THE INDIAN NOVEL IN ENGLISH

Its Critical Discourse 1934–2023

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Dieter Riemenschneider, Professor of English at the University of Frankfurt, taught German at the Universities of Chandigarh and Delhi and wrote his doctoral thesis on the Indian novel in English. He has published extensively on English-language literatures and cultures, particularly in India, Africa and New Zealand.

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The ever increasing number of novels written in English by Indian writers bears witness of the fecundity of a literary genre that has not only attracted a growing number of readers but has also appealed widely to critics from India and abroad. Among countless responses to individual writers or single works about 350 publications – essays, essay collections or monographs – on the novel as such have been published between 1934 and 2023. Apart from attention paid here to historical, thematic and linguistic concerns, the poetics of a genre created by authors writing not in their first language has played a significant role, pioneering, by the way, the present discourse on transnational and transcultural literatures in English created outside countries with English as their national language.

The following presentation in two parts first explores the critical discourse of the Indian novel in English that developed over seventy years between 1934 and 2004. Presented in my book of 2005[1] it draws on around 280 publications that round off its first chapter, "The Indian Novel in English: The Reception of a Literary Genre". The second part, "Supplement" , comments but briefly on the direction the discourse has taken over the last twenty years. It is followed by an enumeration of seventy publications that would of course need a more detailed investigation into the various parameters evident in their titles: a task for the present generation of critics.

I.

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Defining the Genre – From the 1930s to the 1960s
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Towards the 'New' Novel – The 1980s
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[1] Dieter Riemenschneider, *The Indian Novel in English. Its Critical Discourse 1934-2004*, Jaipur: Rawat Publications, 2005. 386 pp.. Rs.750.

Preface

My interest in the Indian English novel was awakened by Mulk Raj Anand whom I met towards the end of 1963 at Panjab University in Chandigarh where the German Academic Exchange Service had sent me to teach German and where Anand had been appointed Tagore Professor of Fine Arts. Mutual Indian friends from the History Department introduced us to each other at a wedding reception of a colleague, the Art historian B.N. Goswamy, whose "out-of-caste" marriage had obviously led the newly-weds to celebrate with their friends and colleagues at the university and not at a traditional Hindu marriage venue. This was an event and an arrangement that struck me only much later as almost symbolic of Anand's critical views on caste which he expressed on numerous occasions and translated into fictional terms in all his narratives. In the course of our conversation about his writing and my studies in English literature, he recommended K.R. Srinivasa Iyengar's *Indian Writing in English* as an especially useful source book and comprehensive study that I purchased on my next visit to Delhi.

My travelling to Bombay and Madras at the end of the year and my move to Delhi University in July 1964 subsequently helped me in often discovering stored-away, yellowed and dusty copies of Indian novels in as far-flung places as Moore Market in Madras or second-hand book shops around Dhobi Talao in Bombay. Anand's own novels published as paperbacks by Kutub (or Kutub-Popular) were sent to me from Bombay at a charge of no more than three rupees a copy. G.V. Desani whose South Indian address I somehow got hold of, mentioned in his letter a Bombay contact from whom I could obtain a first edition of *All About H. Hatterr*. I was told it had been stored in an attic for almost twenty years and when I received it by post, it looked age worn. Delhi book shops, on the other hand, became my usual hunting ground with book sellers assisting me in not only tracing titles by Indian novelists like Bhabani Bhattacharya, Khushwant Singh, Kamala Markandaya, Attia Hosein or Balachandra Rajan, but also Anglo-Indian writers whose names are almost forgotten. Reading whatever material I could get hold of, among them around a hundred novels, dozens of short story collections and journal essays in *The Banasthali Patrika*, *Books Abroad*, *Indian Literature* and *Indian Writing Today*, Calcutta's' Writers Workshop *miscellany*, *The Literary Half-Yearly* and *Quest*, I felt on safe enough ground to write my doctoral thesis on *The Modern Indian Novel in English*, one of the first theses on Indian English literature accepted by a German university at the beginning of the 1970s.

I mention these details to illustrate that Anand encouraging me to explore a literature to which he himself had contributed so much, set me on a track I have followed over many years, though interruptedly. It seemed to me then that a quarter century after the country's Independence in 1947, Indian English writing had eventually lost its propulsion and that apart from a few exceptions, a younger

generation of writers had not really emerged to add to it.. As we know, the early 1980s brought about changes that have profoundly affected the history of the Indian novel in English. The appearance and establishment of what has been termed the "new novel" motivated me to look back at the beginnings and the subsequent development of a critical discourse on a genre that began to attract, excite and provoke an ever larger number of literary critics to reflect on each, or a combination of the three aspects embodied in the term "Indian novel in English": its possible or supposed Indianness, its specific form, and the use of a non-Indian language. Didn't the continued engagement with a host of questions pertaining to literary and political history, to aesthetics and linguistics document the cultural relevance of a literary discourse in India that was matched by similar discourses worldwide? And didn't its critical reception over the years reflect paradigmatic changes of the critical literary discourse generally?

My study sets out to present answers to these questions by bringing together a large number of Indian and foreign critics of the Indian English novel in general even though many contributions include references to single authors or individual works to illustrate theoretical deliberations, enables us to take note of the wide range of critical positions adopted to assess the nature of Indian writing in English; in other words, what is judged as its permissible or improper thematic concerns, narrative devices and linguistic signification. As we come across critics from inside and outside the country probing the widely differing literary practices of their findings also permit us to answer the question as to whether we can clearly distinguish between insiders and outsiders.

My study consists of an overview of representative voices arranged chronologically as well as systematically. While only a selected number of contributions can be presented here, they are complemented both, by notes on further publications and the presently most exhaustive bibliographical compilation. As far as it was possible I have looked at all the bibliographical items, although I could not get hold of each and every one. This is the case of articles in recent collections under general titles such as *Indian Writing in English* or *The Indian Novel in English* of which I counted more than a hundred released just during the years 2000 to 2004. It also explains why single essays referred to on and off carry no page numbers. However, articles can easily be located since all these recent books are available from publishers.

I am grateful to many colleagues, writers and publishers in Calcutta, Delhi, Dharwar, Gulbarga, Hyderabad, Mysore, Chennai, Mumbai and Trivandrum as well as to friends in Australia, Canada, Great Britain and the US who have helped me in many ways with their advice and support and by supplying me with their material. Besides, librarians at the National Library in Delhi, the Central Institute of English and Foreign Languages in Hyderabad and the University library in Tübingen have been of great assistance. I thank all of them as well as Deutsche Forschungs-

Introduction

The attention paid to the Indian novel written in English does not, at this moment, necessitate another critical-historical investigation. As the bibliography will show, apart from quite a substantial number of book-length studies published since Dorothy Spencer's *Indian Fiction in English* (1960) and M.E. Derrett's *The Modern Indian Novel in English* (1966), numerous essays have been contributed to collections, journals, weeklies and newspapers by a steadily increasing group of critics from inside and outside India who, over a period of seven decades, have responded in their own and varying ways to the emergence and development of a literary genre that claims the perhaps first place on the list of English literary publications from India. However, it is precisely the nature of these responses that is worthwhile a critical overview which will permit insight into views, patterns and, quite generally, into the development of a critical discourse.

The present study then is meant first as an introduction into a wide field of critical practice in order to acquaint and inform readers and students alike of a specific genre of English language writing located within the context of what has been termed a national literature or Indian Writing in English. Secondly, it is meant to illustrate how critics have responded to a hybrid literary phenomenon, that is, fictitious prose narratives related to or rooted in two very different cultural traditions, the Indian and the Western – if these general terms may be permitted for the moment. In his study *The Fire and the Offering* (1977) S.C. Harrex points at this "cultural dualism inherent in the Indo-Anglian, or Indo-English, literary situation [which] provides a creative challenge both to the writers who are attempting to communicate simultaneously with India and the West, and to their readers and critics" (12).

As will be shown further, the critical discourse, especially its Indian branch, relates intimately to the general political discourse on nation and national identity that has characterized both the period of anticolonial struggle and of post-independent India.[2] Anglo-Indian, Indo-Anglian, Indo-English or Indian English literature – to name the terms variously applied to a specific cultural practice of the nation – thus participates in quite a common discourse of the 20th century that is motivated by the need to counter Western aspirations of hegemonic control over a colonized country and mass media-promoted transnational cultural tendencies:

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[2] As to the importance of the discourse of nationalism in India, see Partha Chatterjee's *Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World. A Derivative Discourse?* (London: Zed Books, 1986). Chatterjee discusses the "ideological history of nationalism" in India from about the 1870s to the 1940s with special emphasis on Bankimchandra Chattopadhyay, Mahatma Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru.

processes that threaten to level or even erase cultural difference and identity. One critic even maintains that from its very beginning the Indian English novel was "intimately related to the evolution of the nationalist history in India [and] as such the political motif was not only prominent but inherent in its very genesis" (Kaushik: 1988, 49). Not unexpectedly, the western contribution to this discourse is less prone to address politico-historical questions than, for example, problems of literary historiography, of genre or postcoloniality.

Paradoxically and despite its prominence in the literary market, the Indian English novel has not won a large Indian readership while the number of its critics has remained relatively small although my "Bibliography" and list of "Critics" suggests otherwise. Here we have to take into account that books published under the general heading of "The Indian Novel in English" frequently comprise essays on individual writers or selected topics and frequently do not contain studies that address, for example, questions of historiography and periodization or genre from a more theoretically-oriented angle.

Generally, the Indian English novel has been reflected upon, explored and analyzed from the perspective of history and historiography, genre and language, 'Indianness' and Indian sensibility, with the majority of critics dating its beginnings back to the mid-19th century when the Bengali writer Bankim Chandra Chatterjee published his *Raj Mohan's Wife* (1864), a text made available serially in the magazine *Indian Field*. Similarly, the beginning of the modern novel as a realistic portrayal of Indian men and women in society and relating back to the European genre as it had evolved from the 18th century onward, has been dated back to the late second decade of the 20th century as coinciding with the political changes in India pushed forward by Gandhi after his return from South Africa in 1915. Both views have recently been challenged due obviously to more serious research into 19th and early 20th century Indian writing in English. In her book *Politics, Aesthetics and Culture* (1988), a study on the novel and political history, Asha Kaushik (1988) offers proof that "the first novel written in India, *A Journal of Forty-Eight Hours of the Year 1945*, by Kylash Chunder Dutt in 1835, was written in English, not in any indigenous language." And she adds, it was a political novel, "anticipating the movement for independence, one hundred and ten years in advance of the actual occurrence" (49). Only a year earlier, in 1987, K.S. Ramamurti rejects the dating and periodization of the modern novel in his *Rise of the Indian Novel in English* since "[Indian fiction in English] was anything but imitative" of the English novel in the 19th century but connects with its modern counterpart because of its shared experimental character and a "pre-occupation [of the writers] with the task of evolving a form and a medium to suit their artistic purpose." This has lent "a continuity to the tradition of novel-writing in English by Indians" and reflects a "creative process which shows a marked continuity over a period of hundred (sic!) years" (1987, 17 and 18).

Nevertheless, an overwhelming number of critics continue to conceive of the novel's history in two phases, and their arguments are based on the observation that earlier examples, that is of the 19th and early 20th century, are governed by their authors' more general historical and social interest while a younger generation born in the first two decades of the 20th century is more politically and socially aware of contemporary issues. Among them we count K.S. Venkataramani, Mulk Raj Anand, Raja Rao and R.K. Narayan, all of whom started their writing careers between the late 1920s and the early 1930s while Bhabani Bhattacharya, G.V. Desani or Kushwant Singh's first works date from the 1940s. Besides, a quantitative factor of no mean importance comes into play here because it denotes the final establishment of the genre, which, by the way, is also true of the modern regional novel. While no more than "twenty important novels written originally in English by men and women of no mean intellectual calibre" (Ramamurti: 1987, 15) were published between 1876 and 1916, "two hundred odd titles" were released from 1930 to 1964.[3]

These factors have induced many critics to survey the Indian English novel not from its beginnings but from about the time Venkataramani's *Murugan, the Tiller* (1927) and *Kandan, the Patriot* (1934) were published. Both of these have been usually identified as the first 'modern' Indian English narratives because of their author's concern with pressing contemporary political and social issues and their more realistic presentation than in earlier novels. Three publications of the 1960s come to mind creating the basis for a history of the genre, albeit from an outsider's perspective. The American scholar Dorothy M. Spencer's *Indian Fiction in English: An Annotated Bibliography* (1960) is, as the title says, mainly a work of reference and confines its critical remarks to an extended "Introductory Essay on Indian Society, Culture and Fiction." M.E. Derrett's *The Modern Indian Novel in English: A Comparative Approach* (1966), published in Belgium and England, and Walter Ruben's three volume survey, *Indische Romane: Eine ideologische Untersuchung (1964-1967)*[4] from the German Democratic Republic, proceed comparatively and systematically, Derrett exclusively on English language texts, Ruben by also including works in the regional languages. Two further publications from India complement this initial stage: K.R. Srinivasa Iyengar's *Indian Writing in English* (1962) and P.P. Mehta whose *Indo-Anglian Fiction* of 1968 though seems to have disappeared as soon as it was published since we do not come across any further detailed references apart from the title's regular appearance in bibliographies.[5]

The decade of the 1970s experiences a flowering of studies with more than a dozen book-length studies (and two of them consisting of two volumes each), augmented by an equally large number of essay collections that include contributions

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[3] Meenakshi Mukherjee (1971, 15).

[4] *Indian Novels: An Ideological Study (1964-1967)*, Berlin: Akademieverlag, 1967.

[5] One of the possible reasons for its elusiveness is its place of publication, the 'provincial' town of Bareilly in Madhya Pradesh, although I must add that the Prakash Book Depot figures quite frequently as a publishing outlet for studies on Indian writing in English, especially in the 1960s and 1970s.

on the novel and, finally, even more journal articles. Interestingly, the total of new novels decreases when compared with the previous decade, a phenomenon Viney Kirpal attributes to the "1970s […as] a gestation period for the shaping of the new Indian sensibility" during economically and politically "most turbulent years in Indian history" (1990, xx, xix). As she and others argue subsequently, the 1970s proves indeed a watershed in the development of the novel, which the very title of *The New Indian Novel in English* refers to, a collection of critical commentaries on recent novels edited by Kirpal. Concomitantly and not at all unexpectedly, methodical approaches diversify, with gender issues and audience awareness the most prominent newcomers on the critical scene.

The 1980s scene does not differ substantially. There are fewer book-length studies, but now myth criticism and postcolonial theorizing make their first appearance with the latter becoming prominent in the 1990s and after. It is a period significant for a very large number of essay collections published mainly from New Delhi, the country's by now firmly established publishing centre.[6] Along with it numerous publications it raises the question whether this development signifies the tendency towards a serious "attempt to develop co-extensive criticology rather than remain hide-bound to the limitations of previous ages."[7]

Defining the Genre – From the 1930s to the 1960s

I would like to begin with two comments that point at a controversy among critics which may have been initiated by Bhupal Singh (1934) who offered a first brief evaluation on Indian novelists writing in English. Drawing on the literary achievement of about two dozen fictional works written between 1901 and 1930, he felt that to "write in a foreign tongue is a serious handicap in itself [... while] few of them [Indian writers, D.R.] possess any knowledge of the art of fiction." Not only are their works weak in plot construction and characterization but they also lean "towards didacticism and allegory." All in all, he concludes, "we have to learn much before we can 'surprise the world with native merchandise', or with 'bright divine imaginings' in prose" (310).

Singh's rather prescriptive approach reflects of course the dominance of formalism and genre typology characteristic of the pre-1930s critical discourse on the novel in Europe, but also a kind of cultural cringe that appears rather exceptional among Indian critics. His literary judgement though has not altogether been discarded as K.S. Ramamurti's book *Rise of the Indian Novel in English* illustrates as recently as in 1987. Responding to the periodization issue of literary historiographers like K.R. Srinivasa Iyengar (1962), P.P. Mehta (1968) or M.K. Naik's (1982)

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[6] See e.g., publications by ABS, Atlantic Publishers and Distributors, Prestige, Bahri, Creative Books, Rawat Publications and Sarup and Sons.

[7] John B. Alphonso Karkala, "Myth, Matrix and Meaning in Literature and Raja Rao's Novel *Kanthapura*", K.K. Sharma (ed.), *Perspectives on Raja Rao*, Ghaziabad: Vimal Prakashan, 1980, 73 [67-83].

"chronological classifications" on the basis of historical data rather than on firm critical norms (12), he maintains that

> criticism relating to the Indian novel in English has [...] a double task. It has to assess a novel as a novel in terms of criteria applicable to all novels, whether Indian or European, and in terms of universal literary values. Then it has to direct an aesthetic responsiveness to and critical appreciation of its Indianness [...] These two objectives should be balanced and reconciled (5).[8]

The critical reception set in slowly in the 1930s and 1940s with less than twenty novels published since the end of the 1920s and the war preventing writers and publishers from greater activity. By 1945 Mulk Raj Anand had seven, R.K. Narayan four and Raja Rao one novel to their credit. Yet apart from favourable introductions to Anand's *Untouchable* (1935) by E.M. Forster and to Narayan's *The Bachelor of Arts* (1937) by Graham Greene as well as a number of reviews of Anand's work and Narayan's *Swami and Friends* (1935), one cannot really discover any serious critical interest in the genre as a whole before the end of the 1950s and the beginning of the 1960s. Iyengar made his appearance from the mid-1940s onward lecturing and publishing on Indian English writing generally. By the early 1960s he had become the most authoritative voice and his comprehensive and seminal book *Indian Writing in English* (1962) would create a basis no future critic could – and hardly any would – easily bypass. Still, neither in his earlier *Indo-Anglian Literature* (1943) nor in *The Indian Contribution to English Literature* (1945) does he have anything to say on the novel while *Literature and Authorship in India* (1943) makes mention of Venkataramani, Anand and Narayan in just one sentence (36). Rao's *Kanthapura* (1938) was obviously not known to him.

Menon Marath, himself a novelist,[9] was the first to have a short article published on "Three Indian Novelists" (1948/1949) which is also of interest for its comparative approach followed by many other critics. His belief in the novel's task to realistically portray life informs his guarded critique of spiritualism in Narayan's *The English Teacher* (1945), of Anand's occasional character distortion into caricature and of Rao's stylistic experiment and attempt "to convey to the non-Indian reader the atmosphere of an Indian village" (188). On the whole, Marath welcomes the authors' achievement as compared to that of their British counterparts because "here for the first time we have the imaginative picture of India drawn by Indians themselves" (192).

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[8] Incidentally, Ramamurti's study came under serious attack by Renu Juneja (1991) who feels that his using "a specific publication as his starting point" as against "conventional historical divisions based on political events or social movements [...] his quarrel must lie in when the novel emerges and here we are bogged down in imprecise definitions of what precisely constitutes a novel" (367).

[9] *Wounds of Spring (London, 1961) and The Sale of an Island (1968).*

Meanwhile and at their several post-war meetings in different cities, the "All-India Writers Conferences" had very little to say about Indian English literature, let alone the novel.[10] Bhabani Bhattacharya, the best-known novelist apart from the 'big three', who by 1959 had published three novels,[11] was the only person who at the 1959 Bhubaneshwar conference took exception to the attack against using English by looking at the Indian English novel from a number of different angles. Publishing abroad, for example, meant not merely catering for a foreign readership, he says, but "to face the most severe competition", not the least because against international novels' preoccupation with the "quest for universality" Indian fictional works "have clung, as a rule, to conventional moulds and patterns" (75, 77)[12]. Most important, however, was the fact that "Indian writing in English has been a decisive factor in redressing the balance of false presentation by foreign story-tellers who, with their limited possibilities of true experience, have seen only the surface of our way of life, failing to reach deeper into our spirit" (76). In spite of using a foreign language, such concern also confirmed the belief in a "concept of freedom [that] will have to include the medium of expression to which the writer, out of his inner urge, commits himself" (75).[13]

Two events, I believe, played an important role in determining the course of criticism in the 1960s: The founding of the Calcutta *Writers Workshop* by P. Lal in 1958 that was soon to become a forum for an increasingly heated debate on Indian writing in English, and the publication of Dorothy Spencer's *Indian Fiction in English* (1960). By favouring the use of English as a creative means of expression, by publishing such work, initially mainly poetry, and by setting up *miscellany*, a 'workshop' journal published six times annually, Lal joined in the lively debate occasioned by the journal *Quest* and the daily *The Statesman* at the turn of the sixties. It honours him that *miscellany* was open to adverse voices like the writer Khushwant Singh or, most formidably, the English critic David McCutchion. Intervening in the debate on the novel, Singh, himself a novelist,[14] for example questions the use of the novel form as it was "not part of the Indian literary tradition" and feels that publishing in English and for a foreign readership tempted many writers to insert "informative material as in a guide book for tourists" (1960, 20). While "audience awareness" was to become an important issue, the "workshop" felt called upon and rejoined: "long narratives [...] and novelettish tales [...] have been in existence in India for longer than we might care to calculate, and have acted as efficient grandparents to the modern Indian novelist" (21).

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[10] See Wadia (1947); Kumarappa (1947); Iyengar (1950); or Vakeel (1957).

[11] *So Many Hungers* (Bombay, 1947); *Music for Mohini* (New York, 1952); *He Who Rides a Tiger* (New York, 1954).

[12] Bhattacharya's essay is reprinted in Gerhard Stilz (1982, 74-78). All page references to this edition.

[13] Here, I would like to include brief references to Anand and Narayan's early views on Indian English writing. The former talks about the modernity of the Indian English novel that he identifies as the pursuit of the 'modern' values of progress and human liberty and of setting up a school of 'Neo-Realism' (Anand: 1965, 50, 52). The latter claims the status of "experimentalist" for the Indian writer who will not adopt an Anglo-Saxon English. Still, he says, English has served him admirably to convey the thoughts and action of his Indian characters (Narayan, 1964).

[14] *Train to Pakistan* (London, 1957); *I Shall Not Hear the Nightingale* (New York & London, 1959)

McCutchion's introductory remarks to his review of Rao's second novel, *The Serpent and the Rope* (1960), published in the *writers workshop miscellany* under the title "The Novel as Sastra" (1961), address the book's description as "the truly Indian novel." Arguing, "the novel's chief concern is circumstantial reality – 'the very web and texture of society as it really exists', according to the well-known quote from Hazlitt – and that the traditional Indian view point regards all this as tedious illusion," McCutchion feels that "it may be questionable whether a truly Indian novel is at all possible" (1969, 83-84). This is not to doubt writers' ability to write <u>novels</u> but rather the postulate of writing <u>Indian</u> novels. Here, of course, the question arises as to the applicability of Hazlitt's dictum and whether "the traditional Indian viewpoint" will necessarily be shared by each and every modern Indian novelist. If not, do they then shed their 'Indianness'? Or is not S.C. Harrex' s suggestion more accurate that "the traditional Indian world-view [...] is in the bloodstream of modern life"? (Harrex: 1977, 52) McCutchion paradoxically incorporates Indian critics' insistence on 'Indianness' while at the same time questioning the emergence of "the truly Indian novel."

Spencer follows McCutchion only part of the way when she holds that 'Indianness' appears to have prevented the development of the novel <u>before</u> the arrival of the British but that since, there has occurred a "considerable degree of reorientation in the Indian world view" that preceded or accompanied "the appearance of the novel in that country" (1960, 10). Such reorientation has obviously affected the traditional preference of the epic narrative as well as the "lack of interest in the events of ordinary life as lived by man on this earth" (9): a feature that differs from the Western idea "that character is destiny" (29). Yet Spencer also notes a cohesive literary tradition since the "novel throughout its history in India has served the purpose of social as well as political reform," with the latter aspect being more foregrounded "during the last twenty years or so" (26, 27). Such concern may likewise explain the "strong didactic tone characteristic of much Indian fiction" (27), influenced on the one hand by Victorian moralistic works and on the other by the authors' critical assessment of Indian customs and traditions. All in all then, Spencer's remarks complement the ideological debate on Indianness by contextualizing this concept.

The issue of a literary tradition circling around the parameter of 'Indianness' that evolved in the 1960s began to lose its importance only gradually towards the end of the last century. An often veritable war of words and arguments between 'localists' and 'internationalists' characterizes much of this period, yet fortunately, the majority of novelists were not drawn into this controversy. Anand, Bhattacharya and Narayan[15] neither changed their views nor stopped writing in English. Rao's *Kanthapura* and *The Serpent and the Rope* differ thematically from their work but their author did not discard his famous 1938 'credo' of conveying "in a language that is

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[15] See Bhattacharya (1959); Anand (1965); Narayan (quoted in Stilz (1982)).

not one's own the spirit that is one's own", and of infusing "into our English expression [...the] tempo of Indian life"[16] even though his language and style were certainly made to serve different purposes.

Among early staunch adversaries of Indian English texts I would like to quote only a few voices. For Prema Nandakumar authors had ended in "murky defunct Orientalism" (1963, 84). Critical of their concern with "Indianness" or "a self-conscious Orientalism" (81), she admits though that their "bi-nationalism", a combination of a nationalistic viewpoint and "an acute awareness of Western social ideals and customs", had at times created a stimulating tension but more often than not had failed to present the reader with what he wanted: "action, movement, plot, drama – all the familiar ingredients" (83).

Similarly, in his comprehensive discussion *English in India: Its Present and Future* (1964), V.K. Gokak doubts that the two distinct cultural and literary traditions of India and the West manifest in the two branches of Indo-Anglian writing, the "Anglian" and the "Indian", could be brought together in a synthesis "in sustained works of art" (163). "Indo-Anglian writers", he concludes, "come from a microscopic minority group" and have merely succeeded in creating a "hothouse plant rather than one that has sprung from the soil and sprouted and burgeoned in the open air" (164). Himself a poet, Gokak might have had Indian poetry in English in mind. However, his catchy metaphor was eagerly adopted subsequently by similarly critical voices on the novel.

After a short trip to India in 1962, the American Allan Wendt joined their camp postulating in his essay "Babu to Sahib: Contemporary Indian Literature" (1968) that Indian prose writers had merely been "groping for the kind of fusion that combines Indian feeling with Western form" (168). Yet the meaning of "Indian" and "Western" remains as vague as the epithets "Babu" and "Sahib" smack of a racist attitude when he pontificates that "Raja Rao [in *Kanthapura*, D.R.] seems like a Babu who has not sufficiently mastered his medium [while if he] was a Babu in 1938 he has become a Sahib by 1963" (169). Patronizingly, Wendt concludes, "the new Sahibs have produced writing that can be judged by the best Western standards" (171-172) so that "Indo-Anglian literature may be coming of age" (179).

I hasten to add that Wendt's orientalist arrogance is exceptional. William Walsh for example, the perhaps best informed non-Indian critic in the 1960s, follows an incomparably more open-minded and flexible methodological approach although his view is not altogether free of Western preconceptions. In his short contribution to the English journal *Encounter* he turns Khushwant Singh's complaint about tourist guide material around by drawing attention to the Western reader's "deficiencies." "It is hard for us," he says, "to take up the references – to the Indian scene, [...] the terrible poverty, the profoundly significant religion. We live in utterly different conditions" (1964: 83). "And yet", he concedes in a humanistic vein we encounter

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[16] "Foreword" in *Kanthapura*, quoted in Stilz (1982, 137).

again and again in Walsh's writing, "as we read these novels, [...] we are not deceived, I believe, in detecting through all the appearance of strangeness [...] the common and extraordinary rhythm of life" (83).[17]

By way of concluding this summary presentation of the 1960s debate, two Indian and two foreign critics should be cited who attempt to present a provisional evaluation of the literary scene. Krishna Baldev Vaid (1966) raises "some basic questions" about tradition and genre and relates the Indian English novel clearly to the Western tradition which in turn does not justify critics to employ Indian aesthetic values (159). Instead, he pleads for probing into the historical context including the "transitional and hybrid character of our society" (163). Writers themselves have not responded adequately here, he says, but have trapped the Indian novel either in sentimentality or propaganda and have proved altogether "too self-consciously Indian" (167). Such a constructive approach that leaves aside polemics and is not hampered by prejudicial notions also characterizes M.G. Krishnamurthi's (1969) balanced view on the novelists' achievement by taking Rao's 'credo' as his yardstick. Less general and critical in his conclusions than Vaid, he feels that Rao's parameters (and problematization) of audience, idiom and communication (436) are of analytical value. Applied to the writer's own work, Krishnamurthi then cogently illustrates the possibilities of their artistic execution and the varying success in having solved these problems satisfactorily (442-445), apart from having documented here that criticism has to be a serious task of which he complains, "there is very little evidence" (451).

T.D. Brunton (1968) investigates the claim that the Indian novel can be defined as embedded in the tradition of 'Indianness' rather than that of the genre. Applying Western criteria to a few examples, he rejects such a claim with regard to *The Serpent and the Rope* but praises *Untouchable* and feels that Narayan runs the danger of "having no commitment whatsoever" (59). Though not as orientalist as Wendt's, his verdict that "the heritage of Indianness [...] is too vague to be of much positive help to the novelist who has no other inspiration" (61) nevertheless reveals how dubious it is when a foreign critic does not acquaint himself sufficiently well with another culture but simply reverts to his own literary criteria. Here, M.E. Derrett's extensive study (1966) attempts to negotiate the cross-cultural problematic more thoroughly by touching on the various aspects of reading, such as the novels' historical embeddedness, their controversial reception in India, the writers' role and finally, characterization, technique and the use of English. Her comparative study includes works published after the end of the war that to her form an "integral branch of Indian literature" as comparisons with and the evaluation of examples from the "regional languages" document (7). However, extensive quotations often merely serve her purpose of illustrating general remarks, for example on the dramatic style of an author, his wide range of vocabulary or typical dialogue (110-112, 142-143).

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[17] Walsh's general approach to Commonwealth literature has been interpreted as "an example of the way in which New Criticism facilitated the 'adoption' of the individual post-colonial authors by the 'parent' tradition" (Ashcroft, Griffiths, Tiffin: 1989, 160).

Novels are also cited in contrast to features of decadent Western fiction or as documents offering the Western reader the "opportunity of learning more of a society where political freedom is still comparatively new and where unprecedented changes in social life are afoot within its ancient framework" (147).[18] Her remark, on the other hand, that novels are both, embedded in the process of "an emerging national consciousness in India, [and are] at the same time a manifestation of the 'hybrid consciousness' of the intellectual elite of that country" (148), points at the fact that these authors are "certainly not typical of the Indian population" (151) but represent a particular social segment. Thus their works are to be approached by keeping their specific social context in mind.

Literary History and the Novel – The 1970s

More than a dozen book-length studies, among them quite a few from abroad and earning their authors a doctoral degree must be called the outstanding feature of the 1970s. In varying degrees, each of them offers a general literary-historical survey, considers the critical scene and then analyzes a number of selected works. At the same time, of the thirty essays published in the 1970s quite a few tackle a similar task although their format forces them to highlight a particular topic. R. Warwick's "Modern Indian Writing" (1979) takes us back into the 19th century, points at a parallel development of the Western and the Indian novel and looks at the common themes in modern Indian English writing. Interestingly, he ends by assessing the lively critical scene as dominated, he feels, by anthropological, hortative and bibliographical concerns which underlines the "pre-eminent position of the novel in modern Indian literature […] reflected in the volume of critical works devoted to it" (195), and here especially to the three leading Indian English novelists.[19]

Other topics addressed are the recurring problems of language and style[20] and of the literary tradition. P.S. Guptara's discussion of the impact of Europe (1979), including an overview of the early but important influence of missionaries and orientalists, comes to the conclusion that "modern Indian literature is rooted in the realities of the country" but that its authors belong to a social class – and the forms chosen by them deriving from it – that bears "the unmistakable and undeniable stamp of Europe" (32-33).[21] Such a socio-historical reading is not shared by K.S. Ramamurthy (1970) whose inductive approach to several works by Anand, Narayan

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[18] S.C. Harrex goes even further and feels that Derrett's "descriptive approach to literature [...] treats a large number of novels as source material for comparative documentation regarding social attitudes, characterisation, forms, themes, style, attitudes to nature, inter-racial relations" (1977, 6

[19] See also Williams (1973), Mokashi-Punekar (1977), Iyengar (1978) and Niven (1979) for their general informative value, and Riemenschneider (1974/75) for his critical assessment of the Indian literary scene that goes more into detail than Warwick's.

[20] See Mukherjee (1970) and Mokashi-Punekar (1978). While the former's remarks are quite discerning as to a single novelist's style, the latter finds little to praise because their sense of superiority, instead of empathy with the life around them makes the novelists' Indianness (of style) superficial (146).

[21] See Clark (1970) who also relates the modern Indian novel back to the 19th century and discovers narrative and thematic similarities between the Indian novel generally and its Indian English variant.

and Rao testifies a revitalization of the puranic tradition of storytelling that, interestingly, characterizes the Indian English novel more conspicuously than its counterpart in the regional languages, which in turn suggests a more consciously 'Indian' attitude on the part of the novelist who writes in English. Graham Parry (1978), however, as a Western reader, struggles with the novels' dislocation between subject matter and chosen language that at times manifests itself in an "awkwardness of tone" (77) and at others does not help in overcoming the reader's unfamiliarity with the subject matter or its merely local significance. Like Warwick he also comments upon the critical scene, which, he feels, is not particularly exhilarating apart from M.K. Naik or Uma Parameswaran's contributions.

Finally, Anita Desai, herself a novelist,[22] is the first to specifically look at "Women Writers" (1970) whereas Naik discusses "The Political Novel" (1978). Surveying women novels, Desai finds them "strangely alike and insipid [and…] self-consciously prosaic", all of which, she says, reflect "the silence, the falsehoods and the shackles of the past" (130). For Naik, quite a few novels "deal with politics in artistic terms" (18) rather than presenting political ideas. However, many of them are haunted by artificiality although we come across a range of different modes like ironic, melodramatic and purely realistic portrayals.

To return then to a few of the extended explorations into the whole genre, we have as its earliest example Meenakshi Mukherjee's *The Twice-Born Fiction* (1971) on "Themes and Techniques of the Indian Novel in English", a book that has perhaps become the most-widely known, reviewed and reprinted study in its field to this day. Paying attention to the period from 1930 to 1964, she first surveys previous critical investigations that to her were all too often preoccupied with "the general problems of Indo-Anglian writing" instead of addressing "individual books and authors" (13). Instead, here the novel will be studied as "the genre of imaginative literature which gives artistic form to the relationship of man and society […] that must have a definite location in temporal and spatial reality" (18). Its literary achievement lies in the artistic execution of an individual groping towards self-realization. Though the peculiar problems of the Indian writer are not side-lined – his lack of a tradition and attempts at setting up one's own rooted in a distinct national experience, or the use of a foreign language and addressing a heterogeneous audience – *The Twice-Born Fiction*'s main purpose is the assessment of the literary achievement of deserving novels by exploring how Indian themes have been treated from a technical point of view – or, in Mark Schorer's words, present themselves as "'achieved content'" (37). Novels, Mukherjee says, must be "rooted in the concept of history, the concept that man is shaped by the changing forces around him" (209), and here "the few novels which have succeeded are usually the ones firmly rooted in time and place; yet most Indo-Anglian novelists are constantly aiming at an Indianness bereft of temporal and spatial values" (213). Accordingly, the "future of Indo-Anglian fiction seems to lie in

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[22] By 1970 Desai had published *Cry, the Peacock* (London, 1963) and *Voices in the City* (London, 1965).

the direction of further authenticity through exploiting the particular, local and regional reality [...] rather than through straining to find another of the very few available 'all-India' themes" (213). *The Twice-Born Fiction* is an impressive study that clearly outlines its aims, offers balanced judgements and is markedly based on Western methodological perceptions of literature that do not always prevent Mukherjee from being somewhat prescriptive, but it certainly avoids the narrow nationalistic approach with its ever recurring thematization of Indianness.[23]

The introductory remarks of S.C. Harrex's comprehensive two-volume study, *The Fire and the Offering* (1977, 1978), show little patience with "much of the early Indian response to its own literature in English" which, he feels, "was paralysed by parochialism, irrelevant squabbling, emotionalism, nationalism, critical naivety, and a destructive disparity of assumptions and standards" (1977, 7). This outspoken verdict appears somewhat harsh but Harrex fortunately presents us with an unprejudiced and balanced view on notable studies of the 1960s and early 1970s from which he then departs to outline four prerequisites to be heeded by the non-Indian critic that he wants to follow. There is, first of all, the need to take into consideration the Indian cultural and social background; further, the critic must realize the difficulties "of describing accurately the complex blending of Indian and English elements within the sensibility not merely of one writer but within the 'Indo-Anglian' group as a whole" (9). Next, it is necessary to take into account these 'mixed allegiances' and the 'mixed sensibility' of the individual Indian writer when analysing "the literary consequences of this" and when assessing "the scope, power, and human significance of the given work on the basis of the Indo-Anglian 'mixed sensibility' and according to the criteria of the novelist's art" (13). Finally, he must assess an author's style as a fundamental test of his originality in handling his subject matter with its wide range of Indian themes. Once the critic has responded to these demands – a task Harrex then goes about in his own study – we will realize that an understanding of the Anglo-Indian 'mixed sensibility' is of central importance for our assessment of the Indian English novel since it is imaginatively challenged by a reality of "incredible kaleidoscopic diversity and socio-metaphysical complexity" (45).

The perhaps most interesting point here is Harrex's conceptualization of a 'mixed sensibility' that creatively manifests itself in the Indian English novel as "hybrid literature" (8), fed objectively by two cultural traditions and subjectively by a mixed sensibility. Such positioning distances it from a national discourse – without totally neglecting it – and locates it in the neighbourhood of other hybrid literatures like African or Caribbean writing in English. In other words, Harrex's approach can

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[23] In his brief but very perceptive "Concept of Indianness with Reference to Indian Writing in English" (1979) Gokak spells out the dangers of setting up a reductive definition both of who an Indian is and what "Indianness [is] in Indian writings" (24). Arguing that the latter answer might be found in a "writer's intense awareness of his entire culture" (ibid.), the reader can only draw the conclusion that he may hardly come across instances of such perfect awareness of "the vertical as well as the horizontal" (ibid.); which in turn makes it a rather questionable pursuit for the critic to delve into Indianness altogether.

be called an outsider's who in contrast to his Indian colleagues does not limit his attention to a homegrown product but opens up the discourse to an extended and comparative approach – which we certainly do not come across in A.V. Krishna Rao's *The Indo-Anglian Novel and the Changing Tradition* (1972).

The book's introductory chapter (9-26) outlines that the following analyses will be guided by looking at patterns of change that have affected cultural values and have made the novel a product of these changes as well as a vehicle expressing them; in other words, investigating how notions of time and historicity have been "forced on a culture wedded to eternity and spirituality" (24). The partly nostalgic and partly rebellious nature of the 1930s changed into one of disenchantment and dislocation after 1947. Here for example, Narayan looks toward cultural assurance as way out of this continuous crisis while Anand's response swings between protest and hope. Altogether though we cannot speak of uniform responses. In a sense Krishna Rao thus takes up Mukherjee's appeal to the novelist to pay attention to temporal and spatial reality as an essential requirement for the modern novel. But at the same time, his position differs from hers in foregrounding the novel genre's philosophical preoccupation with a synthesized view of life and art and in his defining their representation of changing patterns of national tradition as giving expression to archetypes of modern India's new awareness of herself (26).[24]

R.S. Singh's *Indian Novel in English* (1977) follows a comparable pattern, now relating the country's political and social history to the thematic development of the Indian English novel. Setting the tone and outlining the book's course, the chapter "Indo-English Fiction: A Retrospective Introduction" is followed by theme-oriented brief historical overviews of historical writing, the portrayal of the urban or rural scene, of the Indian aristocratic class or women. Yet this abundance of names, titles, dates and themes and general critical comments is not matched by an adequate measure of problematization while Singh is also reluctant to evaluate the achievement of the major novelists, which is quite obvious in his conclusion that "time alone will show if the genre of Indo-Anglian fiction has inner vitality to grow into a great literature in course of time" (36). As with other studies, the book underlines its prime concern with the status of the Indian English novel but by contrast it also serves the useful purpose of taking stock of what it is all about.

Uma Parameswaran's *A Study of Representative Indo-English Novelists* (1976), confined to works of South Indian writers, is of quite a different calibre and may have been informed in part by her experience and status as an expatriate critic teaching in Canada. Of much interest is the book's general "Introduction" where she proves an astute analyst of the development and state of the Indian critical scene. It comes as a bit of a surprise then to read that the Indian English novel, subdivided

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[24] In the face of Krishna Rao's study Sarma's claim "to fill up [a] gap in the study of Indo-Anglian fiction" (xii) in his book *Nationalism in Indo-Anglian Fiction* (1978) appears out of place especially since his focus. on nationalism and its effect on the novel neither offers a new approach nor basically new insights.

into the groups of early native, native-alien and expatriate writing, is referred to as "bastard" and "minor that seems destined to die young" (2) because of the abolition of English. Setting "A.D. 2000 as the dirge date for Indo-English literature." To our relief, Parameswaran nevertheless hopes that "time proves this prediction wrong" (6) and again somewhat unexpectedly concludes, "Indo-English criticism, after a late start, has, within the last ten years, caught up with the quality and quantity of the creative output" (13).[25] Her well-argued thematic analyses then focus on central concerns of the authors' art and appear geared towards classroom teaching outside India, suggesting a canon of works worthwhile studying rather than feeling called upon to survey the whole field.

A few more books were written by German and Australian scholars who had lived and taught in Indian for a time. Kai Nicholson follows the outsider approach pursued earlier by Spencer and Derrett in *A Presentation of Social Problems in the Indo-Anglian and the Anglo-Indian Novel* (1972), a "study of social problems as presented in the post-independence era of Indo-Anglian and Anglo-Indian literature" (xi).[26] Exploring the fictitious presentation of social change, respectively progress, as depicted through character and action, he draws attention to the writers' ideology, their openness to social and political pronouncements – especially Gandhi's – rather than to the texts' literary aspects and reflects a Western humanist's concern with the country's social conditions. Nicholson's selection of titles, however, strikes one as unusual as he confines his study to "novels, both Anglo-Indian as well as Indo-Anglian, reviewed in *Times Literary Supplement*" (xvi), whose choice at the time can only be speculated upon. Besides, periodizing them as either works of the pre-Gandhi or the Gandhi era, appears similarly arbitrary when he argues that the former were influenced predominantly by English literature and the latter by Gandhian thinking – though he concedes that there are other influences at work today. Here I would like to retort that the literary scene was certainly more complex during both periods. Besides, to postulate an Indian writer's need to "adjust his writing to the tastes of the general English reading public, [because] illiteracy in their homeland and the small and rather insignificant reading public [... had] forced the Indian novelists

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[25] Parameswaran provides me with a cue to mention Reddy's comprehensive study *Indian Writing and Its Audience* (1979) that lies outside the purview of the present overview but deserves a brief comment. As the first sustained investigation of the critical response to Indian English writing, Reddy attempts to assess its achievement by looking at the Indian writer's awareness of (a mixed) audience and at foreign and Indian responses. Among the former he discovers two groups, those who perform practical criticism – of which not much is being commented upon – and those who regrettably, Reddy feels, are not interested in *how* the Indian writer has organized his material. And here, he finds much that is objectionable, distorted, erroneous or simply uninformed. As he concludes: "To what extent these works (Indian English writing, D.R.), realized in terms of literary criticism, deserve the name of works of art, the name of literature, properly assessed, may still be an open question" (103). Indian critics, on the other hand, or rather the dozen examples he refers to, hardly fall into one or several patterns (161) although the bulk of critical writing addresses the same limited number of topics, shows stock responses, neglects lesser known writers and suffers from repetition. In contrast to Parameswaran it seems to Reddy that "with the present situation […] the critical intelligence does not compare well with the creative talent of the writers in this genre which still *awaits exposition*" (216). I shall return to Reddy's final words when I look at the critical scene of the 1980s.

[26] The term "post-independence era of Anglo-Indian and Indo-Anglian literature" is applied rather loosely since Nicholson also includes novels of the pre-independence era, for example Anand's *Coolie* and Venkataramani's *Kandan, The Patriot* (pp. 96-97 and 126 respectively).

to publish in England" (247-248), generalizes their motivation and also overlooks their differing styles.

Klaus Steinvorth's *The Indo-English Novel: The Impact of the West on Literature in a Developing Country* (1975) similarly places textual analyses against the background of social, psychological and economic aspects of a developing country where the "situation of creative writing [...] is completely different from that of the more industrialized countries of the West" (27), particularly with regard to audience, reading habits, the book market, the language situation or illiteracy. On the whole, however, his study conforms to the 1970s formula of combining a historical with a textual-analytical reading, with perhaps the important difference that for him the Indian English novelist's difficulties arise less from his outsider position than from a developing country's economic, social and cultural circumstances. It is a view not many Indian critics would share because they then had to admit that no essential differences separate the Indian English from the Indian language writer.

My own study, *Der indische Roman in englischer Sprache* (1974), influenced by critical preoccupations of an earlier period with its concerns for technique and style leaves aside overviews of genre history and critical reception and focuses instead on the employment of point of view, narrative presentation and the use of time and addresses the question of style in order to explore the fictitious representation of the interrelationship between individual and society. A study of half a dozen selected novels by different writers shows the extent of their allegiance to Indian concepts of man and society although they foreground the cultural collision of Western and Indian concepts of the individual.

We finally have three more contributions by outsiders, Stephen Hemenway's *The Novel of India* (1975) and Haydn Moore Williams's Studies *in Modern Indian Fiction* (1973)[27] and *Indo-Anglian Literature 1800-1970: A Survey* (1976). The latter is indeed a general survey of Indian writing in English against the political, social and cultural history of the country and points out important events that affected the modern Indian English novel and "gained great potency after World War I" (4) due to the national and social atmosphere of the 1920s and after. Here, Anand and Rao found "their themes, and a social justification for their art, in India in the throes of the Gandhian revolt which led to freedom in 1946 (sic!)" (5).

Hemenway's highly reflective study of half a dozen Indian and three English novelists sets off somewhat inaccurately with the remark that "both traditions are relatively untapped areas for scholarly investigation" (vol.2, 3) which he attempts to remedy by, among others, relating his analyses to "the seemingly infinite topic of East-West dichotomies as manifested primarily on the Indian subcontinent" (ibid.). Here, he believes, "the landmark for novels of India" was E.M. Forster's *A Passage to India* (1924).

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[27] It is mainly a study of individual authors preceded in vol.1 by a very general historical outline on "Origins: The Background of Indian Writing" (1-17).

The East-West theme, either noted or discussed at length by almost every critic of the Indian English novel, is subsequently explored from four different angles: the political, the racial-cultural, the personal-social and the religious-philosophical. The novelists' pursuit of presenting the manifold difficulties of cross-cultural understanding and of exploring possibilities of mutual tolerance is indeed a central issue. Like Harrex, Hemenway also locates their writing 'between' cultures although his emphasis is on the novelist's representation of 'the other' rather than on his 'mixed sensibility' and allegiances. At the same time, his selection of novels and his methodology is of a more limited character. Not only does he leave out texts that do not thematize the East-West encounter but he also employs Forster's novel "as a touchstone for evaluating subsequent novels of India" (6). The result is a compact study at the expense of a one-sided argument based on Western literary criteria. Taking this into account, Hemenway offers a fair evaluation of the Anglo-Indian and the 'Indo-Anglian' novelist: The former conveys a feeling of otherness when dealing with India and the latter one of authentic oneness with his subject matter. Such difference however, one should add here, is to be expected since the Indian writer is after all on his home ground while the English is not.

Towards the 'New' Novel – The 1980s

The dominance of familiar methods of investigation and methodological considerations during the 1980s confirms conservative critical views held in India because of the respect paid by younger academics to their teacher generation. Among them I would count, first and foremost, placing the Indian English novel within a national cultural context and further, exploring the genre's realist mode as well as the use of English. Yet due to two cultural- literary events a few tentative attempts to depart from here should not be overlooked. Edward Said's theoretical deliberations in *Orientalism* (1978) was instrumental to the emergence of the postcolonial discourse, though incidentally not applied to the Indian English novel by two of its leading Indian respondents, Homi Bhabha and Gayatri Spivak, and initially only hesitatingly employed by other Indian critics. The second event was the publication of Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* (1981) with its departure from the predominant realist mode of the Indian English novel practised since the 1930s. Though G.V. Desani's *All About H. Hatterr* (1948) had been quite experimental in its non-realistic representation of 'character' and 'event', it had hardly left an imprint on critics at the time, let alone affected the development of the post-Independence novel. The changes brought about by *Midnight's Children*, on the other hand, can hardly be overestimated. But it was not really till the late 1980s that the idea of the 'new' Indian novel began to make its gradual appearance.[28] Obviously, the work of Rushdie and

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[28] See Kirpal (ed.), *The New Indian Novel in English: A Study of the 1980s* (1990).

other novelists living and writing away from India could not easily be accommodated within the prevalent nationalist discourse.[29]

A few more general observations on the 1980s should be added here. Over the years no more than half a dozen critics from inside and outside India had sustained their interest in the novel genre, complemented by only a small number of mainly Indian newcomers;[30] an amazing fact considering the tremendous growth of the publishing industry in general and the modern novel in particular, and both changes certainly taken note of by academics and university teachers. It was perhaps due to the prevailing uniform novel pattern that critical interest had gradually waned while the 'shocking arrival on the scene of *Midnight's Children* had first to be digested before a younger generation began to react to a kind of writing that challenged so many taken-for-granted views on the Indian English novel, and concomitantly on the postcolonial discourse. Thus changes in the critical scene are a phenomenon of the 1990s rather than the 1980s and, importantly, would not so much affect the critical discourse on the novel generally than consist of responses to the 'new' Indian novel.

Introductory survey studies aimed at a general assessment of the genre illustrate differences in approach chosen by outsiders as compared to their Indian colleagues. Much less involved in the 'internal' national discourse, they frequently attempt to systematize the material. S.C. Harrex (1982), for example, focuses on Anand, Narayan, Rao and Desani whose work represent distinctly different forms referred to as expressionist, neo-classical, romanticist and eclecticist respectively. Yet his remark about *Midnight's Children,* a literary event that "suggest[s] that this work has brilliantly opened up new possibilities in the quest for that elusive of ideals, The Great Indian Novel" (1), indicates that his systematization might soon require modification.

Two German contributions point at the necessity to consider socio-literary factors. Thus I argue that the novel

> reflects [the authors'] own urban background […] separating himself from the experiences of life of the majority of his countrymen. His concerns, consequently, must be understood as those of a very small minority in India, [which] in itself, is not necessarily a shortcoming of his art but it does entail the need not to claim more from the Indo-

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[29] Raji Narasimhan, herself a creative writer, critiques Rushdie's narrative "device […] of leaving fabular time and entering the present", for example in *Midnight's Children*, as an "entry back to the gravitational field of the present that inflicts most of the damage in his work", and questions "his grasp of present political realities, his naive, facile and journalistic reading of market-place gossip as political acumen and wisdom" (1984, 50). Unfortunately, she does not substantiate her verdict by presenting evidence. Needless, perhaps, to add that this holds true as well of her evaluative statements that "English is a very sick language indeed in this country" and has not "put down healthy stable roots in our literary body-politic" (49, 50).

[30] Among the older generation we come across Anand and Desai, Mukherjee, Naik and Srinath from India, Harrex, Walsh and me from abroad. Of the younger generation Devy, Jha, Jussawalla, Kirpal and Paranjape are the most prominent names.

English novel than what it intends to achieve (Riemenschneider: 1983, 33).[31]

Horst Wunderlich's doctoral thesis on Narayan, Rao and Anand (1988) distinguishes among three levels of the identity problematic: an 'objective' one brought about by processes of colonization and decolonization, a 'subjective' one as far as these processes affect the writers' awareness of themselves and their attempts at creatively representing the conflict; and a third level embedded in the text itself affecting individual characters and whole social groups. *Zwischen Dharma und 'nation-building'* is not an intervention in the post-colonial discourse with its central concern of 'self-other', as one might perhaps expect from a 1988 publication, but employs such tenets as the basic social determination of human life and man's concomitant need to define himself through social allegiance and difference. The process of colonization that went hand in hand with modernization caused not just one and only one type of identity problem in a traditional society but several ones depending on the extent to which different social groups were affected. As the works of these novelists illustrate, to assess their achievement requires looking at them from a socio-literary perspective.

Among Indian contributors M.K. Naik has throughout been interested in the literary history of Indian English writing and the development of an individual author. His "Post-Independence Fiction" (1982), written for a special novel issue of the journal *LittCrit*, offers a brief thematic survey[32] that singles out *Untouchable, All About H. Hatterr, The Guide* and *The Serpent and the Rope* as important novels. Yet as G.N. Sharma has pointed out in a perceptive review article on historical studies of Indian English literature, Naik is inclined to view "this literature [as] merely a by-product of the political and cultural contact between India and England [rather than] an organic part of the indigenous literary tradition" (1987, 141). A view confirmed both in his 1982 essay as in "The Achievement of Indian English Fiction" (1984) where he rejects K.S. Ramamurti's thesis (1987) that "the early Indian English novelists 'were by no means "imitators" but conscious experimenters who adopted an alien form and medium to socio-cultural situation and sensibility which were specifically Indian'". Not at all, objects Naik, they were influenced by Scott, Bulwar-Lytton and other "fabricator[s] of gaudy melodramas" (102).[33]

It seems to me, however, that Ramamurti's brave attempt to rescue 19th century novels from being placed outside the pale for being neither novels proper nor Indian should be taken more seriously. In spite of an adverse critical tradition

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[31] Aithal corroborates the class-, even the caste-character of the Indian novel by comparing the portrayal of untouchability in works written in the regional languages as well as in English and arrives at the conclusion that in spite of the novelists' recommendable efforts, "the projection of a stereotype image of the untouchables in the works examined in this paper bespeaks the limits of the upper-caste Indian literary imagination" (1984, 345).

[32] A thematic approach also rules the book-length study by Prasad, *The Self, the Family and Society in Five Indian Novelists* (1990). However, he does not really convince the reader because he is obviously unable to decide whether his five novelists should be approached primarily from a literary-critical or a socio-literary perspective. It is an amazingly confused book considering the existence of an extensive critical discourse.

[33] Here, Naik refers to an earlier article by Ramamurti, "Does the Indian Novel in English Have a Future?" *Cygnus*, II, 1 (1980).

over the last quarter of the century he convincingly argues the emergence of a distinct literary genre right from the 1870s when the first novels were published. Such an assumption holds true, Ramamurti argues, when we keep a number of points in mind such as the flexibility of the novel form and a concept like 'Indianness'. Further, the substantial number of works published between 1876 and 1914 needs to be studied much more closely while periods like "The Beginnings" or "The Renaissance in the Spirit" are to be reconsidered against a precise study of the socio-historical changes that were of bearing on the rise of the novel – not unlike the 'rise' of the English novel in the 18th century. If the critic, besides, considers these early works in English as experiments in form and content, he will reject notions such as their being "sorry imitations of the early Victorian novels" (15). After all, experimentation goes on and "lends continuity to the tradition of novel-writing in English by Indians" (17). Look then, Ramamurti pleads, at novel writing since 1874 as "the manifestation of a creative impulse which has derived its sustenance from two distinct traditions of story-telling which have their roots in two distinct cultures […] from the duality of the writer's affiliations" (20, 21).

Rise of the Indian Novel in English has been criticized for its lack of sound scholarship, and the book has its shortcomings in method and terminology,[34] yet it has certainly returned attention to the beginnings of the Indian novel and the need for more research in the historical, social and cultural changes of the country as a whole and their bearings upon the novel. A point taken up earlier in Meenakshi Mukherjee's book *Realism and Reality: The Novel and Society in India* (1985). She refutes the contention that the novel in India can only be pursued along regional and linguistic lines and argues that it is possible to look at it "as the product of configurations in philosophical, aesthetic, economic and political forces in the larger life of the country" (viii). Devoting part of her study to these forces and how they affected the novel in the late 19th and early 20th century, she feels that "despite obvious regional variations" (ibid.) a basic pattern emerges that affects "the form of a novel as well as its content." However, she is careful not to generalize on the basis of only a limited number of texts explored and asks for collaborative efforts of experts in the various Indian language novels.[35]

Two further studies are similarly concerned with the interrelationship of history and literature though they focus on the narrower period of the independence struggle and its impact on the Indian English novel. Ramā Jha's *Gandhian Thought and Indo-Anglian Novelists* (1983), in her own words the first detailed study of the impact

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[34] See again Juneja's review (1991) referred to already who questions Ramamurti's use of "a specific publication as a starting point" as against "conventional historical divisions based on political events or social movements" since this would necessitate definitions "of what precisely constitutes a novel" (367).

[35] The idea of a commonly shared tradition finds also the support of the anonymous reviewer of a seminar on "Indian Literature in English and English Translation" organized by the Sahitya Akademi in New Delhi in 1986. "This literature", he observes, "is Indian, very Indian, with its roots in the soil and soul of India, and not just a variation or devaluation of English, or a part of the Commonwealth or Third World literature, or yet one more example of the growing world literature in English" (*Indian Literature*, 11,3 (1986), 140). See also V.V. John's "Introduction" to *Comparative Indian Literature* (1984) and insights conveyed here into the beginnings of the Indian novel generally.

of Gandhian thought especially on Anand, Narayan, Rao and Bhattacharya, closely relates the emergence of the modern novel to Gandhi. Separate chapters on their work are intended to show how they creatively absorbed Gandhi's thoughts, in particular his blending of traditional Hindu ideas with "the concept of nationhood and work ethics" (6). Similarly, their perception of man "as a member of the entire human community" (7), not of a tribe or a caste, is greatly derived from Gandhi even if Anand's has been called Marxist-romanticist (45). Gandhi's influence was so strong, Jha maintains, that his "thought affected the choice of themes, the art of characterization (sic!), weaving of the plot and even the use of language in many novels of the thirties and forties" (50). Altogether, her book offers a detailed presentation of Gandhi's philosophy but is not concerned with nation and national identity although it reasons that the writers' affinity to Gandhian thought endows them with the status of 'national' writers.

Asha Kaushik's *Politics, Aesthetics and Culture* (1988) follows a similar though more generalized approach in the chapter "Political History and the Indo-Anglian Novel: The Legacy of the Nationalist Movement" (44-81). Tracing the development of modern Indian political ideas back to the 'cultural renaissance' of the 19th century with its formation of a revivalist and a modernist strand, Kaushik agrees with Jha that one of Gandhi's main political achievements was to integrate differing political strands into the national struggle. But the emergence of "Marxist Socialism in Europe in the 1920s and the 1930s also attracted young [Indian] nationalists [... such as] Jawaharlal Nehru, Mulk Raj Anand [and others...]", which led to "Scientific socialism [...becoming] a contending ideology with Gandhian idealism" (48). Thus, next to 'Gandhian fiction' with its generally "adorative presentation" of his political ideas, she says, we also have works critical of Gandhism, for example by Anand, Bhattacharya and later, by Khushwant Singh, Attia Hosain, Manohar Malgonkar and Chaman Nahal.[36] Besides, we could add here, if we talk in terms of a national literature, Kaushik's references to the close relationship between political history and the novel points at yet another strand in more recent examples of "historical fiction dealing both with distant past and with fantasy" (69), for example in Kamala Markandaya's *The Golden Honeycomb* (1977) and Manohar Malgonkar's *The Devil's Wind* (1972) that reflect "the quest for national identity" as much as does Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children*.

By contrast, S.L. Bhyrappa's ontological approach supersedes reflections on the national with his critical remarks that "our novelists [...] do not have any knowledge of the concept of man according to Indian tradition"(1986, 56). As there exists no "universally acceptable concept of man" but rather "certain trends, which are typically national," it is incumbent on the Indian novelist to first "try to understand the Indian concept of man when it comes to deeper human problems

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[36] Works referred to are Bhabani Bhattacharya, *So Many Hungers* (1947); Khushwant Singh, *Train to Pakistan* (1955); Attia Hosein, *Sunlight on a Broken Column* (1961); Manohar Malgonkar, *A Bend in the Ganges* (1964); and Chaman Nahal, *Azadi* (1975).

and crises" (57). C.N. Srinath does not directly respond to Bhyrappa's appeal to Indian writers "to try and understand", but he views their efforts certainly more positively. Arguing that an "Indian vision" exists that is grounded in distinct and innate "national" characteristics which in turn determine differences of perception and expression, Srinath is of the opinion that it is the writers' critical duty to "identify the distinct recognisable manifestations of the Indian vision because of, and in spite of, the possible pervasiveness of the culture of the Western novel" (1986, 69). By doing so, they will "come to grips with the metaphysical vision communicated in a language which is austere, simple; illumined and illuminating" (73). This goal is achieved in Rao's *The Cat and Shakespeare* (1965) or Desani's *All About H. Hatterr*, "a truly Indian story [because of its] struggle for the pursuit of Truth in the midst of all this diamond-cut-diamond 'human horse-play'" (75). As to the path towards discovering the Indian vision, Srinath refers to the Sanskrit concept of "rasa-dhvani or sounding that has existence even after the last word in the printed text" (ibid.), a far cry, he says, from a novel "satisfying the sociological curiosity of an outsider" (70). The novelist should understand that the "mode of realism borrowed from the west has a constricting influence so much so that it appears as if realism has become a mode of escape – escape from the essential" (85).

Compared with such widespread interest in history, historiography and 'Indianness' in the 1980s, a comparatively small number of critics attempt to assess the Indian English novel by juxtaposing more recent publications with their predecessors in order to explore whether these texts continue or perhaps break up an established literary tradition. For Raji Narasimhan most books published in 1983 "add nothing new to the stature of English writing here" (1984, 49), and she is especially harsh on Salman Rushdie's *Shame* which, she is convinced, would not have been taken note of in India or even published here, had it not come from England. Quite generally, she blames "our latter-day writers of English creative works of wanting personal vision and ideology" (52). Shyam Asnani, on the other hand, registers a departure of more recent works from their predecessors, with the 1980s witnessing "the birth of a new kind of Indian English Novel [...] moving from the portrayal of the contemporary socio-political themes to the imaginative treatment of individual fantasies in the mythic / archetypal, fabulist and satiric modes" (1987, 70). Though experimentation with new forms and techniques certainly falls within the province of the Indian English novel, Asnani wonders whether the "need for a more flexible, colloquial English" (72) refers to the language spoken in India or in England.

In a critical mood, Anita Desai observes that "large chunks of Indian writing" in the past were characterized by recurring portrayals of stock scenes, themes and characters and a turn away from the circular to the linear narrative structure under the influence of Western literature. Yet recently, "in *Midnight's Children* Salman Rushdie wound the straight line of narrative into a circle", while in *Shame* he "mythologized still-living people and turned events in living memory into fantastic

legends" (1989, 211). This to her indicates a shift in thinking towards distinctive Indian structures of thought soon joined by "a flood of younger writers delighted to return to the old style of storytelling that was strangely the 'latest' and 'newest' style" (ibid.). Similarly, the use of English by this new generation is a break away from a literary language invented for example by Rao or Desani towards the spoken language of the streets. As little as she doubts that Rushdie is leading the way followed by "a long trail of imitators" (212) as much does she believe that these novelists have "as distinctive and authentic a voice as the American or Caribbean" (ibid.), and she is certain that their writing points to new beginnings.

The most sustained effort at juxtaposing the 'new' and the 'old' novel is undertaken by Viney Kirpal in her "Introduction" to *The New Indian Novel in English* (1990) edited by her,[37] and it is worthwhile quoting her very succinct characterization of the 'new' novel: Here

> there is a lack of the staidness, solemnity and self-consciousness that once characterized the Indian novel. They are uninhibited and cosmopolitan in their reach. Unlike the earlier novels, they are neither idealistic [...] nor are they sentimental. There is a great determination to break with shibboleths and to experiment with new forms and themes. Politics – national and international – is their most important theme, and the displaced, marginal modern man their favourite protagonist. The writing is brisk, vigorous, racy, irrepressible. The novels express the deep urge of the protagonist to speak out, unfetted (sic!) by restraints who virtually screams to be heard (xvi).

Nonetheless, the 'old' and the 'new' are not totally severed since novelists continue to employ techniques of the traditional Indian narrative: "episodicity, 'plotlessness', the story-within-a-story", with the "Old Masters" and the "Middle generation" proceeding more subtly than the "New novelists", whose manner suggests "anarchy, disarray, dizzy dislocation" (xviii). Concluding that these changes are embedded in the economic, political and social upheavals of the 1970s, with the new novel reflecting "a recognisable change in the national sensibility, expression and literary form" (xix), Kirpal, on the one hand, joins the long line of critical investigations that combine an historical with an expository-paraphrasable approach.[38] On the other hand, her argument that a "change in the national sensibility" distinguishes the old

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[37] Though published in 1990, the essays 'belong to' the 1980s.

[38] I owe this term to Shahane whose "Indo-English Literature: Its Major Concerns and Its Academic Rationale" (1981) can rightfully be called an outstanding evaluation of the critical discourse on Indian English writing until the end of the 1970s. While he offers an admirable overview of its main achievements, I would contest both, his claim that "the problem of evolving appropriate critical criteria or approaches for judging Indo-English writing remains undetermined" (18) and that the formalistic approach, or a "discussion for the quest for form"(28) he suggests and exemplifies, has not been followed earlier. His concluding exhortation, besides, documents that a literary text's 'hybridity' is anathema to him when he admonishes Indo-English writers "to find and nourish their roots in the native Indian soil, discover anew their tradition and relate it to the experience of the immediate presents. They must discover their 'nativity'" (29).

from the new novel is not merely of a general nature – as, for example, presented in Krishna Rao's book of 1972 – but is of a different quality. "The 1980s novel", she says, "reflects, <u>as never before</u> (my emphasis, D.R.), the theme of the mixed Indian tradition. The controlling temper of the period is synthesis, polymorphism where all religions, all communal groups including the minorities have an important place" (xx). Convincing though such circumspect description of the new novel is, whether it can be termed Indian remains an open question for many critics. Narasimhan's response to Rushdie testifies that the 'new' novel has not yet found its place within the 'Indian' fold, let alone that the question has been answered as to whether the Indian novel ends with *Midnight's Children*.[39]

Brief references to several essays that do not consider the whole range of fictional works will round off my survey of the 1980s. Here we have Gomathi Narayanan's unusual study of "motifs of guilt and shame" from a psychological and psychoanalytical angle. Analyzing selected examples of both British fiction on India and Indian English novels dealing with the 1940s, she discerns a "pervasive sense of guilt and shame in these novels [...] for various acts of commission and omission by the 'Sahibs' and the 'Natives' in the political, racial, and communal conflicts that came to a head" in these years (1986, 1). Among literary expressions of these feelings as well as of their expiation, Narayanan discovers authorial comments on the one hand, and on the other the re-enactment of past scenes of guilt, the phenomenon of scapegoating, and the agency of archetypal villain and sacrificial figure during a transitional historical period where the "death of an empire" coincides with "the birth of a nation", or the replacement of a colonial identity with a post-colonial one.

Language, sensibility, caste and genre are further topics brought into play although critics usually confine themselves to comments on a few selected novels. However, they remind us of useful perspectives to choose from for a more wide-ranging critical exploration. Feroza F. Jussawalla chapter on fiction in her most refreshing and stimulating critique of Indian criticism, *Family Quarrels: Towards a Criticism of Indian Writing in English* (1985, 67-101), bases her evaluation of the literary and linguistic achievement of Anand, Narayan and Rao on J.R. Firth's concept of "context of situation" and argues that "a style can be authenticated by its situational context [and that] considering the situational context is important to any judgement of verisimilitude in the writer's work" (97, 98): a fact obviously totally overlooked by many Indian critics of the Indian English novel.[40]

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[39] See also Novy Kapadia, "Narrative Techniques in the New Indian Novel" (1990), who calls *Midnight's Children* a "trend setter" in terms of narratology (250).

[40] Here I could insert for example Sircar's critique (1981), but also Rajan (1981) who contradicts Sircar but does so implicitly from a Whorfian perspective "that our conceptual categorization of the world is partly determined by the structure of our native language." (See Alan Bullock & Stephen Tromblay (eds.), *The New Fontana Dictionary of Modern Thought*, London: Harper Collins, ³1999, 922). An interesting aspect of the role of English in India and Indian writing is discussed in Thorpe's article "Some English Reactions to Indian English" (1981). He looks at journalist and Indo-English creative writing and feels that the former has hardly extended the general usage of English while the latter is less marked by its "Indianness" than is perhaps to be expected. It is rather the writers' "sensitivity and subject matter" (98) that marks them as Indian to the outsider.

As far as the perennial theme of 'Indian sensibility' goes, Iyengar appears to respond briefly to a journal editor's request and here the only interesting point he raises – especially with regard to the incipient fundamentalist political trend – is that he rejects the idea of identifying it with Hinduism (1982, 43). Which directs our attention to place (India) as well as caste. K.S. Ramamurti compares several novels by looking at their use of location and feels that Kanthapura, Malgudi, Kedaram and Trinidad "project a certain vision of India which is at once contemporary and timeless" (1981, 61), and thus implicitly assumes a kind of sensibility shared among Indian writers.[41] However, if we look at how they have depicted untouchables, S. Krishnamoorthy Aithal (1984) is of the view that we must draw a line between texts of upper caste authors and their literary imagination and texts written from the perspective of their objects. He would hardly agree with Anand's idea of "Indian expressionism" manifest in his own novel *Untouchable* and Rao's *Kanthapura* that both, he says, demonstrate convincingly Indian writers' "search for the new sentient man" (1982, 49) in a manner cut off from the Western novel tradition (60).

Indeed, does the Indian English novel perhaps have affinities to the "modern third world novel", asks Kirpal (1988) in her search for similarities that join the writing from 'third world countries' and distinguish them at the same time from the other two worlds. Though there exist common features, she feels that the focus has first to be on the local, including aesthetic concepts prevailing there. On the other hand, when it comes to "the final evaluation [, it] must rest on universal criteria" (151). "What is the Modern Third World Novel?" closes on a somewhat unsatisfactory note that takes us all the way back to the beginnings in the 1930s and makes us wonder about the course chosen during the 1990s and after.

The Indigenisation of the Novel – The 1990s and After

Summing up his introductory remarks to *A History of Indian Literature in English* (2003), Arvind Krishna Mehrotra points out that "a striking feature of Indian literature in English is that there have been no schools, literary movements, or even regional groups within it. Its history is scattered, discontinuous, and transnational" (25-26). This observation is of course also applicable to the novel genre, as any reader of its critical studies will readily notice. However, Mehrotra feels that Salman Rushdie, having connected his writing to G.V. Desani, or Mukul Kesavan to *Midnight's Children*, indicate that this is now "changing", or that a continuity of the Indian novel in English will gradually evolve, "become[ing] aware of itself" and thereby establishing its "indigenisation" (26).

The last part of my survey will be concerned with taking up Mehrotra's words by looking at critical contributions to the novel discourse that do not merely address

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[41] Kedaram refers to K. Nagarajan's *Chronicles of Kedaram* (Bombay, 1961) and Trinidad to V.S. Naipaul's early work.

the question of literary history but have also chosen the path of problematizing generic and methodological aspects and in the course of it attempt to design a poetics of the Indian English novel and thus probe into its historical continuity.[42] Side by side, we also come across investigations into the possible relevance of methodical approaches such as the discursive-historical, the culture-theoretical, the psychoanalytical or the ethical to explore the genre's continuity. Further, more traditional historiographical approaches like periodization or the defining of a selected historical period will be looked at that will lead us finally to more phenomenological considerations of a technique- or content-oriented nature.

The samples chosen cover the last decade of the 20th century and the first few years of the new millennium, a period of roughly fifteen years that have seen the publication of almost one hundred critical studies. Among them we come across more than two dozen books written by a single author and variously dealing with "aspects of the novel" by either discussing different authors or novels and single topics or by following a particular line of argument, for example the literary treatment of political or social issues. Edited collections of essays by different critics form an equally large number of titles frequently combining more general remarks with references to selected writers or their work. A slightly smaller group of articles is contained in studies of Indian literature in English, Commonwealth or Postcolonial Literature that may cover several literary genres, cross internal Indian language barriers or national boundaries. Finally, learned national and international journals, for example *Contour, Littcrit, The Quest, Indian Literature* or *The Journal of Commonwealth Literature* and *World Literature Today*, have continued to attract contributions though lack of space has rarely permitted the inclusion of more specialized analyses. Altogether then and quantitatively speaking, critical engagement in the 1990s has not only proved as vibrant as ever but has attracted a spate of new voices and, most importantly, a larger number of publishers than ever before. Most of them are based in New Delhi but a noticeable few are also from Jaipur and their combined laudable efforts in making accessible critical studies on Indian writing generally and the novel in particular have resulted in a flood of book releases during the last dozen years, as a glance at the website of one of the more recently established book distributors easily illustrates.[43]

Such state of the art necessitates a sifting of the material and answering the question on what grounds contributions are to be commented about here. As

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[42] In one of the few essays exclusively engaged in suggesting ideas for writing a history of Indian English fiction that would supersede earlier attempts by K.R. Srinivasa Iyengar, M.K. Naik and others, Jenny Rathod (1997) suggests that it is the "colonial experience that the historian of Indian English Fiction is required to probe and relate to the growth and development of this area of literature" (47). Parameters are perhaps to be found in ideas developed in new historicism and reader-response theory. Looking at the various sources from which the novel has sprung – native soil, diasporic experience, locations adjacent to the novel in regional languages – and considering its short span of existence, she rejects attempts to periodize or canonize it and recommends instead to see its history in terms of clusters of male writers sharing certain approaches, of women novelists, of diasporic authors and even of those "who haven't really made any sizeable impact through their writings" (51). Here we are somewhat reminded of Alphonse's idea of looking first at a clearly demarcated group of writing from where a history of the whole genre might eventually evolve. See note 49.

[43] See www.vedamsbooks.com under English literature.

pointed out previously, the present survey is informed by foregrounding both, the response to the development of the Indian English novel genre since the 1930s and to its three founding fathers. While theoretical contributions, unless merely tied up with the 1990s,[44] certainly have their place in my study; responses to individual 'new' or post-Rushdie authors and their works are not included here. Much the same holds true for studies of the beginnings of the novel in the 19th century[45] and for writing by women[46] or diaspora authors[47] although such examples that bear on what Mehrotra has called 2indigenisation2 will be referred to. Finally, essay collections of such well-known critics as P.M. Mathur (1993) or M.K. Naik (2004) have been left aside since they bring together work published earlier.[48]

The largest number of critiques selected here attempt to assess the novel from an historical angle by proceeding deductively. Naik offers a brief bird's-eye view of "Indian English Literature Today" (2001) constrained by the limited space offered in *The Journal of Indian Writing in English*. He reminds us that it is a literature of the English-oriented middle class while "an entire school of Dalit writers of the lowest of the low classes has arisen during the last two decades" exclusively writing in an Indian language (2). Yet Indian writing is not only departmentalized socially and linguistically but both groups, writers in English and in the regional languages, are beset by a number of mutual misconceptions while, as Naik feels, they have "more in common with each other than the purblind zealots on either side seem to think" (7). Raising these important though not altogether unknown points, he underlines a trend of the 1990s to pay more attention to critical efforts towards a holistic orientation; to reflect upon the need to perceive of Indian literature in its totality and of accommodating its differing social, linguistic and regional strands.

Jasbir Jain similarly highlights the present literary scene by focusing on "The Writing of the 1990s" (2002) but also looks back at "continuities" such as "the engagement with history" in its many facets – national and personal, family sagas and freedom struggle (12) – that is informed by a search for causes, for the "hidden layer of meaning" (13).[49] However, she feels that writing in the last decade of the 20th century has introduced new aspects or brought about shifts in orientation, noticeable for example with well-known writers like Anita Desai. Indeed, here it appears as if the break with the past overrules the relevance of continuities.[50]

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[44] See Albertazzi (1993); Juneja (1995); or Kirpal (1996).

[45] See Crane (1992); Mund (1997); or Shyamala A. Narayan (2000).

[46] See Manjit Inder Singh (1994); Nayak & Swain (1997); Jain (1998); or Chandra (2001).

[47] See Nasta (2002).

[48] See also Kumar (1999), a more or less summarizing account of criticism of the "Indo-Anglian Novel" including references to early English criticism and summaries of the novelists' own views; further, to Mukherjee's *The Twice-Born Fiction* (1971) and various critical 'schools'.

[49] See also Jha (2001) and Prasad (2001).

[50] C.N. Srinath's "Post Colonialism and Faction in Indian Fiction" (1999) emphasizes the differences between the 'older' Indian novel in English represented by such outstanding writers as Rao, Narayan and others and what nowadays is called postcolonial fiction that has "systematically created a new trap namely the medium by succumbing to it without much resistance" (34). Referring among others to Salman Rushdie, Amitav Ghosh and to Vikram Seth as its proponents, Srinath cannot detect anything "eventful enough to change the course [in the lives of the families]" in *A Suitable Boy*; a story, he says "without the basic ingredients of the Indian ethos, the vitality of village life as in *Kanthapura*" (37-38). Srinath's view does not only differ sharply from Mehrotra

In an earlier and more comprehensive survey on "Trends in Modern Indian Fiction" (1994) R.K. Gupta spreads his canvas more broadly. Including comments on novel writing in several regional languages, he holds that "a brooding concern with historical, legendary, and mythical themes" (299) continues to occupy novelists while "feminism remains one of the most significant developments in modern Indian fiction" (301). So do pressing socioeconomic problems that form major themes in the regional novel (302). Yet he also complains about a "certain lack of variety" (306), a neglect of areas of human experience such as environment-related topics and travel, an absence of science fiction and fantasy writing and finally, a lack of humour, depth and self-criticism. Looked at by hindsight and with new titles of the 1990s in mind, it appears as if quite a few authors have since responded to these charges.

Naik's brief and Jain and Gupta's more illustrative excursion into the Indian novel in general is problematized in Mehrotra's already mentioned "Introduction" where he historicizes and contextualizes the vexed linguistic and ideological discourse on the creative use of a foreign language from which there seems to lead no way out. Pointing back at the controversial debate on Hindi as a national language and the official recognition of English, Mehrotra has no patience with those critics Naik refers to as zealots and here among others Bhalchandra Nemade whose "animosity towards Indian literature in English" as expressed in his *Indo-Anglian Writings: Two Lectures* (1991), he says, is derived in large measure from an animosity "towards the social class English has become to be identified with: a narrow, well-entrenched, metropolitan-based ruling élite that has dominated Indian life for the past fifty and more years" (20). As against Nemade and other critics' aversion to English language writing,[51] Mehrotra sides with Rao's view of Indian writers' "instinctive bilingualism" that "umbilically ties the writing done in English to the other Indian literatures" (23): a position very much in accord with Naik and Gupta's.

Meenakshi Mukherjee's "The Anxiety of Indianness" (2000) in a sense complements the deliberations of these critics with her attempt to point out the cultural implications of the Indian English novel (169), not the least in order to reveal certain shared predilections or perhaps even biases it has been prone to. Among them she counts its "greater pull towards a homogenization of reality" (171), a

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and Sethi's but also illustrates once again the dichotomy of the Indian critical scene of advocates of literature's need to express the Indian ethos and those to whom its practice offers many options and who refrain from defining its cultural function in unequivocal terms. – See also S. Xavier Alphonse's *Kanthapura to Malgudi: Cultural Values and Assumptions in Selected South Indian Novelists in English* (1997) who restricts his study to a cultural region to evade having to deal with a vague concept of 'Indianness' but to enable him at the same time "to identify the peculiar and the distinctive South Indian cultural values and assumptions" (47). Alphonse suggests an approach towards literary historiography that might be fruitful also for similar regional-cultural studies and besides comes close to comparable attempts in the regional languages. Such regionally limited studies should in any case be given preference to (the near-impossible task of) writing literary histories of an all-India nature. They would offer useful insights into more or less distinct cultural and linguistic regions of the subcontinent.

[51] See also Rajnath's critical comments on Nemade and G.N. Devy and their advocacy of nativism in his brief article "Literary Criticism in the New Millennium" (2002) where the author does not deal with fiction in English but the Indian critical scene in general. Interestingly, essays by both critics are included in the collection *Nativism: Essays in Criticism* edited by Makarand Paranjape (New Delhi: Sahitya Akademi, 1997) whose concern with a poetics of the Indian English novel will be examined at the end of this chapter.

preference to deal with pan-Indian ideas or "Indian" concerns (173) and thereby overlooking differences within the border by accentuating the difference with what lies outside (174). Very little if at all acquainted with *bhasha* literature, Indian English authors, Mukherjee claims, have to a large extent remained unaware of internal dissensions and dislocations; in other words, of a "multitude of specific and local experiences" (181) that form the mainstay of *bhasha* writing. Even with the more recent literary development where, for example, *Midnight's Children* is still concerned with nation building, but now as a metaphor and not any longer grounded in the experience of colonialism, this and other texts of global migrants reflect a different anxiety than those of writers "at home" who are facing the daily reality of India at a non-metaphoric level (181). Still, as a few novels illustrate, *bhasha* and English language writers may very well share such concerns, as Vikram Seth's *A Suitable Boy* convincingly demonstrates for this critic.[52] Which, I would like to add, raises hopes for gradually overcoming the noticeable dichotomy of the English and the regional novel of India

Michael Pousse, by contrast, discovers connecting links between Anand, Narayan and Rao's early writing and present post-colonial novels – though he does not mention any titles – when we take into account their stylistic novelties and literary ideals, their writing about ordinary people and social themes: all of which characterize their work as "anticipating post-colonialism".[53] This, he claims, is due to both the political situation and the uniqueness of the Indian revolution "which blended political claims with a call for cultural rehabilitation of local values" (22) and resulted in the emergence of a post-colonial literature "in form and content when it dissociated itself from the King's English and from respecting European canons" (11).

Less ambitious in intent but similarly occupied with the fundamental question of coming to terms with the history of the Indian English novel, Syd Harrex highlights the connection between ideological preoccupation and its translation into literary form in Anand, Narayan and Rao's work and to a lesser extent in Anita Desai's novels. In his contribution to Bruce King's survey, *The Commonwealth Novel Since 1960* (1991), unassumingly entitled "India", the Australian critic alerts us to

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[52] Earlier Mukherjee had already focused her attention on the nationalist discourse in several Bengali, Hindi and English novels in "Narrating a Nation" (1992). Arguing that the "discourse that constructed nationalism in India came from diverse sources" (138), her examples illustrate a "fluidity of boundaries" that testify the texts' move away "from the totalizing narratives of territorial nationalism" (148) and thus underline that writers no longer choose "the same stories about the past" (149). – See also Rumina Sethi's *Myths of the Nation: National Identity and Literary Representation* (1999), a study mainly of *Kanthapura* pursued to understand the novel as an example of writing back to essentialist representations of the orient, and in the course of it creating "a problematic pan-Indian identity […] posited by indigenizing the English language" (3) and centred on "culture-specific ideals engineered through myths about language, religion, race, caste and gender" (2-3). It is precisely Mukherjee's topic of "narrating the nation" that is addressed here too, with the purpose of analyzing how a nationalist discourse succeeds in creating its own reality (7); or in other words, of interrogating nationalist history […and] in showing *how* it gets written" (7). As Sethi concludes: "To regard Nanpur, Kanthapura, Kedaram, or Malgudi as 'a truer and greater India, which is timeless and enduring' […; see Ramamurti (1981), D.R.] amounts to taking the Romantic episteme from orientalism for perceiving the village. [… It] raises questions and provides testimony to the agreement between orientalist and nationalist accounts" (26). – See also Crane (1992) who focuses on the "re-invention" of India in fictional representations of the country's past in historical novels by Indian and British writers.

[53] "Anticipating Post-Colonialism: The 'Trio' in the Thirties" (1999).

"avowals by many Indian writers of the symbolic value of *event* as interpreted by philosophical and literary criteria that derive in many instances from Indian sources" (66). Accordingly, we can distinguish between a materialist and a metaphysical type of the novel represented by Anand and Rao's works respectively with most writers finding a place somewhere between them (73): while Anand politicizes myth, Rao mythologizes politics.

Viney Kirpal is equally keen to read the Indian novel, and here in particular its structure "as a distinct form of fiction"" that cannot be properly approached from a Eurocentric critical angle – as T.D. Brunton or T.C. Ghai had done earlier[54] – but (in Harrex's words) as related to "Indian sources." It is precisely those features the novel has been criticized for that determine its distinct Indian form: episodicity and the absence of motivation and of cause-effect relationships between scenes (307) that relate back to the Sanskrit tradition and to folk forms, both of which constitute one of the two literary traditions the novel has inherited, the second being Western. "Episodicity", Kirpal concludes, is "the structural principle of the Indian novel" (307).

If Harrex and Kirpal's concerns relate to the genre's macro level, Anjali Roy (2000) examines its micro level in her discussion of the role of language "as a signification system to underline the 'displacement' in post-national discourse as the 'Other' finds a voice in the language of the 'Self'" (70). Indeed, "making new words" means "making new worlds". Thus, what quite frequently has been commented upon as the Indian novelists' new coinages, the nativization "of words, syntax, or metaphors – are means of resisting English's regulatory function in the colonial context" (70): a strategy variously pursued by Rao, Anand and Narayan. Interestingly and in the context of remarks made by Rumini Sethi (1999 "Introduction"), Roy defines Rao's essentialist nationalist discourse as a signification system of folk speech in *Kanthapura* and of a literate brahmanical patois in *The Serpent and the Rope* (74). These shifts in English determining resistance are however of an essentialist nature, she says, since "the Indianness constructed here is no homogeneous pan-Indian reality but defined micronationalistically as Kannada" (75). A pan-Indian reality is furthermore ruled out when we take into account linguistic strategies of other writers and their regional linguistic affinities or, for example, Narayan's striving "to free language of all cultural associations to minimize the impact of cultural factors in communication" (78). Roy's analyses relativize Mukherjee's claim that the Indian English novel has tended towards a "homogenization of reality" once we distinguish among its individual representatives who have attempted to "making new worlds" through making <u>different</u> new words.

Emphasis on a single analytical notion or a carefully chosen methodical approach circumscribes several more critical contributions meant to grasp Indian

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[54] Brunton (1968; repr. 1977); Ghai, "Patterns and Significance in R.K. Narayan's Novels," *Indian Literature*, 18, 3 (1975), 33-58.

specificities of the novel. In the alienated protagonist (Pathak, 1999) we encounter an old acquaintance, nor are Makarand Paranjape's observations on "The Caste of the Indian English Novel" (2000) altogether new. Linking the literary depiction of caste to the writers' own caste affiliations, Paranjape first notes the "dominance of the brahmin 'caste' among the IE novelists" (51), but more importantly perhaps, states that they belong to the "privileged middle and upper <u>classes</u> [my emphasis, D.R.]" (55) who share a number of social and educational characteristics.[55] Arguing that these features are the reason for their having "lost caste" (56), Paranjape then concludes that their literary products, "the IE novel is a 'caste-less' upper caste" (57), which permits him now to analyse the literary depiction of caste. Here he observes three categories of response: the orthodox, the negative and the mere incidental that is encountered in the majority of IE novels (59) so that we can say, "very few of the novels considered espouse conservative or casteist values" (62). Paranjape, I believe, raises an important point based on his evaluation of statistical figures – though not on reading many examples – because it demarcates the socio-literary circumference of the Indian English novel in a much more precise manner than earlier similar investigations had done. At the same time, as we will see, discussing the caste of the novel contributes to his efforts of outlining a poetics of the genre.

Turning to an inductive approach and to the cultural notion of ownership, of "who owns the fictional India? Who rules it? Who represents it?", Paranjape's essay "Indo-Anglian as Anglo-Indian: Ideology, Politics, and Cross-Cultural Representation" (1994, 41) asserts that to "be post-colonial […] imposes upon us a certain degree of responsibility to ourselves and our past" (42). It addresses the need to correct colonial distortions, but the question is whether Indo-Anglian novelists have done so. Paranjape doubts that non-resident Indian writers have achieved this goal and does not believe either that the group of "culturally or ideologically unIndian and Westernized" writers (45) in the country or those who are "now seen as British or American writers" (46) have displayed an altogether positive attitude to India. This is the point where the shortcomings of Indian critics have to be tackled who have been content to look at the images of India presented in the novel but have disregarded "the means of their production" (49). By doing so, the essential question as to the "reality" of India would have to be raised in order to determine where the Indian English novel stands.

Paranjape's critique is among the most radical present-day ventures in its combination of clearly circumscribing the socio-psychological embeddedness of the

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[55] G.N. Devy similarly talks of 2the peculiar character of Indian-English fiction as an bilingual, bicultural, upper class, socially restricted, linguistically cut off from the going concerns of Indian society, and pan-Indian literature of migration" (1994, 11). In comparison with Paranjape's balanced tone Devy's "overview" is polemical, and his observations are not always factually accurate apart from frequently generalizing and simplifying issues. Though informed by his own practical engagement with the underprivileged in India and by the conviction of a writer's "ethical responsibility [...] to publish in India" (16), it is not easy to understand the reasons for Devy's sweeping accusations of European academics and why he feels that Indian English literature is overestimated, or that there are writers "who have no stakes in the Indian society" (12). Besides, it is simply inaccurate to maintain "no one spoke of an Indian-English literature until about twenty years back" (7).

novel and the philosophical quest to determine its cultural position and its contribution to understanding "ourselves", that is, the contamination of India by the West, entailing the task of recognizing "the Otherness of the Other without trying to deny or incorporate it" (51).

D. Maya focuses her attention on "Postcolonial Images of the British in Indian English Fiction" as the subtitle of her book-length study *Narrating Colonialism* (1997) reads. The novelists, she says, invariably tend "to view the British in terms of the colonial relationship" (187), exemplified at times in strong emotional terms of resistance or conversely, in a generous appreciation of their system and even of individual representatives, though she also discovers that they demythicize British heroes. Similarly, with many writers we face their difficulty of bringing "the linguistic nuances of native English speech into the dialogue of their British characters" (189) while language itself has been made to function as a powerful decolonizing device (193). Finally Maya remarks, we notice the "increased occurrence of decolonized whitemen" in Indian English novels (197) during the seventies and eighties. These observations, I would like to underline here, are certainly not beside the point, yet they also illustrate how difficult a task it is to generalize about a large number of novels by selecting just one particular notion to understand the specifics of a genre that refuses to be pinned down or be reduced to one or the other outstanding or even definite feature.[56]

No such claim is made, of course, either by Maya or by M. Rajeshwar, the latter arguing that criticism of the novel might benefit immensely by "incorporating psychoanalytical formulations into the creative and critical endeavour respectively" (1996, 28). Yet, Rajeshwar nearly falls into the trap of essentializing the Indian psyche. Explicating Indian equivalents of id, ego and super-ego respectively as a combination of *chitta* and *guna*, "a 'passive and less differentiated' ego" and "'communal conscience'" (23, 24), he points at those novels where an Indian protagonist "deviates" from these "common Indian norms" (26) thereby creating problems that make up the gist of her or his story. Rajeshwar's advocacy of psychoanalytical character studies, useful as it may appear, is dangerously close to recommending a homogenizing perception of the Indian psyche, irrespective of the impact educational, social or cultural factors may have had on both, its 'real' and its discursive 'nature' over a long period of time.

I would like to conclude by drawing attention to two authors who are centrally concerned with methodological considerations about the novel genre, albeit from very different epistemological angles: Paranjape in essays and his book *Towards a Poetics of the Indian English Novel* (2000) and Tabish Khair in *Babu Fictions: Alienation in Contemporary Indian English Novels* (2001). In "The Ideology of Form: Notes on the Third World Novel" (1991) Paranjape faces a twofold task. Commenting first upon

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[56] See her remarks on the British in Kamala Markandaya and Nayantara Sahgal's novels (191-192).

analyses undertaken by Kirpal (1988) and Mukherjee (1985) as to whether the form of the Indian novel in English differs from the Western novel and if so, how, he questions their perception of the novel form as being the causal effect of its social reality (22). The novel as an epistemological category, he states, is also "the propagator of a particular version of reality" (24). And here the Western novel has offered merely one version of that reality while in the colonized world "alternate versions of reality were available" (25) for the writer to choose from. Subsequently, a Third World version has emerged, an ambivalent form because of its being tied into "peculiar processes of nativization and acculturation" (27). The critic then deconstructs the very idea of a peculiar form of the Third World novel by pointing out that "the West" and "the Third World" are notional and not actual entities: the former excluding what is non-West and the latter constituted on "denial, absence, difference and lack" (29). Now, the West with its efficient institutions leaves little space for alternatives, while the coexistence of different versions of reality in the Third World offers more possibilities for the novelist, which for Paranjape is proved by the fact that the "most exciting novelists are from the Third World" (29). Their works differ by attempting to escape universalization and by creating an "alternative space from which to function" (30). – Nonetheless, thought-provoking as these deliberations are, they need to be substantiated by analyses of a great number of Western and Third World novels, including their Indian English 'variety', to testify the existence and clearly spell out the nature of "alternative spaces" of the latter and their respective lack or even absence in the Western novel – unless this model of two mutually exclusive novel forms proves yet another binary and homogenizing constellation of "us" and "them".

The theoretically most ambitious central chapter in *Towards a Poetics of the Indian English Novel* (2000) bears the very title of a book that includes earlier essays, some of which have been referred to already. Concerned with the question of the prerequisites of an Indian poetics of the novel, including the English language novel, the author rejects any non-Indian theorem of narrativization, including methodological considerations aiming at a global frame of a general poetics. The Indian novel, he says unequivocally, has to be perceived "against the backdrop of our rich, continuous, and ancient narrative traditions" (81). It is a big claim that does not doubt the continuity and the validity of these traditions and suggests that they have survived unchanged over centuries in spite of historical changes that have impacted on the tangible reality of India as well as on its speculative discourses. Yet once we subscribe to the authority of this pronouncement, which cannot deny its doctrinal nature, all else follows logically. Placing the novel within a broader civilizational context "gives our criticism access to a wide range of methodological and evaluative tools" (82). Further and importantly, these traditions "basically subscribe to […] a dharmic way of life" (87), which in turn necessitates that "all narratives must, directly or indirectly, explore and expound dharma, and help to

uphold it" (84). Finally, such a "civilizational perspective […] enables us to evaluate works of art not just by narrower aesthetic or political standards, but by criteria which have a wider, national or universal significance" (88).[57]

Now, Indian English literature resulting after all from the impact of colonialism is "almost automatically […] imperialistic in the Indian context" (94) because in its mixture of *desi*, *marga* and *videshi* elements it has neither turned out to be "quite marga […] nor is it quite pan-Indian" since it enjoys "imperialistic cultural patronage" (94) and "derives its recognition from the international imperial order" (95).[58] One could only wish, Paranjape says, "to define the dharma of the IE novelist as the will and ability to resist the values of Western modernity and to demonstrate the continuing relevance of the cardinal principles of Indian civilization" (96). Alas, "often […] the IE novelist is doing just the opposite" (96).

It is not possible here to recapitulate each and every point raised by the author. Suffice it to say by way of conclusion that his periodized outline of the novel's history (105-113) and his remarks on recent examples (117-120) against the background of his methodological considerations enable him to evaluate a number of titles and permit him to discern current types. Most recent writers, almost all of whom follow an imperial or sub-imperial cultural politics, fail "to oppose the dominant cultural systems of our times" (113) while only a few meet Paranjape's expectation of having created texts central to Indian civilization. Among the three authors whose critical reception is the concern of my study only Rao raises "fundamental questions such as great novelists do" (116). In any case, Paranjape concludes, since Indian English literature cannot claim to understand India "there cannot be an independent poetics of IE fiction in isolation with that of the other Indian literatures" (124).

Khair's study, certainly as ambitious if not more comprehensive as a kind of history of the Indian English novel, bases its arguments on a very different set of notions centred on a socio-culturally conceived idea of alienation that defines the parameter of "babu fictions". "'Alienation' in this study", he says, "does *not* mean foreign in the sense of implying an essential 'nativism'" (ix), "not the relation between

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[57] Other critics have noted the importance of Paranjape's book. Akshaya Kumar (2002), for example, accepts Paranjape's argument that "the cultural or civilizational specifics of (sic!) Indian novel demand indigenous frames of inquiry and analysis" (34), which in turn necessitates "locating (sic!) Indian novel in the rich narrative traditions of the nation" (35). Yet he questions why "dharma as the keynote of our civilization" in its Indian context is identified with Hinduism (25). If so, he concludes, then dharma "becomes essentially a principle of universal values […] and Paranjape's nationalistic project lapses into a universal one" (35). See, however, Paranjape's own statement that his approach is not the only way of looking at Indian art, but a useful one, and that he does not "wish to equate Indian with Hindu and thus to deny the heterogeneity of Indian culture" (2000, 88). – Less critical and altogether more descriptive than analytical in his extended review, Sudhir Kumar (2000) feels that the author "offers a sound discursive template for a much needed reconstruction of (sic!) Indian theory of narratology" (132), though the author is, in the end, more interested in "the civilizational politics (or poetics) of (sic!) Indian novel, than with the poetics of (sic!) Indian novel only" (133). Nevertheless, and especially in chapter V: "Towards a Poetics of the Indian English Novel" (78-129), Kumar says, we have a "'poetics' of the Indian English novel to fill in a long-standing critical gap, a "significant contribution to the project of constructing an alternative, indigenous literary theory" (133).

[58] *Desi* relates to "regional", "native", "local"; *marga* to "national", "India"; *videshi* to "international", "global", "Western", "Non-Indian" (90).

the writer and his text but the relations *within* the text (which include the relations of the writer with society)" (27). In other words: "My use of alienation is restricted to denoting a split between the textualized and constituted subject and the society of its origin and/or location, as meaning not foreign but contradictory and hostile within a relation of power" (95 n4). This discursive alienation is intimately related to the socio-economic line of division or opposition between

> the 'Babus' [as] middle or upper class, mostly urban (at times cosmopolitan), Brahminized and / or 'westernized', and fluent in English [and the] Coolie classes [that…] are non-English speaking, not or not significantly 'westernized', not or less 'Brahminized', economically deprived, culturally marginalized and, often, rural or migrant-urban populations (ix).

We could say then that in its widest sense Khair's perception of Indian English novels as *Babu Fictions* is informed by – if not altogether embedded in – the discourse on subalternity. This does not mean that the Indian English novelist does not attempt to cross the dividing line between the two 'classes', as the examples of Raja Rao's *Kanthapura* or Mulk Raj Anand's *Untouchable* testify. However, Khair argues cogently that try as they might, the authors' Babu perspective cannot be replaced by a Coolie / subaltern perspective because eventually the socio-economic and linguistic dividing lines cannot be crossed. And it is precisely this impossibility that creates the alienated relationship between the writer and his text; a tension that marks <u>all</u> Indian novels in English irrespective of 'internal' divisions among them, be they of a spatial national or geographical nature; belonging to different historical periods; being either realist or magic realist literary representations and besides linguistically hardly, if at all, influenced by regional novels and their respective literary traditions; and eventually even when considered from a gender perspective though the argument has been advanced that women writing in English is undertaken by women as a subaltern class.

In this sense then Khair's mapping of the Indian English novel can be read as a kind of literary history; yet as he says, his map is "a palimpsest – superimposed on the work of various other critics and literary historians and employing a similar socio-literary canvas. But with one difference: "my map will *not* privilege the divisions within, though it will *recognize* their existence" (37). Having thus set up his frame he examines "how alienation has determined the development of the Indian novel" (52) by paying particular attention to similarities and differences among four 'babu' authors: Rao, Narayan, Naipaul and Rushdie. Furhermore, he analyzes and comments upon the work of a host of other writers in a systematic manner by exploring their use of English, their attitudes to caste, the privileging of the urban landscape and the question of gender. Again, this is not the place to go into an

abundance of highly interesting details in Khair's presentation. *Babu Fictions* succeeds in devising a map of a unitary body of texts by exploring the split between literary discourse and the social reality from which it originates.

Looking back at the critical reception of the Indian English novel over seven decades, ranging from Bhupal Singh's prescriptive survey in 1934 to, among others, Kirpal, Mukherjee, Paranjape and Khair's more recent engagement with a multitude of interconnected questions of an epistemological, aesthetic and historical nature, we cannot but be impressed by a discourse that has remained lively, controversial, self-reflexive and always pursued with seriousness. A few issues have been clarified over the years and constructive responses to shifts in methodology illustrate how far the critical scene has moved away from the state of affairs in the 1930s. There is no question that the Indian novel in English will continue to grow further and will continue to elicit comments and analyses both in India and abroad; responses that will reflect the openness of a discourse engaging critical minds even more so in future than in the past.

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II. *Supplement*

The first chapter of my book "The Indian Novel in English: The Reception of a Literary Genre 1934-2004" (pp.1-72) includes a "Bibliography" (pp.50-68) of critical responses to the genre published between 1934 and 2004; a survey, I believe, that requires a supplement including publications till 2023. Accordingly, I have listed pertinent items selected from the "Annual Bibliography India"-issues of *The Journal of Commonwealth Literature*. 77 publications gathered here – monographs, edited essay collections and journal articles – released over a period of nineteen years. This considerable number testifies to the unabated attention paid by Indian and foreign critics to the historical context and development of the Indian novel written in English as well as to its subjective concerns and narrative characteristics. Often predicted as a doomed literary genre because of its assumed fusion of a colonialist language with an Indian sensibility, a fusion considered impossible to create, it has not only proved its resilience but encountered an increase in attention Indian writers of the first generation, of the 1930s to the 1950s, would have hardly expected. Generations of younger novelists did not merely move beyond the 'founding-

fathers" subjects of interest and their narrative strategies but began to address and write for an Indian readership: an audience, it has turned out to be, less interested in the question of a conjunction of foreign language and Indian sensibility than in a story well told.[1] The following brief comments upon the novels' critical reception between 2005 and 2023 are directed at the number and the format of critical publications, its authors and publishing outlets and is meant to present an overview. We note 284 publications between 1934 and 2004 against 77 during the last 19 years: an annual average of four that has not changed over time. However, the number of altogether 38 books – monographs as well as essay collections, with 16 of them contributed by foreign critics – published over a span of 72 years has been followed by 61 books since 2005, including merely a dozen by outside critics: an impressive growth of the Indian critical engagement with the novel underlining a shift from an international to an Indian arena.. Between 1934 and 2004 we count 32 foreign critics among 193, or one in six, while we now come across 68 Indians with merely five foreigner critics, or one in thirteen; figures that beg the question of the reasons for it.

Shyamala Narayan argues that writers born in the 1950s with a background of normally using English, e.g. the "St. Stephen's school of novelists", gave room – among others – to the 1975-2000 I.I.T. and I.I.M. generation and their interest in the corporate world – and in new subgenres of the novel like the detective story and the thriller.[1] Besides, romances and, not quite expected from modern writers, retold mythological stories further extended the range of the literary representation of the Indian creative mind, complemented by diasporic, women and children's writing. Noticeable too, Narayan adds, has been a shift from national identity concerns to focusing on regional and communal topics. In sum, an astounding diversification of a literary scene that obviously attracted groups of readers hitherto distant to the Indian English novel. Simultaneously, publishers joined the cause with 25 of the 61 books released from (New) Delhi against less than a dozen publications from Britain and the United States; books, incidentally, mainly authored by Indian critics!

Though facing a wider spectrum of literary sub genres than their older colleagues had done, traditional approaches that embody general surveys or the theme of nation and identity have not altogether been abandoned. Yet they have been increasingly complemented by studies focusing on 'new perspectives' and 'postcolonial' or 'postmodern narratives', 'global and cosmopolitan writing' or 'multiculturality'. By contrast, minority, women and diasporan writing form a minority in spite of its growth over the last quarter of the century; an observation which suggests that students and academics at colleges and universities, the sites of the critical discourse on the Indian English novel, follow varying and/or preferred methodological considerations. Since about the turn of the millennium the names of

hitherto well-known critics like K.R. Srinivasa Iyengar,, C.D. Narasimhaiah, A.N. Dwivedi, M.K. Naik, Meenakshi Mukherjee, Harish Trivedi, Uma Parameswaran, Paul Sharrad, Mulk Raj Anand or S.C. Harrex, to name but a few, have given way to those of young Indian colleagues – we note about fifty against half a dozen outsiders: a set of circumstances that mirrors the significant position the Indian English novel has attained among readers and critics 'at home'.

By way of conclusion: an enumeration of published titles should of course be presented in conjunction with a critical investigation of their achievement; a procedure I followed in my book. Yet this is a task I would like to leave to my present younger colleagues as well as to readers and students 'at home' in India and abroad.

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