

Consuming India

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I have been a swallower of lives; and to know me, just the one of me, you'll have to swallow the lot as well. Consumed multitudes are jostling and shoving inside me.

SALMAN RUSHDIE, *Midnight's Children*

ON 5 OCTOBER 1997, the British weekend newspaper *Observer* carried a full-page spread devoted to the fiftieth anniversary of India's independence. The display, tastefully arranged (and no doubt handsomely paid for) by the Indian Tourist Office in London, features a series of marketing blurbs by British-based tour operators. The centrepiece blurb, to which the others refer, announces reasons to celebrate, not least of these being that "the attractions of India are as diverse as the tour operators who organise holidays there." The familiar Orientalist icons are then dramatically unfurled, with a "profusion of romantic palaces, impressive forts and extraordinary temples" counting among the many "wonders of India's fabled shores." The operator blurbs are similarly gushing, with an emphasis on the exclusive, offering "classical tours" escorted by well-heeled "guest lecturers" (Lady Wade-Gery MA [Oxon]) or holding out to "the discerning traveller" the chance to "relive the opulence of the Maharajahs" (*Observer* 10). Here again then, skilfully marshalled, is the Orient as exhibition (Mitchell); and here is a further example of the twisted logic of the tourist industry, more than capable of turning the occasion of a half-century of independence into a fanfare for colonial nostalgia and the invented memories of imperial rule.

Marketing such as this—aimed at a generation of latter-day Questeds—helps stake out India's anniversary celebrations as a prime tourist event. This touristic sensibility has also been much in evidence in a plethora of “new” anthologies and special issues on Indian writing. I shall begin by looking at just two of these bumper anniversary products (both published in 1997): the Golden Jubilee issue of the British-based magazine *Granta*, and the *Vintage Book of Indian Writing*, edited by Salman Rushdie and Elizabeth West. I shall then go on to comment briefly on a commemorative academic conference—“India: Fifty Years After Independence,” held in Barcelona, Spain, 28-30 September 1997—before closing with a few thoughts on “India” as consumer item within the context of an “alterity industry” (Huggan) managed (mostly) by and for the West.

Granta, a widely respected literary magazine with a celebrity cast of contributing writers, offers an engaging, commercially viable mixture of quality reportage, travel writing, topical photography, and recent fiction. Less pompous than the *New Yorker*, less naively sensationalist than *National Geographic*, *Granta* nonetheless combines some of the features of its better-known transatlantic cousins. Its is a distinctively literate brand of cosmopolitan bonhomie, a kind of intellectual populism at once familiar in its gestures and—occasionally—challenging in its selections of current writing and debate.

The magazine, though much admired, is certainly not beyond reproach. The most memorable broadside against it, by Charles Sugnet in the American journal *Transition*, focuses on the cultural complacency of its travel writing selections. There is a contradiction, according to Sugnet, between *Granta*'s claims to (literary) novelty and the conservatism of many of its choices, particularly in the travel writing field. Sugnet is especially harsh on two of *Granta*'s favorite sons, Redmond O'Hanlon and Bruce Chatwin, whose travelogues, belonging to the Old Boy's club of colonial adventure, hold out a series of comforting myths to their equally self-satisfied British audience. Writers like O'Hanlon and Chatwin, fully paid-up members of *Granta*'s coterie of “young fogeys” (Sugnet), indicate the core of cultural parochialism underlying the magazine's international outlook; they also draw

attention to the magazine's tacit investment in the forms of nostalgic mythmaking—"Raj revivalism," "Conradian atavism"—that contribute toward what cultural critics, after Edward Said, have called "colonial discourse" (Said; see also Spurr).¹

Sugnet's argument is overstated in the nature of polemics, taking little account of O'Hanlon's and Chatwin's celebrated propensity for self-irony or of *Granta's* tradition of liberal journalism, both at home and in the field. Nonetheless, he succeeds in scoring a few palpable—and, for *Granta*, embarrassing—hits. There *is* something irritating about *Granta's* literary camaraderie, as evidenced in the mutual regard—the clubbability—of its favored writers, and in the paradoxically establishment feel of its up-to-the-minute house style. And there *is* more than a touch of cultural nostalgia in its selections, a sense of a changing world with Britain still somehow at the centre. Which brings me to the special issue commemorating Indian independence, and more particularly to the question of *what*—or *who*—is being remembered and celebrated.

The issue is, above all else, a festival of crosscultural memory, with long-established "Indo-Anglian" writers (such as Nirad Chaudhuri and Ved Mehta) looking back at their internationally-fashioned literary careers, and equally well-known British figures (for example, Jan Morris) reminiscing about Britain's and India's shared imperial past. This exercise in international *détente* sits uneasily with a history of disruption—one in which Britain has played, and continues to play, a major part. (The Queen's current beleaguered visit, and the diplomatic furore surrounding Robin Cook's offer of "assistance" in Kashmir, merely afford the latest examples of unburied animosity, and of Britain's failure to grasp the arrogance behind its "conciliating" role.) It is significant that, while some of the pieces in the *Granta* issue are alert to regional conflict—notably the photographic "gallery of memories" centring on the Partition riots (23-38), or James Buchan's and William Dalrymple's reports on the troubles in Kashmir and Bihar, respectively (59-84, 173-84)—there is little sense in the volume of the continuing conflict between India and *Britain*. Instead, India is presented as a nation in transformation, to whose at times self-destructive vitality British journalists can

“objectively” attest. The format of the issue also helps declaw it by exhibiting a series of snapshots, offering only a fleeting view of the historical upheavals they document, still less of the more immediate histories behind their own production. (This is particularly troubling with the interviews of low-caste workers, whose stories are presumably intended to counterbalance the more sustained [life-] narratives of the cultural elite [see, for example, the translated testimony of the Harijan agricultural worker/midwife (Viramma 186-92)].) The photographs themselves are mostly portraits, with the National Geographic smile much in evidence, reinforcing the classically Orientalist view of India as a pageant or historical frieze (see Said; also Inden). The stories, by Indian writers (Amit Chaudhuri, Anita Desai, and—a publicity coup—the “newly discovered” Arundhati Roy), are for the most part anodyne and unthreatening, focusing on domestic mishaps and comic scenes of mass confusion. A seemingly statutory homage is paid to V. S. Naipaul, described without irony as “an [unequalled] delineator of modern India,” whose work “ranks alongside the fiction of Kipling, Forster and Rushdie and the films of Satyajit Ray as a key influence on the way we imagine India” (194). And to cap it all—or, perhaps better, to set the tone for what follows—is editor Ian Jack’s introduction, a curious amalgam of sentiment and hard statistics, which speaks with great authority on the state of postindependence India while noting with affection that one of the attractions of India is (or at least was) its “Anglophilia.”

Jack’s introduction—which in fact neither introduces nor frames the subsequent material, leaving it deliberately decontextualized—is written in what might charitably be called the spirit of informed tourism; and it is this spirit that is captured, if not in the pieces themselves, then in the mode of their collection. The *Granta* special issue, for all its attempts to present varied perspectives on modern India, begs the question of what is being celebrated, and for which reasons, and, most of all, for whom. I would argue that it presents an image of India as an object of metropolitan fascination—an India which, while it cannot be fully comprehended, can certainly be *consumed*. Little sense emerges from it of an *independent* India, one that has freed

itself from Britain to forge an always uncertain future. Instead, what emerges clearly is Britain's continuing *dependence on* India, less as a material possession than as an imaginative resource. *Granta's* special issue, ostensibly celebratory of India's capacity to reinvent itself, pays as much tribute to the tenacity with which Britain has ridden India's coat-tails, and with which it is using the new India, as it used the old, to rejuvenate itself.

The *Vintage Book of Indian Writing, 1947-1997* appears at first to belong to another category. A well-thought-out anthology, edited by Salman Rushdie and Elizabeth West, the *Vintage Book of Indian Writing* aims to bring together, in the words on its back cover, "the finest Indian writing of the last fifty years." Rushdie, as one might expect, proves to be an able compere, and his introduction is one of the highlights of this most engaging book. In the introduction, Rushdie goes to some lengths to justify the choice of *English* writing, claiming not unreasonably that "English has become an Indian language" (xiii) and, more controversially, that the writing—particularly the prose writing—produced in the last fifty years by Indian authors is not only "a stronger and more important body of work than most of what has been produced in the 16 'official languages' of India," but represents "the most valuable contribution India has yet made to the world of books" (x).² Rushdie freely admits that the growing "Indo-Anglian" canon might be seen by homegrown critics as an outside imposition. Yet if "Indo-Anglian" writing is, at least in part, a product of Western market forces, it is also a sign of literary creativity and, by extension, of cultural health. Western publishers and critics, says Rushdie,

have been growing gradually more excited by the voices emerging from India; in England, at least, British writers are often chastised by reviewers for their lack of Indian-style ambition and verve. It feels as if the East is imposing itself on the West, rather than the other way around. And, yes, English is the most powerful medium of communication in the world; should we not then rejoice at these artists' mastery of it, and at their growing influence? . . . One important dimension of literature is that it is a means of holding a conversation with the world. These writers are ensuring that India, or rather, Indian voices (for they are too good to fall into the trap of writing *nationalistically*), will henceforth be confident, indispensable participants in that literary conversation. (xiv-xv)

Rushdie's is a by now familiar defense of the literary migrant; literature, he stresses, "has little or nothing to do with a writer's home address" (xv; see also the title piece in *Imaginary Homelands*). Nonetheless, the ethnic label sticks—not English, but *Indian* writing—and all the more so in a collection "published to coincide with the anniversary of India's independence" (back cover blurb). One is reminded here of Aijaz Ahmad's lengthy, impassioned, and often brilliant critique of "Third World" literature in English as a vehicle for global commodity fetishism and a manufactured object of—mostly Western—desire.³ To dismiss critiques such as Ahmad's, as Rushdie seems to do here, as parochial is to miss the force of "India"—and, by extension, the "Third World"—as a *global* merchandising tool. Moreover, few writers are better positioned than Rushdie himself to understand this. As Rushdie remarks with mock-disapproval, citing one of his Indian critics, "Indo-Anglian" literature has been described as "suffering from a condition that . . . Pankaj Mishra calls 'Rushdie-itis' . . . [a] condition that has claimed Rushdie himself in his later works" (xiii). "Rushdie-itis," as its progenitor recognizes, is less a literary phenomenon than an effect of the reception of the "representative writer's" work. (A similar argument might well be made here about the work of Gabriel García Márquez, whose distinctive brand of magical realism has been seen—and successfully floated on the global market—as "quintessentially" Latin American.)⁴ *Midnight's Children*, it should be remembered, that darling of the literate media, was first heralded as the belated but triumphant discovery of a "[literary] continent's voice" (see Picador front cover blurb; also Huggan's commentary in "The Postcolonial Exotic").⁵

Rushdie's corrective is to point out that "Indo-Anglian" writing is a many-headed creature: that it has evolved several different, and by no means immediately identifiable, literary styles. Among the writers, for example, whose work is included in the anthology,

the Stendhalian realism of . . . Rohinton Mistry, the equally naturalistic but lighter, more readily charming prose of Vikram Seth . . . and the elegant social observation of Upamanyu Chatterjee can be set against the more flamboyant manner of Vikram Chandra, the lin-

guistic play of I. Allan Sealy and Shashi Tharoor and the touches of fabulism in Mukul Kesavan. (xxi-xxii)

Few would dispute the claims of these writers to be represented in the anthology, or the deftness of the broad brush strokes with which Rushdie characterizes their work. The selections, too—although one might quibble about the value of excerpting novels—are largely unexceptionable and give plenty evidence of the technical and linguistic diversity that Rushdie praises. Yet, despite the neat biographical blurbs included at the back of the anthology, an overall sense of context is—perhaps inevitably—missing. The introductory appeal of literary anthologies such as this one needs to be weighed against the exoticizing effect they are likely to have on at least some of their audience. This effect is arguably enhanced by the anthology's "celebratory" mandate, which is largely removed, like *Granta's*, from the material circumstances under which it—like the anniversary of independence with which it coincides—is produced.

In addition, far from presenting a showcase for the *autonomy* of the Indian nation, the anthology deliberately deemphasizes the national distinctiveness (and/or political oppositionality) of Indian writing. It does so, and here I would agree with Rushdie, for several excellent reasons: first, because Indian writing—especially *in English*—is clearly a transnational, diasporic phenomenon, the product of complex collisions (and, some might argue, collusions) between East and West; second, because literary texts are rarely (if ever) direct expressions of national identity, with characteristics that might go some way toward "explaining" aspects of national culture; and third, because Indian writers, though not necessarily freewheeling world citizens, move in a global environment shaped by mediated social forces.⁶ The irony of the anthology, as indicated in its preliminary reception, is that it is likely to be assessed for the "Indianness" its marketing—if not its editor—promotes. And that "Indianness" is conceived of largely, not as a postindependence ethos, but as an infinitely rechargeable, universally applicable market tool.

The 1997 Barcelona conference provides the third of my chosen instances of the tailoring of an independent India to metropolitan market tastes.⁷ Like my first two examples, the

conference—which I attended—can be regarded in its own terms as a highly successful event. Superbly organized by the British expatriate university professors Kathleen Firth and Felicity Hand and their team of Spanish student helpers, the conference brought together over the space of three days in late September some hundred or so academic specialists, many of them from the subcontinent. The conference took in papers on the Indian diaspora, on gender issues in Indian studies, and on cultural links between India and Catalonia. Sponsored in part by various Catalonian cultural agencies, the conference assumed something of the aura of an international diplomatic event. (Strangely though, in the panels themselves, where diplomatic niceties were no longer necessary, an opportunity was lost for a critical comparison of the event-filled histories of Indian and Catalonian independence. As with the *Granta* and *Vintage* anthologies, the subject of independence—and its varied implications—was kept at the outskirts of otherwise fruitful cultural debates.)

Social events, though, as they often are at academic conferences, were very much at the centre. These included a bus tour of Barcelona, a supper at an Indian restaurant, and a buffet—also Indian—followed by a performance of (southern) Indian dancing. The conference, seen in this context, was an appropriately festive occasion, with a muted nationalism underscoring many of its crosscultural performances and a series of liberal gestures being made to the reciprocity between Euro-Asian “ethnic” cultures. Such liberalism, as can also be seen in the Vintage Press and especially the *Granta* collections, also has its obvious disadvantages. For one thing, it risks collapsing cultural politics into “ethnic” spectacle, reclaiming culture as a site not of conflict but of pleasurable diversion. And for another, it places emphasis on the mutual *consumption* of the Other, literalized in the themed performance, the touristic circuit, the “ethnic” meal.⁸

Two further examples come to mind that bear upon this topic. The first was a fine individual paper by the Indo-American scholar Padmini Mongia, in which she examined what she called, tongue only half in cheek, “the Roy phenomenon”: the extraordinary sequence of events which has overtaken the publication

of Arundhati Roy's first novel *The God of Small Things* (1997), culminating shortly after the conference in the award to Roy of the self-consciously "prestigious" Booker Prize, and in the completion of its young, previously unknown author's transformation into full-blown media celebrity. Reading from a series of interviews, dust-jacket icons, and related press clippings, Mongia traced the carefully-staged emergence of Roy as the latest hot literary property, and of her novel as, in one critic's words, "the biggest thing since *Midnight's Children*." (The critic, Pankaj Mishra—said diagnostician of "Rushdie-itis"—has claimed a leading role in the media "discovery" of Roy.) Despite their differences, themselves recently publicized (see Roy, "Interview"), Roy and Rushdie are related in so far as their prize-winning books, and the personalities perceived behind them, have ridden a wave of international publicity in which the writers themselves have been readily complicit. (*The God of Small Things* is obviously indebted to *Midnight's Children*—also a Booker Prize winner, in 1981—in other ways; but I am less interested here in the specifics of the two novels' intertextual associations than I am in the sociological processes that unfold from their production.) This is not necessarily to accuse; it is rather to draw attention to these two talented writers' awareness of the media mechanisms through which their work and they themselves have gained recognition and prestige.⁹ And one such mechanism (despite Roy's recent disclaimer in her *Times* interview) operates through the codeword "India." As Mongia's paper in Barcelona demonstrated, the publicity Roy's novel has generated has helped place it firmly within the recent invented tradition of "Indo-chic." The journalistic label is appropriately catchy; it is also *global* in its implications, coinciding with the recognition of India's emergence as a world economic power. "Indo-chic" and Roy's contribution to it, are not simply to be seen as Western constructs; they are products of the globalization of (Western-capitalist) consumer culture, in which "India" functions not just as a polyvalent cultural sign but as a highly mobile capital good.

The flexibility of "India" as a commercial cultural marker is also implicit, albeit in parodic form, in my second Barcelona example. Walking one evening in the pleasant if crowded pedes-

trian zone of Barcelona (the *Ramblas*), my friend and I came across, among other street entertainers, an extraordinary sight. A black man up a tree, adorned with “New Guinean” head-feathers and “Aboriginal” tribal markings, motioned soundlessly to passers-by, pointing at his “African” collection gourd. After a while, the man climbed down and assumed a supplicant “guru” posture, before putting on some “rasta” dreadlocks and pinning a “ghettoblaster” to his ear. One didn’t know what to make of this vaudeville of glaring racial stereotypes, the impact of which, presumably desired, was more one of dis-ease than of delight. Naipaul’s mimic men had nothing on this grinning “ethnic” imposter, whose antics seemed to rehearse his—predominantly white—spectators’ fantasies and fears. This staging of *global Otherness*, in which the “ethnic” signs were twisted, seemed to provide an ironic counterpoint to our own crosscultural venture. To what extent was the “India” being celebrated at the conference cosmetic; to what degree was the conference spectacle of intercultural *détente* just that—a show? And, for all its goodwill, was the conference complicit in the global merchandising of a range of “Third World” products—intellectualized exotica, culturally Othered styles and goods? Was this travesty—this dumbed-down dumbshow—somehow *related* to the “Roy phenomenon” or even to the conference itself as a highly mediated cultural event?

To suggest as much is no doubt churlish or at best needlessly trivializing, yet these were questions that interested me back then, and they continue to interest me now. For India and, by extension, the “Third World” is very much a central player in the global “alterity industry,” catering mainly—though not exclusively—to the capitalist West (for a series of African examples, see also Anthony Appiah’s chapter “The Postcolonial and the Postmodern,” in *In My Father’s House*). The “alterity industry” is closely linked to what Simon During has called the “global popular,” to mediated images of cross-cultural harmony in which “consumption warmly glows” (343).¹⁰ It is also clearly linked to the massification of exotic merchandise—to the range of often tawdry “foreign” goods which, filtering through global channels, eventually land in a shop or shopping mall or street market near

you. But it is linked, as well, to more obviously middlebrow or highbrow forms of cultural production—to the marketing, for instance, of high-class tours to “fabulous India,” or the rush-packaging of literary anthologies to coincide with Jubilee Year. Sara Suleri—herself an academic—has located a branch of the industry in the Academy, where, as she complains in her book *The Rhetoric of English India* (1992), “alteritism” is rampant, especially in emergent fields such as postcolonial (cultural) studies, in which a revisionist study of the literatures of colonialism, “rel[ying] on the centrality of otherness, tends to replicate what in the context of imperialist discourse was the familiar category of the exotic” (Suleri 12; see also Huggan, “The Neocolonialism of Postcolonialism”).¹¹ And Deborah Root too has drawn attention to the role of higher education in the perpetuation and reinvigoration of profitable myths of cultural difference. Ours, says Root, is a cannibal age of mass appropriation, in which Otherness no longer announces inaccessibility or mute incomprehension but, on the contrary, the clatter of the cash-tills as the latest “ethnic” product makes its way to the latest customer, its “difference” already half-consumed.

The symbolic power of India’s independence—thankfully—cannot be reduced to another sales-tag or diluted into another commodified “anniversary event.” 1997 is too important a year to be left to someone’s shopping list, or to be consigned to the next empty pickle-jar in some edible version of the Indian past (see *Midnight’s Children* 459-61).¹² Nonetheless, it will be a year in which India can expect some festive competition: when its own consuming multitudes, as in a Borges dream or Rushdie novel, will find themselves, their country, turned into the objects of others’ consumption.¹³

NOTES

¹ On “Raj revivalism,” see Salman Rushdie’s essay “Outside the Whale” in *Imaginary Homelands* (1991); also the essays collected in Harrex et al., including Harrex’s useful introduction. The vehemence with which Rushdie dismisses the commercial appeal of various (post-)“Raj” products possibly betrays his slight discomfort at the marketability of his own. The phrase “Conradian atavism” is Rob Nixon’s; see his essay on the Naipaul brothers, whose studied—often self-ironic—anachronisms are an integral part of their work, especially their travel writing. The reworking of Conradian motifs has become something of a postcolonial cliché;

should we be surprised to find examples (see the discussion below) in Arundhati Roy's new novel?

- 2 Rushdie acknowledges that another reason for the primacy of English-language writing is the lack of good translations from India's vernacular languages. He doesn't point out, though (or is unwilling to admit) that "Indo-Anglian" fiction is itself a kind of translation, a culturally mediated view of India made accessible to the wider English-speaking world; nor does he comment on the curious uniformity of "Third World" literary translations, which often end up, as Gavatri Spivak has wryly remarked, in a marketable "with-it translatese" (see Spivak's essay "The Politics of Translation," in *Outside in the Teaching Machine*).
- 3 Like Rushdie, Ahmad recognizes that "if present trends continue, English [including English *translation*] will become, in effect, the language in which knowledge of "Indian" literature is produced" (*In Theory* 250). But unlike Rushdie, Ahmad believes that English is "the language least suitable for this role—not because it was inserted into India in tandem with colonialism, but entirely because it is, among all the other Indian languages, the most removed in its structure and ambience, from all the other Indian languages, hence least able to bridge the cultural gap between the original and the translated text" (250). In addition, states Ahmad in what sounds suspiciously like a sideswipe at privileged diasporics such as Rushdie, "the vast bulk of the literary intelligentsia in India is not and has not been very proficient in English, even as a reading public, regardless of what the upper layers of half a dozen cosmopolitan cities may believe" (250). On the favorable—often gushing—metropolitan reception of "Indo-Anglian" literature, Ahmad is at his most censorious. Taking Edward Said to task for his humanist construction of the "worldly" reader, Ahmad scorns Said's enthusiastic recommendation that "the world, especially the 'Orient'—Palestine, Algeria, India—[should be] *consumed* in the form of the fictions of this world which are available in the bookshops of the metropolitan countries" (217). Such consumption, for Ahmad, implies a sovereign, classless reader, whose "worldly" critical stance becomes, in the end, "indistinguishable from commodity fetishism" (217).
- 4 Timothy Brennan, in his most recent book *At Home in the World* (1997), brackets the work of Rushdie and García Márquez under the "Third World" literary category of the "politico-exotic." This category, while useful, elides the differences between the two writers; it does have the merit, though, of demonstrating the homogenizing processes through which literary texts and authors deemed as coming from the "Third World" are marketed for "safe" consumption.
- 5 Rushdie's is an interesting case in that his "representativeness"—like Naipaul's—is *flexible*. The labels ascribed to Rushdie, especially during and after the Affair, are instructive: according to one's perspective, he is either a "Third World" traitor/rabble-rouser or an (Indo-) "British" upholder of the democratic rights of the Western world. More attention needs to be paid to the politics of (literary) labelling, and to its implications for the reception of—another label—"post-colonial" writers' work.
- 6 For an eloquent, if somewhat tendentious, defense of "Indian literature" as a multilingual *national* project, see Ahmad 243-85. For an analysis of Indian literature/culture as a diasporic formation, see the recent work of Arjun Appadurai; also, in a more popularized—and also more questionable—version, the travel writing of Pico Iyer.
- 7 Some of what I wish to say about this conference might come across as ungracious. I enjoyed the conference and would like to thank the organizers for inviting me. My aim here is not to invalidate the conference *per se*—for there was much that was useful that came out of it—but to place it, and critically analyze it, within the wider context of mediated "anniversary" events.

- ⁸ Definitions of ethnicity and ethnic identity, important though these are, are beyond the purview of this paper. Basically, I have retained the quotes so as to distinguish between self-conferred ethnic affiliations and those various staged versions—"ethnic" performances—which are designed to cater to (Western) mainstream consumer tastes. The distinction is, of course, a tricky one, raising further unanswered questions about how identity tags and labels are manipulated by their defining group. "Indian writing" and "Indian writers" are obvious examples here.
- ⁹ The accumulation of what Pierre Bourdieu has called "symbolic capital" is an interesting topic. Who achieves recognition and why? What are the mediated processes that lead to literary "stardom," or to the construction of particular writers as "representative" cultural figures? In what is generally though by no means unequivocally accepted as the postcolonial "field of cultural production" (Bourdieu), these questions are the ones—for me at least—in most urgent need of being (re)assessed. Brennan's recent work expands on suggestions already made by, say, Spivak and Ahmad; but needless to say, a great deal of research still remains to be done.
- ¹⁰ One of the messages, perhaps, to come out of "India '97" is the need to examine more closely the intersections between postcolonial "resistance theory" and global (capitalist) marketing policy. The conversion of "independence" itself into a marketing opportunity is a case in point. In his article, During points out quite rightly that current postcolonial paradigms are often too text-based, and sometimes too site-specific, to embrace transnational agendas and the "larger rhythms of globalization." I myself have recently coined the phrase "the postcolonial exotic" as a means of examining the tensions that arise when a generalized theory—and several specific *histories*—of opposition are turned into a global currency operating according to the logic of the market.
- ¹¹ Suleri speaks out of personal experience: she teaches "Third World Literature" at Yale. See her autobiography *Meatless Days* (1990), excerpted in the *Vintage Book of Indian Writing*, for a further (self-)examination of what it means to be an "otherness machine."
- ¹² *Midnight's Children* is, of course, a work well aware—and self-ironic—of its own "consumable" status. The pickle motif is carried over, incidentally, into *The God of Small Things*—a novel which, as I have implied, is similarly conscious of its place within a tradition of consumer-oriented "Indo-Anglian" fiction.
- ¹³ Thanks to Padmini Mongia, whose paper initiated these ruminations; and to Sarika Chandra, who shared my bemusement at the "*Rambhadr* guru's" antics. Thanks also to Victor J. Ramraj, who encouraged this late submission, in the hope that the pleasures of the topical might outweigh the perils of the plain-late!

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