

# Twentieth-Century Fiction I

November 14. Anand (2).

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# review

peripheral situations

geography, social hierarchy, mess, danger, impurity

realism *or* technique? (documentation *or* ...art?)

the mobile writer (Faulkner/Paris, Anand/London)

# contrasting peripheries

distantiation of the narrator

“The ugliness, the squalor and the misery...made it an ‘uncongenial’ place to live in.” (9)

colonial problematics

the British regiment

“the glamour of the ‘white man’s’ life.” (9)

an unevenly urbanized setting (not a rural one)

# review

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the mobile writer (Faulkner/Paris, Anand/London)

Anand's affiliations

Bloomsbury

the expatriate avant-garde

(Joyce as Parisian, Joyce as Dubliner)

Gandhi and the nationalist movement?

“In English—my novel may get published in London”

# language: discussion

Consider page 81 of the text. What features mark this as a work of Indian English? Who is the imagined audience of a page configured like this one? What do those features that you notice ask the audience to do?

**And:** what do they signify for you reading this now?

# language

*Untouchable*: an Anglophone text from a multilingual world

footnotes, in-text notes

“Bhangi! (Sweeper) Bhangi!” (81)

That was a Hindu custom, Bakha knew. (53)

but also: defamiliarizations

*Yessuh Messih* (128)

# India/Britain

It is to the directness of his attack that Mr. Anand's success is probably due. (v)

Indians, like most Orientals, are refreshingly frank; they have none of our complexes about functioning. (vi)

By caste he is a Kshatriya, and he might have been expected to inherit the pollution-complex...He has just the right mixture of insight and detachment. (vii)

E.M. Forster, introduction to *Untouchable*

# India/Britain

1828 Brahma Samaj founded; Bengal Renaissance begins

1857 Sepoy rebellion (“The Mutiny”); direct British control

1875 Arya Samaj founded (Hindu revivalism)

1885 Indian National Congress founded

1906 All-India Muslim League founded

1914 M.K. Gandhi returns to India after S.African activism

1919 Repression (Rowlatt Acts); Jallianwala Bagh Massacre

1920 All-India Trade Union Congress; CP of India

1921 Non-cooperation movement

# India/Britain

- 1925 B.R. Ambedkar begins untouchable activist campaign
- 1925 Gandhi declares against untouchability
- 1932 Gandhi vs. Ambedkar on untouchable representation
- 1935 India Act (limited autonomy)
- 1936 All-India Progressive Writers Association
- 1942 Quit India movement launched by Gandhi
- 1947 Independence and Partition of India and Pakistan
- 1950 Indian Constitution

# “Indo-Anglian”

1864 Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, *Rajmohan's Wife*

1874 Lal Behari Day, *Govinda Samanta or Bengal Peasant Life*

1901 Kipling, *Kim*

1905 Rokeya Sakhawat Hussain, “Sultana’s Dream”

1910 M.K. Gandhi, *Hind Swaraj* (English version)

1913 Rabindranath Tagore wins Nobel Prize in Literature  
(for the English version of *Gitanjali*)

1924 Forster, *Passage to India*

1927 K.S.Venkataramani, *Murugan, The Tiller*

1935 R.K. Narayan, *Swami and Friends*

1938 Raja Rao, *Kanthapura*

1946 J. Nehru, *The Discovery of India*

1948 G.V. Desani, *All About H. Hatterr*

# Anglophone

1954 K. Markandaya, *Nectar in a Sieve*

1956 K. Singh, *Train to Pakistan*

1963 A. Desai, *Cry, the Peacock*

1980 S. Rushdie, *Midnight's Children*

1988 Rushdie, *The Satanic Verses*

1993 V. Seth, *A Suitable Boy*

1997 A. Roy, *The God of Small Things*

...

# Anglophone

This is it: the prose writing—both fiction and non-fiction—created in this period by Indian writers working in English is proving to be a more interesting body of work than most of what has been produced in the sixteen “official languages” of India, the so-called vernacular languages, during the same time....

English has become an Indian language. Its colonial origins mean that, like Urdu and unlike all other Indian languages, it has no regional base; but in all other ways, it has emphatically come to stay.

Salman Rushdie (1997)

# discussion

There was only one queer voice which dissented from all this. (150)

‘Ha, ha, ho ho! but what has all this got to do with untouchability?’ (154)

What does the depiction of R.N. Bashir suggest about the capacities and limitations of adopting Anglophone culture for an Indian intellectual in 1935?

# Anglophone?

In present-day India, surely, English occupies a much more contradictory space: as simultaneously a language for the production of knowledge, a means of connecting the country with currents around the world, both good and bad, and as a line of demarcation, a cultural boundary between privilege and dispossession; for many among the literati, it is also the language of Raj nostalgia.

Aijaz Ahmad, *In Theory* (1992)

# caste

endogamy, ritual hierarchy, hereditary occupations

varṇa (“class”/estate): Brāhmaṇ, Kṣatriya, Vaiśya, Śūdra

jāti (“birth [group]”): kin/tribe/communal group (1000s)

outside the system: “outcaste” or “untouchable”

harijan (Gandhi)

Scheduled Castes (1935, 1950)

Dalit (contemporary)

late 19c British Census puts all jātis in a varṇa

caste as putative “essence” of Hindu India

# another affiliation

Anand, recording for the Library of Congress (n.d.)

(also includes reading of pp. 60–63 of *Untouchable*)

<http://www.loc.gov/acq/ovop/delhi/salrp/mulkrajanand.html>

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“the voice of all the rejected was not being heard”

Anand mentions as affiliated with the “Thirties movement”: Hemingway, Faulkner, W.H. Auden, Stephen Spender, C. Day-Lewis.

[Anand was involved with founding of All-India Progressive Writers’ Association (PWA)]

# proletarian fiction

Feodor Gladkov, *Cement* (1925)

Mike Gold, *Jews without Money* (1929)

Agnes Smedley, *Daughter of Earth* (1929)

Kobayashi Takiji, *The Factory Ship* (1929)

Alfred Döblin, *Berlin Alexanderplatz* (1929)

Quayaquil group, *Those That Leave* (1930)

Jacques Roumain, *The Bewitched Mountain* (1931)

Sajjad Zaheer et al., *Angaaray* (1932) [suppressed by British, still banned in Pakistan]

Patrícia Galvão, *Industrial Park* (1933)

Paul Nizan, *Antoine Bloyé* (1933)

Yi Kiyong, *Hometown* (1934)

Mulk Raj Anand, *Untouchable* (1935)

C.L.R. James, *Minty Alley* (1936)

# proletarian fiction

To produce pure proletarian art the artist must be at one with the worker; this is impossible, not for political reasons, but because the artist never is at one with any public.

William Empson, "Proletarian Literature,"  
in *Some Versions of Pastoral* (1935)

By caste he is a Kshatriya, and he might have been expected to inherit the pollution-complex...He has just the right mixture of insight and detachment.

E.M. Forster, introduction to *Untouchable*

# next

bring Anand: we will discuss the response to Gandhi and the possibility of revolutionary consciousness

Hurston: focus on the first half (through p. 99)