. Since decolonization is an option that may be applied to a wide range of projects and circumstances rather than a goal, it fosters healing rather than creating a binary relationship with colonialism. It addresses praxis and internal shifts, which is a good process since without it, the project turns dogmatic, and dialogues with the rigidity of canonization, and epistemic hierarchy with the possibility of "co-existence of non-imperial options; co-existence in decolonial love" (Fernandez, 2014, p.209).

Mignolo (2009) puts forward the dilemma of modernity by discussing Chatterjee's ideas from his article "Talking about Our Modernity in Two Languages," which satirizes the concept of enlightenment by Immanuel Kant. For Chatterjee, our modernity and their modernity are

different, since for Kant the concept of freedom and maturity is based on the Eurocentric understanding of man of renaissance and enlightenment. He excludes anthropos, or people living outside of Europe, as for him, those were lesser human beings. (p.169). He further translates Chatterjee's thoughts, "We know that we have to decolonize being, and by doing so we have to start by decolonizing knowledge" (p.172). Modernism is another weapon to control native intellect by imparting the impression that they are lesser human beings and need to be civilized and modernized. Chatterjee revisits the concept of modernity to reclaim indigenous contribution to producing knowledge and becomes epistemic disobedient.

Mignolo (2012) suggests that decoloniality helps in alleviating the destituted state of the colonized culture. It produces a colonial difference when it comes into contact with the coloniality of power. Border thinking arises at this moment of contact, where the restitution of subaltern knowledge becomes possible.

Here, the coloniality of power operates with two competing local histories. First is the hegemonic local history, which asserts universality by using a global design for its implementation. For example, Christianity was a local history that employed global scheme of civilization to bolster colonialism in the nineteenth and the twentieth centuries. The second is the regional history of native culture, which challenges, rejects, or adapts the local history of the outsider. Since the imported epistemology often fails to incorporate an indigenous local experience, native intellectuals search for an expression that matches their lived reality. Furthermore, the hegemony of dominating cultures and academics undermines any native intellectual creation, be it a theory, a rhythm, or any other creative endeavor. Mignolo (2012) unfolds this idea by giving the example of Jamaican novelist and essayist Michelle Cliff, who opines that it is believed that native write is writing folklore, not literature, and that is incapable of becoming art. Milton, Wordsworth, and Keats—the Anglican ideal—were placed before us with the confidence that we are incapable of creating a piece of such accuracy. Consequently, decolonial theories promote decolonial aesthetics, epistemic disobedience, and pluriversality to subvert colonial notions of aesthetics and sublimity and restore the dignity of decolonial people.

Another example of epistemic disobedience can be traced in the works of Aijaz Ahmad who critiques Jameson's hypothesis that all Third World literature is national allegory engendered in response to anti-colonial struggles. What Jameson did was generalize a versatile, multi-dimensional phenomenon by imposing his Eurocentric analytical hegemony. Ahmad (1992) confronts this generalization of so-called Third World literature in a single category of nationalism. He maintains, "There are hundreds of nationalisms in Asia and Africa today. Some are progressive, others are not" (p.102). He continues:

The description has been central, for example, in the colonial discourses. It was by assembling monstrous machinery of description, our bodies, our speech acts, our habits, our conflicts and desires, our politics, our socialities, our sexualities, in fields as various as ethnology, fiction, photography, linguistics, political science, that those discourses were able to classify and ideologically master colonial subjects... what one is presenting is essentially descriptive is to assert a level of facticity which conceals its ideology and to prepare a ground from which judgments of classification, generalization, and value can be made. (Ahmad, 1992, p.99)

Decoloniality challenges this inclination of essentializing the flexibility of indigenous phenomena and this vicarious imagination. According to Mignolo (2009), also questions, why Eurocentric epistemology insists that knowing subjects is universal while concealing its geopolitical location? To create and uphold epistemic hegemony over the rest

of the globe, the Eurocentric epistemological goal is to globalize their local epistemology and understanding of the whole world. On that score, this study intends to explore Gulam Murtaza Aatir's work from decolonial perspective locating the elements of epistemic disobedience that further engenders decolonial aesthesis to heal the colonial wound.

## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY/ THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

The study employs a qualitative methodology deploying textual methods of analysis. The theoretical foundation for this study is provided by Walter D. Mignolo's insights into decoloniality. The key elements from decolonial theory—colonial difference, locus of enunciation, epistemic disobedience, colonial matrix of power/colonial power, and decolonial aesthesis provide the theoretical framework for analyzing the primary work *Struggling through Fire* by Gulam Murtaza Aatir. Mignolo delineates that the point of emancipation of decoloniality is the Third World. "Decoloniality is historically grounded in the Bandung Conference of 1955, in which 29 countries from Asia and Africa gathered. The conference's main goal was to find common ground and a vision for the future that was neither capitalism nor communism. That was decolonization" (Mignolo, 2011, p.273).

Even though political and economic issues dominated the Bandung conference, Mignolo (2011) engages this word to include epistemology in decolonial theory. He brings into question the status of Renaissance and Enlightenment since both are local European developments imposed out-side Europe to accomplish implied political agenda of colonialism. Mignolo links Fanon's *Black Skin, White Masks*, and the geo- and body-politics of knowledge. Fanon prays at the end of his book, saying, "Oh, my body, makes me someone who questions" (p. 274)... the fundamentals of border epistemology, the biographical perception of the black body in the Third World, which serves as an anchor for a politics of knowledge embedded in local histories and the body. The need to delink epistemology stems from both body -and geo-politics. Moreover, the nature of devised epistemology also indicates the locus of the subject in the colonial matrix of power. Thus, the liberation of territories shouldn't be the exclusive goal of decolonization. It needs to encompass the liberation of epistemology and minds as well. In the colonial matrix of power, decoloniality ferments epistemic disobedience and catalyzes alternative knowledge claims from the site of colonial difference.

Postcolonialism and decolonization are not the same. Postcolonialism endorses Eurocentric notions of wholeness since it is more in line with the poststructuralism of Lacan, Derrida, and Foucault. It is an attempt to alter scholarship both internally in Europe and inside academia. Decoloniality cuts across concerns of race, gender, and patriarchy, whereas postcolonialism emerged from the anti-colonial battles in South Asia and Africa and is primarily focused on nationalism or nation-state construction. Mignolo (2014) provides evidence for yet another important distinction between decolonization and postcolonialism. The former primarily focuses on the nineteenth and twentieth centuries describing the colonial experiences of Asia and Africa, while the latter includes earlier European advancement started in the fourteenth century. Decoloniality operates in two stages and is motivated by the need for epistemic restoration. The knowledge system that underpins modernity and colonialism is being questioned in the first phase within the colonial power matrix; the second step is to decolonize and disassociate from that knowledge structure. Epistemic reconstitution follows these two stages, and it "moves towards epistemic and emotional reconstitutions reemergence, resurgences, and re-existences" (p. 5).

To further explain the coloniality of power, Mignolo introduces the idea of colonial difference in his discussion of capitalism, colonialism, and modernism. Strong and overarching narratives of the contemporary world system, modernity and capitalism from Western culture come together to form the coloniality of power. While Western culture may be traced back to ancient Greece and the European continent of the eighteenth century, capitalism and the current world system came together in the fourteenth century, with a suggestion of a spatial articulation of power. This complex articulation of power has been referred to as the coloniality of power since the sixteenth century and the development of the Atlantic circuit. To render local narratives invisible—which are obscured and suppressed by Western civilization's metanarratives—it further establishes colonial distinctions and a hierarchy of civilizations. He persists that epistemology is historical. Colonialism, though was one of the faces of coloniality that is a perpetual process buttressed by the concepts of modernity and civilization strengthening the colonial matrix. In the wake of anti-colonial struggles lands were liberated, however, epistemology was left enslaved in the colonial matrix systematically and strategically.

## **ANALYSIS**

Decolonial aesthesis is different from colonial aesthetics. While colonial aesthetics prompts Eurocentric epistemology and canonization, decolonial aesthesis heal colonial wounds that have scarred indigenous creativity and critical thinking. According to Mignolo (2014), to control an artist's genius and taste, certain canons of sublimity and taste in literature and art are fostered by Eurocentrism and Western Enlightenment. This Eurocentric philosophical aesthetics propagates the idea that people outside of Europe are unable to recognize and understand the sublime and the beautiful. As a result, the mission of civilizing non-European civilizations became indispensable to impart an awareness of the sublimity they are devoid of. His accentuation of decoloniality endorses the idea of decolonial aesthetics. Decoloniality suggests epistemic reconstitution that happens after identifying one's position in the colonial matrix of power to change reasoning, emotioning and sensing of the subject. He confronts the idea of modern aesthetic, and replaces it with decolonial aestheSis that talks about "others... whose memories and dignified anger facing coloniality find the way out through artistic expressions by moving away canonization of art and modern/postmodern/altermodern aesthetics" (Mignolo, 2014, p. 5).

The colonial wound may be healed by decolonial aesthesis. The fundamental cause of the colonial wound extends beyond the political colonization of society and encompasses social hierarchies, such as those based on gender, caste, class, etc. Literature, music, or other art created to heal the colonial wound is known as decolonial aesthetics. How can an epistemology or rigid canon construction originating from a completely different geopolitical circumstance grasp the intrinsic variety and alterity of a native society? In this regard, Mignolo (2014) claims that Western enlightenment and Eurocentric discourse promote particular standards of sublimity and taste in literature and art, which in turn influence the creativity and taste of the indigenous artist. These Eurocentric philosophical aesthetics promote the idea that "people outside of Europe are unable to understand and sense the beautiful and the sublime. Consequently, Europe is justified in its civilizing mission" (p.2).

His insights into decoloniality suggest the concept of "decolonial aesthesis" (p. 3). As influenced by Quijano's propositions, Mignolo considers decoloniality "an epistemic issue: epistemic reconstitution changing one's emotioning and sensing not only reasoning" (p.3). He counters the idea of modern aesthetic by replacing it with decolonial aesthesis and talks about "others... whose memories and dignified anger facing coloniality find the way out



through artistic expressions by moving away canonization of art and modern/postmodern/altermodern aesthetics<sup>1</sup> (p.5). The concepts of decoloniality and decolonial aestheSis can be traced in the creative works of the artists from underdeveloped countries in a post-colonial condition. Decolonial aestheSis exposes the politics of coloniality engendering epistemic disobedience.

This Paper espouses Mignolo's decolonial thoughts to weave the works from Pakistan into the tapestry of decoloniality. *Straggling through Fire* by Gulam Murtaza Aatir demonstrates epistemic disobedience and decolonial aestheSis in current Pakistani indigenous Anglophone literature. This research seeks the literature that challenges the ubiquitous Western canon that participates in exerting coloniality of power with the help of hegemonic academia to endorse the tenets. The work under discussion is an effort to recuperate an understanding of art from a specific loci or geo-political position it holds inside the colonial matrix of power. *Straggling through, Fire* questions this ubiquitous epistemic obedience by stating, "If the question arises 'Is it poetry,' the counter-question is 'Whose slave am I? Is it necessary to follow the pattern fixed by Aristotle and his progeny'?" (Aatir, 2021, p.3). This question further emphasizes the need for an alternative genre encapsulating the indigenous experience. He delineates it further, "if the form and concealment of truth are so essential to literature and therefore it is not poetry, let me call these pieces proems rather than poems for their combination of prose and poetry" (p.16), more than that, he gives space to history in the proems and extends proems to Proemistry, "poetry+ prose+ history" (p.16). Moreover, the writer builds an argument in favor of his deviation and brings an alternative genre: "It is the cultural needs and personal capabilities and understanding that kept making the distinction that what is poetry and what is not...I believe we need to transcend the boundaries of genres lest something that is our responsibility to say should not go unsaid under the stress of the genre restriction" (p.16).

Healing the colonial wound by decolonial aesthetics in all fields, for instance, literature, history, theory, and philosophy, was indispensable, but as Smith notices "writing history, philosophy, and theory are very intimidating for native writers; moreover, these are the fundamental sites of contest where dominant discourse work to control people<sup>1</sup> (Smith, 2021, p. 29). Eventually, the creative or epistemological expression by local or native writers is mostly subalternized by the hegemony of dominant cultures and academia. Mignolo (2012) delineates this idea by quoting Jamaican novelist and essayist Michelle Cliff, who opines that It is believed that "your writing is not literature; it is folklore and can never be art... the Anglican ideal Milton, Wordsworth, Keats was held before us with an assurance that we cannot compose a work of similar correctness" (p. 177). With this protest, voices have been permeated inside the colonial matrix of power for the local say, and native intellect intervenes in colonial epistemic foundation to construe their social or literary experience. Proemistry is one of those voices from Pakistan that questions a canon set by intellectual imperialism.

Proemistry, as a genre, is not only a positioning in the colonial matrix of power. It is a re-constitution of episteme; as Mignolo puts forward, "colonial matrix of power cannot be observed from outside, because there is no outside, we are all in it, like the movie, *The Matrix*<sup>1</sup> (Mignolo, 2014, p. 2). If the margin is a position, it is inside the colonial matrix of power, and proemistry is "of the margin, for the margin, by the margin" (Aatir, 2021, p. 13). Moreover, this marginality is so vital, banging, and accentuated that it infiltrates the so-called alienation of marginalized subjects, whether the alienation is existential, Marxist, or colonial.

Proemistry does not lament marginality but celebrates it as a position. It heralds that ubiquitous imagination that engendered a sense of alienation in the minds of a post-

generation of former colonized writers and artists to contest the intimidating thought that for recognition, they have to meet the canon defined already by their former masters. It spurns the set norms for writing poetry and argues for the new dimensions that must be included. Aatir puts forward, "Rules are for those who cannot make their own rules. If something that I feel my responsibility to say goes unsaid for restriction of genres and structures, I would love to throw them to air" (Aatir, 2021 p. 17). He continues that the question arises of what and for whom the writer wants to reject canon. The answer is that for the people for whom the poetry has been created, "it is the proemistic responsibility to be with the people, write for them, think for them, live for them, live with them" (p.17).

In the Preface to *Stragglng Through Fire*, Aatir (2021) succinctly puts forward that "proemistry is not a spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings for the man who has become entangled into one hundred and one constraints by friends and foes in the era of everything at stake including bread, brother and breaths" (p.18). Eventually what's the point in creating art that addresses individual mind only aesthetically in a locus where "drones, and suicide attacks and blasts have been a regular feature" (p.18). The argument in favor of new genre proemistry becomes stronger when, on the one hand, it questions zero-point epistemology or so-called universal art and, on the other hand, gives an account of its locus of enunciation to enunciate in the context in which one is hurled. Aatir proclaims, "A proemist cannot stay aloof from his context to search for spontaneity in his subjective heaven" (p.19).

Interestingly, the above lines are from the preface 1 and 2 of the book *Stragglng Through Fire*, written after the tradition of The Preface to the Lyrical Ballads by William Wordsworth, who proclaimed that poetry is a spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings. The universal value of this maxim is reduced to the condition in which Wordsworth defines poetry as a spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings. A different condition and geo-political position in the colonial matrix suggests that "spontaneity may be a proper value in Lake District but not in a country where drones and suicide attacks and blasts have been a regular feature" (Aatir, 2021,p. 18). Aatir's locus of enunciation defines poetry for him and his people. He is giving his original say that meets the requirement of his position inside the colonial matrix of power and insists that "nomenclature is a binding that does not let us think our original way and say our original say" (p.18)

Wordsworth could not have seen the hindsight of the colonial wound that did not allow him to see beyond poetry as a spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings. Still, the position of marginality in the colonial matrix of power can engender epistemic disobedience in Aatir's work, which announces that "in this context of ever-in-process war, an artist's withdrawal into the pure aesthetic with callous indifference to the lived agony does not make any poetic sense" (Aatir, 2021, p. 19). Eventually, for Wordsworth, poetry might be a spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings to satisfy one's aesthetics. But for Aatir, a poem becomes a proem once he recognizes his loci in the colonial matrix of power to delink and decolonize knowledge. *Stragglng through Fire* informs its readers about what is a proem. It continues,

"When a tongue-tied non- Native speaker of English

Has a heart tortured with seventy-three cancerous warts?

That fails to find appropriate expression within the available

Learnt and acquired

Repertoires of languages

What is left is

A broken Penglish jarring expression

With seventy-three deviations from the standard:

A proem" (Aatir, 2021, p. 23).

An exciting and powerful expression of using and living between languages with a colonial difference is bilanguaging. Mignolo (2012) states that bilanguaging differs from bilingualism; while bilingualism is a skill, bilanguaging is a way of life. The concept of bilanguaging or bilanguagism is thinking between the languages, "beyond sound, syntax, and lexicon, and beyond the need of having two languages...bilanguaging as a form of life is possible in the fractures of a hegemonic (national or imperial) language: the law that instills fear and shame among those who do not master the master's language" (Mignolo, 2012, p. 264). Proemistry as a poetic genre promotes bilanguaging, living between two languages, using them not only as a skill but a way of life, a consciousness, and a sensitivity of one's living condition in a greater colonial matrix to encapsulate a personal experience with deep insights of indigeneity. The phenomenon of bilanguaging by Mignolo encapsulates Aatir's definition of a proem;

"When you are divided into one hundred and one segments

Of languages and classes,

Creeds and geographies,

You take birth and suck your mother's breasts in one language,

Grow up in another,

Earn in still another,

Take pride in one,

And go to grave and heaven in still another" (Aatir, 2021, p. 24).

## **CONCLUSION**

The work under discussion is an example of contemporary epistemic disobedience from Pakistani Anglophone literature that strived to decolonize and delink poetry to make it appropriate according to certain geo-political positions in the colonial matrix of power. It offers an epistemic reconstitution by offering a decolonial Aesthesis to sense better the current living conditions of its people and to heal the colonial wound. Universality, essentialism, and canonization are those sublime ghosts that haunt the collective consciousness of indigenous intellect. In this scenario, an effort to decolonize epistemology is resilience, an attempt to break the silence to become epistemically disobedient and to unearth indigenous says. Proemistry is one of the reactions against the canons set by colonizers' epistemology.

Driven by decolonial thoughts in contemporary Pakistani Anglophone literature, *Straggling Through Fire* is a brilliant example of resilience when the writer declares that a proem needs not a center to be heard; instead, it is "of the margin, for the margin, by the margin (Aatir, 2021, p.13). Proemistry recognizes its position or locus in the colonial matrix of power and enunciates colonial epistemic differences by questioning and negotiating hegemonic canonization. Proemistry demonstrates epistemic disobedience and decolonial aestheSis and challenges the concept of sublimity that is set to control the artistic genius of native

intellection. Canons are used to generate politically riddled epistemology for the geo-political benefit of the coloniality of power. As a proemist, Aatir (2021) receives epistemology with a colonial difference. He encompasses "soilism" (p. 10), which includes the people of his land, and talks about their agonies, miseries, and wounds to survive in the colonial matrix that knows no end, and cuts across his society's internal fractures and hierarchies. Proemistry legitimizes telling those agonizing stories, emotions, and sensibilities of Aatir's people that were left unsaid due to hegemonic canonization and intellectual imperialism.

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