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Global English and Its Others

While the Hindi-Urdu situation I have examined in Chapter 2 represents at many levels a fairly particular, if not exactly unique, historical trajectory, the broader historical situation of the Indian vernaculars, and their relation to English as literary language and cultural system, reflects a larger and now planet-wide reality. The nationalization of languages over the past two centuries all over the world has been accompanied by the globalization of English. This is only seemingly a paradox, for, as the genealogy I have traced here should have made clear, "English" is the preeminent cultural system for the assimilation of the world's languages precisely along these lines. Having transformed formerly extensive and dispersed cultures of writing, such as Persian and Sanskrit in the region we have been most concerned with here, into narrowly conceived ethnonational spheres, English seeks everywhere to become the preeminent medium of cosmopolitan exchange. And this global situation is replicated in different forms within individual countries, such as India, in the complex hierarchical relations that have come to be established in the postcolonial decades between globalized English and the so-called regional or vernacular languages, as Rashmi Sadana has described in her superb anthropological study of the politics of literary "language and location" in the country.[1]

Among the many signs of this dramatic historic shift—and I have charted some others in detail in the foregoing pages—is in patterns of circulation and of access to literary works beyond their immediate societies of origin, one of the sine qua non conditions, according to preeminent contemporary formulations, for ascent into world literature. To take one more or less concrete example, for instance, a hundred years ago at least some intelligentsias in the vast stretch of societies from the eastern Balkans, through Anatolia and Persia proper, including swathes of Central Asia and Afghanistan, and stretching across the northern belt of the subcontinent, may have encountered each other's textual creations in the original and directly—that is, in Persian, Arabic, or Ottoman Turkish. Today, readers in India, Pakistan, Iran, or Turkey will typically encounter each other's literatures only in translation in English (or in further translation from English), thus only if the works have received that metropolitan authentication. (It is fairly evident that the overwhelming majority of translations of world literature into the Indian languages, for instance, are actually translations from English versions.) Muhammad Iqbal, who is generally regarded as the founding poet and philosopher of the Pakistan idea, wrote much of his poetic output in Persian in the first third of the twentieth century, a far cry from the situation today, when most writers in Pakistan, to say nothing of the larger reading public, may well have encountered *Reading Lolita in Teheran* in the original or in Urdu translation but (with minimal exceptions) are almost entirely unaware of contemporary Iranian literature in Persian. (This is even true, to some extent, of Urdu-language writers, let alone Anglophone ones.) And Naguib Mahfouz's Nobel Prize (1988) and the spate of translations that followed certainly did help introduce modern Arabic literature to many Western readers for the first time, but this is also true of readers in many societies formerly part of the Perso-Arabic sphere as well. Lest this line of argument be mistaken, however, for nostalgia for a lost world—the Perso-Arabic ecumene—a specific case of the nostalgia that unmistakably characterizes certain lines of postcolonial thinking, the stakes here ought to be spelled out clearly: the absence of nostalgia for the past does not require that we submit to the realities of the present.

But these shifts in readership and circulation are largely surface phenomena that indicate the deeper tectonic shifts in language, literature, and culture that I have been concerned with here and that are the long legacy of the colonial empires and their logics of Anglicization (or Westernization) and Orientalization. It is a remarkable historical fact, for instance, that at either geographical end of the Persianate sphere—that is, in India and in Turkey—modern

literariness was instituted precisely through controversies concerning the link to Persian (and thus also Arabic). Both modern standard Hindi at the turn of the last century and the Turkish of the Kemalist language reforms a few decades later were instituted in large measure through a de-Persianization and de-Arabization of the lexical base, literary influence and models, genres, writing practices of various kinds, and orthography of an existing language formation in order to enact a project of ethnonational or civilizational nationalism in linguistically diverse and multicultural societies. In both historical cases, the most radical linguistic innovations were conceived of as a return to the original language of the people.[2] To Erich Auerbach on his arrival in Istanbul in the mid-1930s, the language reform appeared "at once fantastical ur-Turkish ('free' from Arabic and Persian influences) and modern-technical."[3] But the second "and" in this phrase misses the mark slightly but significantly. For it is precisely because the Kemalist linguistic project was conceived as an attempt to indigenize and vernacularize the Turkish language that it may be said to represent a project of modernization and Europeanization as well. It is therefore hardly surprising that the first systematic case for such a project of indigenization of (Ottoman) Turkish was made by a British Orientalist, the Scottsman Elias Gibb, who, in his history of Ottoman poetry, unfinished at his death in 1901, on the one hand recommended this poetic corpus to Western readers for its aesthetic finesse and accomplishments, while calling at the same time, on the other hand, for the radical "reform" and, as he saw it, *vernacularization* of this written form of the Turkish language.[4] And of course we have already seen in the previous chapter the interest of the colonial state in the invention and institution of an authentically indigenous vernacular of North India, the rise of an indigenizing (that is, nationalist) intelligentsia being linked in complex ways to the state's linguistic, literary, and pedagogical projects from the early decades of the nineteenth century.[5]

A World of English

As I have argued at some length in earlier chapters, the entire question of the expansion of English (and a handful of other Western languages) or, more accurately, the question of their assimilation of non-Western cultures of writing—the process I have identified here as the unfolding of the double logic of Orientalism-Anglicism—is largely ignored in contemporary accounts (such as Casanova's or Moretti's) of the emergence and expansion of world literary space and in such frameworks for the consideration of literary and linguistic diversity as Anglophone literature, World Englishes, or Global English. A serious consideration of this historical process is obstructed by the ubiquitous persistence of nation-thinking, which naturalizes the historically contingent contemporary situation into a landscape of peoples in possession of their "own" languages and literary traditions. The supranational role and presence of English escapes scrutiny precisely in the ascription of authenticity to "local" practices of writing through figures of multiplication, either "other" languages than English or the multiplication of the terrain of English itself—"Anglophone literatures" or "World Englishes." Such acts of multiplication cannot quite dispel the suspicion that the language continues to be conceived of as a single organism, with its origins on a little island in the North Sea, whose subsequent history in the world can be charted as a continuous evolution or unfolding.[6] Before turning to the question of Anglophone writing per se, however, I want to start by posing the broader question of what English is in the situation of literature and culture worldwide and how we can understand its relation to its various others.

There is a powerful moment in Tayeb Salih's novel *Season of Migration to the North* (*Mawsim al-hijra 'ila al-šamāl*, 1966) that condenses into a single image this entire problematic of English as cultural system and the situation of global postcolonial culture.[7] The novel is, famously, an inversion of the narrative movements (in time as in space) of *Heart of Darkness*. The Kurtz figure, as it were, appears in the person of Mustafa Said, the novel reversing the direction of the journey into the heart of darkness, this time from colonial Sudan to pre–World War I London.[8] In England, Mustapha reverses the originary and ongoing violence of colonial occupation through sexual conquest, claiming to liberate Africa with his penis—mentioned only in ellipsis in the novel—seducing and ultimately driving to suicide a long series of English women, precisely by manipulating,

intensifying, and finally shattering their Orientalist (and primitivist) fantasies about him as an Arab and African, confirming their desire to see him and his world as the very antithesis of their own, as the purest expression of the barbarous, animality, and nature itself. Convicted finally for the murder of his English wife—who had turned the sexual tables on him and had managed, as he puts it, to convert him from hunter to quarry—Mustapha serves his prison term and returns to the Sudan, settling down in a remote village along the banks of the Nile, where the narrator, a younger native of the village who himself has just returned from England with a Ph.D. in English poetry, encounters him for the first time. The story of his early life is revealed fitfully in exchanges between him and the narrator and at later moments in the latter's encounters with the former's Sudanese friends and acquaintances from his England days.

But this attempt of Mustapha Said's to reinvent himself as an authentic son of the soil and to erase the legacy of his devastating colonial encounter utterly fails in the end. After he has gradually revealed to the narrator this past, entirely unknown to the peasant folk among whom he has chosen to live, including the local young woman he has married, let alone the sons he has had with her, Mustapha disappears, presumed to have drowned in the seasonal floodwaters of the Nile. But Salih leads us to wonder if he had perhaps died, or even simply disappeared, while answering the siren call of the West, of illicit desire, of conquest and sexuality. His widow, in the meantime, who is a local village girl, is forced after his assumed death to remarry against her will with an old man in the village, but she kills both him and herself when he tries forcibly to consummate their marriage on their wedding night. In the wake of this devastating event, the narrator, having discovered that he himself had fallen in love with the now dead woman, returns to the village and enters a room in Mustapha's house that has always been kept locked and sealed from the outside world. It is the jarring juxtaposition of what he discovers in this room in this farmer's house in this village on the banks of the River Nile in the heart of Africa that is of interest to us here. The room is a perfect replica of an English study and sitting room, down to the last architectural detail: "A fireplace—imagine it! A real English fireplace with all the bits and pieces, above it a brass cowl and

in front of it a quadrangular area tiled in green marble, with the mantlepiece of blue marble."[9] It is an authentic replica down to the last object it contains, from the paintings and tapestries on the walls to the furniture, carpets, and mementos carefully placed on floor, tables , and mantlepiece. But what shakes the narrator to the core is the library it contains, the books that are everywhere in the room:

> Good God, the four walls from floor to ceiling were filled, shelf upon shelf, with books and more books and yet more books. . . . I could see in the light of the lamp that they were arranged in categories. Books on economics, history and literature. Zoology. Geology. Mathematics. Astronomy. The Encyclopedia Britannica. Gibbon. Macaulay. Toynbee. The complete works of Bernard Shaw. Keynes. Tawney. Smith. Robinson, *The Economics of Imperfect Competition.* Hobson, *Imperialism.* Robinson, *An Essay on Marxian Economics.* Sociology. Anthropology. Psychology. Thomas Hardy. Thomas Mann. E. G. Moore. Thomas Moore. Virginia Woolf. Wittgenstein. Einstein. Brierly. Namier. Books I had heard of and others of which I had not. Volumes of poetry by poets of whom I did not know the existence. *The Journals of Gordon. Gulliver's Travels.* Kipling. Housman. *The History of the French Revolution*, Thomas Carlyle. *Lectures on the French Revolution*, Lord Acton. Books bound in leather. Books in paper covers. Old tattered books. Books that looked as if they'd just come straight from the printers. Huge volumes the size of tombstones. Small books with gilt edges the size of packs of playing cards. Signatures. Dedications. Books in boxes. Books on the chairs. Books on the floor. What play-acting is this? What does he mean? Owen. Ford Maddox Ford. Stefan Zweig. E. G. Browne. Laski. Hazlitt. *Alice in Wonderland.* Richards. *The Qur'an* in English. *The Bible* in English. Gilbert Murray. Plato. *The Economics of Colonialism*, Mustafa Said. *Colonialism and Monopoly*, Mustafa Said. *The Cross and Gunpowder*, Mustafa Said. *Prospero and Caliban. Totem and Taboo.* Doughty. Not a single Arabic book. A graveyard. A mausoleum. An insane idea. A prison. A huge joke. A treasure chamber.[10]

What Salih attempts to condense in this extended image is *the immense library that is the humanistic culture of the modern West* and the fate within it specifically of those forms of historical difference that come marked with the non-Western or non-European origins of the languages in which they are produced. The passage stages the global dominance of this culture, which seems here to include not only the corpus of bourgeois literature and culture but also the internal radical critique of Western society—"Robinson, *An Essay on Marxian Economics*"—*as well as* the specifically Third Worldist, radical, and internationalist critique of Western colonialism—"*The Cross and Gunpowder*, Mustafa Said." Above all, what this remarkable passage points to is *a generalized condition of culture in the contemporary world.* We see now the enormity of the problem: the non-Western text is available to us only within this immense library—"in English," in Salih's resonant words, that is, *in translation*, assigned its place as "Oriental" text-object within the architecture of the Western "universal" library. The passage thus brings to light the situation of the modern Arabic writer and of postcolonial writing and culture more broadly: it raises the possibility that the book in which we encounter it will itself inevitably find its ("translated" and assigned) place in this library, so that the act of writing would have to be a struggle to produce a text that is not merely a dead letter, an epitaph, as it were, words carved on a tombstone. In the final pages of the novel, the narrator, having escaped from the "graveyard," "mausoleum," "insane idea," "prison," "joke," and "treasure chamber" of Mustafa Said's universal library, enters the Nile in a state of semiawareness, nearly drowns midstream, and in the last lines, comes back to consciousness of himself and his surroundings and decides to fight physically to stay alive. The passage thus offers an allegorical rendering of the wider struggle to achieve *historically* validated social and cultural forms as opposed to fantasies of authenticity.

The Moroccan writer and historian Abdallah Laroui, in his classic work of Arab cultural criticism, *L'idéologie arabe contemporaine* (Contemporary Arab Ideology, 1967), published within a year of Salih's novel, attempted to describe this crisis of the intelligentsia in the Arab world on the threshold of decolonization in philosophical terms. His discussion will be of some use to us here in our attempt to understand the meaning of Mustafa Said's library. Although Laroui resists the claim that his conclusions might have a "general value" for the "entire Third World"—a value he believes has been incorrectly ascribed to "the book by Frantz Fanon," presumably *The Wretched of the Earth,* published posthumously four years earlier—the analysis nevertheless has such a value for societies whose modern culture is characterized by the crisis of a textually authorized tradition, the societies, as he puts it, "possessing a classical culture expressed in a national language," including, beyond the Arab countries, "Iran, modern Greece, or the Sicily given expression by its writers from Pirandello to Lampedusa, countries where the past crushes with its splendor a painful present that is lived in forfeit [*un présent douloureux vécu comme une déchéance*]."[11] The dominance of this fundamentally Orientalist ideological structure—a Golden Age in a more or less distant past that provides a permanent counterpoint to a fallen and inauthentic present—implies that no attempt to comprehend the Self in such historical situations can bypass the Other, that is, "the West."

Laroui identifies three main lines of ideological force in Arab society: religious purisms, statecraft and politics, and developmentalist technophilia. Despite the seemingly different relation in each case to the Other that is the West, all three are in fact situated within the generalized sociocultural situation of postcolonial societies that he describes through the "concept of future anterior—of a future already outlined elsewhere and which we are not at liberty to reject." No self-described attempt to "return" to tradition, religious or secular, can sustain its claim to be autonomous of "the West" as Other, Laroui writes, not even claims to authenticity based on gestures of return to the purportedly uncontaminated doxa of religious tradition: "In contemporary Arab ideology, no form of consciousness is authentic: no more so in the religious intellectual [*clerc*] than in the technophile; he reflects a different image of contact with the West, but the center of his thought is no more his own than that of the technophile belongs properly to him."[12] No attempt at self-definition and self-exploration can therefore bypass a historical critique of the West and its emergence into this particular position of dominance. And, in this sense, the critique of the West and the logics of its

imperial expansion from a postcolonial location is in fact a *self*-critique, since this location is at least partially a product of that historical process.

This is the task that is undertaken in *Orientalism*, which attempts, as we have already seen, to "inventory the traces upon [him], the Oriental subject, of the culture whose domination has been so powerful a factor in the life of all Orientals." From our present perspective, then, Edward Said's *Orientalism* may be read as an attempt to understand the architecture of Mustafa Said's library, the library that one owns by virtue of being a product of the postcolonial world and by which one is owned in turn. In the original text of Salih's novel—that is, from the perspective of modern literary Arabic—it is of course this catalogue of *English* (and more broadly European) names that appear as estranged and foreign, requiring translation, with the Qur'an, made to stand in here for the entire Arabic-Islamic tradition, undergoing a double estrangement, a double translation. And the *hijra 'ilā al-šamāl* (migration to the north) invoked in Salih's novel parallels what is glossed in Said's work by "the voyage in," the emergence of a worldly oppositional consciousness that is neither fully inside metropolitan culture nor entirely outside it, a critical consciousness that will undertake a radical critique of the Other-as-Self as a condition for exploring "contemporary alternatives to Orientalism, to ask how one can study other cultures and peoples from a libertarian, or a nonrepressive and nonmanipulative, perspective."[13] For Laroui, this is the task of a "double critical consciousness," directed both at the various ideological positions in the Arab world and at the cultural complex that is the modern West.[14]

With respect to the mutual relationship of English and the Indian vernaculars, a now-notorious statement published some years ago by Salman Rushdie might inadvertently offer us some further clarity regarding the contemporary situation of the languages and literatures of the postcolonial world. In the introduction to an anthology of post-Independence Indian fiction, Rushdie offered his readers his considered opinion that the only contemporary Indian literature of significant worth was being written in English: "prose writing . . . by Indian writers *working in English*, is proving to be a stronger and more important body of work than most of what has been produced

in the 16 'official languages' of India, the so-called 'vernacular languages,' . . . and, indeed, this new, still burgeoning, 'Indo-Anglian' literature represents perhaps the most valuable contribution India has yet made to the world of books."[15] At least a dozen of these vernaculars happen of course to have literary cultures with traditions of writing that are up to a millennium old, of which Rushdie could not have been entirely unaware. Rushdie's remarks came clothed in a mood of sincerity frustrated: the editor of a projected anthology, having searched exhaustively, was forced to admit in the end that there was nothing in these literary languages that was worth including in the volume. The one exception to this general rule, Rushdie informed his readers, was the Urdu short story "Ṭōbā Ṭēk Siñgh" (Toba Tek Singh, 1955?) by Saadat Hasan Manto, a translation of which was consequently included in the collection—not exactly an original selection or the result of particularly strenuous deliberation, given the story's mass popularity in the subcontinent, including in multiple English translations, and the fact that it had been produced as a short film for Channel Four in Britain a decade earlier for the fortieth anniversary of the Partition of India.

It is tempting to dismiss Rushdie's remark as a sign simply of arrogance or silliness, but I believe it bears much closer examination. It is not, strictly speaking, an Orientalist statement but is rather an Anglicist one, to return to the terms of the imperial debate in the early nineteenth century about colonial governance and native education. If there are echoes of Thomas Macaulay here, this is far from being accidental. Macaulay's judgment of 1835 about the relative merits of Occidental over Oriental literatures had expressed the distinctly *colonial* logic inherent in Europe's encounter with its Asiatic possessions: "I have no knowledge of either Sanscrit or Arabic—but I have done what I could to form a correct estimate of their value. I have read translations of the most celebrated Sanscrit and Arabic works. I have conversed both here and at home with men distinguished by their proficiency in the Eastern tongues. I am quite willing to take the Oriental learning at the word of the Orientalists themselves. I have never found one among them who could deny that a single shelf of a good European library was worth the whole native literature of India and Arabia."[16] Although Macaulay's text is critical

of the Orientalists' case for continuing the natives' education in Asiatic languages and traditions of writing—the narrow issue in contention in the administrative debate—it nevertheless *relies on and reproduces the terms of the Orientalist reinvention of the world literary system* and the placing of the "literatures of the East" within it. Macaulay's formulation expresses very precisely the relative hierarchy and discrepancy of power in the colonial era between, on the one hand, the European languages and above all English and, on the other, major languages of Asia and the Middle East, so that "the whole native literature of India and Arabia" could be *judged in terms of*, and therefore *assimilated into*, "a single shelf of a good European library." It is an image of the *subsumption* of the writing traditions of the world into the European cultural system.

In Rushdie's comments about the quality of literature in the Indian vernaculars, which reveal the reality of a larger linguistic and cultural situation in our times, Macaulay's judgment is updated for the twenty-first century—in an exact sense, giving expression to the now *postcolonial and global* logic through which the Indo-English novel has come to be represented to the outside world in recent years, and to some extent (and increasingly so) to Indian society itself, as the authentic and, more importantly, *authenticating* literature of India. Rushdie, whose *Midnight's Children* (1980) first introduced world audiences to the global ambitions of the Anglophone Indian bourgeoisie at the threshold of the neoliberal restructuring of the Indian economy, seeks to establish the proper relationship in the world literary system between English and the Indian vernaculars: it is on the ground of English as cultural system—and, more precisely, as medium of literary expression—that, for Rushdie, the literariness of the "vernacular" languages must now be adjudicated. Far from being an idiosyncratic and isolated statement, this declaration in fact reflects fairly accurately dominant tendencies in the processes and institutions of world literature. Every spectacular event in the life of global Anglophone literature—such as the much-celebrated recent emergence of the Pakistani novel in English, to which I return shortly—reinforces or even intensifies these tendencies.

No consideration of the Anglophone novel with links to South Asia can bypass entirely the question of the role of English education as "an instrument of colonial rule . . . related to colonial dominance not only as a means of persuasion, but as an arm of its coercive apparatus as well," as Ranajit Guha has put it.[17] As Gauri Viswanathan has demonstrated in her classic study, the teaching of English literature as a subject itself was pioneered in India, in part as a substitute for Christian proselytization, which was looked on with anxiety by administrators for the violent reaction it might produce among native populations of different religious denominations.[18] And as I have already argued, English education, as embodied in individual practitioners and institutions, although typically associated by historians with the Anglicist side of the colonial debate, in fact contained Orientalist projects within it as well. Macaulay's concession to the Orientalists' knowledge therefore catches that complicity between the two poles of the debate at the level of discourse quite precisely. The association of English education with loss of tradition (and even with debauchery and perversity), in the early decades of its institution in India, and especially in Calcutta, extends to the Orientalist dimension of education as well, for the latter invariably meant a reorientation—scholarly or intellectual as well as ritual and customary—toward one's own newly discovered "tradition." It is of course commonplace in the language of politics in contemporary India for partisans of Hindi (as the national language) and the vernaculars (as regional and state languages) to deride the Anglophone elite as "Macaulay's children" and its cultural products as the nation's continuing colonial burden. (A recent Google search of the phrase produced results well in excess of 100,000.) But, as I have argued earlier at some length, the "vernacular" side of this debate is itself implicated in a colonial genealogy and cannot sustain its claim to an "authentic" position uncontaminated by the colonial process. A critical engagement with the Anglophone novel must therefore take place on grounds other than those of authenticity. What is the political scene of the Anglophone novel's emergence, not only at its beginnings in the early twentieth century but every time it is renewed and refurbished into our own times? Rushdie's remark seeks to recode this inherently *political* scene of the mutual relations of English and the vernacular languages in the subcontinent in terms of (uniform and supposedly universal) aesthetic *value*, and it is this

question of the Anglophone novel (from South Asia) as the site of a fraught politics of language to which we shall now turn.

"Out of the Garrets of Bloomsbury": The Anglophone Novel from Anand to Aslam

The Indo-English novel has become in recent decades a global form and tradition with a vast accumulation of cultural capital. For readers of world literature outside the subcontinent, in particular (though not exclusively) in the countries of the North Atlantic, it is Anglophone fiction above all, read in the original or in translation in various European languages, that carries the aura of Indian literature. This is in part a result of the preeminence of the novel form as such in world literature as against poetry or drama. And in turn, this global market for the work of writers in the subcontinent writing in English has significantly affected their writing practices. British and American editors now routinely descend on the major cities of South Asia in a frenzied search for the next big first novel, the next *God of Small Things*, a process that is now a routine part of the lives of aspiring young Anglophone writers, affecting in all kinds of concrete ways the writing that gets produced. Sectors of the English-language publishing industry in India itself now work seamlessly with major publishers overseas. But there are continuities with earlier forms of the novel as well. From the first real beginnings of the Indo-English novel in the 1930s, it has represented a series of attempts to explore the possibilities of the novel as such as an "epic" narrative form, capable of giving an account of social totality. If, in the early phases, it offered itself as the epic of a society on the seemingly inexorable path to decolonization and political sovereignty, in its later phases, it has represented a multivalent questioning of the modes of establishment of the nation as community. Throughout its history, therefore, it has struggled with the *social distance* that separates the authorial context from the realities of social and cultural worlds marked as vernacular.

The social situation of English in the societies of the subcontinent, the social geography of access to the language in a range of cultural spheres, is of course irreducibly linked to class, caste, religious-communal, regional, gender, and urban-rural politics. If, on the one hand, elites and segments of the middle classes rely more and more on English as a marker of their identity and place in society in the postcolonial decades, on the other, the desire for English has become an unmistakable mark of the desire for social mobility at other levels of the class spectrum, leading, for instance, to the growth of a vast private-sector school industry, purveyors of English-language education of very dubious quality. The widening of the sphere of English seems to simply reinforce the privilege of those with regularized and steady access to it at all levels of education.[19] The writing of Anglophone literature in these societies, the only aspect of this social complexity that gets to be seen outside the subcontinent, therefore sits atop this enormous social volcano, to which it has an uneasy relationship. Successful Anglophone writers are thus almost inevitably of urban and middle- or upper-middle-class origin, often even linked to individual elite institutions of secondary and higher education, such as Aitchison College (Lahore), Karachi Grammar School (Karachi), the Cathedral School and St. Xavier's College (Mumbai), the Doon School (Dehradun), and St. Stephen's College (Delhi).[20]

Remarks such as Rushdie's represent, first of all, an erasure of this specific class politics of the acquisition of language itself in contemporary South Asia and, second, a naturalization (in "value" terms) of the asymmetrical situations, the vastly different material and symbolic resources, of English and the "vernaculars" as literary languages—including Hindi and Urdu, the putative national languages, respectively, of India and Pakistan—an asymmetry not just in global terms but within South Asia itself.[21] By "vernacular," I of course do not mean simply indigenous or native, for vernacularization, as we have seen, is a complex and fraught historical process that is differently oriented within, but no less immune from, the broader colonial (and postcolonial) process and the assimilative powers of the English cultural system than is Anglophone writing. English shapes the identity of the Anglophone intelligentsia as, properly speaking, the *national* (rather than a provincial or regional) intelligentsia precisely through the circulation of its cultural products in *world* literary space (Rushdie's "world of books"). Furthermore, the remarks are an attempt at disavowing the heterogeneity of the Anglophone novel's

own linguistic environment in places such as the subcontinent (and, we might add, Africa)—English (or for that matter French, Portuguese, or Afrikaans, among others) in Asia and Africa is never written or spoken out of hearing range of a number of its linguistic others—a heterogeneity that often gets packaged within the form itself as one of its supposedly exotic pleasures, most famously in Rushdie's own works, whose characteristically "Indianized" English stages the presence of modes of speech that the author and the novels themselves repeatedly characterize as the distinct street Hindustani (that is, a sort of "neutral" form of Hindi-Urdu) of the city of Bombay (now Mumbai). Amitav Ghosh's *Calcutta Chromosome* (1995) is perhaps unique in its own generation of Indo-English fiction in that it explores thematically precisely this manifestation of the vernaculars in Anglophone practices, which it characterizes as a *ghostly* presence.[22]

This mode of appearance of the vernaculars within the discourse of the Anglophone novel can be adequately understood only against the long historical arc that I have been tracing in this book. From eighteenth-century Oriental tales, both "original" compositions and those tied in a more or less loose manner to a work or a textual tradition in an Oriental language, through the vernacular "versions" produced (in "Hindi" or "Hindustani") in the early nineteenth century at Fort William College from one or another of the "classical" languages of the subcontinent (Arabic, Persian, Sanskrit, or Braj), to the first self-described attempts to write novels in the vernaculars in the second half of the nineteenth century, the history of narrative forms linked to the societies and cultures of the subcontinent is a series of inversions and tensions—not simply between English and the vernacular languages as media of literary expression, or between "Occidental" form and "Oriental" life-worlds or materials (pace Moretti), but also between versions of the individual and of totality and, finally, between the inherent "novelty" of the novel in relation to more broadly "epic" formal possibilities. The Anglophone novel, properly speaking, is a late appearance in this historical process but carries within itself the tensions it has inherited (and recalibrated and rearranged) from those earlier forms.

The first novelist we shall turn to is Mulk Raj Anand, a figure of considerable interest with respect to the questions that are of concern to us here. A pioneering writer of Anglophone fiction, he was also a cofounder of the Indian Progressive Writers' Association (1935), the umbrella organization of anticolonial writers; played a small role in the United Front antifascist writers' movements of the mid-1930s in Europe; and was at the forefront of Indian writers' and artists' involvement in progressive literary internationalism of the "Bandung" variety from the mid-1950s.[23] *Untouchable* is conventionally treated as the first significant Anglophone novel by an Indian author, the taking-off point in the 1930s for a coherent novel tradition in English. But, as Meenakshi Mukherjee has shown, the form has a prehistory extending at least to the middle of the nineteenth century, with novelistic fictions being published not only from the main metropolitan centers but by small publishers in provincial towns as well and often serialized in periodicals.[24] The Anglophone fiction that emerged in the 1930s—and Anand and Raja Rao are among the key figures—constitutes a sort of declaration of independence from those colonial writing practices. The overarching horizon of these works is of course the problematic of nationalism, and the novels explore the difficulties of the nationalist resolution of the crises of culture and society. At their core is thus the question of the very possibility of representation: they lead us to ask how it is possible for nationalism, the political movement of the Anglicized bourgeoisie, to "represent" the Indian masses in the political sense, an act that is indissociable from its right and ability to produce representations of "the people" in an aesthetic sense.

In this regard, Mahatma Gandhi's reported comment to Anand on experiencing his manuscript of *Untouchable* that his subaltern protagonist—an "untouchable" latrine cleaner and sweeper in a provincial garrison town in North India—sounded too much like a "Bloomsbury intellectual" is more than just an amusing throwaway remark and is of more than casual interest to us here, for it identifies a central tension of the Indian (and world) Anglophone novel as a form.[25] It is Rushdie's distinct place in the history of the Anglophone novel that he attempts to explode this problematic entirely by an ostentatious performance of a "vernacular" Indian speech. But something carries over; the tension and problem are merely displaced to another level, as we shall see in a moment. The temporal structure

of the narrative in Anand's novel is itself an attempt to suture together the vastly distant social worlds of the nationalist writer and intellectual—a consciousness that seems to oscillate, or is at best unable to decide, between Gandhian-populist and Nehruvian-technocratic views of society and politics—and the subaltern protagonist living at the abject margins of society: it is an assertively realist narrative that is nevertheless based on the canonical modernist temporal expanse of a single day. In *Mrs. Dalloway*, Virginia Woolf placed London at the center of a world empire—the novel opens with a "shindig" in a pub involving a "colonial" who had made an audible insult to the House of Windsor, and during Clarissa's party later in the day a guest shares her concern, repeated almost like a refrain, about the "state of India," a reference to the rise of Gandhian nationalist agitation.[26] Anand takes us to the colonial periphery itself, the novel thus marking *a double displacement of Bloomsbury* as aesthetic complex and social milieu, the dominant metropolitan literary and intellectual culture for this emergent Indian nationalist intelligentsia: from the West End of London to a dingy little colonial garrison town in North India and from the peregrinations of a middle-aged socialite through streets lined with bespoke establishments to the fraught and perilous walk through the center of town by a young latrine cleaner, cowering in the presence of his caste oppressors but dreaming of better days. These two protagonists, Bakha and Clarissa, represent perhaps the two extreme ends of the social hierarchy of the globally extensive social order of the British Empire. In an address delivered to the second conference of the Indian Progressive Writers' Association in Calcutta in December 1938, a remarkable document of modern Indian literary history, Anand coined an extraordinary image for the emergent aesthetics of his generation and their attempt to give it political-organizational form: "It is almost uncanny to look back upon those dark foggy November days of the year 1935 in London when after the disillusionment and disintegration of years of suffering in India and conscious of the destruction of most of our values through the capitalist crisis of 1931, a few of us emerged from the slough of despond of the cafes and garrets of Bloomsbury and formed the nucleus of the Indian Progressive Writers' Association."[27] The Indo-English literary imagination appears in this image as the *unconscious* of contemporary British culture, with Indian social realism emerging out of a sort of talking cure of (European) modernism. There is no strong or naïve claim to autonomy here; on the contrary, it marks a recognition of the mutual imbrication of "Indian" and "English."

As for the framed appearance of "vernacular" modes of life and speech in the discourse of the world Anglophone novel in our own times—the *inverse* social scenario from latrine cleaners sounding like Bloomsbury intellectuals—it is an essential structural feature of the form, whose exact treatment can be subject to a fairly wide range of experimentation but whose overall structure does not undergo very dramatic variation. At a certain level of abstraction, we could say that this is merely a subset of the broader feature of novelistic discourse that Mikhail Bakhtin identified as the inherent discursive plurality of the novel form as such, its simultaneously "centripetal" and "centrifugal" arrangement of vastly different discourses in a hierarchical but dynamic structure—tendencies, on the one hand, toward a common and "unitary language" and, on the other, toward "social and historical heteroglossia."[28] But it is among the tasks of a social stylistics of the (South Asian) Anglophone novel as a form to identify, first of all, the *modes* of such discursive suturing specific to it and, furthermore, the social significance and *valences* to which they correspond as well. The representation of vernacular speech and life forms within the discourse of the Anglophone novel, which is perhaps most ordinarily achieved through a speaking person marked as subaltern, is a means of *bridging a certain type of social distance* characteristic of postcolonial society, either within the nation-state or across a wider geopolitical landscape.

We can make a few pertinent observations here about this feature of novelistic discourse in the Indo-English novel of India's own boom years. This globalized form of the South Asian Anglophone novel dates more or less to the publication of Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* (1980), though it has important precedents in G. V. Desani's *All about H. Hatter* (1948) and the works of R. K. Narayan. Perhaps no other Anglophone novel has come to be associated to this extent with the idea that it bends the English language toward another language, terms like "chutney," "masala," or "hot" English being routinely used

to describe this feature by numerous readers and by the author himself.[29] There are many characters, major and minor, in the novel, whose life-worlds, speech forms, and "ideologically freighted discourse" are marked as subaltern, but perhaps none is as paradigmatic as Padma, the lover, caretaker, and even, in a certain way, amanuensis of the narrator, Saleem Sinai, as he races against time to write down the story of his life and that of the Midnight's Children Conference, the psychic assembly of the most magically gifted individuals of India's first post-Independence generation.[30] Being a part of the narrative milieu, Padma is therefore one of the most constant presences throughout the novel, second only to Saleem himself, trying constantly to feed him and keep him alive while witnessing his physical disintegration. Here is a somewhat typical passage involving Padma from near the beginning of the novel, her very first appearance in the story:

> 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 up-down-up in exasperation, "to need all this writing-shiting?" I reply: now that I've let out the details of my birth, now that the perforated sheet stands between doctor and patient, there's no going back. Padma snorts. Wrist smacks against forehead. "Okay, starve, starve, who cares two pice?" another louder, conclusive snort, . . . but I take no exception to her attitude. She stirs a bubbling vat all day for a living; something hot and vinegary has steamed her up tonight, thick of waist, somewhat hairy of forearm, she flounces, gesticulates, exits. Poor Padma. Things are always getting her goat. Perhaps even her name: understandably enough, since her mother told her, when she was only small, that she had been named after the lotus goddess, whose most common appellation amongst village folk is "The One Who Possesses Dung."

For all the talk of blowing up literary English, it is pretty clear in this passage, first of all—and examples from this novel could be multiplied almost endlessly—that there is a clear distinction of diction, rhythm, and grammatical structure between the ideological (and therefore) social field that Bakhtin calls authorial discourse, which is not to be confused simply with "narrative voice," and the discourse we glimpse in Padma's speech, the latter being represented by means of the former. The preceding passage is in fact followed immediately by this one:

> In the renewed silence, I return to sheets of paper which smell just a little of turmeric, ready and willing to put out of its misery a narrative which I left yesterday hanging in mid-air—just as Sheherazade, depending for her very survival on leaving Prince Shahryar eaten up by curiosity, used to do night after night! I'll begin at once: by revealing that my grandfather's premonitions in the corridor were not without foundation. In the succeeding months and years, he fell under what I can only describe as the sorcerer's spell of that enormous—and as yet unstained—perforated cloth.[31]

On the one hand, there is the earthy one, "thick of waist," "Who Possesses Dung"; on the other, there are references to the *Thousand and One Nights*. First of all, since this is first-person narrative, we might say that in this extended passage one character in the novel—the narrator, Saleem—is not revealing (and cannot reveal) large segments of his social and cultural worldview, the ideological contents of his own specific discourse, to the (social) "other" that is Padma, contents that can be shared, of course, with the reader. (The implied reader is thus much more likely to be Saleem's social type rather than Padma's.) And the *Nights* itself appears here as a sign of a certain *Western*, because Orientalist, learning. Furthermore, in one remarkable little imperative phrase—"Eat, na, food is spoiling"—Padma's very first spoken words in the novel, we see Rushdie's entire strategy for the introduction of a recognizably Indian English idiom into his language. In fact, there are two distinct techniques at work here. The phrase "food is spoiling" is an instance of the syntax

of one language being mimicked in another—a common feature of Indian English speech forms. The Hindi-Urdu phrase being "translated" here could, for instance, be, "khānā ḳharāb ho rahā hai." Even more interesting, however, is the imperative phrase—"Eat, na"—where a *morphological* element of a conjugated verb from some unidentified North Indian language (though probably again Hindi-Urdu), the emphatic *nā*, is attached to an English verb in its imperative form. And there is a *comma* separating the English verb from its emphatic "foreign" (that is, Hindi-Urdu) suffix—the hilarious nature of the claim that this suffix might settle into English morphology being highlighted by the comma that separates it from the verb.

These are of course common features of what even sociolinguists have come to call "Hinglish," the lexical, syntactical, and morphological mixing in speech forms in India between English elements and those of the northern vernacular. But more specifically, they are habits of urban *middle-class* Indian (and, more specifically, Bombay) English speech. What we get in this passage from *Midnight's Children*, therefore—and this is a typical feature of Rushdie's novelistic language across his works—is the attribution of an urban middle-class idiom to an illiterate subaltern (and here, a woman and of peasant background) who should typically not be able to speak any kind of English at all. This is not a question so much of "the linguistic authenticity of fictional characters," a question that resurfaces repeatedly in polemical form in the literary language debates in India, as of mapping the social valences of their speech forms and patterns.[32] In the case of Rushdie's writings, we might then say that a middle-class urban Indian idiom is represented in the discourse of the Anglophone novel as a genuinely subaltern speech form or as its "translation" into the Anglophone discourse of the novel. When middle-class South Asian readers respond to this aspect of the novel, therefore, they are recognizing their *own* speech forms. In what is merely the most recent instance of this type of reception, Deepa Mehta, the director of the film based on the novel, told a journalist of her first encounter with the book in 1983, "It's the first time I had read a novel where I felt the English language had been chutney-fied or actually had been reworked with Hindi in such a way that it made it very personal to Indians."[33] And in the case of other Rushdie

characters—Gibreel Farishta in *The Satanic Verses* (1988), for instance—this sociological link of a character's language to the Anglophone middle-class are more patently apparent. It is now a fairly routine judgment that before the moment of Rushdie's emergence practices of representing Asian and African life-worlds in English-language fiction had either exoticized those realities (including linguistic ones), that is, made the other thoroughly familiar through figures of the exotic—in *Cry, the Beloved Country* (1948) by Alan Paton, for instance, or even Pearl S. Buck's *The Good Earth* (1931)—or, in the case of a writer like Narayan, had projected the bullock-cart temporalities of the so-called eternal life of the Indian village or small town onto the life of the nation as such. The new fiction, it is then suggested, burst out of the constraints of those earlier novelistic practices and put the reader directly into contact with the "hot and messy and vulgar and crowded and noisy" reality of India, to quote Rushdie's recent comments about the writing of *Midnight's Children* once again.

While I do not disagree with some of the conventional perceptions about the historical novelty of Rushdie's fiction, I do think that one of its distinctive and much-heralded features, namely, the mode of appearance in it of "vernacular" speech forms and life-worlds, is not, as I have attempted to show in the foregoing analysis of one passage from *Midnight's Children*, exactly what it has often been taken to be. The "chutney-fied" English strewn throughout the novels is not to be confused for the authorial discourse itself, which may *cite* the former from time to time in unmarked ways but is never identical to it. Authorial discourse in these novels may not unfold in what Rushdie himself has called the "cool" language of E. M. Forster's novel of India, but its claim to "subaltern" status needs decoding: it is nothing more (but also nothing less) than a staking of a claim to autonomy within international Anglophone literary culture.[34] In this one limited sense, therefore, it seems to me that Rushdie's is not a more radical experiment than Desani's in *All about H. Hatter*, often mentioned by Rushdie himself as an important predecessor.

The genius of Rushdie's execution in *Midnight's Children* is a double and even contradictory one: it lies in calling attention to the social distance between elite and subaltern as social, cultural, psychological,

and linguistic realities and, on the one hand, *exploring* it thematically in terms of the lifelong struggle between Saleem and Siva—the former having usurped the latter's privileged legacy when the two were exchanged at birth—while offering us, on the other, a *myth* of its overcoming at the level of novelistic discourse. And in this one aspect, it is also not as distant as it might be expected to be from such a canonical work of national realism in Hindi as *Ādhā Gāũ̃* (Half the Village) by Rahi Masoom Raza, whose famous presentation of the "Bhojpuri" speech forms of eastern Uttar Pradesh remain limited to the speech of individual characters, with the authorial context provided entirely in "high" literary *khaṛī bōlī* Hindi. And the technique of Ghosh in the first two (already published) novels of the *Ibis Trilogy*, where sociolinguistic registers, from the Bhojpuri dialect of eastern Hindi to Cantonese pidgin English, are reduced almost to the level of idiolects associated with individual characters, perhaps takes this procedure to its fullest realization. But this is a paradoxical achievement, to say the least. In the first book of the trilogy, *Sea of Poppies* (2008), for instance, we see the return of the glossary, whose elimination from postcolonial Anglophone fiction was sometimes touted as a sign of its declaration of independence from metropolitan literary English, with the added innovation now that it is in fact incorporated into the novel itself, taking the form of the "chrestomathy" of the *Ibis*, the ship on which the lives of all the novel's characters, like their languages, intersect and commingle. To this extent, it is possible to say that these new modes of representation of vernacular speech forms in literary English therefore also mark simply a new modulation in the larger and historically longer preoccupation with vernacularization—and "Anglicism," we might say, reveals its complicity with "Orientalism" once again.

But the treatment of the social distance separating the social milieus of Anglophone novelistic discourse from vernacular spaces and practices can of course take many forms in the contemporary novel other than that of the (subaltern) speaking person and its discourse. In the novel of immigration (from South Asia to Britain), for instance, the distance takes literally geographical form in the vector of the immigrant's journey from his or her homeland in the global periphery to the metropolis. To take one example, in *Brick Lane* (2003), the social and cultural distance between the working-class London inhabited by Bengali immigrants and the rural Bangladeshi hinterland of their origin is given the shape of *temporal* difference, the almost mythological temporality of the opening chapter, which takes place entirely in the ancestral village in Bangladesh, being in sharp contrast with the "empty, homogeneous" realist narrative temporality of the rest of the novel. And the same individual characters "speak" differently in the novel's English in the two different places, as if to characterize the difference between their pre- and postmigration lives as ontologically distinct universes.

Finally, we need to address the singular fact that in a large number of important Anglophone novels linked to the subcontinent the question of a possible approach to the "vernacular" takes the form of a fascination and engagement to varying degrees with one single linguistic and cultural formation, Urdu literary culture and *poetry* in particular. Among the postcolonial writers, these include such important works as Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* and *The Enchantress of Florence* (2008), Anita Desai's *In Custody* (1984), Mohsin Hamid's *Moth Smoke* (2000), Nadeem Aslam's *Maps for Lost Lovers* (2004), Aravind Adiga's *The White Tiger* (2008), and Kamila Shamsie's *Burnt Shadows* (2009), to name only the most important examples and to say nothing of such earlier canonical works as *A Passage to India* (1924), *Untouchable*, or Ahmed Ali's *Twilight in Delhi* (1940), the latter in fact another Bloomsbury work, first published by Hogarth Press. It is hard to think of any other vernacular literary culture of the subcontinent receiving such persistent attention in the Anglophone novel tradition. What are we to make of this predilection, and what exactly is its significance for the larger set of issues that concern us in this book? To begin with, we may note that the modes of appearance of Urdu in the more recent group of novels are far from identical or uniform. In Desai's novel, for instance, Urdu appears cast as a degenerating (formerly elite) culture, given concrete form in the disintegrating life and domestic relations of the poet Nur, resident of Shahjahanabad, the old walled city of Delhi. Interestingly, in the novel's own terms, Hindi and Urdu are mutually antagonistic but nevertheless overlapping literary registers and cultures, on a continuum with each other rather than inhabiting noncoincident

worlds: Deven Sharma, the protagonist of the novel, is a poor college teacher of Hindi in a provincial town but his true love is Urdu poetry, especially the verse of the once-great Nur. This association of Urdu with degeneration is a distinctly Indian possibility, nearly impossible to imagine within a Pakistani cultural framework (for instance in Aslam's novel), where, if anything, Urdu is of course experienced as the dominant literary culture in the country from the perspective of the various regional languages.[35] As I have noted in Chapter 2, this association of Urdu in India with a social order in decline—the cliché of its inculcation of *navābī* or semifuedal *mentalités*—reveals in fact a haze of misperceptions about the social realities of Urdu in the country, let alone in the subcontinent as a whole, from the location of the mainstreams of national culture. But it is also a notable fact that Desai uses Urdu, rather than Hindi or any other more (nationally speaking) "representative" literary culture in India, to reflect on the fate of the vernacular languages as such in the transition to the globalized economic, social, and cultural forms that are visible only in incipient or chrysalis form in the novel.

In Adiga's *The White Tiger*, the appearance of Urdu takes the form of citations of Urdu and Persian poets, including Asadullah Khan Ghalib but especially Muhammad Iqbal, as part of the elaborate joke that is the opening conceit of the novel—Balram Halwai's letter to the Chinese Prime Minister, an invitation, we might say, to collaborate in the creation of a sort of "capitalism with Asian values." The "values" here are provided by Iqbal's philosophy of historically meaningful action rather than, say, the romantic and lyric verse traditions associated in Desai's novel with Nur. And in Aslam's *Maps for Lost Lovers*, a certain sense of melancholia identified repeatedly as derived from Urdu literary culture comes to pervade the mood of the narrative as a whole. Here the preeminent figure is Faiz Ahmed Faiz—militant, worldly, and yet the creator of exquisite lyric verse. The field of affect generated by the scene of separation from the beloved, this characteristic and well-known preoccupation of the Urdu ghazal, provides in the novel the vocabulary for the experience of diasporic communities displaced from the newly decolonized societies of their origin—India and Pakistan, in the case of the major

characters—to the former imperial center, the slow-burning fuse of their loneliness, despair, and disorientation. The sudden disappearance and slow discovery of the fate of the "lost lovers" of the title is in turn itself a figure for the temporalities of Urdu verse, closing the circle from verse to prose and back to verse again. To sum up, then, these English-language novels' attraction to the Urdu poem and its social lives reveals the life of Urdu quite beyond the terms imposed on it by the nation-state system in the subcontinent, namely, that it may be conceived of as either the exquisite but superseded and ghettoized expressivity of "the Muslims" as minority within the nation-state or the powerful medium of their normalization as a majority within a separate nationalism and nation-state. Urdu continues to cross the borders of this system, offering to Anglophone novelistic discourse a strange image, in a distorting mirror, of its own reach across the terrain of Britain's former imperial realm in the subcontinent. Within the practices of the most visible form of South Asian world literature, therefore, one form of the literature of the Hindi-Urdu vernacular of North India keeps making an appearance, a language and literature fundamentally of and in exile, failing to be adequate to the demand for indigenousness under any national project in the subcontinent, the demand that is inseparable from the history of world literature itself and which we have been charting in this book.

More broadly speaking, then, we might say that in world literature the (South Asian) Anglophone novel as a form marks a sort of *translation* of non-Anglophone and vernacular social and cultural spheres and life-worlds into the novelistic discourse of English and its cultural system more broadly. As such, it is subject to a *politics* of translation. On the one hand, the modes of appearance of vernacular realities in the novel's Anglophone discourse signify attempts variously to harness linguistic, cultural, and social inequality and heterogeneity through "ethnicized" assimilation that gets recoded and reproduced as linguistic diversity, in the interests of a global cultural system in which the regional Anglophone elite now wishes to participate on equal terms. It is an asymmetrical situation unimaginable in reverse, that is, a similarly instrumental assimilation of English into the discourses of vernacular fiction. On the other hand,

the force and social prestige of vernacular literary expression continually exerts a certain pressure on Anglophone expression, forcing a reckoning with its social reach and claim to authenticity. The colonial cultural logic, that is, Orientalism-Anglicism, that we have been examining in this book has been reinscribed in our own postcolonial times at one level in the argument (of unequals) about the respective rights, representativeness, and value of English and the vernaculars, an argument that now gets staged globally, not just within the nation-states of the subcontinent. Indeed, Amit Chaudhuri responded to Rushdie's proclamations with an anthology of his own, expanding its range to include precisely the vernacular literatures Rushdie had so summarily dismissed.[36] On the one hand, Anglophone literary expression, the end product of an epochal historical process of *assimilation*, is packaged in the world literary system—including in departments of literature in the West—as an instance of pure diversity; on the other, South Asian languages, especially in the nationalized forms of Urdu and Hindi, stake their claim to *authentic* national expression against the alien presence of English.

This script was performed once again in February 2015 in the contretemps between Rushdie and the Marathi-language writer Bhalchandra Nemade, winner of the 2014 Jnanpith Award, India's highest official literary prize, which is awarded annually. Nemade, himself for many years a teacher of English literature at the university level, had made extreme "nativist" comments at a public gathering, calling for the elimination of English from the school curriculum as part of the promotion of Marathi in its native state of Maharashtra. He described English as a "killer language" and denigrated the value of its literature: "What is so great about English? There isn't a single epic in the language. We have 10 epics in the Mahabharata [*sic*] itself. Don't make English compulsory, make its elimination compulsory." In the cultural politics of literary language in India, such remarks cannot fail to be read in a right-wing "Hindu nationalist" register, especially since the return of the Hindu nationalist Bharatya Janata Party (BJP) to national power in 2014. One of the slogans of the Hindu right, after all, has long been "Hindi, Hindu, Hindustan." But Nemade went further, accusing the most famous "Indian" Anglophone writers, namely, Rushdie and V. S. Naipaul, of "pandering to the West" and dismissing the quality of Rushdie's novels since *Midnight's Children*. The reaction of Naipaul, who has never even wanted to be called a Caribbean writer, to being called an Indian one is not known, but Rushdie's response came soon via Twitter: "Grumpy old bastard. Just take your prize and say thank you nicely. I doubt you've even read the work you attack."[37] Again, as if on cue, this little exchange reignited the "politics of language" debate in the country, with writers taking one or the other side and the state government threatening to take legal action against Rushdie for using abusive language against a revered writer. Meanwhile, the BJP government's attempt to impose Hindi on the central bureaucracy in place of English has been met with loud protests from non-Hindi-speaking states, especially those in the South. The multivalent roles of English in Indian society now include appearing to be a sort of neutral mediator between the "regional" languages and nationalized Hindi, suspending in the very performance of that function the political scene of its dissemination.

In fact, *neither* end of the polar structure of this debate between English and the vernaculars can do the work it is marshaled to do within the globalizing cultural logics of the late-capitalist postcolonial world. Neither framework allows an understanding of the Indian vernaculars themselves as "conscripts of modernity"—if I may borrow a phrase from the anthropologist David Scott from another context—conscripted into the cultural system of English and the world literary relations it makes possible.[38] While dislocated and displaced subjectivity is much touted by Rushdie and others as the great problematic of the Anglophone novel, it is in fact no less pertinent (and poignant), and perhaps more so, for our understanding of vernacular literary practices themselves.[39] For, as I have argued at various points in preceding chapters in some detail, the indigenization of language and culture in the subcontinent is irreducibly a colonial process, a radical innovation in the name of return to the origin. And as I shall argue in the remainder of the book, this historical reality calls for forms of critical thinking that are attentive to those forms of social experience that are fundamentally at odds with nationalist (that is, indigenizing) resolutions of the question of language

and culture. The problem with Rushdie's triumphalist claims about the Anglophone novel, repeated in various forms in his novels themselves as editorial asides, is that they are part of the *myth* of the form and as such preclude a real historical understanding of it, including its actual successes and achievements but above all the multiple internal tensions that characterize it as a genre.

With some important exceptions, the significant writers of this boom in Anglophone fiction from the subcontinent have been from India rather than from the smaller countries of the region, with important exceptions from Sri Lanka and Bangladesh. But over the past few years, this situation has changed dramatically, as media and cultural institutions worldwide have been heralding the arrival of a new breed of writer—from Pakistan—and the birth of a distinctly Pakistani literature. The appearance over a few years of such novels as Mohsin Hamid's page-turner *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* (2007, now turned into a Hollywood film), Muhammad Hanif's brilliantly funny satire *A Case of Exploding Mangoes* (2007), Shamsie's historical novel *Burnt Shadows*, and Daniyal Mueenuddin's short-story collection, *In Other Rooms, Other Wonders* (2009), among a handful of other works, produced the collective sense that there was a new cultural force to be reckoned with in the subcontinent. The global reputation of Pakistan as the home of community-sanctioned gang rapes of peasant women and public flogging of teenaged girls in the name of Islamic values adds to the surprise of these literary developments for metropolitan readers, a mode of response repeatedly expressed by reviewers in the Anglo-American press. The specter of jihadi Islam provides a certain frisson in the global reception of these works.

The process of international validation is already quite advanced—endorsements of metropolitan authorities of various sorts have been coming fast and hard. Individual books and the group of writers as a whole have received, for instance, the imprimatur of William Dalrymple, the new dean of popular history writing in the subcontinent and an organizer of the Jaipur Literary Festival, and of Rushdie himself, who has declared publicly that it is now in Pakistan that exciting things are happening. And even the Indian publishing world has been caught up in the excitement. The general feeling is that the hegemony of the far-better-known Indian writers has been put into

question. Metropolitan readers could be forgiven for thinking that these writers represent the first green shoots of literary creativity in Pakistan. Very little, if anything, ever gets translated into English from Urdu and the other literary languages of the country—Pashto, Punjabi, Saraiki, Sindhi, and Balochi, to name only the most prevalent ones—either overseas or within the country. Lacking a central institution of the ambition of India's Sahitya Akademi or National Book Trust, which undertake a significant project of translation between and from the country's literary languages, the Pakistani literary landscape remains fragmented into linguistic spheres. But the fact that even the Indian media seem to believe the myth about the new writing reveals the extent to which English is now established as the region's literary vehicle for the journey to world literature. The shift in the literary landscape within the country itself is a dramatic one. When the poet and novelist Fehmida Riaz wrote her remarkable little study of Pakistani literature in the 1980s, she did not feel the need to even mention writing in English. Even a history of Pakistani literature in English written in the same decade by a sociolinguist had to make strenuous efforts to assemble its materials beyond Zulfikar Ghose and Bapsi Sidhwa, both long settled overseas.[40]

Given the complexity of the emergence of the new Pakistani writing in English into visibility out of the historical processes I have been tracing in this book—its imbrication in such institutional networks of world literature as publishing, editing, translation, distribution, marketing, reviewing, and the awarding of prizes but also, more broadly, its involvement in the colonial (and postcolonial) logic of Orientalism-Anglicism—how can we understand its significance on its own terms? Are these works a flash in the pan or the harbinger of a stable and more lasting contribution? The encompassing question that seems to hover over this entire body of writing concerns the distinctness and *scope* of "Pakistani" historical experience and whether it can be given coherent form in literary narrative, a question that, if answered in the affirmative, raises another question, namely, what literary *form* is its appropriate medium? In formal-generic terms, we might therefore say that the question of the Pakistani Anglophone novel is *whether* there is such a thing as a *Pakistani epic*, a question that emerges from and addresses the peculiar historical

conditions of possibility of the country as the "nation-state" of "the Muslims of India."[41] The young novelists we are concerned with here have already, fairly early in their careers, experimented with different strategies for handling this question: Shamsie taking as background a vast historical landscape across continents and decades *(Burnt Shadows)*, she and Aslam revisiting canonical moments of the pre-Independence Indian-national historical narrative as the prehistory of distinctly Pakistani experience (*Burnt Shadows* and *Maps for Lost Lovers*), and Hanif exploding the epic ambition of (national) narrative as such into satire *(A Case of Exploding Mangoes)*.

In this regard, and seemingly without being aware of it, the new writing in English echoes aspects of an earlier preoccupation with precisely this question in Urdu literature. In such renowned (and different) works as Qurratulain Haider's novel *Āg kā daryā* (River of Fire, 1959), which I have briefly discussed in Chapter 2, Intezar Husain's story "Ēk bin-likhī razmīya" (An Unwritten Epic, 1950–1951), and Riaz's trilogy of novellas from the 1990s on, the question was not only raised but also answered (controversially) in the *negative*. For Haider's novel, if Pakistan was the nation-state of Indo-Muslim civilization, then the "Indic" element of its history was as pertinent to its cultural elaboration as the "Muslim" one was. (Not coincidentally, the novel's publication marked the writer's permanent departure for India over a decade after Partition.) The narrative unfolds against an expanse of time stretching from the fourth-century BCE reign of Chandragupta Maurya, who defeated the Macedonian satraps who ruled northwestern India in the wake of Alexander's death, to the upheaval of India's Partition in the twentieth century. The series of events narrated across this unwieldy time frame are held together, at one level, through the device of reincarnation, the *Orlando*-like means for the appearance of recurrence and repetition as historical themes that, despite the author's many protestations in this regard—she always claimed not to have read Woolf's novel when she wrote her own—also takes us to Bloomsbury as milieu of literary possibility. Within the fraught politics of religious identity in the subcontinent, the device of reincarnation itself, marked as "Hindu" religious belief, acquires socially significant meaning by undermining

the possibility of notions of an autonomous "Muslim" historical development.

In Husain's story, the Partition, far from being an event that inaugurated an epic history, turns out to be one that put an end to precisely this hope and possibility. What starts out as a standard third-person narrative of a few weeks or months in a small North Indian village called Qadirpur around the time of the Partition, centered around the local fraternity of traditional wrestlers and their leader, Pichwa, ends abruptly two-thirds of the way through and becomes a series of dated first-person, diary-like entries. In these, the narrator, now in author persona, reflects on the impossibility of the story completing itself and his own inability in the end to produce an epic tale in the form of a novel—"my Mahabharata," he calls it—of Pichwa's befuddled reception of the idea of Pakistan and death at the hands of assassins on his return to India in the midst of communal violence. And Riaz's novella trilogy, each volume focused on one of the three successors to British India—namely, India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh—pushes against the impossibility of showing, let alone naming, the totality that contains them all. And even Rushdie, trying to write a "Pakistani" novel nearly three decades ago after his iconic "Indian" novel (that is, *Midnight's Children*), proclaimed in *Shame*, as I have already noted, "that Indian centuries lay just beneath the surface of Pakistani Standard Time."[42]

Could it be possible that now, more than six decades after the creation of the country, the judgment elaborated in Husain's story—"Pakistan" as an "unwritten epic"—is beginning to be reversed in writing in English? Is this new generation of writers collectively producing in English an epos of the nation? And, more broadly speaking, could even the violence, extremism, and overall fissiparous social tendencies that are currently tearing the country apart also be understood as the birth pangs of a new cultural independence from Pakistani society's "Indian" past? It may be too early to answer such questions with any degree of certainty. And it is also not yet evident whether the new writing is capable of the kind of ambitious act of historical imagination that can harness these disparate aspects of social experience into an original form. As the global reception of this

generation of writers draws them further and more seamlessly into world literary spaces, in what ways can their writing continue to respond to the lived realities of Pakistani life? Above all, it remains very much to be seen whether they can engage in meaningful ways with vernacular social and cultural imaginaries, including those produced in the literatures of Urdu and the regional languages. This question about the Pakistani Anglophone novel is thus also of course in the end a question about the instincts and *capacities of the new Anglophone middle class*, forged in the foundry of globalization over the past several decades from which these writers have emerged, and whether it is capable of deep engagement with the cultural and social worlds that surround it. British and American publishers seem willing for the moment to publish and market aggressively virtually anything written by a talented young Pakistani writing in English. And the machinery of translation into the European languages is also in motion. There is no doubt that this is a highly talented group of writers, each in her or his distinct way, but the institutional conditions through which the work is acquiring a global audience will pose a tough set of challenges for them: how to survive the effects of early celebrity; how to resist writing according to the formulaic demands of the global market; and how to repudiate the opportunistic peddling of Islam and jihadi militancy to the global audience. They will have to perform a fine and precarious balancing act between writing about the fundamental issues facing Pakistani and South Asian society—among which religion, sexuality, politics, and violence surely constitute an important cluster—without playing to the metropolitan fascination with the specter of Islam and stereotyped Muslim sensibilities.

It seems pretty incontrovertible to say that the novel as a form has a preeminent, and perhaps even predominant, place in world literature, that is, both in the various forms of systemic literary relations across the world and in the academic discourse that addresses itself to this cultural reality. In the former case, it seems fairly evident that whether a society has something of worth to "offer" world literature—a constant trope in the discourse of world literature from Goethe to Rushdie—is now first and foremost decided on the basis of the novel, even though in many parts of the world poetic

forms and practices of various sort still have a far more crucial place in local literary cultures. (I shall turn to the question of the "survival" into bourgeois modernity of one such form, namely, the ghazal in Urdu, in the remaining pages of this chapter.) And in the latter case, the novel is, for instance, at the core of Moretti's entire effort to conceptualize world literature, his "conjectures" taking the form of trying to answer the question of what exactly it is that happens when the novel "emerges" in a language or country for the first time.[43] But how exactly are we to understand this preeminence or to conceive of the novel as a global form, as perhaps the global form par excellence? In a study of the Latin American novel in a global frame, Mariano Siskind speaks of the novel as the "hegemonic [literary] form" of bourgeois modernity, the very (cultural) vehicle for "the world historical globalization of the European bourgeoisie." I have already noted that Siskind's use of the word "globalization" with reference to the (colonial) processes of the nineteenth century seems to collapse the historical differences between that phase, and those modalities, of the expansion of bourgeois culture and those specific to our own times. To speak, for instance, of "the global novel" in the nineteenth century is to obfuscate, by projecting back from the present, the social and cultural distance that separated colonial centers and peripheries and the aesthetic differences that corresponded to them, often inscribed in literary form itself.[44] And despite the evident preeminence of the novel on a world scale, it can hardly be said to have achieved "hegemony," strictly speaking, across all the modern literary languages of the world. In the subcontinent, for instance, the *novelty* of the novel as form is still available to the form itself as an object of reflection.

The Anglophone novel is, as I have tried to demonstrate here, defined by its paradoxical historical situation: it is a cultural and formal *innovation* that nevertheless emerges out of a long historical process of linguistic and cultural *assimilation.* Given its prominence, the form has been subjected to extensive critical and theoretical interpretation, including often in the novels themselves, especially in Rushdie's works, which never shy away from telling the reader how they ought to be read—as "postcolonial" (that is, postnationalist) Indian fiction, cosmopolitan world literature, or novel of immigration,

to note only some of the registers to which his novels draw attention. If we turn from novel to poetry, however, we are forced to confront the fact that nothing like the highly elaborated conception of the novel, including its self-conception, is immediately available to us. In (Anglophone) poetry, we are forced to confront rather different elaborations of time and space and therefore rather different possibilities for conceiving of the space of world literature. If the form of the (South Asian) Anglophone novel contains (temporal and spatial) elements of the epic, how may we conceive of contemporary poetic expression and its relation to space and time? In order to pursue this line of thinking, I shall turn in the next section to the question of "lyric" poetic practices and their relationship to the history of Orientalism (and world literature) that I have been elaborating in this book. By engaging with a small number of poems by one poet, I shall suggest a possible line of thinking about the question of lyric as a modern norm at the intersections of languages and cultures in the colonial and postcolonial worlds.

The Ghazal among the Nations

In line with the distinct quality of "lyric" expression, it would be appropriate to begin here in a small way and at a certain remove from these larger questions, with just a few lines of verse:

> Someone, finally, is here! No, unhappy heart, no one—
> just a passerby on his way.
> The night has surrendered
> to clouds of scattered stars.
> The lamps in the halls waver.
> Having listened with longing for steps,
> the roads too are asleep.
> A strange dust has buried every footprint.
>
> Blow out the lamps, break the glasses, erase
> all memory of wine. Heart,
> Bolt forever your sleepless doors,
> tell every dream that knocks to go away.
> No one, now no one will ever return.[45]

A few simple observations seem appropriate here: the lines are divided into two stanzas of unequal length, in each of which the speaking subject addresses an other, but this other is identified as the former's own "heart," qualified as "unhappy" on its first appearance, in the first line. There is, in other words, an elocutionary feel to the language, a self addressing an other, even if that other is also revealed to be the self itself. We might say that in this very doubling, the self is made receptive to the possibility of an other, a truly other, with all three—namely, the self, the self as other, and the awaited or expected other—existing together within a world that contains them all. Second, in this *social* world, properly speaking—for two is just a dyad, but three is a society, as Georg Simmel once said[46]—the condition of the self is one of solitude, which itself seems to be not simply the absence of others but rather a *dialectic* of expectation (of the arrival of an other) and the failure of this expectation to be actualized. Third, we are introduced in the first stanza to elements of a material world, or a built environment, to be more exact: "roads," "halls," and the flickering light of "lamps," and it is through this world that a stranger may have passed, raising and then negating the expectation of some known other's arrival, an other who for some unknown reason does not arrive.

The second stanza displays a marked alteration of tone. Its forceful images perform a disassembling of the scene of expectation, the prospective social gathering into which the other was to be received, which would have been actualized precisely in the other's arrival: the lamps that would have lit up the dark, the glasses that would have carried the wine, the doors left wide open to receive the guest. The final judgment is, well, final: "No one, now no one will ever return." And at the end of this last line, in the very last word, something crucial is revealed: the expected (but thwarted) arrival was in fact to have been a *return*. Some of the images—flickering oil lamps, glasses or cups of wine—seem at least a little odd, alien, or out of place in this little lyric poem written in English. What could "strange dust" possibly mean? The poem, which is presented in its entirety here, on its own terms seems to court melancholia, but the very forcefulness of the final judgment, even the image of the bolting of doors, seems to speak of much more of an openness to life and effort than

a melancholic orientation, properly speaking, would imply. Longing and its dialectical unfolding, disappointment and its dogged acceptance—these are some of the elements of the poem's structure of feeling. There is no strong claim on the world here, just an assertion of the right to hope, even in the face of strong disappointment.

We might begin to add a second layer to our reading by noting that these lines were written by Agha Shahid Ali, who died in Amherst, Massachusetts, in December 2001. He succumbed to brain cancer, which, by a bizarre coincidence, had killed his mother only a few years earlier, an event and a loss his readers are familiar with from his poems. He was just shy of fifty-two years old when he died. His early death seemed to have been followed by a quick consolidation of a broad and expanding reputation, which culminated in the publication of his collected verse in 2011. The news of his sudden passing was received with a proliferation of testimonials by people who had known him to one extent or another. In my own case, the encounters had been few and very brief: once at a poetry reading in the East Village and the second time on the Columbia University campus when I ran into him in the company of Edward Said, of whom he was a close friend. On that second occasion, we made jokes back and forth, in the manner of *dēsīs* (that is, South Asians) far from home taking each other's measure. And yet, despite this brief encounter, I have always felt his passing as a personal loss—as the disappearance of someone I could have, and should have, known. It feels like a failure that I did not.

This is at least anecdotal evidence of the force of his writing as of his life, which he commented on extensively in his verse. Shahid—as he is generally referred to and as he referred to himself when he wrote in the ghazal form, which requires one appearance of the author's conventionalized poetic name, or *takẖallus*—was raised mostly in Srinagar, the capital of the Indian part of the troubled and contested region of Jammu and Kashmir, and he also spent some years in Delhi. In the American phase of his life, he sometimes referred to himself as a "Kashmiri-American," a gesture of solidarity with the ongoing Kashmiri struggle for *āzādi* that emerged in 1990—*āzādi* is an overcoded signifier in the Kashmiri context, a first level of whose meanings could be limned simply as freedom or independence—and

a repudiation both of the Indian state's savage and ongoing repression of the Kashmiri Muslim population and of the equally callous and stupid manipulation of the Kashmiri struggle by the Pakistani state, which facilitated a violent global jihad in Kashmir that not only fractured Kashmiri society along Hindu-Muslim lines but has now rebounded on the Pakistani state and society themselves. This event coincided exactly with the end of the first Afghan war, the U.S.-Saudi anti-Soviet global jihad, making available a host of militants hailing from places as far afield as Saudi Arabia, Chechnya, and Uzbekistan for this new jihadi front. The call for *āzādi* is in one sense a sort of prayer to be rid of this eternal and obsessive conflict between two vicious political entities. Shahid's poetry registers his anger and despair, but also his insistent hope, in response to all these developments. Meanwhile, in Kashmir itself, Shahid has come to acquire something of the status of national poet. It is said that on news of his death, activists of the Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF) showed up at his residence in Massachusetts, asking to be allowed to accompany his body home. (He was buried in Amherst.)[47] If this story is indeed more than merely apocryphal, it resonates powerfully with his remarkable cycle of poems titled "From Amherst to Kashmir," which constitutes a record of the psychic journey of accompanying his mother's body back home from the United States just a few years earlier.

Although Shahid was by no means a political poet per se, his corpus of writing raises profound questions about the political landscape of contemporary South Asia and of the world at large. He paints a vast and complex emotional canvas. Loss, distance, recuperation, grief, love, and shimmering perceptions of inner and outer worlds—these are the elements of his poetic universe. The cultural references of his verse are widely ecumenical, ranging from Western literatures and histories to Arabic, Persian, and subcontinental ones, above all Urdu. Many of his poems record the process of his discovery of Urdu poetry, which came to acquire a powerful and luminous presence in them. Returning to the lines of Shahid's that I started with, we may now elaborate a few more layers of reading. This text in English is not, in fact, original. Called "Solitude," it is presented to us as an attempt to translate, or rather "adapt," the Urdu of a poem by Faiz,

titled "Tanhā'ī," a word that carries the sense of solitude as a purely objective condition, certainly, but also of loneliness as a subjective condition, though somehow without the English word's sentimentality.[48] Shahid has spoken of his adaptational strategy as one of "unfaithful" fidelity, a precise description of the relationship between the two corresponding texts, the Urdu and the English. As a strategy, it is perhaps most clearly at work in the case of engagement with Faiz's ghazal poems, a lyric genre and a question in itself to which I shall return later.[49] It was on these terms of unfaithful fidelity, in his own terms, that Shahid sought the latter's permission for the exercise. He has given us a snippet of Faiz's response: "You are welcome to make your adaptations of my poems which I shall be happy to receive."[50] Bot Shahid and Faiz thus speak explicitly of adaptations rather than translations. While this particular poem of Faiz's is not a ghazal in genre terms, it abounds in that elusive quality of the form, *taġhazzul*—some of the recognizable things usually evoked by the term "lyric" but also the particular affective map of the ghazal universe that is situated in the form often in a highly conventionalized depiction of a social world. It is an early poem, from Faiz's first published collection of poetry (1941), therefore written probably when he was in his twenties. It is one of the poems from the second part of the collection, so arranged because they come after a turning point in his early development as poet, a turn marked by the famous poem "Mujh sē pahlī sī maḥabbat mērī maḥbūb na māṅg" (Love, do not ask for that old love again), a programmatic poem in which Faiz transforms the self-enclosed world of the lyric by opening it up to the outer, social world, imbuing the lyric self with the life of the social.[51]

Some of Shahid's choices stand out and merit a bit of discussion. Take, for instance, "strange dust" in the eighth line. Faiz's phrase is "ajnabī ḳhāk," where "ḳhāk" could be rendered as dust or even earth in some contexts (as in the English "khaki"), and the noun "ajnabī" (stranger) is here used adjectivally, so perhaps the phrase could be rendered, a little awkwardly, as "stranger dust" or, more fluidly, "foreign" or "alien" dust. What could this possibly mean? A clue may be had in another of Faiz's poems from exactly this period—in fact, they sit two poems apart in the same collection of his verse—which speaks

of living under the tyranny of "ajnabī hāth" (alien hands), a phrase that has usually been understood as a reference to foreign colonial rule. If this is the case in "Tanhā'ī" as well, then a whole new possibility of reading the Faiz "original" might be opened up. In the image of the bolting of doors, we might then say, Faiz is shutting the door to the historical past and inviting his reader to live without the all-consuming expectation that it might return. An "alien dust" has "obscured" all footprints, all those traces of the past. Faiz's poem could thus be understood to be concerned with the whole cluster of issues that coalesce in a colonial (and postcolonial) society around the idea of a crisis of tradition, the problematic, we might say, of the broken vessels and the desire for their restoration. Fanon famously detailed the perils and potentialities of this situation and cautioned the artists and intellectuals of societies emerging from colonial rule that "it is not enough to try to get back to the people in that past from which they have already emerged; rather we must join them in that fluctuating movement which they are giving shape to, and which, as soon as it has started, will be the signal for everything to be called into question."[52]

If this reading of the Urdu "original" is sound, then it has implications for our reading of the English "adaptation" as well. For the image of "return" is Shahid's—Faiz simply speaks of an arrival, even though he clearly distinguishes this present situation from the past, whose traces have become increasingly obscured in the present but not entirely erased. So in taking this license in the translation, Shahid has in fact heightened a certain element in the original, the same effect also being produced by his insertion of a stanza break where there is not one in the original, increasing the effect given in the lines that follow that a firm *decision* has been taken. And I have come to this understanding via a reading of the original and its comparison to the adaptation. In other words, it is not just that the "adaptation" has taught me something about the "original"; it is also that the latter now tells me something about the former. Could we thus perhaps think of this as one text in two languages, written by two individuals and in two phases or stages, with the second coming decades after the first, and the two modes of expression situated unequally and asymmetrically with respect to each other, multiply and laboriously

articulated rather than constituting an organic whole? The conventions of institutionalized publishing flatten out many such ambiguities carefully arranged here when they assign the author function to Faiz and that of translator to Shahid. To know that you come from something, that in some strong sense you belong to it, and at the same time to know that you have no unmediated access to it free of the distorting and refracting filter of "alien dust"—it is this fundamentally exilic perspective on postcolonial life that our double text seems to have elaborated. In it, the essential homelessness of Urdu, which, as we have seen, cannot pass the test of indigeneity in either nation-state where it is spoken and written—too Arabo-Persian in its effects in India and too (North) Indian in Pakistan—meets the homelessness of the "Kashmiri-American" language of Shahid's poetry.

One of the more pronounced, complex, and distinct aspects of Shahid's verse is its use of Kashmir as signifier, perhaps most intensely in the collection *Country without a Post-Office* (1998). It is by far the most often recurring geographical reference in his work. It comes in many forms—from invocations of its fabled natural environment to ruminations on the Kashmiri origins of paisley design and various events and personages of the history of the region in precolonial, colonial, and postcolonial times. These motifs and preoccupations constitute an expansive set of coordinates that a strong "Indian literature" framing is unable to read in any satisfactory way. And since Shahid seems most often to be speaking of his homeland as an outsider and from a distance from it, that could too easily be assimilated into the frame of "diasporic" literature. But the work of "Kashmir" as poetic signifier is far more complex here and far more intriguing. It draws on a vast North Indian mythology of Kashmir as a fabled and legendary place in the mountains, a mythology that is precolonial, perhaps even ancient, but appears here mediated through its colonial (and Anglophone) reinscriptions.[53]

Many of the poems in *Country*, written at the height of the counterinsurgency, are detailed elaborations of grief tied to the violence: at the news of massacres and other outrages committed by security forces, the loss of loved ones, most often young men, and the army's confiscation of the poet's relatives' homes—all the dullingly repetitive scenes of the brutality of life in a society under siege. One extraordinary (and perhaps climactic) passage is almost unreadable

out loud because it consists simply of multiple spellings of the same word. "Let me cry out in that void, say it as I can. I write on that void: Kashmir, Kaschmir, Cashmere, Qashmir, Cashmir, Cashmire, Kashmere, Cashmire, Cushmeer, Cashmiere, Cašmir. Or Cauchemar in a sea of stories? Or: Kacmir, Kaschemir, Kasmere, Kashmire, Kasmir. Kerseymere?"[54] "Kashmir" is a name to be cried out, said, or written into and against the void, but as a name, it has no stability. By drawing attention to the unsettled spelling of the place name in European languages—and by reducing the poemic content almost entirely to orthographic variation—the poem unsettles the significations of the name as such. Kashmir is an indeterminate name not because of a paucity of signification but precisely because of an excess of it. In fact, we might say, Shahid's Kashmir is literally an excess of the state-cultural system of South Asia. For in this place, *other* imaginings become possible, sweeping imaginings of past, present, and future. To repeatedly invoke Kashmir in this manner is to invoke a place between nation-states or a place in which two states overlap and their respective sanctioning narratives—the claim to the Indic origin and commonality of all Indian cultures, on the one hand, and a strong-nationalist claim to Muslim distinctiveness from the Hindu-Indic, on the other—have to somehow live together. It marks a sort of utopian space that violates the territorial logic of the modern state system, whose genealogy passes through the post-Westphalian order. Both states seem to agree that *this* Kashmir cannot be allowed to exist. "Kashmir" in Shahid's writing is thus the name for this entire complexity, the complexity of South Asian, of Indian, modernity: the indigenization (that is, rooting) and alienization (that is, uprooting) of cultural and social practices and imaginaries, the slow imposition of the modern state form on society. Its meticulous and loving invocation in Shahid's verse invites us to wake, however briefly, from the *dream*, as Stathis Gourgouris has called it in another context, of national belonging.[55] The cliché of everyday political life in South Asia is that Kashmir is the unfinished business of Partition. It is an ugly cliché, raising the possibility of another violent uprooting of peoples that, as Hannah Arendt once noted, is the "deadly sickness" of the nation-state form since the early twentieth century.[56] The proliferation of Kashmir as signifier in Shahid's verse, in fact, his strenuous untangling of its work as signifier, turns this cliché on its

head: Kashmir as a future beyond Partition. Our desire for "Kashmir," so consistently engaged in Shahid's verse, is then perhaps also the desire, which only occasionally becomes available for conscious reflection, to escape from the hell—the fears, suspicions, obsessions, and compulsions—imposed on society by the (still incomplete) normalization of the nation-state form in the subcontinent.

For all the knowing looks that the political activism of Arundhati Roy can produce for her being a celebrity writer and intellectual with global reach, she has been exemplary in openly denouncing the state repression in Kashmir, which has included rape and killing of tens of thousands of persons by security forces over twenty-two years but does not appear to be on many people's radars worldwide, except of course the global-jihadi Islamists, who routinely list it alongside Palestine as one of their geopolitical grievances. She has also been exemplary about drawing international attention to the peasant rebellion among "tribal" (*ādīvāsī* or aboriginal) populations in east-central India and its brutal suppression by the state acting in the interest of multinational corporations. A small detail of her instantly infamous visit with a group of Maoist fighters on forest trails in Chhattisgarh state should be of particular interest to us in connection with the questions I am attempting to raise here. Roy tells us in her published account of her time with the rebels of listening together with them to a recording of the protest poem "Ham Dēkhēñgē" (We shall see) by Faiz, the voice of the singer Iqbal Bano and the defiant chant of her live audience in General Zia ul-Haq's Pakistan in the 1980s reverberating uncannily across the forest.[57] The scene is replete with a variety of political tensions: Roy is a globally celebrated *Anglophone* writer from Delhi, a general gadfly whose *international* celebrity is relevant to the encounter because it grants her a certain protection from state repression of the sort visited regularly on her companions, who are a group of young *tribal peasants* deep in a forest in central India at war with their local social oppressors as well as the postcolonial state over the theft of their resource-rich land, and they are listening to a "high" literary *Urdu* text (by Faiz) being sung by Iqbal Bano, one of his important interpreters in *Pakistan*. It is a scene of cultural transmission and solidarity—across the mesh of class, language, and nation-state borders, at the very least—that is neither

legible as "world literature" in any of its dominant metropolitan formulations nor assimilable to the frames of literature as *national* institution that are promoted by the state and reinforced, as we have seen, by discourses and practices whose frame supposedly is supranational. Neither set of reading practices is adequate to the multiple resonances of this extremely simple yet extraordinary event.

But perhaps the most unique aspect of Shahid's poetic practice is his turn to the possibilities of the ghazal form, an engagement that grew stronger and more developed after the completion of the Faiz translations. It includes *Ravishing Disunities*, a volume of 107 English-language engagements with the form, mostly by American poets, edited by him. This preoccupation with the ghazal runs like a leitmotif throughout his own work. In a number of his own poems from fairly early in his writing career, Shahid reflects on the nature of the form, its wide presence (as song) in North Indian society, and his own slow discovery of it. The collection of Faiz adaptations includes Shahid's versions of a number of Faiz's ghazals as well. For a bilingual reader of this particular transaction, the paradox is that Shahid's reworkings of Faiz's ghazals into English are very unsatisfying in their attempt to render something of the Urdu. They are uniformly in free verse, for one, about as far as you can get in formal terms from the genre. Given Shahid's own stringent insistence on formal fidelity to the requirements of the genre, should we say that his translations of Faiz's ghazals are not themselves ghazals? Paradoxically, where he gets closest to the world of the Urdu lyric is in his own *original* "ghazals" written in English. *This* success seems to be born out of *that* failure.

As with many individuals in South Asia, especially (though not exclusively) those in the middle class given a largely colonial education in English, Shahid's introduction to Urdu poetry came through ghazal as song. In an elegy for Faiz, he writes of his discovery:

> When I learned of her,
> I was no longer a boy, and Urdu
> a silhouette traced by the voices of singers,
> by Begum Akhtar, who wove your couplets
> into ragas: both language and music were sharpened.[58]

In another poem, written in memory of Begum Akhtar, arguably the greatest ghazal singer of the twentieth century—whom Shahid knew personally and seems to have loved—who had single-handedly reinvented ghazal singing for the modern age, that is, the age of recorded music, he writes,

> Do your fingers still scale the hungry
> Bhairavi, or simply the muddy shroud?
> Ghazal, that death-sustaining widow,
> sobs in dingy archives, hooked to you.
> She wears her grief, a moon-soaked white,
> corners the sky into disbelief.[59]

With great delicacy, Shahid manages to convey his affection for the arc of the singer's life, the transformation of Akhtaribai Faizabadi—the very form of the given name signaling her origins in the world of the courtesan-singer—into Begum Akhtar (Lady Akhtar), the doyenne of "semiclassical" singing in the second half of the twentieth century and a national monument. The singer's name occurs repeatedly in Shahid's verse, invoking the uniqueness of her sound and even her technical accomplishments, as in the foregoing extracts. Sexuality and desire as such as an affective terrain are marked out in indirect and elusive ways in Shahid's verse, and this ambiguity seems to reflect the ambiguousness of the Urdu ghazal's own exploration of desire and its sexual or gendered dimensions, moving easily between heterosexual and homosexual images of desire, between physical and platonic versions of love as emotion, and between devotion for the human beloved and that for the divine presence.[60] The emotional perspectives of the identified female figures in his verse—from historical personages like Begum Akhtar to his own mother and grandmother—acquire political overtones in becoming the ethical counterpoints to the hypermasculine demonstrativeness and violence of both the insurgents and the postcolonial state.

It is not an exaggeration to say that Shahid's practice of the ghazal form in English is unique in the now-long history of metropolitan engagement with the form in the European languages. These poems collectively stage a haunting and uncanny encounter between "English" and "Urdu"—as social imaginaries, ways of

thinking and feeling, and, of course, media of poetic expression—without ever giving the impression of dabbling in the exotic. Let us take a closer look now at one of these poems, called "Tonight" after its *radīf* or refrain, in which the encounter assumes a stunningly intimate form:

> Where are you now? Who lies beneath your spell tonight?
> Whom else from rapture's road will you expel tonight? (1)
>
> Those "Fabrics of Cashmere—" "to make me beautiful—"
> "Trinket"—to gem—"Me to adorn—How tell"—tonight? (2)
>
> I beg for haven: Prisons, let open your gates—
> A refugee from Belief seeks a cell tonight. (3)
>
> God's vintage loneliness has turned to vinegar—
> All the archangels—their wings frozen—fell tonight. (4)
>
> Lord, cried out the idols, Don't let us be broken;
> Only we can convert the infidel tonight. (5)
>
> Mughal ceilings, let your mirrored convexities
> multiply me at once under your spell tonight. (6)
>
> He's freed some fire from ice in pity for Heaven.
> He's left open—for God—the doors of Hell tonight. (7)
>
> In the heart's veined temple, all statues have been smashed.
> No priest in saffron's left to toll its knell tonight. (8)
>
> God, limit these punishments, there's still Judgment Day—
> I'm a mere sinner, I'm no infidel tonight. (9)
>
> Executioners near the woman at the window.
> Damn you, Elijah, I'll bless Jezebel tonight. (10)
>
> The hunt is over, and I hear the Call to Prayer
> fade into that of the wounded gazelle tonight. (11)
>
> My rivals for your love—you've invited them all?
> This is mere insult, this is no farewell tonight. (12)
>
> And I, Shahid, only am escaped to tell thee—
> God sobs in my arms. Call me Ishmael tonight.[61] (13)

Clearly, a remarkable wit is at work in this poem, as in many of Shahid's works. It is a deeply ironic sensibility, acutely aware of the instabilities and inversions that mark poetic expression. And a pious mentality might even identify elements of the sacrilegious here, a sort of ecumenical and equal-opportunity searing of the foundational beliefs, practices, or stories of a number of world religious traditions. The first, third, fifth, seventh, eighth, and ninth couplets in particular sound like they could originally have been written in Urdu, so faithful is their replication of the rhythms and the structures of feeling that are characteristic of its poetry. It is not uncommon for Shahid's Anglophone readers to wonder if they are reading translations from some other language. For the bilingual reader, it is nothing short of an uncanny experience. And the poem ends by invoking perhaps the most famous opening line in American literature—but this is simultaneously an Islamic reference as well, evoking the Qur'anic story of Abraham's willingness to sacrifice Ishmael, inverting the relationship of Ishmael to God, who has after all commanded his sacrifice: it is God who submits to Ishmael, sobbing in his arms, rather than Abraham, through Ishmael, to God. The Islamic-religious meaning seems to be hiding within the American-literary one, as tenor to vehicle in this metaphorical construction.

We could approach this very complex poem from a range of perspectives. However, a core of themes and images seem to predominate: belief and unbelief, God's rivalry with "idols," believer and infidel, the passage from belief to apostasy. I am drawn in particular to a handful of couplets that seem to be elaborating this dialectic. If I follow this route, isolating a few lines from the rest of the poem, that would be an *Urdu* strategy for reading an *English* poem, the ghazal couplet being typically treated in Urdu as a more or less autonomous unit of poetic elaboration. Shahid's own rigorous adherence to the genre's formal strictures seems to have allowed me—or compelled me, perhaps—to follow this interlingual and intercultural direction. First of all, God is an intimate interlocutor here, for the "I" of lyric enunciation (in couplet 9, for instance) but also for "the idols" (in couplet 5). Furthermore, the religious and the secular appear to be inseparable in a strange way, elements of each type repeatedly morphing into those of the other. Couplets 1 and 12 seem

to be thematically secular, for instance, with no overt divine or more broadly religious reference. But given the inherent and notorious polysemy of the ghazal's elaboration of love or devotion, which simultaneously points in earthly and heavenly registers and directions, we would be remiss not to pursue a theological possibility here as well. Could couplet 1 be addressed to God, for instance, designating him a thrower of spells on mortals and as an enemy of "rapture"? That would be a far-reaching critique of religiosity as such, as both a hypnotic state and an ascetic one. And could couplet 12 too be similarly addressed to God, or the reverse possibility, that is, in the voice of God himself, chastising the departing believer for rubbing it in, as it were, by inviting God's many rivals to the farewell gathering in which the believer is to take his leave of his erstwhile divinity? One effect of this series of inversions is the fact that the nonbeliever ("refugee from Belief," "infidel") appears to be a *mediating* figure, with a foot in both realms, the religious and the secular.

The monotheistic God is at the very least in a difficult situation here, beset from all sides by rivals, inconstant believers, outright infidels, saffron-clad (that is, Hindu or Buddhist) priests, and calls to prayer that fade into the cries of a "wounded gazelle." This is a lonely God, seeking comfort in the arms of the one who was to be sacrificed to him. And while both God and the believer/unbeliever see the idols as the former's rivals, it is precisely they to whom he must turn in hope of changing unbeliever into believer. In the terms of this remarkable poem, then, for the one true God to become involved in the life of humanity is to enter a polytheistic world. *The monotheistic creed is therefore an impossible proposition on its own terms,* constantly compelled by its own logic to acknowledge and address its other. The poem thus elaborates the dialectic of belief and unbelief as the ground of belief itself. And at another, more historically concrete level of signification, we may view this effort as a reworking of the mutual relations of polytheistic and monotheistic religious traditions in the subcontinent. The core images of the foundational story of Islam's emergence in seventh-century Arabia within and against a polytheistic environment—a *hostile* polytheistic environment—are repeated obsessively in orthodox Islamic culture in the subcontinent as representations of its relation to its own world, especially in modern

times. In the Urdu ghazal from its inception, and especially in its more overtly Sufi forms, these orthodox images and gestures have been routinely undermined, with "idol" *(ṣanam)* in fact becoming one of the names of the beloved in both its forms, human as well as divine. Shahid's poem therefore represents a remarkable transposition into English verse of attitudes and orientations that have been characteristic of the Urdu ghazal as a form since its canonization in the vernacular of North India in the eighteenth century. In Shahid's English, this "medieval" structure of feeling in Urdu becomes available for an exploration of the *modern* dialectic of belief and unbelief, self and other, and belonging and community.

We might therefore say that in Shahid's work, "ghazal" is the name (and the form) of this transposition from Urdu to English. And this effort at translocation reveals something essential about the ghazal form itself. For the colonial reformers' accusation that the Urdu ghazal was a historically superseded (and thus decadent) form, inadequate to the demands of the emergent social and political experiences of the modern (that is, colonial) world amounts to no more than the perception—correct in my view—that it was inadequate to the *national* reorientation of culture and society under colonial rule. To note that the genre has somehow survived the violent colonial disjuncture is therefore simply to note its transformation from a premodern and precolonial (and, thus, in a strictly chronological sense, *prenational*) form to a postcolonial and fundamentally *nonnational* one whose adequate reading therefore requires a nonnational—that is, *exilic*—social imaginary. Such an imaginary would be neither "transnational" in global terms nor "civilizational" in South Asian terms: for the latter, with its assertion of a shared ancient cultural past or heritage, is produced entirely within the terms of nationalist discourse, as we have seen at some length in earlier chapters, and the former typically leaves intact the nation-space while promising an easy crossing of its borders. "Exile" is thus the frame *adequate* to these social, political, and cultural realities because it captures simultaneously the violent exclusions of the national frame, the material reality of its (physical as well as symbolic) borders, the dire need to overcome its destructive fixations, and its inescapability in the present moment. It is to the possibility of such an exilic philology

that I shall turn in Chapter 4 by engaging with the work of Auerbach and Said.

As for Shahid himself, he may indeed be in the process of being lionized by a younger generation among the Anglophone middle class in Kashmir as their "national" poet, but with reference to Kashmir, this means something very different from what it might mean in many other parts of the world. If the nonnational form of the Kashmiri question as I have outlined it is ever resolved into the terms of a distinct and "autonomous" nationalism, that is, if it is ever assimilated into the terms of the nation-state system in the subcontinent, it would have to repudiate the orientations so carefully cultivated in Shahid's oeuvre. In a sense, then, Shahid's attraction to Faiz above all other poets in the subcontinent is far from accidental or idiosyncratic, for we might say that the younger poet picks up in English where the older had left off—but in another language.

One of the great accomplishments of Shahid's oeuvre is thus the way in which it performs a series of relays between "English" and "vernacular" spaces or practices, thereby helping us to bring to the fore the submerged network of relations between the cultural system of English and vernacular spaces in, for instance, the subcontinent. In his poetic practice, Anglophone poetry perceives its own environment as a multilingual one, a perception elaborated most explicitly perhaps in another of his ghazal poems, "Beyond English":

> No language is old—or young—beyond English.
> So what of a common tongue beyond English? (1)
>
> I know some words for war, all of them sharp,
> but the sharpest one is *jung*—beyond English! (2)
>
> If you wish to know of a king who loved his slave,
> you must learn legends, often-sung, beyond English. (3)
>
> Baghdad is sacked and its citizens must watch
> prisoners (now in miniatures) hung beyond English. (4)
>
> Go all the way through *jungle* from *aleph* to *zenith*
> to see English, like monkeys, swung beyond English. (5)

So never send to know for whom the bell tolled,
for across the earth it has rung beyond English. (6)

If you want your drugs legal you must leave the States,
not just for hashish but one—*bhung*—beyond English. (7)

Heartbroken, I tottered out "into windless snow,"
snowflakes on my lips, silence stung beyond English. (8)

When the phrase, "The Mother of all Battles" caught on,
the surprise was indeed not sprung beyond English. (9)

Could a soul crawl away at last unshriveled which
to its "own fusing senses" had clung beyond English? (10)

If someone asks where Shahid has disappeared,
He's waging a war (no *jung*) beyond English.[62] (11)

To begin with, we might note that the *radīf* or refrain has a somewhat different effect here than it does in "Tonight"—it feels like an almost maniacal repetition of a phrase that seems to acquire in its very repetition an imperative force. Each couplet points the reader beyond the borders of "English," a space where all manner of perception, conception, and affect seem to become possible. Of the five italicized words of foreign origin in this poem, only one occurs twice (in couplets 2 and 11)—*jañg*, a word of Persian origin that is the most common word for "war" in more or less all the languages of the northern subcontinent and certainly in Hindi-Urdu. (We might also note that the poem does not in any way highlight the "foreignness" of words of Greek or Latinate origin.) At least two of the couplets (4 and 9) seem to place the composition of the poem in the aftermath of the conquest of Baghdad in the Second Gulf War, although the first of these also invokes the infamous "sack of Baghdad" by the army of the Mongol chieftain Hulagu Khan, son of Genghis and brother of Kublai, in 1258 CE, which laid waste to the capital (and consequently the remarkable civilization) of the Abbasids. The poem thus evokes and links these two acts of occupation and destruction of the city at the hands of barbarous armies, two acts of destruction seven and a half centuries (and five couplets) apart. If we further note the reference to Ernest Hemingway's novel of the Spanish Civil War in

couplet 6, it becomes pretty clear that war is one of the recurring motifs in the poem, invoked in five couplets (2, 4, 6, 9, and 11). The space of language and culture, and certainly the space of intercultural interaction, thus seems to appear as a space of war, that is, of the display, deployment, and exercise of force. The ubiquity of force in the life of human beings is one of the more persistent perceptions and motifs in Shahid's verse, even in moments of lyrical exultation in landscapes, friendships, or loves.

In another remarkable ghazal poem, titled, "In Arabic," Shahid seems to attribute to the language and its culture a sort of gravitational pull over a vast civilizational field across the centuries, bringing into its orbit figures as diverse as Moses Maimonides, Anton Shammas, Federico García Lorca, Jorge Luis Borges, and Yehuda Amichai:

A language of loss? I have some business in Arabic.
Love letters: a calligraphy pitiless in Arabic. (1)

At an exhibit of miniatures, what Kashmiri hairs!
Each paisley inked into a golden tress in Arabic. (2)

This much fuss about a language I don't know?
So one day
perfume from a dress may let you digress in Arabic. (3)

A "Guide for the Perplexed" was written—believe me—
by Cordoba's Jew—Maimonides—in Arabic. (4)

Majnoon, by stopped caravans, rips his collars, cries
"Laila!"
Pain translated is O! much more—not less—in Arabic. (5)

Writes Shammas: Memory, no longer confused,
now is a homeland—
his two languages a Hebrew caress in Arabic. (6)

When Lorca died, they left the balconies open and saw:
On the sea his *qasidas* stitched seamless in Arabic. (7)

In the Veiled One's harem, an adultress hanged by
eunuchs—
So the rank mirrors revealed to Borges in Arabic. (8)

Ah, bisexual Heaven: wide-eyed houris and immortal youths! (9)
To your each desire they say *Yes! O Yes!* in Arabic.

For that excess of sibilance, the last Apocalypse, (10)
so pressing those three forms of S in Arabic.

I too, O Amichai, saw everything, just like you did— (11)
In Death. In Hebrew. And (please let me stress) in Arabic.

They ask me to tell them what *Shahid* means: Listen, listen: (12)
it means "The Belovéd" in Persian, "witness" in Arabic.[63]

Here, once again, the space of intercultural interaction is imagined as a force field, or even minefield, with the desire for crossing over, for rediscovering the self in the midst of the other, intact despite and in the midst, as we saw in "Beyond English," of "war." "Hebrew" and "Arabic" are locked in a death grip that is also a "caress" or embrace. In three couplets (4, 6, and 11), Arabic is put in relation to Hebrew as the scriptural, intellectual, and literary language of the Jews, and these links are both historical (in al-Andalus) and contemporary (in Israel-Palestine). In one couplet (12), Arabic is linked to Persian in a way that concisely and perfectly reveals the internal structure of the Perso-Arabic civilizational complex: lawgiving as Arabic ("witness"), mystical love as Persian ("The Belovéd"). In three couplets (4, 7, and 8), there is a counterposition to Spanish. In addition, we might say, Arabic is in relation with English in every single couplet, as the historical lives of the former are elaborated in verse in the latter. In couplets 1, 5, 7, 8, 9, and 12, Arabic is, in one way or another, viewed as a language of loss and love, but in couplet 12, as just noted, it is viewed, in counterposition to Persian, as a language of law. The name *Shahid* is an Arabic noun of great importance in Islam that means "witness," etymologically and morphologically linked to *śahīd* (martyr) and the *śahāda* (the basic profession of monotheistic faith and belief in Muhammad's Prophethood) itself, the entire cluster of words linked to the trilateral root verb "to witness." But this set of broader

historical, literary, linguistic, and religious associations remain tied in the poem to a very personal and subjective register, tied in fact to the persona of the poet himself: the speaker's tastes in literature and art, for instance, the recurring turn to the language of love and desire, and also, perhaps, in the delicious alliteration of couplet 10 (the lines marked by a rhythmically released "excess of sibilance"), an exaggerated performing of the poet's own slightly discernible lisp—as if, in reading these lines out loud, the reader's speech begins to approach the speech patterns of the poet himself. Finally, the fact that the houris and youths promised in heaven to those who are pious in this world will speak a breathless Arabic is already quite funny (9). But there is another twist here: the opening phrase of this couplet—"Ah, bisexual Heaven"—suggests both that Heaven is "bisexual" and that "bisexuality" is heaven. The couplet elaborates a fantasy of fulfillment in which Heaven is the place or state in which the expression and fulfillment of desire are free of external (or internalized) social command, the object of desire a generalized one, on whom are now cathected all of life's ascetic and prescribed privations. It is not a fantasy of the complete disappearance of socially determined and socially legible (gendered) differentiation so much as one of desire itself freed from its rigid subjugation. The "bisexual" therefore is also a figure for a civilizational ambidextrousness or, alternatively, an agnosticism of cultural affiliation.

There are entire worlds to be discovered "beyond English," not in some geographically distinct and distant place but right next to you, wherever you may happen to be, and even in your own (English) speech itself. Thus, if the attempt to look, think, or feel "beyond English" involves a sort of warfare, that is, an effort that implies a certain arrangement of force, it is also, by the same token, already a matter of *love*, that is, a *suspension of force* in the very midst of a force field. This is possibly the great secret of Shahid's practice of the ghazal form, although, perhaps more accurately speaking, his is a *citation* of the ghazal form as such at the level of form. Love and its involvement in force constitutes the terrain on which this intercultural movement takes place, the movement in which Urdu appears in the midst of English. In the preceding chapters, I have attempted to construct a critical history of the concepts of the force field that

is world literature in its reliance on the social situation of English in the world since the Industrial Revolution. The forms of writing and reading that we now call Urdu poetry, in their double "Persianate" and "Hindi" genealogy, have a complex relationship to this force field since its inception in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, aspects of which I have elaborated in this chapter and Chapter 2. By bringing the (Urdu) ghazal (back) into English, Shahid thus appears to close a great historical circle, whose instantiating moment saw the "discovery" of precisely this "Oriental" corpus and its placing at the center of various programs, from William Jones to Goethe and beyond, for the transformation of poetic practice in the western European languages. His ghazal poems seem to express a desire for a *world culture* but see it as a space of disturbance and conflict, their very movement turning margins into centers, turning received notions of influence and dissemination on their head, and leaving us with a world English that is just a bit less naturalized as the language of poetry. Finally, Shahid's verse makes clear that the question of the civilization of the subcontinent and its place in world literature can now only be posed in *exilic* terms, by taking an unsentimental look at the image of a lost home, in terms that will not help reproduce the structures of violence—physical, cultural, or symbolic—of the nation-state system of homelands in the subcontinent. And it is to the task of developing a concept of philology as homeless practice that I myself shall turn in the final chapter.

In light of the historical analysis of the cultural logic of Orientalism-Anglicism operating in the long, fitful, and ongoing process of bourgeois modernization in the subcontinent that I have attempted here, the task of criticism with respect to the field of culture and society in the region is therefore to adopt *partition as method*, to enter into this field and inhabit the processes of its bifurcation, partition not merely as event, result, or outcome but rather as the very modality of culture, a political logic that inheres in the core concepts and practices of the state. The modern state is majoritarian—a *nation*-state—establishing *some* set of social and cultural practices as normative and representative of the people as such. Majoritarianism is thus itself the minoritization of some other social group, set of practices and social imaginaries. And the crisis of minoritization leads

to the partition of society (and sometimes, of state). Society as such is thus always in excess of the representative claims of the nation-state, and the political logic of partition is inherent in the latter as a form.

As Etienne Balibar has argued, primarily with a view to the emergence of a European political, legal and social space, the border as we know it today is a historical institution rather than simply a place or location, an institution that has already undergone several transformations since its first appearance in Europe alongside the modern state in early modern times. It can thus be made the object of a politics of transformation that would seek to democratize this "absolutely nondemocratic" institution that is the very "*condition of democratic institutions*" within the national political and legal space.[64] Sandro Mezzadra has attempted to take this line of argument further by arguing, against all the happy talk of the emergence of a "borderless world," that our present condition is in fact one of the *proliferation* of borders, which is no longer to be experienced at the periphery of the national territory but rather "running . . . through urban environments but also traversing wide continental and global vistas." These borders thus "cut and cross those that exist at the territory's edge but also establish regional and fragmented spaces of economics, politics and law that do not necessarily display the continuity or boundedness of territory."[65] Any attempt to understand the social life of the border in the subcontinent must take into account this global situation of the border as a now *universalized* institution. Even as the need for irregular labor in the Middle-East and Europe produces flows of humanity that must cross the Partition borders in the subcontinent, the state undertakes, with a sort of psychotic intensity and repetitiveness, a concretization of the institution of the border at the periphery of national territory, which is now visible to the naked eye at night in outer space.[66]

For culture and society in the subcontinent, therefore, partition is not merely a historical event (or events) in the past—which has been the approach of much recent revisionist historiography—but rather the very condition of possibility of nation-statehood and therefore the ever-renewed condition of national experience in the subcontinent. It continually instantiates and intensifies processes with

far-reaching effects across the social field, both within and across the postcolonial states of the subcontinent. We need to ask in particular how Partition has affected and how it continues to affect our understanding of culture and society across the subcontinent. What forms of knowledge does it preclude and what forms does it make possible? The question of the homeland has appeared in South Asian postcolonial discussion mostly under the sign of the ever-present or overbearing homeland—as the repository of too much religion, too much culture, too much history and too much textuality. This is a far cry from the exilic perspectives on culture and society that Said relentlessly called for, which he once described, in a moment of luminous clarity, as the scrupulous renunciation of "the quasi-religious authority of being comfortably at home among one's people."[67] The homeland of criticism is for Said a *missing* homeland.[68] Said reassembles the paradoxes of exilic experience, of coming from a place that does not, strictly speaking, exist, into the orientation of a critical consciousness for our times. What would it mean for us to understand and experience "India" too as a missing homeland, as too little, not too much, homeland?

In a myriad of forms today, society and culture in the subcontinent continue to function at least in tension with the terms of partitioned society. Even the long arm of Islamic militancy, which stretches compulsively across the border that it claims to want to defend and eternalize, is itself enacting a form of cross-border sociality, a *negative* sociality, when it insists on inflicting pain on its undifferentiated enemy. And as Roy reports in the same essay that recounts the experience of listening, with Maoists in a forest in central India, to Iqbal Bano sing Faiz for her Pakistani audience, even the police in one district in Chhattisgarh state refer to a Maoist controlled area as Pakistan.[69] To argue for partition as method is, therefore, to argue for extracting submerged modes of thinking and feeling from the ongoing historical experience that is partition. Shahid's life's work has been to invite us into such ways of thinking and feeling, extracted with great labor and at much cost by making the achievements of one language available to the possibility of writing in another.

4

"Our Philological Home Is the Earth": World Literature from Auerbach to Said

Erich Auerbach is among the more enigmatic figures of European intellectual history in the twentieth century. His more-than-a-decade-long stay in Istanbul, precipitated by his firing from his academic position under the Nazi racial laws in the mid-1930s, has long been subject to a fierce debate about the meaning and significance of this "exilic" experience for his subsequent work, turning the particulars of Auerbach's life, as Seth Lerer has noted, "into a legend of the writer in exile, remembering the texts and context of a past."[1] Always a meticulous philologist typically immersed in the historical minutiae of the languages of the Latin and Romance worlds, he has left behind works that are nevertheless also resonant with some of the most pressing and encompassing social questions of his time. But these questions, from the historical decline and self-destruction of European civilization to the very possibility of the survival of humanity in the wake of the catastrophes of the century, appear and are handled in these works in elusive and *parabolic* ways that call for demanding and sympathetic modes of explication. He thus remains vulnerable to a desiccating form of reading that is not responsive to these larger concerns and remains fixated on this or that detail of his many accounts of European literary history, thereby missing their overall point more or less entirely. His great masterwork, *Mimesis:*