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Rhea Gupta April 10, 2023

Inglishing English: Linguistic Appropriation, Abrogation and Subversion in Postcolonial Literature and Poetry

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An abstract of

a thesis submitted to the Faculty of Emory College of Arts and Sciences

of Emory University in partial fulfillment

of the requirements of the degree of

Bachelor of Arts with Honors

English

2023

Abstract

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By Rhea Gupta

English literary education in India, both during and following the imperial British Raj, played a significant role in the formation of what Homi Bhabha calls the anglicized "mimic man," who attempted to emulate Englishness (Bhabha, *Of Mimicry and Man* 154). Despite the negative historical background of the English language in India, the language has become central to the ways in which people construct identity and culture—for the Anglophone Indian to separate from it is impossible, as doing so necessitates what Adil Jussawalla calls a "very fundamental personal disintegration" (Jussawalla, "English" 257). Critics such as Ngugi wa Thiong'o and Frantz Fanon have repeatedly alluded to the inextricability of language from local culture. How then, might the Indian anglophone writer best use the English language to convey an Indian experience and culture?

The literature of the postcolonial world often explores the complexities of postcolonial subjectivity, contending with the ways in which colonial languages have impacted the identity of colonized people. In this project, I argue that anglophone authors attempt to resist and transform imperial legacies by remolding the English language into the "inglishes," by smuggling a number of Indian vernacular languages, histories, and cultures into the dominant colonial tongue. This process of indigenizing language—which I term "inglishing"—reallocates power away from the imperial center in favor of bringing attention to local politics and perspectives through language. To demonstrate the creative potential of the English language, I build upon Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin's theories of abrogation and appropriation, as well as on Homi Bhabha's theories of hybridity and mimicry to read two postcolonial novels and three poems through the lens of language.

My first chapter draws upon the work of Gauri Viswanathan, Bill Ashcroft, Helen Tiffin, and Gareth Griffiths, to discuss the use of English as both a tool of oppression and emancipation in India. In my second chapter, I evaluate the impact of the English language and education on the Indian anglophone subject through the lens of exile, invisibility, and *Bahujan* [caste-oppressed] representation in postcolonial poetry. Specifically, I analyze Vikram Seth's "Divali," Adil Jussawalla's "Missing Person" and Meena Kandasamy's "Mulligatawny Dreams"—all of which thematize language as a political vehicle in India. My last two chapters examine two novels, *Midnight's Children* (1981) by Salman Rushdie and *The God of Small Things* (1997) by Arundhati Roy to uncover the ways in which the authors engage with questions of culture, identity, and difference through language.

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Acknowledgements

I would like to start by thanking my wonderful thesis advisor, Dr. Deepika Bahri, without whom I would neither have pursued a thesis, nor been able to complete one. Dr. Bahri, your constant encouragement, kindness, advice, and feedback have meant a great deal to me. They have pushed me to the finish line, despite the many times I believed I would not be able to get there at all. Your classes have excited and challenged me, and the care you have for your students is immensely inspiring. Thank you for always calling me clever when you see me, for believing in me, and for agreeing to advise this thesis. I am incredibly lucky to have been mentored by you and to have learned from you — thank you for deciding I was worth it.

I would like to thank my committee members, Dr. Laura Otis, and Dr. Sean Meighoo. Dr. Otis, thank you for being the reason I decided to pursue the English major, for constantly encouraging me over the last semester, for your feedback on my drafts and for agreeing to be on my committee. Your excitement for the field is contagious, and the depth of your knowledge is incredibly inspiring. Dr. Meighoo, your 'Introduction to Postcolonial Theory' course sent me down a (wonderful) rabbit hole like no other. Thank you for always encouraging your students to ask questions, for engaging us in intellectually stimulating conversations and for your feedback on my drafts.

I would like to thank both my parents for always encouraging me to pursue my passions and to shoot for the stars. My mother, for showing me that opinions are meant to be voiced, for never comparing me to those around me, and for always encouraging me to be true to myself. My father, for showing me what it means to work hard, to truly love learning, and to do what is upstanding—even when it is difficult. I would like to thank my younger brother, Ayush, for constantly showing me what tenacity looks like and for impressing upon me the immense value of curiosity. I would like to thank both my grandmothers: Domma, for always encouraging me to give my all to my academics, and Dadi, for her immense love for reading, which I have certainly inherited. Thank you to the rest of my family for their support and encouragement throughout my time at college.

Thank you to every South-Asian author, literary critic, and artist, for choosing to spend their careers pursuing important, creative, and difficult work. Our cultures do not encourage pursuing the Arts enough, and the bravery of your choices inspires others to pursue their dreams.

Thank you to Dr. Shomu Banerjee, for his kindness and support, and for encouraging me to pursue a double major in Economics and English. Thank you to Ben Thomas, for his support, encouragement, and kindness as I spent many an evening rambling on about my thesis. Lastly, I would like to thank my friends: Ben Thomas, Sahana Mathiarasan, Nandish Vora, Demetrios Mammas, Urvi Binjrajka, Jaeden Boschulte and many more, for their friendship, inspiration, constant encouragement, and for always making me laugh—even when I was incredibly stressed. You all mean the world to me.

On a light note, I have been forced to thank my cat, Mister Sir Billi Bonka, whose name remains my proudest “inglish” creation. He didn’t contribute to this thesis at all, but my mom said she might disown me if I didn’t recognize him in this section.

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Introduction

I grew up in a neighborhood in Mumbai characterized by its blaring car horns, long Lalbaug flyover, traffic-congested Elphinstone bridge and gentrifying Phoenix mall. My apartment building, nestled within a larger oval-shaped complex, houses hundreds of people, tens of whom attended the same middle- and high school as I did. Each morning, upon reaching Bombay Scottish School, we filtered into our individual classrooms — all nearly identical, with their four rows of wooden desks facing a single chalkboard—before lining up for morning "assembly." During "assembly," students stand in neat, symmetric lines under the blazing sun and are forced to sing a Christian hymn and "The Lord's Prayer." I would often draw patterns in the dirt with the tips of my shoes instead of singing with my peers, waiting for the chorus of "Our Father in Heaven" to come to a gradual halt, after which I would awkwardly chime in for the Indian national anthem.

Bombay Scottish has sat at a busy intersection in Mahim since its inception by Christian missionaries in 1847. As a school of rich English tradition, it sorts its students through a "house" system and hosts annual Christmas concerts. It continues to use Scottish imagery on its school badges (which are mandatorily pinned to the center of students' tunics or ties) and flags. Bombay Scottish's house system, within which students are automatically distributed, aims to create symbolic student communities that foster teamwork. Through it, children compete across a range of inter-house competitions such as sporting, singing or dance contests. A "Scottishite" can be sorted into any one of eight houses: Haddow, Kennedy, MacPherson, MacGregor, Anne, Victoria, Catherine, or Elizabeth. The houses, named after Scottish and British missionaries and royalty, betray the school's continued reverence of the West — a sentiment that is further echoed in school curricula and tradition.

Bombay Scottish School's curriculum covers a vast amount of Western thought, specifically in the disciplines of history and literature, and is taught entirely in English. In my literature classes, we were assigned authors of the likes of Shakespeare, Hemingway, Frost, and Wordsworth. Much of our assigned reading was rote-learned, with the intent of regurgitating misplaced quotations on examinations, in quest of a few additional points on an exam. Much like my peers, I carefully memorized parts of Portia's speech in *The Merchant of Venice*, recognizing that recalled quotes sprinkled into essays would score additional points on my Indian Certificate of Secondary Education (I.C.S.E) board examinations. Unfortunately, the Western bent of my school wasn't something I questioned as a student, as I didn't recognize the more insidious impacts that my education had on my worldview. It completely reconfigured my approach to praxis, as I found that I often located authority in western academia and practice. I pivoted away from books by non-western authors in bookstores, deeming them less prestigious. My relative expertise in canonical English literature was something I was tremendously proud of—reveling in having read *Pride and Prejudice* and *Dubliners* before my peers, as I believed that a healthy diet of the literary "classics" implied an advanced comprehension of art, literature, and language. Undeniably, learning at Bombay Scottish School gave me a lot of access and privilege, as it enabled mastery over the English language and fostered an understanding of Western modes of inquiry — both of which are arguably necessary for participation in globally recognized and accoladed academia. This knowledge has enabled my participation in global and intersectional thought-spaces today, in a manner that still remains inaccessible to those without a robust English education. However, in locating authority in these texts, I either neglected Indian literature or judged Indian poetry and prose on the basis of how closely they modeled English classical texts. At university, I initially thought I might specialize in British literature, as it

largely consisted of canonical books, comprising the so-called "classics." I often spent hours between library bookshelves, perusing the never ending shelves of accoladed Western literature. At bookstores, I continued to step past books with Indian names on the cover. I beelined to "prestigious" literature at the center of the room — the books with Western authors and English characters. Consequently, I spent my creative writing classes sprouting characters that were Christian and white and chose to situate many of my short stories in London.

Prem Poddar, in *Violent Civilities,* asserts "the historical transition from colonisation to decolonisation can be better thought of as a non-Hegelian reconfiguration where old elements survive and exert considerable after-effects" (Poddar 61). Poddar's claim certainly holds true in India's case, as despite gaining independence in 1947, the nation is haunted by English tradition and thought — most notably in the English-speaking institutions and populations of the socioeconomically privileged. The roots of English curricular tradition that lead to widespread Anglophilia in India derive from the British, commencing with the passing of the Education Act of 1835. The Act, which followed Macaulay's infamous call for the overhaul of Indian school curriculum, catalyzed the creation of Macaulay's mimic men, who were "Indian in blood and colour, but English in tastes, in opinions, in morals and in intellect" (Pritchett; Viswanathan, "Currying Favor" 93). English literature was a means of diffusing Christian values and reinforcing ideas of western supremacy in the Indian English-educated colonial subject, as the British claimed it was "virtually impossible to take Christianity out of English education" (Viswanathan, "Currying Favor" 96). Oblivious of Bombay Scottish's colonial roots at the time, I experienced the vestiges of empire seeping through the institution. In schools like Bombay Scottish, imperial legacy permeates past the school's colonial architecture and burrows into its tradition and curricula. Consequently, in students like me, individual decision making is framed

by the imperial legacies that engulf our daily lives. I never wondered why I avoided Indian authors or asked how my school had guided me to believe that western, English Literature was the mark of intellectualism. I truly believed that my choices were personal rebellions against conformity — be it by refusing to sing Christian hymns or choosing to read "prestigious" books more "critically" than what was encouraged at school. I despised tradition, and I fought against it constantly. In many ways, however, I was shaped by the school I attended and the legacies it re-inscribes onto its students — I did not question why the hymns were Christian, nor did I ask why I chose the literature I did. I did not think twice about writing stories about white children from London, nor did I question the hierarchies of the languages that I was taught.

Frantz Fanon, in critiquing France's occupation of Algeria, writes of the impact that over a century of imperialism had on colonized Algerian people. His work has been perceived as transcending the Francophone context that inspired its birth. Instead, Fanon has become a permanent fixture in the postcolonial theory curriculum, as large parts of his work are applicable across a vast array of colonized nations. Fanon writes about the impact of colonization on the mind of the colonized, arguing that the process of territorial conquest incorporated elements of psychological conquest as well. Through his text, we can better understand the gradual process of creating what Bhabha terms the "Indian mimic-man." Fanon writes:

> Every colonized people— in other words, every people in whose soul an inferiority complex has been created by the death and burial of its local cultural originality— finds itself face to face with the language of the civilizing nation; that is, with the culture of the mother country. The colonized is elevated above his jungle status in proportion to his adoption of the mother country's cultural standards. (Fanon 9)

What Fanon terms "the burial of its local cultural originality" is an ongoing process of constant reinscription of imperial legacy on the postcolonial individual. Fanon claims that "the language of the colonizing nation" is almost inextricable from an opaquer set of traditions constituting

"culture." This notion of language as intrinsic to cultural tradition is echoed by Ngugi wa Thiong'o, who writes that language carries "the entire body of values through which we come to perceive ourselves and our place in the world," and is thus "inseparable from ourselves as a community of human beings with a specific form and character, a specific history [and] a specific relationship to the world" (Thiong'o et al. 16). Fanon and Ngugi allude to the idea that language and culture are bound together, and that learning and utilizing the language of a colonizer creates a space where a colonizing culture subsumes indigenous culture and identity to irrevocably relegate the colonized or postcolonial individual to a position of inferiority relative to that of their colonizers. Applied to the case of India, both Ngugi and Fanon make points that are largely true, as the current use of English and the overwhelming presence of English literary scholarship and the relative absence of non-Western writing in Indian curricula tacitly make Indian individuals valorize Western thought and tradition.

Moreover, the preference for English can also lead to the loss of local vernacular languages. India has already seen the loss of several indigenous languages, such as Ahom, Andro, Rangkas, Sengmai and Tolcha, all from the Himalayan belt (Basak). Several other languages remain endangered; a vast number of these nearly-extinct languages are spoken by indigenous Indian groups (commonly referred to as "Adivasi"). Indian educational policies such as the Multilingual Education (MLE) programme introduced in Odisha in 2006 aim at teaching these languages alongside more popular state languages, attempting to retain local languages without reducing career opportunities for tribal children (Folklore Foundation). However, local languages still teeter on the edge of extinction—threatening the possibility for a significant loss of Adivasi Indian culture (Basak). Ngugi alleges that the only way of retaining local culture is to make a concentrated effort and commitment to teaching and writing only in local languages.

While he specifically writes for an African audience, his experience with and advocacy for writing in his native language, Gikuyu, is certainly applicable to Indian languages that face extinction due to the permeating presence and power of western languages and established *bhasa* [vernacular] languages in India. However, Ngugi's argument claims "[postcolonial] authors are bound by [their] calling to do for [their] languages what Spencer, Milton and Shakespeare did for English; what Pushkin and Tolstoy did for Russian; indeed, what all writers in world history have done for their languages by meeting the challenge of creating a literature in them," which applied to the Indian context, would call for the independent creation of substantial literary work in local languages (Ngugi 29). Ngugi quotes David Diop in claiming that "the use of [colonial languages] was a matter of temporary historical necessity (25), writing that the work of "literature written by Africans in European languages" belongs to the Afro-European literary tradition that is "likely to last for as long as Africa is under this rule of European capital in a neo-colonial set-up (27). He asserts, however, that "African literature can only be written in African languages," as that is "the language of the African peasantry and working class" (Ngugi 27). In a 2018 interview with Rohit Inani, Ngugi called language a "war zone," writing that "when [someone writes] a novel in English—no matter how radical, no matter how progressive—it can only reach people in a trickle-down fashion" (Ngugi cited in Inani). He makes an important point when he claims that the choice to abrogate and appropriate English expands the capacity of the language, while also disadvantaging vernacular languages that have been historically oppressed through the process of colonization (Inani). Ngugi's call for decolonization of language through literary focus on vernacular language is a strong one, and if properly executed, would certainly reduce the negative impact of colonial hegemony and culture of the postcolonial individual. However, I disagree slightly with Ngugi in his belief that a vernacular tradition is the only way to

ensure this transition, that what he terms "Afro-European" literature is not African literature, and that all vernacular literature can be present on a global stage in the same way as the work of Shakespeare, Tolstoy, or Pushkin. Ngugi's call for empowering the vernacular in a manner that it takes the front seat to languages such as English and Hindi is one shared by India's current fascistic Hindu-nationalist ruling party, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)—albeit for significantly more sinister reasons. The BJP's approach constructs Indian decolonization through a Hindu-nationalistic lens, claiming in Article 3 of their party's Constitution that western political thought promoted "secularism [and] individualism" and that the role of the BJP is to create an "alternative [political system] on the basis of Indian thoughts" (Bharatiya Janata Party). On the same site, the party alludes to Hindu culture in India predating cultures introduced through colonialism, and wrongly conflates Hindu belief with "Indian thought," arguing that "Indian thoughts should not be issues of sermons but of politics [and] the policies of the country should be made on their basis." Under this belief system, the BJP has argued for the removal of the English language, the erasure of histories of colonialism from history textbooks and the censorship of those with differing opinions, in promise of creating a united India that sheds the impact of its past to become some sort of untainted pre-colonial culture again ("It's Time for One Nation One Language, Say BJP Leaders"; Soni; Raha). The BJP has, as part of this vision, called for "One Nation, One Language, One India" ("It's Time for One Nation One Language, Say BJP Leaders"). However, in India, it can be difficult to achieve this stabilized notion of a singular Indian postcolonial identity or nation, as Indian culture is a constellation of subcultures, delineated partially by state lines, as individual states have separate histories and languages. On the issue of language specifically, India differs significantly from the West, as each state has its own local language. Examples of this include Punjabi in Punjab, Malayalam in Kerala, and

Kannada in Karnataka. Individual states also have a significant number of local languages that do not resemble the official state language—many of which represent local cultures of their own. The prevalence of a myriad of local languages and communities should shatter the BJP's hope of "one nation, one language and one identity," as it reveals a nation built on linguistic and cultural multiplicity. In addition, India is impacted by a constellation of theistic, ethnic, political, and class-based legacies, all of which interact uniquely, making it difficult to represent Indianness through a single identity or tradition. To complicate matters, extending across people of different religions, languages, ethnicities, and socioeconomic classes in India, is an extensive legacy of colonization, which has resulted in the embedding of English language and custom across states. For example, the Indian Penal Code, which covers the current federal-level statutes governing criminality in India, was largely penned by the British in English, and, despite several amendments, still uses English Common Law as a legal template (Patra). Schools and bookstores across large Indian cities primarily platform popular Western novels in English. Further still, Indian cinema most often utilizes "Hinglish," a commonly used hybrid of Hindi/Urdu and English in its movies, making it one of the best examples of the hybridity in Indian linguistic traditions. English customs have effectively entwined with Indian, creating an East-West hybridity where there previously was none. Consequently, returning to a previous "untainted" pre-colonization culture might even be seen as futile, as present day interactions with colonizers and the West changes the culture of a nation constantly and lends to the creation of new Indian traditions.

While most postcolonial critics call for "decolonization" of literature, academia, and language, they remain divided on the most effective way of accomplishing it. As mentioned earlier, Ngugi, in *Decolonizing the Mind*, claims that postcolonial writers are bound by a calling

to do for African languages "what Milton and Shakespeare did for English, what Pushkin and Tolstoy did for Russian; indeed, what all writers in world history have done for their languages," arguing that this would "open the languages for philosophy, science, technology and all other areas of human creative endeavors" (29). While this is a remarkable ideal, it remains unrealistic for the Indian subcontinent. Writing in a local language comes at a significant reputational and financial cost to an artist—which is a sacrifice that is not required from authors of the United States or Britain, where the dominant language is English. Ngugi acknowledges this, saying "for [such an artist] there are no national "accolades," no new year honours, only abuse and slander" (30). Fanon writes, on the knowledge and ability to wield colonial languages with fluency: "A man who has a language consequently possesses the world expressed and implied by that language. What we are getting at becomes plain: Mastery of language affords remarkable power" (Fanon 9). The impact of Western tradition couples with the present-day hegemonic impact of the West, making the knowledge of English something that is necessary for presence on the global stage. The ten most-read non-theistic books in the world are all originally written in English, and include the Harry Potter, Twilight, and the Lord of the Rings series (Polland). Language is power—both Fanon and Ngugi recognize this. Fame and compensation for an artist's work often tie to the work's reproducibility in English. It remains unfair to ask an artist to sacrifice a means of living, and simplistic to claim that the only mode of resistance is to attempt to use language to return to some sort of untampered pre-colonial period. Ngugi, while correct in claiming that "Language…is both a means of communication and a carrier of culture," fails to recognize that language cannot be owned, and instead can be molded to fit communities that have been shaped by traumatic legacies (Ngugi 13). English in India remains inextricable from the culture of the nation, and as unfortunate as it might be, to eliminate use of the language

would imperil its citizens' opportunities to engage in the global marketplace of ideas. Arundhati Roy in her collection of essays *Azadi,* points out that the English language's scope has grown significantly in the years leading up to and after India's independence in 1947, writing that "English…is the language of mobility, of opportunity, of the courts, of the national press, the legal fraternity, of science, engineering, and international communication. It is the language of privilege and exclusion. It is also the language of emancipation, the language in which privilege has been eloquently denounced" (*Azadi: Freedom. Fascism. Fiction* 11). Roy points specifically to B.R Ambedkar's *Annihilation of Caste,* which denounces the oppressive Indian caste system in English, showing that it may be simplistic to argue that the English language can only be tied to the oppression of colonized people, especially when a body of colonized people may be affected differently by legacies of oppression (Roy, *Azadi: Freedom. Fascism. Fiction* 11). Additionally, to ask writers to abandon the tongues they are both comfortable with and shaped by in pursuit of recreating a culture untampered by the collective traumas of a nation is to strip authors of well-deserved recognition in search of an unattainable goal. Arundhati Roy sums it up correctly: "writing or speaking English is not a tribute to the British Empire [but instead] a practical solution to the circumstances created by it" (Roy, *Azadi* 10–11). Writers who have been shaped by colonization are not "Indo-European." They are Indian, and their stories can still represent Indian people and reflect Indian culture, even if written in English.

Roy repeatedly alludes to English as a native language for a vast number of Indians, as well as the mixing of the language with Hindi to create Hinglish — a hybrid neither-here-nor-there language that combines Hindi-Urdu and English. This language has become my language of native proficiency, and it remains the language in which I am most comfortable and most expressive. As a consequence of a myriad of influences, my English is not the standard

British/American English, but an indigenized version of the English language — splintered by "na" (which can mean both "no" and "isn't it?") and "accha okay," (translated to both "yes, okay" or "okay okay") supplemented by "arrey" (which can be an expression of surprise, anger, frustration, and even joy, depending on context) and bound by fragmented sentences often found in the subcontinent. India's vast English-speaking populations share similar speaking patterns as they also interweave syntactic structures found in their local languages with English, creating hybridized versions of languages that craft local Indian spaces within English culture (Rajpal; Nordquist). Many postcolonial texts are written in these hybrid languages and explore questions of postcolonial identity through the lens of language by abrogating and appropriating both the English language and English literary tradition, while fusing parts of multiple cultures to give rise to a patchwork language and quilted culture (Ashcroft et al. 38). Such inflections of literary tradition aim to disrupt the idea of a stable and singular Indian identity by creating and centering a destabilized postcolonial lingua and hybrid culture. Anweshar Arya has termed this hybrid postcolonial language "Inglish." The gerund that I have used in the title of this paper, "inglishing," refers to the ongoing process of recalibrating Queen's English to fit and represent the Indian tongue. In this thesis, I use the phrase "Queen's English" to refer to the English that was exported out of Britain and into Indian colonies. English, even during the British Raj, was not a stable language within in England. "Queen's English"—a highbrow, posh sort of English—remains markedly different from local dialects such as cockney English, which were used by lower- and middle-class Englishmen. Queen's English, defined as "standard, pure, or correct English" was cast as an aspirational language during the British Raj ("Queen's English"). It reinforces a presence of "imperfection" in local english dialects, buttressing the notion that Indian and lower-class Englishmen must strive to perfect the colonial construction of the English

language in hopes of wielding in a manner identical to the "ideal English gentleman." Much of the work of postcolonial authors dispels this myth through the process of a lower-case "englishing," through which they hammer the English language into a shape that can carry the cadences of a local culture, language, and tradition.

Inglishing English is, therefore, the process of subverting what is considered "proper" English, to what is culturally understood as real and valid uses of the language in India. Here, I refer to the post-partition notion of India, which is separate from Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, and Pakistan. While a large amount of this thesis is certainly applicable to neighboring South-Asian nations that were similarly impacted by British colonialism as India, this thesis aims to specifically examine the Indian context through the writing of Indian authors. The equally important job of linguistic abrogation and appropriation of colonial languages in other South Asian contexts, while important, might prove to be too difficult to effectively cover in a single essay. To attempt to do so by grouping different South Asian nations with India would be a disservice to those nations, all of whom have cultures and subcultures that are specific to their national context and that deserve independent analysis and investigation of the ways in which the histories and politics of their nation shape their languages.

In this thesis, I will explore the ways postcolonial authors and poets explore linguistic hybridity by inglishing English, and will argue that in doing so, they reappropriate language in an age of increased globalization. The first chapter of my thesis will provide historical context relating to the adoption and use of English in India, as well as outline existing theory on the abrogation and appropriation of language. My second chapter will examine postcolonial poetry to demonstrate how English has both exiled the Indian Anglophone subject, and also platformed previously underrepresented groups within the Indian literati. This chapter analyzes three poems:

Vikram Seth's "Divali,"Adil Jussawala's "Missing Person" and Meena Kandasamy's "Mulligatawny Dreams." The next two chapters will cover Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things* (1997) and Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* (1981). Both of the chosen novels have won the prestigious Booker Prize for fiction, which cemented them as two of the most prolific and globally consumed pieces of Indian literature. My chapters will trace the use of language in these novels as not just as a vehicle for plot, but also as a manipulable method of representing Indian tradition, culture, and experience. To do so, I will demonstrate the impact of language-learning on characters and allege that the English language has been recast to center Indian readers. My analysis will draw on the work of prominent postcolonial and feminist studies theorists and will employ techniques of close reading. Through my thesis, I hope to complicate the notion of "decolonizing the mind" by evaluating the impact of the English language on the postcolonial nation through postcolonial work, questioning the feasibility of disentangling an imperial language from Indian subcultures, and demonstrating the ways in which authors have reappropriated the English language so that it is capable of carrying colonial legacies as well as the spirit and resonances of local languages and cultures.

Whose Line is it Anyway? The History of English Language Instruction and Use in India

To understand the ways in which linguistic appropriation, abrogation and subversion occur in postcolonial texts, it is important to understand the history of English literary instruction in India. English Literature and language crept into India with the passage of the Charter Act of 1813, which renewed the British East India Company's charter for commercial operation in India, led to the relaxation of controls over Christian missionary work, and established the British as responsible stakeholders in Indian education (Adams and Adams 160–166). Despite governmental regulation decrying religious non-neutrality, British government regulators privately believed exposure to Christianity would benefit Indians, whose behavior they considered both immoral and disgusting. At first, missionary involvement and British educational policy were at odds with one another, as the British quickly learned that their promotion of "Oriental" learning necessitated the exposure of Hindu and Islamic moral and religious tenets to Indians, contradicting the proliferation of the "moral and intellectual development" that they believed was espoused by British and Christian custom (Viswanathan, "English Literary Studies in India" 377–178). A few decades after the passage of the Charter Act of 1813, the then Governor-General of India, Thomas Babington Macaulay, made an impassioned plea in his 1835 *Minute on Indian Education*, arguing for the introduction of English literary study and language in India claiming that the "language of Western Europe…will do the Hindoo what they have done for the Tartar" — civilize them (Macaulay, "Minute on Indian Education" 86). Macaulay further argued that the Act of 1813 authorized the government to use funds to further the cause of any literature they choose, and that the obvious recipient of this funding should be English literature, as "English is better worth knowing than Sanskrit or Arabic" (Pritchett).

Macaulay's argument that English would serve as a *lingua franca* and create a "class of persons, Indian in blood and color but English in taste, in opinions, in morals and in intellect" influenced lawmakers greatly and eventually played a part in the introduction and passing of the English Education Act of 1835 (Viswanathan, "English Literary Studies in India" 377). This act authorized the entry of English into Indian schools. Viswanathan writes that the English language, despite being taught alongside Indian vernacular languages, enjoyed a higher status in society ("English Literary Studies in India" 377). Separaate schools dedicated to the study of English sprang up across the nation, while schools that continued to teach both English and vernacular language partitioned the departments such that each wing contained a mutually exclusive set of students, which forced students to specialize in either English or *bhasa*. While some Indians learned English before 1835, the Education Act cemented its study in classrooms. Viswanathan further analyzes and critiques the methods used to teach English and English literary studies, arguing that the British utilized English texts to create the image of the "'ideal' Englishman" (Viswanathan, "Currying Favor" 86). She argues that the English depended on this image to preserve its authority over the Indian people and writes the following:

> As a symbol of free intellectual inquiry, religious noninterference generated an image of the Englishman as benign, disinterested, detached, impartial, and judicious. Indeed, British authority depended vitally on the stability of the image and on the consistency with which it was preserved and relayed to the native mind (Viswanathan, "Currying Favor" 99)

The British had already had significant success in maintaining control over lower socioeconomic classes in Britain through the individual submission to moral law and godly authority by citizens. Consequently, the British feared that without Indians perceiving the English as morally and intellectually superior to them, and in lieu of Indian submission to moral law and Christian godly authority, the British would remain unable to control the Indian population in the same way that

they were able to maintain control over the lower socioeconomic classes in their own country (Viswanathan, "English Literary Studies in India" 378). In search of a solution, they found that English literary education in India could prove to be a handy vehicle that not only instilled notions of English superiority through academia, but also diffused Christianity through India's English-educated classes, without the government receiving any criticism for its religious interference. Thomas Macaulay and his brother-in-law Charles Trevelyan worked as part of a larger team both to prove the "diffusive benefits of Christianity" and to aid in curricular selection. Part of the new curriculum was Shakespeare, Aristotle, Locke, and Adam Smith; authors were selected if their works contained "sound Bible principles," "the strain of serious piety," "scriptural morality," and "devout sentiment" (Viswanathan, "English Literary Studies in India" 379). This curricular selection, as Viswanathan argues, allowed the government to teach the Bible while sidestepping potential accusations of Christian proselytization and began the process of conquest 'by consent [before] force' (Viswanathan, "English Literary Studies in India" 379). In teaching Western thought as "objective empirical reality," literary studies became "both the means through which both the claims of Western belief were exerted, and the ground of its truthfulness vindicated" (Viswanathan, "Currying Favor" 100). The new English language curriculum encouraged the cultivation of Adam Smith's "impartial spectator" — an idea presented in his *Theory of Moral Sentiments (1759)*, which argued that inherent in every man was an impartial spectator that made him respond to the ways those around him think and behave. Viswanathan writes that Smith argued for the use of education to cultivate the impartial spectator so that a person came to view the world as their educator and curriculum taught them to. Viswanathan argues that Smith advocates the use of English literature specifically, in the creation of this "impartial spectator," writing:

> The study of literature, Smith argued, provides the formative structures that will determine the development of this spectator within. Through literature, he wrote, "we endeavour to examine our own conduct as we imagine any other fair and impartial spectator would examine it. If, upon placing ourselves in his situation we thoroughly enter into all the passions and motives which influenced it, we approve of it, by sympathy with the approbation of this supposed equitable judge. If otherwise, we enter into his disapprobation, and condemn it (Viswanathan, "Currying Favor" 101)

The cultivation of the English impartial spectator continues in Indian English institutions today. I specifically recall instances in my two years of I.C.S.E curriculum, where our entire class was made to learn Shakespeare's *Merchant of Venice*. Having been raised on a healthy diet of American and British literature, I found myself completely uncritical of the purported "objectivity" in these texts. The idea that these texts were written by people who were as flawed as I was felt foreign to me; instead, I unconsciously recognized British literature as more desirable, and maintained that it was truer to the English language. British literature had cultivated an impartial spectator within me at a very young age. Whether it manifested itself in the form of my thirteen-year-old-self falling back on correcting broken English as a method of asserting that I had more knowledge than someone I was arguing with, feeling pride in my English fluency, or even looking to British novels as models for my own writing—the impartial spectator was always the whisperer in my ear determining that truth, intellect and goodness were reproduced in English texts and behavior, and that it was my job to prove that an Indian can write just as well as an Englishman.

Just as it did within me, Adam Smith's theory of alleged "objectivity" created in Indians a divided self-consciousness, through which Indians evaluated their behavior as an "impartial" Englishman might, imposing Western tradition and morality upon themselves. In so doing, they aspired to become English but instead become what Bhabha terms "colonial mimic men," in pursuit of an unattainable ideal and relegated to positions of being "not quite/not white"

(Bhabha, “Of Mimicry and Man” 132). Viswanathan argued that this process effectively made the Englishman familiar to Indians “through the products of his mental labor” and that it “removed [Englishmen] from the plane of ongoing colonialist activity-of commercial operations, military expansion, administration of territories-and de-actualized and diffused his material presence in the process” (Viswanathan, “Currying Favor” 103). In so doing, English literature concentrated the image of the Englishman to that of the “ideal Englishman,” extricating him from the material harm they were doing on the ground. “English” as both culture and language became an ideal — a set of values, opinions and actions that were split into the binary of correct/incorrect, that natives had to live up to and emulate. This process of “Englishing" was insidious but had its intended effect far past the immediate period of British colonization. English remains a central pillar of discourse today, as it is still both the language of commerce and the courts. The dominance of the language and English literary studies can unquestionably be traced back to intentional English policies seeking to further British hegemony and legitimize British rule across their colonies through cultural and linguistic domination.

The role that the English language has played in forging the postcolonial anglophone identity has made language central to questions of identity, politics, culture, and representation of the postcolonial subject. Critics such as Ngugi wa Thiong’o argue that the ossification of the English language in postcolonial society solicits the reproduction of Englishness by individuals from formerly colonized nations, thereby contributing to a Western hegemony. However, Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Hellen Tiffin in *The Empire Writes Back* argue that the English language in a postcolonial state needn’t be tied to upholding a hegemony, as the appropriation and abrogation of the English language can replace the language of a colonized culture with a discourse that is adapted to the colonized state. The authors outline textual strategies used by

native english authors to disrupt the notion of a western "correct" English, replacing it instead with an appropriated and abrogated lowercase "english," which better expresses a local culture.

Both "abrogation" and "appropriation," as defined by Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin, are crucial strategies for the subversion of English literature and the creation of the english literatures. "Abrogation" is defined as the "refusal of the categories of the imperial culture, its aesthetic, its illusory standard of normative or correct usage, and its assumption of a traditional or fixed meaning "inscribed" in the words (38). "Appropriation" according to Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin is the "process by which the language is taken and made to 'bear the burden' of one's own cultural experience … or 'convey in the language that is not one's own the spirit that is one's own'" (38). They argue that postcolonial literature navigates a tension between the colonizing culture or "center" and the margins, writing that:

> [Postcolonial literature] is always written out of the tension between the abrogation of the received English which speaks from the center and the act of appropriation which brings it under the influence of a vernacular tongue, the complex speech habits that characterize the local language, or even the evolving and distinguishing local english of a monolingual society attempting to establish its link with place (Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin 38)

To better interrogate the impact of abrogation and appropriation, we can make use of Homi Bhabha's "Of Mimicry and Man." In this essay, Bhabha argues that the British civilizing mission aimed at educating Indians in English to "help" them never intended to create a class of Indians equal to Englishmen. This is typified by Charles Grant's advocacy for designing the English curriculum to ensure "partial" diffusion of Christianity, and the 'partial influence of moral improvements' through the exclusion of the aspects of liberal thought that would influence Indians to revolt against their oppressors. Instead, Bhabha claims the education would advocate a "reform of manners" to "construct a particularly appropriate form of colonial subjectivity," thereby pushing for the imitation of English manners and the creation of Macaulay's mimic men

who are ‘Indian in blood and colour, but English in tastes, opinions, morals, and intellect" (Bhabha, “Of Mimicry and Man” 127). Bhabha claims that the mimic man, however, was defined by his difference from the Englishman, thereby creating “ambivalence” that undermined the colonizing culture. Bhabha writes, “the menace of mimicry is its double vision which in disclosing the ambivalence of colonial discourse also disrupts its authority,” arguing that the space between a well-intentioned mimicry and a subversive mockery is where the mimic man threatened the colonizer’s authority (Bhabha, “Of Mimicry and Man” 129). Knowing and using the English language became a method of mimicry, especially as it was introduced with the sole purpose of creating Maculay’s infamous mimic men and was the golden ticket to social and economic mobility in colonial India. However, in postcolonial texts, English can become a site of mockery, for although the overlaying of vernacular syntactic structures on British English is often unintentional and is seen as “broken” English, it produces slippage that undermines the center. “Broken” English is an attempt to mimic British English and creates a recognizable other that is, in Bhaba’s words, “almost the same but not quite” as that of their white counterparts (Bhabha, “Of Mimicry and Man” 132). Through abrogation and appropriation, this “broken English” might be intentionally represented as “english” that mocks the authority of what it imitates. In such cases in postcolonial texts, english can construct difference and can smuggle the many legacies of a nation into a text, therefore doing what Ngugi alleges can be best done by a vernacular tongue.

Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin discuss several methods used by postcolonial authors to appropriate or abrogate language within their texts. These methods include glossing, the use of untranslated words, metaphor, allusion, interlanguages, syntactic fusion, code switching and vernacular transcription. Each of these strategies nativizes language differently. Glossing occurs

when a cross-cultural text uses a word in a vernacular language and provides a bracketed translated explanation of the term. Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin use the example "obi [hut]," which uses neither just the Igbo word "obi" nor the English "hut." Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin argue that while the use of "[hut]" demonstrates a loss in cultural context through translation, it also privileges the language used to explain the vernacular term as "real," implying its superiority (*The Empire Writes Back* 60). An alternative to glossing is to leave the word unglossed, or untranslated, to signify cultural difference. For readers who aren't fluent in the vernacular language used, the unglossed term must be understood via context clues. Ashcroft et al. claim that the movement away from glossing reveals the presence of an untranslated gap and has "released language from the myth of cultural authenticity" (65). They further claim that "leaving words untranslated in post-colonial texts is a political act," as the choice does not raise the receptor culture to a status higher than the vernacular (*The Empire Writes Back* 65).

Translations, however, are not the only way of introducing local dialects into an english text. "Interlanguage" is a term used to describe the meshing of two or more linguistic structures derived from different languages (65). The use of interlanguage demonstrates the presence of hybrid subjecthood, as the language is structurally intermediate between a native and learned language. The hybrid intermediary is therefore "not [a] deviant [form] or mistakes" but an independent linguistic system (66). Interlanguage is similar to syntactic fusion, which doesn't fuse the structures of the sentences of two languages, but instead fuses the syntax of a vernacular language to that of the lexical forms of the colonizer's tongue, to recreate the rhythm of the vernacular language in English (67-68). In many novels, we find the use of phrases, similes and metaphors that are not seen in Queen's English, and that are rarely seen outside the Indian subcontinent. An example of this can be seen in *The God of Small Things* with the phrase

"Stopit" (301), when Ammu asks her children to stop behaving in a certain way. Here we see the first letter of "it" flow into "stop," in the same way that the first letter of a word runs into the end of the preceding word in Malayalam. The language structure of Malayalam, therefore, influences Ammu's English.

Both of the novelists whose work I will be studying center their narratives around the process of pickling, which is itself a metaphor for the innovative use of language in postcolonial literature. Rushdie's novel, specifically, gave rise to the term "chutnification," describing a vibrant clashing, mishmash, and liquefaction of the English language into a series of englishes that is produced by its interaction with Indian vernacular languages and cultures. In the following chapters, I will outline the many ways in which authors chutnify language, and the impact that has on the literary products of their endeavors. Language, as demonstrated by this chapter, is deeply political. In many cases, the choice to represent language as fragmented, translated or meshed is not purely a phonetic choice. Instead, chutnified words can reveal legacies of colonization, access to wealth, and even reveal interactions between local tradition and custom in a rapidly globalizing world.

Exile, Invisibility and Representation: What Postcolonial Poetry Says about English

As demonstrated in the preceding chapter, the history of English literary and language studies in India is inescapably entwined with the subjugation of Indians and the execution of the imperialist civilizing mission in India. The malicious intent and deleterious consequences of colonial education in India made Anglophone Indian writers grapple with the implications of using the colonial language and the consequences of colonial education on the expression of their identity. Many of these writers felt alienated from what they considered a *bhasa* [vernacular] experience—access to the nation's "unmediated presence," untainted by the Englishness of colonial education and rule (Som and Das 2). Most famous Indian Anglophone poets, such as Felix Mnthali, Adil Jussawalla, Vikram Seth, Eunice de Souza, and Nissim Ezekiel, were immersed in English and a number of different *bhasas*. Arvind Mehrotra, in *Twelve Modern Indian Poets,* argues that the linguistic background of a poet impacts their works uniquely, as each Anglophone Indian poet's "idiolect is constituted differently: Ramanujan's is of English-Kannada-Tamil, Kolatkar's and Chitre's of English-Marathi, Ali's of English-Urdu, Mahapatra's of English-Oriya, and Jussawalla has in an interview spoken of 'various languages crawling around inside [his] head,'" indicating the influence that vernacular languages have on Indian Anglophone poetry (Mehrotra 6). Despite differences in the *bhasa* that the poets speak, the Englishness of their education has united some of these writers, as they all experienced a detachment from India and grappled with accepting the parts of their identities that were shaped by the British. A study of post-partition Indian poetry, therefore, can reveal the many ways in which Anglophone poets struggled with how English shaped their identity, and guide future solutions for the "language question" in India. For this reason, I will devote this chapter to analyzing the influence of English language and literature on the formation of the subjective

Anglophone Indian identity through popular postcolonial poetry—namely Vikram Seth's "Diwali," Adil Jussawalla's "Missing Person," and Meena Kandasamy's "Mulligatawny Dreams."

Exile in Vikram Seth's "Divali"

Vikram Seth's poem "Divali" from his early poetry collection *Mappings* (1980) compares the position of the postcolonial Anglophone individual to that of the exile, both of whom are "not at home at home / And…abroad abroad" (Seth). The notion of "exile," which might conjure up the image of forcible and *physical* removal from a nation, can also be seen on an ideological plane. Edward Said, in *Representations of an Intellectual: The 1993 Reith Lectures,* claims:

> While...an *actual* condition, exile is also…a *metaphorical* condition…[The] intellectual in exile derives from the social and political history of dislocation and migration…but is not limited to it. Even members who are lifelong members of a society can… be divided into insiders and outsiders: those on the one hand who belong fully to the society as it is, who flourish in it without an overwhelming sense of dissonance or dissent, those who can be called yea-sayers; and on the other hand, the nay-sayers, the individuals at odds with their society and therefore outsiders and exiles so far as privileges, power, and honors are concerned. The pattern that sets the course for the intellectual as outsider is best exemplified by the condition of exile, the state of never being fully adjusted, always feeling outside the chatty, familiar world inhabited by natives, so to speak, tending to avoid and even dislike the trappings of accommodation and national well-being. (Said 52)

For Said, the Anglophone intellectual is marked by his anglicization such that s/he is exemplified by a "condition of exile." The postcolonial exile, whose removal from their nation is not perceived as a voluntary ejection, rarely feels "acculturation and adjustment" to their present environment (50). Instead, their identity is often in a volatile and unstable condition (50). Seth's "Divali" is a story of the exiled Anglophone individual, who is plagued by their inability to find a "home" in any nation because of their hybrid identities.

The poet-speaker of the poem in "Divali" has recently returned to India after spending three years in Britain. The speaker recalls "neurotic / Guy Fawkes Days," which is a British celebration of the failure of the Gunpowder Plot in 1605, when Guy Fawkes attempted to assassinate King James I of England and blow up the British Houses of Parliament (Adams). The poem is set on the day of the Hindu festival of Light, Divali, which the speaker expects to enjoy more than Guy Fawkes Day, as "[he] is home after all" (Seth). Guy Fawkes Day and Divali, both of which occur in November and are celebrated with fireworks, music, and food, feels interconnected for the intellectual exile—a condition that Said deems a "double perspective that never sees things in isolation" (57). Because of this doubling, every scene in one country "necessarily draws on its counterpart in [the other]," thereby resulting in the counterposing of two experiences and having them appear in a "new and unpredictable light" (Said 57). We certainly see this in "Divali,"as the speaker juxtaposes Guy Fawkes Day with Divali, writing "Guy Fawkes Days-I recall / That lonely hankering- / But I am home after all. / Home. These walls, this sky / Splintered with wakes of light / These mud-lamps beaded round / The eaves, this festive night" (Seth). Despite being at home, the speaker claims he feels an "old insensate dread" that prevents him from feeling at peace. The condition of intellectual exile, which the speaker identifies here as an "old insensate dread," is marked by what Said calls a "dissatisfaction bordering on dyspepsia" that becomes the "new … habitation" of the intellectual exile. The unsettled nature of the intellectual exile is permanent and deeply uncomfortable.

The speaker claims the root of his exile was "a school…[with the] Authoritarian seal: / English!" alluding to the coveted colonial education that birthed the Anglicized Indian subject (Seth). Anglicization was simultaneously desirable and undesirable, as he claims "Five … Six … generations" of diligent work was necessary for his to avail the educational opportunities that his

family recognized as the "Key to a good job, to power / Snobbery, the good life, / This separateness, this fear" (Seth). The English language becomes inseparable from the literature prescribed in colonial school as the language is described as the "beloved language / of Jonson, Wordsworth's tongue" (Seth). Gauri Viswanathan has claimed that the English literary curriculum was the medium through which "both the claims of Western belief were asserted, and the grounds of its truthfulness vindicated" (Viswanathan, "Currying Favor" 100). The curriculum had its intended effect on the speaker of the poem, who located truthfulness and superiority in English texts, and therefore "crawl[ed] along" the "grooves" of English authors like Jonson and Wordsworth (Seth). Viswanathan claims that by locating objectivity and truth in these English texts, "Indians confirmed what … C.E Trevelyan maintained all along: that the Indians' greatest desire was to raise themselves to the level of moral and intellectual refinement of their masters" (Viswanathan, "Currying Favor" 102). Locating authority in these texts led to Indian mimicry of the English, which the poet speaker alludes to when he says:

> And I twist along
> Those grooves from image to image,
> Violet, elm-tree, swan,
> Pork-pie, gable, scrimmage
>
> And as we title our memoirs
> "Roses in December"
> Though we all know that here
> Roses *grow* in December
>
> And we import songs
> Composed in the U.S
> For Vietnam (not even
> Our local horrors grip us)
>
> And as, over gin at the Club,
> I note that egregious member
> Strut just perceptibly more
> When with a foreigner

(Seth)

English reconstitutes human experiences by giving name to action and meaning to ideas. The juxtaposition of the East and West on the basis of English "civility" began with the onset of British colonialism of the East. The power to name is influential—as Seth writes, "The British / Made us the Orient" (Seth). "Orient" etymologically derives from the Latin word *orientem* meaning "the rising sun, the east," but it is the British English meaning that the word Orient carries, which juxtaposes the image of the East not only etymologically or geographically with the image of the Occident, but also culturally (Orient). Seth points to the notion that linguistic choices in literature can similarly bequeath cultural and sociological meanings. In "Divali," the poet speaker claims Anglophone artists utilize popular British motifs such as the "Violet, elm-tree, swan / Pork-pie, gable, scrimmage," in their literature. These motifs, which Indians recognized only in "image," are symbols of blind imitation, as those words and experiences are rarely found within India. Indian-educated writers might reproduce the language of English literature that Macaulay and their curriculum venerated, through the reproduction of the images of English experience within the boundaries of the Indian nation. We see this in the speaker's critique of memoirs titled "Roses in December," which is a specific jab at M. C. Chagla, the Oxford-educated first Chief Justice of Independent India, who engages in similar mimicry. In his autobiography, titled "Roses in December," Chagla writes:

> If winter comes, can spring be far behind? But that is the winter of man's discontent, not the winter which precedes total darkness. For such a winter there is no spring, only a period of waiting till everything disappears, even the fragrance of roses which one cherished till the end. (Chagla)

The implausibility of roses in December is referred to across English literature, visible in works such as Byron's poem "English Bards, And Scotch Reviewers," where he writes "And shall we own such judgment? no—as soon / Seek roses in December—ice in June" (Byron). Chagla,

choosing to name his book for the dissipated scent of roses in the winter mimics the representation of winter roses in English literature, ignoring the local reality of roses flowering year round in South India and in the winter in North India. Writing like the British is an active choice Indians make, and in doing so, they write against their own experience in favor of the experiences of the English (L. Gandhi).

The impact of English colonialism is markedly worse than others that invaded Indian land because of the subjugation of Indians by the British through the psychological hierarchies that it sought to develop. Seth writes:

> Macaulay the prophet of learning
> Chewed at his pen: one taste
> Of Western wisdom "surpasses
> All the books of the East,"
>
> And Kalidas, Shankaracharya,
> Panini, Bhaskar, Kabir,
> Surdas sank, and we welcomed
> The reign of Shakespeare.
>
> (Seth)

This is, of course, a reference to Macaulay's Minute on Indian Education, in which he claimed that "a single shelf of a good European library was worth the whole native literature of India and Arabia" (Macaulay). Unlike during the conditions of British colonialism, Indian intellectualism was still able to flourish during other periods of imperialism in India, such as during the Mughal Empire in India. To illustrate this, the speaker draws on Indian thinkers and writers who lived in India before the sixteenth century: Sanskrit poet Kālidāsa, philosopher and theologian Shankaracharya, the 'Father of Linguistics' and philologist Pāṇini, mathematician and astrologer Bhāskara, poet-saint Kabir, and poet and singer Surdas, all of whom were venerated for their contribution to literature and science, and whose lives span across the pre-Raj years (Kalidas;

Mayeda; “Panini-Biography”; “Kabir”; “Sūrdās”). Surdas, who wrote the epic Sanskrit poem *Sursagar* (which translates to “Sur’s Ocean”), unexpectedly “sank” as the Indian English educated individual “welcomed the reign of Shakespeare” (“Surdas”). The welcoming of Shakespeare demonstrates that Indian anglophone classes embraced the British’s imposition of Shakespeare as a superior text in relation to the Arabic and Sanskrit literature that had been previously venerated. Leela Gandhi points to Michel Foucault’s argument on power, claiming “power is best able to disseminate itself through the collaboration of its subjects” and that “such apparent ‘collaboration’ is really symptomatic of the pervasive and claustrophobic omnipresence of power” (Gandhi 14). The poet speaker, in writing “we welcomed / The reign of Shakespeare,” reveals the guilt the anglophone Indian feels in collaborating with the British through the adoption of their language and literary style, at the cost of pre-British Indian literature such as “Kalidas, Shankaracharya, / Panini, Bhaskar, Kabir / Surdas [which] sank” (Seth). Anglophone writers become pawns in the colonial chess game, as the West uses colonial education to make Englishness “a psychosocial category [that is] in structures and in minds” (Nandy cited in Gandhi 16).

The speaker continues to contrast British colonialism with Mughal invasion of India, arguing that the difference in their impact lies in the British subjugation of Indian literature, language, and tradition through the creation of hierarchical categories dependent on race. The English refused to recognize India as independently valuable and beautiful, even if different from Britain. Mughal rulers, on the other hand, “assumed their love” for India, despite their nostalgia for the “musk-melon / Rose, peach, nightingale” that they left behind. To illustrate this, I draw upon the stark differences between the two in their approach to Indian cuisine. The Mughal ruler, Babur, in his autobiography *Baburnama*, writes about his longing for melons and Central Asian

foods and nuts, which he later imported into India. Babur, Akbar, Humayun and a series of Mughal descendants "round[ed] up chefs from around their Indian domains, a practice that invited fusion," a tradition that birthed the Mughlai food for which India is globally famous (Hay). The fused tradition demonstrates an appreciation for both Indian and Turkish food, as it relies on the harmony of ingredients from both regions: nuts and fruit from Central Asia, and spices and vegetables from India (Hay). This response juxtaposes itself with the abysmal British's response to Indian food—part of which involved the creation of the term "curry" as a catch-all identifier for a variety of spicy, gravy dishes that their palates could not distinguish (Twilley et al.). Twilley claims that the "origins of dishes such as biryani and vindaloo…[morphed from] complex, regional specialties to simplified, curry-house classics, thanks to a combination of colonialism, empire, and immigrant entrepreneurialism"—a tracing that does not celebrate Indian food but instead strips and simplifies it. This culinary example typifies the difference between Mughal and British rule in India, the former of which celebrated much of India's literature and geography, while the latter expressed disdain and condescension for Indian literature, people, and cuisine.

The speaker, aware of the harm that the British Raj had in India, remains conflicted over some of the contradictions posed by their literature. Seth writes:

> The undigested Hobbes,
> The Mill who later ground
> (Through talk of liberty)
> The Raj out of the land ...
>
> O happy breed of Babus,
> I march on with your purpose;
> We will have railways, common law
> And a good postal service-

These stanzas of Seth's poetry weaves in the English thinkers such as the philosophers Thomas Hobbes and John Stuart Mill whom the speaker read in school. He recognizes the complicated history of English texts in India, given the paradoxically productive use of some English texts in the Indian Independence movement for emancipation from the British Raj. He references this in the line "The Mill who later ground / (Through talk of liberty) / The Raj out of the land" (Seth). Here, the speaker refers to John Stuart Mill's "On Liberty," which was utilized in the Indian Freedom movement as advocating for Indian independence from British rule. The use of "Mill…which ground" is also evocative of the economic subjugation of Indian people and foundational to the arguments for Indian independence. "Mill" reminds us of textile and factory production in India, as the British Raj often forced the export of cheap raw material from India to Britain, and the expensive import of British finished goods into India at the cost of the Indian manufacturing sector (Tharoor). The British exploitation of the Indian textile industry galvanized the Swadeshi movement in the late 19th century, during which Indians boycotted British goods, in favor of only Indian-made products. Gandhi pushed for "swaraj" (self-rule) of Indians through the principle of self-sufficiency, termed "swadeshi." He led the Swadeshi Movement by using only Indian hand-spun khadi cloth, which was nationally adopted as a sign of Indian resistance, leading to the incorporation of the blue spinning wheel at the center of the Indian flag (Victoria and Albert Museum). Therefore, Seth's line becomes emblematic of the speaker's internal conflict: the import of British texts, such as "On Liberty," itself undermines the Indian movement for "swadeshi," while advocating for "swaraj"—a conflict that Anglophone Gandhi himself had to navigate when incorporating John Stuart Mill into his famous book, *Hind-Swaraj* , within which he advocated for swaraj through swadeshi, writing, "we shall save our eyes and money and support Swadeshi and so shall we attain home-rule" (M. Gandhi).

In the second stanza of the quoted excerpt, Seth gestures toward the ways in which no amount of replication of British textual strategies would make an Indian writer equal to the English, through the use of the word "Babus." The term "babu" is used by Indians as a respectful address for educated men. However, the history of the word in India is mired in colonialism. "Babu" was made popular by the British 'comic paper' *Punch*, where it used the term to mock anglophone Indians for their mimicry of the British (Chandan). British colonialists derogatorily named indigenized English "Babu English," which was a style that the British library defines as "aspiring to poetic heights in vocabulary and learning, despite being full of errors" (Dore). The term demonstrates the slippage between the British's simultaneous desire for and fear of Indian imitation, as "babu" comes to demonstrate how the Indian sees the anglicized men as respectable and intelligent, while the British see them as buffoonish mimic men (Dore). "Babu" therefore demonstrates the incapacity of the Anglicized to assume the same status as the British, reaffirming Bhabha's assertion that "to be Anglicized is *emphatically* not to be English" (Bhabha, "Of Mimicry and Man" 126–128). Despite knowing this, the speaker "marches on in [babu's] purpose," recognizing that the language in which he is comfortable will always relegate him to the "not quite/not white" position of intellectual exile (Bhabha, "Of Mimicry and Man" 132). Anglicization through the intrusion of English has exiled the Anglophone Indian permanently, as the speaker writes:

> I know that the whole world
> Means exile of our breed
> Who are not home at home
> And are abroad abroad
>
> (Seth)

Said writes about this condition of the intellectual exile when he says:

> Exile for the intellectual in this metaphysical sense is restlessness, movement, constantly being unsettled, and unsettling others. You cannot go back to some earlier and perhaps

> more stable condition of being at home; and, alas, you can never fully arrive, be at home with your new home or situation…The intellectual exile tends to be happy with the idea of unhappiness, so the dissatisfaction bordering on dyspepsia, a curmudgeonly disagreeableness, can become not only a style of thought, but also a new, if temporary, habitation (Said 52)

To be "not at home at home / And…abroad abroad" is to feel unsettled, whilst recognizing the inability or return to a "stable" condition of home. The speaker of "Divali" chooses to disentangle himself from the political world in favor of what Said calls a "metaphysical" reality, because the politics of his language and life has "warped" his tongue. He claims he "need[s] no words" and no language to appreciate and connect to the non-verbal moments of beauty which necessitate not voice but sight:

> I am too used to the flavor
> Of tenuous fixity;
> I have been brought to savour
>
> Its phases: the winter wheat-
> The flowers of Har-ki-Doon -
> The sal forests - the hills
> Inflamed with rhododendron -
> …
> What if my tongue is warped?
> I need no words to gaze
> At Ajanta, those flaked caves,
> Or at the tomb of Mumtaz;
> …
> "The world is a bridge. Pass over it,
> Building no house upon it."
> Acceptance may come with time;
> Rest, then disquieted heart.
>
> (Seth)

The festival of Divali marks the end of Lord Rama's exile. On this day, Indians lit the path to his home, Ayodhya, with the same "mud-lamps beaded round" with which Seth's speaker opens the poem. However, unlike Rama, he will never be able to find his way back "home," because his idea of home—a culturally intact place that welcomes the Anglicized—does not exist. Despite

this, he is content, despite not being happy, with the fragility of his position. He has resigned himself to a lifetime of "tenuous fixity," noting that intellectual exile means never truly being free, and instead wandering the world to set up a number of transient houses that can never become homes.

Invisibility in Adil Jussawalla's "Missing Person"

Bombay-based poet Adil Jussawalla released his second book of poetry—*Missing Person*—in 1976, as part of the innovative Clearing House poetry publishing collective in Mumbai. His poem, "Missing Person" (the first of four long-form poems in his novel, which is also titled *Missing Person*), navigates similar issues as Vikram Seth, as he specifically displays the impact of the English curriculum on the Anglicized Indian. "Missing Person" contains twenty-one smaller poems, split into two sections, "Scenes from a life" and "Points of view." The Indian Anglophone protagonist of the poem is "missing;" he lacks a language, a culture, and an identity. His fragmented worldview is re-emphasized through the linguistic construction of the poem, which reads similarly to a "very quick-moving rather jaggedly cut movie," due to his use of clean cuts between stanzas and the fragmentation of the poem's language (Zecchini, "Indian Poetry in English"). Jussawalla's poem is an interesting one to analyze because of the number of elements he incorporates and themes to which he alludes. Laetitia Zecchini, in her excellent essay titled "Adil Jussawalla and the Double Edge of Poetry," demonstrates the vastness of the poet's scope when she writes that the poem "presents itself as a collage of literary, musical, and cinematic references; colonial, racial, and sexual stereotypes; puns, flashbacks, and commonplaces taken from Marxist ideology, Western and popular culture, advertising, Hollywood, and 'Eng. Lit.'" (Zecchini, "Double Edge of Poetry" 253). In this section of this thesis, I will demonstrate the ways in which Jussawalla emphasizes the violence of

the intruding English language, analyze the impact of Anglicization on the Anglophone postcolonial subject, and examine the ways in which Seth's "exile" differs from Jussawalla's use of invisibility or missingness of the persona of the Anglicized.

Similar to "Divali," the speaker of "Missing Person" emphasizes the hegemonic nature of the English language in India by alleging that "the [English] letter will happen / the rest of your life" (Jussawalla 2). He compares the first letter of the Devanagari script (अ) and the first letter of the English alphabet (a), both of which are pronounced similarly, when he writes:

> A ~~~~~~~~'s a giggle now
> but on it Osiris, Ra.
> An
>
> अ
>
> 's an er ... a cough,
> once spoking your valleys with light.
> But the a's here to stay.
> On it St. Pancras station,
> the Indian and African railways.
>
> That's why you learn it today.
>
> (Jussawalla)

The Hindi letter अ is pronounced the same as "er," which is identical to the English article "a." The postcolonial 'a,' Bhabha claims, "is the sign of linguistic objectivity inscribed in the IndoEuropean language tree, institutionalized in the cultural disciplines of empire" as the indefinite article and determiner (Bhabha, *Location of Culture* 58). However, the 'a' exists phonetically across cultures, as it is pronounced identically across: "अ…er…a," which he claims demonstrates that "the object of linguistic science is always already in an enunciatory process of cultural translation, showing the hybridity of any genealogical or systematic filiation"

(Jussawalla, *Missing Person* 2; Bhabha *Location of Culture* 58). Colonial education, in its creation of a hierarchy of language, cemented English learning in India, irretrievably Anglicizing the Indian anglophone subject. The embedding of the English language as inherently superior in India is what makes the speaker claim the "a's here to stay / On it St. Pancras station / the Indian and African railways" (Jussawalla). He continues:

> Look out the school at the garden: how the letter will happen
> the rest of your life:
> bright as a butterfly's wing
> or a piece of tin aimed at your throat:
> expansive as in 'air',
> black as in 'dark',
> thin as in 'scream'.
> It will happen again and again-- in a library in Boston,
> a death-cell in Patna.
> And so with the other twenty-five letters you try to master now--'cat', 'rat', 'mat'
> swelling to 'Duty', 'Patience', 'Car'.
> Curled in a cortical lobe (department of languages),
> an unspeakable family gibbered.
>
> (Jussawalla 2–3)

For the speaker, anglicization is permanent, as it will "happen for the rest of [his] life" (2). The speaker struggles to find their place in India, always recognizing their position of "not white/not quite;" feeling unwelcome abroad and exiled at home because of their ideological distance from both the Indian masses and the English (Bhabha, "Of Mimicry and Man" 132). For the Anglophone writer, the path forward is tenuous. English gives him access to wealth, global discourse, and power, but, without the *bhasas*, he remains unable to hold conversations with *bhasa* Indians. Therefore, for the poet speaker, English can be "bright as a butterfly's wing" and harmful as "a piece of tin aimed at [his] throat," preventing his speech (2). For the Anglicized Indian, the अ will penetrate his pronunciation of the English 'a,' the latter of which is pronounced differently in "air … dark … scream" (2). It "will happen again and again" the

speaker claims, in the pronunciation of "library" as lib-r-अ-ry and "Boston" as bost-अn. "Patna" (correctly pronounced as "Pअ-tna) and "Boston"—on opposite sides of the globe—will both prove inhospitable to the missing person, who is composed of both cultures, and consequently finds peace in neither. The hybrid, postcolonial 'a' renders both languages incapable of transcribing the speaker's accent. Much like the enunciating tongue, the languages "curl" within his brain's "cortical lobe," which is his "department of languages." English, despite being the language through which the Anglophone subject constructs their world, does not give them access to feeling at "home" in Britain or the United States because of how English sounds exit "his throat." The English/American metaphorically "hurl[s] tin at [his] throat" through their disdain of his accent, which they claim "[pollutes their] sounds." The Western citizen says to the Anglicized Indian:

> 'Turn left or right,
> there's millions like you up here,
> picking their way through refuse,
> looking for words they lost.
> You're your country's lost property
> with no office to claim you back.
> You're polluting our sounds. You're so rude.
>
> 'Get back to your language,' they say.
>
> (Jussawalla, *Missing Person* 2–3)

The anglophone Indian struggles to negotiate his uncanny resemblance to the Western intellectual, and his envy and anger for the hegemonic influence of a racist center. Because of the failings of language, the speaker cannot fulfill the colonizer's demand for him to "get back to his language"—his language does not exist, as neither English nor any *bhasa* language can carry his experience (Jussawalla, *Missing Person* 3).

His English, seen as too little in the West, is perceived as "too much" in India. The poet writes:

> In the fist of a rioting people
> his rotting head.
> A mirror fires at him point blank
> and yells, 'Drop dead,
> colonial ape,
> back under an idealist spell.
> Yes, you've made it to some kind of hell, backslider, get liquidated.'
> 'Wait! you know whose side
> I'm on,' he shouts,
> 'but the people, their teeth bright as axes came after my stereo and cattle,
> came after my bride.
> I've said all my prayers.
> O pure in
> thought word and deed have I been, delivering sun,
> yet you gild street-urine--
> theirs!'
>
> (Jussawalla)

The missing person, despite claiming to be seen on the side of the *bhasa* speaker, is perceived as a "colonial ape" on the side of the colonizer. The missing person's growing wealth, which is tied to their ability to speak in English, is earned because of the Anglicized Indian's proximity to the British. "Get liquidated" is the call by *bhasa* speakers for the economic equality of the two classes, which they hold in the hope of returning to the pre-colonial period, before English interference. "They came for my stereo and cattle" says the missing person, who will always see himself as a "fucking fake" for decrying colonialism but profiting because of it. The missing person's entire life is created by the period of colonialism. His home, "his stereo and cattle…his bride" are tied to the economic uplift that his colonial education gave him, while his language is the colonizer's language. The missing person is, ultimately, made up of images of the East and West—unable to experience either the *bhasa* or English experience fully. He remains suspended between the position of colonial mimic-man and colonial "ape"—unable and unwilling to wholly

embody those stereotypes, yet unable to refute his partial embodiment of both. The unhomed speaker asserts, “Exile's a broken axle” and asks “Goes back (to where / whose travels cannot home?)” (Jussawalla, *Missing Person* 4). Ultimately, his simultaneous guilt and desire for the language are too much to bear, and the “missing person”—the bourgeois Indian intellectual—is ripped apart. The writer is overwhelmed by his inability to extricate himself from systems that have a colonial and oppressive past in India, while feeling a compulsion to rebel against the colonial center and recreate a nation that reclaims power from their colonizers.

The mechanism for and impact of the introduction of the English language in India has been established, several times over, as violent. The physical violence of “Missing Person” serves to juxtapose the psychological violence of the imposition of a colonial language in India. In his introduction to *New Writing in India* (1974), Jussawalla claims that themes of “dismemberment and dislocation” pervaded the poetry of Bombay in the sixties (Zecchini, “Indian Poetry in English”). Zecchini writes:

> [Through the use of metaphors of dismemberment and dislocation, poetry can be a] disillusioned meditation on the chaos and fragmentation of the world. Nothing holds fast. Reality is on the verge of falling apart. This poetry of rupture and dissociation, uses jagged rhythms, discontinuous language and metaphors representing a clinical apprehension of reality, one never analogical or comprehensive. Imagery forefronts the arid and fissured land, the splintering glass or mirror breaking to pieces, and recurrent images of a dismembered body(Zecchini)

“Missing Person” wields language in exactly this way, as each stanza is harshly severed from the next, interrupted by cinematic references and distorted images of the protagonist’s life. The “missing person” is himself subjected to physical violence— he is beaten, brutalized, mauled by dogs, and ultimately killed. The poem’s theme and structure “feed into each other,” intentionally disorienting the reader in order to replicate a part of the experience of being unhomed through language.

Through this poem, Jussawalla complicates the question of how postcolonial Anglophone individuals might ethically and effectively use English. Jussawalla, in his essay in the anthology *Name Me a Word*, says "[writers] have experienced the two disturbances of jailbreak and reimprisonment: the exhilaration of being free to write as we choose, of being able to overrun British rules norms of language and literature (and even decency) and the oppression, forty years later, of finding ourselves strapped, rather like forks choked with spaghetti" (Jussawalla, "English" 2). On the topic of the *bhashas* and English, Jussawalla writes about the incapacity of either English or a vernacular language to provide more than what Bhabha called "positions [that are] are partial; [and in]sufficient unto [themselves]," claiming that both English and Hindi are individually "wholly inadequate to fill out the poetic and fictional worlds of our witnessing," even if those worlds lie at very different points on the socioeconomic spectrum (Jussawalla, "English" 250; Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* 58). Given the incapacity of both languages to contain fully experiences that rooted in the colonial encounter, there is a need for a language or a linguistic intermediary that might be able to carry a postcolonial experience. However, for the Indian Anglophone writer, "Eng. Lit" has formatively reconfigured part of their worldview, and Jussawalla claims breaking away from it results in "a very fundamental personal disintegration" that only poses questions and has no answers (Jussawalla, "English" 257). Both Jussawalla and Seth, therefore, demonstrate the inability of the English language to singularly contain the experiences of the Anglophone postcolonial, who is metaphorically ripped apart by their partial immersion in two opposing traditions. While both Seth and Jussawalla identify and represent the postcolonial anxiety that governs their use of the English language, my next section will explore modern calls for reshaping the colonial language to fit the postcolonial nation. To do so, I will draw on Meena Kandasamy's "Mulligatawny Dreams," which advocates the acknowledgement

of the politics of the English language and searches for a postcolonial home within an adapted and reformed english.

Representation in Meena Kandasamy's "Mulligatawny Dreams"

Meena Kandasamy's "Mulligatawny Dreams" is a poem that advocates englishes that incorporate local dialects, grammar, and histories, and pushes for a non-hegemonic english to unseat the hegemonic English. Both Ngugi, in *Decolonizing the Mind*, and Fanon, in *Black Skin, White Masks*, independently allude to the notion of language as a carrier of culture, and the harm that an imitative use of the English language has on the postcolonial individual. Seth and Jussawalla have shown that the imprint of colonial education is permanent, and the blind imitation of "Eng. Lit" can push postcolonial Anglophone individuals to write against their own reality. Indian poet Meena Kandasamy, through her poem "Mulligatawny Dreams," charts the course of the colonial language differently than Seth and Jussawalla by calling for the uplift of a *new* lower-case "english" that unites the *bhasas* and English, and that is free of the power structures and grammatical conventions of the English language.

Kandasamy sees global "english" not as a stable, hegemonic language but instead as a dynamic and changing language that draws from vernacular languages across the globe. In "Mulligatawny Dreams," she demonstrates that local language variants have pushed their way into English in the past, visible through the absorption of local words into "canonical" English throughout history. Global conquest has made English a sticky language, as it has pulled words from local cultures into its folds. Within the field of linguistics, words that have been pulled into English from outside dialects are termed "loanwords," and tend to borrow the form and meaning of the vernacular word partially or entirely (Durkin 3). Psychologist George Boeree argues that english's expansiveness derives from this interaction between English and various cultures, as

English absorbed Norman French, Danish and Latin first, after which it borrowed from Jamaican, Australian and Mexican dialects, amongst others (Boeree "The Origins of Language"). For example, from the Uto-Aztecan language of the Nahuatl from southern Mexico and Central America, english picked up "avocado" ("ahuacatl"), "chile/chili" ("chilli") and "shark" ("xoc"). From the Caribbean, the language collected words such as "guava" ("guava"), "canoe" ("canoe"), "barbecue" ("barbricot") and hurricane ("huracan") (Boeree "The Origins of Language"; Durkin 366-369). Portuguese and English colonialism as well as trade with the East heavily influenced the language, evidenced by loanwords such as the Arabic "monsoon," Marathi "mongoose" and Sanskrit "palanquin" and "brinjal" (Durkin 366-369). Durkin argues that a significant portion of common non-technical words are loanwords, and that it would be tremendously "difficult to conduct any sort of conversation in modern English" without their use. It must be noted that the rules of the English language are marked by Western notions of what the "correct" way to use these borrowed words is. We rarely ask what a language comprised of other languages should look like, nor do we question why some words jostle their way in, while other local words don't. Kandasamy dreams of a language that continues to collect local experience and can represent tradition, but without the grammatical rules of English or the hierarchies that the language creates on the basis of these arbitrary rules. In "Mulligatawny Dreams," Kandasamy chooses not to capitalize the first letter of "english," demonstrating its difference from the colonially imposed "English." Deepika Bahri writes that "English, at once an adjective and a noun, must be understood simultaneously as language, culture and class" (44). The allure of a global english is in its difference from the colonially imposed English, and its promise of a language that "doesn't belittle brown and black men and women" (Kandasamy). Kandasamy's poem calls for a language in which she can announce the presence of Tamil

culture, convention, and norms in a globally read and recognized language, without the imposition of a racist center. Her english would continue the stickiness of english, such that it is, in Bapsi Sidhwa's terms, "no longer the monopoly of the British… [as we have given it] a new shape, substance and dimension" (Sidhwa 223). Kandasamy's Mulligatawny dreams opens as follows:

> *Anaconda. Candy. Cash. Catamaran.*
> *…*
> *Patchouli. Poppadom. Rice.*
>
> I dream of an english
> full of the words of my language.
>
> An english in small letters
> an english that shall tire a white man's tongue
>
> (Kandasamy)

In this poem, Kandasamy yearns for an english that incorporates Tamil words, while acknowledging that English has picked up Tamilian words in the past. The opening stanzas of the poem demonstrate the stickiness of the English language, as they list words absorbed into English from Tamil, such as "anaconda," "candy," "cash," "catamaran," "cheroot," "coolie," "corundum," "curry," "ginger," "mango," "mulligatawny," "patchouli," "poppadom," "rice," "tatty," "teak," and "vetiver." She dreams of an english that might behave as Tamil does, and the poem dexterously subverts English by sidestepping English grammatical rules, and instead adopting the rules of the Tamil language. In addition to advocating a language that is different from the colonial English, Kandasamy's choice against capitalizations represents Tamil, which contains no rules governing alphabetical capitalization. The poem is itself designed to "tire the white man's tongue" as it forces the tongue to curl to pronounce words such as "poppadom" and "catamaran," and typifies the ways in which english wouldn't be constructed around Western

comfort. She writes, in english, of Tamilian practices such as “tasting with five fingers,” using pebbles to pronounce the Tamil consonant “zha” correctly, of incorporating suffixes that connote respect, such as through the Tamilian use of “aiya”/ “amma” (Kandasamy). Kandasamy’s poem, however, does not advocate an appreciation for the use of Tamil words imported into English, but instead a language that fights for the marginalized. In this vision, there would be an english where “the magic of black eyes and brown bodies/replaces the glamour of eyes in dishwater blue shades/and the airbrush romance of pink white cherry blossom skins” (Kandasamy). The ability of english to do this in postcolonial nations would mean that postcolonial citizens have been able to rework the colonial center to make it work for its citizens. In this poem, english tells the story of culture: a love for the sea, eating with your hands, and suffixes for respect:

> an english with suffixes for respect
> an english with more than thirty six words to call the sea
> an english that doesn’t belittle brown or black men and women
> an english of tasting with five fingers
>
> (Kandasamy)

With time, Queen’s English might expand to incorporate words that carry cultural significance (such as “rice,” or “poppadom”), but it will always be marked by the politics of its (mis)use and the violence of its enforcement. Kandasamy dreams of an english that escapes the impact of the British, so that it may be more than a fusion of languages. Kandasamy’s english would not be constructed through the process of exclusion and marginalization, but instead would be a constantly evolving and contested space. The english she dreams of would remain in constant flux because of the process of negotiation between and hybridization of various cultures. Importantly, it would embrace pluralism, cultural hybridity, and the diversity of language.

In addition, “Mulligatawny Dreams” cannot be extricated from Kandasamy’s background as a Dalit woman in India. On Dalithood, Laetitia Zecchni writes that Dalits can be identified to

a "difference [that questions and fractures a number of mainstream narratives], to which outcastes have been condemned by one of the most ideologically articulated systems of socio-cultural exclusion and estrangement, and a difference *reclaimed* or championed" (Zecchini 58). She elaborates further, saying:

> Dalits have…constructed themselves as a dissident political and cultural non-Hindu minority in the course of the 20th century. It is from such a marginal position that they have dislodged not only conventional discourses on democracy and modernity, but also challenged official representations of the Indian nation, of its culture, literature and founding myths … Dalit literatures disturb or exceed certain generalizations and abstractions of theoretical discourses, and cut across some of the most common colonial/postcolonial binaries…By giving what was previously invisible, inaudible or 'unsayable', and challenging the exclusive system of repartition between what is 'same' and 'other', proper and improper, noble and vile, but also what 'counts' and what does not, this literature is intimately linked to the political…The reconstitution of a political subject with a voice, a name and an agency is not only a struggle for civil and political rights [but also] a formidable effort of assertion and engenderment of the self through language. **The political battle for representation is also a battle *of* and *for* language; a right to say 'I', a right to name and narrate and a right to articulate a claim to 'difference in equality**'" **(**Zecchini, "'No Name Is Yours until You Speak It'" 59-60, bolding and italicizations mine).

It is no surprise, then, to see Kandasamy's fierce use of 'I' in "*i* dream of an English," which focuses on the writer's agency and stresses the capacity of Dalit dreams and hopes for a language that encompasses their experience. In an address to the United Nations Human Rights Council, the International Movement Against All Forms of Discrimination and Racism (IMADR) along with the International Dalit Solidarity Network (IDSN) and the National Council of Women Leaders (NCWL) argued that Bahujan women "face a triple burden of caste, class and gender" (International Movement Against All Forms of Discrimination and Racism). Many Dalit activists have argued that English is the language of liberation for Bahujan men and women, as they remain excluded from national vernacular academic and literary spaces because of their caste and cannot independently compete in the global literary marketplace with only a vernacular language under their belt (Ilame 998–1000). Kandasamy, who has been regarded as one of the

most influential female Dalit poets of the 21st century, rose to fame for her ability to engage in the global marketplace of ideas in English. Mulligatawny Dreams does not just write back to the colonial center—it also writes back to India—a country that often excludes Dalit men and women from what is considered to be the "margin" to the colonial "center" by *not* dreaming of a *bhasa* (Stancati). Unlike most postcolonial writers, she dreams *for* english. For Dalit writers, English, with a broadened scope, is the language of accessibility, not oppression. It is because of this that Kandasamy pushes back on the notion that english language education in India is undesirable, or that it would simply produce english mimic-men. In another poem of hers, titled "Once my Silence Held you Spellbound," she writes "You wouldn't discuss me because my suffering / was not theoretical enough. Enough. Enough. / Enough. Now I am theoretical enough. / I am theatrical enough. / I have learned all these big big words / I can use them with abandon" (Kandasamy). Kandasamy rages, rightfully so, against the double exclusion of Dalitness from both English and *bhasa* literature and academia, the latter of which is extremely biased by Brahmins in India (McHenry and Sharkey). While Jussawalla might claim that invisibility comes from the Indian Anglophone's exposure to English, Kandasamy might claim it is a consequence of Dalit exclusion from it. For Kandasamy, english enables Dalit women to create in unique ways that remain impossible for the vast majority of English-speaking Indians, especially in light of the lack of academic literature and theory on Dalit experiences. She writes, "I invent new [words] every passing day / FYI, OED consults me. Roget's Thesaurus / finds it tough to stay updated" (Kandasamy). In "Mulligatawny Dreams," she dreams of an English that is adapted to fit both Dalit and non-Dalit postcolonial cultures, broadened to represent her Tamil experiences, and accessible to "brown or black men and women" who have traditionally been alienated by the language, by demonstrating the ways in which English-language poetry can contain postcolonial

ideas and structures without mimicking and mindlessly reproducing a colonial center (Kandasamy). English has adapted repeatedly in the past, she claims, by absorbing words such as "mango" and "cheroot" and "catamaran." Through "Mulligatawny Dreams," Kandasamy is able to chart a path forward *with* English, by recognizing the language's current inadequacy while emphasizing the ways in which it has adapted in the past. Exposure to english needn't always create a 'missing person.' Instead, the language has the power to elevate people who have been missing (read: excluded) from the world stage for far too long—who have important ideas to share and compelling stories to tell.

Linguistic Abrogation and Appropriation in Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things*

As I have demonstrated in the first chapter of this thesis, language has been a powerful tool for social control in India, specifically in its initial role as a buffer between Empire and the Indian masses, ensuring the cultural and social stratification that helped uphold a British hegemony in the country. However, it can also be a vehicle for positive social change. In the language's later years in India, English has also become the language of mobility for many Indians—especially the Dalit community, who often argue that English can help liberate them from a restrictive caste system, outside of which they exist and by which they are oppressed (Rahman). Given that Dalit literatures have often been penned in the vernacular, they have been excluded from the "postcolonial fiction" literary canon (Zecchini 60). Meena Kandasamy, whose work I have cited in the previous chapter of this thesis, has claimed that it is impossible to dissociate womanhood and Dalithood, as "caste and patriarchy go hand in hand" (Zecchini 60). The language question, therefore, cannot be purely interrogated through the lens of an East/West binary, but instead must be read through an intersectional lens that recognizes the politics of language use within the State. In canonical postcolonial fiction and Dalit literatures, English has undoubtedly grown to be a mobile language — one that Pakistani author Bapsi Sidhwa aptly claims:

> [Is] no longer the monopoly of the British. We, the ex-colonized, have subjugated the language, beaten it on its heads and made it ours! Let the English chafe and fret and fume. The fact remains that in adapting English to our use, in hammering it sometimes on its heads, and in sometimes twisting its tails, we have given it a new shape, substance, and dimension" (Sidhwa 223)

Sidhwa points to what Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin identify as reappropriation and abrogation of a colonial language to fit a local culture as a method of postcolonial resistance. In this chapter, I will analyze a novel that successfully twirls English into a local inglish through such resistance:

Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things* (1997). Roy's novel interweaves metaphor, genre, stylistic elements, and language to create work that is extremely specific to its location and context, but also a commentary on issues that span the breadth of the Indian subcontinent. Roy often uses techniques that Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin identify as central to postcolonial texts' abrogation of English, such as glossing, interlanguage, and untranslated words. Language, often seen as a medium for political writing, becomes part of the politics of the novel in *The God of Small Things*. The novel demonstrates that it is possible to reappropriate the English language in a way that demonstrates the legacies that the language smuggled into it, as well as the politics of its use.

The God of Small Things is Arundhati Roy's first fictional work and is focalized through the perspective of a child, Rahel Ipe, as she navigates childhood, trauma, socio-political tensions and learning English. The novel is a non-chronological account of the Ipe family's life in Ayemenem and recounts the tragic events leading up to a young half-Indian, half-English girl's death and the twins' separation. The Ipe family is an extended family that lives under one roof, in a manner typical of many Indian families, and consists of the twins (Estha and Rahel), their mother (Ammu), grandmother (Mammachi), grandfather (Pappachi), uncle (Chacko) and great aunt (Baby Kochamma). In the story, the Ipe family hosts Chacko's ex-wife Margaret Kochamma and his daughter Sophie Mol as they leave England to visit Ayemenem for the first time. The visit is a turbulent one in which the twins are expected to perform Britishness. During the visit, Mammachi finds out that her daughter has fallen in love with Velutha, a Dalit man, who has also worked as a carpenter for the Ipe family. Baby Kochamma frames Velutha for rape, and the two children run away from home, across a turbulent river in the dead of night. While they are attempting to go to Kari Sapu's house on the other side of the river, their boat overturns, and

Sophie Mol drowns. Upon finding her body, the police make their way across the river and beat Velutha within an inch of his life, while the twins watch. Velutha dies of his injuries, and Chacko banishes a devastated Ammu from their family home. Ammu sends Estha to live with his father, the same man who abused her. Twenty-three years later, Rahel and Estha return to Ayemenem, where they meet for the first time since they were separated.

The novel is written entirely in what Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin call "englishes" — the lowercase counterpart of Queen's English, encompassing the languages of a number of vernacular tongues and cultures. In the novel, Roy indigenizes language by fragmenting sentences, incorporating the dominant vernacular language in Ayemenem (Malayalam), and upending grammatical conventions governing spelling, punctuation and sentence structure. Examples of these strategies include capitalizing sentences to generate emphasis, such as when Ammu calls the *Sound of Music* "a World Hit," or Chacko talks in what Rahel deems his "Reading Aloud voice." She splits and melds words, using phrases such as "Prer NUN sea ayshun" and "dustgreen" (Roy, *The God of Small Things* 36, 55). Her Indo-Anglian form of writing is, as Agustín Reyes Torres claims, "a transnational, diasporic phenomenon that reveals that India itself is a hybrid creation, a conglomeration of what was brought in from outside, absorbed and reworked" (Torres). This reworking of English to Inglish upends the colonial center though its disavowal of its rules. Her style achieves Bhabha-esque hybridity—which Robert Young defines as "the moment in which the discourse of colonial authority loses its univocal grip on meaning and finds itself open to the trace of language of the other, enabling the critic to trace complex movements of disarming alterity of the colonial text"—through subversion of English, and by generating meaning through an alternate discourse that appropriates the colonial tongue to generate a new language (Young cited in Aboul-Ela 60). In

this chapter, I will trace how Roy achieves subversive hybridity, as well as argue that her process of Inglishing does not simply refer to the incorporation of vernacular terms and speech patterns, but also smuggles Indian legacies of oppression into the book's folds.

Arundhati Roy's *God of Small Things* pivots around themes of transgression, specifically focusing on the transgression of the "Love Laws," which lay down "who should be loved, and how. And how much" (Roy, *The God of Small Things* 33). The novel culminates tragically, as Ammu's affair with Velutha is viewed as a transgression of the love laws, as Velutha is a Dalit man and Ammu is an upper-caste woman. Velutha is brutalized and murdered by the police, and both the twins are convinced by Baby Kochamma to lie to the police and claim that Velutha raped Ammu. Benedict Anderson in *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, claims that "regardless of the inequality and exploitation that may be prevailing in each, the nation is always conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship" (Anderson 7). Roy's novel pushes back against this notion by depicting the horizontal comradeship and vertical alienation occurring within the State, especially delineated by caste and socioeconomic lines. The characters navigate the pressure of what you are *supposed to do* — be it romantically, ethically or grammatically — and the cost of transgressing your pre-determined role. Across the novel, characters are defined as part of an in-group or an out-group, forming alliances and animosity based on a persons' status as part/outcast of the group. Across the novel, fears of transgression manifest themselves in different ways, as characters police themselves and those around them in pursuit of status. As the lives of most of the characters become performances to attain certain reputational goals, language is weaponized as a performative method of achieving societal status and respect. English is a status symbol, and characters cling to their fluency as a way of asserting power over those around them. For example, Rhodes-scholar and Oxford

educated Uncle Chacko, despite his criticism of Pappachi for his Anglophilia, clings to British English as the correct and singularly acceptable expression of english. He corrects Baby Kochamma when she says, “over familiar with who,” claiming that “of whom” is the correct construction (Roy 154). Baby Kochamma, in turn, reprimands Estha for saying “thang god” instead of “than*k* god” (Roy 154). These exchanges closely follow what English education hoped to attain in India, which was to cement British values and actions as superior to or more correct than vernacular uses of language**.** The Inglish phrase “over familiar with who” is just as understandable to an audience as “over familiar with whom,” just as “thang god” is as comprehensible as “thank god.” English education (Chacko’s at Oxford University and Baby Kochamma’s at the University of Rochester), underlies the power they feel because of their proximity to Englishness, and both Baby Kochamma and Chacko correct indigenized Inglish to exert power through mimicry, becoming what Macaulay had hoped to create — “a class of [English educated] interpreters" (Macaulay, “Minute on Indian Education”). Through this hegemony, English serves as a class-based distinguisher in Ayemenem, where the richer Ipe family has access to convent and English-medium education in a way that class-oppressed people do not. Often, the knowledge of English language and literature is interlaced, since to wield both is a way of conveying class and educational superiority in Ayemenem. We see this phenomenon in Baby Kochamma, who wields the English literary curriculum as a method of demonstrating her wealth:

> Baby Kochamma said, “Hello, Margaret,” and “Hello, Sophie Mol.” She said Sophie Mol was so beautiful that she reminded her of a wood-sprite. Of Ariel.
> “D’you know who Ariel was?” Baby Kochamma asked Sophie Mol. “Ariel in *The Tempest*?”
> Sophie Mol said she didn’t.
> “Where the bee sucks there suck I’?” Baby Kochamma said. Sophie Mol said she didn’t.
> “In a cowslip’s bell I lie’?’ Sophie Mol said she didn’t.
> “Shakespeare’s *The Tempest*?” Baby Kochamma persisted.

> All this was of course primarily to announce her credentials to Margaret Kochamma. To set herself apart from the Sweeper Class (144)

Here, Baby Kochamma announces her "credentials" to British-born Margaret and Sophie Mol, in an attempt to demonstrate her access to colonial education by flaunting her knowledge of Shakespeare's *The Tempest*. This late play is widely critiqued for its colonialist depiction of native islanders Caliban and Ariel, both of whom interact with their colonizer (Prospero) differently. Ariel, one of the two native inhabitants of the island, works alongside Prospero, whereas Caliban pushes back against Prospero, arguing that he is subjugated by Prospero. Michael O'Toole writes: "Ariel is portrayed as a submissive servant, while Caliban is characterized as rebellious and spiteful" (O'Toole). Over the course of the play, Caliban rejects Prospero's occupation of the island and his language, arguing that he wants autonomy:

> You taught me language, and my profit on't
> Is, I know how to curse. The red plague rid you
> For learning me your language! (Shakespeare , page I, ii, 363-65)

Ariel, who is promised freedom, stands to gain from proximity to Prospero and remains committed to serving him. Baby Kochamma's obsession with *The Tempest* is ironic, as she upholds the master's tools as symbols of intellect — aligning herself closely with Ariel, the Islander who is set free for working alongside Prospero at the cost of Caliban, whose destiny now lies entirely in the hands of Prospero because of Ariel. Baby Kochamma fiercely fights against any caste or class intermingling, cognizant that her ability to wield the masters' tools is itself a language that cements her position as superior in the public eye.

English as a marker for reputation and intellect can be seen not just within the wealthy Ipe family, but across Ayemenem. Comrade Pillai, the leader of the Marxist party in Ayemenem, also internalizes and propagates the reputational hierarchy generated by his mastery over the English language, boasting "triumphantly" to Chacko that his wife "understands English very

well. Only doesn't speak" (*The God of Small Things* 278). It is also the language of the mimic man, as it is the mode of discourse that Chacko, Comrade Pillai and Baby Kochamma all attribute to the English gentleman figure of apparently superior intellect and stature that colonial education venerated through the literary curriculum.

While English is repeatedly established as the mode of dominant discourse in the Ipe family, the use of vernacular languages is done cleverly in the novel. Malayalam, which is the dominant language in Kerala, is the twins' first and strongest language; it is integrated into the novel in the form of poetry, glossing and as untranslated words. Some Malayalam remains untranslated, such as "onner, runder, mooner," meaning one, two and three; "mundu," meaning 'dhoti', and "oower" which means 'yes' (Roy, *The God of Small Things* 63, 52, 182; Mukherjee et al. 4). In other places, the words are glossed, such as when the author writes "modalali Modalali in Malayalam means landlord" (*The God of Small Things* 80), and translations demonstrate a cultural gap between the two languages through song:

> *Thaiy thay thaka rbazy thaiy thome!*
> *Enda da korangacha, chandi ithra thenjada?*
> (Hey, Mr. Monkey man, why's your bum so red?)
> *Pandyill thooran poyappol nerakkamathiri nerangi njan.*
> (I went for a shit to Madras, and scraped it till it bled.) (Roy, *The God of Small Things* 196)

Malayalam is also often used to demonstrate the relative social positioning of the speakers, giving readers unique insight into the ways language bends around societal position in India: "Velutha! *Ividay!* Velutha!" (Roy, *The God of Small Things* 71). In this example, Rahel, in calling Velutha by his first name, reveals a significant amount about the relative difference in their class and caste. In Indian culture, it is rare for a child to call adults by their first name, unless they are extremely close and are more economically or socially influential than the person that they are calling (Mukherjee et al. 4): "Chacko *saar*. Our factory *Modalali*." (Roy, *The God*

of Small Things 271, italicizations mine). When Kalyani Pillai introduces Chacko to her niece, Latha, she refers to him as "saar," which is an indigenized version of "sir." "Modalali" means 'landlord,' indicating to the family that Chacko owns the pickle factory where Comrade Pillai works. "Saar" itself conveys respect and is often addressed to someone economically or socially better off. In her introduction of Chacko as a "modadali [saar]," she reveals her and Comrade Pillai's implicit expectation of Latha—to impress him, as he is perceived as wealthier and English-educated, and therefore, more worthy of respect.

Consequently, we see smuggled into Inglish the social hierarchies that delineate groups within India, which often form a person's first signifier. While an understanding of Malayalam is unnecessary for understanding the power dynamics between characters in the novel, Roy's selective use of vernacular not only represents the hybrid language spoken in India but also privileges the Malayali reader, who might connect more closely to the text because of their understanding of the social connotations of Malayali signifiers. Emily Stockdale writes about the history of Malayalam, quoting Vir Gopal, who writes that "Malayalis have always welcomed other languages to coexist with their own and the interaction of these with Malayalam has helped its development in different respects" (cited in Stockdale 3). Rich Freeman writes:

> [Malayalam] was the purely literary project of crafting Manipravalam that first urged the rejection of eastern Tamil grammatical and phonetic features in favor of principled Kerala-speech alternatives, while simultaneously legislating the massive introduction of Sanskrit vocabulary and literary forms. These are the very features that we recognize today as having given rise to Malayalam as a separate language, and though we may objectively chart their emergence through Manipravalam … they were clearly argued for the first and only time in premodernity within the scope of this singularly incisive treatise (Freeman 39)

Malayalam itself borrows heavily from Sanskrit, which was adapted to fit the speech patterns of the people of Kerala and "[undermine] Tamil's literary authority" (Freeman 41). Roy's use of English intermingled with Malayalam stays true to the historical formation of both the English

and Malayalam languages—producing a tongue that reflects its speakers accurately, without simply reproducing the hegemonic language at the center. In so doing, Roy demonstrates the ability of vernacular and colonial languages to coexist and draw from each other in ways that stay true to both (Stockdale 3).

Arundhati Roy's linguistic expertise can also be observed in the way she creates and releases emphasis, specifically through repetition, capitalization and phonic pause and syllabification. Examples of these techniques include "A carbreeze blew. Greentrees and telephone poles flew past the windows" (*The God of Small Things* 87), "Feathers, Mangoes, Spit" (*The God of Small Things* 82) and "Locusts Stand I" (Roy, *The God of Small Things* 159). In places across the novel, multiple methods of literary inversions occur together:

> A wake.
> A live
> A lert (Roy, *The God of Small Things* 238)

> With the long iron stirrer. Estha stirred the thick, fresh jam.
> The dying froth made dying frothly shapes.
> A crow with a crushed wing.
> A clenched chicken's claw.
> A Nowl (not Ousa) mired in sicily jam.
> A sadly swirl.
> And nobody to help. (Roy, *The God of Small Things* 194)

In the latter example, Estha relates the jam to his molestation, and Roy uses phonetics to connect the two moments. 'Long iron stirrer' and 'thick, fresh jam' utilize phallic imagery connecting jam to the OrangeDrink LemonDrink Man, who molested Estha in the theater where his family watched *The Sound of Music*. Estha often chooses the inside of the Paradise Pickle & Preserves factory as a safe space for him to think, but the traumatic recollections of harm that he has previously endured render that space unsafe. The banana jam in the vat next to him, "was still hot and sticky," similar to the "stickysweet" orange drink he held while being molested (Roy

104). The banana jam is also the first jam he has thought of during the act, and it carries similar phallic imagery to that of the 'long iron stirrer' in the jam vat. Estha sees the "tiny banana bubbles drowning deep in jam and nobody to help them," and the froth (himself) in "dying frothly shapes" (Roy 194). Roy repeats sounds in the sentences describing the shapes to create rhythm and draw attention to specific words — the 'cr' in 'crow' is repeated in 'crushed,' while the 'w' is repeated in 'wing.' In the following sentence, 'clenched' is split in half, and the first syllable of each part is repeated — 'cl' in 'claw' and 'ch' in 'chicken.' The repetition calls a reader's attention to acts of violence through emphasis: "*crow* with a *crushed wing*" and "*clenched chicken's claw"* (Roy, *The God of Small Things* 194, italicizations mine). Roy's linguistic choices emphasize violence in a scene that does not incorporate any direct violence, using language to allude implicitly to a character's memory. Roy's writing here is rhythmic and wields literary devices most often seen in works of poetry instead of prose. To analyze the purpose of this technique, I draw on Homi Bhabha's *How Newness Enters the World,* within which he inverts the traditional meaning of 'cultural translation,' arguing that the displacement of an individual from one cultural context to another can be termed 'translation.' Bhabha writes of a third space for the untranslatable and hybrid:

> This liminality of migrant experience is no less a transitional phenomenon than a translational one; there is no resolution to it because the two conditions are ambivalently enjoined in the 'survival' of migrant life. Living in the interstices of Lucretius and Ovid, caught in-between a 'nativist', even nationalist, atav-ism and a postcolonial metropolitan assimilation, the subject of cultural difference becomes a problem that Walter Benjamin has described as the irresolution, or liminality, of 'translation', the element of resistance in the process of transformation, 'that element in a translation which does not lend itself to translation'. This space of the translation of cultural difference at the interstices is infused with that Benjaminian temporality of the present which makes graphic a moment of transition, not merely the con-tinuum of history; it is a strange stillness that defines the present in which the very writing of historical transformation becomes uncannily visible. (Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* 331)

Bhabha's paragraph, despite referring to the first- or second-generation immigrants in a country with a dominant culture that is foreign to their own, can also be applied to the postcolonial individual born within English-speaking communities in India. Given Macaulay's vision for Indian education, the creation of a class "English in tastes…opinions…morals…and intellect" would ensure that the impact of colonial education on children raised in English-speaking and learning communities would be that they experience similar catching "in-between a 'nativist', even nationalist, atav-ism and a postcolonial metropolitan assimilation" (Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* 331). In Roy's novels, the twins act as an example of this liminality, as they feel pressure to assimilate into Englishness by performing Englishness. The "What Will Sophie Mol Think Week" centers on Baby Kochamma preparing the twins for assimilation into British culture and tradition, as she fines them for speaking in Malayalam instead of English, practices perfecting their English, and enunciates words 'correctly,' in line with British pronunciation (Roy 36).

> Estha and Rahel had to sing in English in obedient voices. Breezily. As though they hadn't been made to rehearse it all week long. Ambassador E. Pelvis and Ambassador S. Insect.
> RejOice in the Lo-Ord Or-Orlways
> And again I say rej-Oice.
> Their Prer NUN sea ayshun was perfect. (Roy, *The God of Small Things* 154)

Rahel's emphasis on "NUN" when enunciating "pronunciation" works to correct the indigenized pronunciation (pro-NOUN-sea-ayshun) and demonstrates both her awareness of the accent of the British subject and the categorization of herself as "other" or deviant from it (Roy, *The God of Small Things* 36). Lucy Hopkins correctly asserts, "the accent of the performance rewrites Christianity not as the local Syrian Christian, but as British," — indicating how Christianity and language cannot be fully disentangled from the British Empire and its colonial past and implying

that the lines between local and foreign might blur in postcolonial nations (Hopkins 286). Rahel and Estha become what Bhabha describes as the "migrant in-between" within the borders of their own home country. Regarding this positionality, Bhabha posits:

> The migrant culture of the 'in-between', the minority position, dramatizes the activity of culture's untranslat-ability; and in so doing, it moves the question of culture's appropriation beyond the assimilationist's dream, or the racist's nightmare, of a 'full transmissal of subject-matter'; and towards an encounter with the ambivalent process of splitting and hybridity that marks the identification with culture's differ-ence. (Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* 331)

Rahel, who is described as "brown" and "Loved a Little Less," is constantly seen as inferior to a "beach colored" and "Loved" Sophie Mol, irrespective of Rahel's performance of Englishness. Rahel, therefore, is an example of the English-educated postcolonial individual who can be viewed as occupying an in-between minority position to the dominant culture, whose attempted linguistic assimilation under Baby Kochamma's coercion might be something Bhabha claims "dramatizes…culture's untranslatability," and renders the hybrid position untranslatable and separate from both English and vernacular. The double entendre of "cultural translation," which can be taken to mean translating language in a manner that does not displace or mistranslate culture, as well as Bhabha's interpretation, is important to Roy's work. Roy's novel, in its mishmash of vernacular words, its english base and its poetics, becomes a work of prose-poetry as it creates emphasis and builds rhythm through linguistic devices such as alliteration, assonance, rhyme, and phonic pause, as in the lines "crow with a crushed wing" (Roy, *The God of Small Things* 194). The text becomes more than simple English on a page that tells a story. Similar to Mammachi's jam that the Food Products Organization (FPO) had banned for its "ambiguous, unclassifiable" between-jam-and-jelly consistency, Roy's novel refuses to fit within apparently demarcated, simplistic binaries of poetry/prose or English/vernacular, remaining ambiguous and unclassifiable (Roy, *The God of Small Things* 30). It is a work of cultural fusion,

exploring the untranslatability of Inglish in India and the hybrid postcolonial identity created by colonial education. The language in the novel exposes what Bhabha argues assimilating migrants do — it "marks the identifier of cultural difference" (Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* 331). The novel, much like the migrant, or the postcolonial English educated individual, is both linguistically and culturally untranslatable because of Roy's own immersion in British colonial education in India and her affinity for Malayalam and English.

Roy also uses language to illuminate instances of oppression that pervade Indian society and that sometimes might not derive from colonial influence. Roy presents the household as a microcosm of gender relations in India and writes about the patriarchal bent of Indian tradition through the characters. Mammachi and Ammu both face abuse from their partners, while Baby Kochamma is afforded fewer educational privileges than Chacko and is only sent to school because of her inability to "find a husband" (Roy 26). Body language, too, is used to demonstrate the inferior position of women in the house, as later in the novel Comrade Pillai is described as the "Man of the House," who greets Uncle Chacko "[without acknowledging] the presence of his wife or mother." Comrade Pillai, despite leading the Ayemenam Communist party, uses his wife as an unpaid laborer: "Comrade Pillai took off his shirt, rolled it into a ball, and wiped his underarms with it. When he finished, Kalyani took it from him and held it as though it was a gift" (272). In India, Hindu surnames in the South often denote caste and usually consist of the person's father's first name, changed to her husband's first name after marriage. Kalyani Pillai, through her marriage to Comrade Pillai, uses the Pillai surname — changed from her father's name after marriage. Her last name not only ties and defines her relationally to either her husband or father but also communicates her *savarna* caste to those around her. Her first name, which remains the only unique identifier for her, derives from 'kalyānaam' in Malayalam,

meaning ‘the wedding’ (Dvorak). Consequently, Kalyani Pillai is entirely defined by her marriage to Comrade Pillai, both in name and expected behavior. Roy’s clever use of Malayalam here illuminates the ways in which identity, language, tradition, and oppression often overlap in traditional Indian society, and how seemingly irrelevant linguistic choices can carry great meaning.

Themes of female transgression form a recurring motif in Roy’s novels—one bolstered by Roy’s hammering of English to fit Kerala and reflecting in it the lasting and deep oppression against women that occurs and is learned in the home. We see this oppression in Baby Kochamma’s resentment of Ammu’s transgression of the societally prescribed role assigned to married Indian women, as she believes a “*divorced* daughter from an *intercommunity love* marriage” has no place in her parents’ house (Roy, *The God of Small Things* 45–46). Roy’s italicized words indicate transgressions against societal expectations for women, who are expected not to divorce abusive husbands, marry outside their communities, or choose against having an arranged marriage. The fear of transgressing gender-roles is taught implicitly within the home from a young age. We see, in her deconstruction of English, Rahel’s understanding of the sociopolitical factors governing the role of women in India. Mohit Kumar Ray claims, “the breaking of form and the consistent breaking of sentences and words are made to serve in the novel as the objective correlative for the fractured sensibility and the broken and fragmented world of women” (cited in Lemaster 803). Rahel’s restructuring of ‘locus standi’ (meaning ‘no legal standing’) to “Locusts Stand I” that singles out the individual “I” in the phrase “[Ammu] who had to pack her bags and leave. Because she had no Locusts Stand I” demonstrates an extant understanding of the legal mechanisms used by India to dispossess women who are untethered to men. Despite Ammu also being a direct descendant of Pappachi, the Paradise Pickles &

Preserves factory stands to be inherited solely by her brother Chacko, because of Indian property laws that cede asset ownership to the men in the house and alienate women. Consequently, Ammu's claim for ownership has no locus standi (or legal standing) in courts. Lemaster correctly points out that Rahel's conceptualization of "Divorce" as "Die-vorce" reveals "the extent to which linguistic permutations continually reflect the Indian woman's precarious social position," revealing the way in which divorce in Indian communities can be a social death sentence for women (Lemaster 803). This is particularly true in the novel, as Baby Kochamma is only permitted to receive a gardening degree because she "couldn't find a husband." Ammu is considered to have the unfortunate "fate of a Man-Less woman," indicating a certain respectability women earn from their connection to men through marriage, and the loss of social standing they experience when that connection is severed (Roy 26–45).

Transgression along caste lines, too, forms a large part of the novel. The Indian caste system is a Hindu tradition that has existed since 1200 BCE, in which each caste relates to a specific occupation: brahmins as priests, kshatriyas as warriors, vaishyas as traders, and shudras as laborers (Elliott). A person's caste often determines the food they eat, the job they have, and the wealth they accumulate — with higher castes often having access to more wealth and opportunities than others. Brahmins, kshatriyas, vaishyas and shudras exist within the caste system, and the first three privileged castes are collectively referred to as *savarnas*, while Dalits exist outside the caste system and are grouped with caste-oppressed people, including "scheduled tribes (Adivasis)," muslims, and shudras under the title *bahujan* (Sur). Dalit individuals remain the most caste oppressed people in India and are often termed "untouchable," and their jobs under an oppressive caste system are considered to relate to sewage and garbage disposal — often requiring contact with bodily fluids and waste (Elliott). Dalits are often segregated and

have separate home entrances and are made to drink from separate wells as they are considered to be in a state of "constant pollution" (Elliott). While conditions have gotten better with time, Indian society still predominantly ostracizes individuals who marry across caste lines, and upward socioeconomic mobility across caste is extremely difficult. In the novel, it is these expectations that Ammu and Velutha break, by breaking the "Love Laws" through their romance, as Ammu is an upper-caste woman and Velutha is a Dalit "paravan" (73). Upon finding out that Ammu has broken the Love Laws by sleeping with a Dalit man, Mammachi immediately sees the act as an unforgivable transgression:

> [Mammachi's] tolerance of 'Men's Needs' as far as her son was concerned, became the fuel for unmanageable fury at her daughter. She had defiled generations of breeding … and brought the family to its knees. For generations to come, forever now people would point at them at weddings and funerals … It was all finished now. (Roy, *The God of Small Things* 258)

The etymological root of the Portuguese term "caste" reveals a history of caste separation built on ideas of brahmanical 'purity.' The term "caste" itself derives from the Latin "castus," meaning "chaste" and "separated" ("Caste"). The English term "caste" also meant "a race of men," which too derived from the Latin "castus," meaning "chaste." It is this etymology that smuggles into english the legacy of caste separation and underpins the perceived betrayal of Ammu and Velutha, who both break the expectations prescribed by the meaning of "castus" — not only of caste separation, but also of chastity.

Roy's creative linguistic foray into the politics of (post)colonial education also explores language as a site of resistance to colonial education. The twins themselves dissect the English language and recast it using the terms of the English language, such as in saying "redly dead" (Roy 31) or "Afternoon Gnap" (Roy 198), which utilize the -ly suffix that modifies an English verb, or a silent letter that might exist in nouns such as 'pterodactyl' (Dvorak 58). The children

play with language, refusing to stick to the rules that make english English. Examples of this play include their reversal of the order of words, reading them backwards:

> So when Baby Kochamma's missionary friend, Ms. Mitten gave Estha and Rahel a baby book — *The Adventures of Susie Squirrel* — as a present when she visited Ayemenem, [the twins] were deeply offended. First they read it forwards. Ms. Mitten, who belonged to a sect of Born-Again Christians, said that she was a Little Disappointed in them when they read it aloud to her, backwards. '*ehT serutnevdA fo eisuS lerriuqS. enO gnirps gninrom eisuS lerruqS ekow pu*.' They showed Ms. Mitten how it was possible to read both Malayalam and Madam I'm Adam backwards as well as forwards. She wasn't impressed… Ms. Mitten complained to baby Kochamma about Estha's rudeness, and about their reading backwards. (60)

In this passage, the twins specifically rearticulate English to make it their own. The twins' reversal of the language is no simple feat—it serves to upend the power dynamic that exists between the 'missionary' and themselves by demonstrating their intellect and undermining Ms. Mittens' dismal expectations of Indian children's educational capacities. Their choice to read in this manner to intentionally rile Ms. Mitten constitutes a deliberate mockery of the language and results in the appropriation of the English language for the twins. Ms. Mitten's complaint to Baby Kochamma is grounded in Christianity, as she claims she "saw Satan in their eyes" when they reappropriated English for themselves, indicative of how the colonial center saw the appropriation of their language as something to be feared, as it demonstrated a movement of power from the center to the margins (Roy 60). After Ms. Mitten leaves Ayemenem, they continue to dissect, reverse, and split the language as a cure for boredom:

> *Nictitating membrane,* she remembered she and Estha once spent the whole day saying. She and Estha and Sophie Mol.
>
> *Nictitating*
> *ictitating*
> *titating*
> *itating*
> *tating*
> *ating*

ting
ing

(Roy, The God of Small Things 189)

A nictitating membrane is a "whitish or translucent membrane that forms an inner eyelid in birds, reptiles, and some mammals, and which can be extended across the eye to keep it moist and protect it from dust, etc. (also called third eyelid)" ("Nictitating, Adj"). This membrane is often stretched across the eye in a triangular shape, extending from the inner corner of the eye, until its center. Roy's indentation makes the text take the triangular shape of the membrane it describes, therefore introducing a visual element into her novel. This is not the only place she where uses language as an interdisciplinary vehicle, as Rahel earlier claims to read "cuff-link" as "cuff + link," which "rivaled the precision of mathematics" (Roy 51). The process of taking these words apart in a child's mind, fusing traditionally opposing disciplines of language, art, and math, and subverting strict structures governing Queen's English can also be seen as a child's rebellion against the imposition upon them of a structured English that fails to represent their reality, and a disavowal of English's apparent superiority.

The importance of linguistic choices and the subversion of the English language come to the forefront in Comrade Pillai's niece Latha's recitation of the Walter Scott poem, *Lochinvar*. In this scene, Comrade Pillai, the leader of the Marxist party in Ayemenem, is visited by the Ipe family in his home. To demonstrate that his family is fluent in English, he asks his nephew Lenin and his niece Latha to recite English texts that they have learned in school. Kalyani Pillai boasts to Chacko of Latha's recent prize for elocution at the Trivandrum Youth Festival, specifically for her recital of "Lochinvar," which is an excerpt from Walter Scott's 1808 epic poem *Marmion*, before Comrade Pillai instructs Latha to perform the recital for the crowd gathered in his living room (Roy, *The God of Small Things* 270). Latha's recital—a torrential current of words—

remains incomprehensible to Chacko, who mistakes it for a Malayalam translation of the poem. Her rendition imposes the lexical structures and pronunciation of Malayalam on a Western poem, which is then spit out with astonishing velocity:

> The words ran into each other. Like in Malayalam, the last syllable of one word attached itself to the first syllable of the next. It was rendered at remarkable speed.
>
> *'O, young Loch in varbas scum oat of the vest,*
> *Through wall the vide Border his teed was the be:*
> *sTand savissgood broadsod he weapon sadnun,*
> *He rod all unarmed, and he rod al lalone.'*
>
> The poem was interspersed with grunts from the old lady on the bed, which no one except Chacko seemed to notice.
>
> *'Nhe swam the Eske river where fird there was none;*
> *Buttair he alighted at Netherby Gate,-*
> *The bridehad cunsended, the galla ntcame late.'*
>
> (Roy, *The God of Small Things* 271–272)

The breakneck speed at which Latha recites the poem remains consistent with English elocution recitals in India, which often expect memorization of English texts and quick delivery of the material, both of which allegedly demonstrate the child's fluency and competency in English to a crowd. Martha Dvorak argues that the reading constitutes "what Paul Valéry dubbed 'parrot,'" as the children "mindlessly and unrecognizably" regurgitate a poem for an audience's entertainment—reinforcing politicized readings of the novel's critique of mimicry (Dvorak 53). This argument has significant merit, as the text appears to be a scrambled mishmash of words and pronunciation that certainly evokes the rote-learning models employed within Indian (and especially colonial) schooling at the time. However, colonial schooling was meant to act as a buffer between the Empire and the Indian masses and was sustained predominantly by class-privileged and *savarna* Indians through the more expensive I.C.S.E and Central Board of

Secondary Education (C.B.S.E) curricula. Because of this policing, it is difficult to imagine Latha, the daughter of a factory worker who "held his poverty like a gun to Chacko's head," would have access to colonial education in India (Roy, *The God of Small Things* 275). Instead, she has likely studied the state-board curriculum—the Kerala Board of Public Examinations (KBPE) curriculum—which is conducted in both English and Malayalam. Given that Latha's economic background likely splinters the idea that she would have access to convent education, her recital cannot be read as simply a critique of the education systems in which Rahel is immersed. Latha's recitation certainly exposes the Anglophilia that colonial education perpetuates throughout Kerala, evidenced by the Pillai family's passion for fluency in English language and literature, and pride in Latha's ability to recite the poem in English. However, her recitation also satirizes the poem, as Roy has chosen words that strip Walter Scott's *Lochinvar* of its original meaning, introduce elements of humor, and deride the Anglophilia pervading Ayemenem. For example, Latha, in her recital, reads "Sadnun," which can also be read as "sad nun." "Sad nun" could be a tongue-in-cheek reference to Baby Kochamma, who had to abandon her brief stint as a nun after attempting (and failing) to woo her church's priest, Father Mulligan. Another humorous term that undercuts the poem is the use of "buttair" instead of "but ere," which can be read as "butt/air" (flatulence). This term is derisive, undercutting the "seriousness" of the famous classic English poem that she has memorized.

Roy also uses English slang and creative wordplay to lampoon the British. In her recital, the word "come" in the sentence "has come out of the West" is pronounced "scum;" thereby changing the sound of the phrase to "scum [out of the West]," undermining the idea of Western superiority that Western literature introduced into India. "Broadsod," while seeming like a gross mispronunciation of "broadsword," can also be read as "broad/sod." "Sod" is an offensive

British term for someone who is annoying or unpleasant; “broad sod” can therefore be read as “a large unpleasant [British] man” (“Sod (noun)”). Sod is also used similarly to the English curse word “fuck,” such as in the phrase “Sod off.” “Sod” is not the only use of British slang — “sav” is a British slang term, and a clipped version of the word “savage,” which we see used in Latha’s word “savisgood,” read as “sav/is/good” (“Sav”). It has been well established that the British justified their imperialism by deeming it “civilizing” and referred to people from formerly colonized nations as “savages.” Ikechi Mgbeoji, similar to Viswanathan, claims that the transition to “civilized” from “savage” was seen as desirable, and that “to be regarded as ‘civilized’, the ‘savage’ is required to imbibe and reproduce Eurocentric norms, values and institution” (Mgbeoji 857). The assertion that “sav[age] is good” upends this mindset, reinforcing the notion that imbibition and reproduction of Eurocentric language, values and literature is not necessary, and the Western way of life of the “civilized” is not better than the ways of life of those they considered “savages.” To analyze the impact of this challenge, I draw on Homi Bhabha’s essay “Of Mimicry and Man,” where he explores how colonial mimicry always generates tension, and how that tension threatens the colonial civilizing mission. He writes:

> It is from this area between mimicry and mockery, where the reforming, civilizing mission is threatened by the displacing gaze of its disciplinary double, that my instances of colonial imitation come. What they all share is a discursive process by which the excess or slippage produced by the ambivalence of mimicry (almost the same, but not quite) does not merely "rupture" the discourse, but becomes transformed into an uncertainty which fixes the colonial subject as a "partial" presence. By "partial" I mean both "incomplete" and "virtual." It is as if the very emergence of the "colonial" is dependent for its representation upon some strategic limitation or prohibition within the authoritative discourse itself. The success of colonial appropriation depends on a proliferation of inappropriate objects that ensure its strategic failure, so that mimicry is at once resemblance and menace (Bhabha, “The Ambivalence of Colonial Discourse” 153–154)

Latha’s recital and Roy’s use of English offer the perfect examples of the use of mimicry to mock the British civilizing mission. The English of Lochinvar is so bungled by Latha that

Chacko initially believes she is attempting to translate the poem to Malayalam and can't even recognize the work as English. In describing the recitation, Roy draws on the history of "Babu English." "Babu English" was the British term for Queen's English that had been bungled by Indian pronunciation. This tradition is not specifically Indian—Sancho Panza similarly alters Don Quixote's old-fashioned and literary Spanish in *Don Quixote*, adding to the tradition of lower-class characters 'accidentally' subverting a dominant language. Through Latha, Roy infuses Lochinvar with inappropriate objects, such as words like "buttair" and "sadnun," such that they appear to mimic the poem on the surface but instead mock it as a whole, making it a successful example of colonial appropriation. Latha's recital does what Bhabha argues undermines the British's civilizing mission—it ensures the strategic failure of the recital that demonstrates the failure of the British civilizing mission through the proliferation and use of British and English literature. However, the use of words like "savisgood" does more than undermine the British civilizing mission. If one is to step back from the text, the creative use of British slang resists the British disbelief in the existence of Indian creativity and intellect, as it reverses the power dynamic that the British use of the word "sav" sets up. Arundhati Roy's subversion of language, her linguistic cartwheeling, and her ability to mold language to a nation so that it carries within it some of India's most pressing political and social issues, makes her novel a specifically Inglish one. In so doing, she is able to reclaim a language imposed on India by the British and do exactly what Sidhwa asks of postcolonial writers and citizens: subjugate the English language, beat it on its head, and make it hers.

Language in Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children*

As my last chapter demonstrated, the English language in postcolonial novels can be successfully Inglished in order to smuggle India's social, economic, political, and religious realities into its folds. Inglished texts, through a mix of introducing vernacular, exposing tradition, and hammering Queen's English, can carve out space in the English tradition for the Indian reader at home and abroad, and reclaim the power that language can carry by making it its own. Salman Rushdie, in his novel, *Midnight's Children*, writes about the protagonist's process of producing an Inglished text through the process of pickling, or, as he terms it, "chutnification":

> What is required for chutnification? Raw materials, obviously--fruit, vegetables, fish, vinegar, spices. Daily visits from Koli women with their saris hitched up between their legs. Cucumbers aubergines mint. But also: eyes, blue as ice, which are undeceived by the superficial blandishments of fruit--which can see corruption beneath citrus-skin; fingers which, with featheriest touch, can probe the secret inconstant hearts of green tomatoes: and above all a nose capable of discerning the hidden languages of what-must-be-pickled, its humours and messages and emotions ... at Braganza Pickles, I supervise the production of Mary's legendary recipes; but there are also my special blends, in which, thanks to the powers of my drained nasal passages, I am able to include memories, dreams, ideas (643)

The process of pickling—of smashing together, infusing and fermenting—is what Rushdie attempts to do with language by welding together vernacular, Indian traditions, oral storytelling patterns and religious mythology. Chutney, unlike jelly and jam, is rarely of an unclassifiable and uncategorizable consistency. Instead, making chutney and pickle is a process of fusing and amalgamating favors that might seem discordant, but that come together to build something harmonious. *Midnight's Children*, much more pickle-like than jelly-like, attempts to do just that on the scale of the nation by identifying, collecting, and representing discordant voices of India: rich and poor, North-Indian, and South-Indian, literate and illiterate. Rushdie's *Midnight's*

Children situates itself primarily in Mumbai, identifying the city (in some ways) as a microcosm of the nation because of the religious, linguistic, ethnic, and occupational diversity of the city. In Mumbai, Saleem writes, "Language divided us" (261). Rushdie, however, uses language as an attempt to unite the various parts of India that seem impossible to unite. Regarding his choice to use Inglish, Salman Rushdie writes that he had an "interest in creating a literary idiolect that allowed the rhythms and thought patterns of Indian languages to blend with the idiosyncrasies of 'Hinglish' and 'Bambaiyya', the polyglot street slang of Bombay," to form a dialect that encompasses the modernity and cosmopolitanism of a city that draws people from all over a diverse country (Rushdie, *Midnight's Children*, xiv). *Midnight's Children* traces the formation of a post-Partition nation as seen through the lens of a half-Indian and half-British illegitimate child, Saleem Sinai, as he navigates the sociopolitical issues affecting a pluralistic nation. *Midnight's Children* is itself magical-realist in nature and fuses history, fantasy, and oral tradition such that Rushdie claims that "[people in] the West tended to read *Midnight's Children* as a fantasy, while people in India thought it was … almost a history book" (Rushdie xvii). This was because of Rushdie's idiolect, which smuggled in history, culture, and vernacular from across the expanse of the Indian subcontinent through one thousand and one "midnight's children," all of whom could communicate telepathically without language barriers through Saleem. In *Midnight's Children*, language is the site of both unity and violence. It pushes back against a colonial center, while illuminating the many limitations and pressures of the English language in India. In this chapter, I will argue that Rushdie abrogates and appropriates English to upend the rules of the colonial center by reworking their language to fit some parts of India. I will also demonstrate how Rushdie's "literary idiolect" subverts the English language by smuggling in multiple vernacular languages, Bombay culture and post-partition socio-cultural

tensions in a worthwhile attempt to represent the diversity of the nation, but that it ultimately fails to create an idiolect that represents "rhythms and thought patterns" of all Indian languages, and instead privileges mainly the dominant Hindi/Urdu dialects.

Midnight's Children follows the trajectory of three generations of the Sinai family, starting in Kashmir, moving to Mumbai, then to Karachi before ending back in Bombay. The book is split into three sections, or 'Books.' The first opens in the Kashmir Valley, before the partition of India, with Saleem's grandfather, Aadam Aziz. The books trace the circumstances leading up to and following the birth of Saleem Sinai, a boy born at the stroke of midnight on August 15th, 1947—the fateful night of the Partition of India, which divided India into the Hindu-dominated India and Muslim-dominated Pakistan and forced the migration of millions of people across the country. This child, Saleem Sinai, is endowed with fantastical powers by virtue of his birth—he first possesses the ability to telepathically communicate with other 'midnight's children,' and later develops an extremely keen sense of smell that can sniff out intangible and abstract emotions, in addition to physical objects. Saleem is the eldest of one thousand and one other children born between midnight and one in the morning on the night of Indian independence from British rule. In *Midnight's Children,* Shiva, a boy with whom he was switched at birth, and who is gifted with immense strength, serves as Saleem's foil. He, unlike Saleem, is not wealthy or English-educated. Saleem, seeing his fate as "handcuffed to that of the nation" because of the circumstances of his birth, bands together all the children to form the Midnight's Children Conference (MCC), held in his mind, to navigate the formation of a nation that was grappling with the legacies left by over two hundred years of colonial rule. The novel is narrated in multiple Indian languages and transcribed in Inglish by Saleem himself, as he

recounts his childhood, his life in India and Pakistan, and his post-Partition experiences to his partner, Padma.

Similar to Roy's, Rushdie's Inglish incorporates a significant number of untranslated words in vernacular languages. Most notable is his use of Hindi/Urdu, as in the words "pakoras" (a type of fried food), "chaprassi" (peon), "rani" (queen), "badmaash" (rogue), "nibu-pani" (lemonade), "chitties" (tiny pieces of paper), "feringhee" (foreigner), "bulbul" (nightingale) (Rushdie 36–282). The novel also incorporates French, Latin, and Arabic words. Urdu/Arabic words are transcribed in English, even if the transcription is left untranslated for the reader, such as the word "djinn" (جن) (180). French is left untranslated, but remains comprehensible by the English reader, such as in the phrase "coup de grâce" (410). The meaning of the Latin phrase in the novel "Ora maritima, ancilla cenam parat" is translated for the reader to "By the side of the sea, the ayah cooked the meal" (285). While Hindi/Urdu and Arabic form the majority of the vernacular words in the text, we witness the presence of a vast range of languages across Bombay and India's linguistic landscape when we learn that the midnight's children speak a variety of languages—Saleem, who can hear the thoughts of every living midnight's child in their first-language, claims that despite initially struggling to decipher the vast number of languages spoken by the children, later he had perceived "language [fade] away, and [replaced] by universally intelligible thought forms, which far transcended words" in his mind (Rushdie 233). The novel is written entirely in English script, and because of this, readers fail to understand the languages spoken by individual characters unless they are specifically mentioned. In some places, we recognize languages that are specifically identified: the Maharashtrian protesters speak to Saleem in Marathi (264), and the midnight's children speak (amongst other languages) Malayalam, Urdu, and Tamil (232). Saleem's daily interactions with his military

peers, despite initially seeming as though they might be in English, are in fact in a “really classy Lucknow-type Urdu,” which is revealed to the reader while he was a “man-dog” in the Canine Unit for Tracking and Intelligence Activities (CUTIA) unit in the army (Rushdie 484–489). His partner, Padma “can't read and, like all fish-lovers, dislikes other people knowing anything she doesn't” (94).

While some languages are explicitly mentioned, others remain ambiguous, as Saleem is translating the content and rhythm of his peers’ speech for the reader. We are able to infer this, as many parts of the novel rely on the use of English to create a work that incorporates so many vernacular languages, even in cases where the speaker cannot reasonably have used that dialogue (Gane 582). Gane points to a specific set of phrases in the novel:

> Padma—our plump Padma—is sulking magnificently. (She can't read and, like all fish-lovers, dislikes other people knowing anything she doesn't. Padma: strong, jolly, a consolation for my last days. But definitely a bitch-in-the-manger.) She attempts to cajole me from my desk: 'Eat, na, food is spoiling.' I remain stubbornly hunched over paper. 'But what is so precious,' Padma demands, her right hand slicing the air updownup in exasperation, 'to need all this writing-shiting?' (Rushdie 94)

She identifies, specifically, that Padma, who neither understands English nor can write in Urdu, engages in wordplay that requires the understanding of the grammatical rules and form of the English language. For example, when she coins the term “writery” (536) she suffixes –ery, a modifier often used in English. Elsewhere, she coins the phrase “writing-shiting,” (26) and “joke-shoke” (539) which depend on rhymes in written and spoken English (Gane 582; Rushdie). To explain how Padma is inventing these forms, Gane turns to critic Uma Parameswaran, who states:

> If one were to conclude that Padma does not speak in English, we have a problem. Her hallmark interjection, “Mister,” is easily explained for that is commonly used all over India, no matter what the language. Even her imperatives and inversion of statement to

> question (e.g., “Why you’re waiting? Begin, Begin all over again.” [347]) are explainable as translations that retain the flavour of the vernacular. But what happens to words like the much-quoted “writery” or “lookerafter” or the even more difficult “writing-shiting” whose word-play depends on the specificities of the English language? (Uma Parameswaran cited in Gane 583)

Throughout the novel, the narrative includes the third-person point of view of Saleem in the present (as he narrates the story to Padma), and his recollection of his past through his memory (recorded in real time in the present). These disparate points-of-view are not separated but instead run into each other. The reading audience recognizes when they have been spoken to through the pages of the novel when Saleem brings up Padma’s reaction to his story as he narrates it to her and to them. For example:

> ‘Good afternoon, Begum,’ I said. (Padma interjects: ‘O you-always so polite and all!’) ‘Good afternoon; may I speak to the manager?’ (Rushdie 638)

Here, the reader can differentiate dialogue between people retrieved from Saleem’s memory, and Saleem and Padma’s dialogue in the present, outside of Saleem’s storytelling. However, the reader is not privy to the language of their exchange, which remains unspecified. Despite this, we are able to infer what is likely, from the circumstances of her upbringing and life. Padma, being illiterate, likely does not know English and did not attend colonial schooling in India as Saleem did and likely either speaks a local state language, or Hindi/Urdu. In other places, Saleem writes of characters that are themselves speaking English, such as his high-school geography teacher, Mr. Zagallo. Saleem studied at the Cathedral and John Connon high-school, a colonial institution that teaches all its classes except Hindi and Marathi classes in English. Saleem writes of Mr. Zagallo’s speech: “Zagallo is rounding on me. ‘A little arguer ees eet?’” (Rushdie 320). The use of ‘ees eet’ phonetically describes ‘is it’ in Mr. Zagallo’s accent demonstrates that some of the characters in the novel might speak Inglish themselves.

Padma's and Mr. Zagallo's dialogues are not the only instances in which Saleem's narration relies heavily on the phonetics of the English language. Instead, the use of English sound is deployed throughout the novel, as Rushdie employs rhyme, assonance and alliteration that tie to English words constantly, and leaves the question of the novel's "true" language murky at best. The use of slogans in rhyme, such as when a fruit seller rhymes "greats" and "dates," or puns, such as when Dr. Schaapsteker, the snake-venom injection-experimenter, is dubbed "Sharpsticker sahib," is evidence of this (Gane 583). We see significant use of syllabification, parallelism and rhyme that must be almost certainly lost in translation to vernacular: "Snot-nose is a bal-die" (322), "eccrine-and-apocrine" (443). There is also a significant use of alliteration, such as in saying "death-of-democracy" (453) or in Saleem saying, "I am Saleem Sinai…Snotnose, Stainface, Sniffer" (158), all of which are phrases that rely on English words to perform rhetorically. Saleem reiterates that his story is being said aloud and recorded concurrently, telling the reader: "Nevertheless, if Padma is listening or not, *I have things to record*" (159, my italicization). Later, he says, "here *I record* a merciful blank in my memory" (605, my italicization), and "to explain that, *I must tell* the difficult part at least" (612, my italicization), all of which confirm that the novel is written in Saleem's recorded voice, and that the narration of *Midnight's Children* is set up so that the text is the story narrated to Padma in a vernacular language. However, as demonstrated above, the written text requires Padma to understand the English language to be able to coin certain terms, which is impossible because Padma is illiterate and unable to speak English. How then can we reconcile these gaps? On this, I concur with Gane, who writes:

> There is in the end only one novel, and to question the language within the novel is to reach an aporia: It is impossible for Padma, knowing little or no English, to understand the same novel that we read in English. Either she or we must understand *Midnight's*

> *Children* by virtue of an impossible feat of transfer across languages—a textual equivalent of the magic radio (Gane 588)

Through the complex intermingling and impossibility of singular translation of the words of different characters, it becomes clear that Saleem's intent is not to translate the words of Indian people from different parts of the subcontinent perfectly, but instead to make English carry the cadence of Indian vernacular languages that the characters might speak through his recording for the reader. In this way, Inglish is made to replicate the rhythm and substance of vernacular words, more than the direct word level translation of the many languages that the characters might speak—be it Hindi, Urdu, Gujarati, or Bangla. Raja Rao writes, on Indian Anglophone tradition:

> One has to convey in a language that's not one's own the spirit that is one's own. One has to convey the various shades and omissions of a certain thought-movement that looks maltreated in an alien language. I use the word 'alien', yet English is not alien to us. It is the language of our intellectual make-up—like Sanskrit and Persian was before—but not our emotional make-up…We cannot write like the English. We should not. We can only write as Indians…The tempo of Indian life must be infused into our English expression (276)

Because the Indian subcontinent is a collection of subcultures, vernacular languages, religions, and state traditions, the "emotional make-up" of Indians is not singular but expansive and diverse. *Midnight's Children* attempts to capture that diversity through Saleem's ability to hear and record the experience of the hundreds of midnight's children, all of whom have different languages, ideas for the nation and belief systems. This novel is an attempt to bring the cacophonous voices of Indian experience into the folds of a single novel by using Inglish to demonstrate the ways in which an Inglished text can be abrogated to carry many different linguistic and cultural experiences.

However, despite the presence of a vast number of languages, it is largely Hindi/Urdu[1] words that remain unglossed. As in *The God of Small Things,* the unglossed nature of the transcribed words calls attention to the vast bilingual population of India, many of whom are able to pick up on the plot of entire sections of the text much faster than monolingual English speakers. The conversation between Tai, a boatman, and Aadam Aziz, the protagonist Saleem's grandfather, is evidence of this:

> [Tai said] Nakoo, listen, listen. I have seen plenty. Yara, you should have seen that Isa when he came, beard down to his balls, bald as an egg on his head. He was old…but he knew his manners. "You first, Taiji," he'd say, and "Please to sit"; always a respectful tongue, he never called me crackpot. Never called me *tu* either. Always *aap.* Polite, see? And what an appetite! (Rushdie 13)

"Nakoo" means 'one with the nose,' but can also mean "nosey one." It derives from the Hindi-Urdu term *nak* (nose), with the 'oo' added to the end as a signifier. Occasionally, this is added to a word after dropping the -a sound at the end of an adjective, such as when converting *chota* (small) to *chotoo* (the small one). In India, -oo is used to define a person by a specific trait or characteristic of theirs. Common examples of this include gol (round) to *goloo* (the round one) or lamba (long) to *lamboo* (the long one). Here, *nakoo* is used specifically because of Aadam Aziz's abnormally large nose, which "on him…is what one sees first and remembers longest" (9). His nose becomes a metonym for him. Similar to the use of vernacular to denote status in Roy's novel, Tai also references the Hindi-Urdu terms *tu* and *aap*. In Hindi-Urdu, *tu* is often

[1] For the rest of this chapter, I refer to Hindi or Urdu phrases in the novel as Hindi/Urdu, as both languages share a significant overlap in phonetic use of individual words. Hindi uses the Devanagari script, which developed from Sanskrit. Conversely, Urdu is written from right to left and derives from Persian and Arabic scripts. However, when spoken, they are nearly indistinguishable, as both developed orally from Khari Boli (a Delhi dialect) and share over 70% of their dialect (Miyatsu). As in *Midnight's Children*, Hindi/Urdu is transcribed to English without translation, so that readers cannot differentiate between the languages used. While Saleem himself speaks in Urdu, we do not know the language of his interactions with Padma or any of the other characters in the novel unless specified.

used to refer to someone of "lower" caste or socioeconomic status, or someone who is younger than you. The more formal *aap* denotes respect, often conflated with age, in India. Tai also claims that Isa calls him "Taiji." The -ji suffix following a name often conveys respect, just as *aap* does. It is the ability to denote respect through suffixes that Kandasamy, in her poem *Mulligatawny Dreams,* yearns for, writing "[i dream of] an english with suffixes for respect." The use of these terms is twofold. First, by using terms so central to a culture that values respect over much else, Rushdie abrogates the English language, subverting it such that it creates distance between the monolingual and bilingual reader, thereby emphasizing their difference. Indian readers who have been immersed in vernacular languages can quickly pick up on what Tai is saying: that Isa, *despite being older than him*, calls him "aap." It is rare in Indian culture to do so, and it explains why Tai believes that Isa 'always [has] a respectful tongue" (13). Secondly, by leaving these terms unglossed, Rushdie refuses to set them apart from the English language of the text. In the language of the novel, "ji," "aap" and "tum" are as natural to the flow of the sentence as "you." Through Rushdie's equating of the terms, we can see how he builds his novel in Hinglish, expecting a reader to understand the terms (or look them up on their own time) without the use of parentheses or italicization to designate their difference from English. In this way, he crafts a space specifically for the Indian Hinglish or Urdu-English speaker, to whom this dialogue does not seem out of the ordinary, but instead seems like an Inglished dialogue that they might hear across the Indian subcontinent. However, in analyzing this tactic of Rushdie, it is important to note that *Midnight's Children* privileges a dominant vernacular language over regional ones and complicates the notion of "representability." Hindi is itself a dominant mode of discourse in many parts of India, and arguably is itself overpowering regional languages. It has also become, with time, the language that most Indians consider aligned with the nation-

state, despite it not being spoken or adopted by all Indians. In some ways, by assuming a reader from India would not experience a significant cultural gap when reading Hinglish, the unglossed nature of only Hindi/Urdu words in a text that serves to represent a nation itself reinforces fundamentalist ideas about what it means to be Indian. The burden of this, of course, does not fall entirely on Rushdie, who does not claim *Midnight's Children* is a novel that encompasses all of India. Instead, it complicates the notion of 'Inglish,' which can (and should) be divided into a series of 'inglishes' within a polyglot nation.

Returning to Tai's speech to Aadam Aziz, while a Western reader might read the boatman's Inglish as "broken" Queen's English, the use of Inglish doesn't always stem from the inability to speak Queen's English, but instead can be a conscious choice by the speaker. Rushdie uses Inglish to undercut the assumption that indigenized English is 'improper' Queen's English, by demonstrating that it can be a deliberate choice made by a speaker to use an idiolect that contains cultural elements of some geographies within the nation. He uses innuendo and comical punnery that utilizes Queen's English and Inglish throughout *Midnight's Children*. For example, Rushdie comments on how the Bombay street-vendors were "hand-holding street loafers" (89). The double entendre of "loafer" as both a type of shoe and as "idle people" leaves the true meaning of the sentence intentionally ambiguous, demonstrating the competence of the postcolonial author in constructing this novel in English, but his preference for Inglish phraseology in the novel (Dora-Laskey 190). Similarly, the young boy who requested Amina Sinai hire him to protect her car says "poliss" twice, used once as "please" and once as "police" (Rushdie 298). By wielding his expertise in Queen's English and demonstrating that the Indian author is fully capable of understanding the meaning of English words as used by the British, Rushdie emphasizes his *choice* in indigenizing the language of the novel because of Inglish's

ability to encompass the Indian experience. The word can also carry more than vernacular languages, such as in the phrase "the three sisters are known as the "Teen Batti, the three bright lights" where "teen" can mean either 'teenager', or the Hindi/Urdu translation of "teen," meaning 'three'(Dora-Laskey 191; 65). *Batti* means light; *teen batti* means 'three lights,' which is also the name of a crossroad near Malabar Hill in Bombay, named after the popular 1953 movie, '*Teen Batti, Chaar Raasta*' (Three Lights Four Roads). Considering that *Midnight's Children* is set in the Bombay-talkie film-producing epicenter of Bollywood and that Saleem lives in the rich part of Bombay by "Warden Road at the foot of …[a] hillock," a bilingual Mumbaikar[2] might quickly pick up on the concealed filmy Bollywood-esque language within the phrase 'teen batti,' and tie it to Saleem's own home on Malabar Hill, where the famous *Teen Batti* crossroad sits. Here Rushdie smuggles in not only vernacular but also a core cultural component of Mumbai's film culture (Rushdie 133). The purpose of these instances demonstrates the prowess of postcolonial authors in constructing the English language or vernacular independently and gestures towards the vast choice postcolonial authors have in playing with language because of their competence in both vernacular languages and Queen's English (Dora-Laskey 191).

Rushdie's penchant for bilingual puns can sometimes smuggle a religious component into Inglish as well, crafting spaces for bilingual Indians of specific cultural backgrounds, such as when he describes Saleem's alcoholic father, Ahmed Sinai:

> The next day I provoked gales of laughter when I told Sonny, Eyeslice and Hairoil, 'My father fights with djinns; he beats them; it's true!... And it was true. Ahmed Sinai, deprived of wheedles and attention, began, soon after my birth, a life-long struggle with djinn-bottles. … In those days, Bombay had been declared a dry state. The only way to

[2] A 'Mumbaikar' is someone from the city of Mumbai (formerly 'Bombay')

> get a drink was to get yourself certified as an alcoholic; and so a new breed of doctors sprang up, djinn-doctors, one of whom, Dr. Sharabi, was introduced to my father by Homi Catrack next door. After that, on the first of every month, my father and Mr Catrack and many of the city's most respectable men queued up outside Dr Sharabi's mottled-glass surgery door, went in, and emerged with the little pink chitties of alcoholism.… [His servants, gardeners, bearers, drivers and] old Musa and Mary Pereira, brought my father back more and more pink chitties, which he took to Vijay Stores … and exchanged for the brown paper bags of alcoholism, inside which were the chinking green bottles, full of djinn. And whiskey, too (180)

"Djinn," from the transcribed Arabic word jinn (or al-jinn), are spirits made from fire and air (Ettachfini). Indlieb Farazi Saber claims that in Islamic doctrine, mankind's origin began due to the "rebellious action of a djinn," who "[refused] to prostrate himself towards the image of Adam," resulting in his expulsion from heaven (Saber). This same djinn then "tricks Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden" (Saber). Saber claims that djinn often negatively influence human action and are often considered devilish. The nature of a djinn's physical manifestation remains uncontested amongst Islamic scholars, some of whom claim that djinn can shapeshift, others of whom claim they are made of an imperceptible smokeless flame, while still others believe they can exist as men or animals in our midst (Saber). The word "djinn" is etymologically derived from an Arabic trilateral root "ja-na-na," meaning 'to conceal' (Saber). Ahmed Sinai "fights with djinns" in the Islamic context, battling an invisible, concealed spirit trying to negatively influence him "for the rest of his life" (179). "Djinn" is a pun, also meaning the "green bottles full of" gin (180). Ahmed Sinai's sharp behavioral change after "entering the world of djinn[/gin]" indicates him being under the influence of djinn/gin, which obscures the "good mood" he had in his pre-alcoholism years (181). In this way, Rushdie's appropriation of English smuggles in both the Arabic language and Islamic mythology. In the same paragraph, we hear about Dr. Sharabi, the "djinn-doctor" who prescribes the pink chits of paper to those who declare

themselves alcoholics. “Sharabi” in Hindi/Urdu means “drunkard.” Through clever wordplay, the translation of djinn-doctor Dr. Sharabi becomes djinn[gin]-doctor Dr. Drunkard. By being the man who prescribes alcohol to alcoholics, Dr. Sharabi himself becomes Ahmed’s enabler, and the djinn that he cannot escape. Elsewhere, we see that the use of “Sharabi” is not the only example of Rushdie’s tongue-in-cheek play on words within names, specifically for the consumption of a purely bilingual audience. Saleem references the “Rani of Cooch Naheen,” which translates bilingually to the “[Queen] of [Nothing]” (Rushdie 51). English and vernacular puns, while funny, also demonstrate the two languages to be culturally distinct, so that their translation creates a gap that Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin define as “a silence beyond which the cultural otherness of the text cannot be traversed by the colonial language” without privileging a receptor culture through the process of in-text translation (Winks 68). In other parts of the novel, Rushdie’s choice of translation to English makes a phrase lose its cultural impact in the colonizer’s tongue, reinforcing the presence of a cultural gap in translation. We see this again when he writes, “her innocent chand-ka-tukra, her affectionate piece-of-the-moon” (134). “Chand-ka-tukra,” of course, literally translates to “piece-of-the-moon,” but in the translated version, the phrase loses the tongue-in-cheek tone that it often carries with the connotation of being a parent’s *raja-beta* or ‘precious son’. Saleem references this loss again when he says “Talaaq! Talaaq! Talaaq! The English lacks the thunderclap sound of the Urdu, and anyway you know what it means. I divorce thee. I divorce thee. I divorce thee” signaling the difference produced by translation, and the impossibility of a colonial tongue to convey an Indian experience purely through Queen’s English (78). By playing around with in-text glossing and translation, Rushdie effectively inverts Bhabha’s phrase “not quite/not white,” removing Indians

from the position of the "Other" and replacing them with the non-Indian Westerner within the pages of the Inglish novel.

While the use of words like "djinn," "sharabi" and "nahin," might raise arguments that Rushdie is exoticizing India through the use of sprinkled-in vernacular, it is important to note that Rushdie identifies his linguistic cultural experience as specifically "bambaiyya," a dialect specific to Mumbai that Stuti Khanna claims is "not simply a potpourri of words from different languages used simultaneously" but instead a "uniquely Bombay-ized speech that transforms words by the addition of new prefixes and suffixes and often coins new words altogether" (Khanna). To this effect, we often see vernacular terms are fused with English, such as in the word "jailkhana," which fuses the English "jail" with the Hindi-Urdu "khana" (food) to create a word for 'food served in jail' (Rushdie 389; Srivastava 217). Khanna also claims that bambaiyya is created by "the jostling and rubbing together of a great variety of languages and accents … the hectic pace of city life [which] necessitates communication across these differences in the most efficient and matter-of-fact manner," and that Rushdie's attempt to construct this represents a "citi-fied remoulding" of English. This speedy discourse is the language on the street, as a young boy pleaded with Amina Sinai, saying "Gib the car poliss, Begum? Number one A-class poliss, Begum? I watch car until you come, Begum? I very fine watchman, ask anyone!" (298). In another location, the speediness of English use in Bombay is mimicked through the blending of words into a single word, such as in "whatdoyoumeanhowcanyousaythat" (315). In addition to the speediness of an article-less dialogue, Rushdie chooses to type the speech phonetically by deviating from the British spellings of words—"gib" instead of "give," and "poliss" instead of "please" and "police." We see him make this choice again in another location, when Saleem recalls the slogan for Kolynos toothpaste as, "Keep Teeth Kleen and Keep Teeth Brite! Keep

Teeth Kolynos Super White!" (632). Here, "kleen" and "brite" are misspellings of "clean" and "bright," constructed due to the lack of difference in the sounds of 'c' and 'k' in the English language. In another location, we see the word "unquestionabel," which is an Indian pronunciation that puts pressure on the last quarter of the word 'unquestionable' to pronounce it as 'un-question-ay-bel' (Rushdie 371). However, the goal of this is not only to subvert British English through a disavowal of its orthography. In addition to using Inglish to convey a specific Bambaiyya accent and speaking-style, the text overlays the lexical patterns of Hindi, in which words tend to be spelled exactly as they are pronounced. The interlanguage at play hammers the English language so that it submits to the Indian accent and to a vernacular construction of its words. Rushdie's instances of concealing elements of indigenization of the English language in the dialogue of the young boy and in the naming of characters are not the only examples of places where facets of the nation are concealed within the use of English. It is through such indigenizing of the text that Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin claim a postcolonial writer makes language "bear the burden of one's own cultural experience," through the upending of grammatical convention to reflect the cultural context of the text more accurately (Ashcroft et al., *The Empire Writes Back* 39).

Much as in *The God of Small Things*, proximity to Englishness works as a marker of wealth and status in the novel. When William Methwold, the Englishman departing India, sells his expensive home, complete with its four villas "named majestically after the palaces of Europe: Versailles Villa, Buckingham Villa, Escorial Villa and Sans Souci," the terms of the transaction are that the Sinais will lead a British life, that the transaction will occur at the same time as Indian Independence, on August 15th 1947, and that the Sinai family will not throw away or move anything left in the Methwold Estate after the Englishman departs (125). Methwold

calls these degrading terms his "departing colonial… little game" (126). During discussions with Methwold, Ahmed Sinai's "voice changed…[and became] a hideous mockery of an Oxford drawl" (127). Later, when Ahmed Sinai contracts vitiligo, Saleem claims he "was secretly rather pleased…because he had long envied Europeans their pigmentation. One day…he told Lila Sabarmati at the cocktail hour: 'All the best people are white under the skin; I have merely given up pretending'" (Rushdie 247; Bahri 44–45). To be 'white *under* the skin' refers to the British ideology that formed Macauley's class-privileged mimic men—a class into which Ahmed Sinai himself fell. Deepika Bahri argues that the use of English aesthetics, which often necessitated wealth, produced a class of people in India that were "distinct from the native population" (Bahri 44). Because of this, she writes:

> English, at once an adjective and a noun, must be understood simultaneously as language, culture, *and* class. English is a "class act." Along with caste, financial status, and other existing hierarchies, colonial education and the anatomopolitics of the civilizing mission introduce an additional mode of class formation in the subcontinent. A recombination of native markers of elite status with the comportmental aesthetics associated with Englishness introduce a new bioaesthetic fault line evidenced not least in new techniques of the body associated with the "better sort" of natives: liberal education, posh accents, and the brandishing of commodity aesthetics, grooming practices, and so on (Bahri 44)

British commodity aesthetics, such as Ahmed Sinai's prestigious Willingdon Club membership, or Saleem's "MADE AS ENGLAND" tin globe, are markers of "elite status," Englishness, which Saleem does not hesitate to weaponize against his peers (369). Saleem writes:

> Chutney and oratory, theology and curiosity: these are the things that saved me. And one more-call it education, or class-origins… By my show of erudition and by the purity of my accents, I shamed [the midnight's children] into feeling unworthy of judging me (Rushdie cited in Bahri 47)

English education, for Saleem, becomes a weapon to thwart opposition to his leadership of the Midnight's Children Conference, through a show of "erudition" and "pure accents" — both of which are carefully cultivated in colonial schooling institutions in Mumbai (Bahri 47). However,

English aesthetics are also focal points of slippage that render him distinctly not quite/not white migrants-in-between, just like Estha and Rahel. Saleem's proximity to Englishness alienates him from the majority of the country he attempts to represent. He is heckled by Maharashtrian protesters, who call him "little laad sahib (little haughty sir)" who lives on the "big rich hill" (Rushdie 264). In an apparent inversion of Latha's recital, Saleem parrots a Gujarati rhyme that he barely understands, and that "[was] designed to make fun of the speech rhythms of [Gujarati]" to escape the protestors (265). At the same time, Saleem is not British, but instead an "Anglo"—an in-between half-British identity that shocks and disgusts Padma (158). Saleem's childhood toy, his tin globe, is described by him as:

> A tin orb, on which were imprinted the continents and oceans and polar ice? Two cheap metal hemispheres, clamped together by a plastic stand? No, of course not; but I did. It was a world full of labels: *Atlantic Ocean* and *Amazon* and *Tropic of Capricorn*. And, at the North Pole, it bore the legend: MADE AS ENGLAND (Rushdie 369)

The grammatical mistake in the legend of Saleem's tin globe reveals its inauthenticity, as the error likely means the globe was not made in England, but instead in India. Neil Kortenaar claims that the proclamation of Britishness "conveys at once the manufacturers' desire to be the same [as the British] and the way they inevitably fall short of the original" (Kortenaar 168). However, it might instead demonstrate local manufacturers' ability to utilize the British civilizing mission for their own gain and their ability to generate a profit from the British's cultivation of Indian mimic men like Saleem and Ahmed Sinai, who might buy these products believing that they are superior. The tin globe, in its proclamation of a British origin, demonstrates the impact of a British tag on a product's marketability, irrespective of its quality. In making their products appear British, Indian manufacturers reduce Englishness to a marketing gimmick, used to make a quick buck from those who may be more aligned with Britishness than

themselves. Amina Sinai's resistance to the British ways of life, which influenced Ahmed Sinai to tell her to put on an act "until the deed is signed," after which she can "throw anything" out, similarly reduces Britishness to mimicry intended to curry favor with an oppressor to affect a positive outcome for themselves. This deliberate use of the English language to utilize mimicry undermines the British civilizing mission by inverting the power dynamic that the English attempted to impose and by creating slippage that undermines the English language and English commodity aesthetics.

As mentioned above, the language used during the Methwold Estate transaction also reveals resistance to the colonial language, as Amina Sinai alone pushes back against Methwold's ridiculous terms. Her use of language juxtaposes the overly formal and posh accent of her husband:

> 'Everything?' Amina Sinai asked. 'I can't even throw away a spoon? Allah, that lampshade. . . I can't get rid of one comb? …. . . And look at the stains on the carpets, janum; for two months we must live like those Britishers? You've looked in the bathrooms? No water near the pot. I never believed, but it's true, my God, they wipe their bottoms with paper only! . . .'
>
> 'Tell me, Mr Methwold,' Ahmed Sinai's voice has changed, in the presence of an Englishman it has become a hideous mockery of an Oxford drawl, 'why insist on the delay? Quick sale is best business, after all. Get the thing buttoned up.'
>
> '. . . And pictures of old Englishwomen everywhere, baba! No place to hang my own father's photo on the wall! . . .' (Rushdie 126–127)

The indigenized use of language by Amina Sinai is seen in her use of short and hanging sentences, words like "janum" and "Allah." Her resistance to the "pictures of old Englishwomen everywhere" on the walls leaving "no room for [her] father's photograph" follows Methwold's campaign for British colonialism, where he says "You'll admit we weren't all bad: built your roads. Schools, railway trains, parliamentary system, all worthwhile things" (127). This positioning renders Methwold's diatribe against independence entertaining and ludicrous

because it demonstrates the Indian resistance to traditionally British systems (Pilapitiya). Amina Sinai even calls Methwold's language and behavior "loony," questioning the safety of a deal struck with him (127). It is because of her insistence that Ahmed Sinai tells her that she can throw away anything she likes once the deeds are transferred, making it clear that she will not have to live a British life if she does not want to.

In addition to the smuggling in of Western tradition that burrowed into India following British colonization of the country into the text, Indian mythology, especially pertaining to Hinduism and Islam, is smuggled into the names of characters across *Midnight's Children*. Saleem's arch nemesis, Shiva, carries the name of the Hindu god of destruction and sensuality—within his name is a foreshadowing of his future in the military, and as a "notorious seducer" (Rushdie 571). Saleem's first wife Parvati is named after one of the most powerful Hindu goddesses — the goddess Parvati. Parvati, the Hindu goddess of Power, is married to the god Shiva. In the Ramayana and Mahabharata, Shiva, Parvati and their son, Ganesh, live atop Mount Kailasa in the Himalayas. In Hindu mythology, Shiva did not wish to have children, and so Parvati conceived a living Ganesh out of a doll — circumventing the wishes of her husband ("Female Hindu Deities"). In Rushdie's parallel, in *Midnight's Children*, Parvati-the-witch becomes pregnant with Shiva's child — an outcome Shiva does not want. Following this, Shiva physically abuses Parvati in "an earthly echo of that eternal marital battle-of-the-gods which their namesakes are said to perform atop Mount Kailasa in the great Himalayas" (575). Saleem alleges that Parvati-the-witch bewitched Shiva, as he thought that if Shiva were not bewitched, he would have "cast her off the instant he heard of her pregnancy," hinting at Parvati-the-witch's penchant for trickery, similar to that of Parvati-the-goddess (576).

Concurrently, the narrative techniques of the novel also smuggle into Rushdie's work the Indian oral epic storytelling tradition. The novel's digressive narrative draws inspiration from Indian epics, specifically the *Mahabharata* and *Ramayana*, and replicates their seemingly endless storytelling methods, non-linear plots, and verbal (often meandering) dialogues (Cundy 28). Raja Rao writes, "The *Mahabharata* has 214,778 verses and the *Rama-yana* 48,000. The *Puranas* are endless and innumerable. We have neither punctuation, nor the treacherous 'ats' and 'ons' to bother us — [Indian anglophone writers] tell one interminable tale" (R. Rao 276). Rushdie's writing does just this, as it also often eliminates the grammatical conventions imposed by a colonial center and utilizes Saleem's character to construct the narrative as an oral tale.

Saleem as the transcriber of a story that attempts to tell history through both literary and oral media, in Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin's words, ultimately uses language as a "tool with which a 'world' can be textually constructed" (Ashcroft et al., *The Empire Writes Back*). Rushdie attempts to carve space for oral media in India through characters that cannot write through Padma, who is audacious, loud, and opinionated. The linguistic choices Rushdie makes in writing Padma's dialogue occasionally mirror those made for Amina Sinai's dialogue. Padma often deterritorializes the English language through the use of local phraseology, vernacular terms, and short sentences. Examples of this include her quips "Arre baap" or "you've learned how to *tell* things really fast" (146). Saleem, who looks at Padma's illiteracy quite snootily and calls her "dung lotus," and "his disciple" whom he had to "educate," is dependent on her presence as a listener for the progression of his story (35–206). She often calls out his digressions and verbiage, such as when she says his narration is "a crazy way of telling [his] life story" (45). She often questions his integrity, such as when she slyly asks him "When was it?" regarding the election of 1957, which makes Saleem realize the error in his timeline and

memory. There is irony in the fact that Padma, in her illiteracy, keeps Saleem's *written* narrative in check, despite his condescension for her "unscientific" nature (331). At one point, Padma, upset by Saleem's wordiness and impotence, walks out after saying "what use are you, little princeling ... as a lover?" (166). It is after that point that Saleem recognizes his need for her, saying "A balance has been upset; I feel cracks widening down the length of my body; because suddenly I am alone, *without my necessary ear*, and it isn't enough" (206, emphasis added). Padma's presence, in some ways, debunks Spivak's notion that the "subaltern cannot speak," as her presence in the novel is one of both subalternity *and* of loud imposition (Rao 32). Padma's vocal interjections can be read as disrupting and undermining Saleem's narration, so as to constantly problematize his descriptions of those less fortunate than himself, and of his and his peers' roles within notable Indian events. Kishani Pilapitiya writes:

> Her linguistic authority as well as her dismissal of seminal events in Saleem's life challenges his role as the narrator while also subtly exposing, through their own relationship as speaker and auditor, the oppressions that are implicit within the deeply entrenched class system. Their relationship itself is transformed into a subtle but profound class critique. (Pilapitiya 64)

However, their relationship as speaker and auditor is itself contested, as we see Saleem often remain deluded that his story is interesting and meaningful for a Padma-like audience, despite Padma demonstrating little interest in his rambling:

> But here is Padma at my elbow, bullying me back into the world of linear narrative, the universe of what-happened-next: 'At this rate,' Padma complains, 'you'll be two hundred years old before you manage to tell about your birth.' *She is affecting nonchalance*, jutting a careless hip in my general direction, but doesn't fool me. I know now that she is, *despite all her protestations*, hooked. No doubt about it: my story has her by the throat, so that all at once she's stopped nagging me to go home, to take more baths, to change my vinegar-stained clothes, to abandon even for a moment this darkling pickle-factory where the smells of spices are forever frothing in the air (44)

Concurrently, Padma's oral interjections, while persistent, are often overwritten and undervalued by Saleem—despite his recognition that his literature necessitates the presence of his "ear"—

Padma. Oral narratives and literacy are often inextricably yoked together in India, especially since pre-colonial nations had extensive oral traditions that still trickle down generationally. In India, pre-colonial literary traditions and oral folk traditions existed and informed each other—this interaction is a core component of "bhasa" South Asian literatures (Ashcroft et al., *Post-Colonial Studies: The Key Concepts* 151). On this topic, Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin argue that:

> [In] post-colonial societies, the dominance of writing in perpetuating European cultural assumptions and Euro-centric notions of civilization, as well as the view of writing as the vehicle of authority and truth, led to an under-valuing of oral culture, and the assumption that orality was a precondition for post-colonial writing, which subsequently subsumed it (Ashcroft et al., *Post-Colonial Studies: The Key Concepts* 151)

In *Midnight's Children,* the well-heeled Saleem Sinai repeatedly demonstrates condescension for orality, and for Padma's illiteracy, placing himself as the intellectual elite. He writes:

> I am seized by a sudden fist of anger [because Padma has left me]: why should I be so unreasonably treated by my one disciple? Other men have recited stories before me; other men were not so impetuously abandoned. When Valmiki, the author of the Ramayana, dictated his masterpiece to elephant-headed Ganesh, did the god walk out on him halfway? He certainly did not….How to dispense with Padma? How to give up her ignorance and superstition, necessary counterweights to my miracle-laden omniscience? How to do without her paradoxical earthiness of spirit, which keeps—kept?—my feet on the ground? (Rushdie 206)

His infantilization of Padma, by calling her "impetuous," and his reduction of her stories to "superstition" and his egotistic comparison of his "masterpiece" to the Ramayana, alludes to a Western denigration of oral narratives in favor of literary ones (206). However, the urgency with which Saleem insists on recording in writing, a disjointed, bungled series of events that are constantly undermined by Padma and his peers demonstrates that the privileging of literary media as harbingers of truth is erroneous. Memory, with which he writes, sits at the core of oral narratives. Through his digressive, frenzied, and contradictory narratives, Saleem's written

recording is undermined by himself and by those around him; revealing even the literary medium to be fraught with inconsistency and shaped by fallible humans who each have their own versions of truth. Padma, who remains necessary for Saleem's writing but who will never be able to read his record, demonstrates the need for oral media; reinforcing the assertion that orality is just as rich, (dis)honest and complex as its literary counterpart. Additionally, Saleem's written and recorded account, in its Inglishness, could never have been written for a Padma-like audience, nor is it likely that such an audience would even care for what Saleem had to say. Inglish, or even the process of Inglishing, is bourgeois. While the use of English is undoubtedly a reality for many in the nation, English will not touch a Padma-like audience, nor will the language of the English-educated be able to carry subcultures of those who have no exposure to the language or the economic privilege that an English education requires. Through the use of characters so removed from the upper-class English-speaking protagonist, and by using a subaltern subject to upend the integrity of the privileged author, Rushdie problematizes the notion of any Inglish, even one that Raja Rao calls Inglish that contains "the spirit that is one's own" as being able to "represent" a nation. In fact, the use of Inglish, while undoubtedly postcolonial, becomes increasingly complicated when considering the backgrounds of thousands of midnight's children who speak languages other than the dominant Hindi/Urdu — the english containing unglossed Hindi words is different from the english with Arabic puns; both of which are noticeably different from the english in Ayemenem. In fact, when cultural experience differs so vastly across socioeconomic, caste and gendered lines, it becomes difficult even to consider a single stable Indian or South Asian culture that can be 'represented' by any hybrid english—all of which would need a privileged author like Saleem at its center, who will never be able to accurately speak to the lives of those who come from different states, socioeconomic, and

linguistic spaces than the ones he inhabits. Rushdie's English smuggles into it not the histories, languages and cultures of all of India, but instead the dominant Hindu/Urdu and Hindu/Muslim cultures within which Rushdie was himself raised.

However, despite *Midnight's Children's* failure to represent an *entire* nation, it does raise an important critique regarding language and the inability of one language to encompass all of India, given the immense variance in cultures within the country. It becomes notable that abrogation and appropriation are highly specific to the individual and the context of a novel; Inglishing, then, is not done with a capital 'I' but instead in a series of lowercase 'i's. The process of inglishing is to abrogate and appropriate a language within India, to bring within it local cultures and lexical patterns that may differ across state and communal lines. English is an imperfect vehicle, and no amount of abrogation can make it represent a nation or culture in its entirety, especially a polyglot nation such as India. Instead, abrogation and appropriation may create a base that is understandable to a range of people, while incorporating specific and few local cultures within it, and pushing back against Western notions of what is proper. Saleem's narration, in its deft use of bilingual paronomasia, disavowal of the rules of the colonial center, and the omission of connectors to create Bambaiyya, successfully mangles the "sanctity" of a colonial tongue while still failing to create a 'universal' Inglish. *Midnight's Children* exposes the inability of a single person to 'Inglish' a text for all Indians—especially those who opt for languages and cultures that fall outside the dominant Hindi/Urdu and Hindu/Muslim experience.

Conclusion

I moved to the United States of America at eighteen, after spending all of my formative years in India. I began to experience what Seth termed "exile" almost immediately—with every flight out of India, I felt increasingly disconnected from the country and alien within it. Concurrently, my foray into the world literatures at university meant a great deal to me, because I was reading books that carried my experiences, my humor, and my history for the first time. Through this project, I have attempted to analyze the ways in which language has formed the Anglophone Indian subject and evaluate the methods that Indian authors have used to reclaim some power from the hegemonic English center. Over the last decade, Indian *bhasa* and Inglish literature have striven to do just this, and several novels have won accolades for the inventive ways in which they advance plot through their compelling and subversive use of language. Most notable is the recent 2022 International Booker Prize for Translated Fiction awarded to *Tomb of Sand,* which was written by Geetanjali Shree and translated by Daisy Rockwell (The 2022 International Booker Prize). *Tomb of Sand* was written and published entirely in Hindi, before being translated to Inglish. The charm of Daisy Rockwell's translation lies in her ability to maintain the cadence of Indian life through her translation, leaving in untranslated words like "gully" and inventing words that have no English equivalents, such as by describing a *mundair* as a "roof wall" (Shankar). *Tomb of Sand*'s Booker Prize is the first one awarded to a *bhasa* text (Marshall). It reveals the possibility of Indian *bhasa* texts to enter the mainstream Western canon through their translation to Inglish. Gitanjali Shree, while receiving her award, notes, "After [Tomb of Sand] was longlisted, much was said about Hindi making it for the first time. It feels good to be the means of that happening, but it also obliges me to emphasize that behind me, and this book, lies a rich and flourishing literary tradition in Hindi *and* in other South Asian

languages. World literature will be richer for knowing some of the finest writers in these languages. The vocabulary of life will increase" (The Booker Prize). In a world that is attempting to decolonize their literature, perspectives, and language, what Shree refers to as the "vocabulary of life," and Kandasamy refers to as "english" —a open, creative language that embraces diversity and multiplicity—*is* the future of the English language. Inglish, however, is not useful just because it makes *bhasa* literature accessible to the West. It remains important to note that there are a number of Inglish texts written specifically for the Indian reader *from* India, whose jokes, subplots, and dialogue would likely remain under-appreciated by the Western reader. Equally important is the tradition of *bhasa* literature in India, which is, as Gitanjali Shree said, a rich and established tradition in the country. *Bhasa* literary works, especially in non-dominant vernacular languages, must be kept alive, researched, and funded, as they are important carriers of culture and tradition. In addition to exploring the tensions between English and the *bhasas*, my research aims to nuance the notion that the imposition of English is universally detrimental, especially when considering the use of Inglish by Dalit writers. Dalit literature in Inglish carries within it the experiences of groups of India that have been marginalized by the East and the West, and whose voice has been excluded from both mainstream *bhasa* and English literary traditions. Inglished Dalit works by authors like Meena Kandasamy, Bama Faustina Soosairaj and Namdeo Dhasal engage in the critical work of crafting a space in the global literary tradition for Dalits, recognizing the contribution, intelligence, and agency of India's large *bahujan* population. *Midnight's Children* and *The God of Small Things* demonstrate that language is far more than just a vehicle for plot—it is a series of choices that smuggle in political, social, and cultural experiences and arguments. Given that Dalit Indians problematize the binary of colonizer and colonized, it is likely that their appropriation and abrogation of Inglish is

significantly different from that of their *savarna* peers. A future expansion of this project might seek to analyze the ways in which bahujan inglishes might differ from savarna inglishes, in order to nuance our understanding of postcolonial appropriation and abrogation of language. Other expansions of this project might seek to examine the divergence in the abrogation and appropriation of English in Indian, Bangladeshi, Sri Lankan and Pakistani literatures and translations, to examine the differences produced by the same colonial encounter across nations.

I recognize that the role of English literature in society has become tenuous, and that the fight for curricular space for non-canonical texts will be arduous. I read an interesting article on this recently, titled (rather brazenly) "The End of the English Major." The author makes a compelling case for why the humanities are a dying field: low student enrollment numbers, reduced investment, students with "no interest" in studying literature authored by "dead white men," and a generational shift towards technology (Heller). This project demonstrates one of the many reasons that world literature is truly worthy of investment: the construction of literature and language will always be an integral form of resistance, and a compelling vehicle for change. In the journey to decolonization, English must continue to be wrangled, mashed, and twisted into the englishes by anglophone authors in an erstwhile attempt to reallocate global power. Books like *Midnight's Children*, *The God of Small Things* and *Tombs of Sand* demonstrate that the future of the English language is a hybrid one, and that literature is central to understanding the world around us. It is certainly worthy of investment and time. It is for those reasons that I will have to forcefully assert—on the topic of the future of the humanities—that irrespective of if it is the "end" of the English major, for the englishes, it is just the beginning.

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