

Muhammad Umar Memon

In Place of Abstract

Specifically, I've been invited by the Department of Humanities and Social Sciences and, in particular, by the Gurmani Centre for Languages and Literature of Lahore University of Management Sciences for a two-week campus visit for "talks and sessions of academic and literary interest" with faculty and students.

Although it is not a formal conference, my intention is to give, additionally, two lectures (in what the invitation letter states as "sessions") on two topics that have remained the center of my academic and literary work for several decades now.

The first lecture will be on the problems and difficulty of translating literary texts (preeminently fiction and criticism) into Urdu, generally from English. As I have translated extensively from English into Urdu, I have become aware of some peculiar problems that relate to Urdu, both in terms of absence of appropriate vocabulary and syntax. It seems to me that Urdu, ideally suited for oral delivery (e.g. poetry, which was usually presented before an audience) has not yet developed appropriate linguistic structures and tools to deal with the requirements of literacy. This creates a set of formidable problems in translation. I wish to delineate some of these problems and suggest ways in which they can be partially remedied.

My second lecture will focus on elements of crucial importance in the production of good fiction, which I have identified through extensive readings of major Western novelists, among them Max Frish, Garcia Marques, Carlos Fuentes, Jose Saramago, Mario Vargas Llosa, Milan Kundera, Gunter Grass, Sandor Marai, and a host of others. I would like to discuss these elements with audience. My hope is that writers among them will consider these elements when they write their own fiction. More importantly, I wish to help critics learn what writing about fiction involves and how greater professionalism could be brought to bear on their work with awareness of effective methods and elements of fiction criticism.