Chapter IV

*New Stories in New Bottles: A New Historicist Appraisal of the Postmodernist Idiom and Techniques in (Hi)Stories of the Diaspora*

“To conquer English may be to complete the process of making ourselves free”.

(Salman Rushdie, *Imaginary Homelands* 17)

“[A]t its most brilliant, its most elegant, New Historicism is characteristically postmodern”.

(Catherine Belsey “Making Histories Then and Now” 29)

The fictions of history by the Indian diasporic writers in the post-independence era doubtlessly evince postmodern sensibility. And postmodernism, as Linda Hutcheon says, is a “problematizing force in our culture today” (*A Poetics of Postmodernism* xi), which cannot escape the “economic (late capitalist) and ideological (liberal humanist) dominants of its time” (xiii). Literature itself, according to a broad consensus of Marxist approaches, is influenced by the material conditions at the time of its construction, and these socio-economic conditions leave their traits in the linguistic, thematic and formal concerns of the texts. Charles Russell argues: “Postmodern literature recognizes that all perception, cognition, action and articulation are shaped, if not determined, by the social domain. There can be no simple opposition to culture, no transcendent perspective or language, no
secure singular self definition, for all find their meaning only within a social framework” (Poets, Prophets and Revolutionaries 246). This comment is very close to the logic of New Historicism which explores the literary as well as the non-literary constructs of a given era in the effort to assess their larger implications and significance. Since 1980’s New Historicism, also known as ‘Cultural Poetics’ has been offering its methods for analyzing ‘texts’, which include all forms of print, filmic, hypertexual, oral, and other narrative practices. In this chapter an attempt is made to assess the postmodern idiom in the chosen fictions of history by the diaspora in the light of the theoretical arguments of New Historicism.

‘Historicism’ is the belief that past events can be understood not in universal terms but in terms of particular contexts in which they occurred. But ‘New Historicism’ finds new meanings in literary texts by analyzing in detail some marginal non literary anecdote or text from the relevant period. It is premised on the Foucauldian assumption that what counts as ‘knowledge’ in each historical period is dependent upon the ‘epistemic’ shifts. ‘What is knowledge’ is determined by certain key institutions in society like Church, University, Government, political parties and so on which also change or bring in other institutions. For Said, the analysis of colonial discourse was facilitated by Foucault’s “understanding of how the will to exercise dominant control in society and history has also discovered a way to clothe, disguise, rarefy, and wrap itself systematically in the language of truth, discipline, rationality, utilitarian value, and knowledge” (Said, The World 216). Ipso facto, knowledge serves as the source of power, making statements as to
what is normal/abnormal, valid/invalid, and true/false. It is also significant that there are no transcendental and pure ‘facts’ in history, because every fact in history is a construct or conjecture.

According to David Macey New Historicism as “a style of literary analysis developed mainly in the United States from the 1980s onwards which challenges the dominance of deconstruction and the legacy of New Criticism by attempting to produce a ‘cultural poetics’ and reinforcing a historical dimension to literary studies”. But this “invocation of historical framework does not return to the traditional view that history is a stable or unified body of facts or a ‘neutral’ background to the literary text; it is a constituent part of both the ‘acts’ and the ‘text’”, adds Macey (The Penguin Dictionary of Critical Theory 270). As Jurgen Pieters comments, earlier historicists upheld a quasi-positivist belief in the objectivity and the unproblematic representability of the historical past. But New Historicists like Stephen Greenblatt, Louis Montrose, Stephen Orgel and Robert Weimann, as staunch believers in post structural theories of representation and signification, could not reduce history to a single massive monolith that left no room for dissonant voices (“New Historicism: Postmodern Historiography Between Narrativism and Heterology” 21-22). Postmodern history and postmodern literature have both rejected the ideal of representation that dominated them for so long (Hutcheon, A Poetics of Postmodernism 15, Lionel Gossman, “History and Literature: Reproduction or Signification” 38-9).
New Historicists feel compelled to analyze residual, emergent, repressed and marginal elements of culture which are less dominant. They are narratologists who believe that the past is essentially available to us in narratives shaped by others. Such narratives are not transparent and do not give access to reality. History is basically a story and is told in the form of stories, and so it is mediated by techniques of narration. Frank Ankersmit puts forward the concept of ‘narrativist historicism’, referring to the historiographic practice whose descriptions and interpretations of the past are characterized by an absolute accuracy (History and Tropology 126). The logic of old historiography is governed by what he calls a “double transparency postulate” (126). On the one hand, traditional historicists consider texts to be transparent that they offer a direct and unproblematic access to historical reality; on the other hand texts are unmarked by the intentions and critical performances of the subject that created them (126). Greenblatt is against the traditional historians who ‘monologize’ history, who reduce historical periods to a single homogeneous tradition. He proposes a fully dialogical practice which takes the past in all its heterogeneity, and also the historicity of the historian. It considers history as a dialogue within the past as well as with the past.

Postmodernity sustains the recognition that all ‘reality’ as we know it is ‘discursive reality’, and “genuine historicity” is that which openly acknowledges its own discursive and contingent identity (Hutcheon, A Poetics of Postmodernism 24). It refuses the view that only history has a truth claim, asserting that both history
and fiction are discourses, human constructs, signifying systems, and both derive their truth from that identity (ibid 93).

Jean Howard speaks about the New Historicists’ affinity for ‘the particular, the anecdote and the ‘real’: “Instead of invoking a monolithic and repressive history, one must acknowledge the existence of ‘histories’ produced by various subjects variously positioned…” (Quoted by Ivo Kamps, “New Historicizing the New Historicism 163-164). Kamps states that the New Historicists’ affinity with peculiarity and ‘histories’, refers to the use of historical anecdotes as a corrective of, or supplement to existing historical narratives which are organized around a set of principles demonstrating cause and effect sequences, origins and developmental trajectories. All historical narratives reveal a process of selection that judges some facts relevant and others immaterial. This selection is always ideological in the Althusserian sense.

H. Aram Veeser enumerates five fundamental assumptions about New Historicism as follows:

1) that every expressive act is embedded in a network of material practices; 2) that every act of unmasking, critique and opposition uses the tools it condemns and risks falling prey to the practice it exposes; 3) literary and non literary “texts” circulate inseparably; 4) that no discourse, imaginative or archival, gives access to unchanging truths or expresses unalterable human nature; and 5) that a critical method
and a language adequate to describe culture under capitalism participate in the economy they describe (“The New Historicism” 2).

New Historicists attempt to study a work through an analysis of its historical context and also to make sense of its cultural and intellectual history through a parallel reading of both literary and non literary texts. Stephen Greenblatt in his Renaissance Self – Fashioning: From More to Shakespeare (1980) exposes the horrendous colonial policies operating within Renaissance plays. He brings out the practice of self fashioning that people consciously and/or unconsciously embarked on to integrate themselves with the accepted standards of society. He also clarifies how the powerless and oppressed ‘other’ were always marginalized and dehumanized in Renaissance plays and correspondingly in society or vice versa. In “Resonance and Wonder” (1990) Greenblatt says that “the idea [of New Historicism] is not to find outside the work of art some rock to which literary interpretation can be securely chained but rather to situate the work in relation to other representational practices operative in culture at a given moment in both its history and our own” (80).

Stephen Greenblatt, a pioneer in New Historicism, defines it as “a shift away from a criticism centered on ‘verbal icons’ toward a criticism centered on cultural artifacts” (“Resonance and Wonder” 3). New Historicist readings involve a parallel reading or juxtaposition of the literary and the non-literary texts of the same historical period. Both are given equal importance and allowed to work as sources of
information or interrogation with each other. This way, the non literary text becomes not a con-text, but a co-text, along with the ‘literary’ work.

Arif Dirlik’s query about the postcolonial scholars, which is quoted here, briefly summarizes a major concern of New Historicism as well: “[T]he question . . . is not whether this global intelligentsia can (or should) return to national loyalties but whether, in recognition of its own class position in global capitalism, it can generate a thoroughgoing criticism of its own ideology and formulate practices of resistance against the system of which it is a product6 (quoted by Lazarus, The Cambridge Companion 6). The literary works produced by the postcolonial cosmopolitan diasporic writers are marked by their global experiences and at the same time are products of globalization, liberalization and commoditization.

However, as Morris Dickstein comments, professional historians often find the work of New Historicism unconvincing7. They mostly remain committed to empirical canons of evidence, to sequential narratives that emphasize beginnings and endings, cause and effect. They feel obliged to weigh competing explanations, as the best interpretive works have always done.

Ivo Kamps expresses strong discontentment towards Gallagher and Greenblatt’s work- Practicing New Historicism (2000), - which he says is “neither personal nor (New) Historical enough”. He states that “from more than two decades of the New Historicist work we know that the New Historicist have a predilection for tales of violence, sexual deviance, salutary anxiety, religious heresy, erotic
dreams, and so forth” (“New Historicizing the New Historicism” 162). Besides, though Greenblatt and other New Historicists pledge strong fascination for Clifford Geertz, Michel Foucault, Pierre Bourdieu, Friedrich Nietzsche and the eighteenth century German philosopher Johann Gottfried Von Herder, they do not reason what was ‘outside’ those texts that made them interested in their contents. Kamps also points out that Greenblatt himself has confessed the influence history had over his thought, and states that it is certainly awkward for any critic to breach academic decorum and bring the personal into the analysis of the professional. At the same time Greenblatt rejects Jean Howard’s call for a more overt self consciousness of New Historicist method. This contradiction in the theory and practice of Greenblatt prompts Kamps to urge New Historians to turn their eyes more rigorously to the broader historical circumstances and sources of their own emergence (“New Historicizing the New Historicism” 163).

What is narrated about Indian history or about historical people in the (hi)stories of the diaspora may not be authentic at all. As Tharoor’s narrator comments: “It is only a story. But you learn something about a man from the kind of stories people make up about him” (The Great Indian Novel 141). “Of such coincidences, Ganapathy, is history made”, comments the narrator (ibid 140). The significant issue is that historicizing has been identified to be the source of power. The cosmopolitan literary diaspora exert power over Indian history offering parallel versions to the official histories and pre-empting the very possibility of authenticity in historical narratives.
The fictional universe unveiled by the diasporic writers is not a mirror or a realistic portrait of the contemporary world. Instead they construct parallel universes which vary from the ‘real’ world. A primary function of literature itself is to open up other worlds that do not exist. The urge for constructing other worlds follows the discontentment with the present state of affairs. No version of the ‘real’ is completely satisfactory and writers have to keep on writing, until they find a better one, which generations of creative writers never finish finding. Linda Hutcheon says that “postmodernism deliberately confuses the notion that history’s problem is verification, while fiction’s is veracity”, but both fiction and history mediate the world with the intent of meaning construction (A Poetics of Postmodernism 112). Paul Veyne qualifies history as ‘a true novel’, pointing out the shared conventions of both discourses such as selection, organization, diegesis, anecdote, temporal pacing and emplotment (Comment on écrire l’histoire 10).

 Literary endeavours can be compared to the task of the existential character Sisyphus. Every writer attempts to narrativize issues that do not bend itself to narration as narration requires some kind of unity, a beginning, middle and end. There are only ‘conditions’ in the world which a writer tries to unify into a narrative. The lives of people are plotless, as ‘plots’ are only imposed on certain ‘conditions’ in the lives of people for the sake of understanding. As Rushdie makes clear in Imaginary Homelands, reality is only a fiction10. Events which do not have much significance by themselves are taken, and some logic is invented to connect a person with that event in a narrative. So is Midnight’s Children, wherein we find
Saleem Sinai intimately connected with Indian history so that there is some point in his existence. Saleem is positioned as a ‘midnight’s child’ in the very title. The desire and need for identity is evidenced in the very name of the novel. In the beginning of the novel Saleem expresses his hope “to end up meaning – yes, meaning something” and adds, “above all things I fear absurdity” (9).

It is significant to explore as to what the diasporic writers have to offer that other writers fail to give their readers. What distinguishes the writings of diasporic writers from the oeuvre of other domicile litterateurs? They too construct fictions, uniting conditions in such a way that their diasporic identities are involved in the narration. Their very condition of interstitial existence is a sine qua non for the kind of writing they are engaged in. Julia Kristeva articulates the necessity of the exilic situation: “You will have understood that I am speaking the language of exile. This language of the exile muffles a cry. It doesn’t ever shout. . . Our present age is one of exile. How can we avoid sinking into the mire of common sense, if not by becoming a stranger to one’s own country, language, sex and identity? Writing is impossible without some king of exile” (“A New Type of Intellectual: The Dissident” 298)

A great chunk of the (Hi)stories of the Indian diaspora in the post independence era are written in English. The selection of a language other than one’s own mother tongue for writing is not accidental. It is motivated by a number of concerns including an awareness of the expected readership and their ‘class’, the economy of the publishing industry, the status and acceptance of English language among the academia and the general public, the ‘horizon of expectations’ of the
readers, etc. It is this selection, adaptation and amplification of English and the reasons behind them that are being analyzed here using the tools of New Historicism.

The language used for fiction is of immense significance in the postcolonial context, as postcolonial theory attempts to interrogate all forms of hegemony, claims of superiority of values and cultural practices including literature. The postcolonial diasporic writers, motivated by the ‘will to power’ and without any obsessive allegiance to the home country, choose English for their literary endeavours. The choice of English language is not apolitical or disinterested. Veeser’s statement regarding New Historicism that ‘a critical method and a language adequate to describe culture under capitalism participate in the economy they describe’ becomes incontestable when one is made aware of the role English language plays in India (“New Historicism” 2). Works written by Indian authors in English do engage in the capitalist economy they cater to in many ways. Vikram Seth was catapulted to the position of one of the most ‘successful’ writers of all times, mainly due to the huge amount of initial royalty that he bagged for his A Suitable Boy, which was worth more than two crores of Indian currency. Rushdie’s Midnight’s Children was celebrated also due to its dexterous use of ‘English English’ contrasted to ‘Indian English’ used by other Indian writers, which silenced many literary connoisseurs who used to look down upon the linguistic incompetence of writers from India.
The African writers Ngugi wa Thiong'o and Chinua Achebe became popular first by writing in English. The latter still writes in English like Rushdie, whereas the former has left English for his native Gikuyu. The selection of language for writing has always posed a problem to postcolonial writers. V. S. Naipaul, George Lamming and Toni Morrison among others have discussed this issue. Writing in The Times Literary Supplement on August 15, 1958 Naipaul lamented: “Americans do not want me because I am too British. The public here [England] do not want me because I am too foreign... I live in England and depend on an English audience. Yet I write about Trinidad and more particularly the Indian community there” (Quoted from Mishra, “English Language, Postcolonial Subjectivity and Globalization in India” 400). Mishra feels that Naipaul’s frequent references to the inability of a writer to cater to the community he comes from, may have been instrumental in Naipaul’s colonial outlook and the urge to cultivate an English speaking readership in his uncertain early days as a writer (ibid 401). George Lamming in the Pleasures of Exile (1960) has referred to the difficulty of finding adequate readership in the Caribbean and the need for a Caribbean writer to migrate to the English speaking metros so as to get English-knowing readers and the facilities to get works published. Tony Morrison, who portrayed the difficulty of westernized blacks in her Tar Baby (1981), again in her Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination (1992), states that “until very recently, and regardless of the race of the author the readers of virtually all of American fiction have been positioned as white. I am interested to know what that assumption has
meant to the literary imagination. When does racial ‘unconsciousness’ or awareness of race enrich interpretive language, and when does it impoverish it” (xii).

Pramod K. Mishra points out that English, like the phenomenon of modernity, possesses a double-edged sword in India- possessing the potential for a liberating future while at present creating and abetting the production and reproduction of a hierarchical world12. In the long history of India, there was never any official language that was closest to the language of the people. Instead, the official language of any time attained its hierarchical status by virtue of its confinement among the elite and distance from the masses. The Indian masses have always been ruled by the ideology of an elite language, whether indigenous or foreign (“English Language, Postcolonial Subjectivity and Globalization in India” 384). Mishra relates the elite nature of English language as a continuum of the exalted position that Sanskrit and Persian once had in India. Besides, English language had its own legitimacy in the secular as well as Christian modernist ideology of British colonialism, an ideology that emphasized the conversion of the Sanscrit and Persian oriented traditional elites who were class, caste and land-bound, into colonial elites through whom the English ruled the colonial populace.

Mishra quotes Braj B. Kachru’s claims that English is attitudinally and linguistically neutral, a language with pan-South Asian acceptance, a language of power and prestige and opportunity, allowing access to attitudinally and materially desirable domains of power and knowledge13. But only five percent of the Indian people are capable of using that language, as Kachru himself admits (385). Given
these qualifications, Mishra feels that it is difficult to characterize with certainty whether English is a source of domination or liberation, although it possesses both possibilities. He continues:

But its exclusive, class-based dissemination has for the most part played the role of an ideology of keeping the vernacular masses in a perpetually subordinate place. As a result, it has functioned mostly as a source of elitism in postcolonial India, perpetuating the workings of Filtration Theory of T. B. Macaulay and John Stuart Mill and instituting a structure of what Robert Phillipson calls linguicism-antagonistic to vernacular linguistic and cultural life and therefore responsible for its impoverishment. Whatever liberatory possibilities English contained, which were evident in the Indian inspiration of Indian nationalists received both for the freedom struggle and literary enrichment, and even now possesses, these possibilities have been belied by its confinement to the elite sectors of the metropolitan as well as landowning rural Indians. Because of its exclusive use as a language of government and technology, and of economically and politically powerful groups in India, English has left the ninety-five percent of the Indians who cannot use it high and dry (“English Language, Postcolonial Subjectivity and Globalization in India” 385-386).
Referring to the cover page of Harish Trivedi’s *Colonial Transactions* (1995) which has on it the photo of a suited Englishman and a dhoti-clad, paste-smeared Brahmin looking up to the Englishman in a gesture of collaboration, Mishra avers that in the transaction between the British and the Indians that happened during the colonial encounter was mainly the replacement of one elite language for another— that is Sanskrit for English (“English Language, Postcolonial Subjectivity and Globalization in India” 387).

But there is an impending issue as to what result the selection of English produces upon the postcolonial subjects. Mishra refers to the insightful comment of Pennycook that “if we accept the argument that subjectivities are constructed in discourse, then we can see how the spread of English is not only a structural reproducer of global inequalities, but also produces inequality by creating subject positions that contribute to their own subjectification” (ibid 388). When transposed and transferred through the history of colonialism into the globalized postcolonial space by means of education, English is a medium of communication. It is a language rooted in caste, class and gendered relations, enabling certain acts and disabling others, according to Mishra. In the transactions of Indian postcolonial space, English has always remained as the language of the upper class which is evident from the fact that only less than five percent of the people in India can use this language. It always has served to be the prerogative of the educated, elite, powerful sections of the society which most often coincide with being members of the upper-class society.
Besides Gauri Viswanathan’s *Masks of Conquest* (1989), Mishra talks about three other prominent postcolonial critics who have made language the central problematic in their theorization of the hegemonic project of British colonialism, viz, Partha Chatterjee, Ashis Nandy and Ranajit Guha. Viswanathan, through her analysis of the workings of English studies, Guha, through his archaeology of Indian historiography and Nandy, through his examination of the evolution of psychoanalysis in India concur that the colonial project of hegemony over India through the imposition of English did not work. Mishra comments:

> [I]t is now a cliché in contemporary postcolonial discourse to suggest the Calibanic function of English in undermining the structures of dominance imposed by Eurocentric colonialism. The formation of counter-discourse through a process of what Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin call abrogation and appropriation has been an ongoing function in which the myth of the centrality embodied in the concept of a standard language is forever overturned... that English becomes *english* (390).

It was Raja Rao who first realized the need for the subversive use of English by writers from the colonies. Long before Salman Rushdie coined the phrase ‘the empire writes back’ in 1980, and long before the volume *The Empire Writes Back* (1989) was published, Rao was aware of the critical impasse which Third World writers writing in English were facing and that is why he suggested solutions for overcoming the trouble of choosing a right model:
One has to convey in a language that is not one’s own the spirit that is one’s own. One has to convey the various shades and omissions of a certain thought movement that looks maltreated in an alien language... *We cannot write like the English. We should not. We cannot write only as Indians. We have grown to look at the large world as part of us.* Our method of expression therefore has to be a dialect which will someday prove to be as distinctive and colourful as the Irish or the American. Time alone will justify it. The tempo of Indian life must be infused into our English expression, even as the tempo of American or Irish life has gone into the making of theirs. (*Kanthapura* vii, italics added).

Chinua Achebe, George Lamming and Rushdie variously call the practice as “the empire writing back” or Caliban’s tongue. The Calibanic paradigm has been promoted by other theorists like Dominique O. Mannoni, Aime Cesaire, Fernandez Retamar, Homi K Bhabha\(^{16}\). Expressing agreement with the prospects of this subversive strategy Mishra also points out that in the globalized context the binary distinction between Calibans, Prosperos and Ariels have dwindled, and the clear demarcation that was available in the political colonization by Europe has diffused into multiple forms at various sites of empowerment and disempowerment (“English Language, Postcolonial Subjectivity and Globalization in India” 391).

George Lamming in his *Pleasures of Exile* (1960) traces the role of language in the relationship between colonizer and colonized, through an analysis of Prospero
—Caliban duality: “Prospero lives in the absolute certainty that Language, which is his gift to Caliban, is the very prison in which Caliban’s achievements will be realized and restricted (109). Therefore, as S. Padmanabhan says, Caliban must borrow Prospero’s tongue and adopt his speech for Caliban’s own purpose. He becomes bilingual, and articulates his rediscovered culture in Prospero's language as well as his own. And in the process, Caliban transforms his acquired language, bestowing it with new meanings which Prospero never dreamt of, so that the language he shares with Prospero and the language he has created out of it are no longer identical (“The Inheritance of Caliban” 15). A postcolonial reading of The Tempest reveals how the colonized Caliban is invested with the power to liberate Prospero the colonizer. Prospero teaches Caliban to speak the language of the colonizer, and thus Caliban becomes bilingual. Now Caliban is able to curse Prospero for teaching him language. He can understand Prospero's words, but Prospero is ignorant of Caliban’s native tongue. Here, “Prospero can choose either to remain ignorant and proud, or he can shed his colonial arrogance and prejudice, consort with Caliban on an equal footing and humbly learn the mysteries of his “fresh-forged” tongue; he has thus a great opportunity to drop his despotic role and become a human being. In liberating himself, Caliban has paved the way to Prospero’s freedom” (S. Padmanabhan, “The Inheritance of Caliban” 16).

Nobody ever publishes a work if it does not anticipate a potential readership. As Ross Chambers comments, “People do not tell stories in vacuo, they do things with stories just as they do things with words, and storytelling is a mediating of
human relationships” (“Narrative Point” 60). The works published, if they have to be read, have to fulfill certain demands and expectations of the readers. One such demand is the language that is used in the work. The diasporic cosmopolitans have chosen English because of its wider readership, its greater acceptability, the prestige that a writer in English enjoys both in literary and social circles, the greater amount of money that a work in English fetches a writer since it enjoys an international market, the scope of being globally known which often does not happen to writers in regional languages.

As one thinks along the line of Veeser, works in English by the diasporic writers of India do describe the culture of India from certain personal vantage points, but not with the mission of giving it wide circulation round the globe and win admirers for the culture of their home countries. It is ‘the will to power’ that basically motivates the diasporic writers to construct fictions of history. English being the language of power is the best suited medium for such fictions. This is why they can be found to maintain a light hearted vein in handling issues of history and using language in fashionable ways, though none of them denounces history or underestimates its potential. Basically what the Indian diasporic writers do with their (hi)stories is to play the game that the colonial powers once played in India, that is, to present history from certain angles so that the one who narrates history benefits. The analysis of colonial historiography (in Chapter II) clarifies how the practice of misrepresenting history invests the narrators with power over what is narrated.
Bill Ashcroft suggests the idea of ‘interpolation’ - which “ironically reverses Althusser’s concept of ‘inerpellation’” - as a suitable means for investing the colonized with a potential for agency (Post-Colonial Transformation 11). Interpolation, according to Ashcroft, would change our understanding of the way power operates in colonization. “Rather than being swallowed up by the hegemony of empire, the apparently dominated culture and the ‘interpellated’ subjects within it are quite able to interpolate the various modes of imperial discourse to use it for different purposes, to counter its effects by transforming them” (11). Ashcroft says that “language is the key to this interpolation, the key to its transformative potential, for it is in language that the colonial discourse is engaged at its most strategic point” (11). The reason for the selection of English by the cosmopolitan Indian diasporic writers for the narration of their personal versions of national histories is none other than this.

Various sources show that only a small percent of the Indian population can handle English properly. It is this small percentage of the Indian population endowed with the power of the English tongue that has more say in matters of both national and international import. Most of the major industrialists from India can speak English. Almost all major political figures at the helm of their political parties can handle English along with Hindi. Out of the thirty most widely circulated dailies in India, twelve are in English\textsuperscript{17}. The language of the majority of web sites is English. The constitution of India was first drafted and is most often quoted in English. Most of the governmental transcriptions are in English. Out of
the twenty most watched television news channels in India, a majority are in English. The most privileged and prestigious schools and colleges in India have English as medium of education. It is considered as a status symbol to be able to use English with regional languages in popular television chat shows and phone-in-programmes. Most of the advertisements for their social acceptability resort to words or expressions in English. A vast chunk of the books published in India are in English. Finally the only language that can truly connect the entire people of India is English. It has the reputation than any other language for being the lingua franca in all circles in India. John Roosa and Ayu Ratih (2001) state that the postcolonial critic is preoccupied with literature in English language. They argue that the term ‘postcolonial’ in literary criticism has partly emerged from studies of British Commonwealth literature, and still is used almost exclusively for that literature (2681). Rushdie in his “Commonwealth Literature Does Not Exist” says:

I’ve become convinced that English is an essential language in India, not only because of its technical vocabularies and the international communication which it makes possible, but also simply to permit two Indians to talk to each other in a tongue which neither party hates (Imaginary Homelands 65).

Veeser says that ‘every expressive act is embedded in a network of material practices’ (“The New Historicism” 2). Literature is an expressive act like advertisements, television programmes, chat shows, online games, music mixes, etc. which characterize the contemporary society. It is neither a transcendentental practice
nor does it claim any divinity. In the postmodern times, every expressive act is expected to have a political backdrop. Literature—especially that of the diaspora—is not an apolitical act. Besides, literature that is penned with a reformative zeal or attains a standard of social activism with their social commitment is on the wane, as far as the fictions of the Indian cosmopolitan diaspora are concerned. As Veeser further states, every act of unmasking, critiquing or opposition is influenced by the strategies it exposes, and becomes a prey to the very same practices ("The New Historicism" 2), and it is evident when the fictional histories of the diasporas are examined. By offering parallel histories that challenge colonial histories, the cosmopolitan diasporic writers devalue the colonial strategies but do not succeed in recovering and redefining the ‘truth’ of the Indian past, since the possibility of any one ‘truth’ is impossible in the postmodern times. This is of vital import in the context of postcolonialism as it is concerned with the way as to how the once colonized inscribe history. But the inability to cultivate ideas of the ‘real and the true’ cannot be said to be a failure on the part of the literary diasporas as that would be a regression to the prescriptive mode of criticism. Instead, it has to be understood as the predicament of a writer in the postmodern world order. Besides, New Historicism upholds the notion that no writer can escape the trends and material practices of one’s times.

English has come to occupy such an elevated status in the literary circles thanks to various reasons. Globalization has made the use of English inevitable. Within English, there have been attempts to come up with variety, which would
offer freedom from the conventional, trite use of the language. The word ‘englishes’ has been frequently used in the academia recently and has been understood as ‘varieties of a language’, originally of England that is now spoken by people round the globe. The penchant for variety (or the exotic) is evidenced by the acceptance given to the works of postcolonial writers by the English speaking communities across the world. It is no coincidence that Booker Prize winners happen to be people who work magic with their language, offering strange coinages, slang expressions, regional terms, retain the features of the variety of English that is spoken in their regions. The desire for exotic experiences, newness of expression etc. are the propelling forces behind the search for such linguistic twists.

The literature produced by the post independence diaspora is generally reckoned to be postmodern. Postmodernism, according to Chris Baldick, is “applied to a cultural condition prevailing in the advanced capitalist societies since the 1960s, characterized by a superabundance of disconnected images and styles – most noticeably in television, advertising, commercial design, and pop video” (The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms 174). Postmodernism finds its impact in fiction in the form of fabulation, pastiche which is “the random cannibalization of all the styles of the past, the play of random stylistic allusion” (Jameson, “Postmodernism, Or The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism” 65-6), bricolage, or aleatory disconnection since postmodernism expresses distrust towards all ‘grand narratives’ (Jean Franco Lyotard, The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge 26), claims of authenticity and originality of experience. As knowledge
has ceased to be the kind of narrative knowledge so long upheld by modernists, there has occurred a ‘loss of meaning’ in the world or art, and it has resulted in incredulity towards ‘master narratives’. It is a ‘cultural dominant’ characterized by the results of late capitalist dissolution of the traditional concept of ‘bourgeois hegemony’ and the development of mass culture (Hutcheon, *A Poetics of Postmodernism* 6). The growth of mass culture has replaced conventional concepts of bourgeoisie. Neil Lazarus views postmodernism as the “dark underside of bourgeois thought”, that it denounces historical knowledge and ignores or cynically dismisses Enlightenment, modernity, progress and revolution (“National Consciousness” 197).

Postmodernism and its relationship with the notion of truth need clarification. It is “a problematizing feature of our culture today; it raises questions about (or renders problematic) the commonsensical and the natural. But it never offers answers that are anything but provisional and contextually determined (Hutcheon, *A Poetics of Postmodernism* ix). Nor can postmodernism be equated with nihilism.

Postmodernism and postcolonialism are problematically related to each other. It can be said that they are complimentary in nature considering their operational strategies. Benita Parry emphasizes that “postcolonial criticism has come to be identified as postmodernist in its orientation” (Lazarus, *The Cambridge Companion* 66). And Annamaria Carusi claims that “post structuralism and
postmodernism are presently locked in a logical aporia as theoretical constructs (“Post, Post and Post. Or, Where is South African Literature in All This?” 82).

Linda Hutcheon rules out the scope of nostalgia in postmodern narratives, and cautions readers against misconstruing the references to history for nostalgia. She reiterates that postmodernism is neither ‘nostalgic nor antiquarian in its critical revisiting of history’ (A Poetics of Postmodernism xii). The postmodern ‘return to history’ is neither nostalgia nor revivalism (ibid 93). Postmodern historicism is “willfully unencumbered by nostalgia in its critical, dialogical reviewing of the forms, contexts and values of the past” (ibid 89-90). It is the presence of irony that allows critical distancing, and refuses nostalgia in such narratives. The parodic self reflexiveness in postmodern works paradoxically assert their modernist autonomy of art and also manages simultaneously to investigate its intricate and intimate relations with the social world in which it is written and read. They subvert dominant discourses, but are dependent upon those same discourses for their very physical existence (ibid 45-46), clarifying the New Historicist perspective earlier asserted by Veeser that every act of unmasking, critique and opposition uses the tools it condemns and risks falling prey to the practices it exposes.

Postmodern fictions are characterized by one or many of the following traits: abrupt endings or multiple conclusions, intertextuality, magical realism, word play or language games, self consciousness or linguistic narcissism, unreliable narrators, unaccounted and illogical transformations in the plot and characterization, focus on
issues of hybridity, identity, authenticity, use of slang, dialects and registers in the language, distrust of conventional heroes and elevated themes. Though most of these techniques were employed also by literary modernism, the sensibility that operated behind it was drastically different.

The works of Rushdie, Tharoor and Seth are such that they dexterously concoct events and personages traditionally held to be historically authentic and verifiable with the improbable and unlikely, which equals a kind of boundary crossing. Postmodern art revels in this sort of boundary crossing of genres, discourses, historical temporalities, literary criticism, art and philosophy. It can be viewed as a metaphoric boundary crossing undertaken by the diasporic writers who cross over national boundaries. Edward Said perceived it as a positive sign among writers. For him, “the supervening actuality of ‘mixing’, of crossing over, of stepping beyond boundaries, (which) are more creative human activities than staying inside rigidly policed borders” (“An Ideology of Difference” 43). Postmodern writings, as Hutcheon comments, can thus be said to share “a desire to interrogate the nature of language, of narrative closure, of representation, and of the context and conditions of both their production and reception” (A Poetics of Postmodernism 54).

The very same linguistic strategies of modernist writers are part and parcel of postmodernism as well, though it has a different ethos. As has been mentioned earlier, self consciousness is one trait of postmodern narratives. But as Craig Owens argues, “when the postmodernist work speaks of itself, it is no longer to proclaim its autonomy, its self-sufficiency, its transcendence; rather it is to narrate its own
contingency, insufficiency, a lack of transcendence” (“The Allegorical Impulse” 80). Ashutosh Banerjee in his essay “Narrative Technique in Midnight’s Children” (1992) has traced in detail the linguistic self consciousness of Rushdie’s narrator. Linguistic auto-referentiality is a predominant feature of Rushdie’s narrative. Shortly after the announcement of Gandhi’s death in the novel we read:

Re-reading my work, I have discovered an error in chronology. The assassination of Mahatma Gandhi occurs, in these pages, on the wrong date. But I cannot say, now, what the actual sequence of events might have been; in my India, Gandhi will continue to die at the wrong time (166).

But even after this confession, the correct date of Gandhi’s death is not given in the novel. The ‘actual sequence of events’ is irrecoverable. The point is that the narrator has the power to alter history, because it is his version of reality. And it is only in ‘fiction’ that one can have such power. Fiction turns out to be the best site for Foucauldian exercise of power. In the ‘desperate need for meaning’, facts get distorted, and it gets the narrator into the ‘central role’. Ayub Khan’s seizure of power in Pakistan may not have happened as Saleem has described it. Rushdie’s narrative aspires to the condition of truth or reality, and becomes true in a fictional way if not historically.

Saleem is a historian by night and he works in a pickle factory during the day. The task of both the historian and the pickle maker is preservation. “Memory
as well as fruit, is being saved from the corruption of the clocks” ([Midnight’s Children 38]). Saleem’s counterpart in the novel is Shiva, who shares the name of the Hindu god of destruction. By contrast, Saleem is in the position of Vishnu, the god of preservation. In mythology, Shiva is also the cause of creation represented by the image of phallus (Sivalingam), and in the novel he fathers thousand and one children. Aadam the son of Siva and Parvati has resemblances to Lord Ganesh the patron of literature.

Saleem constructs a history of India wherein he places himself in the central position. The motive behind his historicizing is to gain an uncontested position in history. It can be argued that Rushdie himself enjoys a fictional gratification of desire through his character Saleem (suspending the ‘death of the author’ theory for once), to be the centre of the history of a nation from which he has distanced himself. Saleem, the history man, is the grand narrative upon which the protagonist builds his narrative. In other words, Saleem raises himself to the position of a grand narrative through his fictional reconstruction of Indian history. But this ‘fiction’ has to be broken fictionally itself, if he has to retain his identity, at least as a fiction maker. Linda Hutcheon states that Richard Rorty, Jean Baudrillard, Michel Foucault, Jean Francois Lyotard and such theoreticians “seem to imply that any knowledge cannot escape complicity with some meta-narrative, with the fictions that render possible any claim to ‘truth’, however provisional”. Besides, there are “no natural ‘master’ narratives” or “natural hierarchies” except those we construct ([A Poetics of Postmodernism 13]). Saleem Sinai assumes proportions of a grand
narrative in order to construct a history, consciously enough that he breaks it towards the end of his narrative, and he disintegrates. Parallel to that he also raises the idea that Indian history is a grand narrative which disintegrates, and fails to uphold any claim to ‘truth’. It is mere rhetoric that privileges one’s claim of truth over another, and Saleem’s version may not hold beyond the scope of the narrative.

But narrativizing the self is more important than its veracity, and this exercise is imperative in terms of existential philosophy. The practice of historicizing has an existentialist dimension. Only those things that have an identity can be recorded as history. Abstruse ideas without any concrete form, without any relation to definable entities, cannot be etched in history as they are neither verifiable nor identifiable. What requires a space in history must have a term/name by which it could be identified. The act of naming is an attempt to construct an identity. Identity construction and existentialism are intimately connected to each other. In order to live in the world, to create essence, one should accrue an identity. Only when an entity attains an identity can it have any space in history, as identity construction is etching a space in history. Thus, the essential givenness of an entity, the state of ‘Da Sein’, can be understood and acknowledged only when that particular entity gains a state of narratability. Nothing makes any sense when everything remains as unconnected states or conditions, mere points in time. To gain an idea of the state of things, to conceive of something, the human subject has to connect it with what preceded it and what followed it. This cause and
effect paradigm has turned out to be a *sine qua non* epistemologically and in terms of human teleology. Sisyphus rolled up a huge stone up the hill just to let it roll back in order to shatter the myth of continuity and historical imperativeness of events in the discontinuous temporality of one’s subjecthood. Efforts to historicize one’s existence in the linearity of time become a political act. For Sisyphus the practice of rolling the stone up the hill is an effort to narrativize his conditionality. In the *Midnight’s Children*, when Saleem constructs a myth associating himself with the history of India, he is engaged in another means for narrativizing his own existence to give it a significance, to create ‘essence’. The perspectives of the narrator seem to put on trial the so called historical truths in postmodern narratives, that the narrator has complete freedom to alter and reinterpret ‘reality’. But elevating “private experience” above “public consciousness”, says Hutcheon, is not really to expand the subjective. Instead, it is to “render inextricable the public and historical and the private and biographical” (*A Poetics of Postmodernism* 94).

The narrator in Throor’s *The Great Indian Novel* as he proposes to embark on the “memoir of [his] life and times” states that “in my epic I shall tell of past, present and future” (18). It shall be “the Song of Modern India”, but at the same time “[t]his is my story, the story of Ved Vyas, eighty-eight years old and full of irrelevancies, but it could become none the less than the Great Indian Novel” (18). The narrator is extremely self conscious about the venture he undertakes. Tharoor’s narrator at the end of *The Great Indian Novel* (1989) confesses that he has told the ‘story from a completely mistaken perspective’ (418). The very same reasons can be
pointed out to validate the claim that these fictions entertain unreliable narrators, yet another feature of postmodernism. S. Chakravarty qualified The Great Indian Novel as ‘a dazzling leap beyond into postmodernism’.

Self consciousness figures in Vikram Seth’s narrative as well, who in his A Suitable Boy (1993) requests the reader at the opening with a high degree of self reflexivity to buy his book ‘before good sense insists’, cautioning that the reader will strain his purse and sprain his wrists, if they buy his book. Seth’s representative in the novel is said to be Amit, the writer. He compares the form and feel of the genre of novel to the river Ganga, bringing out the role on imagination in the construction of histories and the self referentiality of the narrator. Amit’s brother Dipanker writes to Amit:

I remember Amit Da, you once told me that the Ganga was the model for your novel, with its tributaries and distributaries and so on, but it now strikes me that the analogy is even more apt than you thought it at the time. For even if you now have to take on the additional burden of handling the family finances – since I won’t be able to help you at all – and even if it takes you a few more years to complete your novel, you can still think of the new flow of your life as Brahmaputra, travelling apparently in a different direction, but which will, by strange courses yet unseen to us surely merge with the broad Ganga of your imagination. . . . Of course I know how much your writing means to
you, but what is a novel compared to the Quest of the Source? (A Suitable Boy 718).

The form of the novel is later compared to that of “a Banyan tree” (1109). The metaphor of music also figures in the description of novel form. Amit conversing to Ila Chattopadhyay and Lata says:

I’ve always felt that the performance of a raag resembles a novel – or at least the kind of novel I am attempting to wrote. You know,” he continued, extemporizing as he went along, “first you take one note and explore it for a while, then another to discover its possibilities, then perhaps you get to the dominant, and pause for a bit, and it’s only gradually that the phrases begin to form and the table joins in with the beat . . . and then the more brilliant improvisations and diversions begin, with the main theme returning from time to time, and finally to all speeds up, and the excitement increases to a climax” (394).

Excusing himself for the kind of writing he is engaged in, Seth incorporates future criticisms that may be directed to his work. Ila Chattopadhyay speaks about Amit, the said to be ‘alter ego’ of Seth: “He’s just a writer; he knows nothing at all about literature” (394).

These three novels can rightly be called metafictions and metafictionality is an attribute of postmodernism according to Linda Hutcheon (Narcissistic Narratives: The Metafictional Paradox 1) and Mark Currie (Metafiction 15).
Metafictions are fictions about fictions. All these (hi)stories revel in wordplays, and other language games. They mix up light verse, which surprisingly serve as major tropes in the novels. The “soo che? Saru che! Dande le ke maru che!” episode in Midnight’s Children (228) exemplifies the role of silly verses in the fiction.

Arundhati Roy’s Booker prize winning novel The God of Small Things (1997) has a lot of such light verses: “Oh Esthapappychayachen Kuttappen Peter Mon, Where, oh where have you gone?” (182), and the funny recital of the word “Nictitating, ictitating, ctitating, titating, itating, tating, ating, ting, ing” (189) shows the exciting variety of language practices that the people described in the novel possess.

In Vikram Seth’s A Suitable Boy there are around five hundred untranslated words (Angela Atkins, A Suitable Boy: A Reader’s Guide 58). The use of the vernacular - a common feature of postmodern narratives – can be seen throughout the novel. Jagat Ram’s daughter entertains Haresh with such a song:

Raam Ram Shah
Alu ka rasa
Mendaki ki chatni
Aa gaya nasha! (223)

Seth incorporates wide variety of Indian registers in English which Shyam. S. Agarwalla categorizes as ‘Hinglish’, ‘Banglish’, ‘Tanglish’ and ‘Pucka Sahiblish’ (Vikram Seth’s A Suitable Boy 1995).

In Shashi Tharoor’s The Great Indian Novel we find the funny verse:

“Thottathin ellam ‘Thank you, thank you’, Ottu mushinyal ‘Sorry, sorry...”, sung by
the Ottomthullal artist. It makes fun of the English practices of unnecessarily apologizing and thanking people. Vikram Seth’s *A Suitable Boy* comprises abundance of light verse in it. Just one may be cited here from the verse conversation of Kakoli and Meenakshi: ‘Luscious Lata, born to be, Lady Lata Chatterji’, and ‘Kissing, missing, every day, Cuddling, muddling all the way” (881).

Intertextuality is another feature of postmodern narratives. References to other writers and their literary conventions abound in all these novels. Tharoor’s *The Great Indian Novel* has many intertextual references. The title of the novel itself is intertextual. It is appropriate to discuss Tharoor’s own description of the title:

A hasty note of disclaimer is due to those readers who may feel, justifiably, that the work that follows s neither great, nor authentically Indian, nor even much of a novel. *The Great Indian Novel* takes its title not from the author’s estimate of its contents but in deference to its primary source of inspiration, the ancient epic the *Mahabharatha*. *Maha* means great and *Bharatha* means India.

It is clear that the author has a clear expectation of Western readership. The explanation provided to the name ‘Mahabharatha’ would have been irrelevant had the novel been written exclusively for Indian audience. Later, on other occasions come many more intertextual references: “Look at Nirad Chaudhuri, who wrote *Autobiography of an Unknown Indian* on that basis and promptly ceased to live up to its title. It is not a principle that these memoirs of a forgotten Indian can afford
to abandon” (35). Tharoor invests the narrator of the novel with foresight that he says: “If ever the Empire comes to ruin, Heaslop, mark my words, the British Publisher will be to blame” (38). Tharoor’s narrator offers his version of Indian history, and he does not claim any authenticity in his narrative: “It is, after all, my story, the story of Ved Vyas, doddering and decrepit though you may think I am, and yet it is also the story of India, your country and mine” (46). He also finds opportunity to ridicule the scant sense of history our education has been able to impart to the younger generation. The narrator refers to the answers of children to the question as to who Gangaji (Gandhiji) was: “Gangaji is important- because he was the father of our Prime Minister; wrote on ten-year-old with a greater sense of relevance than accuracy. ‘Gangaji was an old saint who lived many many years ago and looked after cows’, suggested another. ‘Gangaji was a character in the Mahabharatha, noted a third. ‘He was so poor he did not have enough clothes to wear’ (47). Besides, the narrator also dons the garb of an Indian throughout the narrative, and repeatedly uses the expression “we Indians”21. It has another intertextual reference known even to the high school student. The famous Constitution of India begins with the expression “We, the people of India...”.

In Seth’s A Suitable Boy, the Nawab of Baitar thinks about “The Marginal Notes of Lord Macaulay Selected by his Nephew G. O Trevelyan”, and also plans to hire a Latin tutor so that he could understand the sections on Cicero better (267). The conversations between Amit and Lata often dwell around Amit’s literary
endeavours, and Ila Chatopadhyay demonstrates her intellectual interests during conversations often referring to the books she has read.

Magical realism is yet another feature found in postmodern narratives. Salman Rushdie is the most famous contemporary Indian writer to have used the technique of magical realism in fiction. Rushdie’s work reveals strong affinity to magical realism. There are unaccounted transformations and twists in the novel bestowing the narrator with magical and superhuman abilities like telepathy and acute olfactory faculty.

In Tharoors novel also there are instances of magical realism. In the part where the birth of Priya Duryodhani is discussed, we read:

And then, from behind Gandhari’s closed door just down the corridor, there emerged single, long, wailing sound. We both stood transfixed. It was a baby’s cry and yet it was more than that; it was a rare, sharp, high pitched cry like that of a donkey in heat, and as it echoed around the house, a sound started up outside as if in response, a weird, animal moan, and then the sounds grew, as donkey’s brayed in the distance, mares neighed in their pens, jackals howled in the forests, and through the cacophony we heard the beating of wings at the windows, the caw-caw-cawing of a cackle of crows, and penetrating through the shadows, the piercing shriek of the hooded vultures circling above the palace of Hastinapur (73).
This extract is intertextually laden as well. As one reads it, the instance of Shadwell’s coronation ceremony as depicted by Dryden in “Mac Flecknoe” comes up to mind by its sheer power of irony. The use of ‘Pathetic Fallacy’ here also brings to mind various instances from Shakespeare, Milton and other writers of the Elizabethan period who lavishly employed the technique of pathetic fallacy.

The form of the narrative used by Tharoor in The Great Indian Novel also is linguistically analyzed by the narrator. Linguistic self-referentiality is a characteristic of postmodern literature. In the Seventh Book of the novel, the narrator says:

Just look at that Ganapathy. I began a section vowing to stay clear of Gangaji, and what does the man do? He takes over the section. As long as he is around, it will be impossible for us to concentrate on other people. . . In the olden days our epic narrators thought nothing of leaving a legendary hero stranded in mid-conquest while digressing into sub-plots, with stories, fables and anecdotes, with stories, fables and anecdotes within each. But, these Ganapathy, are more demanding times (133).

The same kind of linguistic auto-referentiality and Intertextuality are seen in works like The French Lieutenant’s Woman (1969) by John Fowles, which is a celebrated postmodern narrative. In Fowles’ fiction, there are constant intertextual references.
These (hi)stories of the diaspora evince postmodern traits and attributes in good measure. English being a language of power, is employed by the cosmopolitan Indian diaspora for their (hi)stories. The application of New Historicist strategies clarifies how these (hi)stories challenge colonial historiographic practices and at the same time offer alternative and parallel histories with a certain ‘will to power’. It may be claimed that these writers’ major thrust is not decolonization. The (hi)stories that these cosmopolitan diasporic writers offer are as problematic as the colonial (hi)stories of the imperial masters. Their primary concern is not history but fiction, and the former is just a fertile ground for cultivating stories.

Greenblatt in his historicism does extensively use anecdotes, which is the ‘narration of a singular event’, a ‘literary form or genre that uniquely refers to the real’ (Veeser Ed., The New Historicism Reader 56). He states that anecdotes, even as they appear to be raw pieces of past reality, are in fact pieces of reality. Yet Greenblatt is against the employment of anecdote as a rhetorical ploy alone. “If it is only a matter of rhetoric, then only a reality effect is conjured and nothing more” (“The Touch of the Real” 21, italics added). Though postmodernism questions the possibility of regaining complete historical truth, it prompts literary and cultural historians to discover alternative means to overcome this issue. C. Behan McCullagh opines that Greenblatt wants the historian to be true to his calling and become a “conjurer” who presents the past as if it were real (“Bias in Historical Description, Interpretation, and Explanation” 38). Thus in many ways than one
these fictions evince postmodern features and approaching them through New Historicist strategies reveals their postmodern predilections.
Notes

1 Catherine Gallagher in “Marxism and New Historicism” states that New Historicism is “charged on the one hand with being a crude version of Marxism and on the other with being a formalist equivalent of colonialism”. However, postmodernism and Marxism cannot be equated in terms of their approach to history any more than the fact that both these critical practices are responsive to the socio-economic phenomena.


4 See the earlier introduction of the term ‘dialogic’ in the Preface of this thesis. Bakhtin in his The Dialogic Imagination (written during 1930s; published in 1981) refers to the dialogic and polyphonic potential of narratives.


6 It has already been quoted on a different occasion in this thesis.

Ivo Kamps accuses Gallagher and Greenblatt for not abiding by the principles they themselves upheld in regard to New Historicism. Gallagher and Greenblatt had quoted Herder to make a claim about art that was seminal to New Historacists: “The first questions to be asked about art such as drama are ‘When? Where? Under what circumstances? From what sources should people do this?’” Kamps criticizes them for not applying these questions satisfactorily in Gallagher and Greenblatt’s own work *Practicing New Historicism* (2000). See *Historicizing Theory*, Ed. Peter C. Herman. (State University of New York Press: Albany, 2004). P. 162.

Kamps refers to Greenblatt’s *Hamlet in Purgatory* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001) wherein he is extremely frank about his study of Shakespeare and his personal life, which actually resulted in *Hamlet in Purgatory*. Kamps feels that it does not mark the beginning of a systematic effort by Greenblatt to historicize either his work or his critical method (2004, 185).

“In Midnight’s Children, my narrator Saleem uses, at one point, the metaphor of a cinema screen to discuss the business of perception: ‘suppose yourself in a large cinema, sitting at first in the back row, and gradually moving up, . . . until your nose is against pressed against the screen. Gradually the stars’ faces dissolve into dancing grain; tiny details assume grotesque proportions; . . . it becomes clear that the illusion itself is reality’ (Rushdie, Imaginary Homelands: Essays and Criticism 1981-1991. Granta Books: London, 1992) p. 13.

Nietzsche’s concept of the will to power applies to all living things, suggesting that adaptation and the struggle to survive is a secondary drive in the evolution of animals, less important than the desire to expand one’s power.

Mishra’s analysis of the position of English in India is enlightening and thought provoking. Presenting English in a continuum of the elite languages like Persian and Sanskrit, Mishra clarifies how English has contributed to the confinement of a vast percent of Indian populace in ignorance of, and inability to participate in administration.


The term "write back" is from Rushdie's own article 'The Empire Writes Back With a Vengeance', published in the London Times on 3 July 1982.


CNN, BBC World, Headlines Today, NDTV 24x7, CNN IBN, Times Now, News X, ET Now, CNBC-TV18, NDTV Profit, UTVi etc. have wide viewership in India.

For a brief treatment of the idea of commitment see the first note in the Preface of this thesis.

S. Chakravarty, The Statesman, New Delhi, July 8, 1990 made this claim. It is quoted by P. K. Rajan in his article “History and Myth in Tharoor’s The Great Indian Novel”, published in Changing Traditions in Indian English Literature. However, Rajan strongly opposed Chakravarty’s argument.

See for example, page no. 47, 48 and 49 of the novel.