



EDITORIAL

Shyamasri Maji and Robyn Andrews

This special issue focusses on Anglo-Indian creative writers and comprises a set of responses to invitations to reflect on various aspects of their fiction or film writing. The inspiration for the special issue came from the paper which the guest editor, Shyamasri Maji, delivered at an Anglo-Indian Studies seminar held at the University of Calcutta, in August 2022. In it she explored the representation of Indianness in the fictional works of the Anglo-Indian writers. From this the idea germinated to have a special issue in which Anglo-Indian creative writers would reflect on their own writing.

We are aware that the history of the Anglo-Indian community, which has effectively been brushed aside in the mainstream discourses of Indian and British history, finds an important place in fictional works (whether produced as novels or film). We posited that there is a strong urge for narrating the 'nation' from the Anglo-Indian viewpoint which distinguishes their narratives from those of the other Indian born writers in India. While those in the global diaspora bring yet other distinct perspectives.

This special issue focuses on the socio-cultural positions which shape the literary perspective of Anglo-Indian writers. We proposed these questions to our authors to stimulate their thinking: How does an Anglo-Indian writer understand oneself as a writer of English in India? Does s/he have a unique relationship to the language not shared by others? What does one seek to do through the act of writing and publishing? Who does an Anglo-Indian writer represent? Is there a politics to writing as an Anglo-Indian in/about modern India? How is it different for an Anglo-Indian writer living in the global diaspora?

We invited selected Anglo-Indian authors to reflect on these questions in terms of their experience of producing their creative works, the purpose for which they write, and their *Anglo-Indianness* as it is manifest in their literary production. The writers who responded are those included in this issue, four of whom are novelists, and two are film- script writers. We are grateful to all the contributors for submitting their thoughtful essays to this issue. Each offers different insights and perspectives.

The issue begins with an essay from Shyamasri Maji discussing the works of Anglo-Indian writers in India including Ruskin Bond, I. Allan Sealy and Nikta Lyrad, and Anglo-Indian diasporic writers, Keith Butler and Jimmy Pyke. The essay situates these writers in the frame of Indian English Fiction, which today is recognised as a rich category of English literary studies. Since Anglo-Indian writers differ from the other Indian-born writers in their cultural and linguistic orientations, an analysis of their fictional works widens the scope of multi-cultural representation of the Indian nation in Indian English Fiction.

The essays written by Anglo-Indian novelists are from: I. Allan Sealy, Keith Butler, David McMahon and Bryan Peppin. In his essay, 'Grey Man's Burden', Sealy stresses that he writes as an Anglo-Indian, with Anglo-Indianness his inspiration. As he describes, before writing *The Trotter-Nama*, he had been searching for a way to tell *his* story of his community. As well as looking for a form, he sought a position to tell it from. He describes the discovery of the '*nama*' as a fitting model to adopt, and in terms of positioning, he concluded that his work needed to be written with the freedom and 'strangeness' of being Anglo-Indian, which would work best if he was writing from within India.

Diasporic author Keith Butler also draws on his identity, in his case doing so in tandem with the realisation that he lacked historical knowledge about that identity. In his essay, 'Historical Weightlessness: Writing *The Secret Vindaloo*' he explores the formative influences of *The Secret Vindaloo*; why he wrote it, and the personal and literary issues that arose in a work of fiction that foregrounded Anglo-Indians. He describes the place of magical realism in his work, which he used in places to represent weightlessness. He also dwells on how his lack of knowledge of his own history played out for him, leading to writing the novel in a particular way. He concludes with a plea for Anglo-

Indian history to be taught formally, despairing that Anglo-Indian schools continue to omit it from their curriculum.

David McMahon's mission as an Anglo-Indian author is clear from the title of his essay: 'Mentoring Aspiring Writers Is One of my Goals'. His article is in two parts: in the first he answers questions about aspects of being an Anglo-Indian novelist, and in the second he explains what led him to embark on writing at an early age, and why he is committed to helping other would-be writers. As well as inviting aspiring writers to contact him directly, he offers constructive advice to would-be writers within the article.

In his essay Bryan Peppin discusses the writing of his novel, *The Nowhere Man*, providing some sense of the plot and main protagonist, and then moves on to address issues he feels strongly about as an Anglo-Indian living in contemporary India. These range from the loss of political representation and the community's uncertain future to his firm stance about being Indian, and India being his country. He also offers his views on other contemporary situations, such as the recent importation of cheetahs. He compares the demonstrated concern for this endangered species to the seeming lack of concern for the dwindling community of Anglo-Indians.

The last two articles are by film writers. In his essay, Glenn D'Cruz focuses on *Vanitas*, the film he wrote and co-directed. As he describes, *Vanitas* is a short film which explores his relationship with his Anglo-Indian father who died in 1985 at the age of 53. On one level it is a belated eulogy to his father, but it is also about the way Anglo-Indians have experienced racism leading to thwarted ambitions. D'Cruz also reflects on the film's creative and collaborative processes, the place of affect, as well as the ethics involved in such a personal project.

The second film writer contributing to this special issue is Harry MacLure. His essay is titled 'Making *Calcutta, I'm Sorry*: The Idea, the Process, the Completion'. He begins by relating his early love affair with film and his dreams of becoming a filmmaker, provides information about the real-life inspiration for the film *Calcutta, I'm Sorry*, and describes some of the behind-the-scenes decisions and production challenges. The main character is an Anglo-Indian woman, and although her community is referred to, MacLure believes the film's storyline will appeal to a wider audience. As he says, "its

core theme of redemption will resonate well with anyone from any community.” We wish both him and D’Cruz all the best for the success for which they have worked so hard.

We hope readers enjoy this distinctive contribution to Anglo-Indian Studies scholarship as well as to English Literary Studies. We are open to suggestions for further Special Issues; please contact the current permanent editors, Robyn or Brent, with ideas.

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Robyn Andrews holds a Ph.D. in social anthropology from Massey University in New Zealand, where she is an Associate Professor in anthropology. Her Ph.D. thesis was on the *Anglo-Indian Community* (2005), about which she continues to research and write extensively in collaboration with other *Anglo-Indian Studies* scholars in various disciplines. She has most recently co-edited: *Anglo-Indian Identity: Past and Present, in India and the Diaspora* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2021) and *Beyond the Metros: Anglo-Indians in India’s smaller towns and cities* (Primus, 2021). She may be reached at R.Andrews@massey.ac.nz