Chapter One

Background to North-East Literature(s) of India

1.1 Introduction

To endeavour an attempt to study and analyse the literature and writings emerging out from an under-represented region of India known as the North-East, it is becomes an imperative and an inescapable necessity to have some comprehensive knowledge of the history, geographic location, politics and socio-cultural aspects of the region known as North-East India.

The North-East is geographically separated from the Indian mainland and connected only through a strip of land known as the “Silliguri corridor” (www.wikipedia.com). Mentions of the region have been recorded in ancient Sanskrit texts speaking of a golden-skinned people called the Kiratas of the sub-Himalayas (Jacobs et al. 10). The Chinese scholar and pilgrim Hiuen Tsang in the seventh century described the region as overrunning with lush forests, wildlife and mountains inhabited with people of rich cultural heritage (R. Haokip; Mukherjee 114-15; Dikshit 23-25).

Contrary to popular outsiders perception of North-East India as a culturally homogenous region of mongoloid races, the region is according to Thonkholal Haokip, “diverse in almost every aspects; it is inhabited by a mosaic of societies characterised by diversity in ethnicity, language, cultures, religion, social organisation, economic pursuits, productive relations and participation in political process.” (109-10)

This chapter provides a background study of the region’s history specifically taking a look at the region’s literary journey from the past to the present day. It helps to posit the study of fiction from the region taking into consideration the complexities that marks the North-East.
1.2 Historical Portrait of the North-East

1.2.1 Origins

The region comprises of seven states known as the “Seven Sisters”. These states are Tripura, Nagaland, Mizoram, Meghalaya, Manipur, Arunachal Pradesh and Assam. Sikkim was integrated as the eight North-Eastern Council state in 2002. Each state has its own unique features, distinct geographical details and various ethnic and tribal identities with different rituals, practices and cultures.

During the early days of the colonial presence in India, as early as 1792, Assam had contacts and trade relations with the British East India Company which was solicited at the behest of the Assamese King. According to T. Haokip, the annexation process gradually began:

The persisting internal strife and disorder led the Burmese to occupy the plains of Assam from 1817 to 1826 and Manipur from 1819 to 1826. At the request of the king of Assam the British defeated the Burmese who were forced to surrender their suzerainty over Assam and Manipur by the Treaty of Yandaboo in 1826. Eventually the British rulers annexed the whole region in the subsequent years, the Cachar plains in 1830, Khasi Hills (1833), Jaintia Hills (1835), Karbi Anglong or Mikir Hills (1838), North Cachar Hills (1854), Naga Hills (1866-1904), Garo Hills (1872-73) and Mizo Hills (1890). (110-11)

Formation of the states began during the British colonial period. At that time it was ruled as part of the Bengal province. The state of Assam came into existence in 1874. When India achieved its independence from British rule in 1947, only three states covered the area of the North-East. Manipur and Tripura were still princely states, whereas the much larger Assam province previously under British rule was carved to accommodate four new states as the Indian government was desirous to reorganize the states along ethnic and linguistic lines. Accordingly, Nagaland also became a separate state in 1963, followed by Meghalaya in 1972.
In the same year, Mizoram became a Union Territory, and later, achieved its statehood along with Arunachal Pradesh in 1987.

Geographically speaking, the ‘Seven Sisters’ states are located in the eastern most region of India. The North-East is a true frontier region. It has over 2000 km of border with Bhutan, China, Myanmar and Bangladesh. It is a part of the eastern Himalayan Mountain range that includes a number of valleys – large and small of the mighty Brahmaputra river system. In *Myths of the North-East Frontier* Verrier Elwin, renowned English Anthropologist and Tribal activist observed that:

> The North-East is a wild and mountainous tract … bounded by Bhutan to the west, Tibet to the north and Burma [Myanmar] to the south-east, and into which the Valley of the Brahmaputra projects like a great spur….

> This area … is populated by a large number of tribes speaking different languages and dialects … exhibiting a great diversity of culture, dress and custom.

(Rustomji 301)

### 1.2.2 Migration History

For several centuries the valleys and hills of the North-East were exposed to waves of migrations and invasions bringing in numerous groups of people of diverse ethnicities. At different phases in history, the region has witnessed migrations of people from the lands around its vicinity which included some parts of Southern China and Southeast Asia. In the introduction to Major Alan Playfair’s book *The Garos*, J. B. Fuller (1909) aptly described the diversity of people found in the region as a “museum of nationalities.”

On the migratory paths of the various ethnic groups of people, S.K. Chaube notes that:

> Of these, the Garo living in the western part of the Meghalaya plateau have a legend of having migrated from the northwest, that is, the southern side of central Tibet. The
Khasi, at least some of them claim to have migrated from Southeast Asia, part of their route probably through Burma. The Kuki and the Chin inhabit the southern hills of Manipur, Tripura, and most parts of the Mizo hills are supposed to be from southern China. They are also believed to have contributed to the basic linguistic strain of Meitei who inhabit the Manipur valley. The Naga settled in Nagaland and the northern hills of Manipur, and some of the groups in the northeast frontier are mostly assumed to be immigrants from eastern Tibet, whereas most of the inhabitants of the sub-Himalayan and cis-Himalayan areas trace their origin directly from southern Tibet. (1-2)

Chaube, however, reiterates that the migratory routes used by these people are merely speculative and generalised ideas. These ethnic groups, due to their complex histories of migration that happened at different timelines, coupled with the lack of written records, with the exception of oral narratives passed down through generations, cannot with clarity and surety attest from where they first stepped out and how they ended up in their present dwellings. Research in anthropological evidences is lacking and there is much to be studied.

1.2.3 Ethnic and Religious Composition

The North-East is the most ethnically and linguistically diverse region of India owing to the presence of numerous ethnic groups, each state having distinct cultures, traditions and practices. Its people and cultures have very strong ties with Southeast Asia. Himansu C. Sandangi writes that: “From times immemorial, India’s North-East has been the meeting point of many communities, faiths and cultures … some groups have migrated over the centuries from places as far as Southeast Asia.” (1)

Albeit the great diversity and for the purpose of eliminating confusion in this study, the people of North-East India can be broadly divided into three distinct groups – the tribes of the
Hills, the tribes in the Plains and the non-tribals of the Plains. Hill tribes inhabit the states of Manipur, Mizoram, Meghalaya, Nagaland, Arunachal Pradesh, and Tripura with some spreaded out in the plains of Assam. Major hill tribes include the Khasi, Jaintia and Garos of Meghalaya (the major tribes in the state), the Mizos of Mizoram, the Nagas of Nagaland, and the Kukis who are spread over the states of Manipur, Nagaland, Assam and Tripura. Then there are also tribes like the Bodos and Mishings of Assam who are referred to as plains tribes as these groups are settled in the plain areas. The non-tribal populations reside mainly in Assam, the plains of Manipur and Tripura. The Meiteis, the Bengalis and the Assamese of Imphal, Agartala and the Assam valley can constitute as the major inhabitants of the plains.9

Linguistically, there are more than two hundred languages, including dialects and sub-dialects, spoken in these states. The region is distinguished by a preponderance of three language families, namely Indo-Aryan, Austro-Austric and Sino-Tibetan. The Indo-Aryan is represented mainly by Asamiya (Assamese) and Bangla (Bengali); Austro-Asiatic is represented mainly by Khasi and the Sino-Tibetan family of languages by the Tibeto-Burman. 10

Given the region’s long history of migrations by various ethnic groups, the religious composition is no less complex.

Brahmanism reached the valley of Manipur probably in the fifteenth century to which some Manipuri Brahmans trace their settlement.11 Vaishnavism reached into the upper Assam and greatly influenced the Mishings, Tangsas and the Noctes of Tirap (the Southern district of Arunachal Pradesh) by the eighteenth century through the efforts of the followers of Sankara Deva of Assam.12 It even touched the fringes of the Khasi and Garo hills.

In pre-Christian era, Buddhism that came from the Gangetic valley had its influence confined to Assam only. It was only during early medieval period that Mahayana Buddhism
came to be a major influence and presence in several sections of people of north-western and northern Arunachal Pradesh.\(^{13}\)

Since the nineteenth century, with the advent of the British administration in the hill districts of Assam and neighbouring states, Christianity started spreading fast in the Garo, Khasi, Mizo and Naga hills and is now the religion of about half the total population.\(^{14}\) Historically speaking, the American Baptists were the first to establish permanent work in the region but they were not the first to preach the religion.\(^{15}\) Two Portuguese Jesuits first set foot in Assam in 1626 probably on their way to find a passage to Tibet and China.

Indigenous faiths known as Animism persist even today in small pockets of the region.\(^{16}\) Followers of traditional animist beliefs are found particularly in eastern Arunachal and in Naga tribes of Nagaland particularly the Angamis who practice Christianity infused with animistic elements.

An underwhelming general composite of the major and minor ethnic communities in the region and religious belief systems of the past and the present is presented in this chapter keeping in mind that the focus of the research is on the narratives that have been written in contemporary times. Even though a detailed in-depth study of a very broad and complex subject has been curtailed, a brief knowledge of the socio-cultural and religious aspects have to be touched upon to study the implications of all these influences and the nuances that appear in the narratives concerned in the following chapters.

\subsection*{1.3 Problematizing the ‘North-East’}

Since the North-East region is an amalgamation of various ethnic groups with their own set of distinct cultures and practices, the term ‘North-East’ becomes an umbrella term for all the states that fall under the region. It is an extremely contentious and problematic term owing to
the fact that the region is so diversified linguistically, culturally and ethnically. The term as we will see has problematic origins.

The term ‘North-East’ was first used to identify a geographical area by the British administration. T. Haokip writes, “Alexander Mackenzie was perhaps the first to use the term “Northeast Frontier” to identify Assam, including the adjoining hill areas and the princely states of Manipur and Tripura in his book History of the Government with the Hill Tribes of the North-East Frontier of Bengal in 1884” (111).

T. Haokip elucidates on this:

Initially the term remained a geographical concept and throughout the colonial period the British rulers referred to Assam as the “Northeastern Frontier of Bengal”. Thus, in the colonial period the area what now constitute the “Northeast” was considered a frontier of Bengal that needs to be protected and defended militarily. Northeast India became a region merely though a geo-political accident. (111-12)

So historically speaking, the states that constitute the region today were at no point governed by one political head. It was simply for the sake of administrative purposes, at the time when India was a colony of the British Crown, that the British annexed areas of the region and divided it into different parts without taking into consideration the multiplicity of the cultures and languages of the region during the colonial period (Phukan, “Writing in English”). The term ‘North-East’, according to Udayon Misra, is contentious because the North-East is representative of a “varied cultural mosaic and has never considered itself to be one compact unit.”

The concept of the term ‘North-East’ continued into the time of Independence. The concept was popularized when the North East Council (NEC) was formed in 1971 and through it the concept attained political formalization (T.Haokip 113). The term has its origins in the
changes made to the political and administrative map of the area in the 1960s and early 1970s.

In more recent times, the problematic concept of the term has more implications especially due to the nature of region’s sensitive relationship with the Centre. The problematization of the concept primarily arises from the fact that many of the states of the region after India’s independence were created with the aim of “national security” rather than “in response to popular sentiments seeking recognition for historical regions or their fiscal viability.” (Sanjib Baruah 36)

Like other directional place names (e.g. the Far East or the Middle East), North-East India reflects an external and not a local point of view, Preeti Gill comments that the region “reflects an external and not a focal point of view. To this effect, the North-East would mean a lumping together of seven or eight disparate state, each individual in its cultures, ethnicities, physical contours etc., and certainly very distinct in the nature of its problems.” (3)

Having established that the concept of the term ‘North-East’ is problematic and fraught with many implications, the complications of the term carries into the literature and narratives coming forth from the region and literatures written about the region.

The problems arising from such a term also undermines the complexity that literature from each state of the region reflects the unique culture, geographical peculiarities and experience of that state. The unique culture, customs and traditions of each state is reflected in its literature and narratives, from the hill tribes, to the valley and plain dwellers of the region and this multiplies the problem of generalizing and problematizes the singularity of the “sweeping” term according to Phukan (“Writing in English”).

The term is not only problematic with regards with socio-cultural and ethnic diversity but also betrays linguistic diversity too. The fundamental difference is the medium of
transmission with some states having a rich history of oral tradition and literature while states like Assam and Manipur possess literatures in the written form too. Not only that, the different mediums of communication, written or otherwise, in regional languages and English becomes an impossibly complex and broad spectrum of study.

With this in mind, it is important to reiterate that the focal point of the thesis lies in the literature and narratives written in English by select contemporary women writers of fiction from the region. However, with the problematization of the concept of this region as a singular geographical construct, I deem it necessary that this calls for a perusal of the history of literatures and narratives of the North-East up to the present contemporary writings which are carving out a niche as a part of the greater arena of Indian writings in English.

Though there are many contemporary writers from the region who profess a deep discomfiture in referring to their writings as ‘North-East literature’ or ‘Literatures from the North-East’, for the purpose of research and study, navigating the premises of writings from the region without using a broad and general term to refer to innumerable works coming out from this area has proven to be difficult. This is the researcher’s argument, in a sense, for employing the singularity of the term. Another facet to the argument, which will be dealt with in the succeeding chapters, is that given the unique geo-political location of the region and its diversely complicated history of countless migrations birthing in the heterogeneous portrait of the region, does this give an element of uniqueness to what is called “North-East Literature” and is such a term justifiable?

It is the researcher’s argument in the thesis that the usage of the term ‘North-East’ becomes a necessity when studying a variety of writers over a broad spectrum of geographical and socio-cultural divides. It is not to say that the problematic politics of the term is not recognized.
For the purpose of the study, the researcher will use the phrase ‘North-East Literatures of India’ to identify post-colonial and contemporary writings in English and regional languages and the phrase ‘Narratives of the North-East’ to encompass a broader classification of writings from pre-colonial and colonial times of the region to avoid confusion.

1.4 Narratives of the North-East

Why do we have narratives? It is simply that story telling is an essential part of human nature and is the soul of every human society to express their experience in a narrative form. Story telling has been an integral part of every human society since the dawn of vocalising sounds as a means of communication. Story telling began with oral traditions which were told and retold in the form of myths, legends, fables, anecdotes, ballads etc., passed down from generation to generation. Another dimension was added to storytelling with the development of expressing language in letters and other marks. As Peter T. Daniels notes “Humankind is defined by language; but civilization is defined by writing” (1-10).

Roland Barthes in his “An Introduction to the Structural Analysis of Narrative” (1966) states that:

Among the vehicles of narrative are articulated language, whether oral or written, pictures, still or moving, gestures, and an ordered mixture of all those substances; narrative is present in myth, legend, fables, tales, short stories, epics, history, tragedy, drame [suspense drama], comedy, pantomime, paintings (in Santa Ursula by Carpaccio, for instance), stained-glass windows, movies, local news, conversation. Moreover, in this infinite variety of forms, it is present at all times, in all places, in all societies; indeed narrative starts with the very history of mankind; there is not, there has never been anywhere, any people without narrative; all classes, all human groups, have their stories, and very often those stories are enjoyed by men of different and even opposite cultural backgrounds:
narrative remains largely unconcerned with good or bad literature. Like life itself, it is there, international, transhistorical, transcultural. (237-72; my emphasis)

With this definition in mind, I will make a brief assessment of the history of the narratives that originate from the North-East.

1.4.1 Written narratives: Pre-Colonial

Our knowledge of the pre-colonial narratives of the North-East comes chiefly from traditions found in the Asamiya and Meitei cultures because the languages of these cultures possessed the written script and could document the historical proceedings of courtly life, ballads, prose, poems, documents and other forms of literary expression.

On the narratives that originated from these places in the North-East, Tilottoma Misra remarks that:

In Assam, Manipur and Tripura, this [the] process of cultural intermixing began long before the advent of colonialism. Shaiva, Shakta, and Vaishnava forms of Hinduism together with Buddhism and Islam spread their distinctive influences in the region, while the Tao-Ahoms who entered Assam from the east and ruled the country for almost 600 years till the advent of the British in 1826, made immense contribution to the syncretic culture in the region. It is significant that the literature of the pre-colonial period in all these three kingdoms was deeply rooted in the wonderfully mixed cultural life of their respective societies. (xiii-xxix)

K.N. Dutt also opines that the accounts of travellers like the Chinese scholar, Hiuen Tsang, stone and copperplate inscriptions, and architectural and iconographic remains also add to our knowledge of the region in ancient times. There are also technical literatures on various topics like astrology, medicine, music, mathematics etc.
Traces of the beginnings of the Asamiya language go as far back as the sixth century. Buddhist ballads of the eighth to tenth century in the Charyapadas have strong affinities with Asamiya and are considered as the first examples of Assamese literature. Contents of these lyrics are of a mystic nature centring on doctrines and beliefs of the Sahajayana, a later development of the Mahayana Buddhism. The succeeding centuries are barren of historical manuscripts and documentation, and it is only in the fourteenth century that Assamese literature takes it concrete form showing what Satyendra Nath Sarma calls “various aspects of a literary tradition” (44).

From the fourteenth century Assamese literature saw the flourishing of translations, adaptations, choral songs and narrative poetry. These works contained local description, local customs and about nearby kingdoms. Even though many of the works of this period were adaptations and translations of Sanskrit literary traditions, the epics and Puranas, they were infused with local flavourings and metaphors. The literature of this period owed its growth to the patronage of the kings to the poets, writers and scholars of the day who had brought with them a historical sense prompting them to keep a recording of all political activities in the Kingdom. A major work of this period was by the Assamese poet, Madhava Kandali, whose Saptakanda Ramayana in Assamese verse left a lasting impression (Sarma 45-46).

In the period that followed, around the seventeenth century, the Ahom court in Assam, known for its instinct to record historical proceedings produced many court chronicles called the Buranjis. These prose works broke away from the religious writings of the period that preceded them, there were writings that recorded the reigns of different rulers and also recorded events which happened beyond the kingdom.

Manipuri literature has a long standing history and is written in the indigenous script known as Meitei Mayek. This literature also expands to works from Assam, Tripura, Myanmar and Bangladesh written in the Manipuri language. According to Yengkokpam Bibi Devi,
“indigenous written history in Manipur began from AD 33. The Meeteis maintained records of their history in the form of royal chronicles royal genealogies and other forms of literary works” (5). An example of the an important document from this period which records the state’s historical events up to the middle of the twentieth century is the Cheitarol Kumbaba or The Royal Chronicle of the State. Early Manipuri literature was an admixture of religious ritual hymns, history, proto-scientific and astrological text, or folktales in prose and poetry. The influence of Vaishnavism and the Sanskritization of the state in the early eighteenth century encouraged the translations of epics like the Ramayan and Mahabharat into the Manipuri language. Historical accounts of expeditions were also produced.

Literature from the state of Tripura is also called Kokborok literature. A significant written work in pre-colonial times which can trace its origins from the state of Tripura is the Rajmala, now in Bengali, which is a fifteenth century chronicle of the Kings of Tripura containing their genealogies. Certain portion of the chronicle mentions that it was first written in the Kokborok language and later translated. Besides from the Rajmala, there are very few written works in Kokborok from the period and efforts to write in the language took off significantly only after the nineteenth century.

From the Sikkimese traditions, there is a plethora of classical writings by Tibetan scholars on literature, history, philosophy, medicine, astronomy and other secular subjects.

By the turn of the late eighteenth century, British presence in the region gradually infiltrated into Assam starting with the East India Company and the subsequent British Raj and its ensuing annexation of the surrounding regions would bear witness to an overhaul in the literature of the area. The start of the nineteenth century was the beginning of a period of documentation, journal writings and anthropological studies on various ethnic communities
set into motion by employees of the British East India Company. The introduction of the Roman script to local languages and dialects also produced a variety of works.

A notable work from this period from Mizoram is the work of Thomas Herbert Lewin who in 1874 published “Progressive Colloquial Exercises in the Lushai Dialect” that included translations of Mizo folktales which previously had not been recorded in written form. By the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century, colonial presence and influence of the British in the region was well established, this along with the work of Christian missionaries ushered a new phase into writings that were to follow.

1.4.2 Written Narratives: Colonial

Writings from this period of the region consist mainly of two types, first, empirical data, manuscripts, field notes, tour diaries, ethnographic and anthropological studies done by British administrators and independent scholars – all of these done from the perspective of the “outsider” and not the natives themselves. Secondly, works of religious nature particularly translations of the Bible and Christian hymn and devotional songs from English to local and indigenous languages done by Christian missionaries. Christian Missionaries of this period had a profound effect especially among the hill tribe communities who were more accepting of the religion than the plain dwellers of Assam and Manipur.

At the turn of the twentieth century, many British administrators took a keen interest in the study of customs and traditions of various ethnic groups besides carrying out administrative work. Most notably of these anthropological works carried out were done by British administrators John Henry Hutton and Joseph Phillip Mills whose study on the Garos, Khasis, Nagas, Mikirs etc., have proved to be invaluable. Also in the 40s and 50s of the century, the work of foreign scholar Christoph von Furer-Haimendorf and other collected information about the Nagas, Apa, Tanis and other various tribes in the hill areas of the
North-East laid the foundations for scientific cultural-anthropological studies (Goswami 323-29).

Suresh Kant Sharma comments that:

North-East India came into the limelight of anthropological research as early as the middle of the last century when a galaxy of foreign Christian missionaries, scholarly-oriented British administrators, distinguished sociologists and anthropologists tried to project through their writings, the traditional life-styles, customs, rituals, religious beliefs, etc., of this region. J.H. Hutton, J.P.Mill, P.R.T. Gurdon, J.Shakespear, T.C. Hodson, C. von Furer Haimendorf, Verrier Elwin and many others richly contributed in one way or the other, to our knowledge of the hitherto unknown ethno-cultural groups of the region. Further, the linguistic survey carried out by Dr. Grierson, is a mine of knowledge on ethno-linguistic variabilities of this composite area. (Preface xv)

The influence of the Christian missionaries in this period is not only the translations of religious materials, but also introducing education that has had impacts in many hill tribes communities with far-reaching outcomes especially of the first wave of writers who would use the English language for creative expression. T. Misra writes that the Christian missionaries, “took the lead in ushering in a print culture by establishing orienting presses and bringing out textbooks, books on grammar, and Christian literature and journals in the local languages” (Introduction xiv).

1.4.3 Oral Narratives

T.Misra writes that: “Most of the communities from north-east India can pride themselves for possessing a vibrant story telling tradition” (Introduction xvii). The North-East has a rich tradition of oral narratives especially in ethnic communities without the written script of their languages having to rely on this form of narrative to sustain and preserve the memories of
their cultures. The most important purpose of oral narratives is to pass on knowledge. Oral traditions and its expressions encompasses an enormous variety of spoken forms which includes proverbs, riddles, tales, nursery rhymes, legends, myths, epic songs and poems, charms, prayers, chants, songs, dramatic performances and more. Benjamina Darlong notes that:

Oral narratives are cultural materials and documents transmitted verbally from one generation to another in speeches or songs that later take up the form of folktales, folksongs, ballads, ritual sayings and even chants. No doubt, the origin of this tradition may date back to some when knew not the art of writing yet watermark their every deed for their forth coming generations. (71-82)

The introduction of the print culture during the colonial times saw a stupendous rise in the effort to collect, re-tell and print the folklore of the different communities and this became an “important part of the colonial ethnographic agenda of mapping the region for more effective administrative control over the bewildering variety of races that the British encountered” (T. Misra xvii).

Oral narratives of North-East the ethnic communities of the region in the form of prose and poetry cover a wide kaleidoscope of themes. Some of these are creation myths, origin myths, of gods and goddesses, ballads of heroism, ancestral spirits, fables, and veneration for nature, lyrics of forbidden love, moral instructions, lullabies, ritual songs, sowing and harvest songs, migration memories and many more.

1.5 Post-Independence and Contemporary Literature

A perusal of the immediate post-independence literature in English and regional languages both in fiction and in poetry from the North-East displays an occurrence of dominant themes and subject matters some of which are the lamenting of cultural identity loss and the desire to
reclaim it; modernization posing a threat to old traditions; inter-ethnic conflicts; the armed resistance and conflicts emerging with the discord between the states of the North-East and the Centre; and these themes continue to percolate into the contemporary writings of today. While Assam and Manipur has had a long tradition of oral and especially written narratives, States like Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland and Arunachal Pradesh have a very recent scribal tradition that incorporates the rich indigenous oral traditions. In the case of Tripura, there is yet to be emergent writing literati even though at present attempts are being made to retrieve the rich oral culture and modern literature from the state is taking shape in the Kokborok language.

The first generation of writers after post-independence from the North-East, most notably from Assam and Manipur wrote fiction and poetry in their regional languages. Some notable writers from Assam from this time are Birendra Kumar Bhattacharyya and Indira Goswami (also known as Mamoni Raisom Goswami). Indira Goswami had a prolific writing career with much of her fiction focusing on the plight of women and also the social and cultural differences in various Assamese communities. Her famous works include Datal Hatir Une Khowa Howda (The Moth Eaten Howdah of a Tusker, 1988) and Chinnamastar Manuhto (The Man from Chinnamasta, 2005). A pioneer of modern Assamese literature, Birendra Kumar Battacharya important works include Mrityunjay (1979) and Lyaruingom (1961) both of which won awards. The poetry of Assamese poets like Nilmani Phookan, Navakanta Barua and Hiren Battacharya "bear the marks of a variety of influences from Anglo-American and European modernist poetry, combining these with elements from the classical Indian Tradition” (T. Misra xxii). These poems dwell on the subject of appreciation for history, the dilemmas of modern man and exploring the human consciousness. From younger generation poets like Nilim Kumar, Anubhav Tulasi, Jiban Narah and Aruni Kashyap come forth verses
that reflect the “heterogeneous sensibilities of a truly polyglot culture. Images, metaphors, myths, and folklore drawn from the different linguistic communities of the region …” (xxii).

Prominent Manipuri poets are Yumlembam Ibomcha, Saratchand Thiyam, Robin S. Ngangom, Gambhini Devi, Memchoubi and Thangjam. Modern Manipuri poems are according to Robin S. Ngangom:

Born amidst the ravages of the Second World War …. The political events that followed soon after the War – the departure of the British, the questionable accession of the kingdom of Manipur to the Indian Union, the disillusionment with the new political arrangement, and the subsequent militant resistance movement … the anti-romantic trend that characterizes much of the modernist literature of post-War Manipur is reflected. (T. Misra xxiv)

Women poets of Manipur have also made an attempt to understand contemporary life and society and have raised questions on identity, freedom and status writes Thingham Kishan Singh (155).

Manipuri fiction also covers these aforementioned themes widely especially the new social realities, concern for the loss of traditional way of life, violation of human rights by militants and military forces, the conflicts that affect everyday living, the armed struggle and the “endless battles fought over the land” has had a profound impact on contemporary literature according to T. Singh (155).

As mentioned earlier, the tradition of writing is fairly new in Nagaland state, literature was confined to the oral form until the development of script for the Naga languages were made by the American Baptist missionaries. There are many tribes in the state, and it is only the major tribes that had the privilege of script development for their languages during colonial times which is why only a few writers from major tribes have contributed to the collection of
Naga writings. The influence put in by the work of Christian missionaries is unmistakable in the early phase of written literature with a wide array of writings that have a spiritual tinge and moralistic notes, in particular, translations of the Gospels. Adaptation and transcreations of oral literature also constitute a significant part of print literature in modern times.

The volatile years following post-independence with conflicts breaking out between the Indian government forces and Naga underground army, a devastating thread that binds all the North-Eastern states, had a massive impact on the cultural ethos and psyche of the Nagas and this theme is a recurrent in most writings coming out from the Nagas today. We find this in the fiction of Temsula Ao and Easterine Kire, and in non-fiction works of writers like Kaka Iralu and Charles Chasie who cover extensively on the imbroglio of political and social matters that plagues the state. On this, T. Misra comments:

> The post-1950’s generation of Naga writers have journeyed through territories of the mind which are distant from the world of simple Christian pieties upheld by the newly converted Christian writers of the earlier period. The new literature most of which is English, has sprung from the staccato cry of the machine guns and reflects the revolutionary ideals of the militants as well as the disillusionment with their ways that followed. The course of the struggle has also transformed the whole idiom of poetry as well as prose fiction and words with sinister connotations have crept into the vocabulary of common speech. (Introduction xxv)

Modern Mizo literature too draws from a rich oral tradition. While much of the secular prose literature is derived from myths and folktales, the poetry draws inspiration from the rich corpus of folk songs that the various Mizo groups possess. The coming of Christianity to Mizoram had a profound effect especially in the early phase of written literature in Mizoram. As in Nagaland and Meghalaya, the Roman script was adapted for local languages and some the first literary works accomplished were translations of religious books and songs.
According to Margaret Ch. Zama despite the effort of the British to ‘civilize’ and marginalize the tradition of oral literature, folk songs and narratives, the Mizo’s innate love for songs, ballads and narrative have survived and this may also be a reason why written works in English are few simply that the adopted language does not capture the essence of Mizo experience. Most of the literature churned out from the state is written in Mizo tawng. Aside from writings of religious contents, a huge body of songs were also composed on the theme of love, nature, and patriotism. Some well-known composers are Awithangpa, Hrawva, Vankhama, Lalzova and P.S. Chawngthu. An important writer in the literary corpus of Mizo writings is Biakliana who is notable for writing the first Mizo novel Hawilopari (1936) and a collection of short stories Lali (1937). The first drama Sangi Inleng by Lalthagfala Sailo was published in 1963 (Zama, “Mizo Literature” 210).

Like the other states of the North-East, a striking recurrent subject matter in fiction and non-fiction writings of Mizo literature is the period of insurgency (1966-1986) that paralyzed normal life and traumatized the people. Fictional works such as James Dokhuma’s Silaimu Ngaihawn (1998) and Rinawmin (1970), and Zikpuii Pa (1989) are some noteworthy novels that deal with the insurgency movement. These writings are also sometimes called ‘conflict or insurgency literature/ writing’ (Zama, “Mizo Literature” 212).

The same story of a colonial ‘civilizing’ mission was repeated in the Khasi-Jaintia Hills as elsewhere in the region where a people were persuaded to abandon their rich indigenous oral tradition and to adopt an alien way of life. The Khasi language in the absence of a script, like many tribal languages, developed a written literature only in the nineteenth century. The welsh missionaries were the first to introduce the Roman script to the Khasi language and they took the initiative to publish hymns, moral fables, and Bible stories in the Khasi language for almost fifty years. But by the end of the nineteenth century there was a clarion call for Khasi writers to challenge the monopoly of intellectual and cultural affairs by the
works of these missionaries. Some important personalities of this rise in national awakening amongst the Khasis were Rabon Singh, Singh Berry, Soso Tham and Jeeban Roy. In modern Khasi literature we find themes that lament the loss of culture, the need to seek out roots, the problems of negotiating with different ethnicities, alienation and angst.

In Arunachal Pradesh, first generation fiction writers Lummer Dai and Yeshe Dorjee Tjongchi contribute an interesting facet to Arunachali literature by writing in Asamiya. This is because Asamiya is the language of their education. In their works Dai and Thongchi question the values represented by the traditional institutions that give little space to the voices of youth and women. These two writers may be considered counterparts of the litterateurs of the Indian Renaissance of the nineteenth century who encountered challenges posed by the ideals of ‘modernity’ and ‘progress’. Of the new generation of writers, Mamang Dai is a noteworthy addition to the tradition of Arunachali literature. Her lyrical prose harkens the rich oral tradition of the Arunachali people and explores the predicaments of the new generation.

In recent years, contemporary literature of the North-East is witnessing a significant number of writers writing in English and this has afforded them a wider audience and has paved the way for writers from the region to join in on the larger arena of the tradition of Indian writing in English. The use of English as a medium of creative expression by contemporary writers has special significance and reasons given the diversified nature of the region.

Like the rest of India, the use of the English language in the region was introduced by the British colonizers, however, it was the work of Christian missionaries that consolidated the use of the language. The establishment of Christian institutes, schools and colleges in the region made English the precedent language and medium of instruction. Therefore, contemporary writers who have an education in English medium schools though they speak
their mother tongues prefer to use English to write their experiences because it becomes a first language for them. This is a common thread in the fabric of English writing from the region. On the phenomenon of a new breed of English writers from the region, T. Misra makes this observation:

Many of them [writers] have had the privilege of being educated in English medium schools and they are more capable of handling that language rather than their mother tongues. This new band of writers writing in English is bound to grow in number because most of the hill-states of the region have adopted English as the official language, thus ensuring that it would be the first language of the literates … given the sizes of linguistic groups to which many of the writers belong, it is understandable that the aspiring writers should choose to write in a language through which they can reach out to a wider reader base.” (Introduction xv-xvi)

Those writers who come from a traditional oral literature employ the use of English language to capture and add the element of permanence to their experiences. Writing in a global and universal language allows writers from the region to transmit expose and present their experiences to a wider global audience. Choosing English as a medium of ‘literary expression’ is the factor that binds all the writers from the region irrespective of their diverse socio, cultural and linguistic differences. The new generation of writers have accepted the prime position of English in the intellectual sphere of the country and this change in the medium of expression has brought about some significant innovations in the choice of subject matter as well and this phenomenon has happened within a short span of time.

Contemporary literature from the North-East embraces a kaleidoscope of themes and subject matters and can even claim to have a distinctly ‘North-Eastern’ flavour. It is interesting to note that only the literature from the region has a tag to it – “Literature from North-East
India.” No other regional tags have been affixed to writings from a certain geographical direction in the tradition of Indian Writings in English and this opens up a highly debatable question of whether there is an unmistakable distinct literary stream that North-East writings possess that sets it apart from the literary trends of India.

A literary categorization based on geographical location can never be a distinguishing factor for excellence and writers from the region are justly involved in resisting such a tag. However, many writers do concede that the world they present through their writings is totally unknown to the readers outside the region and this novelty also contributes to their growing popularity.

Their growing popularity could also be a response by the homogenizing gaze of mainland India to exoticize the region thereby further perpetuating the prejudices and assumptions about an already isolated population of people. But this growing phenomenon of writers proliferating from the region and their growing popularity is still in its nascent stages and so it would be early days to study this in comprehensive detail.

It can be argued that North-East writings occupy a unique and distinct space in the tradition of Indian writing in English because of not only its unique geographical location and history but also that isolation from the mainstream proceedings that always puts the region in the position of the ‘other’. This isolation comes from within the region as it has a tendency to display a strong rootedness in the land and also from the outside where mainstream India clubs the region under a homogenous umbrella.

There is also the shared experience of history that is very familiar even though the region is home to innumerable ethnic and tribal communities. There are shared experiences and intertwined histories that threads and binds the writings from the region. Broadly the writings
from the region have features that one can argue makes it distinctly North-Eastern in character.

On the matter of the distinctness of certain features common to the writers from the region, Urvashi Butalia comments that:

Personally I find that much writing from the region has a strong sense of place. I expect that over the years, North-Eastern writers will begin to transcend borders and write about things that may not necessarily be rooted in the North-East, but for the time being it is this that makes the writing so distinct and unique. 22 (Borpujari, “Reading the North-East”)

A feature of writings from the region reflected broadly in fiction and in poetry is the need to reclaim an identity that had been ruptured by different waves of cultural invasions from the past to present. T. Misra describes it as:

An intense awareness of the cultural loss and recovery that came with the negotiation with ‘other’ cultures as a recurrent feature of the literatures of the seven north-eastern states. Each small community or linguistic group has responded through its oral or written communication to the encounters with the majoritarian cultures from either mainland India or from outside the borders of the country, in its own distinctive manner. (Introduction xiii)

The urgency to reclaim a cultural identity is shown in the literature of the region as a ‘strong-rootedness’ in the land, in the cultures, and in the traditions. Butalia observes that “writings from the region have a strong sense of place,” this sense of place and regional rootedness crops up in the writings with abundant descriptions of the physical features of the land. The evocative descriptions of the misty mountains, lolling hills, pristine rivers, bamboo groves etc., immediately paints a picture of the sights and sounds that the writers fondly reflect in
their works and that one would easily identify as typically ‘North-Eastern’ (Borpujari, “Reading the North-East”).

The prologue in Mamang Dai’s The Legends of Pensam (2006) captures this rootedness and reverence for the land eloquently:

All the river systems, in fact, are calm. Streams of glass spread across the earth like lost pieces of a shining ocean. The first line of hills beyond the plains of Assam is a strip of dark jungle. Here the narrowest ravines have wedged themselves in between each twisted and pitted hill. Higher mountains loom ahead, where the earth has been pushed up and folded into a knot of jagged peaks …. In the middle of the night a bird swoops low and calls out in a wild, staccato note. The thatch rustles. The bamboo creaks. The darkness is full of breath and sighs. (3-4)

Another example is Janice Pariat’s Boats on Land (2012) where she fondly remembers the nuances of the land she grew up in through a character in the story “Hong Kong”: “No matter the stories about Shillong’s prettiness during the monsoon – clusters of dripping pine trees, roadside waterfalls, bright blossoming umbrellas …. This afternoon out of nowhere, a faint memory stirs of the scent of pine on long walks home from school” (235).

The urgency and the fervour to assert a cultural identity that is displayed in the region’s writings also emanates from an awareness to reclaim the past where indigenous traditions and cultures were pushed to the margins by the coming of Eurocentric models of education and concepts of modernity. By collecting and printing the oral and written literatures of the past and producing reinterpretations of it through fiction, poems and prose, identity assertion is established and it reflects a “nationalistic agenda” (T. Misra xvii).

A dominant feature of North-East writings is theme of violence, insurgency and unrest. The first generation of post-independence writers are in a sense ‘children of violence’ many of
whom have grown up in close contact with people who have memories of the Partition of the Subcontinent and its tragic after-effects in the North-East. Others have experienced at close quarters the violence associated with the insurgent movements in different parts of the region that have changed the very character of the societies in many ways. The region’s idyllic natural beauty is often in stark contrast with the psychological trauma that people have endured and continue to experience due to the violence that has scarred the region.

In *The Peripheral Centre*, Gill elaborates on the history and origin of the region’s turbulent politics:

> There is a sense of deep deprivation which has been the basis of much of the unrest and violence that the region has been witnessing over the last fifty years. Most states have been besieged by three to five decades of armed conflicts which range from demands for self-determination and greater autonomy to assertions of complete secession from India, and a look at the recent past in Assam, Nagaland, Tripura and Manipur provides ample evidence of the way this has affected the lives of local populations. (5)

Each state of the North-East is fraught with insurgency problems – problems which originate with the fraught relationship that the region has with the government and this is mirrored in the literature of the region. Even though some states have seen the cessation of violence like Mizoram, sporadic violence occurring in the states of Assam, Manipur and Nagaland continue to be a debilitating factor in normal life and is etched deeply into the psyche of the people whose experiences are reflected in their writings. Ananya S. Guha writes that:

> Violence is enmeshed in the literary culture of North-East India because of long standing oppressive binaries of militarism and militancy it has been subjected to … The fact is that writers of North-East India use violence as a reactionary motif to
respond to their surroundings but not necessarily to emphasize their violence-prone existence. (“Violence”, Economic & Political Weekly)

Some few examples of works of fiction with violence and insurgent militancy as the dominant themes are Mitra Phukan’s The Collector’s Wife (2005), Temsula Ao’s These Hills Called Home: Stories from a War Zone (2006), Bijoyia Sawain’s The Shadow Men (2010), Easterine Kire’s Bitter Wormwood (2011) and Aruni Kashyap’s The House with a Thousand Stories (2013).

Similar to the older generation of writers who express a strong political awareness of addressing issues such as violence, identity and ethnicity, a new younger generation of English language writers like Jahnavi Barua, Siddhartha Sarma, Aruni Kashyap, Anjum Hasan, Daisy Hasan and Janice Pariat continue to interrogate these questions in their works. Preeti Gill comments in Tehelka Magazine on this: “Many younger writers continue to grapple with these issues. Having grown up in the shadow of the gun, their desire to analyse the common man’s reaction to insurgency is as strong as ever.”

Some writers from the region have taken issue with the unsavoury associations of words like ‘violence’ ‘insurgency’ and ‘terror’ with their literature but it is inevitable that the writings should reflect the experiences of the people and though not all literature from the North-East dwells on these matters, it does make up a significant portion of it. An example of it is when during the 1980s when political matters were at a boiling point, there was a growing convergence between North-East studies and conflict studies. The literature at the time consisted predominantly of memoirs, biographies, autobiographies, journalistic writings and some literary works in regional languages.

While an overwhelming majority of fiction writings reflect on the theme of violence and peace, yet there are in those same stories a celebration of the endurance of the human spirit and the beauty of relationships in the midst of terror and violence.
An interesting dimension to the thematic scheme in North-East writings in English is a growing awareness about the nature-man conflict and the need for conservation of nature. With modernity comes a multitude of changes, where once there was complete harmony and balance with nature in these indigenous communities and their lifestyles, modern living has caused a rupture between them and nature. The land that has sustained them for centuries is slowly disappearing into concert jungles and this concern is raised by writers from the region. Margaret Ch. Zama stresses on the intricate dependency and relationship of the indigenous communities with nature: “The great variety of people in the North-East survived through the centuries because they were one with ecology, and developed their indigenous knowledge systems to sustain both themselves and the environment that accommodate them.”

(Introduction 14, Marg Magazine)

There are a sizeable number of stories about the growing awareness of the wanton destruction of forests and wildlife in the name of development. Yeshe Dorjee Thongchi’s “The Forest Guard”, Monalisa Chankija’s “The Hunter’s Story”, and Arupa Patangia Kalita’s “The Conflict” are a few. The following paragraph from Temsula Ao’s “Laburnum for My Head” (Laburnum for My Head Stories) is a symbolic declaration of nature’s tenacity, man’s vanity and impermanence which poignantly expresses the sentiments of many writers who are awakening to the rapaciousness of man’s destruction of his ecological surroundings:

Every May, something extraordinary happens in the new cemetery of the sleepy little town. Standing beyond the southernmost corner of the vast expanse of the old-cemetery – dotted with concrete vanities, both ornate and simple – the humble Indian Laburnum bush erupts in glory, with its blossoms of yellow mellow beauty. The first time it happened, some years ago, surprised visitors to the concrete memorials assumed that it was an accident of nature. But each year as the bush grew taller and the blossoms more plentiful, the phenomenon stood out as a magnificent incongruity,
in the space where man tries to cling to a make-believe permanence, wrenched from him by death. His inheritors try to preserve his presence in concrete structures, erected in his homage, vying to out-do each other in size and style. This consecrated ground has thus become choked with the specimens of human conceit. (1)

Though the mentioned themes have a dominant streak in most writings from the region, there are many young and new voices that are also incorporating the issues of alienation, nationhood, perspectives of the other, angst, modern living maladies etc., into their writings. As mentioned earlier, these writings in English and its foray into the greater tradition of Indian writings in English is still very much in its initial stages. It will take a good few decades before critical studies on these narratives are taken up seriously.

Even if the nomenclature of these writings as ‘literature(s) from North-East India’ is subject to contestation, it is of no doubt that their ‘other-ness’ has helped in the overcoming of their isolation once their feelings and thoughts are textualized, inscribed in written form in forging similarities of world views with other cultures yet help in retaining the uniqueness of their geographically endowed cultural differences in their writings. Kailash C. Baral in “Articulating Marginality: Emerging Literatures from Northeast India” opines that it is for this very reason that it is impertinent to study the writings from the region without considering the socio-historical-cultural conditions within which the writer from the North-East lives and writes while bringing into his/her writing the unique personal-cultural experience and sensibility (Emerging Lit. 4-5).

1.6 Conclusion

In concluding this chapter, I would argue that the North-East is a complex synthesis and amalgamation of heterogeneous population of people and this is clearly reflected in the literature of its past and present. In contemporary times, the emerging popularity of English
writings from the region is a phenomenon that acknowledges that the literature is distinctly and uniquely ‘North-eastern’ in its flavour. A close reading of the works of fiction or otherwise in the literature of the region cannot be accomplished without taking into consideration the socio-historical-cultural contexts in which they were written. This also more importantly paves the way to bring into discussion an interesting development that with the rise of fiction writings in English from the North-East in the form of novels and short stories having a meteoric rise in popularity and in publications in the first decade of the twenty-first century, it is a compelling to note that the contribution of women writers have been prodigious.

How are we to perceive this surge in the growth of women writers who in contemporary times are contributing significant input into the consciousness of the intellectual and cultural realm of the literatures of the North-East and in the tradition of Indian writing in English, and more importantly in the tradition of women’s writing in India as a whole? Where do we posit these torch-bearers? What do they have to say through their writings? These are some of the many questions that I will attempt to answer in the following chapters with caution knowing that the scope of my study in this field is a fairly untouched and it is important to reiterate the fact that one is wading into an uncharted territory with just a handful of limited critical studies attempted on it.

A historical inquiry into women’s writing in India and in the North-East will supplement my examination of the growing phenomenon of women writers from the region and the emerging feminist consciousness of a new generation of English fiction writers from India’s North-East.
Notes

1. A generic term in Sanskrit literature used for people who lived in the mountains particularly in the Himalayas and North-East India.

2. The sobriquet, the Land of the Seven Sisters, had been originally coined to coincide with the inauguration of the new states in January, 1972, by Jyoti Prasad Saikia, a journalist in Tripura in the course of a radio talk show later compiled a book on the interdependence and commonness of the Seven Sister States and named it the Land of Seven Sisters. It has been primarily for this reason that the moniker that has caught on, see Sandagi 3.

3. In 1971, the Indian Central government set up the North Eastern Council by an Act of parliament. The NEC Act was amended in 2002 to include membership for the State of Sikkim.

4. The British colonial period or better known as the British Raj, was the rule of the British Empire in the Indian subcontinent between 1858 and 1947.

5. The Bengal Province comprising of Eastern Bengal and Assam was an administrative subdivision of the British Raj between 1905 and 1912.

6. A princely state, also called a native state was a nominally sovereign monarchy under a local or regional ruler in a subsidiary alliance with a greater power. The predominant usage of the term specifically refers to a semi-sovereign principality on the Indian subcontinent during the British Raj that was not directly governed by the British, but rather by a local ruler under a form of indirect rule, for further reading see S.N. Sadasivan 6 -7 and Ramusack 2.

8. North-East India has always been a magnet for population geneticists due to its unique, strategic geographical location and the presence of linguistically, culturally and demographically diverse populations. New and ongoing scientific research in genetics from the region suggests that since the location of the North-East creates a natural land bridge between the Indian subcontinent and Southeast Asia, it could have been an important corridor for human migrations and movements of populations from India to East/ Southeast Asia and vice versa, see Mohan et al.

9. For detailed descriptions on the history and culture of each ethnic tribe aforementioned, see Sengupta.

10. For a thorough study of this exceedingly complex subject, see Pattanayak.

11. Brahmanism is an ancient religious tradition that emerged from the earlier Vedic religion which was the religion of the Indo-Aryans of north India. The Brahmans of Manipur are understood to be migrants who arrived in the state over a period of time. The first arrival of the Brahmans in the state happened during the reign of King Kyamba (1467-1508CE) which is recorded in ancient manuscripts. Although other sources also claim of the possibility of the arrival of the Brahmans in the state as early as the fourth century CE and gradually absorbed into the Meitei population of the valley, see S. Devi 29-36.

12. Vaishnavism is a tradition of Hinduism. Through the teachings of Sankara Deva, a saint-scholar in Assam, this offshoot of Hinduism was not confined but also penetrated into the Patkai hills and Tirap valley in the medieval period. The Noctes a major tribe of the Tirap
valley adopted Vaishnavism as their own religion, see Rao 359-63.

13. Mahayana Buddhism, a form of Buddhism, was brought by Buddhist missionaries from Tibet to Sikkim and northern and western frontier of Arunachal Pradesh. The late medieval period also saw the migration of a number of Buddhist tribes from Burma (Myanmar) to the borders of Assam and Arunachal Pradesh, see Tripathy and Mize 286-96.

14. Christianity came to the hill districts of the North-East as a consequence of administrative policy at a time when the British parliament was seeking to reduce the powers of the East India Company which was more interested in expanding trade then spreading Christianity. The Charter Act of 1813, which laid down the duties of administration to introduce useful knowledge, help religious and moral improvement, gave a fillip for mission work as the British administration supported missionary work, each facilitating the work of the other, see Goldsmith.

15. The first American Baptist missionaries reached North-East India in 1836. Their work began along the Brahmaputra River in the leading towns of Assam plains and gradually into the hill tribes.

16. Animism is the belief system of some indigenous tribal peoples that a spiritual essence is possessed by non-human entities like animals, trees and inanimate objects. According to the English anthropologist Edward Burnett Tylor, Animism is the theory in which the “Phenomenon of nature” is endowed with personal life (Religion of the Savages, 1866), see Kamei.
17. A vast genre of ancient Indian literature covering a broad range of topics, in particular myths, legends and traditional lore.

18. The Ahom kingdom in Assam was established by a Tai prince, originally from Mong Mao in China. The kingdom was established in 1228 and maintained its sovereignty for 600 years, see K. Devi 105-09.

19. Kokborok is the principle language of the state of Tripura.

20. For a more comprehensive reading on the topic, see Lewin.

21. Mizo Twang is the native language of the Mizos who are living in Mizoram and its neighbouring states in North-East India. It is also known as the Duhlian or Lushai language.

22. Urvashi Butalia is a renowned Indian feminist and publisher, see Borpujari.
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By and large, I have followed the 8th Edition of MLA Documentation but where certain types of entries have not been specified in the 8th Edition, I have reverted to the 7th Edition MLA Documentation.


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