Introduction

If the postmodern is defined with reference to Lyotard's now clichéd "incredulity towards metanarratives" or Baudrillard's 'simulacrum' or, for that matter, Derrida's 'metaphysics of presence', then the question, 'What is Postmodernism?' cannot be asked. It perhaps should be rephrased in terms of 'why the postmodern' or, still more relevantly, 'whose postmodern?'. I must confess the question, still in search of 'the' answer, has been bothering me right since it, as always, belatedly invaded and engulfed the Indian (English) academy. Our colonized minds are always found ready to be overwhelmed by western knowledges, literatures and theories. Our own 'irrational' faiths, searchings and longings easily yield 'ground' to their 'reason-able' beliefs, doubts and desires. They steal insights from our philosophies, literatures and even religious traditions and build 'rigorous' theories around them which we find so attractive when they are circulated back to us. Our academy then re-interprets, 're-views' our literatures and cultures in the 'new light' of those theories. Their failure to acknowledge what they borrow from us becomes the success of their knowledge as we let it become a measure of our much richer literatures and cultures. Our literary critics and university teachers feed on this knowledge and arrogantly flash the exotic charm of western aesthetics and epistemologies to the Indian readers who are so naively 'grounded' in their own native 'tastes' and 'truths'. Our maya and sach look so shabby, worn out and laughable before their 'bad faith' and 'authentic self', mere ridiculous-sounding signifiers before their cosmetic signifieds, 'differance' and 'simulacra'.

As for the postmodern being a radical break with modernism, where does the Postmodernist difference locate itself as a new aesthetic practice? Was not Modernism already problematizing the transparency and
reliability of language, the certainty and presence of meaning? Even though, for Modernism, there was a common reality, a shared world, 'out there', more or less independent of the subject and language, the language was already finding it increasingly difficult to deliver the 'universal reality', the referent was already slipping away from the sign, and 'the common extra-linguistic world', too, was getting mixed up with the language which sought, with a certain measure of confidence, to describe it. Language was losing its confidence as it struggled to grasp a reality it was failing to transmit transparently. Even before Beckett's characters started feeling cynical about the reliability of language, Eliot's Prufrock was nervously self-conscious and skeptical about whether he was able to say what he wanted to: "That's not what I meant at all."

Much like Postmodernism, Modernism, too, was concerned with making some sense of reality, making some reality of whatever sense it could make. It was always criticizing itself, and Postmodernism only intensifies that self-doubt into a more conscious, systematic and forceful movement. It seeks to be redefined all the time as it resists definitional modes of thinking and theorizing. So, if at all, Postmodernism can be defined only negatively, in terms of what it rejects and de-constructs. It typically criticizes classical notions of origin, unity and presence, and rejects all attempts to find some foundation for our thought, or any transcendence of norms. In the postmodern space, the Enlightenment project of material and moral progress built on the Modernist pillars of truth, reason, identity and objectivity is dismantled, and meaning, self, or even reality, are problematized. It is a hyper-real, virtual world of signs and images. Search for meaning ends up in an endless play of signifiers. The quest for self leads to an infinitely constitutive otherness leaving 'nothing' for any stable identity. There is nothing outside the all-embracing text which has left little room for meaning or truth. We encounter reality
through our accounts of it, and those accounts – the words, images, metaphors – are 'the reality' rather than its descriptions.

This emphasis of Postmodernism on signs and images, play and fictionalization rather than on meaning or realist truth, is what makes it significantly relevant to literature. It seeks to de-canonize literature by deconstructing Historicist, Formalist or Structuralist frameworks. Thus, in a way it is only by searching and questioning the possibilities of its own existence that postmodern literature comes to exist. The making of a postmodern text must include making sense of its continually unmaking itself even as it makes itself up. Unlike the Modernist text, 'a well-wrought urn' the postmodern writing has unexpected twists, turns and discontinuities as the author weaves surprises and strategies to pull the reader's leg. Hence its increasingly theorizing and self-referential nature. The strategy substitutes the subject. Sometimes, it uses outrageous subject-matter to question priorities and polarities, to subvert received hegemonies and hierarchies, to blur binary categories, to defy cultural and critical conventions. It often results in polymorphous and unstable text, generating new possibilities and limits of reading. The language, the writing itself becomes the theme. The Postmodernist theorist Richard Rorty takes the poet as a metaphor for self-creation as against the metaphysician's preoccupation with self-discovery. The postmodern poet, for Rorty, is an ironist who recognizes the contingency of his language and his selfhood. He creates his unique vocabulary, his unique selfhood, but without claiming any superiority over other self-creations and vocabularies.

The postmodern turn in poetry entails the rejection of the new critical paradigm of the poem as an autonomous and self-sufficient work cut off from the context and history. And the corresponding notion of an autonomous self and an authorial identity governing the work's
interpretation is also deconstructed as the postmodern text makes a radical departure from the modernist notions of language, presence and subjectivity. This departure has been facilitated by intertextuality which is “both a method of reading that juxtaposes texts in order to discover points of similarities and differences as well as the belief that all texts and ideas are part and parcel of a fabric of historical, social, ideological and textual relations”\(^1\). Thus every text, literary as well as philosophical, has to be read in the context of other texts and discourses. A text is a fold within the larger network of socio-historical and discursive forces. The rich rhetorical complexity of a text can be experienced and explicated only through what differentiated, slow and stratified reading. A text carries along with it a network of traces which links it up with a larger textual and discursive space. A good reading will have to take account of contaminating influences from other literary as well as non-literary texts. For Derrida “a text is simply a “machine head” for reading other texts....Consequently, the autonomy of the text is shown as false since a text by its very act of associations reveals that it is a trace of other texts.”\(^2\)

Does not intertextuality become a license for anything goes, a textual free-play without any constraints whatsoever? Derrida’s deconstructive work, while effectively employing the idea of intertextuality, does adhere to “rigorous protocols of reading”\(^3\). The unlimited free play would be an extreme reaction to the New Critical method of reading a text as a self-contained entity. So while intertextuality opens the text into a semantic field of potentially infinite re-readings, it cannot become a freewheeling enterprise without any limits or logic. What makes intertextual signification possible is the notion of difference, a key-concept in poststructuralism, and celebrated in postmodernism for its disruptive effect on identitarian thinking. "The very concept of difference
could be said to entail a typically postmodern contradiction: "difference", unlike "otherness" has no exact opposite against which to define itself.... postmodern difference on rather differences, in the plural, are always multiple and provisional."

It can be traced back to Saussure's cardinal statement that there are only differences in language, no positive terms. However for Saussure language still remains a reliable network of differential signs which acquire stability through conventional use. It was Derrida who radicalized the idea by adding another dimension, that of deferral, to it. The meaning is not only differential but endlessly deferred; it can never be pinned down. The difference cannot be overcome, without effacing alterity and multiplicity. Derrida names it differance, a non-concept like deconstruction, which cannot be defined without reducing it to the very terms it radically critiques. The differance leads to an indeterminacy of meaning, a flow of semantic effects which never solidify into final units of meaning. Still we go on making meaning, as we believe in the "radical illusion" of there being a significant and signifying world. "Over against the subject, that indomitable producer of meaning, stands the world, that inexhaustible producer of illusion, including no doubt ... with the involuntary complicity of the subject ----the illusion of meaning."  

The reading of a postmodern text concerns itself with how its meaning is made rather than with what its meaning is. Norris mentions Derrida's "metaphor of "multiple reading heads" intended to suggest ..... the way that we read simultaneously what is there in front of us and also, in the process, a potentially infinite range of intertextual meanings and allusions some of which may very well obscure welfare the immediate sense of the 'words on the page'." 6 In the postmodern view of signification, the meaning is a matter of self-referentiality, of a differential
network of signs, never touching the referent in its presence. This is not to say the real does not exist at all. But in its semantic appropriation, the real is always already represented. Signification takes place independent of the existence of the referent. The purity and the stability of the distinction between the textual and the real is no longer guaranteed.

The Punjabi poet, too, in his postmodern moment is engaged in the radical process of de-mythologizing the system and deconstructing the discourses, both Indian and Western, that threaten to define him. He had never felt challenged to question the givens so searchingly as he was in the second half of the last century.

The modern Punjabi literary sensibility in the post-Partition period had to contend with a persistent pre-occupation with the Sikh religious thought. On the one hand, and an insistent western modernism on the other. Even the most militant ultra-leftist, revolutionary Punjabi poetry took quite spontaneously to the images, allusions and symbolism drawn from medieval Sikh lore. The Sikh revivalist impulse was balanced by utopian and radical visions of revolution, projected alike by the progressive movement in early fifties and militant ultra-leftist poetry in the seventies. The eighties saw a major shift away from these meta-narratives of modernism, mysticism and Marxism. Poetry was yet again called to review its role, to redefine its direction, and, this time, the possibilities of its very existence.

The eighties was a decade of disillusionment as the Punjabi poet found himself faced with an ideological vacuum. The rug had been suddenly pulled from under his feet. The impact of the fall of Communism the world over dealt a deathblow to a dominant leftist stream in Punjabi poetry. However, it was the parallel rise of Sikh militancy in the eighties which forced the Punjabi poet to make a difficult choice, to rethink his
calling: to rediscover Marxism in a new form, to fall nostalgically back upon the tradition, or to squarely face the challenge by looking beyond these cross-roads of religion, regionalism and revolution. To grope in this frightening vacuum for direction was indeed forbidding. The task was the more daunting for those already committed to, and now disillusioned with, a certain kind of writing. It meant a U-turn for the poets like Amarjit Chandan, Surjit Pattar and Dev. How could they disavow a tradition of poetry they themselves had played no small part in establishing?

Everything – the style, the strategy, the sensibility – had to be shifted in a new direction not yet clear. In the absence of ideological supports, the poetic practice searched for new bearings by probing and questioning its own processes. If poetry need no longer serve the grand objectives of social and spiritual transformation, then what little narratives can be spun out of it? The post-Partition Punjabi poetry until the eighties, even the secular, Progressive stream in it, with the exception of Shiv and Push, was only weaving out patterns of total meanings, transcendental significance and idealized emotions. The at once challenging and forbidding inner conflicts generated by this dichotomy between an inherited totalizing sensibility and acquired awareness of contemporary concerns paved the way for a major transition in Punjabi poetry.

This feeling of general dissatisfaction with the Romantic and the revolutionary, with the Mystical and the Marxist, with the Progressive and the personal, gradually ripened into a major force in the nineties with the publication of such postmodern works as Leela (Rode and Bharati), Shabdant (Dev) and Aseen Nanak De Ki Lagde Hann (Zafar). The Punjabi poetry seems to have steered clear of its more or less borrowed binary categories of the religious versus the secular, the modern versus the medieval, the Mystical versus the Marxist, the urban versus the rural, the global versus the local. There is little trace in this poetry of nostalgia,
Romantic melancholy, Progressivist rhetoric or utopian hope. A glance at some of the titles of recent publications in Punjabi poetry — *Shabdan Di Marzi, Shabd Rehange Kol, Shabdanth, Leela, Kavita Menoon Likhdi He, Bache Ton Dardi Kavita, Lafzan Di Dargah, Shabdon Paar, Shabdyog*, to mention a few — indicates a definite shift, an emphasis on the word, the sign rather than the meaning, the process itself of writing poetry, the problematic of the poetic act.

The publication in 1999 of *Leela* in particular has been hailed as a singularly significant event in the history of Punjabi poetry. It has been compared to the publication, two centuries ago, of *Lyrical Ballads* (1798) in English Poetry. It is a mammoth work of sustained quality running into more than a thousand pages of fresh reading, the authors marginalizing themselves to let the poetic act perform itself onto the page. The strategy, not only of its writing, but even of its publication has a manifestly postmodern design about it. In another path-breaking writing *Aseen Nanak De Ki Lagde Haan*, Jaswant Zafar de-constructs Sikh-ism by de-mythologizing its founder Nanak and re-dis-covering his extraordinary humanness, thus making it more possible for us, humans, to relate to him.

The response so far of Punjabi criticism and academic research has been far from adequate. It has not come to terms with a paradigmatic shift in Punjabi poetry. The paradigm poses its own problems which further compounds the difficulties of its recognition. The criticism in Punjabi seems to have only recently woken up to the need for a postmodern poetics and perspective to reread a radically new poetry. The Punjabi critic, however, continues to show the Marxist and Structuralist bias on the one hand, and the overzealous, uncritical borrowing and influence of Western theory on the other. The postmodern Punjabi poetry deserves a more careful examining, devoid of uncritical zeal, outright condemnation or reactionary dismissal.
The Punjabi criticism has shown a tendency of being either too selective or so sweeping as to lump the entire new-wave Punjabi poetry under the umbrella term of postmodernism. Dr. Gurbhagat Singh's approach in *Kav-Shastra: Deh Ate Kranti* is theory-ridden and too selective, restricted primarily to an analysis of *The Adi-Granth and Loona*. Amarjit Grewal in his critical work *Mohabbat Di Rajneeti* advocates a pluralist critical perspective on contemporary poetry. While he makes some interesting observations on the Punjabi poetry written in the last decade, he fails to evolve a workable postmodern poetics in this study, significantly sub-titled 'A politico-cultural perspective of contemporary Punjabi poetic practice'. Another critic Vanita, in her critical work, *Uttaradhunikta Te Kavita*, focuses more on making postmodern theory available to the Punjabi reader for de-constructive analysis rather than on Punjabi poetry. Her selection of ten poems is too capricious to be justified by any standards of Postmodernism.

The only work of note is a recently published book, *Uttar Adhunikta Ate Samkali Kavita* by Dr. Atam Randhawa. However, in his preoccupation with thematising a borrowed postmodernism and its overzealous application to contemporary Punjabi poetry, he fails to come to terms with the interface between the postmodern and poetry. Among other important studies on contemporary Punjabi poetry, Dr. Guriqbal Singh in *Punjabi Kavita: Naveen Pripekh Te Pasar* and Dr. Jaswinder in *Naveen Punjabi Kavita: Pachhan Chinn* examine the new-wave Punjabi poetry from orthodox Marxist and Structuralist perspectives.

These critical studies have not come up with the re-reading that post-Partition Punjabi poetry calls for. The glaring omission, in these studies, of *Leela* (1999), easily the most representative postmodern text in Punjabi literature, further underlines the failure of these studies to measure up to the challenge. Whereas our critics are preoccupied with what to make
of Punjabi poetry in the face of Postmodernism, I believe it is more a question of what we can make (of) the postmodern in the light of our own poetry, Punjabi poetry being more vital, more 'present' than what we have received of/as the postmodern literary theory.

The postmodern has to be located in our culture and literature before it can be theorised for and, more importantly by us. Not only the Punjabi critic, in my view, even the Western theorist has yet to measure the horizon of that singular space where thinking and poetry cross each other to leave a trace of 'presence', a surplus capital of power and magic, which draws, out of which is drawn, every reading and yet always withdraws its unique excess which both invites and bars access to all meaning.

I did not have any 'central' argument or formulation to begin with. However I began working tentatively with the conviction that something is still 'left' (and that Left is still something) after the Postmodernist deconstruction of the self, society, origin, reality, presence, meaning and knowledge. Poetry, I believe 'is' that inexhaustible possibility of the impossible where 'something' is always left after all that has been read into or out of it. What really intrigued me was that the postmodern was rarely talked about in the context of poetry. So much has been written about postmodern fiction, historiography, cinema, television (which for Baudrillard, is 'the' postmodern simulacra), architecture, politics, law, social theory and music. But when it comes to postmodern poetry, it does not get beyond the (predominantly western Marxist) L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E poets who "have been creating a poetry that disrupts the traditional conception of the poem as a self-reflexive and self-contained artifact in favour of a process-centred, disjunctive poetry that challenges the supposed "naturalness" of referentiality, subjectivity, textuality, and the poem as a genre". And "a pivotal moment" of postmodern poetry is traced to "Charles Olson's essay "Projective' Verse"
"which "emphasizes poetic process over product and proposes that the poem should be an extension of the content and not dictated by a predetermined form (a sonnet, for example)". So finally, we already have all the 'essential' consequences and conclusions of such a poetry. Consequently, the L=A=N=G==U=A=G=E poets and other postmodern poets often stand in direct contestation with institutionally backed conceptions of a poetic canon or tradition. Further more, many postmodern poets also resist the naïve and narrow conception of poetic form, voice, and aesthetics that continues to be the mainstay of the traditional lyric and most institutionally valorized poetry programs. In essence, postmodern poetry mirrors Adorno's criticism and eschews the very poetic characteristics and traits that Adorno found so barbaric and inhuman.9

The western intellectual has done the thing yet again for us. He has got to the very "essence" of poetry, postmodernism and Marxism as well as their curious (for us) mixture in postmodern (Marxist) poetry. We only need to imbibe this "essence" and apply it as theory to our native poetries, while swallowing this truly Marxist pill to nourish our cultural practices as well. Their deconstruction of "the traditional lyric" in this materialization of essential Adorno (as postmodern poetry) 'encapsulates' the meaninglessness of the spectral spirit of our song as well as the meaningfulness of our poetry in so far as it does not conflict with Adorno's argument "in Negative Dialectics that poetry after Auschwitz is not possible since a continuation of such practices would be "barbaric".10 Adorno has usurped the Left's right to say the last word, 'the last poem' on every Auschwitz; after him, nobody is left with the right to speak the unspoken pains, the blood-written tales of terror, the traces lost to the memory of history. The Anschwitz in our own historical background. The partition which happened only a few years later has already found its singular representation, the representation of its singular event of pain and
horror which was no less but certainly different from the German holocaust, in Adorno's 'poem', which articulates so certainly and accurately the very truth of all 'barbaric" practices constituting human history. What if 'our' (post)modern poetry is possible only after the Auschwitz we have suffered, the holocausts of Jallianwala Bagh and 1947. What if Modernity (epitomized and imported by the British Colonial rule) left us only the holocausts of Jallianwala Bagh and Partition? What if the West has left us only the practice of a poetry to interrupt the endless continuity of its "barbaric" Modernity? What if we were marginalized to the 'fiction' of Modernity and left entirely to a postmodern possibility of poetry.

The Punjabi poetry, as the possibility of a really indigenous postmodern, is the very articulation of the struggle of a culture coming to terms with a western Modernism in the form of British imperialism and an imported Marxism. In the history of modern Punjabi literature, there is no such thing as postmodern fiction. So here we have a literature where, interestingly and surprisingly the postmodern has manifested itself, its difference, in poetry rather than in fiction.

Punjabi poetry creates a site of possibility for a difference, for an indigenous post for the modern to renew itself, to feel some 'presence' away from the 'absence' underpinning the 'Negative Dialectics' of history of philosophy. The site of this encounter offers a meaningful questioning of the meanings that have already defined and thus reduced to theoretical jargon both the postmodern and Punjabi poetry.

This thesis is not written with a view to making an academic gesture, or proving a point to the West; its representatives here, it is just one of the (im)possible articulations of the tremendous difficulty I have been experiencing for the last three decades, as a reader, speaker, writer and teacher, of 'translating' one language game into another. It has not been fully possible to even transliterate the quotation of Punjabi poetry from
Gurmukhi alphabet into the Roman alphabet. The translation, in the sense we normally use this word, of Punjabi poetry into English is impossible even in the form of a working prose translation; it is unthinkable to render it in any form of English poetry.

Perhaps nothing poses the problem of translation as such more fundamentally than poetry which is always already a translation of an internal text marked by a virtual singularity. Every reading of a poem is a possible translation marking the path of negotiation with the resistance and opening to reading as constitutive of the poem itself. The necessary distance between the exteriority of the pre-articulated virtual poem and its unfolding through and as a discourse problematizes the notions of equivalence, coherence, or exegesis marking every act of reading as translation. Reading cannot simply retrace the unfolding back to its origin, nor can it leap towards the pre-articulated, pre-text of the poem; it has to take recourse to the strategy of translating the gap, the distance itself as a sign (however intertextually complex). Every reading is a trajectory of a failure of the desire to meet the text, to translate it in familiar terms while at the same time preserving its irreducible strangeness.

No translation, howsoever competent, can reproduce or represent the rhythm, the tone, the textual flow of Punjabi poetry which is bound to be converted into, reduced to, if not totally subjected to, corresponding meanings available in English language. Any order of these meanings, despite all the creative labour marking it, is bound to miss the flow of signification emerging from the untranslatable irreducibility constituting the signs, the letters in Punjabi, the individuality of the signifier which must remain intact in the universal semantic field where languages cross and meet each other. There is no full presence of meaning or content in this poetry which can be afforded a safe passage to an alien signifying system through mastery of both languages, and fidelity to the 'original'
supplemented by a creative flair. Only meanings are translatable; so every translation risks a movement 'from the text to the work', an inversion of the Barthesian distinction.

The postmodern reading of Punjabi poetry is the very work (labour) of 'translating' its impossible ontology into 'different' terms. It summons translation precisely because of its exemplary singularity, which can be assigned relevance or value only through its repetition in other contexts, representation by other means, translation into other language. Its singularity, its difference is untranslatable, but it can be 'read' only through interlingual translation. Though I have made efforts to contain it within the given limits of a thesis, the queer combination of the postmodern, 'a' poetry and 'the' thesis may have crossed the boundary sometimes. The postmodern would not let any genre, including itself (if it is taken to belong to the genre of what goes by the name of 'literary theory'), settle into a set of fixed norms or rules or conventions. Whereas I have tried to apply the 'rigor' of a research thesis to the interface of the postmodern, poetry and their western and non-western contexts, I feel I have often failed to contain the unexpected excess inherent in the strange encounter of a western theory and non-western literature of English language and Punjabi poetry.

My thesis does not face the problem of translation only in its own specific limited context. The question of translation becomes constitutive of the postmodern as an issue in Punjabi poetry. Translation, as a practice and a problematic cannot be separated from the basic postmodern crisis of knowledge and truth, or reality and representation. The assumed transparency of language and reality itself relies on a notion of translation of the latter into the former through adequate representation. Translation, in this general and Derridean sense, becomes in a way the site of not only approaching Punjabi poetry from the postmodern perspective but also, and
more so, re-reading the latter in terms of a language and literature which situate me as a reader no less than the English theory or language does.

The thesis is so much a part of my own situatedness as a teacher of English literature in a town in the heartland of Punjab to students who have, like me, Punjabi as their mother tongue and English as the 'other' tongue.

It is of course, a very ambitious attempt doomed to fail from the very start to introduce to the larger world a culture through a language, a language through one of its most singular and authentic manifestation its poetry, which paradoxically cannot be translated into another language, particularly the English language which holds the possibility both of representing it to the larger world and of appropriating it into its own universals of lexicon, syntax, semantics and, even more significantly, phonology which would not admit the difference of tone, timbre, rhythm, metre, even layout in some cases.

The present project is also a renewed attempt to resurrect the postmodern from its death as a stabilized theory in the western critical cannon, through yet another interface with a non-western literature, and its first authentic, and therefore risky, encounter with Punjabi poetry. Both the Modern Punjabi poetry and the postmodern theory had to be put at risk in this encounter on the territory of an academic research thesis which, in my opinion, is a bit alien to both.

This work is only 'a' defense of my 'belief' in poetry as 'grounded' in my own engagement with reading (writing and teaching being for me only alternative ways or situations of reading) poetry, Punjabi poetry being a singularly different image-music-text. I avoid using the term 'discourse' for Punjabi poetry because western discourse (including the discourse of deconstructionism which Derrida himself, is always so insistent on deconstructing) is what Punjabi poetry deconstructs too, among other
things. The term 'discourse' smacks of philosophy's superiority over poetry in the former's logocentric quarrel with the latter since Plato. The relevance of the Barthesian (non)concept of image-music-text for a way of describing the singularity of Punjabi poetry will become clearer in the course of my writing on it.

In its attempt to examine how the post-Partition Punjabi poetry extends or contends with the (post)modern phenomenon, my thesis also faces the task of tentatively evolving a workable anti-method for the interface between the postmodern and Punjabi poetry. Postmodernism, perhaps more than any other approach, can lend itself to either a narrow mechanical framework or a loose, inclusive view appropriating diverse and contradictory texts. It has been described as an anti-method and a non-concept, "a contradictory phenomenon, one that uses and abuses, installs and then subverts the very concept its challenges".11

Postmodernism is "reducible to neither a method nor an analysis",12 nor even a set of formulae to classify novels or poems into neat categories of modern and postmodern writings. It is more of a question than an answer, a pointer rather than a solution. As Lyotard says, "A postmodern artist or writer is in the position of a philosopher: the text he writes, the work he produces are not in principle governed by pre-established rules, and they cannot be judged according a determining judgment by applying familiar categories to the text or to the work. Those rules and categories are what the work of art is looking for."13

Postmodernism has encouraged the interface between literature and theory, as is evident from self-referentiality in poetry and increasingly metaphorical nature of theory. "You break through the frontiers ... between literature and philosophy" as it is "necessary not to close one-self up in either philosophy as such or even in literature."14 The critical decision of declaring a method, even a postmodern one, would amount to such a
prohibitory closure. Any postmodern study, including this one, of literature has to contend with the problematic of poetics, the blurring of distinction between theory and literature.

While the (anti)method will be broadly de-constructive, I propose to steer clear of a narrowly defined or applied de-constructivist approach, adopted, for instance, by Vanita in her book on postmodernist Punjabi poetry. As Derrida reminds us: "Deconstruction ... is not a tool or technical device for mastering texts or mastering a situation or mastering anything; it's, or the contrary, the memory of some powerlessness ... a way of reminding the other and reminding me, myself, of the limits of the power, of the mastery – there is some power in that." It is in its engagement with its other, Punjabi poetry in this case, that it finds a possibility of its own expression its redefinition. It finds its way, its strategies, its form, so to say, in the very process of talking about what it talks about. There is no deconstruction apart from what it does.

The interface among the highly idiomatic Punjabi language, poetry, the postmodern and the English language was inviting like the challenge and romance of a difficulty to overcome. This thesis is only the moving forward of this difficulty of articulation, of all kinds of translation – interlingual, intercultural, intergeneric – which if not entirely overcome, is, I believe, for the first time marked out and in some way come to terms with in the following pages. My critical story of the postmodern Punjabi poetry in no way claims to be a fully exhaustive comprehensive account of contemporary Punjabi poetry. I hope this thesis will take us closer to defining the critical relationship of Punjabi poetry with English language and western theory, the postmodern in particular.
In the first Chapter I have tried to locate the possibilities of a genuine post-modern shift in what has been largely taken by critics as modern Punjabi poetry. In the next three Chapters I have tried to read three poets Shiv Batalvi, Pash and Chandan in terms of the 'difference' they make and bring to the Postmodern in terms of possibilities of its necessary renewal as a 'theory of difference'. In Chapter five, a postmodern text 'Leela' has been read in terms of how it signs a new difference on the postmodern site by investing more seriousness into its critical concept of play and otherness.

I have considered some other contemporary Punjabi poets in Chapter six who are relevant to the interface between the postmodern and Punjabi poetry.

In the last Chapter, I have, by way of a conclusion, emphasized the role poetry can play in revitalizing the by now fixed theory of the postmodern. I have also tried to take a measure of how our indigenous literatures, our Punjabi poetry, can be an inexhaustible 'source' of possibilities to read western theories rather than be read by them.
References

2. *Ibid.*, 191
6. Christopher Norris, *op.cit.*, p. 200
11. Linda Hutcheon, *op.cit.*, p. 3
15. *Ibid*, 385