

10-2003

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Recommended Citation

Hawley, J. C. (2003). Can the Cosmopolitan Speak: The Question of Indian Novelists' Authenticity. *South Asian Review* 24(2), 26-40.

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Can the Cosmopolitan Speak?: The Question of Indian Novelists' Authenticity

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The marketing of books is often beyond the control of their authors; nonetheless, dust jackets sometimes offer amusing evidence of the audience that publication houses, if not authors, wish to reach. Thus, in *Red Earth and Pouring Rain* (1995), Vikram Chandra apparently offers readers the story of "an eighteenth-century warrior poet (now reincarnated as a typewriting monkey) and an Indian student home from college in America...[and] ranging from bloody battles in colonial India to college anomie in California, from Hindu gods to MTV." By way of context, consider Lee Siegel's academic novel, *Love in a Dead Language* (1999), described on its jacket as "a love story, a translation of an Indian sex manual, an erotic farce, and a murder mystery...a hypertextual voyage through movie posters, undergraduate essays, upside down pages, the *Kamasutra*: Game of Love board game, and a proposed CD-ROM." We are led to believe that "Siegel has done for sex in India what Melville did for whaling in New England"—whatever that might mean. Now, Indians might excuse Siegel's book as a typical Orientalized commodification of their country, since it makes fun of its stereotyping in the process and ridicules the satyric professor at its center. But many have not been as forgiving of Chandra's novel, and of others like it, wondering whether he has written a "genuinely" Indian book or simply an entertainment for westerners and the Indo-Anglian cultural elite. The same genre of objections made against Chandra is increasingly made against expatriate novelists from African nations as well, suggesting that questions of representation and performativity in globalized narration have not yet been settled in much of the postcolonial world. Therefore, in this essay, I would like to rehearse some of the issues that keep coming to the fore, drawing here on Vikram Chandra's recent essay contending with Meenakshi Mukherjee and Rajeswari Sunder Rajan on the question

of what makes for authenticity in national writing; I will also allude to Shashi Tharoor's recent engagement of this issue in contention with Harish Trivedi. More broadly, I would like to silhouette those many migrant intellectuals who choose to write "of" and "for" their homelands, but do so in ways that arguably suggest they write for an audience that lives elsewhere (as they themselves usually do). Are western critics, by focusing exclusively on a "world literature written in English," stifling authors in India and elsewhere who write in languages other than English? And how serious is the challenge that this western cultural juggernaut poses for regional writing?

About two-thirds through Chandra's long and complicated interweaving of plots, he has his narrator expound as follows:

Today the television cameras came, and also the death threats. We have been warned by several organizations that the story-telling must stop. The groups on the very far right—of several religions—object to the "careless use of religious symbology, and the ceaseless insults to the sensitivities of the devout." The far-left parties object to the "sensationalization and falsification of history, and the pernicious Western influences on our young." Everyone objects to the sex, except the audience. (373)

While it may have been the former group that got Salman Rushdie's attention in 1989, one suspects it was the latter group that surprised Chandra in 1998. In an essay which appeared in the March 2000 issue of the *Boston Review* entitled "The Cult of Authenticity," he writes of his by-now famous encounter with Meenakshi Mukherjee; if the title didn't give away the game, its subtitle surely did: "India's cultural commissars worship 'Indianness' instead of art." As Chandra tells it, he, Sunil Khilnani and Ardeshir Vakil were giving a reading before the British Council in New Delhi before what they anticipated would be a receptive audience. Suddenly, though, they were peppered with hostile questions like the one addressed to Khilnani: "How can you live abroad and write about India?", or that addressed to Vakil: "Why was there that long passage about the preparation of bhelpuri? We Indians all know how bhelpuri is made. Was that an emigrant's nostalgia, or was it written for the Westerners who don't know what bhelpuri is?" Chandra did not know Meenakshi Mukherjee at the time, but it was she who brought the attack his way. Here is how he describes it:

A woman in the audience, somebody I didn't recognize, raised her hand and asked, "Why do the stories in your collection *Love and Longing in Bombay* have names like 'Dharma' and 'Artha' and 'Kama'?" I answered. I talked about wanting to see how these principles—Duty, Gain, Desire—worked their way through ordinary

lives. But my interlocutor was not satisfied. "But your stories are so specific, and these titles are so abstract." That's precisely what I like about the titles, I said, the burnished glow of the Sanskrit, their seeming distance from the gritty landscapes of the stories themselves. "No," she said. That wasn't it, according to her. "These titles are necessary to signal Indianness in the West," she said. "Since ordinary people don't think about such things as *dharma*, or use that kind of language, the titles couldn't have arisen from the stories but were tagged on to signal Indianness in a Western context." ("Cult of Authenticity")

Chandra goes on to recount how Professor Mukherjee, a year later, gave a talk in Switzerland called "Indian Fiction in English: the Local and the Global," in which she notes the Sanskrit titles of chapters in Chandra's *Love and Longing in Bombay* and she remarks that "such language and choice of words would embarrass any regional writer writing in an Indian language." She goes on to criticize all such non-regional writers for "exoticiz[ing] the Indian landscape" (Chandra, "Cult of Authenticity" 4).

In a nutshell, Chandra summarized the sort of criticisms he felt she represented, as follows:

- 1) To write about India in English is at best a brave failure, and at worst a betrayal of Indian "realities"....
- 2) Indo-Anglian writers write for a Western audience....
- 3) Indo-Anglian writers make too much money....[and]
- 4) A lot of Indo-Anglian writers live abroad, so they are disconnected from Indian realities, and are prey to nostalgia; and besides, the bastards are too comfortable over there and don't have to face Delhi traffic jams and power cuts and queues for phones and train tickets and busses, and so they don't suffer like us and so they can't possibly be virtuous enough to be good artists. ("Cult of Authenticity")

Chandra rejects all four, which many will recognize as over-simplifications for the sake of argument, and does so largely by making reference to a 1951 article by Jorge Borges called "The Argentine Writer and Tradition." Chandra carries over Borges's argument against those who criticized him as being far more European than authentically Argentinean. Briefly, Chandra affirms that Borges has "the right, and the ability, to call on Dante in *addition* to *gauchos*" (4)—and that he himself can do the same with English and American globalized cultures *as well as* the variously obvious regionalisms of India. Let me quote his come-one-come-all attack on his various Indian and Indo-Anglian readers:

To have less money does not mean that you are more virtuous, to have more money does not mean you are less capable of integrity....

[I]f you write in Marathi or Gujarati, of course it is hugely angering to be told that you are not as "strong" as a bunch of toffee-nosed English-speaking brats, and of course it is annoying to enjoy less than your fair share of any pie. But when a certain set of people start referring to you collectively and generally as "regional writers," and when they start locating in you a paranormal connection to reality and lost innocence and original virtue, and using you as a stick to beat other writers over the head with, you may be absolutely certain that you are being simplified, exploited, and used. Saintliness may have its temporary and ethereal satisfactions, but for any artist it is finally a trap. (12)¹

Chandra concludes that "whatever you do felicitously will be Indian," and if some reader in New Jersey finds it exotic, this is irrelevant.

This, of course, did not dispose of the issue, and we find Chandra defending his position again in April of 2001 in India's newspaper, *The Hindu* (which, by the way, gave his novel a favorable review). Here his nemesis is Rajeswari Sunder Rajan, who once taught at George Washington University, where Chandra currently teaches. In an essay published in two parts in *The Hindu* in February of 2001 ("Writing in English in India, Again," and "Dealing with Anxieties") she takes up where Mukherjee and Chandra had left off. The editors frame Sunder Rajan's essay as a discussion of two questions: "Does an Indian writing imaginatively in English cater to an elite audience that constitutes less than two per cent of the population?", and "How authentic can such writing be?" This is not quite accurate, though, since Sunder Rajan explicitly notes that theories of "language-as-identity" should not be universalized, "still less [be] establish[ed] as a critical standard of 'authenticity.'" She does point out, in passing, that "English is used by less than two per cent of the population" in a country where "overall literacy...stand[s] at only 52 per cent," but grants that the use of English "can no longer be countered by nationalist or chauvinist demands for its removal from educational curricula or from other forms of official, commercial, or technological use." But its use in literature, she contends, is "a different matter" that leads to her central question: "does the disjuncture between the English language and a non-English reality impose certain kinds of constraints of subject-matter, style and fictional genre on the novelist?" Like Mukherjee, Sunder Rajan contends that Indian writers in English "sometimes do fail between explaining too much and explaining too little." Her conclusion is important: "the question of readership, then, becomes the crucial one." In Sunder Rajan's view, this should not be a contest of claims to virtue, but she blames Rushdie's valorization of Indian-writers-in-English for "(re)cast[ing] the English 'vernaculars' linguistic/literary situation in India as an opposition between a cosmopolitan against a parochial world view."²

It is, perhaps, ironic that Vikram Chandra gets embroiled in this controversy, since, as some have seen, his novel fairly explicitly deals with the endurance of the vernacular.³ Dora Salvador describes his work as a "transcultural project" in which writing is "a way of recovering and intercommunicating cultures," and as "an open proposal that suggests another sort of creation that goes beyond fetishized dichotomies between native and foreign traces, local and universal, past and present" (95). In his "transcultural narratives" (96) Chandra "entwines his cosmopolitan side with his Indian essence, rooted into oral culture" (100). Chandra himself responds to Sunder Rajan in *The Hindu* in an essay similarly published in two parts ("Arty Goddesses" and "Arty Goddesses, II"). As he recalls her criticisms, he is struck that she singles out his "name-dropping about the Bombay mafia, policemen, crime journalists, the innumerable place names, the 'inside' stories about literary quarrels," etc., all "intended to strenuously 'prove' his 'belonging'" (1). Chandra will have none of it. "As Dr. Sunder Rajan herself tells us," he writes, "writers who work in languages other than English are somehow effortlessly 'natural,' somehow astonishingly free of this great and inescapable national turbulence that afflicts the culture that they are a part of." Referring back to Mukherjee's and Sunder Rajan's other point, having to do with the insertion of "exotic" Indianisms and accompanying explanations to court western audiences, Chandra points out that "[t]he language in [Sunder Rajan's] own work is even more specialized and formal than the formal English she says is used, to their detriment, by Indians," that "[t]he Indian market for this kind of work is even smaller than that for English literary fiction," and that "in fact the main market for such work is the West, where flourishing departments in post-colonial studies provide classrooms full of readers" ("Arty Goddesses"). All of these heated disagreements, which have cropped up in writers in other cultures as well (Borges in Argentina, Ngugi in Kenya, Chinua Achebe and Wole Soyinka in Nigeria), makes one wonder what all the fuss over "authenticity" is really about.

I asked Professor Mukherjee what she thought of the Chandra article, and she indicated that she did not much like the word "authenticity," and was not sure that she had ever used it in her 30-or-so years of writing about the Indian Novel in English (going back to her 1971 book, *The Twice Born Fiction*). "I think those who write in Indian languages are not automatically better or worse than those who write in English," she informed me. "But the question of readership and whether it affects a writer at all is something," she adds, "that can be discussed without being judgmental." Thus, the question does not seem to focus on the more "authentically Indian" choice of a language in which to write, but rather on the results of that choice: for whom is one writing, and with what consequences (aesthetic, financial,

social, etc.). For Mukherjee, the question is not binary: it is, in fact, simplistic to be "either FOR Indian Writing in English or AGAINST it" (email letter, 6 January 2003). And in her recent book, *The Perishable Empire*, she explains this in greater detail. She favorably cites Harish Trivedi's conclusion that Vikram Seth's *A Suitable Boy* translates into Hindi far more successfully than Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children*, because, in Trivedi's view, *A Suitable Boy* is "most deeply embedded in the theme and the context which it depicts and the most intimately complicit in a local language" ("Translation" 30). Mukherjee adds that "languages" in the plural will be a better description, because a distinctive quality of *A Suitable Boy* is its polyphonic mosaic" (2000: 184). Anyone who has read Rushdie would immediately object that his writing, more than almost any contemporary author's, is in every sense "polyphonic," but the point that Mukherjee is making is more localized: "The rustic Urdu spoken at Debaria is made to sound different from the courtly grace of Saeeda Bai's conversation, and Haresh Khanna's studied English is evidently a world apart from the casual doggerel-spouting wit of the Chatterjee family in Calcutta. In an unobtrusive way Seth manages to capture the linguistic diversity of Indian life even though he is writing in English" (184). The language is in one sense irrelevant, therefore; the difference between Seth and Rushdie, from Mukherjee's point of view, is in their immersion in the context of their characters. "I remember wondering," she writes, "if anybody except a reader like me who shares the same regional background would get so completely involved in the nuances of the story of these interlocked upper middle-class families in UP, Bihar and Bengal....[H]is novel might just as well have been written in Bangia where a tradition exists of long three-decker realistic stories about families" (183).⁴ Thus, one assumes that Mukherjee is implying here that Seth, more so than Rushdie, has an eye for an audience in India—and in a particular section of India, at that.

Mukherjee insists that of the many novels written by "Third World Cosmopolitans" and now incorporated into postcolonial literature courses in the West, it seems a prerequisite that Indians on the list must write originally in English; "implicit here," she concludes, "is an erasure of the diversity of India" (197). This seems to be the crux of the argument between Chandra and Mukherjee. Building on Gayatri Spivak's discussion of related issues, Mukherjee notes that, "for the urban or diasporic English writer issues of caste, subcaste and tribe, tensions and pressures of a convoluted local variety do not assume the same intricacy and urgency as those directly involved in them" (199). She goes on to refer to "the novelist in the Indian language," which must be a slip, whether Freudian or not. To which language (other than English, of course, which seems beyond the pale) is Mukherjee

referring? In any case, the overriding issue here seems to be the focus of the novelist, rather than the language itself. Vikram Seth, though writing in English, arguably writes of "local" issues and "tensions of community, religion, caste, language, region and class" (201), and therefore claims a potential audience that lives in India and speaks (and, more importantly, writes) in a language other than English. Why this is even an issue becomes obvious if we consider, along with Rajeswari Sunder Rajan, that "culture appears as the chief matter and consequence of dominant ideological investment, powerfully coercive in shaping the subject; but since it is also heterogeneous, changing and open to interpretation, it can become a site of contestation and consequently of the reinscription of subjectivities" (10). Those who are "allowed" to create that culture are, perhaps, allowed to do so because the picture they are painting pleases those who buy the painting, rather than those who are its subjects. Perhaps western canonizers find (acceptable) common denominators among the pictures painted by Indians writing in English—characteristics that they do not find (perhaps because they do not themselves read any "other" Indian language) in novels written in Marathi, etc.

Echoing Mukherjee, Graham Huggan criticizes "the tailoring of an independent India to metropolitan market tastes" because such a move risks "collapsing cultural politics into a kind of 'ethnic' spectacle, reclaiming culture as a site not of conflict but of pleasurable diversion" (66, 67). One might think of Rahman/Lloyd Weber's *Bombay Dreams* or of Daisy von Scherler Mayer's *The Guru* for recent examples of this marketing of the exotic. As it has long been said, something crucial gets lost in such "translations." A related point is made against Salman Rushdie's preference of novels in English: in his notorious "Damme" essay in *The New Yorker* he acknowledges that he did his own reading "only in English" ("Damme" 50). The vast majority of critics in the West, other than migrant South Asians, will only listen to (or be able to read) Indians who write in English. On the simplest level of analysis, such western critics cannot be unaware of how diminished their powers will be if non-English writers are added to the list of books they are called upon to award with international prizes: "new" languages require new critics.

Rushdie, however, defamiliarizes the notion of "Commonwealth literature" and implies its parochial status—its last stand by the British Empire—by defining it as "that body of writing created, I think, in the English language, by persons who are not themselves white Britons, or Irish, or citizens of the United States of America" ("Commonwealth" 367). More pertinent to our argument here, though, is the definition not of "Commonwealth" literature, but of *Indian*. Chandra, after all, argues that he is fully invested in India and is creating *its* culture, wherever he

may live.⁵ If Rushdie shines a light on those who hold on to a notion of "Commonwealth" literature, G. J. V. Prasad pits himself against those in the West who are the delineators of "postcolonialism":

...when we talk of Indian writings and post-colonialism we only talk of English writings by Indians. This is the specifically, peculiarly post-colonial literature in India. It is almost as if writers in other languages in India escaped this historical experience. It is also as if Indian English writers do not have access to other Indian traditions, as if they exist in a vacuum, or a space created solely by British colonialism untouched by earlier or even contemporary lateral continuums and concerns. (188)

This latter point of Prasad is taken up by Rushdie, as well, who builds on earlier, similar arguments from Mulk Raj Anand and from Raja Rao's introduction to *Kanthapura* in suggesting that Indians use English in new ways, and thereby make the colonizer's language something that the formerly-colonized now own and manipulate. "One of the rules, one of the ideas on which the edifice rests," continues Rushdie,

is that literature is an expression of nationality....Books which mix traditions, or which seek consciously to break with tradition, are often treated as highly suspect....'Authenticity' is the respectable child of old-fashioned exoticism. It demands that sources, forms, style, language and symbol all derive from a supposedly homogeneous and unbroken tradition....[whereas] the rest of us understand that the very essence of Indian culture is that we possess a mixed tradition, a melange of elements as disparate as ancient Mughal and contemporary Coca-Cola American. ("Commonwealth" 370-71)

Rushdie's argument might be heard more effectively had he not made the infamous statement (too simplistically compared by some to Macaulay's declaration in 1835 that all the accumulated writings in Arabic and Sanskrit are overshadowed by a single shelf of books in English) that "the true Indian literature of the first postcolonial half of the century has been made in the language the British left behind" ("Damme" 50). Several of his critics noted that he did not inform *The New Yorker's* readers that only about five percent of the Indian population is fluent in English. His apparent disdain for the contemporary literature produced in the other officially recognized languages read by the millions of other Indians thereby grows all the more offensive. "Salman playing literary Salieri to the vernacular Mozart?" asks S. Prasannarajan in *The Indian Express*. Nandi Bhatia characterizes Rushdie's article as "problematic," and explains why it should be characterized this way:

...what made it really unpalatable was the irony that the success of contemporary Indian writing in English itself can, in large part, be attributed to the incorporation of the vernacular. It is precisely Rushdie's own interaction with the vernacular that gives, in part, his writing its unique ability to capture and comprehend snapshots of cultural and political realities in what he calls "CinemaScope and glorious Technicolour"...[H]is own writing and most of contemporary Indian writing itself functions as a reminder of—or, for that matter, the ignoring of—the significance of the vernaculars. ("Indo-Anglian Writing")

Thus, if Rushdie ironically "saves" various regional vernacular phrases for the West, he is also, according to Sunder Rajan, among those few South Asian writers in the West who do not display an anxious need to explain the unfamiliar to his western readers ("Writing in English").

In what has by now become a classic essay on "multiple mediations," Lata Mani raises a question of "location" that haunts the cosmopolitan intellectual, and that shapes discussions of authenticity:

In the face of this discourse of authenticity, some Third World intellectuals working in the First World have reterritorialized themselves as hybrid. This strategy is compelling when such a demonstration of hybridity becomes, as in Gloria Anzaldúa's *Borderlands* an enabling moment for the possibility of a collective politics attentive to difference and contradiction. When, however, the elaboration of hybridity becomes an end in itself, serving only to undo binary oppositions, it runs the risk of dodging entirely the question of location. To this one must say, "necessary but insufficient." ("Multiple Meditations")

Nonetheless, many of these writers of fiction really do not occupy their time with tortured self-definitions of their hybridity. But if they are not some sort of hybrid, then what *is* their "location"? Some critics who seek to define them are irked when such writers reaffirm their *Indian* identities. These are, so such critics would have us believe, not *typical* Indians.

This does bring us back to the question that may trump the vexed issue of authenticity, and that is the question of one's choice of an audience. Some Indian critics suspect that attendance at the Doon School, St. Stephen's College in Delhi, and then either Oxford or Cambridge, has produced the most prominent Indo-Anglian writers, and that they might therefore be reasonably described (whether they literally attended these schools or not) as a "Stephanian" school of Indian literature. Gauri Viswanathan's groundbreaking book in 1989 charted the influence of British education on the training of an English-speaking cultural elite in India, and others have sought to chart its

contemporary ramifications in such a "school." Leela Gandhi acknowledges that such a simplistic pigeonholing must be taken with a large grain of salt, but very interestingly argues that "a variety of historical and literary circumstances have made it possible—even imperative—for the postcolonial novel to narrate the nation through a distinctively Stephanian idiom....[M]ost 'Stephanian' novels are boringly—if skillfully—'indicative' of the sensibility through which the newly elite Indian middle-classes recognise their community in the nation. Very few challenge the limits of this sensibility, fewer still refuse the postcolonial middle-classes the narcissistic pleasures of self-recognition" (7).

Shashi Tharoor is among those who contend with that legacy, pro and con. In an article written for *The New York Times* and reprinted by *The Hindu*, he contends that "I write for anyone who will read me, but first of all for Indians like myself" (confirming Leela Gandhi's assertion of the pleasures of self-recognition). He writes in English because it expresses Indian diversity "better than any Indian language precisely because it is not rooted in any one region of my vast country....[and] because writers really live inside their heads and on the page, and geography is merely a circumstance." In an article for *The Stephanian*, he defended his schooling against implied charges of "elitism, Anglophilia and deracination" by noting that it was "astonishing for a college in Delhi, insulated to a remarkable extent from the prejudices of middle-class Indian life" (*pace* Leela Gandhi) and "also embraced the Hindi movies at Kamla Nagar, the trips to Sukhiya's Dhaba, and the chowchow at TibMon (as the Tibetan Monastery was called)." Appearing to concur with Gandhi's broader conclusion, Tharoor concludes that "what is being described as 'Stephanian' writing is in fact characteristic of an entire generation of Indian writers in English, who grew up without the shadow of the Englishman judging their prose, who used it unself-consciously in their daily lives in independent India, and who eventually wrote fiction in it as naturally as they would have written their university exams, their letters home, or the notes they slipped to each other in their classrooms" (3).

Regarding that "entire generation," Nandi Bhatia points out that "expatriate writers such as [Rohinton] Mistry and Rushdie may enjoy a large readership in the West, but many of their compatriots identify their audience in India. And they have found outlets through Indian publishing houses that have emerged since the 1980s: Penguin India, HarperCollins, Ravi Dayal, India Ink, and Kali for Women, India's first feminist publishing house." Prasad is insightful here, arguing that "Yes of course you can create what you want but...if you feel your centre is in the metropolis, not where you are, that you want their appreciation and acceptance, you have to ensure that you write in a language they consider legible, what they consider to be legitimately your business....

If [some other group is] not your primary audience you need not be part of their project, you need not be complicit in it" (191).

So the question seems to come down to this, for the individual author: in whose "project" do you wish to devote your energies? From Prasad's point of view, at any rate, there should be no problem if an Indian chooses to write novels in English and "sees his audience in the metropolis and is willing to accept their agenda to be read by them, to be approvingly appropriated by them" (193)—as long as he acknowledges that he has made this choice. But the implication here seems to be that the Indian reader of novels in Indian languages other than English is not up to the sophistication (verbal, multicultural, etc.) that a western audience (or the cultural elite of India's major cities) purportedly demands from the Indian English novelist. Those who read the various languages would know better than I in this matter, but on its face this seems a rather demeaning argument that is implied without any evidence. In fact, an argument might be made that a certain kind of interpellated narrative is more naturally congenial to Indians (English-speaking and otherwise) than to westerners, as Vikram Chandra himself seems to do when discussing the inspiration for *Red Earth and Pouring Rain's* story-within-stories. Noting that commercial Indian films shaped his writing of the novel, he admits that he loves the form: "you can have...a war movie, which will stop the doomed trek of the lost platoon for a musical interlude. Now, this makes no sense to the Western eye, which is trained to read musical comedies but finds a hard-hitting war musical incomprehensible" (O'Neil 10). And, as Graham Huggan has noted, "it should not be forgotten that [*Midnight's Children*] enjoyed, as Rushdie's other novels have enjoyed, a large readership in India, nor should it be imagined that responses to his novels are culturally and/or geographically determined in any simple way" (72).

Where this leaves us remains to be seen. Huggan astutely observes that "counterhegemonic thought arguably constitutes the new academic orthodoxy, as different interest groups fight it out for the right to make the margins their own....[In the process,] 'resistance' itself has become a valuable intellectual commodity" (83). Like it or not, marketing decisions will probably determine the outcome of these cultural battles, and a growing consciousness of global citizenship (if the concept makes any sense) may eventually obviate a good many of the skirmishes. One desirable result of the professorial infighting, however, may be a greater awareness of the marketing potential within India for novels written in languages other than English, and outside India of the great financial treasure trove of Indian novels yet to be translated into English. Nandi Bhatia points out how Anita Desai's *In Custody* and *Clear Light of Day* address the loss of Urdu under the spread of English, and Vishwapriya Iyengar does much the same.⁶ As Rajeswari

Sunder Rajan suggests, "a good, vibrant translation industry, supported by publishers, academic bodies and the state, is a crying need, one that would bring regional writers the visibility they deserve" ("Dealing with Anxieties").

Notes

1. "Those who believe in the salutary effects of poverty on artists have never been truly hungry, and are suspicious of money from the safety of their own middling comforts. Finally, I suspect, whatever language we write in, we are all equally capable of cowardice and heroism. And I don't mean to cast particular aspersions on Marathi or Gujarati writers, so please, no angry brickbats, at least on this score. In case it makes anyone feel any better, let me state for the record my considered opinion that for sheer incestuousness, for self-serving pomposity, for easy black-and-white moralizing, for comfortably sneering armchair wisdom, for lack of generosity, for pious self-interested victim-mongering, for ponderous seriousness and a priggish distrust of pleasure, there is no group on earth that can match the little subcaste that is the Indo-Anglian literary and critical establishment. I say this with full cognizance of my own somewhat contested membership in said establishment" ("Cult of Authenticity").

2. In the second part of her essay ("Dealing with Anxieties"), Sunder Rajan points out that "'regional writers' is not pejorative usage as Chandra seems to think—the politically incorrect term is 'vernacular.'"

3. Dora Salvador writes that "the novel also reflects the hard tension between the vernacular and English voices during colonial times, together with the clash between oral and written transmission. Literacy already existed in India before the Europeans' arrival. What the West brought to India was printing technology. In *Red Earth and Pouring Rain*, Sanjay and Sikander are sent to Calcutta to become apprentices on the Markline Orient Press. There, by chance, Sanjay has to work on the printing of a book written by an English missionary, who gives a false account of the death by immolation of Janvi, Sikander's mother. Facing this manipulation, Sanjay feels insulted and gets a slightly modified duplication of the font used to print the book. So, he inserts a subversive message, in Hindi, into the alien field of the English book: 'This book destroys completely. This book is the true murderer' (Chandra 1995: 354). When Markline tries to find the font, Sanjay literally swallows all the metal letters, which later on, will be dropped out of his body, against oppression" (105-106).

4. In a review of Mukherjee's *The Perishable Empire*, Akshaya Kumar remarks that "the writer is carried away by her Bangla heritage. Novelists or poets belonging to Bengal or Bihar receive preferential treatment. By underplaying Sanskrit as an alternative to English imperialism, Mukherjee is hinting towards the regionalisation of Indian novel. Such regionalisation is welcome provided it is not done at the cost of the nation. Moreover by asserting different trajectories of novel in different Indian languages, she seems to suggest a total absence of

Indianness per se in these novels."

5. Perhaps here is an instance of what Keya Ganguly interestingly discusses when she rehearses classic European arguments over authenticity. Referring to Adorno, Ganguly concludes with him that "it is the representation of truth that contributes to inauthenticity, not truth itself (133), and that "it is necessary to return our philosophical or theoretical assumptions about the world to the world itself" (133). She favorably quotes Walter Benjamin to the effect that "the true method of making things present is: to imagine them in our own space (and not to imagine ourselves in their space)" (134).

6. Among the authors in other languages that Bhatia singles out as meriting greater world (and, thus, English-language) attention are Mahadevi Verma, Qurratulain Hyder, Mahasweta Devi [whom Gayatri Spivak has brought to some western fame], Shivani, Mrinal Pande, Sahir Ludhianvi, and Amrita Pritam. Others that could be added to this list who have none or relatively few of their works yet translated into English, would be: Munshi Pramchand, Sharat Chandra, C. S. Lakshmi (Ambai), Subramanya Bharati, Unnai Warriar, Ramapurathu Warriar, Kunchan Nambiar, Gurajada Venkata Appa Rao, Rayaprolu Subba Rao, Vishwanatha Satyanarayan, K. Shivarama Karanth, Kuvempu, and Gopalakrishna Adiga. Noting that translations between the vernacular languages also need a boost, Salman Rushdie adds the following names to those who merit more attention: O. V. Vijayan, Surykant Tripathi ("Nirala"), Nirmal Verma, U. R. Ananthamurthy, Suresh Joshi, and Ismat Chughtai. There is only one Indian writer in translation, though, whom he would place "on a par with the Indo-Anglian," and that is Saadat Hasan Manto ("Damme" 52).

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