



DISCONTENT AS RESISTANCE: THE CULTURAL - POLITICS OF ENGLISH STUDIES

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ABSTRACT

This paper attempts to identify and explore the varied ideological implications of English studies by constructing a contextual genealogy of the field as it travels from its inception in the colonial period to its contemporary context. It attempts to respond to questions concerning reading practices, pedagogic agencies, knowledge, production, disciplinary formations and identity politics. It is neither theoretically comprehensive nor chronologically systematic and does not discuss the rise of feminisms and translation studies as these areas demand fuller analysis than this space can afford. It prefers not to marginalize these issues with tokenist responses. The principal interest of this paper is to think through the problematic cultural-politics of the field so as to place it in perspective.

Introduction

Among the troubling questions that disturb English teachers today is the contradictory status of contemporary English Studies in our Universities. On the one hand, there is the history of British imperialism, with all its hegemonic violence, in which the field and its teachers have participated either in complicit obedience

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or in forced silence. On the other, there are those diverse paradigm shifts, which both the field and its agents have mobilised, either in fashionable discontent or in radical dissent. Located within this problematic matrix, the field of English Studies soon intersects with other complicated questions of post-coloniality such as race and class, caste and gender - issues of immediate concern in the English Studies classroom today.

The pedagogic practices that are deployed in the English Studies classroom are equally implicated in the histories and cultures above-mentioned. Consequently English classroom practice constructs both learning projects and meaning systems that conjoin into, what can be considered, the knowledge-making process which in their turn depends heavily on the critical choices and reading methods deployed in the classroom.

The English Studies teacher as the critical agent of such pedagogic practices establishes his/her relationship with learners and learning within the knowledge making process either through the politics of control or the muddle of self-effacement. Indeed the learner as knowledge-maker combines with learning as knowledge making in order to produce a self either in compliance or in conflict with the large cultural-political arrangements of the historical context.

As it stands, the English Studies classroom is obviously a forbidding cultural and political minefield as academic work in any cultural political context is never neutral but always highly ideological in nature and practice. Hence any analysis of such a complex field must disentangle its contradictions in order to treat its complexities effectively. My interest here is less to prescribe any politically correct technology than to think through these complexities in order to clarify some issues and questions. I imagine that there are at least two central questions that must be raised in order to map and assess the knowledge making and identity-constructing project English Studies in "India" really is. They are:

- a) What do we actually do in our English Studies classroom? That is, what are the varied reading practices we employ to construct the English Studies curriculum and produce knowledge to develop the academic discipline of English Studies today?
- b) What is the nature of our position as knowledge-producers and as selves in the English Studies classroom today?

I will attempt to construct a contemporary genealogy of the field and its practices in order to respond to these questions. I will also draw heavily from postcolonial and other culture theories to think through this muddle differently.

The Colonial Logic of English Studies

There is an extremely powerful and instructive oral poem that Chinweizu renders in the English Language from his native Ibo African that succinctly encapsulates the colonial project of cultural dominance. Chinweizu's poem is instructively titled "Colonizer's Logic" (1988) and it reads:

The Natives are unintelligent—
We do not understand their language'

Chinweizu's poem adequately characterises the cultural logic of colonial transactions between the colonizer and the colonized, setting out the politics of 'us' and 'them'³. The poem demonstrates that the grand logic of colonialism claims that the native is unintelligent because the civilized cannot understand native languages. Strange this might be but British colonialism must construct and civilise its native other at the cost of its own eurocentric logic so that British imperialism, not just British dominance may define its role and function in the far-flung colony. For purposes of consent, British imperialism reversed its own logic in order to shape and order its imperial mission and self-definition. No doubt, Chinweizu's poem belongs to the African experience, but its cultural politics can be transposed to the Indian colony, because the cultural trajectories of English Education in India and Africa have been similar.'

Rather recently this peculiar logic of colonialism has been re-read differently particularly by Meenakshi Mukerjee and Harish Trivedi⁵ who have rigorously interrogated postcolonialism and its terms of reference so that the contemporary discourse of postcoloniality itself may be further radicalized. Harish Trivedi argues in his *Colonial Transactions: English Literature and India* (1993/95), that postcolonial theories are heavily underwritten by western theorizations of culture and politics, drawn from highly esoteric ideas and models of "Self and Other" in the metropolitan academy. Post-colonialism as discourse thus becomes a repetitive mimicry of western psychoanalysis and cultural metaphysics and is effectively metropolitan, undifferentiated, and co-operative in nature and practice. Harish Trivedi's polemical explanation implies that there has been no real culture conflict in the colonial experience. Instead a mutual but disruptive "give" and "take" is visible between colonial ideology and native cultures, much like a hard-bargaining business transaction.⁶ His argument considers alliances of hegemonic consent with upper caste and metropolitan-educated native intellectuals as the transacting media between colonial modernity and cultural destiny within the territory named "India." Despite his predominantly powerful argument, Trivedi eludes interrogating the nature of hegemonic authority that stitched these

transactions together. Nobody can confidently deny the cultural-political spread of the epistemological violence euro-centricism heaped on the colonized, appropriately phrased by Ngugi as an attack on the "spiritual eyeglasses" of the natives.⁷ What the British Empire sutured together through these "transactions"—even if they were after all so—was not just the innocent, infantile, primitive, native as other but also the subordinating bonding with the alienated and dominated native informant. Therefore, the colonial transaction that Trivedi proposes is yet a highly hierarchal encounter with hegemonic power weighted in favour of British imperial interests.

In this respect, Susie Tharu's analysis in "Government, Binding and Unbinding: Alienation and The Teaching of Literature" of *Subject To Change: Teaching Literature In The Nineties* (1998) is resonant for the way she "unpacks" the politics of "reduction" in the colonial period. For her, orientalist-humanism lumped together "upper-caste, upper class, courtly and priestly traditions as representative of an entire people, their history, and their many cultures",⁸ but simultaneously dislocated them from their contexts, binding them to "imperial interests" and making 'European knowledge' as a "sequel to oriental knowledge".⁹ This perception built the necessary alliance between the "elite Indian custodian"¹⁰ of culture and the orientalist-humanist colonizer linking the project of colonial governance with native awakening. Indeed when the British Crown in 1857 established the Indian Universities as structures of consent, the imperial purpose was to visit the economy of European modernity onto "India" and locate the colony within British history as well. Thus Trivedi's reading of post-coloniality as transaction—as against Susie Tharu's more explanatory perspectives— is one-sided and palpably *bhadralok* in trajectory because it denies the role of cultural hegemony that the colonial master set up through the project of British Education in India

Colonial Hegemony and British Education in India

The project of English Education in "India" began rather early in the 1800's with complicated debates in England over the diverse approach to educating the "natives" in the colony. While advocates of the vernacularist, anglicist and orientalist agreed that the study of "English Literature and European Science" in the colony would ensure "the longevity of empire" and "British authority"¹¹ they were divided over whether to transpose European scholarship without reference to local "existing" scholarship.¹⁴ However anglicists, vernacularists and orientalists proposed to structure a "disciplinary project" that enhanced the consent to empire. As Susie Tharu's analysis (1998) suggests:

...they conceived of an education as a means of shaping Indian subjects who equipped with disciplined minds and bodies, would not only be in a

better position to understand Imperial laws but will also have the necessary ethical discrimination and mental cultivation to desire and appreciate the rational, humane and impartial government the new rulers were trying to set up¹⁵

This debate pre-dated the much-maligned Macaulay was driven by European scholars, Company officials, administrators and missionaries whose interests varied from colonial ambitions to cultural domination. Despite differences in perception, they nevertheless were convinced about the vast cultural potential of European Science and Languages for capital formation and colonial rule. The structures of hegemonies visualised and planned however took long a-coming, as the differing debates in colonising Britain could not suture together a unity of purpose. The British East India Company, not yet a colonial power had articulated this project for these so-called infantile regions, but could not actually translate this imaginary into concrete action. Though it continued to bring ideological pressure on the British Crown in varied public spaces, it only found intellectual approval and social acceptance, but no real political or administrative action.¹⁶ It was then left to Macaulay, who chaired the Committee on Public Instruction (1835) to denounce the natives and activate the project of colonial hegemony in India. Thus for most radical thinkers Macaulay became the marking agent of the colonial moment, who fashioned British hegemonic presence in India because of his denigrating pronouncements about Sanskrit and Arabic knowledge."

Macaulay's utterances about Indian wisdom and European progressiveness captured the British people's imagination principally because of its racist resonance and its self-pride, legitimising the British quest for self-hood in the fast emerging colony. His infamous Minutes of 1835¹⁸ was an impervious and arrogant projection of cultural imperialism in the future colony. The Minutes dismissed all Arabic and Sanskrit literatures as barbaric, insufficient and simplistic:⁹ Native knowledge and the arts could never compare with the superior English wisdom or the European arts and sciences because the natives were "ignorant" and "primitive" incapable of modernist logic and encircled in traditional mythologies.²⁰ Indeed the ideology of empire was based on eurocentric scientific knowledge emerging from the European Enlightenment and its associated discourses in Orientalism. This implied that eurocentric knowledge and more specifically British Science and the Arts, offered a powerful and influential cultural potential for human development in the so-called primitive Asiatic societies of the East. The means to initiate this intellectual conquest for consent to empire was to introduce the "natives" to the English Language through its "best" representations in Literature and the Arts. The empire therefore must teach the English language, its grammars and its literariness, not only to bring them to civilization but also to establish a new

discursive discipline called English Literature much like the dominating discipline of Orientalism. The natives, for racist British thinkers, could not access the so-called imperceptible ideas and values from the European Classics because those were beyond the intellectual reach of Asiatics in the subcontinent. Hence the fledgling, yet second-hand canonicity of English Literature was sufficient to socialize the native into civilization. This overtly racist argument masked the political and economic programme of British capitalist interests overseas" for as Macaulay outlined, the empire would have local intermediaries "Indian in blood and color but English in taste and opinions, morals and in intellect" to "govern its millions." This way the insidious empire would survive and prosper through the project of English Education in India.

Gauri Vishwanathan in her *Masks of Conquest: Literary Studies and British Rule in India* (1992)" provides a detailed analysis of this insidious imperial interest. She also shows how British Education in India remained a highly contested cultural enterprise because Britain had to blunder through the "tensions" between the erstwhile Company, the British Crown, the British Parliament, the "Indian elite and the missionaries".²⁴ Imperial interests on the one hand and liberal humanist commitments on the other created "vulnerability" for the overseas colonial functionary.²⁵ There was the dread of large-scale rebellion, despite the hegemony of the English school system and the power of British capital from a people notorious for their irrationality, their moral and intellectual deficiency and their terrifying volatileness.²⁶ The cultural-politics manufacturing consent remained dangerous and unstable because of the anxiety for self confronted by the colonial master. The identity of the universal hero of history was inextricably connected to this anxiety and therefore to the ambiguous sense of loss overseas. The British manipulated this rite of passage, revised their methodological attitudes, and recast themselves as agents of progress through processes of othering that subjugated the native communities in order to fulfill their ultimate European destiny. This way the interpellation of the "free subject" silenced by hegemony could be produced. Thus hegemonies of English Education in India bred colonial subjugation through consent while fostering Britain's quest for the universal hero of history.

The culture-conflicts in this context between the Indian elite, the British parliament, the overseas colonial administrators and the missionaries unfold in the confrontations over curriculum choices for English Education in India. The anglicist, vernacularist and orientalist positions earlier cited haunted these debates over the regimes of textuality for the colonial native. The anglicist assumed that European knowledge could be imposed univocally onto native experience by systems of control that inferiorised local knowledge; the orientalists and the vernacularists proposed an assimilatory process that would be all-embracing and co-optative but only permitting a "subordinating" alignment between

indigenous knowledges and European thought in order to make cultural and political control lasting and widespread. It was a combination of interests that bolstered English education in India but its secular ideology could not resist missionary zealotry, which wrote in the Christian ideals of redemption and salvation into the colonial project. This then was a complex negotiation of cultural, political and economic interests transacting the manufacturing of consent among the subject peoples of India. There was a certain warped binding together of impossible contradictions, one, in which the colonial master endured the scare of revolt and instability while desiring to control the colonized subject. The fear that English Education in building hegemonies could also inspire, instead of, merely tame the colonised because of a liberal radical textuality was ever present. Hence the curricular choices of British education in its earliest period were particularly evocative of British civilisation, like Milton, Locke and Newton, Bentham and Mill too but not yet Shakespeare." Besides, under pressure from missionary regimes, the moral and rational rigour either in, textuality or in methodology that English Victorianism produced was forced into University curriculum in the colony. Somehow, Shakespeare and the Romantics were all too playful and certainly too rebellious to be given to the already depraved and volatile native. Therefore it was not until the late 1880's that Shakespeare and his rude and robust contemporaries made their way into the University curriculum. The young men that accessed this system of British power were largely from the landed gentry, the urbanised upper castes and the powerful professional groups of the colony. The urban elite and the powerful feudal communities emerging out of the indigenous caste order built a subtle leverage of power within the colonial order, while the system denied for the masses whatever potential the cultural capital of western humanism could offer.²⁹ Thus the colonised elite became colonial allies and positioned themselves as parasites, necessarily uncomfortable but powerful by their alliances with British control. British colonial ideology however subordinated the indigenous elite classes, offering them only second-hand authority and assimilating them into a "self-incriminating"³⁰ comprador cultural-politics that Macaulay's agenda had suggested. This in a sense was the era of cultural co-optation, the period of British hegemony, when mimic men were hired/ co-opted to fulfill some of the despotic roles of the colonial administration. Hence the identity of the comprador elite without whose consent colonialism would be impossible occupied a complicated position, one that was both bound to and broken from the colonizing powers, steadily breeding an alienation that was both distanced and complicit with colonialism.

This identity was constructed through the politics of dissemination, which underlies the pedagogical attitude in English Studies. The name of Alan Duffr recurred in the cultural-politics of this time as a missionary, and as chief architect of the

Christian English school curriculum. He chose to disseminate the moral message of European civilization, reading even secular literary and critical work including the Romantics from European Christian standards of discipline and morality, while the secular government school/college curriculum sought arduously to inculcate modernist training in statecraft and bureaucratic administration. Duff also aimed at replacing the "Vedic Guru" with the English Professor in his classrooms, displacing the inferiority of Sanskrit knowledge onto the insufficiency of Brahminism. In fact he inspired a consenting respect for the white man and insinuated the alienation among the colonized, which eventually cost British imperialism the colony. What resulted was the ideological rift between knowledge making and knowledge makers that constituted colonial discourses about native inferiority, which in turn encrusted the politics of "us and them". The English Professor as the productive knowledge maker controlled discursive authority and over-determined the backwardness of classical Sanskrit, Persian and Arabic" emphasising British power over the discursive colonial space. No doubt there was spectacular awe for colonial modernity but the reception of intellectual authority was underwritten by discontent. All knowledge making for the alienated British subject had to muddle through the inscriptions of British hegemony producing an alienated Indian subjectivity that the local elite mediated by spectacular surprise and discontented acceptance.

Indeed the educated Indian elite lived through an ideological and psychological split between decentralised modes of control in the British colonial administration and the will to rebellion against the colonial master. The subaltern in the colonial army and the Census Officers produced by British Education either guarded the outposts of empire from rebellion or further massified the Indian peoples in the cities. British cultural-politics in this period fostered the utilitarian objective of British Education in India but empowered the anti-colonial resistance with ideological handle to discontent. The arrival of European modernity served adequately to suppress the classical as well as the folk traditions of the Indian peoples but the personal, psychological, cultural and historical discontent mobilised into revolt against colonisation. The English Educator no doubt still remained the knowledge maker, holding the reins to intellectual power and his Indian recipient, merely the object of his hegemonic inscriptions but the dialectics between knowledge-makers and knowledge-making, the local elite and local knowledge on the one hand and colonial power and colonial modernity on the other, produced the discursive encounter between British colonial selfhood and the othered native recipient of intellectual violence. It is in reading this dialectics down-up, from the episteme of suppression and repression, that the disgruntled yet consenting native other could conceive anti-colonial resistance and national culture.

Late Colonialism and The Native Indian-English Professional

As colonialism entered into the 1900's, the Indian English Professor, one with knowledge of and sympathy for Euro-centric liberal universalism, appeared not only on the site of Indian-English institutions but also on the cultural matrix of the colony. His/er narratives of civilization, alienating and discontented, signified the arrival of the native Indian-English professional, in the imperial continuum, English in manners and morals but anti-colonial in principle and attitude. Hence the consent sought after, remained tenuous, as the slowly but surely emerging local professional was being inspired to revolution and rebellion against the colony. This then was the split-identity that the native professional occupied. Though English education chose to teach the English language through its Literature to its natives and provide a liberal humanist argument for imperialism in the colony, it could not permanently co-opt the comprador bourgeoisie from anti-colonial resistance. In fact, English studies had failed to arrest this growing discontent but merely postponed its eventual upsurge.

The colonial masters however continued to develop English Literature as a respectable academic discipline³⁴ with some orientalist and vernacularist concessions in order to socialize their subjects into a diffuse and alien knowledge so that resistance and disruption in the colony could be minimised. What effectively resulted was a normative and static liberalism embedding the imaginary of a native identity among the subjugated people. Though the politics of "us and • them" continued to permeate colonial consciousness, the subjugated elite began to seize modernist knowledge to speak on behalf of the colonized and their own cultural and political destiny.

English literary Studies, through a series of revisions, continued to privilege the classical lecture mode, pedagogic method in classroom practice, underscoring colonial and missionary methodological attitudes." This method belied the missionary zeal of secular civilizationists underscoring moral "instruction"" as its purpose, not christian proselytisation. It had secularized this method so that secular control would remain with British authority. Mission work was socially reformist, not pietistic in practice and attempted to liberate society from class/caste hierarchies but carried no colonial sanction about this time. Colonial rule by contrast kept off social, religious and cultural tampering for fear of rebellion. The lecture mode today in our contemporary classroom even today raises serious ideological questions regarding its value and ancestry in independent India because it continues colonial ideology by other means.

There were therefore three key components of colonial pedagogy and hegemony that constituted critical practice in the colonial classroom. First, there was the English Studies curriculum itself, which shaped the value of English Literature as it progressed into becoming a discipline. It also proposed an identity-politics that maintained the "us and them" framework of colonial ideology, but sharpened the power of the indigenous elite, fractured and enraged by its dislocation but empowering that displacement towards nationalist emancipation.

Second, the arrival of the native English professor whose learned command of the English language and its literature impacted on the discipline and its scholars, so as to shape his/er position in the field of English studies itself. This provided the much dreamed of subjectivity for the disciplinary processes of English Studies legitimising its effects on knowledge-making itself. That apart, it positioned the British Professor in a moment of hegemony displacing h/erself onto the native variant of the Indian-English professional.

And third the lecture method, so consistently practised, determined the processes of colonial massification, the indirect violence of British hegemony that silenced knowledge-makers and knowledge making, in the colonised classroom. This process bred unconsciously an uncritical complicity with imperial hegemony that was to continue in its mimicry even in independent India.

These three aspects of colonial English Studies, though contradictory in nature, conjoined to structure the European canon, its central signs being Milton and Shakespeare, Bradley and Arnold, in that order. Their assumed universality and their equally powerful eurocentricism provided an iconic status to the language and literature, not easily dislodged even in the late 1900's. What resulted from such cultural mediation were degrading notions about the barbarity and ritualism, naiveté and unintelligence of the colonized native." The European canon mobilised an epistemological violence on native wisdom, systematically entrenching its civilisational authority over the colonized masses and marking its own identity in ambiguous superiority to the colonised masses.

The narratives of European authority performed another critical function too. It set up the power and prestige of the native intellectual. The processes of eurocentric assimilation developed the Indian-English-Teacher-Orientalist, whose ability to inhabit both the local and the colonial cultures provided h/er social power to speak on behalf of both the colonized and the colonizer. H/er legacy constituted the colonial official, the bhadralok babu, who enumerated the backwardness of indigenous society and the progressiveness of European society, arguing for universal rationalism and against orthodox mysticism, faulting traditionalist culture and legitimising western capitalist modernity.

The presence of the Indian-English-Teacher-Orientalist constantly reproduced the native self in the recurring lecture in the English Studies classroom based on the detailed paraphrase and the descriptivist form resembled the colonial administrative procedures of Empire that categorized, defined, totalised and excluded the highly differentiated cultural matrix of the colony. Thus the technique of orientalising culture arrested the pedagogic moment in sacred immobility; its consequences and effects are to be felt in our University practices even today.

By the large, this colonial pedagogy, though it centered British power in the East, also provoked counter—hegemonic controversies. The contradictory nature of British education mobilised its own discontent with, the European canon, as the native informant," was born, with his/her sense of the pan-Indian Sanskritised sensibility. The English Teacher agent captured his/her deep historical past in order to resist colonial hegemony and domination.

In the 1920's the emergence of "Indianness" as a concept ably supported and abetted the already powerful of anti-colonial struggle developing in the political sphere. Sanskrit poetics, as a unitary theory of Indianness was displaced on the imagined nation, as the indigenous elite, not yet the subaltern" began to speak against empire. The Leavisite tradition was being replaced by the Sanskrit episteme of cultural assertion. It was a period of colonized history, in which the local elite recuperated native histories and mythologies, languages and traditions, through a process of sanskritisation. It was a time of cultural revival and national assertion unifying the multiple language communities into a powerful yet upper caste cultural sensibility. The high modernism of Europe had also contributed to recasting the colonial ideological apparatus as a neo-sanskrit modernist episteme for anti-colonialism and national resistance, though the masses remained disempowered in "real" terms. Thus we see the birth of nationalist elite that an alienating British education in India had produced through a process of eurocentric modernization, nativist recuperation and national consciousness.

The Nation and English Studies

Between the period of anti-colonial struggle and the rise of a new post independent nation, the academic controversies in English Studies polarized between European liberal humanism and Pan-Indian Sanskritist classicism.⁴⁰ This debate permitted the arrival of Bernard Shaw, Charles Dickens and Joseph Conroe (Lomba 1992:72) on the post-colonial pedagogic context but restored Hindu Sanskritist pedagogy in the classroom. Under pressure from revisionist forces Government policy would have imposed a neo-Vedanta curriculum and pedagogic process⁴² but for the strong and persistent anti-brahmanical social revolution in the South

particularly Tamil Dravida Movement initiated and developed by EVR Periyar.⁴³ It focused on Tamil identity and invoked Dravida origins defining the anti-colonial nationalist leadership as caste-based and modelled on Aryan racism. This growing discontent with a facile and undifferentiated "Indianess" culminated in the anti-Hindi agitations in the 1960's against the nationalising imposition of Hindi," forcing government policy to legitimise the three-language formula deploying English as a link language in the nation-state. It problematised" the position of the Indian-English Professor hitherto an orientalisng decentralised despot recasting his/er as a local but differentiated post-colonial informant. Around the late 1960's, Applied Linguistics brokered quite efficiently by the British Council" entered the cultural-political scene and inserted linguistic technologies that served to construct an alternative space for English Language Studies and produce "the common Indian citizen"" based on the Nehruvian model of National Development, modern and progressive, a liberal pan-Indian subject, international in outlook but fiercely national in character. Applied Linguistics did offset the romanticisation of universal liberal values and British cultural sympathy that projected European reason even in post-colonial India.

Applied Linguistics depoliticised the English language, neutralised its conceptual underpinnings conceptual outcomes broke the colonial hangover with English literariness. It distributed the English Language at least among the urban under-classes, previously marginalized by caste/class politics, empowering them with the cultural capital for upward mobility. It moved English Language Studies into a different cultural realm, that of national-economic development, and into the alternative ideological sphere of political neutrality at the service of the new nation. This dissociation of language from culture marked an epistemological break in English Studies, problematic but interventionist nevertheless, and set out its embattled ideological career that would disturb the English teaching community in the future. The position of the native Indian English professional was recast as English-Teacher-Technologist constructing selves that inhabited the liberal nation with prospective careers as international scholars enriched by Euro-British expertise." This structured a career-bound pedagogic culture, deeply inscribed by Western models that focussed on skills training as pedagogic practice. This interactive classroom practice mediated a free-floating cultural space where learners as knowledge-makers and learning as knowledge-making became participatory and democratised, developing technologies for the "worlding"⁴⁹ of human experience and knowledge production. What resulted was the Language/literature divided that produced cultural insularity, disconnected from the politics of language. This epistemic break also signified the continuance of metropolitan influence but suspended momentarily the sanskritisation of University education, vocationalising English in favour of the subaltern castes/classes. Nevertheless it polarized the debate between Language Studies and literary Studies in English,

structuring a cultural artifice of mutual discontent. Despite its ellisions, Applied Linguistics inserted Stylistics, the formal linguistic strategies of analysis that was to frame the discursive questions of later cultural interrogation. The systematic dismantling of universal meanings through Stylistics determined far-reaching analytical trajectories of cultural-political discontent.

But it was Edward Said's *Orientalism* (1978) in the 1970's that radically shifted the discipline of English studies from its insular space of neutral ideologies into the provocative realm of cultural-politics. Edward Said's gesture exposed the structures of hegemony deeply rooted in contemporary Eurocentric aesthetics and Social Sciences, implicating a power struggle between knowledge systems of the world. Said interrogated the discursive processes of western knowledges uncovered the hegemonic regulation and control of the other as Orient. Deploying Foucault's theories of discursive power, Said argued that in describing, controlling and defining the Orient in intellectual terms the Occident defined itself and ruled its discursive other in the Orient. His critique that included William Jones on discourse on "sanskrit" studies located the terms of reference by which western knowledges were bound to the agenda of imperial hegemony and domination⁵⁰. Said's shocking polemic on Orientalism was to develop colonial discourse analysis, not just to explain the continuities of colonialism but also to resort to counterhegemonic constructions of the other in ex-colonial societies. When applied to the experience of the ex-colonies Said's critique impelled the inauguration of critical practice that situated Literature and the Arts within the continuum of history, politics, culture and ideology.⁵¹ Therefore Literature or language could remain no longer innocent of the historical and ideological forces of the context that produced and is produced by it. Said's ideas had a huge counter-hegemonic influence, though they were critiqued for the undifferentiated construction of the dominant Other as Occident.⁵² His substantive pronouncements framed evocatively the issues and questions that were to be articulated in theories of post-colonialism. Theories of marginality and its conflict with metropolitan discourses sprung up to reconceptualise English studies in India as a cultural-political site of ideological contestation.

In about a decade after *Orientalism* (1978), the term "Post-Colonial"⁵³ as marker of the relations between colonialism and the ex-colonies gained immense currency in cultural discourse with a series of intellectual accretions that re-deployed Lacanian formulations of self and other, loss and lack, desire and control. It arrived simultaneously with studies on the institution and history of colonial English Studies produced by Gauri Vishwanathan in *Masks of Conquest: Literary Studies and British Rule in India* (1989), a seminal work, which explained the hegemonic origins of consent for colonialism and identity politics in colonial India. Vishwanathan argued that University Education was indeed ideological in nature,

thus revisiting the concepts, Said had proposed. This critique of British education also framed the English Studies archive within the politics of race, class and gender and interrogated the cultural political underpinnings of imperial history and epistemology."

Postcolonialism as theoretical practice however emerged with. Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin, Australian critics from settler British colonies, and their book, *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice In Post Colonial Literatures* (1989), now violently contested and maligned, in which they argued for a similarity of colonial experience between vastly dissimilar ex-colonies which they named as "Postcolonial". They projected an awfully universalizing discursive strategy to interpret colonial and postcolonial nationalities, that inevitably conflated differing contexts and ideological variations only to aggressive reaction from a recuperative and sometime co-optative nativism. The dazzling but sometime sanskritist critiques of Harish Trivedi in recent times, much after the earlier G N Devy⁵⁶ have disrupted "the metropolitan impositions" of the so-called "white colonies". Harish Trivedi's critique in "India and Postcolonial Discourse" about "just too much" postcolonialism" presents a powerful analysis continuing metropolitanism of Postcolonial criticism but expends much theoretical energy on Sanskrit poetics thus invoking an equally alienating discourse of reception and representation of an uncluttered glorious "Indian" past. Trivedi provides an almost nativist moment through his metaphor of a "Boxing" match that resists a "Knock-out", choosing to work "with/within" discourse of postcoloniality.⁵⁹ What is being ignored in such critiques is postcoloniality as a cultural-material condition of nationalism and nationhood which created particularly after partition a "coercive inside" building a diasporic within,⁶¹ forced into either a labouring migrancy or a wandering displacement internally. The politics of identity in nativism needs then to account for dislocated local exiles, uprooted from their cultural-material spaces. Despite my sharp disagreement with the writers of *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice In Post Colonial Literatures* (1989) and Harish Trivedi as well for their undifferentiating mimicry and his sanskritist ideology respectively, the ideological wrestling exposes the highly ambivalent and contested field, contemporary English Studies is today.

Among a variety of disputations, that occupy the field, the one on subalternity inspired by the historiography studies of the Subaltern Project has deeply influenced the field of English Studies. Ranajit Guha's inaugural definition of the subaltern" as the subjugated, a term belonging to colonial military formations but as covering caste, class, gender, peasantry and other subjugations⁶³ developed critical inflections on reading practices and cultural productions that broke the disciplinary boundaries of literary studies. It situated an explanatory paradigm of cultural

advocacy within pedagogic—critical practices that by a complex process of dialectical negotiations would recast theorisations of the "autochthone",⁶⁴ the gendered local informant, Third World Studies, hybridist identity politics and indeed postcoloniality itself. Therefore in the 1980's the new emerging category of Indian Writing in English and Third World Literatures encounter the emerging field of Critical Theory and Post-colonial Studies fracturing the embedded canonicity of the Euro-American Literary studies.

Meanwhile, after decolonisation, Commonwealth Studies" occupied the cultural imaginary of Indian-English literary studies, re-defining its boundaries, dislocating its assumed unity, in the name of multi-cultural diversity. But any edition of commonwealth literature will expose the centrality of English language, the centring role of the metropolis and the marginality of non-English Literatures. Moreover it sought to restore the meaning systems of the Sanskrit language, searching for untarnished origins of "Indianness". The relations between the ex-colonies and the colonial powers were still trapped in an intellectual bind that could only be extricated by postcolonial discourses and an imagined Pan-Indian nativism."

Beginning in the late 1970's, this stage marks the penetration of resisting theoretical reading practice in English Studies. These reading methods have informed the interactive processes in English Studies classrooms brokered by Stylistics at the outset, leading to Postcolonialism of the recent past and constructed English Studies classrooms into sites of contestation involving questions/issues in culture, history, politics and society. Thus knowledge-making processes have been more engaged producing resisting selves in this context as classroom negotiations are not merely about just the text but also about the politics of identity formation. The English Studies classroom ceases to be protected, insular and static, just like the field it seeks to disseminate.

The native English Professor now occupies a highly controversial and fractured ideological terrain recurrently contested by the history of violations and the problematised cultural experience of the knowledge-making community. S/he is now the Critical-Teacher-Theorist, whose position constantly is eroded by the cultural experience of her learners as knowledge makers. She can no longer inhabit the illusion of ideological neutrality, conscious of h/er cultural-political location, which demands self-critique; and re-invents her-self as resisting reader-theorist on the site of English Studies. H/er position is severely eroded by the context of cultural ambiguities predicated on the ideologies of the cultural-political matrix, constituting h/er as an ideological agent in the field. Hence s/he is culturally part of and outside of the field being native to h/er culture and bound by hegemonies of history at once, representing an ambivalent hybrid being native subjectivity.

Conclusion

English Studies in "India" has had a history of complex beginnings, mediated by contemporary colonial conquest, conflict, hegemony, and domination. Reading procedures based on critical disobedience, discontent, and dissent write in the concept of resisting reading into critical practice. The shifts in methodological protocols destabilise insular and esoteric sense making problematising canonical textuality and politicizing the domain of English Studies. The native informant seizes upon colonial and metropolitan subjugation, displacement and dislocation empowering oppression, exile marginality into a speaking voice of resistance against imperial and metropolitan authority.

In its travel to institutionalization, English Studies is beleaguered by differing struggles against the epistemological violence that Empire and metropolis write in. As it blunders along English Studies attempts to order an unfettered historical continuity to an otherwise discontinuous ideological space, "binding and unbinding"" with reading practices that foreground an hermeneutic of power based on and resisting of alien concepts of modernity, civilization and progress. But the native discontent over displacement and dislocation, often smothered into obedience and silence by epistemological violence, nevertheless develops a politics of rupture and dissent, demanding resistance-reading strategies to the ideological centres of control and domination. In this ideological wrestle, reading practices subverted/defied the projects of victimisation and subjugation and the interpellation of the "free" subject⁶⁸ from within the regimes of textuality and pedagogy. In the colonial context the resisting voice was located in subversive/defiant practices of anarchic nativist recuperation of pre-colonial knowledge systems that inflected the imperial politics of English Studies and as a cultural-political back-loop engineered the production of a nationalist elite reshaping its politics in the public domain. By contrast in the post-colonial early nationalist period, public discontent in social revolution reshaped Sanskrit "Indianness" inducing a multi-cultural politics from outside and for English Studies.

These subversive/defiant strategies also problematize curricular formation in English Studies, redefining the boundaries that blindly placed English Literary/ Language Studies with the canonical categories of art and aesthetics. Postcolonial, Subaltern, Commonwealth, Multi-culturalist, Class/Caste/Dalit, and feminist theories from within and without the cultural centres split open the Literary/linguistic normativeness of the field and located it within the ruddy discursive continuum of history, culture, society and politics. This conceptual move follows Raymond Williams' critical gesture concerning the moving of literary texts into the realm of "social practice" persuading a new model of exploration and analysis named

Cultural Studies. By its avowed incursiveness, Cultural Studies rejects the sanctity of literary production, disrupting the disciplinary divisions between "high" and "low" culture," marking spaces for those cultural products that live outside the artifice of literature. Moreover it plots a "reading against"⁷⁰ practice that not only discloses the ideological underpinnings of textual regimes but also exposes and explains the cultural political intersections of text and context. While Cultural Studies is involved in other engagements too, these key projects of Cultural Studies reformulate and reshape the field of English Studies, negotiating cultural spaces other than those occupied by literature. Cultural politics proposes a more engaging politics of representation and reception than that earlier signified by hidebound English Studies and constituted by critical spaces based on discontent and dissent. Should we then theorise Cultural Studies via English Studies or vice versa? What then will be the place and position of critical spaces in the process of institutionalising a critique of English Studies? What then will be the trajectories of Cultural Studies model as enabling critique and questioning of canonical fields like Literature? That problematic deserves more sustained analysis and exploration and therefore cannot be marginalised in this spate.

Meanwhile the native English Professor, the ideological agent of the ambiguous space of English Studies, mediates a self-representation either as controlling affiliate or conscience-keeper speaking for or against social power. From his/her position as civilizing authority, through his/her role as mimic despot to his/her function as culture theorist, s/he invents and re-invents h/er native subjectivity, through a series of discursive conjunctures and disjunctures in order to articulate his/her position a critical intellectual—modeled perhaps on the lines of Said's resisting intellectual! S/he is perhaps the native informant, the gendered autochone, the protesting liberal and the critical expert, all of which proposes a fractured subjectivity.

By this token what can we theorise about the identity of the native informant? I wish to contextualise historically the reception of nationalist ideology among varied cultural constituencies, uprooted by different forms of coercive nationalism breeding strife, bloodshed and disharmony between people. After partition, nationalism names its other within and in its own minority constituents, ignoring cultural spaces and displacing national citizenship. In the name of the nation, majority triumphalism thrives on minority mourning, producing the diasporic within, namely those dislodged from native spaces and moving in endless exile. That apart, the coerced internal exile is further marginalised by a cultural nativism in spaces of option. When one's citizenship is under erasure and one's cultural dislocation cyclical what can the diaspora within narrate as a native "Indian" identity but a radical, combative hybridity,⁷² tarnished and profane, fighting the

postcoloniality of the nation, corrupting metropolitan English as link-language, disrupting native recuperation, and located in the discontented self of exile within the cultural material conditions, self-reflexive, not in a seamless post-modernist sense but through the burdens of history. The now-maligned category of Indian Writing in English and its contesting counterpart, Indian writing in Native Languages may have to consider the questions of radicalised marginalities of multi-lingual cultures in exile within.

What I have attempted here is to identify and, wherever possible, explore the ideological formations embedded in a contextual genealogy of English Studies. It is neither theoretically comprehensive nor chronologically systematic, but only partial, placing in perspective certain issues and questions shaping and restructuring the field. I have not explored the rise of feminisms in English Studies. This is not a masculinist resistance but a self-contesting hesitation to marginalize women's discourses and their representation to merely a partial discussion in this space, particularly because of the problematic questions of authenticity and appropriation represented in the following questions: Is it possible at all for a male informant to speak on behalf of women's loves from outside their experience? While this authenticity question has been as another form of biologicism, still focusing women's bodies as sites of control, it leaves another critical question dangerously unexplored and ambiguous: does a male informant engaging gender questions appropriating women's discourses in fashionable dissent, and by masculinist slippage controlling the gynocentricity of women's discourses? And that would require a larger more extended exploration perhaps as the subject of a full discussion.

So far in my exploration I have attempted to point out that English Studies and its reading practices are neither neutral nor insular, but are located in the ideological politics of history, culture and society. Its constant reformulation is rooted in discontent with and from the margins of the field that empowers a cultural political resistance against hegemony and domination in cultures and societies. Thus we can speak of discontent as resistance as an inflecting gesture of cultural politics in English Studies.

Notes and References

1. The term, concept and territory, named "India" is highly problematic particularly because of the facile nature of its conceptualisation as a nation with often no reference to either its history or its interpretation in contemporary discourse. Hence I have used quotation marks wherever necessary to refer to its problematic construction.
2. Chinweizu, "Colonizer's Logic" in Chinweizu. Ed. (1988) *Voices From Twentieth Century Africa: Griots and Town Criers*, London: Faber and Faber, p. 32.

3. The term has been most regularly used by particularly postcolonial theorists to signify the relationship between coloniser and colonised and the kind of politics such an unequal oppressive relation will involve. For detail perhaps Ashcroft, Bill, Griffiths Gareth and Tiffin Helen (1989) *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice In Post Colonial Literatures*, London: Routledge.
4. I have in mind particularly Ngugi wa Thiongo's analyses of English Studies in Africa. Its institutionalisation there shares similar capitalist and colonial implications with colonial India. For detailed analysis, see Wa, Thiongo, Ngugi (1986/1989) *Decolonising The Mind: The Politics of Language in African Literature*, London/ New York: Heinemann. Also see Ashcroft, Bill, Griffiths Gareth and Tiffin Helen (1989) *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice In Post Colonial Literatures*, London: Routledge.
5. Trivedi, Harish and Mukherjee, Meenakshi Ed (1996) *Interrogating Post colonialism: Theory, Text and Context*, Shimla: Indian Institute of Advanced Study.
6. Trivedi Harish (1993/95) "Introduction" *Colonial Transactions: English Literature and India*, Manchester/New York: Manchester University Press, p. 1.
7. Ngugi, p. 14.
8. Tharu, Susie "Government, Binding and Unbinding: Alienation and The Teaching of Literature" in Tharu, Susie Ed (1998) *Subject To Change: Teaching Literature In The Nineties*, New Delhi: Orient Longman, p.11.
9. *Ibid.*, p. 11.
10. *Ibid.*, p. 11.
11. The term is drawn from the Bengali meaning elite or upper class. For further reference see Trivedi Harish (1993/95) *Colonial Transactions: English Literature and India*, Manchester/New York: Manchester University Press.
12. Tharu, Susie (1998), p. 4.
13. *Ibid.*, p. 4.
14. *Ibid.*, p. 4.
15. *Ibid.*, p. 5.
16. Vishwanathan, Gauri, (1998) "The Beginnings of English Literary Study" *Masks Of Conquest: Literary Study and British Rule in India*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, p. 23-44.
17. Mauculay, Thomas 1835 "Minutes on English Education in India" in Ashcroft, Bill, Griffiths Gareth and Tiffin Helen (1995) *The Postcolonial Studies Reader*, London: Routledge, p. 427-435.
18. *Ibid.*, p. 432.
19. *Ibid.*, p. 432.
20. *Ibid.*, p. 427.
21. *Ibid.*, p. 427.
22. *Ibid.*, p. 430.
23. For a stirring analysis of the institutionalization of English Studies in India during colonial rule see, Vishwanathan, Gauri, (1998) "The Beginnings of English Literary Study" *Masks Of Conquest: Literary Study and British Rule in India*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press.
24. Vishwanathan, p. 10.
25. *Ibid.*, p. 10.

26. *Ibid.*, p. 11.
27. I have drawn this idea of interpellation from Louis Althusser whose analysis shows the function of the free subject often helpless but consistent with the oppressing ideological formations of the ruling classes. For Details, See, Althusser Louis, (1971) "Ideology and the Ideological State Apparatus (Notes Towards an Investigation)" in *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays* New York/London: Monthly Review Press and Vishwanathan, Gauri, (1998) "The Beginnings of English Literary Study" *Masks Of Conquest: Literary Study and British Rule in India*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press.
28. Vishwanathan, p. 54-56.
29. I am re-reading in Tharu, Susie in Tharu, Susie Ed (1998) *Subject To Change: Teaching Literature In The Nineties* p. 4 and 7.
30. Vishwanathan, p. 2.
31. *Ibid.*, p. 58.
32. *Ibid.*, p. 57 and 58.
33. I interpret here colonial forms of pedagogic dissemination and power using Vishwanathan, p. 20.
34. Tharu, Susie, (1998) p. 11.
35. I have used the reference that Gauri Vishwanathan makes in her analysis but I have also in mind the unassailable judgements of Edward Said in his work on Orientalism. For details see Vishwanathan, Gauri, (1998) p.5 and Said, Edward (1978) "The Scope Of Orientalism" in *Orientalism* (2003) New York: Vintage p. 58-60.
36. Vishwanathan, Gauri, p. 58-59.
37. I am using here Wa, Thiongo, Ngugi (1986/1989) *Decolonising The Mind: The Politics Of Language in African Literature*, London/ New York: Heinemann.
38. I use here the theorisations of Gayatri Spivak in Spivak, Gayatri Chakraborty (1999) "Philosophy" *A Critique Of Postcolonial Reason: Towards A History Of The Vanishing Present*, Calcutta: Seagull, p. 7.
39. Spivak, p. 170.
40. See, Sunder Rajan, Rajeswari (1992) "Fixing English: Nation, Language, Subject" in Sunder Rajan, Rajeswari Ed (1992) *The Lie Of The Land: English Literary Studies In India*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, p. 12.
41. See Loomba, Ania (1992) "Criticism and Pedagogy" in, Sunder Rajan, Rajeswari (1992) *op.cit.* p. 72.
42. Sunder Rajan, Rajeswari (1992) p. 10.
43. I have drawn this from a recent analysis on the Tamil movements beginning in the 1920s, which was to culminate into anti-brahminical Movement leading up to the Hindi agitations in the 1960's. See Geetha, V and Rajadurai, S V (1998) *Towards A Non-Brahmin Millenium: From Iyothee Doss To Periyar*, Calcutta: Samya.
44. *Ibid.*
45. Chatterjee, Lola (1992) "Landmarks in Official Educational Policy: Some Facts and Figures" in Sunder Rajan, Rajeswari Ed (1992) *The Lie Of The Land: English Literary Studies in India*, p. 303.

46. Sunder Rajan, Rajeswari(1992) "Brokering English Studies: British Council In India" in op.cit. 143-155. •
47. I am gesturing what Tharu, Susie call "the ordinary Indian" in Tharu, Susie "Government, Binding and Unbinding: Alienation and The Teaching of Literature" (1998) p. 11.
48. Sunder Rajan (1992) p. 130-147.
49. This is a term coined by Spivak to propose the "bringing to knowledge" so called unknown geographical and cultural spaces. I use this term to show the appropriation processes of contemporary discourse that inscribes and imposes meanings that are ideology-driven and suited for continued domination. However I have drawn this term from the explanations offered in Ashcroft, Bill, Griffiths Gareth and Tiffin Helen (1998) *Key Concepts in Post colonial Studies*, London/ New York: Routledge, p. 241.
50. see, Said Edward, op.cit. p 56-59.
51. *Ibid.*
52. *Ibid.*
53. This term was perhaps first received with academic approval, now much contested, with Ashcroft, Bill, Griffiths Gareth and Tiffin Helen (1989) *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice In Post Colonial Literatures*, London: Routledge.
54. For a detailed analysis, Vishwanathan, Gauri, (1998) "Introduction" *Masks of Conquest: Literary Study and British Rule in India*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press.
55. All the stimulating analyses in Trivedi, Harish and Mukherjee, Meenakshi Ed (1996) *Interrogating Post colonialism: Theory, Text and Context*.
56. Much of G N Devy's work but particularly, "Some Anthropological Observations of The Study Of English Literature Prefaced by the Confessions of An English Teacher" in Tharu, Susie Ed (1998) op.cit. p.159-169.
57. Trivedi, Harish (1996) "India and Post colonial Discourse" in Trivedi, Harish and Mukherjee, Meenakshi Ed (1996) *Interrogating Post colonialism: Theory, Text and Context*, p. 240.
58. *Ibid.*, p. 231.
59. *Ibid.*, p. 245.
60. Chaterjee, Partha (1989) in Sangari, Kumkum and Void, Sudesh Ed (1989) "The Nationalist Resolution of the Women Question" *Recasting Women: Essays in Colonial History*, New Delhi: Kali For Women, p. 238-290.
61. Spivak, Gayatri Chakraborty (1999) "Philosophy" *A Critique Of Postcolonial Reason: Towards A History Of The Vanishing Present*, p. 170.
62. Guha, Ranajit (1982) "On Some Aspects of The Historiography of Colonial India" *Subaltern Studies* Vol. I New Delhi: Oxford University Press p. VII, 3 and 10.
63. *Ibid.*, p. 10.
64. Spivak, Gayatri Chakraborty (1999) op.cit. p. XL.
65. Ashcroft, Bill, Griffiths Gareth and Tiffin Helen (1998) *Key Concepts in Post colonial Studies*, London/ New York: Routledge, p. 54.
66. See, Ahmad, Aijaz (1992) "Jameson's Rhetoric of Otherness and the National Allegory" *In Theory: Classes, Nations, Literatures*, London/New York: Verso.
67. Tharu, Susie op.cit. p. 1-32.

68. Althusser Loius, (1971) op.cit.
69. Bretens, Hans (2002) *Literary Theory: the Basics*, London: Routledge p. 171-192.
70. A term that signifies for me the reading of discontent and resistance from within dominant texts of culture.
71. Said Edward, (1994) *The Representation Of Intellectuals: The Reith Lectures*, London/New York: Faber and Faber.
72. I am using this term not in the way Homi Bhabha uses it but in the way Spivak does, See Spivak, Gayatri Chakraborty (1999) p. 155.