'Ball-bearings all the way, and never a dull moment!': An Analysis of the Writing of G. V. Desani

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Abstract

This thesis explores the writing of G. V. Desani and his impact on the literary scene both then and now.

Chapter One considers how Desani uses comedy as an enabling tool in Hatterr's quest for a sense of identity. In order to be able to locate Desani's particular use of comedy, this chapter also considers some of the more traditional theories of comedy. These are then aligned with a novel that challenges traditional categorisation. The second chapter begins a debate that continues through the following two chapters - that of revision. Desani was obsessed with revising his texts, taking over fifty years to produce what he considered to be his definitive version of *Hatterr.* This second chapter introduces some of the theoretical concerns regarding revision and considers why an author chooses to revise. The theoretical paradigm explored in this chapter is used to consider two areas of *Hatterr*, food and women. Chapter Three considers Desani's food revisions and Chapter Four focuses on women within the text. Hatterr's relationship with women is a fraught one and this chapter charts the deterioration in his relationship with the women he encounters, his wife, his laundry-woman, a circus performer and a number of women who appear to him in dreams, visions and stories. Chapter Five considers Desani's most elusive work. Published in 1950 *Hali* was to be Desani's greatest work and, in the first instance, met with much positive critical acclaim. However, it soon became clear that much of the criticism was couched in terms of ambiguity and confusion. This criticism is debated and is aligned with a consideration of early criticism of Indian writing in English. The ambiguity surrounding *Hali* continues in the penultimate chapter of this thesis as Desani attempted to gain radio air-time for his work. This chapter outlines his correspondence with the BBC at this time and offers an insight into the complexities of attempting to accommodate an unfamiliar text within the familiar medium of radio. The final chapter of this thesis moves the debate on to the language employed by Desani. Issues of bricolage and cultural belonging are debated alongside textual analysis in *All About H. Hatterr.*

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This thesis is dedicated to Alan, Henry, Jessie and Flora, and
to Dad who is so proud of all of us and for Mum who would have been.

Introduction

All those who have heard of G. V. Desani are invited for tea at my place next Sunday. All those who have heard of Salman Rushdie can just look around and say, "My, my, aren't we a big club".[1]

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[1] Indrajit Hazra, *The Hindustan Times,* (New Delhi: 11th December, 2000).

When Salman Rushdie claimed that Desani's work was 'the first great stroke of the decolonising pen', he reawakened an interest in one of the more elusive writers of the twentieth century.[2] Govindas Vishnoodas Desani wrote one novel, one play, a handful of poems and twenty-three short stories. He published a number of essays on a range of subjects from conveying meaning in literature to the Nadi texts, from Vipassana Yoga to the wonders of India. His literary career spanned somewhere in the region of fifty years and led him into friendships with some of the greats of English literature such as T.S. Eliot, E.M. Forster, Edmund Blunden, George Orwell and Edmund Wilson, yet it would appear that he is now remembered largely for his silence.

His novel *All About Mr. Hatterr,* published in 1948, when he was thirty nine, was heralded as a remarkable piece of writing.[3] His play *Hali* was greeted with a mixture of awe, admiration and confusion, and his short stories, appearing regularly in the *Illustrated Weekly of India* in the 1960s were eagerly read, if not completely understood. However, despite his obvious talent and range and in spite of his success with *Hatterr*, it is largely held that he all but disappeared from the literary scene until the emergence of a developing interest in the writing of the South Asian Diaspora. It is noticeable that the majority of books focussing on the writing of the Diaspora in the last few years contain either a passing mention of Desani or devote a chapter to outlining Desani's career and particular impact on the rise of South Asian writing in Britain. Among the most recent tributes to the impact Desani has had on Britain are those from Rushdie, Susheila Nasta, C. L. Innes and James Proctor's anthology, *Writing black Britain, 1948-1998*, published in 2000.[4]

Despite Rushdie's acknowledgement in the early years of the 1980s of the influence Desani had on his own writing, and the re-publication of a definitive edition of *All About H. Hatterr* by McPherson and Co. in 1986, interest in Desani as a postcolonial writer is only now beginning to emerge. Perhaps it is the multiple problems within his texts that have created an aura of mystery surrounding his writing, to a lesser extent with *Hatterr* and to a far greater extent, with *Hali.* The former, by far Desani's greatest success, proved both at the time of publication, and now, some fifty years later, difficult to categorise. The protagonist is part fool, part wise man, the characters he encounters offer wisdom and success and deliver neither, his aims are ambiguous and arguably, remain unachieved.

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[2] This reference to Desani made by Salman Rushdie appears in D.J. Enright, *A Mania for Sentences,* (London: Chatto and Windus, The Hogarth Press, 1983), p. 183.

[3] The first edition of *Hatterr* was entitled *All About Mr. Hatterr*. Subsequent editions were re-titled *All About H. Hatterr.*

[4] See for example, Rushdie and West, *The Vintage Book of Indian Writing, 1947-1997*, (London: Vintage, 1997), Susheila Nasta, *Home Truths: Fictions of the South Asian Diaspora in Britain,* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2001), C. L. Innes, *A History of Black and Asian Writing in Britain, 1700-2000*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

The opening and introductory chapter of his novel pinpoints the author's difficulties in gaining publication for his novel, and whilst this account appears to be part of the fiction of Hatterr and indeed of Desani, it is a true, though possibly embellished, account of Desani's own struggle to gain recognition for his work. He did indeed offer the manuscript to a selection of readers. These included George Orwell, who dismissed it as a waste of literary talent, especially during the serious period of the war that was going on at the time. However, despite or possibly in spite of the manifold problems of getting his work published, *All About Mr. Hatterr* was finally published in 1948 by Francis Aldor in London.

Two years later *Hali* was published, and then came what has become known as Desani's great silence, generally believed only to have been broken by the publication of *Hali and Collected Stories* in 1991.[5]

On Desani's death the majority of the obituaries made much of this silence, claiming that Desani's disappointment with the reception of some of his work was to blame, or that changes in religious beliefs were responsible. Amitav Ghosh, writing on the Internet suggests an alternative. He claims that the language in *Hatterr* became an outworking of the incommensurability of what he wanted to say and the language he had at his disposal to say it. He suggests that this problem is a common one among writers who choose to write in English. Whilst this may be problematic, it is clear that to most of the world, Desani appeared to be silent and Ghosh adds some weight to his argument as he claims that Desani followed this incommensurability to its natural conclusion – that of silence. He says:

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[5] On his death a number of obituaries were published on the Internet and in the press, which claim that after *Hatterr* Desani published nothing until *Hali and Collected Stories* appeared, suggesting, erroneously, that *Hali* was first published with this collection.

> The voicelessness of his later years was to my mind, an astounding, almost unthinkable gesture - a sacrifice through which he honoured the integrity of his own, hard-won vision.[6]

Despite Ghosh's generous suggestion regarding Desani's 'silence', the fact remains that Desani was far from silent.

In the years between the publication of *Hali* in 1950 and the definitive *Hatterr* and *Hali and Collected Stories* in the last decades of the twentieth century, Desani published a large body of material. Amongst the numerous short stories, papers submitted for conferences and newspaper articles were two poems 'A Dirge' and 'No Reason, No Rhyme' (subtitled 'It's the Jets of Air-India!' '(In association with B.O.A.C. and Quntas)') included in *Modern Indian Poetry in English*, edited by P. Lal.[7] The poems are complicated and in true Desani fashion, each is accompanied by a page of notes that offers no significant clue to interpretation. However, each of the authors included in this collection has been asked to reply to some questions posed by P. Lal that draw their emphasis from an article published by Buddhadeva Bose with whom, it would appear from Lal's anthology, Lal has an ongoing argument concerning who should or should not write in English. This argument and the subsequent questionnaire posed by Lal has a particular relevance to Desani concerning issues of silence and voice.

Bose's argument runs thus; there was the old school of nineteenth century pioneers of Indian writing in English who he defines as those poets such as Sri Aurobindo whose ambition was 'to become *English* poets in every sense of the word'. He also quotes the example of 'Manmohan Ghose's poem 'April', where the flowers of an English spring are mentioned in their order of appearance with a rather pathetic precision'.[8] This type of writing has now been replaced by what he terms as 'Indo-

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[6] Amitav Ghosh, 'Desani was a hero', www.tehelka.com, on the occasion of Desani's death (November/December 2000).

[7] P. Lal, (ed.), *Modern Indian Poetry in English,* (Calcutta: Writers Workshop, 1971), pp. 128-134.

[8] Ibid., p. 4. The quote comes from Stephen Spender and Donald Hall, (Eds.), *The Concise Encyclopaedia of English and American Poets and Poetry,* (London: Hutchinson, 1963).

Anglian' poetry whose authors insist that they are Indians writing in English. Bose asked these Indo-Anglian authors 'why in English?' and their replies, he claims, centre on issues of audience. He suggests that these authors believe English to be an Indian language, which he says it is not, and secondly, that English provides the writers with a larger audience. Bose points out that this audience, at the time of writing, was mainly located in England and America.[9] He concludes his argument by claiming that:

> The best of Indian writing in English verse belongs to the nineteenth century, when Indians came nearest to 'speaking, thinking and dreaming in English'. [...] As for the present-day 'Indo-Anglians', they are earnest and not without talent, but it is difficult to see how they can develop as poets in a language which they have learned from books and seldom hear spoken in the streets or even in their own homes, and whose great sources lie beyond the seven seas. [...] As late as 1937 Yeates [sic] reminded Indian writers that 'no man can think or write with music and vigour except in his mother tongue'.[10]

Whilst Bose, a poet himself, is concerned with poetry here, his arguments, since then, have become indicative of a particular way of thinking about and debating Indian writing in English as a whole. Bose concludes his indictment of Indian writing in English with the claim that all those poets choosing English over their 'own language' will never succeed.

Lal has some very obvious disagreements with Bose's point of view and reworks his concerns into a list of questions which each contributing poet is required to answer. Briefly the questions asked are:

1. What are the circumstances leading to your choice of writing in English?
2. What are your views on the history of 'Indo-Anglian writing? (with regard to Bose's summation of nineteenth versus twentieth century writers)
3. Is English an Indian language?
4. Do you feel that you lack an audience in India?

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[9] It should be noted that Bose does not include Indian authors whose work has been translated into English, thereby excluding writers such as Tagore.

[10] P. Lal, (1971), p. 5.

5. Should a poet be able to change and recreate language? Can Indian poetry in English include the possibility of changing and recreating language?[11]

Desani's replies are interesting and, to a certain extent, dismissive. He is clearly bored by the whole 'who should write in English?' debate and suggests that there are far better, more concise and imaginative ways of assessing an author that are independent of his or her culture, mother tongue, location, ancestry, nationality or personal or social status. He says that in 'assessing poetry the standards are poetic' and that reader response and critical acclaim should be sufficient indicators of success without the need to apply the 'who should' debate to the project. By extension, and in keeping with some of Desani's later comments on Indian writing in English, he is speaking of all writing, prose, poetry or drama. It should be noted that his insistence on literary independence is of prime importance to him. One of the most frequently quoted extracts from *Hali* runs thus:

> Why would I let my destiny be linked with a clan, a country, a faith, and a place of birth?[12]

Here, the tone is definitely one of dismissal of the tenacity of the ties that bind one man to one culture. For Desani, language is a tool that is available to all to use, regardless of any concepts of what is and what is not appropriate.

As such, this thesis does not concern itself primarily with the issue of *why* Desani wrote in English, but rather, focuses on the way in which he uses English to create and maintain a particular and unique vision of India whilst simultaneously conducting a debate on the ways in which Indian writing in English does or indeed does not, fit easily into the English literary canon. For Desani, the choice of language with regard to English, Sindhi, or Hindi, was less important than the meaning he wished to convey.

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[11] There are more questions than this but some of them relate directly to Bose's argument and are of little interest here. I have also taken some liberties with his questions in order to make them more relevant to the whole issue of Indian writing in English, not just poetry. However, the gist of the questions remains the same.

[12] G. V. Desani, *Hali*, (London: Saturn Press, 1950) p. 38. It should be noted that *Hali* is seldom referred to but this quote is one that is often used as an indication both of Desani's insistence on his lack of particular cultural ties, as well as an explanation for his immense scope of reference material within *Hatterr* especially.

Clearly then, Ghosh's conclusion regarding Desani's silence may not be as persuasive as it first seems. Apart from the poems, which Desani, after publication, was unhappy with and had withdrawn from subsequent editions of the anthology, Desani worked for the *Illustrated Weekly of India* publishing a regular and anonymous column entitled 'Very High, Very Low'. However, it was reasonably well known that he was the author and a number of his articles recall his particular linguistic dexterity, so prevalent in *Hatterr.*[13] Desani also attended a number of conferences speaking on Theravada Buddhism, Patanjali Yoga Sutras, as well as a small number of lectures and talks on the creative literary process. He was also working on his short stories, a number of which were published in the *Illustrated Weekly.*

During the process of researching this thesis, it became clear that Desani's silence was one projected onto him, rather than by him. Although he was physically removed from England, the country in which he had sought, and to a great extent won approval, he did not cease working. However, his physical relocation to India, following swiftly after the ambiguous reception of *Hali*, meant that to the general reading public, the author of *All About H. Hatterr* had left England and stopped writing. As such, his re-introduction to the literary world might require some new and dramatically re-worked inspection of how Desani fits into the English literary canon, not simply as a postcolonial writer, but perhaps more importantly as an innovative and dynamic writer who chose to write in 'rigmarole' English at a time when no other Indian writer was attempting such a task.

Salman Rushdie is the most frequently quoted exponent of the reawakening interest in Desani, claiming that his own work learned a trick or two from him, but there is a small body of critical work that has continued to consider Desani as one of the prime movers in a new way of depicting India, Indian life and perhaps, importantly here in England, the position of the stranger to England. With the increase in interest in Diasporic writing

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[13] G. V. Desani, 'Very High, Very Low', *Illustrated Weekly of India,* (Bombay: September 18th, 1966), p. 27, reads thus:

> [...] A *spotless* nurse received us. (*Not* a smudge or smear on her! Looked for it! Known some grubby girls in my day!)
> After the Resident Idiot gave her the glad eye (*habit!*) and offered her his fin, they shook, and she said to him; "Thanx" – polite as a basket of chips – I murmured, "Howdee?... Proud to meet yer!"

Desani became, slowly but surely, an oft-quoted example of both the literary or fictional figure seeking some kind of cultural identity in a land far from home, in the exploration of his protagonist's quest for inclusion, as well as the Indian writer abroad, seeking recognition for his work in a country that appeared to embrace Indian writing. However, as *Hali* was to reveal, a sense of inclusion and recognition is dependent on a mode of literary and critical enquiry that may be profoundly challenged by works that suggest a breakdown or subversion of the conventional rules, whatever they may be, regarding the critical analysis of Indian writing in English. If *Hatterr* proved to be a challenge the critical world was willing to rise to, *Hali*, it would appear, was not. Whilst Desani's prose-poem elicited a fair amount of positive criticism, this was overwhelmed by the critics whose praise was couched in terms of mystery and ambiguity to such an extent that even the critics themselves were unsure what their colleagues actually made of the work.[14] As a result, if *Hatterr* is frequently referred to as a forgotten classic, *Hali* is more frequently referred to as simply forgotten, with the suggestion, overt or otherwise, that this may be the best way of describing this work.

This awareness of the potential for dislocation has led to an increase in interest in the quest for autonomy of the individual living in and writing from a place that is not home and has meant that there is now a wealth of material, published in Britain, written by South Asians living in the country. There is no single subject that the works confront, but there are some familiar themes such as the sense of being between cultures, neither here nor there, living in a past that belongs somewhere else and attempting to measure and resolve the sense of cultural loss in whatever way is accessible. On the whole, novels emerging from the diaspora, especially the earlier ones – those written before the 1980s[15] focussed on difficulties of living in a place that is, or appears to be hostile, and the tone is necessarily serious.

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[14] It should be noted that the description of *Hali* has become something of a problem. Desani labelled it as a play, contemporary critics referred to it in terms of poetry and subsequent critics have chosen prose/poem as the most suitable description of the text.

[15] The dating here is deliberately vague. The new writing I am concerned with here certainly does not begin with Salman Rushdie but it is the wealth of literature that followed his emergence onto the British literary scene that marked the start of a particular type of writing about the diasporic existence- one that concerned itself with the here and now of England as well as the usefulness of the ability to create, perpetuate and utilise mythic reconstructions from an other 'home'.

This thesis began with the idea that there may be texts, emerging from experience of diasporic life, that employed comedy as one of the weapons against inscription. Initial research suggested that comedy can be used to disempower, subvert and challenge authority, especially with regard to prescribing and ascribing identity. Clearly, the tragedy of the experience of colonialism and relocation, forced or otherwise, can not simply be eradicated by using comedy and none of the writers who employ it to narrate their experience have any intention of simply casting aside the trauma of dislocation occasioned either by the implementation of colonial rule or by the movement from one place to another, as is the case for the diasporic writer.

However, for those writers who choose to employ comedy as a strategic weapon to dilute, confuse and re-inscribe issues of power, their voice emerges loud and proud.[16] G. V. Desani broke new ground with his exploration of one man's relocation to England in search of family roots and fortune. Hatterr's first glance at the country he believed to be home causes him to realise that he has made a mistake and that England is no more likely to feel like home than India. However, Hatterr (and indeed, Desani) has at his disposal a weapon few such disappointed heroes employ, he has comedy. For his creator, Desani, comedy and the ability to articulate experience via his writing are the only tools he has with which to shape his experience in England. If he can write himself into existence, he may just survive in a country teeming with 'pukka muggers' who threaten his happiness at every turn.[17] Comedy allows him to explore and debate issues of relocation, displacement, loss and frustration in terms that do not ignore or underplay the seriousness of his position, but rather, add a new and innovative inflection to his writing.

Ultimately, what Desani, Hatterr and even Hali are seeking, is inclusion within a society that is inherently hostile. Hatterr employs comedy to negotiate and explore the life of someone who is at times both Everyman and No-man and Hali invokes a certain type of mysticism to create an ethereal reality that may or may not allow him to locate himself within a world that is now without all those he loves. As such, this thesis pays tribute to the various ways in which Desani sought inclusion within a world that was not always completely sure of his literary intentions.

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[16] See for example, early Naipaul, such as *The Mystic Masseur* (1957) or later texts such as Rushdie's *Shame* (1983). Comedy in these novels is used to explore and exploit issues of power using subversive strategies to challenge traditional concepts of what is and what should be seen as funny, comic, sad or tragic.

[17] The pukka muggers are discussed at length in Chapter Two of this thesis.

Before giving an outline of the thesis, I feel it is necessary to insert some details of Desani's life. As such, the biographical details below do not attempt to influence the reading and critical assessment of Desani's texts but do none the less offer a valuable insight into the life of one of modern literature's more elusive figures.

Govindas Vishnoodas Dasani was born in Nairobi on July 8th 1909.[18] His parents came from Sind and carried on their trade as merchants in Africa where his father took full advantage of the newly built railway and went into the business of selling wood to the railways. In 1918 the family returned to Karachi where Desani attended a private school. At a very early age, for unknown reasons, his father instructed Desani's school master to break his will and as a result the young boy was made to stand for hours in the sun on a scorching pavement in his bare feet which very soon became burned. As a direct result of his treatment at school (and also at home) Desani made two unsuccessful escape bids from school. After his recapture he was declared unteachable, but before being formally expelled a pundit from Benares suggested Desani be entered for a public examination.[19] His results in this exam gained him the status of a child prodigy. More interesting still, as a result of this new status he was exempted from class work, sports, social events, and 'five years overdue homework'.[20] He was also made librarian in charge of the Sabha's Hindi library until he was fifteen.

The relationship between father and son did not improve with time, and when Desani discovered that he was betrothed to a very young girl and would be expected to marry her, he fled (after several attempts) to Britain where he arrived aged seventeen. On his arrival he was befriended by George Lansbury M.P. who arranged for Desani to become a reader at the British Museum. During this period he was also a juvenile actor in a number of films.[21] Desani returned to India after two years and undertook a tour of Rajasthan at the request of the B.B. & C.I. Railway (Bombay Baroda and Central India Railway) - a British chartered project - after which he lectured widely on the sights he had seen.

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[18] Govindas Vishnoodas Dasani changed his name in the early 1940s following a legal action brought against one G. Dasani for unpaid debts/bankruptcy. Desani became tired of the constant barrage of mail and general harassment for payment of debts that did not belong to him and legally changed his name. The BBC has some correspondence signed by Dasani.

[19] Desani himself always referred to his 'removal'from school as being 'rusticated'.

[20] All information from a press release by McPherson and Co., undated but thought to be somewhere in the region of 1991 on the publication of *Hali and Collected Stories.*

In 1939, just weeks before war broke out, Desani returned to Britain and moved into a flat in London. He began working for the BBC, writing a number of short broadcasts for the various international programmes, and encountered people such as T.S.Eliot, E.M. Forster, and George Orwell. He may also have met Mulk Raj Anand who was by 1942 a regular contributor to the BBC. However, it is not certain that the two men met.[22] During the early years of the 1940s he was also working hard on *Hatterr*. There are a number of stories regarding Desani's years in England which may or may not be completely true. The stories are recounted here as they offer an insight into a most unusual man.

Desani once claimed in a newspaper interview that whilst he was living in a smart Chelsea flat, he slept for a short while in a Chinese coffin, made for the remains of an Emperor. During this time he lived very close to T. S. Eliot, a man who he admired but alleged never to have met. However, one of Desani's favourite stories was one regarding the somewhat tenuous link between himself and Eliot (this pre-dates Eliot's appraisals of both *Hatterr* and *Hali*). Both men shared an electrician called Bill. When Bill was working at Desani's he would be pumped for information on Eliot, and Desani hoped the reverse was happening just a few yards down the road. Also during his London years, in the first months after his arrival, he was asked by a man what he did for a living. He replied, with some pride that he was a writer. The man returned to Desani's house sometime later asking if Desani could write something for him - a sign. Desani was too polite to refuse and quickly finished the job for the man. However, he made it clear that he would not be undertaking any further commissions.

One of the more Hatterresque encounters in Desani's life occurred during a routine visit to a large department store. Desani had discovered a number of holes in his socks and sought the advice of a young shop girl. He explained the nature of his problem and was promptly told, 'Go to Haberdashery'. Desani's reply to this suggestion was blunt, 'Madam, you go to Haberdashery'. His unfamiliarity with English shopping led him to believe he had been profoundly insulted. A scene worthy of inclusion in *Hatterr.*

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[21] Despite intensive research, I have been unable to discover what the films were.

[22] It is known that Desani was a fan of Anand's work.

Correspondence with the BBC suggests that Desani led a full life during his years working for them, entertaining friends and travelling around the country. In a letter to Professor Rushbrook Williams Desani outlines his work in India as well as his work in England since his arrival:

> As a Sanatanist Hindu representing as Jt. Hon. Secretary of the oldest religious and social organisation in Sind, I have openly advocated a broad and in my judgement a sound policy, aimed at bringing about a lasting understanding between your great people and mine. As Secretary responsible for the all India Sanatanist Conference, held shortly after the seperation [sic] of Sind from Bombay, we confirmed this by unanimous vote. I publicised this resolution as the accredited Correspondent of the Times of India and the Associated Press.
> [...] I have lectured for many social, religious and educational organisations including the Indian State Railways; Correspondent of the Times of India, Reuters and the Associated Press, contributor to among other papers [...] Hindustan Times [...]. Special Foreign Correspondent the Sind Observer and features editor Calcutta Municipal Gazette.
> Since my arrival here a few days before war begun, for the second time after a lapse of 12 years, I have been assigned various jobs by the Ministry of Information. [...] During these three years I organised an Indian Seamen's Committee and an Indian Student's committee at Oxford, [...].[23]

This letter begins with an apology for the tardiness of his reply but explains that he had suffered a 'relapse of an old infection of malaria', and ends with a philosophical comment on the need for unity between British and Indians alike:

> [B]itterness and hatred [...] make us blind to goodness to each other as peoples and members of one family.

This letter, full of pride in his achievements and hope for the future, manages to capture the joy Desani felt in the first years of his life in England.

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[23] Letter from Desani to Prof. L.F. Rushbrook Williams, Eastern Director BBC, dated January 18th 1943, BBC Written Archives Centre.

All of this was to change shortly after the publication of *Hali* as Desani left Britain to return to India. There are a number of accounts concerning his reason for departing the country he had come to think of as home. Among the documented reasons, by far the most insistent theme is one of a sense of dissatisfaction. He felt slightly - or perhaps greatly - let down by British literary opinion which he considered to have overlooked his greatest work, *Hali*, despite the apparently glowing reviews it received. What is clear is that something had overwhelmed him and caused him to return to India.

It is alleged that, back in India, he was approached by Nehru to work for him in the capacity of some sort of cultural ambassador. Desani agreed to the job but something was to prevent him from ever taking up this job. Desani claimed that one day he suddenly became aware that working for Nehru was not what was intended for him and a life of spiritual enlightenment beckoned. As a direct result of this 'vision' he simply left his home - the contents of which were later auctioned – and, in 1959, he headed for Burma to study Hindu and Buddhist culture. He was to remain as something of a recluse for fourteen years.

Despite his apparent silence he began writing for the *Illustrated Weekly of India* and *The Times of India*. His column 'Very High, Very Low', although anonymous, was clearly the work of Desani. There are numerous articles on various types of Yoga, meditation and Buddhist texts. There are also a large number of recognisably Desani style articles that give an account of daily life in a light, often humorous tone.[24]

In 1967 Desani was approached by the University of Texas, offering him a job within the Department of Philosophy and the faculty of the Center for Asian Studies. The letter sent to Desani suggests that 'with you and Raja Rao here at Texas on a permanent basis, we shall have a superb program of Hindu and Buddhist studies'.[25] Desani remained at the University of Texas until 1978 when he retired and became Professor Emeritus. He spent the final years of his life being cared for by friends in Dallas. In the early 1990s he had a stroke which eventually left him blind and requiring twenty-four hour care.

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[24] I have not been able to explore Desani's journalistic work in depth within this thesis but have consulted a large number of his articles in order to be able to assess the tone and style of his writing. On the whole, the more spiritual articles are not recognisably his, but the more matter-of-fact ones contain a large number of Hatteresque descriptions.

[25] Information from letter to G.V. Desani from John Silber (Dean) dated March 1st, 1968, Austin, Texas.

However, his spirit did not leave him and to the last he remained a feisty man determined to make his mark on life.

The first chapter of this thesis explores the ways in which Desani uses comedy to debate the position of the extraordinary individual. Hatterr is a man who is at home neither in India nor in England and whose only hope for securing autonomy lies in the hands of a number of spurious gurus, sages and friends. This chapter considers the dynamics of the comedy at work in *All About H. Hatterr* and aligns it with various theories pertaining to comedy within literature. Above all, this chapter aims to inspect the ways in which Hatterr negotiates the chaos within his life, employing comedy as the diagnostic tool. Ultimately, he is seeking some kind of order within his seemingly haphazard life, and if he is to secure this, it will require something quite extraordinary to reveal to him the unorthodox patterns within his life. For him, this is comedy and the ability to laugh at others, and more importantly, himself.

One of Desani's chief tasks, and one that occupied him for over fifty years, was that of revising his published works. It took him fifty years until he was satisfied with *Hatterr* and it is no mere publicity stunt that the final edition of Hatterr is entitled 'A New Definitive Edition'. Desani believed that, at last, and after five revised editions of his only novel, this last one, published by McPherson and proof read by Desani himself, then in his eighties, was the definitive and 'finished' novel. The second chapter of this thesis concerns itself with Desani's ongoing task of revising his work. Whilst this chapter (and the subsequent two chapters) consider the revisions within *Hatterr* it should not be forgotten that Desani revised *Hali* at least twice and all the short stories at least once. Why any author should choose to revise a work that has already been published remains, on the whole, something of a mystery. There is very little work on the impulses that drive such a project, although there is no lack of material on texts that have been revised.[26] This second chapter seeks to explore the circumstances that may have prompted Desani's revisions and creates the investigative and interpretative paradigm used in the following chapters to explore thematic revisions within *All About H. Hatterr.*

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[26] See for example the abundance of material on Henry James which pays close attention to the changes but offers little in the way of reasons why. This is explored in more depth in Chapter Two of this thesis.

Whilst exploring the concept of revision within Desani's work, it became apparent that a thorough inspection of all the revised editions would need to be undertaken in order to establish whether or not there were distinct patterns to the revisions. Close inspection revealed that there were indeed some particular areas that Desani appeared unable to leave un-revised. There were a vast number of typographical spelling amendments, changes to grammatical structure and syntactical changes but amongst the plethora of small, though not insignificant revisions, there emerged a smaller number of consistently revised themes. By far the most frequently re-inspected areas were those of food and women. As such these two themes are explored in depth in Chapters Three and Four. These chapters track the development of the changes Desani made to his text, using all the revised editions to assess the intentions behind both individual changes and all the revisions as a whole. Both chapters identify theoretical frameworks that may be useful in analysing the changes made and attempt to determine any contemporary critical thought that may have influenced Desani's revising.

Chapters Five and Six do not consider the project of revision as such but do assess the lengths Desani went to in order to gain critical acclaim for what he considered to be his greatest work, *Hali.* Chapter Five debates the position Desani sought for *Hali* within the contemporary literary scene and aligns this with the confusing and ambiguous critical acclaim it received in the early years of the 1950s. This chapter also explores contemporary attitudes to Indian writing in English that was, by this time well established with writers such as R.K. Narayan, Raja Rao and Mulk Raj Anand, publishing a range of material to great critical acclaim. Desani's prose/poem offered a challenge to the critical and analytical frameworks employed by his contemporaries as it appeared to be a work that straddled not only cultures, but whole literary genres, subject matter and linguistic conventions. Desani's attempt at gaining what he considered to be adequate approbation for his work did not rest just with the reading public but extended into a prolonged and sustained battle with the BBC to gain radio airtime for his play.

Chapter Six explores the dynamics both of Desani's relationship with his prose poem as well his correspondence with the BBC. This chapter continues the debate concerning how and if Desani's work slotted neatly into the canon of either English literature or Indian writing in English.[27] It also offers some insight into the machinations of the BBC during its early years as an international broadcasting medium as it established the Eastern Service to address the needs of both the English in India, and more importantly at the time, the vast numbers of Indians who would be called on to fight for England during the Second World War.

The final chapter seeks to consolidate the issues of inclusion and exclusion explored throughout this thesis. Having explored and debated the comedy within Hatterr and the way in which Desani's works secured for themselves a particular, if not always desirable, position within the British literary scene, the final chapter considers Desani's extraordinary and innovative use of language. It debates issues of cultural belonging as the linguistic dexterity of H. Hatterr is aligned with the work of the bricoleur who selects, collects and organises items of his or her cultural baggage in an attempt to form an ordered - though not always recognisable - whole that begins the process of acknowledging the powerful influences of the past to inflect the present with a new and reinvigorated meaning. This chapter aims to consolidate much of the material debated in the earlier chapters and serves to highlight the links between language and character development and contains a certain resonance of the difficulties inherent within the project of narrating the experience of a character who is, or feels himself to be, culturally dislocated. As such, Hatterr's unease and grim determination to locate himself, at whatever cost, within a framework that is stubbornly resistant, is profoundly evocative of Desani's life-long task of creating literature that *fits*, however awkwardly.

This thesis began with an interest in one of literature's more minor figures, an interest largely reawakened by one of contemporary literature's major figures, and continues with the hope that at last, more than fifty years after the publication of *Hatterr* Desani's position within literature can be debated in terms of a continuum and not of appearances and disappearance, of outbursts and silences. Ultimately, this thesis seeks to begin the debate surrounding all of Desani's work and the position, however tenuous, he occupies in modern literature. Whilst it cannot answer all the questions arising from

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[27] This thesis acknowledges that the two terms may now be interchangeable and to a certain extent, literary criticism regarding Indian writing in English up to the 1950s would suggest that, on the whole, Indian writing in English was debated using the same critically analytical structures as English literature.

Desani's texts, it does place Desani in a central position, one which he truly deserves and which has been denied him for over fifty years.

However, the seeming inability to articulate an 'adequate' response to *Hali* suggests that there were gaps in the ways of appraising a type of literature that was not instantly recognisable.

Chapter One

Human Horse-play, Clowning and Vaudeville-turning: Comedy in *All About H. Hatterr*

> There are three things that are real: God, human folly and laughter. Since the first two pass our comprehension, we must do what we can with the third.[1]

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[1] Valmiki, *The Ramayana*, c. 200B.C., taken from Marina Warner, *No Go the Bogeyman*, (London: Chatto and Windus, 1998), p. 239.

In 1948 G. V. Desani's first and only novel appeared. *All About Mr. Hatterr*[2] was well received by the British reading public and its place within English literature seemed assured. However, its subsequent disappearance, despite numerous revised editions has meant that until recent years it has remained a somewhat obscure text. Although the material is relatively familiar, a challenging number of linguistic tricks combined with an odd cast of characters serve to create a number of 'difficulties' when categorising and interpreting the novel.

This opening chapter sets out to establish the type of novel Desani created and to debate the 'tricks' he employed within his work that, in the first instance, captured the imagination of the British reading public, and then later served to secure its position among the forgotten 'gems' of literature.[3] The contention is that the comedy within the novel and the way in which Desani chooses to explore H. Hatterr's experiences, using comedy, creates a level of ambiguity within the text that has led to an uncertainty among its readers.

The first section explores the dynamics of the relationship between comedy and literature and considers some of the theories of comedy. The second section draws its focus from an analysis of the text itself, whilst the third and final section considers the links between comedy and myth and the ways in which the two are explored in terms of a symbiotic relationship that attempts to create a whole in the comic narrative of H. Hatterr.

Section 1

In a section of her book, *No Go the Bogeyman,* Marina Warner discusses the power of laughter to challenge the frightening, the threatening and above all, the unknown. In a chapter entitled, 'In the Genre of the Monstrous'[4] she debates the meaning of the word 'funny' deftly dividing it into the two childlike divisions of 'Funny Ha-ha or Funny Peculiar'. She suggests the possibility that in some literature the division is absent and that the combination of the two types of funny creates a sense of the grotesque that reveals itself in the comic or in the grotesque figure who erupts at specific times in history in specific locations. Although Warner's focus is more on the European tale, as her discussion continues it becomes clear that this figure of the comic or the grotesque character is universally useful in debating the uncertainties of fearful times and experiences, perpetually embracing both the terror and capriciousness of the time.[5]

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[2] G.V. Desani, *All About Mr. Hatterr,* (London: Francis Aldor, 1948) was the first edition. All further references, unless indicated otherwise, refer to The Saturn Press, 1949 edition due to the scarcity of the first edition. Thorough checking of both first and second editions revealed that they were identical, with the only exception being in the title which after the first edition is *All About H. Hatterr*.

[3] An interesting point here is that McPherson, Desani's most recent publisher, published an edition of *Hatterr* as part of their 'Recovered Classics' catalogue. Consultation with Bruce McPherson indicated that this served a double purpose for the publishers. It allowed them to literally re-cover some largely forgotten books, using new dust jackets as well as recovering them from relative obscurity. Other works in the series include titles by Pamela Frankau, Mary Butts, Frederick Castle, V.K. Arseniev, Edward Dahlberg, Jaimy Gordon and Valery Larbaud.

In the postcolonial novel the importance of both of these facets of comedy becomes intense, with the borders between the two necessarily blurring to create ambiguity.[6] Ultimately this ambiguity creates unease and an unwillingness simply to accept one version of events or a single historical account. Equally powerfully, it promotes an impulse to identify alternatives and to tap into them and realign history and the role of the self within this complex framework of experience. The focus of Warner's discussion then moves on to the role of nonsense in literature and whilst this is perhaps less well represented within the field of postcolonial literature, Warner makes the point that nonsense unsettles the certainties of sense and possesses the potential to disturb conventional meaning, identities and histories, becoming a powerful weapon of resistance as it simultaneously attacks and provides a relatively impenetrable armour against prescription.

In order to understand the role of comedy at work in *All About H. Hatterr* it is important to establish the nature of comedy and its function, form and critical contribution to postcolonial writing as a whole (and its ability to make the unbearable not only bearable but a potentially enabling tool towards securing a new, reworked identity).

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[4] Marina Warner, *No Go the Bogeyman*, (London: Chatto and Windus, 1998), p. 247.

[5] For Hatterr, the business of trying to get his novel published brings him into close contact with a number of such bodies. He encounters Betty Bloomsbohemia and Pius Prigg Pilliwinks who both occupy positions of power and ultimately possess the potential to dictate Hatterr's future as a writer. They become grotesque manifestations of what Hatterr considers to be the English literary circle, narrow-minded, shallow, dismissive and above all, exclusive, discouraging foreigners (or at least, those who choose to write 'foreign' texts). Clearly their idea of foreign is based on unfamiliarity. What they are unable to understand must be foreign.

[6] See for example Amos Tutoula's *The Palm Wine Drinkard* (1952) where the chaotic comedy of Africa as it appears to the modern mind is explored. More recently Kiran Nagarkar's *Ravan and Eddie* (1995) explores complex family relationships using comedy as a mediating device. What is clear, is that texts using comedy do so in very different ways, sometimes with language, sometimes with characterisation and often using both. There are or course, a growing number of texts that are considered to be both postcolonial and comic, but space here does not allow for an in-depth analysis of such texts.

Great thinkers from Plato[7] to Schopenhauer[8] have debated the role of comedy in life and have attempted to secure an identity for comedic thought, demonstration and literature. Although much thought has gone into analysing the proponents and components of comedy, little has been written on its application. Christopher P. Wilson, writing in *Jokes: Form, Content, Use and Function*,[9] neatly summarises the theories pertaining to comedy that have been 'agreed' by the above. He identifies incongruity as a necessary cause of humour with the components of a joke in a mutual clash, conflict or contradiction. As such the level of humour will derive from the impact of the joke, emotionally, intellectually and socially. He goes on to consider the nature of the joke as being divided into three categories. The first of these is relief, where the joke is an 'emotional hoax' that 'barks without biting', suggesting that this type of joke threatens, but fails to deliver the violence of the threat. The second category he identifies is the joke that emerges from conflict theory and focuses on the incongruity of the behavioural implications of humour that always invites a variety of conflicting responses and impulses, including such dichotomies as mirth and disgust and horror and amusement. The final category is the most interesting and particularly relevant in this analysis of comedy in the postcolonial novel and in *All About H. Hatterr* in particular. Wilson claims that it is the incongruity of humour, evoking as it does a multiplicity of reactions, impulses and emotions that reveals the truly subversive nature of comedy, invoking a multiplicity of interpretation, freeing the individual to make of it what he or she will.

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[7] In *Laws*, Plato suggests that comedy and tragedy have an equal place in society. Comedy, he claims, must be admitted because, 'man, in learning the nature of the ignoble and the ridiculous, may be better able to understand and pursue the noble and the virtuous'. Plato also suggests that '[...] serious things cannot be understood without laughable things'. Quoted from, *Classical Literary Criticism: Translations and Interpretations,* Eds. Alex Preminger, Leon Golden, O.B. Hardison Jr., Kevin Kerrane, (N.Y: Frederick Ungar Publishing Company,1974).

[8] Writing in *The World as Will and Representation,* Trans. E.F.J. Payne, (N.Y:Dover Publications, 1966), p.96, Schopenhauer writes: 'The origin of the ludicrous is always the paradoxical, and thus unexpected, subsumption of an object under a concept that is in other respects heterogeneous to it. Accordingly, the phenomenon of laughter always signifies the sudden apprehension of an incongruity between such a concept and the real object thought through it, and hence between what is abstract and perceptive'.

[9] Christopher P. Wilson, *Jokes: Form, Content, Use and Function,* (London: Academic Press, 1979), p. 9.

Wilson considers each of the categories, and to summarise his findings, he discovers that the relief theory taps into the threatening which may reveal that it is ultimately, unexpectedly trivial, and naturally evokes a level of joy. This is perhaps the category least willing to lend itself to postcolonial texts which seldom propose to pass off the project of colonialism as a bad joke or as a threat that never materialises. However, the postcolonial novel that introduces comedy as a weapon against prescription is, arguably, attempting to trivialise and disempower the threat. Whilst this is clearly not the case with all such novels, there are moments in texts such as *All About H. Hatterr,* that frequently draw the focus from the threatening to the trivial thereby robbing the threat of some of its power to dictate focus, ideas and conclusions. For example, there are a number of occasions in *Hatterr* where the narrator is exposed to real danger, such as his imprisonment by Ananda Giri-Giri who threatens to kill him. However, the seriousness of the incident is overlaid with a fine veneer of comedy as Hatterr attempts to secure his release. His asides are both an endeavour to understand the personal implications of his impending death as well as a brave attempt to ease the situation with laughter:

> I am asking him to play me a Wagner Mastersingers piccolo piece, and he is giving me a lousy thé dansant instead! I am begging him for a floricultured bouquet of dew-laden D. Perkins rosebuddies, and he is dealing me a tuft of dog-grass! I am imploring him for a fried chicken cuisine-classique continentale, instead, he is venturing me a handful of senna pods, dustbin pips, a virtual dose of Ipecacuanha! I am seeking the sun-kissed Cotswolds and he is consigning me to the Boston Deeps! I am applying to him to let me have a go at the peerless vanilla orchid, and he is giving me a syphon-whiff of producer gas!
> *I am asking him to let me out, and he is giving me a ghost!*[10]

For each of Ananda Giri-Giri's threats (real or imagined) Hatterr has a comic antidote. He is attempting to find his own 'joy' within a situation that looks to be joyless and as such uses comedy as the only weapon he has to call upon in this moment of profound fear.

The conflict theory is more interesting with its possibilities of catharsis through laughter and the incongruous nature of a conflict that both compels and repels the listener, insidiously drawing him to the centre whilst reminding him to stay where he is on the peripheries. It could be argued that this analysis of the joke is perhaps more closely aligned to the act of colonialism itself which relies on both inclusion and exclusion of the other whilst simultaneously depending on models of chaos and order. It is now widely acknowledged that one of the chief beliefs that made the project of colonialism both possible and successful, was the intrinsic belief that 'the other' was barbaric, dark, evil and above all incapable of organised thought, therefore, by implication, part of a chaotic regime which 'needed' to be restored to order. Such beliefs simultaneously invoke collusion and disgust, compelling the listener/reader/spectator to challenge his own perceptions, tolerances and intolerances. This category could perhaps be best explained by simply pausing to think of jokes that were popular for some time until the advent of political correctness made them unacceptable to most people, yet, depressingly, still apparently amusing to some. Jokes focusing on 'stereotypes' of race, colour or creed maintain a popularity, with each nation tapping into the apparent 'weaknesses' of another nation. However, colour and race are still primary materials for the now politically incorrect joke.

Marina Warner in a chapter entitled 'Going Bananas' debates the relationship between the fruit and the comedy and laughter it engenders and she briefly discusses the link between bananas and racial intolerance.[11] She quotes Nick Hornby's 'ferocious account' of the abusive mockery of the Liverpool supporters:

> We could see quite clearly, as the teams warmed up before the kick-off, that banana after banana was being hurled from the away supporters' enclosure. The bananas were designed to announce, for the benefit of those unversed in codified terrace abuse, that there was a monkey on the pitch [...].
>
> Those who have seen John Barnes, this beautiful, elegant man, play football, or give an interview, or even simply walk out onto a pitch, and have stood next to the grunting, overweight orang-utans, who do things like throw bananas and make monkey noises, will appreciate the dazzling irony of this.[12]

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[10] *Hatterr*, (1949), pp. 151-152, (author's italics).
[11] Marina Warner, (1998), pp. 348-373.
[12] Nick Hornby, *Fever Pitch,* (London: Indigo, 1992), pp. 188-189.

Warner goes on to consider the nature of the shared meaning which is required if the joke is to work and insists that the level of inclusion achieved by this sense of community makes the joke powerful, persuasive and above all damaging. Wilson expands the argument as he considers that the conflict type of joke is a 'green stop-sign that simultaneously energizes and restrains us'.[13] He then concludes that this type of joke is built firmly on dichotomies, both absolute, such as friendliness and hostility as well as more abstract entities such as mania and depression. Whilst this particular category is interesting it has very obvious limitations within the genre of postcolonial literature which seeks to make sense and disempower a situation which threatens to overwhelm, and pausing at the green stop sign is simply not enough. Action is required.

The final theory of the incongruity of jokes as propounded by Wilson focuses on the impact of humour on thought or perception and claims that a joke can subtly conjoin two distinct meanings. He considers Schopenhauer who writing in 1819 ('Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung') defines humour as the sudden perception of the link between two apparently distinct orders or, more precisely, between an object and the abstract concept under which it has been subsumed. This proposes the possibility that a joke never works on a single level but that it possesses the potential to mean something different to each receiver. Ultimately, the essential meaning of the joke and the impulse towards laughter will derive from a shared understanding of both the abstract, and the object that has become the focus of the joke. Whilst this looks, albeit fleetingly, as if it resembles the racist joking discussed above, there are vital and intrinsic differences that derive their power from intelligent analysis and application rather than the fragmentary knowledge and reliance on stereotypes which make the racist or sexist joke possible and appealing to some.

Within *All About H. Hatterr* the joke or comic factor of the novel is frequently confused by the seemingly contradictory nature of the protagonist of the story who is both wise and foolish, self-aware and naïve. However, Desani reveals the distinct possibility of a joke being able to work on multiple levels including the personal, the social, the cultural and the linguistic and capable of embracing all facets of human existence from the banal to the intrinsic. For Desani, incongruity of expectation, ideals, fact, fiction and above all, experience, become the valuable enabling devices for a text that explores the diversity of mankind which can, and must encompass comedy and tragedy in equal measure.

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[13] Christopher P. Wilson, (1979), p. 11.

Section 2

Perhaps the largest clue with regard to reading *Hatterr* comes from Desani himself. In the early manuscripts of his novel he attempted to insert some guidelines for the reader. His numerous attempts to find the correct words and then the subsequent removal of the directions before publication, suggest that Desani had very definite views with regard to who might understand his novel but was unwilling, in the end, to limit his audience. He chose instead, to leave interpretation to the individual reader - a decision he may have regretted later on. In one of the earliest manuscripts (1943-5) he includes a notice to 'All Smart People' that outlines the fascinating qualities of folly and of a literary exploration of the fool or the 'numskull'[sic]. Desani points out that unlike novels such as *Don Quixote* which is about a fool, his book is *by* a fool. He claims that:

> Whether they invite pity, sympathy, or laughter, this much is certain: fools are engaging because they flatter one so!

He goes on to say that the 'intelligent reader' will find the book 'bracing' just because it will make him or her feel better.[14] Clearly then, Hatterr was intended to be regarded as a fool in the early stages of the creation of Desani's text but the finished novel revealed Hatterr to be something very different from a fool and Desani felt that the notice was a false indication of the tone of the book and was detrimental to his construction of a character who would hold a diverse appeal to his readers.

The final published edition of *Hatterr* celebrates this diversity and multiplicity as it narrates the experience of a Eurasian man who has travelled from India to London in search of '[r]omance, adventure, success'.[15] All of the contradictions within his life rise to the surface in the new location and although he keeps up regular correspondence with his friend back in India, he finds that his ability to seek out the comedy of his situation has become intrinsically aligned with an inability to admit to or to tell the truth of his situation. After a short period in England the protagonist becomes aware that he is living a lie and that life in the new land is unsatisfactory. He feels that he has begun to lose his sense of self and only a spiritual return to India will restore it. He consults the Seven Sages of India who, whilst purporting to impart wisdom, manage to reveal to Hatterr the gullibility of man in the face of the driving impulses of human existence: wealth, wisdom and love. Hatterr stumbles from one encounter to another and whilst his journey is memorable for its chaotic nature and seemingly incoherent and inconclusive quest, it becomes clear that Hatterr will only be able to identify the chaos and order within his life when the quest is completed. His ability to apply comedy to the pitfalls and disasters of the quest become a way of negotiating this chaotic order and ultimately presents Hatterr with the truth of his own life, where all experience, positive or otherwise is essential. Thus, he is forced to acknowledge that wisdom, insight and humour are intrinsic to mankind in general and, are not, as he first thought, singular to his own experience.

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[14] All information from private papers, Austin, Texas. (The exact date of the manuscripts is not certain). Please see Appendix 1 for information regarding these papers.

[15] *Hatterr*, (1949), p. 20.

For H. Hatterr, the quest for meaning and identity is the prime motivation. In *All About H. Hatterr* the protagonist, with his 'rigmarole English', deftly juxtaposes the complexities of diasporic existence in London with the quest to find the meaning of life in India which, he hopes, will ultimately secure a sense of order in England. For Hatterr, understanding India will make understanding England possible. He openly admits that his relationship with written English is somewhat tenuous but, courageously, he chooses to grapple with it and utilise the tools he has at his disposal: a knowledge of both Indian and English idioms, a sense of humour and a large repertoire of literary references and styles, in the pursuit of obtaining some kind of wholeness. He feels that the 'nonsense' of his situation is that he is lonely and that in order to secure a sense of belonging he must write himself into existence. In an interesting remark, almost an aside, in the opening pages as he speaks about his good friend, Kanhayalal Savaldas, he remarks that as far as his friend is concerned Hatterr is thriving in his new environment:

> I write this book for him. [...] As an apology. [...] Conscience got me. I had lulled him into believing me the most industrious creature dead or alive. The truth is, I never did a day's honest work in my life. Didn't think it gentlemanly or dignified.[16]

For Hatterr there is now an overwhelming urge to tell the truth. However telling the truth is problematic as he openly admits to having acquired a 'major Fault', that is an inability to tell the whole truth. In order to be able to negotiate successfully the discrepancies in his life, he has begun to realise the importance of invention, mimicry and half-truths. However, he is not blind to the necessity of giving an account that is ordered and believable and he insists that that the only way to achieve this is by mimicking truth:

> Mimic me Truth successfully (that's to say, lie to me and achieve belief) and I'd credit you with Art, Skill, Imagination, and intimate intelligence of Truth.[17]

For Hatterr truth and fiction are equal in their value for securing identity and creating order from the chaos of his life, and whilst neither is dependent upon comedy, for Hatterr, they are better explored and experienced using comedy as an enabling device. Thus mimicking the truth not only describes Hatterr's quest but comes to represent the model for utilising comedy within *All About H. Hatterr*. Mimicry, subversion, misrepresentation and re-presentation are the impulses that both promote and enable comedy within a situation that looks, at first glance to be more suited to tragedy than to humour or laughter.

This section examines the links between chaos, order, comedy and language and argues that both chaos and humour are primordial and as such, are fundamental to the state of being. Writers who accept and embrace this idea, return to chaos in order to negotiate a new set of circumstances or to insist upon a new way of seeing and narrating experience. The motivation for rediscovering the self will always be a powerful impulse in writers who have, for one reason or another, moved away from their land of birth and have relocated in a land which may not be strange but is nevertheless different. This move promotes a vital awareness of the impulse to re-evaluate, a process that is frequently confused by memory and experience. There remains however, an overwhelming impulse to establish order from the apparent chaos of translation and resettlement.

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[16] *Ibid.,* p.3.
[17] *Ibid.,* p.3.

Each historical and literary period has its great quest narrative which seeks to make sense of various aspects of human existence and experience, from *The Odyssey* to the Arthurian Legends to *Don Quixote* to more recent texts such as T.S. Eliot's *The Waste Land*, and *Omeros* by Derek Walcott.[18] Traditionally the quest has been for love, honour and power, and whilst *Hatterr* does not specifically adhere to the conventional motivating impulses, many of these aspects can be identified. Of the less conventional, but none the less important aspects of the quest novel, the postcolonial novel of self-discovery finds a rich seam of material that seeks to negotiate and consolidate identity in a new place and for a new mode of living whilst drawing on the past for inspiration and information. The traditional quest novel, whilst containing many of the motifs outlined above, also includes elements such as visions of both faith and doubt, humour and honour and of order and disorder. Ultimately, the quest comes to represent the search for, or retrieval of, an archetypal pattern that is profoundly rooted in daily dreams and needs. This quest simultaneously encompasses both the concrete and the abstract and, for the postcolonial writer, removed from his/her homeland, comes to represent a way of writing back, either as a redressing of traditional accounts or, in the case of Hatterr, an impulse to write himself back into a recognisable existence, which takes into account the archetypes used to consolidate his identity. In England he feels that he has become distanced from these vital patterns and seeks to rediscover them and establish their usefulness in consolidating his personal sense of identity.

What remains imperturbable in the face of change (national, social or domestic) is the potential of the quest to inspire, to provide new hopes and dreams and a perpetually evolving desire to look beyond the present and to break the boundaries of the here and now. For the narrator in *All About H. Hatterr*, the quest becomes a cosmic comedy with myth and ritual as the framework and comedy as the enabling device allowing the framework, both to support and to construct the quest of the central character. For Hatterr humour is a necessity that drives his personality and makes it possible for him to bear the incongruities of his life in London, away from the place he feels to be his spiritual home. Humour also enables him to adopt a sympathetic and understanding view of his new fellow countrymen, even those who cause him to feel isolated and intrusive:

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[18] *Don Quixote* does not fit as easily into this category as the other listed works as it mocks the epic form but is included simply because it is one of a number of texts that could be considered to straddle several genres. It is a comic work, a mock epic employing subversion that undercuts the form and starts a new tradition. It anticipates the subversive form of the quest to which *Hatterr* belongs.

> [I]f I am in your way, in your Street, [...] I desire you to do me right and justice, for I am a most poor man and a stranger, having here no judge indifferent, nor no more assurance of equal friendship and proceeding; it is not because I wish to be in your way, [...] but, because, [...] I am *lonely*![19]

Importantly, Hatterr is acutely aware of his own sense of dislocation and the desire to belong. He needs to feel a part of something or somewhere and acknowledges the necessity of avoiding the extremes, choosing instead to challenge the boundaries threatening to confine him and to prescribe his experience and identity in this new place. He recognises the need within his life to reconcile all the conflicting elements of being in London, belonging to India, and being thought of as successful, feeling idle and useless and, most importantly, living a lie but experiencing the painful truth of his existence. For Hatterr, life is a constant negotiation, re-negotiation and attempt to consolidate the dualities governing his life and to create a sense of order that will ultimately, he feels, secure more than just a sense of belonging.

Throughout the novel this duality is reflected in the narrative that simultaneously proposes a serious message and a humorous tale of the gullibility and fallibility of man. Where the two meet there is both chaos and comedy, but from this apparently chaotic assembly of encounters, incidents and escapes, emerges a pattern that will ultimately rescue Hatterr from a sense of obscurity, lending meaning and purpose to his own life and above all, an awareness of the comedy that may be inherent in both his diasporic existence and perhaps, in the lot of man; to be eternally tempted, duped and enlightened. This pattern, Hatterr realises, is *his* archetypal pattern, it is the meaning of his life. For him, the key to the comedy of his existence lies in paradoxes and contradictions, of comedy and tragedy, chaos and order, foolishness and wisdom, reality and ideal, expectation and experience. At the moment when Hatterr realises that what appears to be the tragedy of his life is heavily laced with fine comedy, he begins the quest for enlightenment that explains to him the role and the dynamics of the relationship between the comic and tragic in his life and allows him to align the two into a harmonious and workable relationship. If he can tap into the comedy of his life he possesses the potential to disarm the destructive power of tragedy to promote an awareness of destiny which looks to be permanent and immutable but which, in the case of Hatterr's own life, is far from permanent.

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[19] *Ibid.,* p. 22. Author's italics.

What Desani does is to create a character who comprehends fully the dynamics of the dualities that are present in life and yet challenges the immutability of attitudes and experiences. Hatterr is an intelligent, if gullible, young man who refuses to accept that his life is intrinsically tragic and preordained, preferring to seek out the alternatives instead. It is also clear that Desani intended the dualities within the life of his protagonist to be reflective of humanity in general. He chooses two locations (London and India) two narrators (Hatterr and Banerrji), [20] stories and encounters that are always readable on at least two levels with the reader always being one step ahead of Hatterr, unable to do anything but observe the gullibility of mankind.

Whilst discussing duality within the novel it is clear that Desani intended this work to be a novel that destroys logic and temporal/spatial order; creating, as he does, a protagonist whose identity is dependent on the situation he finds himself in and locations that become a kind of everywhere and nowhere.[21] This enables him to create a world that seems to lie within experience whilst outside time, in an estranged world of fiction where heterogeneous elements are blended together to form a cohesive whole and where order and meaning may be clearly delineated, or indeed, may not.

Hatterr's quest for fulfilment and understanding is inspired by his own awareness of a life lived in both the past and the present with the past being India and the present being London. At the time of writing his story, Hatterr is unable to reconcile the two but is acutely aware of the need to do so in order to make sense of his present experience. He acknowledges the power of the impulses in his life; past interpretations, present experience and future projections and whilst he has, to some extent, managed to determine the stresses, he is unable to order and use them effectively. His movement from India to England (and subsequent spiritual return to India) and the feeling that he is now accountable to someone, allows him the space with which to explore the fragility of the line between truth and fiction although, at the time of writing he is less concerned about the dynamics of the relationship.

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[20] It should be noted that Banerrji's narrative voice is always heard through Hatterr's thus making his words unstable in as much as they always bear the inflection of Hatterr's thinking. However, Banerrji's voice is a persuasive one and reveals much of the nature of both men as well as exploring the dynamics of the relationship between the two men.

[21] Hatterr frequently changes identity to suit the needs of the particular experience he is anticipating. He is variously, 'Baw Saw (the uninitiated)', 'Sir H. Hatterr, O.M., M.D., D.D'., 'The Bitter-One, a rector of the Church of all' and 'Pundit Lolly, a high-caste Brahmin body'.

Desani creates a character who feels the responsibility of providing an accurate account of his life experiences but who has, at the commencement of the narrative, yet to discover a way of adequately and accurately narrating it. Hatterr is an unorthodox social figure, seeking desperately to order and narrate an existence that seems, at the time of writing to be deeply enmeshed in chaos. Writing the book becomes an apology to his friend but also, perhaps more importantly, he writes because he is eager for change. However, he is none the less fearful of the implications of such a change which may involve the breakdown of accepted and proven patterns, myths and rituals and ultimately provoke the potential clash of the modern and the ancient. For Hatterr mythic thought is an intrinsic part of his anticipation of the future and, more importantly, fuels his fear of the uncertainty of his future as a struggling writer far from home. Despite the desire to break from one mythic heritage and to embrace another he finds himself unable to do this, largely, it appears, because of his initial reasons for leaving India. After all, his impulse to come to England is inspired by a desire to 'return' to the land of his father, albeit his adopted parent:

> All my life I wanted to come: come to the Western shores, to my old man's Continent, to the Poet-Bard's adored Eldorado, to England, the God's own country, that seat of Mars, that damme paradise; to Rev. the Head's mother and fatherland, to the Englishman's Home, his Castle, his garden, fact's, the feller's true alma mammy, and apple-orchard.[22]

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[22] *Hatterr,* (1949), p. 21.

Soon after his arrival he becomes confused by all that he has learned from India and the sense that he has no 'claim' to belong to England after all. Hatterr has become acutely aware of the need for an understanding and integration of the ancient myths of nationhood for sustaining personal, social and psychic health, but in England he feels that any reconciliation, any attempts at ordering his experience, are impossible.

The potential inability to order his existence/experience is pre-empted in the opening ALL ABOUT... as Desani describes the process of getting his work published in London:

> So to Betty Bloomsbohemia, the Virtuosa with knobs-on. I was summoned, Come Monday: but bagged Tuesday. I was questioned closely. Honouring me, as I never ever! she insisted that I *do* explain the *ABC* of the book. Awed, I did the best I could. *A.* A man's choice, Missbetty, is conditioned by his past: his experience. [...] Depends on his experience. That's all why, this book isn't English as she is wrote and spoke. Not mere verbal contortionism, I assure. *B.* There are *two* of us writing this book. A fellow called Mr. H. Hatterr, and I. [...] *C.* As for the arbitrary choice of words and constructions you mentioned. Not intended by me to invite analysis. They are there, because, I think, they are *natural* to H. Hatterr. [...] I never was involved in the struggle for newer forms of expression, [...]. [...] She was shocked disappointed. Said of me the day after, I didn't know myself, poor devil! what had I gone and done. [...] I was drawing on my unconscious, obviously.[23]

Even the comedy of this account fails to conceal the bitterness of Desani's attack on a system that demands order but will not reveal any indicators of how order could be or should be sought. As Desani attempts an explanation of his book it becomes clear that whilst he explains he also confuses, finally admitting that he is unable and unwilling to categorise his work and that if it cannot be understood then the fault lies with the reader and not the writer. However, despite the comic bravado of Desani's claim, as his attempts to get the book published fail time and time again, he is forced to admit that whilst the cathartic outcome of the book may not be in doubt, his 'foreignness' within the literary world looks set to keep him as a perpetually marginalised and isolated figure. Ultimately if he is unable to publish the work, perhaps even catharsis is impossible.

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[23] *Ibid.*, p. 6.

It is at this point that the archetypal pattern he seeks to discover or rediscover looks to be at its most elusive. If he can not proceed beyond this point, then his driving need to order the chaos of his life will remain unfulfilled. Both Hatterr and Desani develop an awareness of the possibility for change in both social and individual outlook but just as Desani has discovered that the English literary scene is hostile to change in many ways,

Hatterr is profoundly aware of the unshakeable nature of ancient myth and tradition, to program and condition attitudes, and perhaps more importantly, to modify and control new and emerging patterns and to conceal the old and vital ones. For Hatterr, the need to understand and quantify the power of such myth to influence the present, is overwhelming, and as he finally appreciates the falsity of his attempts to communicate with his Indian friend, he begins to understand the need to look beyond his immediate experience. As he returns to India he can begin to order his memories, and, more importantly order the mythic representations that have begun to confuse him in his new location. Re-invention has become intrinsic to survival and as such, is part of the temporal and spatial process that seeks to explore the nature of these myths, their relevance to Hatterr's present, and the dynamics of the relationship between his present, his past and his future. One of the ways in which re-invention may be possible is through the use of comedy.

Section 3

If Hatterr is to secure the re-invention he seeks, then he has to explore the fundamental dynamics of his relationship with the world in which he is living. He will have to discover, negotiate and utilise all the tools he has at his disposal, amongst which are the ability to consider his life and experiences as part of a greater plan, his awareness of the comic aspects of his life and above all, the powerful and persuasive effect of myth within his life. For Hatterr, myth and mythic representations, memories and re-inventions may provide a way of negotiating the discrepancies between times, locations and cultures.[24]

The cosmic and eternal aspects of myth are discussed by Mircea Eliade who, writing in 1968, considers that myth becomes a way of narrating these discrepancies.[25] It provides a space that promotes reconciliation, allowing as it does, for either a suspension of time or a realignment of the chronology of events and histories. For Eliade, myth is synonymous with the 'eternal return' which he defines as a desire to be at one with, not necessarily the past, but with an alternative time. From his thesis of the 'Myth of Eternal Time' he concludes that myth and ritual allow for a transcendence of history and also for man himself to transcend history. For Eliade, myth is life-forming and profoundly useful as a locational and positional tool for the establishment of identity. However he goes beyond merely identifying prejudices and stereotypes and offers the possibility of subverting them by reading the myths of nations as creative, both in the past, and more importantly in the present, in a world where boundaries have become less distinct and where movement and migration have created nations of people with diverse cultural histories.

In the case of H. Hatterr, Desani moves beyond the traditional view of the power of myth and introduces comedy which he runs alongside the mythic reconstructions and with which he reveals both the strengths and weaknesses of the past. For Hatterr, this is essential if he is to establish a sense of order. He needs to be aware of the fallible nature of myths, of the falsities that they can potentially create and ultimately, he has to acknowledge that the power of myth and history lies in its intrinsic unreliability. He has to be able to locate the myth and to understand the nature of its influence on his life, but ultimately he has to tap into the unreliability that makes myth a powerful tool for change. Desani creates a character who seeks out mythic structures in order to subvert them and make them personally useful. He needs Hatterr's myths to be fallible and flexible. In England he looks for perfection and is unable to find it. One example of this

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[24] It should also be noted that the whilst Hatterr is seeking some form of re-invention, so too is Desani. He is searching out a position for himself in a country that he feels to be more hostile that he had anticipated. As such, he uses all the tools at his disposal; comedy, a linguistic dexterity and an ability to create a character who explores these aspects in an imaginative and creative way.

[25] Mircea Eliade, *Myths, Dreams and Mysteries*, (London: Fontana Library, 1968).

'disappointment', in the discrepancy between myth and reality occurs as Hatterr goes to Cambridge, 'the Proctors' Paradise Lost':

> (I was looking for gownsmen, academic nudities, bags and fags. Instead, I struck a Maths.-Tripos-II-passed feller. [N]ame Emlyn, hobby, furniture, in Cambridge for his vacs.
> [...] When met, this intelligentsia feller, *look you! eh*-ctually tried to unload on me a worthless 'cello, *savvy*? as original Chippendale!
> [...] Hell, at my soberest, I may be tiddly by the Cantab and Oxon standards, but, damme, I can tell a 'cello, if it's a genuine Chipp!)[26]

Despite his obvious disappointment that his mythical notions of Cambridge bore no relation to the reality he experiences there, he emerges from the contact with Emlyn a wiser man. His final comment on his ability to judge the difference between fake and real becomes a comment on his developing ability to sift and order the various elements structuring his past and present. After this reminiscence Hatterr's narrative returns to India.

On his return he finds that his lack of success in England may be indicative of the fact that life is never perfect and that for him, humour, comedy and the ability to laugh at oneself and others is the most powerful stabilising weapon with which he can simultaneously combat feelings of alienation and inferiority whilst beginning to align his experiences in a new and dynamic order.

Eliade and Desani both acknowledge and dismiss the insistence on definition by myth, preferring instead to focus on the power of mythopoeia, the conscious creation of a myth or the appropriation and reworking of mythical material in order to create what Eliade refers to as 'cultural creations in themselves', or a kind of private mythology, and what Desani describes as 'Mimic me Truth(s)'. However, Eliade, unlike Desani and Hatterr, stridently refutes the possibility of negotiating identity in terms that encompass myth and dreams as co-operative, insisting instead that the two are separate functions of man. Hatterr needs to be sure that what he feels and thinks and what he physically experiences are equally reliable indicators. His dreams, such as the visit to the Albert Hall in London where he is embarrassed by his brother-in-law, are duly written down 'for reference purposes' and are frequently, but not always, recalled as valuable experiences.[27] Clearly for Hatterr dreams and myths are frequently interchangeable. This is perhaps most blatantly revealed in the characters he encounters who have become an embodiment of ideas, stereotypes, dreams and myths and who have become indebted to all these impulses for their character and who fail, at all times to acknowledge the comedy inherent in this slavery to idealism. In the chapter entitled 'Walrus Versus The Bitter-One', Hatterr, under the pseudonym Baw Saw, encounters a Sheik who has spent some time with the 'Laird-sage of Co. Dundee' and has developed a deep 'understanding' of the British class system. When the Laird is ready to leave India and return home to Dundee, he bestows on his dutiful servant the trappings of 'success' in Britain:

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[26] *Hatterr,* (1949), p. 163.

> Ere he returned home, [...] as the result of my supplications to him, every day of those long-endured years, he took pity on me, and bestowed and baksheeshed upon me, his Occidental clothing, this kilt, and this sporran, and *all* his neckwear! Without those, I was a mere naked no-one! But, after getting silk from my preceptor, and my title of L.C.C., I became a lion! [...] I have seen the world! [...] I am the Sheik of the London County Council, the '*Ell See See*! [...] Know, this is the source, the device, and the secret of my prosperity! With this neckwear, this mystic material, I am a burrasahib! A man! I am Eaten! I am Westmoreland! I am Shrewsbury! I am Arrow! I am Charter's House! I am Rugby-Football! I am Gun Co. Winchester! I am all-in-all! And C.L.C. besides![28]

The benefits of the stereotypes and enduring traditions of the British culture have served both the Sheik and his employer well, causing Hatterr to appreciate the necessity of an understanding of the myths and histories which make up a nation, (or the 'idea' of a nation) and which simultaneously promote control, order and imaginative interpretation. At this point, it may be useful to consider the nature of the comedy at work here. Desani is tapping into stereotypes and he creates a character in the Sheik who is a victim of his own gullibility. He creates a man who looks to be astonishingly aware of the minutiae of the class system in Britain and has utilised this knowledge which may appear to be superficial and fragmentary, but is, nonetheless a powerful tool for establishing a sense of worth and belonging. Whilst it may appear that the Sheik is included in Hatter's narrative purely as a comic device, it becomes clear that Hatterr finds himself unable to laugh at the 'foolishness' of the Sheik, acknowledging, instead, the power of abstract notions to effect and affect identity.

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[27] *Ibid.,* pp. 84-85.
[28] *Ibid.*, p. 82.

Up to this point in the novel, Desani has prompted his protagonist to search out the meaning of his life. Hatterr has encountered wise men, fools, clowns, trickster figures and manipulators but his encounter with the Sheik is very different. The Sheik becomes the embodiment of Imperial power which is abstract, seemingly incomprehensible but ultimately extraordinarily powerful and persuasive. Hatterr's plea to the Sheik to bestow the 'mystic L.C.C.' upon him is refused because Hatterr has pronounced it '*Hell See See*' and has therefore forfeited his right to inclusion and the sense of belonging he has quested after.[29] It is at this point that the delicate balance between the institutions and metaphysics of the two cultures he is attempting to synchronise, looks to be unachievable. However, Hatterr will not be defeated and acknowledges the distinct possibility that synthesis requires a completely new form which draws its material from eccentricity, imaginative interpretations and above all from comedy and laughter.

As Hatterr continues his quest he begins to understand this new form which is motivated by the complicated relationship between fact and fiction and more importantly, between the comedy and the tragedy inherent in every situation. He can both laugh at and pity the gullibility of the Sheik but cannot choose to see only one side. After all, the Sheik's apparent foolishness has served him well, securing a sense of self-importance and credulity that Hatterr has been unable to establish. Clearly the Sheik lacks self-awareness, his identity has been 'bestowed' upon him by his employer (who in turn appears to be as much a victim of the process as his employee). The Sheik fails to see the irony and the comedy of his situation, focusing instead on the power he feels he has gained from this investiture. Hatterr, on the other hand, is acutely aware of both his own situation and that of the Sheik and masterfully lays bare the fragility of class, system and identity. As the Sheik declares himself, 'I am Eaten!' he refers less to the Old School Tie than to his own weakness and consumption by the system that can dictate belonging and exclusion and has overwhelmed his need for individuality. Desani will not directly condemn the character but provides a subtle subversion of this 'truth' by narrating the episode with a heavy comic irony of tone.

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[29] *Ibid.,* p. 82.

The narrative technique employed throughout depends on such comic irony used to reveal a creative chaos where truth and fiction have equal claim in the text. It becomes a display of the multiplicity of human existence that is composed, in equal measure, of tragedy and comedy, of frustration and of laughter and which ultimately reveals man's existence as a panto-comedy, 'against which there lies no appeal' and which depends on 'damme, clowning and vaudeville-turning'.[30] Despite Hatterr's apparent insistence on the absolute certainty of a non-negotiable existence, he sets out to prove that he is wrong. Just as he is determined to prove that Betty Bloomsbohemia has no right to dictate his literary style and choice of material, his narrative becomes a rebellion against inscription. He chooses language, material, characters and events that frequently defy categorisation and which, like the Sheik, come to represent much more than the superficial representation they appear to embody.

For Desani, like his protagonist, 'Life is Contrast' and the contrast in this text lies in the subtlety of the relationship between comedy and tragedy which is constantly reworked and redefined. It then becomes a valuable motivating impulse to mythic self re-creations that empower characters like the Sheik (albeit perhaps unsatisfactorily) and more importantly present Hatterr with the power and potential perpetually to reinvent himself and his experience.

The power of such mythic self re-creations is discussed by Don Culpitt[31] who views the use of personal myths as a primal function of the human mind as it struggles to come to terms with the search for a 'more-or-less unified version of the cosmic order and the social order and the meaning of the individual's life'. He goes on to claim that this story-making function is an intrinsic part of the make up of man and as such is irreplaceable. He concludes by stating that 'the individual finds meaning in his life by making of his life a story set within a larger social scale'. Clearly then, Culpitt views the myth as both paradigmatic yet adhering to no pure paradigm, acknowledging the validity but not the exclusiveness of the resemblance between myths. In the case of the Sheik, Desani seeks to explore this overlap and allows half-truths, pure fictions and chaotic comedy to resemble order to such an extent that the resemblance becomes the actual. The Sheik no longer possesses the ability to distinguish the lines between truth and fiction, between the comedy and tragedy of his life, but the order that he has established is creative, evolving and above all, enabling, allowing him to create his own story within the larger social framework.

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[30] *Ibid.*, p. 17.

[31] Don Culpitt, *The World to Come,* (London: SCM Press, 1982), p. 29.

Laurence Coupe, writing in *Myth*[32] discusses the need to consider what a myth is doing as well as what it is saying and that if it seeks to regain some type of 'paradise lost' then it would seem to be seeking a resolution in perfection. However, Hatterr himself, has already discovered in Cambridge that his image of Paradise Lost is fragile and easily disrupted by the reality. As such, the concept of *All About H. Hatterr* as a quest novel with the protagonist returning to his spiritual home in an attempt to order the chaos of his life in London looks to be possible if movement, displacement and change are allowed to re-order the gaps between myth and reality. Hatterr's paradise is an egotistically- created place, where he attains wealth, happiness and love. It is, however, clear at the conclusion of the novel that he has attained only a partial paradise. He has been forced to confront the reality of his life; that idleness will not create wealth, that a genuine fear and mistrust of women ('Cupid Is Blind, Non-Rational, Anti-Intellect, Sense-Enemy: And So Are His Victims...'[33]) will not secure him love, but he does realise that comedy will always save him from unhappiness. He can always retreat into humour. For Hatterr this heavy dependence on laughter (albeit, often muted or ironic) is a device that counteracts exclusion, challenges power relations and difference and even, to a certain extent, reduces hardship and poverty. He discovers that comedy and laughter allow him to occupy a schism between two worlds, between dream and reality, wilderness and civilisation, this world and another world. Whilst Coupe may be correct in suggesting that the quest seeks a return to 'paradise' and to enlightenment, Desani derives his material from a debate that centres on the nature of this paradise. He creates a character who returns to India for enlightenment and then laughs at his own ability to create a character who follows his heart to England but is ultimately driven to return to India to discover meaning in his life, thereby creating something of an eternal return.

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[32] Laurence Coupe, *Myth*, (London: Routledge, 1997).

[33] *Hatterr*, (1949), p. 45.

Clearly as Desani challenges stereotypical ideas and expectations, he scrutinises the vastness of the chasm between appearance and reality. The confusion, the blurring at the edges, and the intense speculation becomes Hatterr's motivating impulse towards the quest for self-discovery.

For Hatterr, paradise is a place where comedy is as intrinsic to existence as tragedy. Vincenzo Maggi writing on comedy and laughter, claims that to produce laughter comedy has to be combined with wonder and admiration.[34] He goes on to explain that wonder is 'a human desire for novelty' whilst the laughter, also described as 'baseness', comes to 'represent the physical object, the thing itself'. If this is the case then it begins to look, for Hatterr, as if the rigidity of the modern world, or perhaps more importantly, his concept of the world as rigidly unbending and unwelcoming, has replaced the ancient laughter and become, in itself, the comedic essence of life for H. Hatterr. For him, laughter in London is barely recognisable. His desire to return to India for inspiration, to recapture the wonder and to transcend the superficiality of life in the West, where editors refuse manuscripts written in 'rigmarole English' and where they cast aside what appears to be incomprehensible, ultimately dismissing it as the ramblings of a mad and foreign man, becomes an imperative. Speaking of the hopelessness of gaining acceptance of his creative talent, he says of his novel:

> Then I passed it elsewhere. And he referred it to a well-known psychiatrist friend of his (at a mental clinic). The doctor posted it, with an invitation to me to meet him- professionally.[35]

And later:

> [T]he Counsellor flew into a rage. What the devil are you trying to do? Bust up your future? In this goddam country, you tell the truth at your peril! Fancy, blast'd fool, losing a chance like that![36]

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[34] Vincenzo Maggi, 'On the Ridiculous', *Theories of Comedy*, Ed. Paul Lauter, (New York: Doubleday, 1964), p. 65.

[35] *Hatterr*, (1949), p. 4.

[36] *Ibid.*, pp. 6-7.

Clearly the ironic humour here, thinly veils the bitterness and hopelessness of the outsider's quest for inclusion, revealing the need to revive the laughter and to restore the wonder in his life which will, he hopes, ultimately lead to a renewed sense of worth and belonging. His willingness to recount the details of his failure to secure an audience for his work reveals his own awareness of the gravity of the loss he is experiencing and provides the final impulse to seek out an alternative which may or may not be *the* truth but which is certainly *a* truth.

Hatterr's fiction exists in his plea to 'Mimic me Truth', in the Sheik's willingness to suspend disbelief as well as the ability of various characters in the novel who adhere to unlikely and seemingly ridiculous sets of beliefs and rules. Hatterr knows that he is being duped and that his principles and beliefs are dubious and extremely fallible yet this awareness will save him. His willingness to embrace the fictions and the half-truths that compose his life is, for Hatterr, the exquisite truth. As well as this perception, he also possesses the wit and intelligence to begin to order the fragments of his life and to utilise this implicit fragmentation as an empowering tool. Gerald Larue explaining the need for wholeness which is always accompanied by a sense of the absurdity and comedy inherent in existence, claims that:

> To know to whom one belongs, to sense poetically a heritage, to be linked emotionally and perhaps physically to a tradition rooted in antiquity and marked by beauty and suffering, joy and heartache is to acquire psychic strength to meet the trauma of existence and to answer the absurdity, the human dilemma of man existing in endless time and space.[37]

He continues, explaining that holding on to the past in order to locate oneself in the present is a valid, powerful and enduring image and whilst this undeniably has a stabilising effect on man, Larue suggests that a heavy dependence on the rigidity of tradition will always reach a point where creativity begins to falter in the face of such inflexibility. At this point man potentially develops a subservience that may deny the possibility of either challenging tradition, or more importantly in postcolonial writing, the possibility of deconstructing ancient myths and traditions. If this is the case then redeveloping these myths and traditions as enabling rather than disabling tools begins to look impossible. In *All About H. Hatterr* Desani deftly weaves both old and new interpretations into a new and enduring fabric and challenges the old certainties of tragedy and primordial destiny and as such, creates a space from which Hatterr is able to use constructively his personal interpretations.

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[37] Gerald Larue, *Ancient Myth and Modern Man,* (New Jersey: Prentice Hall Inc., 1975), p. 201.

Further on in his thesis Larue draws the focus on to cultural heroes who embody the ideal and thus begin to stifle the urge for creative renewal in the individual who is so far removed from this epitome of heroism. Whilst it would be possible to view Hatterr's quest as a demonstration of the impotence of man in the face of tradition, myth and ancient archetypes, Desani does not do this. He creates a character who gently but persistently chips away at the edges of the restrictions until they become less clearly defined. When his own freedom is challenged he writes:

> I have written the work for one good reason: to shield myself from further blows of Fate, and to ensure me against drifting from isolation to utter eclipse, [...].[38]

He is galvanised into action, writing a tale of a quest in an attempt to narrate himself into being. Instead of using the more traditional forms of expressing isolation, fear, anger and hostility of the subject placed in a position where he feels himself to be inferior, Desani chooses to draw the focus on to the comedy inherent in a quest that seeks both to establish and challenge the role of tradition and myth in a present lived far away from the centre of the archetypal pattern and away from the cultural centre. For Hatterr, and for Desani, the potential for mythic change is enormous but equally pressing is the desire for stability which for Hatterr, in common with many of the writers of the Diaspora, leads to a moment or indeed a lifetime of insecurity, one of the antidotes to which is the powerful ability to laugh at oneself and one's predicament.

Clearly though, apart from the opening chapters that present the details of both Hatterr and Desani's experiences in England, the novel turns to India for both enlightenment and comic inspiration, drawing its material from incomprehension, bewilderment and chaos but which, as has been stated before, comes to represent and demonstrate a particular type of order and truth. As Hatterr encounters each Sage and learns valuable lessons about humanity he begins to understand the power of fiction and its need to be persuasive and believable. He also learns that chaos may indeed only be held in check by the power of mythic regulations. As Desani lays bare the absurdities and comic moments of life, he creates characters who are bound by ancient archetypes, developing a protagonist who, no matter how hard he tries, is unable to fit into the same pattern, or even, frequently, to be able to see any of the attributes of the established patterns. However Hatterr emerges from his final encounter with an acute perception that his ability to see the comedy inherent in each situation has set him apart from his fellow man and more importantly, from the ancient archetypal patterns that he considered to be an intrinsic part of understanding the self. This may suggest that Hatterr's quest for enlightenment has a negative outcome. However, resolution is achieved and the final chapter of the novel works out some of the discrepancies in his life between the ideal and the actual and between the fiction and the experience.

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[38] *Hatterr,* (1949), p. 22.

In this final chapter, 'Punchum And Another, With Contempt' Hatterr poses the question:

> *Questions*: Can joint-cunning undo single-minded vigilance? What of the future of humans - and all this Shirtdom and Skirtdom?[39]

He debates the natural conflicts arising when people live together and identifies that part of the problem is that man, unlike animals, is driven by ambition, by the need to succeed. In an aside, he claims to have been eternally ashamed of his 'pedigree' and his parents, wondering if perhaps he should consider the larger picture and move from the personal to the universal. He asks:

> *(Note: By Gab and by Aflatoon, for as long as I can remember, I have been ashamed of my stem, pedigree, and pater-and-mater. Question: Should a problem-feller like myself stop being personal, and start being ashamed of man's ancestry, instead?)*[40]

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[39] *Ibid.*, p.13. It should be noted that in this 1949 edition, the Digests are presented at the beginning of the narrative. Subsequent editions place these Digests at the beginning of the chapter they refer to.

[40] *Ibid.*, p. 217.

Clearly then, for Hatterr, man's position in society is a constant cause for concern at both a personal and a universal level. This speculation is followed by a discussion on the 'evils' of alcohol and Banerrji's insistence that Hatterr spend a few days in the country to save his wages and to reflect on life without the aid of alcohol. He suggests that Hatterr attend a *satsang* (a gathering of Seekers of Truth) which he duly complies with. At the first *satsang* he encounters Punchum and witnesses a violent exchange of words between this man and an unfortunate young man. After an entertaining debate on love and loss Hatterr is forced to part with his month's wages as a 'donation' to the good works being done by Punchum. A short while later Hatterr realises that the scene was engineered by the two men who make all their money from the gullibility of the public. At this point, when he realises that he has been duped for the final time, he begins to acknowledge and appreciate the comedy which is so deeply entrenched in his situation. With this realisation comes the awareness of the fragility of man's belief in truth and honesty:

> A *Truth*-thing, or a *Truth*-idea, might be an *a*. By the time a feller has the notion of this *a*, a sensation of it, its nature changes. What a feller has is not an *a* at all, but an awareness of an *a*. [...] He hasn't the true *a*, but a translation![41]

What Hatterr has finally acknowledged is that truth, as such, is fleeting and flexible, with the potential for perpetual evolution. For this hero, truth has become a type of Chinese whispers that will never be stable and will, eventually, over time and over distance become a very different truth to the original version.

At this point any order that has been imposed upon the text and the narrator becomes unstable and unreliable in the hands of H. Hatterr who seeks to deconstruct meaning and thereby reinforce his insistence on individuality of presentation, representation and thought. The complications within Hatterr's life cannot be regimented and the gaps in the logical arguments that govern existence are exposed by Hatterr as problematic yet intrinsic to life. Whilst, as has been discussed previously, Hatterr does not address directly the advent of colonialism, he is acutely aware of the dependence on binaries which makes such projects possible and which still, to a certain extent, govern his existence. The implications of this impulse for deconstruction, which appears to stand outside the values and beliefs of society, is that narratives such as Desani's are all-questioning and promote an awareness of the impossibility of finally understanding the text, the character or the narrative technique. Essentially this deconstructive argument contends that nothing is absolute, that truth is flexible, adaptable and unique to the individual understanding. For Hatterr this is a profoundly empowering realisation, confirming not only the intrinsic value of independent thought and interpretation, but, more importantly for him, his renewed belief in the ultimate humanity of mankind as always open to re-creation and reinterpretation:

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[41] *Ibid.*, p. 236.

> Now, *Life* distinguishes a feller from a stone. *Life* is feelings. [...] I know the feelings of funk and fright, of rage-anger, loathing, nausea, and tenderness: and distress, submission to the authority of man and God, the feelings of pride, elevation of the spirit, of hope, of self-destruction, loneliness: appetites, gusto: of the possessive, reproductive and protective notions of the inner man: I've been jolly, been relaxed, indulged in a hell of an ego, in logic, analysis, romance; probed into the Unknown, the mysterious, the curious: had health, hope, disease, hell: the ad infinitum variation of the feelings of man. *Proof*: See my autobiographicals. I have dealt in 'em all. That's *Life*. *Life* is no one way pattern. It's *contrasts* all the way. And *contrasts* by Law! [42]

Conclusion

For Hatterr, the final realisation is that life is multi-faceted and that each aspect has an equal claim and influence on his life. He has debated the order that underpins the apparent chaos within his life, claiming that the seemingly random, inexplicable nature of experience is governed by laws, and the most powerful motivations driving man are contrast and compulsion and the need to eternally test the laws themselves. He claims that there is:

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[42] *Ibid.*, p. 236.

> [A] hell of an itch in man to be, to function, and it's Compulsion! [...]Things *are*. They are there. Good and bad. To hell with judging, it's Take it don't leave it, and every man for himself![43]

For Hatterr, the good and the bad are consolidated into *Life* and this allows him to view both the tragedy and the comedy of his existence which appears to be governed by a chaotic system, blurring the boundaries between good, bad, positive and negative experiences. Desani's protagonist has sought out and refashioned both the tragedy and the comedy of his life, insisting that comedy, laughter and the ability to undermine potential threat using humour are powerful subversive weapons that are able to challenge inscription and prescription. As such, comedy reveals that nothing is as it first appears. He has challenged both the power of tragedy and of comedy and has discovered that although the comedy of his situation and his experience has often been bitter and ironic, it has nonetheless, caused him to smile.

Laughter and the ability to laugh at oneself as well as at and with others have empowered him to challenge, if not completely negate, the force of tragedy to decide destiny and experience. Hatterr has been able to utilise comedy as an enabling tool to order his life and to consolidate a sense of meaning between the abstract forces in his life. He has created a world that utilises the contrasts between a world as it is and the world as it ought to be and has created a harmonious, albeit still slightly chaotic, world where all is not right yet it is *Life,* where 'Carry on, boys, and continue like hell!' is an imperative and not an option.[44]

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[43] *Ibid.,* p. 238.

[44] *Ibid.,* p. 239.

Chapter Two

Pukka Muggers and Readers With Soul: The Case for Revising the Text

> This book [*Hali*] has been many years in the making – the experience and the shaping of it. Its publication may be justified as so many faces or facets of a contemporary person. Besides, if the makers of images and icons matter at all, as do the images and icons themselves, then the faces and the facets of the makers might be indulged with a measure of sympathy?[1]

> October 1950, and I see the memorable events of my recent past are again III. *I.* The publication of *H. Hatterr*. Through H. Hatterr I offered a portrait of Man. I found him entertaining. *II.* The publication of *Hali*. Through Hali I offered my ideal of Man. He made me unhappy. *III.* And now I have fallen a prey to a mortal consuming anger for the offence caused me by Man. I am provoked by the past and I am oppressed by the present. I think I must learn to pray if I am to be relieved of this grievous passion that I feel.[2]

> The makers of literatures, recording the legacies of ideas, consciously or unconsciously, are craftsmen too. [...] One can teach others the meaning of words. *Selecting* them and *combining* them, so as to bid power, is not easy.[3]

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[1] G. V. Desani, Preface to *Hali and Collected Stories,* (N.Y: MacPherson, 1991) p. viii.

[2] G. V. Desani, *All About H. Hatterr,* (N.Y: Farrar, Straus and Young, Inc., 1951) p. 11. It is interesting to note that this quote only appears in this edition, suggesting that some contemporary events had begun to overwhelm Desani.

[3] G. V. Desani, 'A Marginal Comment on the Problem of Medium in Bicultures', Daniel Massa, *Individual and Community in Commonwealth Literature,* (Malta: The University Press, 1979), p. 202. Author's italics.

> To preserve the *essentiality* of the original, it might be necessary to recreate.[4]

This chapter serves as an introduction to the following two chapters that consider the subject of revision with particular reference to G. V. Desani's *All About H. Hatterr.* As such, this chapter sets out to clarify some of the issues pertaining to revision and to consider the impulses driving an author to revise time and again.

G.V. Desani is famous, perhaps in almost equal measure, as both writer and revisionist. The changes he made to *All About H. Hatterr, Hali* and his poems are manifold and often seemingly inexplicable. Changes range from simple corrections of typographical errors, to whole paragraphs which appear in some editions, disappear in others, only to re-emerge in a different form later. However, some of the largest and most obvious revisions occur in the final section, added as early as 1951, only three years after its initial publication. This final section is entitled 'Appreciation: A Critique By Nath C. Banerrji (in humble collaboration) Work: H. Hatterr fecit Mr. H. Hatterr' in 1951 and, over 60 points and 16 pages, 'explains' and 'defends' H. Hatterr's book. By the next revision in 1970 this additional chapter had been omitted but was re-introduced in the 1972 Penguin edition in a much enlarged form, now covering 80 points and 35 pages. In the final revised edition published in 1985 (the first Indian edition) it appears much the same but is accompanied by 2 further pages of 'Footnotes'.[5] It is an almost impossible task to ascertain the motivation and intention for each change to the text. However, this chapter seeks to begin the process of understanding how the changes in Desani's attitude to his readers and critics changed over the years and created a dialogue with the reading public which becomes a unique record of the development of both his writing and the intricate dynamics of the relationship between reader, writer and text.

Desani wrote at least four versions of *All About H. Hatterr* before he was satisfied with the text. As early as 1944 he sent a version of *Hatterr* to George Orwell, with whom he was working at the BBC, and by 1946 he was offering his manuscript to publishers.

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[4] *Ibid.,* p. 204.

[5] It should be noted that although there is a further edition of *Hatterr* (N.Y: McPherson 1986) claiming to be the definitive edition, there are very few revisions as it uses the Penguin 1972 plates.

Orwell returned the manuscript in October 1944, with a letter outlining his objections to Desani's style and material. Among his comments was a suggestion that it was 'a considerable talent running to waste, [...] this is not the time for literary high jinks of the type of Finnegan's Wake [...]'.[6] The majority of Orwell's criticism is levied at the novelty of the text and its potential to confound the British literary public. It is interesting to note that for several years - between 1944 and 1947/8 Desani was intent on using Orwell's reply as an endorsement for his book. However, eventually the negative comments which, apart from those stated above, included such phrases as 'doesn't seem to me to come off', a 'most unusual book', and perhaps the most damning criticism of all, 'I think the number of people [...] able to read [it] to the end without getting in a fever of irritation would be very few indeed', persuaded Desani to rethink.[7]

However, he was not to be defeated and he submitted his finished manuscript to Routledge, Collins, and Hutchinson and Co. between January and July of 1946. All his manuscripts were returned with polite notes claiming that they were 'too experimental' and would not appeal to a 'quaint British audience' at that particular time.[8] Thus it would appear that from the outset, *Hatterr* was destined to cause some problems.

This chapter is divided into three sections which will explore both the theoretical and the practical implications of revising the text. The first section considers why Desani may have felt the need to revise his texts. The second section considers Edward Said's theory pertaining to filiation and affiliation and outlines its relevance to the work of G. V. Desani. The final section debates the potential for revision to create an organic and dynamic text, able to challenge traditional modes of interpretative inquiry.

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[6] Private papers, Austin, Texas. (Please see Appendix 1). Orwell's point concerning what he considers to be Desani's bad choice of timing for his book, may be a reflection of Orwell's own inability to write fiction during the war years. In a letter to Dorothy Plowman, dated June 20th 1941, he says, 'It is hard to make much more than a living these days. One can't write books with this nightmare going on, and though I get plenty of journalistic and broadcasting work, it is rather a hand-to-mouth existence'. W. J. West, (ed.), *Orwell: The War Broadcasts,* (London: Duckworth, BBC,1985), p. 19.

[7] All information from private letters, Austin, Texas.

[8] *Ibid.*

Section 1

The pre-publication history of *Hatterr* may hold some clues with regard to Desani's zeal for revision. When *All About Mr. Hatterr* was completed and ready for publication, Desani took it along to Francis Aldor, a Pole who was one of the few publishers left in London with any paper as a result of the war.[9] Desani wanted to be able to view the first printing of his novel and correct it where necessary. Aldor was against this - due to the precious nature of paper at the time, and said that revisions/corrections could only be made if Desani was willing to pay a ludicrous amount for each correction - a figure of several pounds per correction. Desani grudgingly prepared himself for a less than perfect copy of his novel. When it was published it was given to Desani to look over. Amongst the many 'mistakes' in the book was one that so incensed Desani that he returned it to the printer. Desani challenged him with the question, 'How many swans do you know with underwear?' The confusion of the printer was profound. Desani patiently yet insistently explained that the printer had inserted an apostrophe where none existed changing 'underwear as white as swans' to 'underwear as white as swan's'. The printer was so upset at this embarrassing oversight that he let Desani have somewhere in the region of 1000 corrections free of charge. This relatively free rein regarding revision, when combined with Desani's continuous re-workings within his manuscripts, paved the way for what was to become a life-long quest for the 'perfectly' worked novel.

There are a few other indicators of how Desani wanted his text read. In Desani's manuscripts - held in Austin - there are numerous multiply-edited entries that shed some light on Hatterr's developing awareness of both his own creative process as Hatterr grew in character, as well as the realisation that his text would have to be accessible to an audience, unfamiliar with his style and subject matter.[10] For example, as Desani tries to capture Hatterr's Indian environs he makes a series of changes. The earliest manuscript describes the scene thus:

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[9] Aldor was a relatively well-known publisher at the time, publishing a wide range of material from pulp fiction to crime, biographies and self-help books.

[10] The importance of the revisions within the unpublished manuscripts is of relevance within this thesis as it begins the process of illustrating Desani's creative process. However, these manuscripts were very much a work in progress and as such lend only suggestions with regard to individual changes.

> Indian kiddies, Hindu tots were riding on round-abouts and paper mache horses, laughing and shouting and a man was selling 'em Cantonese catherine-wheels, bawling his wares in a nasal sotto voce.[11]

Later manuscripts reveal these changes:

> Indian kiddies in general, were riding on round-abouts, some mouted (sic) on paper mache horses, laughing and shouting, others on a Centrifugal Chair-plane, swinging around and round, till the kids were almost horizontal instead of vertical when at rest. There were bright capped youths too, enjoying themselves [...] and a man bawling his wares in a laryngitis sotto voce.[12]

The final published version of this episode reads thus:

> Indian kiddies, *Hindu tots, Moslim cubs,* were riding on round-abouts, some mounted on papier maché horses, laughing and shouting; others, on a Centrifugal Chairoplane, swinging round and round, *dingle-dangle,* till the *urchins* were *a'most, a'most* horizontal, instead of vertical! There were bright-capped youths too; enjoying themselves [...] and a man [...] bawling his wares in a chronic-laryngitis sotto voce.[13]

Each new version becomes an attempt at finding exactly the right words, capable of conveying the exact meaning Desani is searching for. This particular extract, although heavily revised during the pre-publication process, does not undergo any further revisions once in print.

One of the more noticeable creative wrangles within the manuscripts is Desani's search for the right Digest for each chapter. The first two manuscripts offer this explanation of the role of the Digest for each chapter. They are to act as a 'contents-tabloid' for the 'convenience of the time-thrifty reader' and claim to show the gist of each chapter.[14] The original Digests were lengthy containing several biblical references and were designed to tell more of what was to follow than those eventually published. Each original Digest also contains a 'pin-point' question which forms the basis of the published questions.[15] Clearly then, Desani took many years and many revisions to get his text to what he considered to be a publishable state. What then compelled him to revise off and on for the next fifty years?

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[11] Information from Private papers, Austin, Texas.

[12] *Ibid.*

[13] *Hatterr*, (1949), p. 19, my italics.

[14] Information from private papers, Austin, Texas.

Desani's relationship with his readers and contemporaries may provide some vital clues with regard to the impulses he followed to amend his text. When *All About Mr. Hatterr* was first published in 1948 by Aldor in London, it was greeted with great critical acclaim. Edmund Blunden describes the novel in these terms:

> ... something remarkable here by this most curious and resourceful among writers. [...] I do not know how briefly to describe his Hatterr. A fantasy on Civilization[16]

T.S. Eliot referred to it as a:

> [R]emarkable book [...] It is amazing that anyone should be able to sustain a piece of work in this style and tempo at such length.[17]

Regional newspapers throughout Great Britain were equally quick to praise the novel. Harold Brighouse writing in the *Manchester Guardian* claims that *Hatterr* is:

> [A] jester's tale of India, always gay; sometimes [...] riotously funny. Mr. Desani is a playboy of the English language, a juggler with words, mischievous with Biblical and Shakespearean quotation, mocking with genial irreverence the shibboleths of East and West, and his Hatterr, being a half-breed born in Penang, is in India an innocent abroad looking among ludicrous adventures for a workable philosophy. The style? Those who have mastered Runyon have here another world to conquer.[18]

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[15] Interestingly, the biblical references do appear in the additional chapter of the 1951 (and all subsequent editions carrying the extra chapter, 'Appreciation' or in later editions, 'With Iron Hand I defend Thee'). In the 1951 edition Banerrji outlines his understanding of Hatterr's seven chapters. '(1), I beheld treacherous dealers and was grieved. (2) Comfort me with apples: I am sick of love. (3) Arise, O Lord: Let not man prevail. (4) From henceforth, thou shalt have wars. (5) Many are they that rise against me. (6)David comforted Bath-Sheba his wife. (7) Lord, how are mine adversaries increased! *Hatterr,* (1951), p. 296.

[16] Quoted from the dust jacket of *All About Mr. Hatterr,* Francis Aldor, London, 1948.

[17] *Ibid.*

[18] Harold Brighouse, *Manchester Guardian,* April 30th, 1948.

Brighouse's interest in Desani's 'mischievous' use of quotations was however, not universally shared. Edmund Blunden who clearly appreciates Desani's talent, is nonetheless, in an account by Desani, extremely dubious of the merits of additions to the text:

> He's [Blunden] a poet himself and his book, *Undertones of War*, was the most discussed book of World War One. I told him, 'I will add to it'. Now, he didn't think that this remark was strictly appropriate. [...] After I showed him some Shakespearean quotations, he told me he couldn't find them in a concordance anywhere. 'Where are they?' I told him, 'I wrote them'.[19]

Clearly, Desani appears to have few reservations with regard to amending either his own or other people's texts but it is also clear that when it comes to his own texts, one of the problems he experiences is a sense of vulnerability, engendered by a tendency to misinterpretation.

Perhaps the largest clues to Desani's zeal for revision lie in this additional chapter of *All About H. Hatterr* entitled 'Appreciation: A Critique By: Nath C. Banerrji (in humble collaboration) Work: H. Hatterr *fecit* Mr. H. Hatterr' in the 1951 edition which is footnoted with an 'explanation':

> As to this so-called *Appreciation*, from my pal, I have asked the publisher company to shove it in, in toto, because he wishes it, and because I am obliged to the feller, and would like to do him a good turn. Danke shön! H.H.[20]

This 'Appreciation' claims to be written in this edition by Hatterr's good friend Banerrji, but by the 1972 edition, is written by Yati Rambeli claiming to be Hatterr's Counsel.[21] Either way, this final chapter is an attempt to 'explain' both Hatterr and the text.

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[19] Ferdinand Dennis, Naseem Khan, *Voices of the Crossing,* (London: Serpent's Tail, 2000), pp. 117-132 (p.127). It is interesting to note that Desani refers to his adaptations of Shakespeare as 'my blended Shakespeare - not mock Shakespeare, but Shakespeare added to Shakespeare [...]'. 'Communicating an Oriental to a Western Audience' in *Awakened Conscience*, Ed. C.D. Narasimhaiah, (New Delhi: Sterling Publishers PVT LTD, 1978), p. 403.

[20] G.V. Desani, *All About H. Hatterr,* (N.Y: Farrar, Straus and Young, Inc., 1951), p. 284.

[21] Yati Rambeli is almost an anagram of Y. Beliram, Banerrji's distinguished friend and legal advisor.('Formerly widely known as Sri Y. Beliram, B.Com., Advocate, Original & Appellate, Civil & Criminal').

However, like the text itself, the style is chaotic, rambling and frequently opaque, often denying the reader the possibility of using this additional chapter as a tool for enlightenment. This is not to say that it does not shed some light. In particular, one descriptive phrase leaps from the page:

> Mr. H. Hatterr has faced all misfortune from these pukka *muggers*. [...] He stood firm. He faced those pukka *muggers*.[22]

The author of the 'Appreciation' describes these 'pukka muggers' in somewhat vague terms, as the writer's enemies who have made his life difficult by refusing to accept that he was perhaps not seeking inclusion within the English literary scene, preferring to distance himself:

> He [Hatterr] stood alone. He rejected the cosy Sir Alma-Tadema[23] interiors of the Western world.[24] He preferred the dust and the *fellahins* of the Orient. Other men would not do this. Other men have a fig ready for everybody. They think the best place to have an itch is on another man's skin [...] .They play safe. There are no lions in the path of such pukka *muggers*. They patronize only the pigs of their own sows.[25]

Later on, the Pukka Muggers are referred to in terms placing them as diametrically opposed to all that Desani believes in and who are 'bold' as 'they pretended to be gentlemen', 'toughs' and 'cads'. It is clear that the final, added chapter, is an attempt not at excusing Hatterr's story, but rather, at defending it and asserting the right of the author (Hatterr or Desani) to narrate experience in whatever terms are available, whether or not this is 'acceptable'. Such sentiments can be directly linked to the text itself in Hatterr's dialogue with Betty Bloomsbohemia as it contests the right of the author to create a text that is difficult to classify. Betty Bloomsbohemia's inability to understand the 'ABC of the book' is dismissed by Hatterr who asks, ' whoever asked a cultivated mind such as yours to submit your intellectual acumen or emotions to this H. Hatterr mind?'[26]

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[22] *Hatterr,* (1951), p. 285. Author's italics.

[23] Lawrence Alma Tadema (born Laurens Tadema) was Dutch, and only came to England when in his mid-30s, in 1869. He was a great Anglophile, and became very much part of the English establishment, becoming ARA in 1876, RA in 1879 and gaining a knighthood in 1899. Early influences on his art included George Ebers, a famous Egyptologist, and he painted some ancient Egyptian scenes, most notably *Pastimes in Ancient Egypt* in 1864. However, after a visit to Pompeii, he painted above all the life of ancient Greece and Rome, concentrating on the domestic and the homely rather than the dramatic. His paintings were commissioned en masse by the art dealer Ernest Gambart, who encouraged him to concentrate on the highly saleable classical paintings.(www.speel.demon.co.uk/artists/tadema.htm).

[24] Later editions change the 'interiors of the Western world', to 'interiors of his sahib club friends'.

[25] *Hatterr,* (1951), p. 285.

This section sets out to debate the possibility that for Desani the process of revision becomes a project that seeks placation whilst simultaneously offering few placatory gestures. The dialogue he creates through his multiple revisions becomes the story of the writer's (Hatterr or Desani again) relationship with his audience as well as with the material itself. Ultimately, Desani seeks to create a dialogue representative of a particular type of authenticity, one that will transcend time and tradition.

At the heart of Desani's drive to revise lies the quest for some form of authenticity; an account of Hatterr's experience that will transcend time and tradition and will emerge as a definitive account of 'Everyman'. However, in order to be able to do this Desani requires a language and a range of experiences that will continue to engage the imagination of the reader. There are difficulties inherent in the creation of such a text, namely the fickle nature of the reading public which may be easily swayed by current political, social and literary opinions. All of which look set to confound Desani as a man who has written a novel in a country far from home employing a style that is neither completely familiar to an English nor an Indian audience, and using idioms and images that reveal themselves in a language unique to Hatterr. He describes this language to the reader in 'Mutual Introduction' as 'rigmarole English'[27], and his insistence on both the usage and the promotion of such rigmarole English does suggest that a text incorporating such a language may be difficult to categorise within the field of fiction. However, Desani has realised that the power to create an enduring text may lie in the ability of its creator to re-create, revise and renew the text at frequent intervals.

In a paper given at a conference in Malta in 1978, Desani acknowledges the tenuous nature of the relationship between writer, text and reader. He claims that:

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[26] *Hatterr,* (1949), p.6.

[27] In C.D. Narasimhaiah, (1978), 'Communicating an Oriental to a Western Audience', G.V. Desani speaks about his choice of style in the novel claiming,

> He [Hatterr] is to me a comic character, and my treatment of him is bound to be satirical. I have tried, [...] *per pro* H. Hatterr, to minimise man somewhat. And the very personal language he uses, [...] has nothing to do with the species of English called *babu*. Actually *babu* is spoken by incompetent people and [...] it has little virtue as a means of expression.(p. 404).

> Personal uniqueness in art is an effect, a manifestation, of the kind of person one is [...]. Literature is life-histories, a response by individuals to life, to love and hate, and both the makers and the readers need to have, from individual experience and formed habits (cultural movement), the capacity to move and be moved.[28]

It would appear from this comment, written nearly thirty years after his first revision, that Desani, viewing literature as 'life-histories', considers that the histories need to be, in some way, eternally relevant to human experience. The capacity to move and be moved with its natural intimations of a dynamic yet abstract force, constantly shifting its focus, boundaries and form, becomes for Desani, a threat to the authenticity of the text. If he has written a moving account of the experiences of Hatterr then the account needs to maintain its freshness if Hatterr is to *be* and to *remain* 'Everyman'. The dynamics of the relationship between life histories and the language used to narrate experience may, in order to maintain relevance and freshness, require revision. Despite the realisation of the potential for re-creation here, Desani, for one reason or another, does not re-write the text but chooses to insert indicators, intended to challenge previously accepted interpretations of the text.

However, this motivation for revising is deeply problematic. Firstly, it relies on several factors such as a general understanding of the tastes of the reading public (however fickle they may be) which would seem to be directly opposed to Desani/Hatterr's own insistence upon an 'every man for himself' mentality. Secondly, Desani in his introduction to Hatterr, is adamant that he will not categorise his work in order to pander to the whims of the literary scene, and thirdly, it is abundantly clear that Desani is attempting to tread the finest of lines between clarity and obscurity, finding the space in between to be perhaps, the most creative, and dynamic space of all; a space that hints at the boundaries, the things which bind Hatterr, but celebrates the bizarre and the extraordinary in life. This space is bordered by the binaries that are attempting to confound Desani, literary opinion and artistic integrity, here and there, then and now and perhaps most importantly, inclusion and exclusion.[29] The space that Desani creates may allow him to explore the dynamics of these binaries, and in turn, may suggest that the process of the revision, for this writer, can become an empowering tool for utilising the gaps and for creating a text which both Hatterr and Desani can embrace as a 'truthful'[30] account of Hatterr's experience, not just in the final revised edition, but with every revision and every edition. Thus Desani, proposes revision as a way of negotiating the binaries threatening to overwhelm him[31] as well as creating a dynamic text that is ever changing, attempting to maintain its authenticity in a way very few other writers choose to apply.

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[28] G.V. Desani, 'A Marginal Comment on the Problem of Medium in Bicultures', in Daniel Massa, *Individual and Community in Commonwealth Literature,* (Malta: University Press,1979), p. 203.

In order to be able to understand and negotiate the ways in which Desani is exploring his personal interpretation of authenticity it may be useful to consider more traditional views on the subject. Traditionally, authenticity has been debated in terms of the 'condition of significant emotional appropriate living'[32] and is contrasted with inauthenticity, the state of living a life, stripped of purpose and responsibility and which is largely depersonalised and dehumanised. Clearly, this particular understanding of the state of authenticity is more rigid than the type being debated in this chapter. In this discussion authenticity is being debated in terms of truth and commensurability between language and experience in Hatterr's account. When both interpretations of authenticity are laid alongside a novel that undergoes revision, frequently seeking to re- personalise and re-humanise the subject through a narrative of re-discovery or re-creation, the dynamics of the relationship between the two notions of authenticity must surely be of some importance.[33]

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[29] For Desani (and his narrator H. Hatterr) literary opinion and his artistic integrity are always seen to be at odds. As Desani submits his manuscript to the Book-keeper, he is met with the response, 'Never read slang'. It is also considered to be not 'the sort of nonsense young girls in the office ought to see'. Issues of inclusion and exclusion are inspected as Desani continues his quest for publication. Pius Prigg Pilliwinks wants Desani to write something completely different, Betty Bloomsbohemia does not understand it and the Studies Director of the Short Story Writing College claimed that 'the English and the Grammar were in need of a drastic overhaul'. *Hatterr,* (1949) pp. 4-7.

[30] It must be remembered that Hatterr's account, which begins with an Introduction by G.V. Desani, introduces the author as a liar, ' I acquired a major Fault. I became secretive, told lies, at any rate, rarely the whole truth. [...] Invention helps'. *Hatterr,* (1949), p. 3.

[31] Such binaries may include, living in one place, writing about another, seeking inclusion but creating a dialogue which anticipates exclusion.

[32] Simon Blackburn, *The Oxford Dictionary of Philosophy*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press.1994), p. 30.

The tensions within the attempt to create a narrative of authenticity are tangible; past and present, here and there, inside and outside. There remains the possibility that narratives emerging from an exploration of these tensions, fail to create an authentic or optimistic dialogue. If it is difficult to articulate an accurate account of experience because of the weight of the position the writer occupies (in the case of Desani/Hatterr, 'fifty-fifty of the species' living in a land that is hostile) within the larger discursive economy, then in all likelihood, the difficulties of expressing or narrating experience using language and idioms defying conventionality, may be problematic. For G. V. Desani the imperative exists to create a dialogue that attempts to rewrite experience without changing the nature of the experience as it was first encountered.

Ultimately, this may secure a radically different reality; one where the narrative voice is invested with the knowledge of the reasoning of both past and present whilst simultaneously creating a discourse that learns from this reasoning and re-creates identity, authority and above all, authenticity, thus revealing itself in a definitive and final account. The effort to seek out and narrate this authenticity, this definitive account, becomes Desani's task as a writer existing in a time and a place presenting a distinct before and after time and place, who has created an experience or way of life able to draw from both spheres but which is, as revision would suggest, fragile, mobile and suggestive.

To return to the question of authenticity and responsibility then, is an attempt to read Desani as a writer whose burden to tell the truth (albeit *a* truth rather than *the* truth) is overwhelming to the extent of prompting him to revise his works in accordance with changes in beliefs. These changes, in turn, prompt a situation that denies him some level of belief in his creation, thus compelling him, for one reason or another, to revise. These changes are problematic. It is difficult to assess the thinking behind every revision, but there may be some clues in Desani's life. In a number of articles published in both India and England in or around the early 1950s, as well as in the quotation on the opening page

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[33] Perhaps one of the most interesting texts which debates such issues is *Wide Sargasso Sea,* by Jean Rhys which tells the story of Bertha Mason, Rochester's mad wife in *Jane Eyre.* Rhys' account gives Bertha a voice to narrate her experience, a tool denied her in Charlotte Brontë's account. Rhys' account is also interesting in as much as it narrates an experience which simultaneously humanises and dehumanises Bertha but none the less provides an account which is 'emotionally appropriate' and through which Bertha achieves credulity and sympathy leaving the reader feeling that Rhys' account is the 'truth' of Bertha Mason which Charlotte Bronte, for one reason or another, was unable or unwilling to tell.

of this chapter, Desani made it clear that he felt let down by London. Whilst his work received great critical attention and encouraging reviews, his acceptance within the literary scene at the end of the 1940s and early in the 1950s, appeared to him to be somewhat limited. Such was Desani's dissatisfaction with England and its literary world that he felt his novel did not receive the readership it deserved. He was seeking readers with soul, but was nonetheless aware that such readers can only exist if the material they are subjected to is of a type that reaches out to them. He claims:

> Such experiences, when fabricated in words, from a compulsion, if you like, are not the same. These statements, I realize, would be meaningless to all those who do not function as I do and are not constituted as I am. [...]. The criterion of success of an experiment is an approving response from a *discerning* audience.[34]

Here, it is clear that Desani's audience is of paramount importance yet he is somewhat vague as to exactly what constitutes such an audience. In the additional chapter of *Hatterr* he refers to his readers as 'those pukka muggers, who cheated, robbed, and have not loved the author H. Hatterr'.[35] Desani does not refer directly to himself as the author in question but shifts the emphasis onto H. Hatterr who is indeed cheated and robbed by a less than discerning audience. It is also arguable that the above quote from Desani is a subtle but effective distancing of himself from his avatar, H. Hatterr who he considers to be absolutely separate from himself, being constituted and functioning in radically different ways but none the less, the creator of the dialogue within *All About H. Hatterr.*

For Desani, authenticity, responsibility and authority are shared between reader and writer. If this is the case, and it appears clear that Desani feels that it is, then the project of revision becomes a two way process repeatedly challenging both reader and writer to reconsider the material laid before them.

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[34] G.V. Desani, 'A Marginal Comment on the Problem of Medium in Bicultures', in Daniel Massa, *Individual and Community in Commonwealth Literature,* (Malta: University Press, 1979), p.207 (my italics).

[35] *Hatterr,* (1951), p. 291.

Section 2

Any discussion on responsibility and authenticity would be incomplete without considering the work of Edward Said whose theory of filiation and affiliation is particularly relevant to the work of Desani. In *The World, The Text and The Critic*[36] Said discusses and assesses the role of the modern critical consciousness, of oppositional criticism and the value of ambivalence to negotiate the complexities of the relationship between author and text. He outlines the differences between filiation and affiliation, which also has cultural implications, where filiation is the ineluctable, biological kind of inheritance, one's ethnic heritage, and affiliation is a particular and wilful association with a preferred cultural group or a specific identification with a culture. Said suggests that movement from one to the other is required if one is to be able to interpret a text that stands outside or apart from one's own culture. What Said is suggesting is that a level of empathy is required to read a text that, to all intents and purposes, lies outside that which is recognisable. He suggests that some borrowing from other cultures is necessary and that a level of identification with alternative cultural signs and images will create a space from which constructive interpretation may be possible.

The importance of the relationship between affiliative theory and Desani's text or Hatterr's narrative, is two-fold. Firstly it is useful for examining the process of scrutinising a text that has been revised over a period of time, and secondly for its analysis of the management of power and authority within the text. It seeks to address and to unpack the culture it claims to narrate and most importantly, for Desani, it seeks to narrate the relationship between author, text and reader that is fraught with potential for misunderstanding and misinterpretation. This relationship may or may not be refined by revision.

With regard to texts that do stand apart from what is known, Said debates issues surrounding the worldliness of a text and its ability (or perhaps inability) to render different critical interpretations. He suggests that if worldliness in a text can be achieved, then there is always the possibility of continuous re-readings of the text, by the same reader(s) at different times. Said's arguments are equally applicable to the process of revision, relying as revision does on suggestions of what was and what is now, as it negotiates the ambivalence of the space created between the two. This relationship between oppositional criticism and ambivalence is what Robert Young refers to as the 'inside/outside opposition [which] is best disrupted by a certain textual ambivalence'.[37] Clearly, Young is interested in the tools used by writers to create a dialogue drawing on opposition and binaries in order to portray experience as it is. This may be different from experience as it has been told historically. The key to this is ambivalence. Young's view is interesting in the light of the practice of revision undertaken to rectify or clarify an historical account. If what Young claims is true then it becomes a possibility that what Desani is also attempting as he revises, is to create a way of writing or re-writing that draws on these oppositions and binaries and ultimately re-inscribes the 'original' account with new meaning thereby challenging not only the protagonist's initial account, but also subtly challenging the fixedness of an historical account that traditionally draws its power from a type of certainty that Desani is clearly not anxious to embrace. This sentiment has already been observed in the exchange with Blunden in which Desani lays bare the fragility of the written word as he challenges Blunden's own writing, revealing the potential for change.

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[36] Edward Said, *The World, The Text and The Critic*, (London: Faber and Faber, 1984).

What Said debates in his thesis is the relationship between this ambiguity, filiation and affiliation as the responsibility of the author, and the influences which shape, define and articulate either a narrative of belonging or of alienation, as it emerges in a text. Perhaps, in the work of Desani, Said's theory may be useful in working out what the writer is saying and not saying, what he is revising and what he chooses not to revise especially if the dual questions of history and cultural association are implicated within the text, its interpretative community and its revisions.

In order to begin to understand the relevance of Said's thesis to Desani's work it is necessary to consider the stance Said is taking. He begins the debate with a discussion of culture in the nineteenth century, claiming that it 'acquired an affirmatively nationalistic cast, which drew natural links between culture and state'.[38] He goes on to discuss the possibility that the circumstances or experiences determining the production of such a link, belong to affiliation:

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[37] Robert Young, *White Mythologies, Writing, History and the West,* (London: Routledge, 1990), p. 137.
[38] Said, (1984), p. 174.

> [T]hat implicit network of peculiarly cultural associations between forms, statements and other aesthetic elaborations on the one hand, and, on the other, institutions, agencies, classes and amorphous social forces.[39]

For Desani it is the clash between different forms (India and England, Pukka Muggers and Readers with soul) that provides, in the first instance, his material and ultimately, his impetus for revision. Said also considers that affiliation may debate the need to align these multiple and complex systems as well as currents of philosophic thought and a desire to scrutinise the process of diffusion. He takes this proposal from Gramsci's work in *The Prison Notebooks*, which posits the idea that all culture and art is part of the larger intellectual programme and all parts and processes co-exist.[40] Gramsci insists on the need to order this confusing system and, in the process, scrutinise the lines of fracture occurring as a part of the project of diffusion. He also insists on the intrinsic worth of reinvestigation, and a unique solution; a way of looking at a text that suggests a definitive account, even if no such account exists. This is particularly interesting in the light of the text presenting itself for revision. If Gramsci is correct, then the dynamics of this reinvestigation are of utmost importance. However, if revision is seeking Gramsci's 'unique solution' then in Desani's work it would appear to fail, or at the very least, falter in its intentions. Constant revision would suggest that solution or resolution is, at the time of writing, unattainable.

Ultimately, what Said considers is a reworking of Gramsci's thesis, expounding the value of personal definition and an intrinsic understanding of self and society. However, as Gramsci points out, this can only be done by examining history and philosophy. Such inspection will ultimately reveal the processes and intricacy of historic thought, the ways in which ideologies are formed and the influences that defined and continue to define them. It would seem prudent to suggest that as Desani revises he undertakes a re-examination of a particular and unique personal history and philosophy, in an attempt to reveal not only the processes and intricacy of historic thought, but more importantly, he is intent on re-discovering the creative drives which compelled his previous versions and have compelled him, once again, to invest his text with new and pertinent information. Once this complex procedure is begun, historic thought can become part of the dynamic present. Indeed, if even the mistakes are important (as Gramsci insists) and the follies and recklessness of Hatterr as both protagonist and author, are to become vital shaping tools of the present, then the need to re-examine these follies and mistakes becomes an important element of the processes of self definition and of affiliation which for Desani, can only be undertaken through the process of revision itself. By extension then, it would seem that personal re-examination within the text can be interestingly reworked in the text itself during the process of revision as it looks back to the old text and forward to a new, re-inspected text, investing it with current and pertinent experience, philosophies and additions.

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[39] *Ibid.*

[40] Quintin Hoare, Geoffrey Nowell Smith, (Eds. and Trans), *Selections from the Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci,* (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1971).

In *All About H .Hatterr* Desani shies away from a constant reminder of the eternal ability and propensity of man to err, considering instead that mistakes and faults are the 'wonder-making' elements of life that are relived via his revisions. These changes to the text, look back, re-inspect and renew, making constructive use of what he considers to be the 'faults' of the previous editions of his texts. Clearly then, for Gramsci, Said, and Desani the past reworked, (although in greatly varying manifestations) with all its faults, errors and repetition, is intrinsic to an understanding of the present not only in social terms, but more importantly, in critical and literary thought, as it scrutinises the dynamics of the relationship between reader and writer, and is of immense importance in any consideration of the impulses and processes of revision.

Said's analysis then moves on to a discussion of the importance of filiative theory to the critic, and whilst his focus remains almost entirely on the critic, it is possible, if not essential, to extend the focus to both writer and general reader. As an interpretative principle, affiliation partially dilutes theories of relativity and filiation, suggesting that 'natural belonging' may indeed frequently become a paradoxical term. It is also interesting to note that if Said is correct regarding the properties of affiliation then it may also possess the potential to disrupt continuity and linear progression in a manner that is clearly evident in *All About H. Hatterr.* Said's concern is that texts have traditionally been read and defined in terms of a process of affiliation and are therefore, potentially refused the possibility of clear and concise analysis in terms of individuality. It would seem entirely possible to align Desani's work with this point of view.

As an author who remains perpetually unsettled by interpretations of his texts,[41] clear and concise analysis, as desired by the author, looks to be an imperative. However, revision that seeks to clarify but seldom, if ever does, may fail to secure a definitive interpretation. Clearly there will always be some form of imbalance in a text when it comes to interpretation. In order to redress this historic imbalance in favour of homogeneity Said proposes a theory of affiliation which he claims will 'enable a text to maintain itself as a text'.[42] However, Said fully acknowledges that the independence required by a text to maintain its integrity is, in turn, largely dependent on a series of external influences from the personal (the author himself or herself), to the historical moment, (the here and now of text, author and reader). Although it seems a little confusing to insist on both intrinsic and unique meaning and then to define this uniqueness in terms of dependence and defining influences, Said refuses to see this relationship as stifling or restrictive. He insists instead, that affiliative theory seeks to develop an acute awareness of the impulses and experiences that underpin the text and ultimately place it within a framework. This will, in turn, allow the text to be located temporally and spatially. All of this, Said claims, provides the reader with accurate tools of interpretation and reassessment concerning the possibilities that prompted the text in the first place.

Desani, however, is not content to be complacent at this juncture. For this writer, affiliation may provide the reader with the right tools but they will not necessarily create 'readers with soul' who are attuned to the underlying messages of the text. He is unable or unwilling to assume that his readers have such knowledge, preferring instead, to carefully insert or re-insert phrases which, he hopes, will provide the clues to such an

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[41] Desani's play *Hali* was performed at the Watergate Theatre in London in 1950. It is alleged that he was unhappy with the interpretation and abruptly ended the run of the play. Several other attempts at performing both *Hali* and adaptations of *Hatterr* have all ended with the play being withdrawn either by Desani or by the production's director as a result of some unhappiness with the final result.

[42] Said, (1984), p. 174.

'accurate' reading.[43] Essentially, to quote Said, what affiliative theory produces is a 'place for intentional analysis and for the effort to place a text in homological, dialogical, or antithetical relationships with other texts, classes, and institutions'.[44] This concept is problematic for Desani who has created a text that blatantly defies categorisation, flaunts the 'rules' of English literature, and is a 'gesture' not a novel.[45]

Said is concerned with the nature of the responsibility expected and delivered and the process of fragmentation and refraction that becomes a way of negotiating the fragile line between what can and what can not be comfortably said. He also considers the possibility that understatement and misunderstanding are both necessary and powerful yet, by definition, create an atmosphere of ambiguity.

For Desani, such ambiguity has empowered the 'Pukka Muggers' to misunderstand his text. Indeed, Said goes on to claim that whatever it is that the writer chooses to mask (or in Desani's case, to revise) becomes not only a clear indicator of the ties binding him to the State, but perhaps, more importantly, they become a suggestion of the complexity of the relationship between the writer, what needs to be said and what can actually be said or written. For Desani, what can and can not be said is almost immaterial.[46] However, it is clear that Desani is acutely aware of what needs to be said but over time, begins to feel that the emphases he created within his original text have lost their focus and need either to be said again in a newer, more direct way, or alternatively in a more oblique way.

Whatever it is that Desani has chosen to mask in the first edition of *Hatterr*, required, or so he felt, an inspection of what lay beneath the masks. The process of re-inspecting the text, due to the nature of the fluidity inherent in such a project, falls short of describing in detail the image that lies beneath the mask, simply suggesting what *may* lie beneath. As such, this subtle but insistent need to begin the process of clarification may flounder. It is as if Desani is acutely aware of the ambiguity and the possibilities of misinterpretation or bad interpretation but is unable or unwilling to erase ambiguity to the point where the text speaks for itself, requiring no special interpretative strategies. However, even this possibility is problematic. If such a text exists, and it is doubtful if it can, then it would seem possible to suggest that the relationship between reader, writer and text is over. The work is no longer dynamic and creative, denying as it does, the possibility of re-reading or re-interpretation, therefore, by extension, denying both writer and text the power of suggestion. What Desani seeks to create is a text that is as different to this sterile form of literature as is possible, desiring instead to create and then recreate a text that is more or less eternally and universally readable, whose links with culture and history are visible but fluid, allowing for the text constantly to reinvent itself with each successive generation of reader, critic and interpreter. Clearly, Desani feels that the original version of the text, complete as it is in itself, does not, for one reason or another, lend itself to such inspection, so revision becomes a way of creating newness and vitality within the text.

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[43] It is clear that the final additional chapter, seeks to correct previous mis-readings as it defends Hatterr's style and choice of material. However, the multiple revisions of this chapter alone, manage to confuse the reader further - as he or she reads more than one edition, with each edition emphasising different aspects of interpretation which need to be re-addressed by both writer and reader.

[44] Said, (1984), p. 175.

[45] The 1949 and 1951 editions are titled *All About H. Hatterr: a gesture*, the 1970 edition and all subsequent editions are titled *All About H. Hatterr: a novel.*

[46] It should be remembered that the opening section of *Hatterr* outlines Desani's attempts at getting his work published and his unwillingness to change anything in his manuscript despite 'helpful' suggestions from those he seeks guidance from.

Section 3

If creating newness is the objective of revision, then Said's conclusion becomes pertinent. He suggests that both writer and critic bear a heavy responsibility for identifying, specifying and refining the objects, symbols and language they choose to describe experience. This responsibility is perhaps at its heaviest for the writer who chooses to revise. Having originally agonised over the exact and appropriate combination of words, phrases, images and idioms to accurately and adequately describe experience, the author prepares to re-negotiate. During this process it becomes increasingly clear that like Italo Calvino's *If on a winter's night a traveller,*[47] a second story is emerging, one that usurps the original but, at the same time, can not be considered as independent of the first one. With each subsequent revised version of his texts, it becomes clear that there is not one version of *Hatterr,* any more than there is one version of *Hali*. The characters may be the same and the experiences identical but the process of revision has made each version a record of experience of not only the characters but of the writer himself. It is not unreasonable for the reader to begin to consider each text as an autonomous account but is this really what Desani has in mind when he revises? If this was the case then only the removal of all previous editions would ensure a definitive account. Is this perhaps what Desani hoped to achieve by ceasing the production of *Hali* and by litigating against publication of his poetry?[48] Perhaps what Desani ultimately achieves is a text that becomes definitive or indeed is defined in the light of *all* its versions, not just one. Hence, it is possible to suggest that *All About H. Hatterr* is a text/story that has taken more than 40 years to write and is written in at least 5 volumes, each with a similar or identical title but each, very definitely, with its own tale to tell.

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[47] Italo Calvino, *If on a winter's night a traveller,* trans. William Weaver, (London: Picador, 1982).

Salman Rushdie, writing about Calvino pinpoints exactly the underlying motif of story-telling, 'which is after all, also a nursery euphemism for lying'.[49] For both Calvino and Desani/Hatterr (who both admit on more than one occasion to a highly developed ability to lie) the construction of the text becomes, perhaps, one of the key tools for interpretation. If Desani's text is indeed a series of stories containing both striking similarities and clashing aberrations then it becomes a distinct possibility that the revisions, far from being an attempt to erase the differences, become a dialogue with transformation of both the text and the author, requiring the reader not only to read the text(s) but more importantly to read between the lines to discover the ties that firmly bind one account to another. Once this process of affiliation has been established and understood, the critic can identify these ties and use them as enabling tools to read between the lines, deciphering and utilising these 'other' stories.

However, there will always be the dual pressures of knowledge, what is actually known, and interpretation, that troubling area where knowledge is challenged. If a text is to exist as an organic or dynamic work able to fulfil Desani's desire for an enduring tale, then the exact dynamics of the relationship between filiation and affiliation may require closer inspection. The acquisition of new allegiances in the form of affiliation, may not be sufficiently adequate tools for a new exploration of the text and if this is the case then any interpretative strategy will have to rely on a combination of both filiative and affiliative theory. The key to establishing a useful and workable relationship between the two is heavily dependent on an understanding of the dynamics of the relationship between knowledge and refinement. This, for Said, is deeply problematic and he asks of the reader:

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[48] In 1969 Desani wrote two poems 'Dirge' and 'No Reason, No Rhyme' which were published in *Modern Indian Poetry in English,* ed. P. Lal , an anthology of work collected by The Writers Workshop, Calcutta. Once the collection was published, it is alleged that Desani began legal action, denying that he ever gave permission for the publication of his poems and he succeeded in having the book removed from the shelves.

[49] Salman Rushdie, *Imaginary Homelands,* (London: Granta Books, 1991), p. 259.

> [A]s I have been saying over and over, these are matters to do with knowledge, not refinement. I suspect that the most urgent question to be asked now is if we still have the luxury of choice between the two.[50]

Clearly then, writers who choose to revise, have found a useful way of negotiating this problematic bind. Revision becomes a process able to suggest one thing, then suggest another, which is, in turn, only readable in the light of the previous version. Thus, for the writer choosing to revise, knowledge and refinement are not independent of each other but come to represent two halves of the creative self drawing inspiration from both what is known and what is learned. Said himself answers his question early on in *The World, The Text and The Critic* where he claims, that 'for every critical system grinding on there are events, heterogeneous and unorthodox social configurations, human beings and texts disputing the possibility of a sovereign methodology of system'.[51] In Desani's texts his language, revisions and characters become 'the unorthodox social configurations' that make one interpretation or reading impossible, and by their very presence, indicate the erratic and eccentric nature of man, society and most importantly, interpretation. All of this reveals not only the gravity of the responsibility writers feel towards adequate and accurate representation, but also reveals something of the interpretative origins within a particular society and culture which, for Desani, is a society inhabited by a plethora of 'Pukka Muggers' and too few 'readers with soul'.

One of the key reasons for Desani's revisions is the attempt to achieve a text that is acceptable to both types of reader, pukka muggers[52] and readers with soul, as well as to the author himself who is acutely aware that the responsibility and power of the individual consciousness can never be understated. For, as Said claims, the individual mind forms itself both as part of, and dependent on, the collective whole with regard to context and situation. Equally important is the weight of the individual consciousness as it frequently becomes the sole agent in lending vision to the 'facts', becoming an interpreter and exhibitor of *what is*, and *what may be*.

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[50] Said, (1984), p. 177.

[51] Said, (1984), p. 23.

[52] Despite the fact that Desani is clearly frustrated and angered by the pukka muggers it is likely that his revisions seek to create a final, definitive text which will appease both pukka muggers and his readers with soul.

Henry James is perhaps one of the few writers to have discussed the process of revision and its effect on both reader and text.[53] He lays emphasis on the possibility that revisions are not intended to clarify, explain or debate meaning within the text but simply exist as independent additions to the text adding to meaning but not necessarily changing it. Sharon Cameron[54] considers the psychology of this process of revision and posits the idea of the text becoming an 'account of consciousness'.[55] This, for James, emerges as texts that deftly explore consciousness. Cameron claims that James' revisions become a visual and textual dialogue with the developing consciousness. For Desani, both the individual changes and the project of revision itself become a challenge to the finite possibilities of a creative idea which, when transferred to the page, encounters the boundaries of creative interpretation and re-interpretation, and in turn, at the moment of inscription, becomes open to the reader only, as the sole interpreter. For Henry James and for G.V. Desani who have both chosen to revise, the sense of finality engendered by publication, becomes less stable. Revision renews the creative process allowing for changes of perception, experience and consciousness to shape the newer and emerging revised text. Cameron considers James' position with regard to the text as:

> [P]olemical, embattled [...] as embracing its embattlement so as to free itself of the given, effectively to banish it, and to substitute for what is there what is *wanted* to be there.[56]

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[53] This occurs in, Henry James, *The Golden Bowl*, (London: Penguin, 1985).

[54] Sharon Cameron, *Thinking in Henry James,* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989.)

[55] *Ibid.*, p.1.

[56] *Ibid.*, p. 3.

Clearly Desani occupies a similar position, seeking to add to the text in such a way as to maintain the initial integrity of the text whilst creating a dynamic space from where new meaning can emerge.

However, there are problems with creating such amorphous areas where meaning can just as easily be lost as gained. One such problem lies with the inherent instability of the revised text that directs the reader to read the current revised edition of the work as a definitive, completed work, thus denying, or perhaps simply bringing into question, the authenticity of the previous versions. Frequently authors who do revise attempt to underpin this instability by creating a dialogue with the reader in an attempt to explain the dynamic drive behind revision. Interestingly two passages, one from James and one from Desani, outline the authorial intention behind subsequent accounts, although it is clear, at least for Desani, that the device is not initially introduced to explain the motivations and processes of revision. Both authors, however, are eager to consider revision as a process prompted then promoted by fictional characters as much as by the writer himself. From Henry James:

> [...] not [...] my impersonal account of the affair in hand, but as my account of somebody's impression of it - the terms of this person's access to it and estimate of it.[57]

and from Desani:

> There are *two* of us writing this book. A fellow called Mr. H. Hatterr, and I. [...] Though I warrantee and underwrite, the book's *his*. I remain anonymous.[58]

Henry James is encouraging the reader to refocus and take note of the revisions in the light of the character's altered consciousness and not as a reflection of any unease or dissatisfaction with the textual content itself. The same cannot be said of Desani who, whilst seeming to embrace the idea of a text that has developed almost beyond his personal control, asserts his own doubts at the moment he first revises and adds the

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[57] Henry James, (1985), p. 19.
[58] *Hatterr,* (1949), p. 6, Desani's italics.

'Appreciation' in the 1951 edition of *Hatterr.* This additional chapter opens with the lines:

> 1. This is a marvelous scenario!
> 2. Despite that, I deeply regret its publication [...].[59]

In terms of authorial responsibility then, both Desani and James (in very different ways) require a level of abdication of responsibility to justify the process of revising a text that has already been judged favourably on the merits of its original, published form. However, despite a willingness to embrace some from of negation or abdication of total responsibility, it is clear that neither writer is refusing responsibility for their actions. Rather, their intention is to investigate the dynamics of the relationship between creative responsibility and 'responsible' reader interpretation. Henry James considers that for him, revision is simply to re-read the text, either from the perspective of reader or writer. He claims that:

> To revise is to see, or to look over, again - which means in the case of a written thing neither more nor less than to re-read it. [...] the act of revision, the act of seeing it again, caused whatever I looked at on any page to flower before me as into the only terms that honourably expressed it; and the 'revised' element in the present Edition is accordingly these terms, these rigid conditions of re-perusal, registered [...].[60]

For James and for Desani, revision becomes a way of re-investigating the text, but should not be seen as having a detrimental effect on previous editions which both authors are quick to defend as being authentically intended at the time. However, one point worth mentioning is that both writers are acutely aware of the predilection of the reader and critic to identify and exploit any discrepancy, any apparent ambiguity, within the text and to create experience or emotions not originally intended by the author to be a part of the text.[61] James claims that these unintentional gaps promote, in the reader, a sense of 'unacquaintedness', in which 'creeping superstitions' can grow. He suggests that this can perhaps, only be rectified by revision. Revision, for James and almost certainly for Desani, then becomes a:

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[59] *Hatterr,* (1951), p. 284. It should be noted that the mention of the 'marvelous scenario' only appears in this early edition.

[60] Henry James, (1985), p. 29.

> [T]idying up of the uncanny brood [...] removal of accumulated dust, [...] washing of wizened faces, [...] straightening of grizzled locks, [...] twitching of superannuated garments.[62]

What is clear, is that both writers are intensely wary of their readers, Desani has his 'Pukka Muggers' and James, his readers who have a tendency to tap into the 'creeping superstitions'. Both writers have discovered a need to 'do better justice to the patches of crude surface'[63] and have, in different ways, begun the process of re-creating a text in order to address some of the ellipses, ambiguities and 'errors' in the previous texts.

Conclusion.

Ultimately it is clear the G.V. Desani, as his avatar, H. Hatterr claims, has had to fight the 'Pukka Muggers' using whatever tools he has at his disposal. In this case, it is the ability to revise his text in order to answer some of the criticism of the 'muggers'. Yet it is also apparent that as much as Desani revises, he seldom makes what appear to be major changes to the text, preferring instead to insert subtle amendments. These changes are intended to guide the reader towards an understanding and interpretation of the text. Over time and over subsequent revisions this process creates a text that is no longer, as has been argued earlier in this chapter, a single, final text, but is a more impressive work spanning almost forty years of writing and revising. The work now encompasses several volumes that are the same yet different. For Desani, revision is a necessary movement from misunderstanding to understanding and is undertaken using the same movement as

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[61] Indeed, Desani, in his opening 'All About...' declares his mistrust of the process of interpretative analysis as he claims, 'As for the arbitrary choice of words and constructions you mentioned. Not intended by me to invite analysis'. *Hatterr*, (1949), p. 6.

[62] Henry James, (1985), p. 27.

[63] Henry James, (1985), p. 33.

H. Hatterr who writes to ensure drifting 'from isolation to utter eclipse'.[64] This is a movement with only language and the act of writing at its disposal, yet it succeeds in creating a series of texts that become a dialogue with the process of writing, the experience of the writer in the literary and social world, and most importantly of all, a dialogue between the writer, his audience and his text. One final quote from Desani pinpoints the ambiguity and ambivalence of both the text and the process of revision itself:

> Art, for all the explaining, is a mystery: and original imageries, for all the exploring, the greater mystery.[65]

This chapter set out to explore the dynamics of the relationship between author, reader and text and has debated the conditions that may prompt a writer to revise his/her work. In order to begin the process of aligning this largely theoretical consideration, with the work of G.V. Desani, critical analysis of the way in which he revises his texts is required. The following chapters pay close attention to *All About H. Hatterr* and the project of revising the text.

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[64] *Hatterr,* (1949), p. 22.

[65] G.V. Desani, 'A Marginal Comment on the Problem of Medium in Bicultures' in Daniel Massa, *Individual and Community in Commonwealth Literature,* (Malta: University Press, 1979), p. 206.

Chapter Three

'Unquiet meals make ill digestion': Food, Revision and *All About H. Hatterr* [1]

> I have written the work for one good reason: to shield myself from further blows of Fate, and to ensure me against drifting from isolation to utter eclipse, and perhaps, deprivation of grub.[2]

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[1] William Shakespeare, *The Comedy of Errors*, Act 5, Sc. 1, l. 74.

[2] G.V. Desani, *All About H. Hatterr,* (London: The Saturn Press, 1949), p. 22.

When any artist chooses to revise his or her work, the curiosity of the audience is naturally raised and questions regarding the impulses which both impelled and made possible the changes, are brought into any debate surrounding the work of the artist. For G.V. Desani who revised *All About H. Hatterr* at least five times,[3] questions about the motivation for changing his texts are seldom entirely absent from any critical analysis of the text itself. What this chapter sets out to debate is the nature of the changes and the patterns occurring in the revisions which begin the process of understanding revision as an intrinsic part of the creative process.

For most authors revision is a part of the pre-publication process. For authors undertaking such a project after publication, thereby exposing themselves to a critical analysis of the changes, the revisions become an incisive tool with which to begin the process of critically analysing the creative process. Within any revised work the patterns which emerge, the areas which appear to be most frequently re-worked, become the prime focus for analysing the text. Therefore, it is important to establish just what these areas are. As Desani's revisions are legion, ranging from small grammatical changes to entire paragraphs, there is some difficulty inherent in a search for these patterns within the revisions. However, close inspection of the text reveals that there are a few areas that Desani appears to be unable to leave un-revised. One of these is food.

In order to be able to appreciate the way in which Desani selects his material for revision and the importance of food within the larger framework of revision and the text, it is important to understand a little of how cultural and sociological studies begin the process of determining the role of food within society. This chapter aims to establish and explore the links between traditional theories pertaining to food and society and then to align these with a debate on the changes made to the passages containing references to food within *All About H. Hatterr.*

In order to be able to appreciate the complexities of Desani's changes I have used italics to emphasise any changes he made to the original version.

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[3] The first edition appeared in 1948, the second, 1949 and first revised edition in 1951, the next revision occurred in 1970, the next in 1972 and the final, in 1982. There are many editions published between and after these editions but they remain, for the most part, imprints of an earlier edition and carry few or no changes.

In *Food, The Body and Self,* [4] Deborah Lupton introduces her discussion with traditional understandings of food and how society views food. She proposes the theory that food is frequently divided into binaries which are largely fixed and non-negotiable. She divides food into strict categories such as masculine, feminine; powerful, weak; alive, dead; healthy, unhealthy; comfort, punishment; sophisticated, gauche; sin, virtue; raw, cooked; self and other. It is of course likely that there are many more pairings equally applicable to food. The importance and relevance of dividing food, for Lupton and many other writers focussing on food in this way, is to demonstrate the fixedness of the polarities which are frequently described as non-negotiable, whilst simultaneously hinting at the possibilities of the space existing between the poles. This is the prime focus of this discussion which considers the project of revision and is focussed on issues of food and consumption.

Food is a useful tool with which to begin to gather information about a given society. Although traditional understanding of society is largely limited to groups of people or peoples, it would seem perfectly reasonable to consider the text as a society. It does after all provide an arena for discussion, sets of attributes which are familiar to the characters/people within it and ultimately conforms neatly to the dictionary definition of society as 'the sum of human conditions and activity regarded as a whole functioning independently'.[5] For Desani, food is a useful tool which lends itself to a perpetual locus for re-imagining or re-inventing experience and for understanding social and cultural processes as eternally evolving, changing over time and over experience. Just as food naturally changes with exposure to light, dark, heat or cold, cooking or eating, so too do Desani's words, changing as he gains insight and experience, becoming an organic entity. Whilst this analogy may appear to be a little too neat, the intention here is to highlight both the potential for food and all its associations such as cooking and meals, to begin the process of exploring the cultural nuances appearing within the text. If the analysis of food allows us to gain an insight into society then it would seem possible to regard the study of revisions concerning food as a way of gaining a significant knowledge of the writer. In the case of *All About H. Hatterr* this is ultimately Desani but also, H. Hatterr himself who is, after all, the actual narrator of experience and the eyes through which the reader receives knowledge of the food in hand. Just as food takes on a significant cultural identification, by association, the language used to describe food in both the raw and the cooked form and the vital linking process of translating one to the other, cooking possesses the potential to become a significant if not unique way of negotiating culture and writing. If this can be proven to be so, then the act of re-writing or revising the minutiae of food and cooking references, reveals far more about a writer's awareness of the intricacies of both language and symbol than merely informing the reader that over time, the need to revise is compelled by a desire to find a better way of saying something.

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[4] Deborah Lupton, *Food, The Body and Self,* (London: Sage Publications 1996), p.1.

[5] O.E.D.

This chapter is divided into three parts. The first considers the dynamics of the relationship between power and food, drawing on the work of Claude Lévi-Strauss. It also begins the process of negotiating the links between food and cultural location.

The second section continues with the theme of a cultural and personal sense of place, whilst aligning Hatterr's position in relationship to food within Homi Bhabha's concept of liminality and the marginal figure. The final section addresses issues of control and food, relying heavily on the text for its critical analysis. All sections of this chapter align the various theories with the project of revision in an attempt to critically debate one of the areas in which Desani frequently revises.

Section 1

Power relationships within the text are problematic. The men and women who hold the power are frequently revealed to be charlatans and Hatterr's acceptance of them as authority figures highlights many of his own weaknesses, his gullibility, his willingness to please and his endless drive to seek a sense of inclusion. All of this reveals itself in a seeming lack of commitment to the pursuit of power and autonomy which is both quested after and denied him time and time again.

For the writer, the most powerful tool he or she possesses is the ability to inscribe character and experience and this would suggest that the ultimate power must, therefore, be the ability not only to inscribe in the first instance, but to revise and re-inscribe character and experience drawing on an imaginative awareness that has developed since the inscription's primary emergence as the published word.[6] Each new revision bears the marks not only of G. V. Desani's developing interest in his experience as a writer and creator, but also of H. Hatterr's awareness of experiences and characters as symbolic parts of a whole for which he becomes the single describer and inscriber and whose account becomes a paradoxically definitive account with each new edition of *Hatterr*. This paradox lies in the sense that each new edition of the text posits itself as the 'new' definitive account, only to become redundant as the 'newer' definitive account emerges.

For Hatterr food becomes a blatant symbol of power. At the most fundamental level, it defines those who have from those who have not. As such, Desani's revisions become a manifestation of Hatterr's growing awareness of the power food has to inscribe and dictate experience. Issues of consumption are always at the forefront of the arguments concerning equally, food, power and revision and as such within the text, becomes the driving impulse of H. Hatterr, to consume culture, beliefs and experience whilst necessarily becoming consumed by all three. Hatterr is compelled by his personal sense of cultural alienation, (fifty-fifty of the species) to seek some form of cultural belonging. In order to be able to locate Hatterr's particular struggle for this sense of belonging it may be useful to turn to Claude Lévi-Strauss.

In *The Raw and the Cooked* Lévi-Strauss discusses the role of the mythic process as intrinsic to any understanding of culture and society. As such, he claims that any debate on culture must take into account the mythic structures that both underpin and drive interpretations of culture and society. He claims that this process:

> [...] takes us beyond the study of individual myths to the consideration of certain guiding patterns situated along a single axis.[7]

When considered within the context of revision, this statement takes on some significance. Revision relies on a comparison of editions, where one is paradoxically both dependent upon, and independent of, its former self, maintaining an intrinsic identity between editions yet developing a sense of literary autonomy with each new version. The emerging patterns form the basis of this chapter as it debates both the patterns themselves and the vital and dynamic nature of the 'single axis' which, within the context of this chapter, is taken to be the process of revision. In the case of food and the revisions focussing on this subject as a prime target for re-writing, the patterns seldom form obtuse angles to the original axis or the original account, but reveal themselves in acute but substantial deviations, where a simple reference, almost an aside, increases in detail from one edition to the next until it bears only a superficial resemblance to its original and retains only the essence of the original meaning- although even this is often doubtful. For both Hatterr and Desani, building on the original becomes a way of debating power, insisting on both links and boundaries where there seem to be none, and creating a dialogue between culture and power which becomes visible only when comparisons are made between what *was* and what *is* being said. Lévi-Strauss describing the process of drawing links between myths, claims that:

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[6] An awareness which takes into account both experience and the imagination and combines the two into a new, more dynamic account.

[7] Claude Lévi-Strauss, *The Raw and The Cooked: Introduction to a Science of Mythology: 1*, (London: Jonathan Cape, 1970), p. 2.

> Loose threads join up with one another, gaps are closed, connections are established, and something resembling order is to be seen emerging from the chaos. [...]Thus is brought into being a multi-dimensional body, whose central parts disclose a structure, while uncertainty and confusion continue to prevail along its periphery.[8]

This concept of uncertainty and confusion, remaining even when the gaps look to be closed and the threads joined up, perfectly encapsulates the process of revision and deftly outlines the symbiotic relationship between the raw and the cooked and the original and the revised.

It would be erroneous to suggest that Desani was familiar with Lévi-Strauss or that he considered his own revisions to food as fundamentally indicative of ways in which power relationships can be negotiated and debated within the text. However, it is clear that for Desani, every revision is vitally important, both individually and as a whole and that at the most basic level, the power of the author (Desani) to influence the narrator (Hatterr) can be relived and re-worked within the text through the process of revision. As such, food, being fundamental to existence, becomes a forum for debate on issues that are intrinsic to survival, both personal and cultural.

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[8] *Ibid.*, p. 3.

In *The Raw and The Cooked* Lévi-Strauss explores the links between culture and food and as such his research becomes an invaluable tool for investigating the area of food and revision and the levels of power displayed by or through food within the context of the novel. Lévi-Strauss focuses on mythology as a way of exploring culture and although the majority of his work considers myths, there is much of his argument that is useful in debating issues of both revision and of food. He suggests that we need to understand myths less as isolated examples of life but more as an integral and contextual process, only able to begin to assume meaning (either unique, local or global) when placed alongside similar myths. Thus, individual myths become dependent on discovery and elucidation of the shared features of all myths. He insists that the importance of the structure of myth overrides any insistence on the details of individual myths and while this chapter is less concerned with the mythic dimensions of Desani's revisions, it becomes increasingly clear that revision itself is a process, not dissimilar to the creation and perpetuity of a myth.

Essentially, a myth is a story which changes over time and experience until any resemblance to its original is tangible but only just. The idea of a myth as a 'false story', as 'paradigmatic (with no) pure paradigm'[9] finds a profound similarity in the process of revision. With reference to Desani's food revisions the changes become illustrative of both the ultimate significance of the links between food and culture and food and experience and of the potential slippage between symbol and meaning at the moment when experience enters the equation. A fine example of Hatterr's acute awareness of the importance of each moment occurs as he is reaches a state of Nirvana in the lion's den:

> Having contacted the Infinite, I sensed a wonderful perfume in my nostrils: honey and roses, honey and roses, attar of roses, *everywhere*![10]

In later editions this becomes:

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[9] Laurence Coupe, *Myth*, New Critical Idiom, (London: Routledge, 1997), p. 5.

[10] *Hatterr,* (1949), p. 63, (author's italics).

> Having contacted the Infinite, I sensed a wonderful perfume in my nostrils: *coffee* and roses, *coffee* and roses, attar of roses, *everywhere*![11]

The final revision occurs in the 1970 edition:

> Having contacted the Infinite, I sensed a wonderful perfume in my nostrils: the scent of *roasting* coffee and roses, *roasting* coffee and roses, the *ultra* attar of coffee and roses, everywhere![12]

For Hatterr, the memory of the experience requires some fine tuning that can only be wrought by compounding a particular range of sensory images. The smell of the coffee is more important than the coffee itself and as such requires definition.

In the case of revision, it is the experience of both the author as a living, sociable being and of the author, as a developing literary consciousness which informs the textual changes. Lévi-Strauss's focus is on the workings of the human mind which he defines as only being readable in relation to its other units. As such the work of Lévi-Strauss and the act of revision can be viewed as projects which have a number of similarities, the main one being that both processes are entirely and inextricably linked to 'other units'. Myth, according to Lévi-Strauss, is unable to stand alone and retain a sense of intrinsic isolation, but has to be viewed as part of a whole. Revision, likewise, can not stand alone but is dependent on the past to dictate and establish the exact dynamics of the present. As such, and based on an understanding of Lévi-Strauss's debate on the natures of the raw and the cooked, many of Hatterr's experiences becomes a fascinating example of the relationship between food, revision and power which is simultaneously flexible yet restrictive, negotiable and non-negotiable, inclusive and exclusive.

Lévi-Strauss focuses on the ways in which food practices explore and illustrate the binaries in life. He suggests that considering food as binaries such as the raw and the cooked, highlights both the mutual exclusiveness of food types and the impossibility of returning to one state; of claiming the original, raw state as definitive. Lévi-Strauss sets out a bold proposition early in his text, as he considers the possibility and potential for exploring:

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[11] *Hatterr,* (1951), p. 62, my italics.
[12] *Hatterr,* (1970), p. 84, my italics.

> [H]ow empirical categories - such as the [...] raw and the cooked, the fresh and the decayed, the moistened and the burned [...] can be used as conceptual tools with which to elaborate abstract ideas and combine them in the form of propositions.[13]

For Lévi-Strauss, taste is culturally shaped and socially controlled and he believes that by undertaking an analysis of myth, he will be able to begin the process of considering the dynamics of the relationship between food and culture and by extension, between food and social inclusion or exclusion. Whilst his debate centres on the binaries and myths created and perpetuated by food, it is the potential that food has to instil a sense of order within society that becomes his prime focus. Such potential also suggests the possibility that the way in which Lévi-Strauss considers the role of food in society, may be a useful investigative and interpretative tool for the inspection of a text where food revisions are multiple.

In order to be able to comprehend the dynamics of myths, Lévi-Strauss takes his starting point as a single Bororo[14] myth which he explores and unpacks until he can claim a level of understanding of the myth and more importantly, its relationship to other myths. Essentially, what he sets out to do is to decode the symbols contained within the myth. When this process is considered to be complete, albeit for the moment only, he moves on to explore myths containing similarities in theme. He then assesses the myths, considering them in the light of some of the ties binding them to one another. His aim is to understand the myth as both an independent entity as well as an intrinsic and dynamic part of the whole of myth. He claims, early on in his argument, that there are difficulties inherent in a project that seeks to understand myth and to contain it within 'the framework of any one system of classification'.[15] However, it is his appreciation of the ambiguity and fluidity of meaning contained within myth that allows him to undertake the challenge. He insists on a movement forward to consider archetypes as part of a progression and as only understandable in direct relation to other units. He sets out to discover a communal logic, a way of interpreting food as part of an ongoing process of negotiation which considers all aspects of both food and community and proposes a method of looking at myth to scrutinise the contradictions in an attempt to resolve them. For Lévi-Strauss, food becomes a way of assessing communities, of exploring the dynamics of culture and of belonging, utilising a process which deciphers food at its most fundamental level, its position and role within a society and the dynamics of this specific space. As such, Lévi-Strauss's arguments become a persuasive mode of inquiry lending itself, at least in the first instance, to an analysis of the process of revision.

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[13] Lévi-Strauss, (1970) p. 1.

[14] The Bororo Indians come from central Brazil and Lévi-Strauss stresses that he has chosen the myth purely for its simplicity or completeness.

Just as Lévi-Strauss's focus on myth and the intricate and frequently complex relationships he reveals between myths is profoundly ambiguous, in as much as he claims that his project 'spreads out like a nebula, without ever bringing together in any lasting pattern [....] the sum total of the elements from which it blindly derives its substance, [...]'[16] so too is the subject of revision which is perpetually debatable, eternally negotiable and perpetually open to interpretation and re-interpretation. When this possibility is aligned with food as a subject for revision, the dynamics of exploring both areas requires an understanding of the shared principles underpinning both food and revision. Both depend on binaries; a distinct before and after (raw and cooked, original and new) and, in turn, demand an exploration of the space that exists between.

Whilst Lévi-Strauss provides a useful structure for analysing food within the text, there are some obvious limitations to his arguments within this debate on food, revision and the text. In order to be able to assess the merits of his argument it may be necessary to align his considerations with those of more recent analysis. As such, Mary Douglas[17] continues Lévi-Strauss's quest to discover meaning and representation, although her focus is more directly aimed at food, culture and society. She begins her project with the question, 'If language is a code, where is the precoded message?' She attempts to answer the question by suggesting that if 'food is treated as a code, the messages it encodes will

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[15] Lévi-Strauss, (1970) p. 2.

[16] *Ibid.*.

[17] Mary Douglas, 'Deciphering a Meal', in Carole Counihan, Penny Van Esterick (eds.), *Food and Culture,* (London: Taylor and Francis, 1997), pp. 36-53.

be found in the pattern of social relations being expressed'.[18] She goes on to claim that the 'message is about different degrees of hierarchy, inclusion and exclusion, boundaries and transactions across boundaries'.[19] She accuses Lévi-Strauss of considering food only in terms of its binaries and the ways in which it is defined by them, rather than discussing the binaries in terms of the position they hold within the larger framework of food as a conceptual tool for analysing societies. Douglas suggests that it is possible to examine 'social boundaries which the food meanings encode by an approach that values the binary pairs according to their position in a series'.[20] Although Douglas is concerned with the physical placing of food within a structure of daily life such as breakfast, lunch and dinner, the concept of organising food within a structure, possesses the potential for a critical debate on the ways in which food can be explored as a framework which both supports its binaries and simultaneously creates a dialogue with the gaps between. It also enables a debate on food as a construct that becomes the focus for revision seeking simultaneously, to explore and exploit the idea of food as an indicator of social inclusion or exclusion. Douglas's focus is on the meal as a structure to distinguish order, creating an inevitable gap between disorder and order is also dependent upon all meals for its identity. If it occurs after breakfast, it must be lunch and so on. Although there are some obvious limitations to Douglas's arguments within the confines of a discussion on revising the text, the identification of some of the structures represented through food, and the dynamics of the framework responsible for supporting its ability to maintain itself as a series of mutually exclusive binaries, is of central importance. In a discussion that considers the ways in which references to food are changed, and of the ellipses occurring between revisions, the underlying structures become a way of negotiating the changes as single and unique re-inventions of an original, as well as an intrinsic part of the whole process of revision. As such, any exploration of these structures becomes a way of narrating the nature of the polarities and the gaps which emerge as distinct from these polarities.

One further point that Douglas makes, emphasises the relationship that food has to a sense of belonging or a sense of culture as she claims:

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[18] *Ibid.*, p. 36.
[19] *Ibid.*
[20] *Ibid.*, p. 37.

> It would seem that whenever a people are aware of encroachment and danger, dietary rules controlling what goes into the body would serve as a vivid analogy of the corpus of their cultural categories at risk.[21]

Throughout Hatterr's narrative, it is clear that food and meals and the ways in which Desani revises them, become a stark reminder of the borders of social and cultural inclusion. As such the processes involved in re-inspecting and re-inscribing them through revision, a project which possesses the potential to challenge cultural norms, places these norms at risk. For Hatterr social inclusion is almost always foremost in his mind. As such a key moment in the text reveals the potential for an ongoing inspection of food as a tool with which issues of inclusion and exclusion can be debated, occurs as Hatterr has been 'evicted' from his house by his angry wife. He is forced to watch as his wife and her friends enjoy the meal he had planned with extraordinary care, for himself:

> And, the menu ordered includes such par excellence stuff as saffron rice, chutnied *kofta*, Bengali *kabab-goulash*, the sweet-course cooked by *my* fellers, and coffee *garam* hot![22]

The 1951 edition is revised thus:

> And, the *lista da platos* ordered includes such par excellence stuff as saffron rice, chutnied kofta, Bengali kabab-goulash, the sweetcourse *fried* by my fellers, and coffee garam hot![23]

The final revision occurs in the 1970 edition:

> And the lista da platos *offered - on the house*! - includes such par excellence stuff as *fried* saffron rice, kofta *meat balls browned with garlic and spice,* Bengali kabab-goulash *with mango and lime chutnee, pickles pampered in mustard oil,* the sweetcourse fried by my fellers, and coffee garam-hot![24]

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[21] *Ibid.*, p. 52.
[22] *Hatterr* (1949), p. 214, (author's italics).
[23] *Hatterr* (1951), p. 251, my italics.
[24] *Hatterr* (1970), p. 257, my italics.

For Desani, with each new version of *Hatterr* the magnitude of his protagonist's isolation at this moment becomes immense. Simple description will not suffice and the meal has to become a banquet. Revisions such as those that focus here on food, raise some interesting questions. If the author chooses to revise and the focus of his revision centres largely (though not entirely) on one of man's fundamental drives, the drive to eat, which is culturally influenced and socially driven, then what type of challenge is being examined or re-examined? If the original account is deemed to be no longer adequate or authentic and the new account offered as a more appropriate version, then the gap between what *was* and what *is*, enables a detailed exploration of the dynamics of the cultural links binding both accounts and more importantly, in the case of H. Hatterr, binding Hatterr to the community he is seeking inclusion within.

When such elaborations emerge as a direct result of revision, transforming one type of meal into another,[25] it is clear that the 'original' sense of order established by the original version is being challenged. As such, meals for H. Hatterr come to represent a microcosm of boundary definitions and moments during which his position within society is negotiated, frequently to an unsatisfactory conclusion as his liminality, his position within the community is challenged.

For some of the other characters within *Hatterr* food becomes a way of describing inclusion or exclusion. A key moment in the text occurs as Hatterr and his best friend, mentor and financier, Banerrji are discussing fate in the form of 'kismet' and the ways in which some things are simply not meant to be. Hatterr has lost his job and Banerrji is planning to get him reinstated. His plan is that Hatterr should make it known to his boss that he too is a cultured man, sharing an interest in music (which Hatterr does not). Banerrji highlights the potential for social advancement by conforming to standards set by society and the boss in particular, and by being seen to be doing and embracing the 'right' things, which are, of course, highly subjective. The irony of this attempt at inclusion lies in the fact that as a result of Hatterr's desire to belong, he is estranged from his wife who is unable to understand his actions, resulting in the loss of his meal as outlined above. For his friend Banerrji, inclusion means separation from much of his cultural heritage and it is at the point where he outlines his personal manifesto on belonging, that Desani elects to insert some important changes. In the 1949 edition Banerrji claims:

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[25] Or at least, one type of meal into another version of the same meal, with added detail.

> 'We are all human-brothers. One for all, and all for one. Mr. Ben Johnson rightly mentions in his, The Devil Is An Ass...'[26]

In the 1951 edition it appears thus:

> 'We are all human-brothers. One for all and all for one. *Excuse me, I do not belong to the backward India. I already believe in the European sanitation and the water-closet. Mrs. Banerrji and I are also using forks and knives which is better than eating with sweating fingers in the summer.* [...] *The culture of mankind is for all. India confirms same.* Also, Mr. Ben Johnson rightly *says* in his, The Devil Is An Ass ...'[27]

In the 1970 edition Desani has changed it once again:

> 'We are all human-brothers. One for all and all for one. Excuse me, I do not belong to the backward India. *Arise, awake, advance!* I already believe in the European sanitation and the water-closet. Mrs Banerrji and I are also using forks and knives which is better than eating with sweating fingers in this summer. *A decent quantity of toilet tissue has already been ordered. You and your lady are welcome to use our lavatory if you wish to spend a penny and good luck to you both.* [...] The culture of mankind is for all. India confirms same. Also, Mr Ben Johnson rightly mentions in his, The Devil Is An Ass...'[28]

The changes here are extensive. Desani sets up a single qualification for inclusion in his first edition here; we are all human, and as such can consider ourselves as members of the community. However, by the time the second edition, (the first American edition) is published, Desani has made some important changes. The introduction of the knife and fork as symbols of a particular level of inclusion in society is made all the more interesting by the way in which Desani allows Banerrji to explain it. Banerrji is extremely proud of owning cutlery but Desani's own perception of the merits of

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[26] *Hatterr* , (1949), p. 198.

[27] *Hatterr*, (1951), p. 231, my italics.

[28] *Hatterr,* (1970), p. 240, my italics.

Banerrji's understanding of cultural identity is cleverly highlighted by the particular language he attributes to Banerrji. Banerrji is not aware that in English the traditional grouping of cutlery is *knives and forks*[29], claiming that he and his wife own *forks and knives*. Whilst this may appear to be a somewhat trivial interpretation of the text at this particular point, it is important to remember that it is not so much an indictment of Banerrji's lack of understanding that is revealed here, rather it is the structure of a society that considers inclusion and exclusion in purely materialistic terms that is under attack. The final revision with the inclusion of toilet tissue becomes a further attack on culture and society, perpetually delimited by boundaries, whimsically constructed and seemingly maintained without integrity by groups of people who perpetuate myths in order to ensure that such minutiae as knives and forks and toilet tissue (and membership of the Tail Waggers & Chums' Club of England, of which Banerrji boasts earlier on in the narrative) come to be both descriptive and representative of inclusion and exclusion.[30] For Desani, a writer who, in his opening 'All About...', outlines the process of getting his book published and aligns it with a quest for inclusion within a society set to exclude him, the rigidity of the boundaries between exclusion and inclusion appear to be as arbitrary as the grounds on which his book is dismissed by Betty Bloomsbohemia.

Desani's focus on cutlery is of particular importance. Cutlery is the mediating device, coming between food and the body, between the outside and the inside and according to Lévi-Strauss's thesis, between the civilised and the uncivilised. Whilst this particular argument has some limits, it is nonetheless interesting to note that it may be at this point that Lévi-Strauss's arguments regarding the rigidity and the incommensurability of the binaries looks set to falter as a useful interpretative framework. If being civilised is dependent on such minutiae as cutlery, then Lévi-Strauss's classification of the categories or binaries and the ways in which he uses such classification to examine aspects of social and cultural inclusion or exclusion, reveals itself as having a useful yet limited resonance within the analysis of revision.

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[29] It should be pointed out that such a 'traditional' grouping is of course a cultural idea but is important here as it is inclusion within the West- or at least a uniquely personal interpretation of the West- that Banerrji is seeking.

[30] Banerrji's mention of the English Tail Waggers' Club comes as he and Hatterr are discussing the merits of belonging to English society, an experience Hatterr has undertaken in the past and one which Banerrji is envious of. *Hatterr*, (1949), p. 197.

Just as cooking utensils are emblematic of the gap between the raw and the cooked, between the civilised and the uncivilised, so too is cutlery. However, cutlery is different from saucepans and other cooking utensils as it crosses that boundary between the outside and inside, conveying what was outside to the inside. For Banerrji 'forks and knives' have come to represent that leap he feels he has taken from uncivilised Indian to civilised Englishman. (It should be noted that Banerrji mentions that he would like to change his name from Nath to Noel in order to sound more English).[31] Mary Douglas also comments on the role of cutlery within a meal. She contends that, meals 'properly require the use of at least one mouth-entering utensil per head'.[32] Although it is clear that Douglas is speaking from the standpoint of somebody from the West and as such, the above comment appears to be perfectly valid, it is important to remember that although such criteria may not be wholly applicable in India at the time of Hatterr's narrative, Banerrji considers that it is important enough to ensure a sense of acceptance within a given culture, in this context, a Western culture.[33] As Desani makes the changes to Banerrji's original claim of universal heritage and culture, in the form of being 'all human-brothers' it is clear that what he is doing is overwriting, literally and theoretically, what went before, investing it with a stark definition of what constitutes both inclusion and exclusion. As far as Banerrji is concerned, all the barriers between himself and inclusion have been successfully traversed and the additions to the original account of cutlery and 'water closets', creates a dialogue which examines the space between the original and the new, revealing with acute clarity, the possibility of utilising such space as a point from which the polarities can be explored. Here also, lie the limits of Lévi-Strauss's thesis as he places little or no emphasis on the potential for exploration and elaboration that exists in the gaps between the binaries. For Desani, the knives and forks, acting as intermediaries, possess the potential to cross the barriers between inside and outside and whilst this movement from one space to another is visible, the suggestion, with the mention of the water closet, that further barriers are being crossed is complete. In the most rudimentary form, the food that entered the mouth via the cutlery is now evacuated from the body with the aid of the water closet and the suggestion that movement between polarities is possible, though not always accessible, is complete. However, even if Lévi-Strauss is to be dismissed at this point as no longer relevant to a study of literary revisions, it is impossible to ignore the power of his argument and the main contention of his thesis that the raw and the cooked are binary oppositions with nothing lying between the two. There are many instances within Desani's text where the dynamics of the binaries that look set to govern human existence and experience are debated, and even if Desani is more interested in exploring the gaps between the binaries, his elaboration of the ellipses can only begin by scrutinising the binaries themselves. As such, the dialogue with Banerrji outlined above, is a classic example of the intricate relationship between the outside and the inside, the binaries and the gaps. As Desani inserts revisions to the original account, he debates the fixedness of the original, giving a voice to the previously unspoken, simultaneously debating issues of inclusion and exclusion in an extraordinary movement which reveals a literary manifestation of what was excluded and is now included using new language and images, whilst revealing, as a consequence of the 'new' version, Banerrji's own understanding of inclusion and exclusion.

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[31] *Ibid.*

[32] Mary Douglas, (1997), p. 41.

[33] It should be pointed out that the emphasis here is on the 'sense' of belonging that Banerrji experiences which is, of course, contrasted with the reality of his situation as an Indian living in India.

Desani is aware of the insistence on the need for a sense of cultural belonging, and whilst the ties that bind man to a given culture may be tangible, they are not always available. It is this lack of availability that impels Desani to revise, to seek to clarify ideas and images and to draw associations with culture and a sense of belonging where it appears that none exists. Banerrji's 'forks and knives' represent both the potential for revision to inspect such associations but more importantly, allows Desani to reveal the tenuous and fluid nature of cultural inclusion as it emerges in the gaps between accounts and between the images and language used.

Section 2

This section seeks to align Lévi-Strauss's arguments concerning food, culture and belonging with Homi Bhabha's writing on the dynamics of the spaces existing between and beyond the traditional binaries, into a workable interpretative tool for examining *All About H. Hatterr* in the light of Desani's revisions on food.[34] This section will also debate the dynamics of the ways in which the two distinct arguments for assessing and exploring the dynamics of cultural identity, and of inclusion and exclusion, can be aligned and used imaginatively, to explore the shifting consciousness of G.V. Desani as he puts his highly selective, personal collection of cultural indicators under pressure during the process of revision. Homi Bhabha's understanding of liminal or Third Space where meaning is flexible, open to re-interpretation and possessing the potential to destroy more traditional mirrors of representation,[35]will be argued alongside the seemingly restrictive practices of structuralism, specifically the structural anthropological interpretation of Claude Lévi-Strauss.

Whilst the two methods of inquiry and interpretation appear to be almost if not entirely, mutually exclusive due, in part, to the insistence each method lays on the details of its particular mode of investigation, it may be possible to create a way of utilising both interpretative structures to provide a rounded and creative exploration of the ways in which the dynamics of what is said, and what is not said can be negotiated. At the same time the nature of the ellipses occurring around, beyond and between meaning will require inspection. Both structures for analysing a text can be used if the emphasis of the exploration lies with the uniquely personal selection of signifiers employed to reveal many of the cultural and social pressures at work within the text as well as the emphasis or allocation of worth/merit attributed to each particular image, by the author as s/he selects them.[36] It is this careful selection and then re-selection as the author revises, that possesses the potential for the creation of a symbiotic relationship between the two distinct interpretative structures.

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[34] Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture,* (London: Routledge, 1994).

[35] Bhabha, (1994) p. 37.

[36] The cultural/social/political pressures that are intimate/personal to the author at the time of writing – not necessarily global/national pressures- are of the utmost importance within this discussion of the role of interpretative structures in an analysis of the process of revision.

In general Lévi-Strauss derives the force of his arguments in *The Raw and The Cooked,* from an insistence on the structure of the imaginative world as delimited by binary oppositions. These oppositions structure meaning. This is not necessarily the same as determining meaning, rather, it suggests that a framework is in place which may appear to be non-negotiable, but, on closer inspection, reveals itself to be potentially flexible. Whilst Lévi-Strauss locates his interpretative structures within a sense of fixedness and regulation, his writing does at least hint (even if he does not explore it) at the potential for negotiation and re-negotiation between meanings. It is the possibility of exploring this in-between space in a challenge to the assumed rigidity of the binaries seeking to delimit both character and experience, which promotes a drive to find a more adequate way of exploring the dynamics of the relationship between the binaries and what lies between and indeed, beyond.

By analysing the binary sets created in and by culture, Lévi-Strauss suggests that cultural thought can be explored. It is perhaps worth noting that for writers such as Homi Bhabha and for many contemporary postcolonial critics, the concept of binaries is an inevitable - though not unshakeable principle which underpinned the project of colonialism. It makes it possible to categorise and prioritise groups of people, prescribing and describing both identity and experience and as such, possesses the potential for 'understanding' culture. It is clear that this was not the case but the structures, once in place, no matter how whimsically constructed and maintained, retain an enduring power to create and direct ways of seeing and of analysing anything and anyone from culture, to identity to the written text. If the binaries have been created or introduced within a literary text which changes from one edition to the next, then this negotiation or re-negotiation of cultural thought is significant. It can be presumed that the original indicators of cultural thought, need, for one reason or another, to be discarded and replaced.

It is clear that Hatterr's consumption needs to be allocated a definite and distinct space within the signifying framework and as Desani makes the changes, occasionally subtle, often bold, he puts into place some discreet cultural and locational devices. It is arguable that both devices or indicators, cultural and locational, are interdependent and as such have a symbiotic relationship with both themselves and the quest for autonomy. Hatterr's quest is to achieve a sense of belonging both culturally and locationally to the country and to the society or community he finds himself in. This need is problematic from the outset as Hatterr's narrative is begun by Desani in 'All About [...]' in London and shifts to India to narrate Hatterr's biographical details, ending in London. As such, location, for Desani, is inextricably linked to culture and his revisions reveal an awareness of the dynamics of this relationship and, simultaneously, his drive to clarify the links whilst challenging the tenacity of the relationship between culture and location as well as between cultural identity and human identity. The seeming minutiae of some of the changes comes to represent the relationship between the deftness with which Desani inserts the changes into the text and the emphasis Hatterr adds to the changes, and, it could be argued between the fixedness of Lévi-Strauss insistence on the importance of exploring and maintaining binaries and the potential fluidity of Homi Bhabha's Third Space.[37]

Both ways of interpreting the text would appear to have some links to or with, the social construction of reality. For Homi Bhabha, such a construction is frequently prescriptive and demeaning yet potentially extremely powerful[38]. However, for Lévi-Strauss the emphasis is slightly different. It is clear that he uses the binary oppositions within the realm of food and of culture to indicate a sense of order which having been established, looks set to maintain itself indefinitely. However, there is always, within his text, a sense that the binaries, the raw and the cooked, the civilised and the uncivilised are more fragile than they appear to be. His insistence on the need to perpetually review and realign the underlying principles governing his notion of binaries, suggests that his awareness of the fragility of his particular understanding of the social construction of reality is never far from his argument. It is confusing and complex and threatens, at all times, to start to chip away at the binaries.

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[37] It could also be argued that this attribute of Bhabha's Third Space is perhaps not the most important, but it is the potential that this space possesses to challenge fixity in any form and to suggest and then explore the possibilities of what lies beyond 'fixed meaning' that would seem to be relevant to a discussion on revision.

For Hatterr, the social construction of reality is confused by Desani's 'interference' with the text and as such, Hatterr's sense of reality is permanently being challenged and changed as his dialogue is reviewed in the light of experience, of both author (Desani) and narrator (H. Hatterr), and his location re-negotiated and realigned and reinvested with a whole new set of images and signifiers. As such Hatterr's particular interpretation of society, of reality and the way in which he has constructed it, is under siege. In line with both Bhabha and Lévi-Strauss, Hatterr knows that the binaries exist and, as they do, there must be something that lies between or beyond them. As Desani revises he challenges convention, implying that social constructions of reality are perpetually shifting and that there are always newer, more relevant signs and images, better suited to experience. If this is the case then it would seem likely that such an attack on these social constructions of reality require a way of interpreting the text that pays homage to Lévi-Strauss's interpretation as it explores the binaries and the dynamics of the fixedness of meaning, whilst drawing on newer, more flexible interpretative structures, possessing the potential to examine the ellipses occurring between such binaries.

Homi Bhabha's focus in *The Location of Culture* lies in the exploration and negotiation of such a space and the way in which resistance develops within the interstices, the chinks and the crevices existing in structures, physical, human, literary and linguistic. As such, these locations come to represent areas where power of one sort or another, should have erased the possibility of resistance in any form, but a slow yet persistent challenge to, and subversion of, the rigidity of the binaries has created a 'grey' area where meaning can be debated. Within the arena of the text, such grey areas, where meaning is ambiguous, suggest the possibility of confusion. For Bhabha this confusion is a positive and constructive manifestation of the potential ambivalence he associates with the Third

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[38] This is certainly the case with the project and outcome of colonialism which left in its wake an enduring image of how society was or is ordered and the binaries of inclusion or exclusion which demarcate identity and experience.

Space as a site from which challenges to, and re-negotiation of, the traditional binaries becomes not only a possibility, but an imperative. In the text, such ambivalence possesses the potential to be equally constructive and destructive. For Desani, a writer whose aim is to produce a text which will attract 'readers with soul'[39] the ambivalence associated with the gaps between and beyond meaning, are wholly troublesome. The potential finality of the printed text[40] suggests a finite and definitive structure, until, that is, the author refuses to accept the permanence of the text and chooses to investigate the chinks and expand them via the process of revision. As the chinks are expanded and developed, the level of resistance achievable by any holder of power (in the case of the text, this is the author), is revealed. As such, the ambivalence of Homi Bhabha becomes a manifestation of the potential both to explore and promote, as well as subvert, the tenuous existence of the liminal space between the binaries. In the case of the text, the binaries are constituted, largely, though not wholly, in the before and after of each account and what exists between is the unsaid. However, despite the fact that the in- between (of accounts) has no language, it reveals itself in the difference between what was then and what is now. For Desani, this is profoundly antagonistic. By changing the account from one version to another, he hopes to eliminate any ambivalence, any intention by the interpreter or reader to secure a meaning other than that intended by the author. However, it is clear that once the two (or more) accounts are visible, comparisons can be made and the dynamics of the shift in language, style or experience reveals itself between accounts and becomes the loudest manifestation of the unspoken, one which refuses to be silenced. It is at this point that Homi Bhabha's ambivalence and the potential he ascribes to the gaps existing between and beyond traditional accounts (be it of culture, experience or the text) looks to be in doubt. The homage such a space is required to pay to the binaries which determine it (whether overt or covert) slowly begins the process of chipping away at the sense of freedom that it looked to possess in the first instance. If the binaries, constituted within the text are the before and the after, then it would be possible to suggest that, at least potentially, the author holds the power to inscribe both the binaries and the interstices/ellipses.

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[39] G.V. Desani, 'Difficulties of Communicating an Oriental to a Western Audience, in C.D. Narasimaiah, *Awakened Conscience: Studies in Commonwealth Literature,* (New Delhi: Sterling Publishers PVT LTD, 1978), p. 406.

[40] The finality under discussion here, is the apparent withdrawal of any power to change the written word once it is published. This does of course respect the ability of the reader to interpret the text and to 'change' meanings, it simply refers to the removal of authorial control at the point of publication. However, for authors who choose to revise, the finality of the text is revealed as fragile.

When aligned with the process of revision it is the power of the author, albeit a confused and confusing manifestation of power, which emerges as potentially the most powerful controller of the Third Space. Revision also questions the authenticity and the permanence of the site or location of culture as a fixed and non-negotiable construct. The role of the reader in this struggle for power is of prime importance, especially when the revised text is the space open for negotiations regarding power and control. As has been made clear previously, most readers will only read one version of *All About H. Hatterr*, suggesting that the location of the reader is relatively straightforward. However, for the reader of multiple versions, the potential for joining Hatterr as supreme dwellers of the Third Space looks to be a genuine possibility. He or she (the reader) possesses the ability to look backwards and forwards, to interpret the changes, allocating meanings and definition to the individual changes. This does, of course, pose some hazards for the author who revises and who must surely rely on the reader reading only a single version of the text and regarding that one as the definitive version. Once again, ambivalence and ambiguity begin to creep into the argument.

In *The Location of Culture* Bhabha focuses on the way in which cultural analysis has glossed over the ambivalence of the location of culture. He defines a need to employ subversive strategies both to explore and then exploit the binaries with the intention of revealing the fragility of these binaries and the potential power of the liminal space of marginality in cultural production. For Bhabha culture is not and can not be confined to a single position or a single space but is multi-positional and multi-spatial and as such requires a position or a view point which escapes the polarities of East and West, Them and Us, Now and Then, Self and Other and opens up a space of hybridity which certainly examines the binaries but reveals that their power can only be maintained by a way of thinking which denies the existence of any gaps. For Bhabha, such thinking is neither positive nor constructive and requires revision.

In line with this particular mode of thought, literary revision possesses the potential as a device/procedure which adopts an interstitial position; being able to look backwards as well as forwards and to create a new, redefined and refined set of culturally sensitive indicators drawing on the past while representing the here and now of the text. What revision requires (and indeed, what Bhabha urges), is literally a re-seeing. It has to adopt a different perspective; a different location from and through which culture can be assessed and explored. It has to be able to overcome 'the given grounds of opposition [as it] opens up a space of translation; a place of hybridity [...]'.[41]

For Bhabha, this site of translation needs to acknowledge 'the historical connectedness between the subject and the object'[42] and when this argument is extended to the subject of revision it is difficult not to appreciate the significance of this insistence on connectedness. For Desani connections are multiple. As he revises he not only connects the here and now to the then and there within the text as he produces a new version of what went before, but more significantly, he selects the new images, considering and discarding the old in favour of the new.

As Desani embraces the productive possibilities of this space, he extends the potential for his avatar H. Hatterr, creating, through revision, a character/narrator whose position within society (and within all the communities he enters into, with the various Sages, his wife, his club and with Banerrji) is essentially marginal. He occupies a space between dominant social formations and whilst Bhabha's Third Space is revealed to be constructive and productive, Hatterr, as a dweller within such a liminal space is inadequately equipped to deal with, explore and exploit his position of liminality. However, it is clear that although he lacks some of the tenacity to exploit fully his position of liminality, it is undeniable that as Desani revises the text, his avatar, H. Hatterr, becomes the embodiment of liminality, existing both in and between all accounts, creating and re-creating his narrative and experiences. He draws on the past to shape both the present and the future and ultimately becomes a representative of the potential of the liminal character to affect and effect both narrative and experience.

If Lévi-Strauss's contention is that the social construction of reality is revealed to be perpetually shifting, finding its definition in signs which separate meaning, then the insistence would seem to be that if a sign means one thing, it can not, with ease, mean something else. However, both Bhabha and Desani challenge this 'fact' as they explore the gaps between meaning. It is these gaps or ellipses in meaning which fascinate Hatterr. He is frequently duped by people who appear to him to be saying one thing whilst they mean another. Hatterr is unable to see what Bill and Rosie Smythe are up to as they lure him into a dangerous job with the promise of a kiss from Rosie, and Always-Happy promotes Hatterr's devotion as so great that he has performed the '*last sadhana*'[43]. These gaps between meaning and between signs (or at least, the significance or emphasis of particular signs or images) form the focus of much of Homi Bhabha's work. For Bhabha the in-between spaces that exist between binaries, actual, metaphorical or traditionally perceived, provide the clues to culture, creating areas where all aspects of culture can be explored, subverted, rejected or taken at will.

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[41] Bhabha (1994), p. 25.

[42] *Ibid.*, p. 26.

In ' The commitment to Theory'[44] Bhabha claims that:

> The pact of interpretation is never simply an act of communication between the I and the You designated in the statement. The production of meaning requires that these two places be mobilized in the passage through a Third Space, which represents both the general conditions of language and the specific implication of the utterance in a performative and institutional strategy of which it cannot 'in itself' be conscious.[45]

For Desani, this Third Space embodies a starting point for his acts of revision, drawing on a before and after, a then and now, which negotiates meaning through change or adaptation/revision. The 'passage through a Third Space' becomes both a temporal - a then and now - and a linguistic movement. As Bhabha points out, the intervention of this Third Space redefines the structure of meaning, calling into question the rules which determined meaning in the first instance, and creates an ambivalence.[46] He suggests that this Third Space 'destroys the mirror of representation in which cultural knowledge is customarily revealed as an integrated, open, expanding code'.[47] However, it has become clear that although the mirror may have been destroyed, the resulting ambivalence he cherishes as a productive and empowering tool, can never truly free itself from the tenacity of the binaries whose very existence, independent of whether or not they were constructed intentionally or unintentionally, looks set to determine the dynamics and the force of the Third Space. This suggestion haunts the reader of Homi Bhabha and likewise, the critical reader of the works of G. V. Desani, reminding both sets of readers that an exploration of the ellipses whether textual or cultural, requires the examination of the very aspects of text or culture which the writer is seeking to destroy, or, at the very least, obscure. For Homi Bhabha this is prescriptive and non-negotiable identity, for Desani, it is a definitive and prescribed identity and experience for his characters and for the text as a whole. However, it is important to remember that for both writers change is what is being sought.

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[43] A form of castration. (Desani's italics).

[44] Homi Bhabha, (1994), 'The commitment to theory', pp. 19-39.

[45] *Ibid.*, p. 36.

[46] *Ibid.*, p. 37.

[47] *Ibid.*, p. 37.

As Desani selects, discards and then re-selects his choice of material, intrinsic to his decision is the implication or suggestion of a sense of cultural change, or, a realignment of culturally symbolic signs and gestures. As Desani revises, he investigates perceived notions of cultural knowledge, challenging assumptions and traditional representations and examining any sense of order which gives priority to one representation or set of cultural indicators, over any other. For Desani no indicator of culture is a definitive symbol, but presents itself as one aspect of culture and as such lays itself bare to re-inscription time and again. A fine example of the way in which Desani explores such notions occurs as Hatterr shares a meal with a *Maaga*,[48] the 'naked and enlightened one':

> As it was the hour all over the globe for sahib fellers to dress for dinner, chow time, I made ready, and undressed a cold baked potato. And, as a gesture of good-will and no ill-feelings after, Come and get it! I extended to the bed-feller the half of the stomach-cheer, with some diced carrots.[49]

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[48] It is only in the early editions that the man is referred to as a *Maaga,* in all editions after the 1949 edition, he is referred to as the *Naga*.

[49] *Hatterr,* (1949), p.181.

This becomes:

> As it was the hour all over the globe for *the memsahibs and the* sahibs to *feel for their nosebags and* dress for dinner - chow time - I made ready and undressed a cold baked potato: *having harvested it from the old gourd.* And, as a gesture of goodwill and no ill-feelings after, *I extended to the bed-feller half of it: with a diced carrot, as stomach-cheer, also recovered from the gourd. A sort of invalid diet for two ...*[50]

For Desani, cultural knowledge reveals itself to be flawed when it is viewed in the light of experience. The gaps between the language he has used, once thought to be entirely appropriate, and the meaning he is seeking, reveals itself to be the source of his inspiration for change. The mention of the sahibs in the first edition and the image created as he considers them as they dress for dinner, becomes too simplistic when re-viewed. The picture created is full of cultural indicators of Indian perceptions of English behaviour in India at the time, the lifestyle, even the dress sense, yet it is not enough for Desani. By 1970, he is no longer able or willing to present a simple account of the meal shared by Hatterr and the *Naga* but has deemed it necessary to invest it with images taken from Hatterr's experience. Hatterr's bitter memories of his treatment by the Sahib club[51] becomes an important and influential factor in his new, revised account. The alignment of the sahibs and their wives with horses and the suggestion of the vastness of the gap between the sahibs dressing for dinner and the poor meal shared by H. Hatterr who is dressed in a 'brief loin cloth'[52] and the 'naked and enlightened one' who is not actually naked due to his being a novice,[53] is highlighted in the new revised edition. As such, for

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[50] *Hatterr,* (1970), pp. 220-221, my italics. (although much of the final phrase is the same, Desani has changed the order and added to it, hence the italics here).

[51] Early on in Hatterr's narrative he has become embroiled in a somewhat compromising incident with his *dhobin*, his laundry woman whom he is unable to pay. She suggests claiming her wages in kind and when Hatterr refuses she goes to his Club. She takes up position on the lawn outside where she loudly and passionately berates him as a man who refuses to pay her and would let her children starve. As a result the Sahib Club expel him, 'I was unanimously declared a defaulter, black-balled, and *struck off*! (*Hatterr,* (1949), p. 29).

[52] *Hatterr,*(1949), p. 167.

[53] The actual description of his appearance runs thus:

> Being a beginner in the Order, he was wearing clothing: a nearly transparent slip. It was a mere few inches width below the waist, and to proclaim his Order, he had deliberately made a number of tears and holes in the textile. *Hatterr,* (1949), p. 170.

Desani, H. Hatterr and the reader, it is clear that cultural knowledge becomes a contradiction in as much as it is open to inspection and re-inspection to such an extent that using the term 'knowledge' with its assumptions regarding certainty, understanding and truth look to be in jeopardy.

If this is correct then it would seem possible that Bhabha's contention that the Third Space (revision in Desani's case) as an intervention, a disruption to the idea of static understanding or acceptance of historical identity, presents a way of considering culture as exploratory and constructive. Bhabha considers that the dynamics and the manifestation of this disruption can be revealed through culture as it is created and perpetually recreated and as it is embraced by its people who tap into culture, believing it to be the 'originary Past'.[54] Displacement, then, is bound to occur. If culture lays itself open to constant disruption it suggests an inherent weakness, or at least, an instability which encourages re-inspection and re-definition as an ongoing process. As such, it could be argued that the 'originary past' is equally fragile, a point which Bhabha makes forcefully. His contention that such a past, based on history and tradition, is in a constant state of flux, being reworked and re-imagined within both the social world and within the literary text, poses a direct challenge to the assumptions concerning the rigidity of Lévi-Strauss's insistence on definitive interpretations of signs and symbols.

Bhabha concludes this debate by claiming that what such potential disruption, brought about by the creation and exploration of a Third Space ensures, is that:

> [...] the meaning and symbols of culture have no primordial unity or fixity; that even the same signs can be appropriated, translated, rehistoricized and read anew.[55]

For Bhabha this is constructive but for Desani, the very concept of 'no primordial unity or fixity' and the potential for appropriation, translation and re-reading is profoundly

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[54] Bhabha (1994), p. 37.

[55] *Ibid.*, p.37.

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worrying.[56] After all, it is this 'freedom', this ability to continually re-interpret the text, that compels him to revise time and again.

It is clear that Bhabha concerns himself with the larger picture where ambiguity and ambivalence exist in and between meanings, and that Lévi-Strauss concerns himself, largely, though of course not wholly, with the drive to find and isolate a finite set of rules to account for the infinite set of both real and possible narrative. Bhabha's Third Space of liminality, of both here and now and of neither here nor there, possesses the potential to draw both sets of interpretative structures together. Bhabha asks questions and demands answers of structuralist interpretation, whilst, in turn, structuralism demands an explanation (or at the very least, an exploration or account) of the dynamics of any gaps between.

While, within the realms of revision, ambiguity presents an either/or, neither/nor as well as proposing new definitive versions, it is clear that Desani finds this ambivalence to be problematic. Desani, writing some years before Bhabha, observes acutely the unease that exists within something that defies any type of categorisation. As Bhabha promotes a way of thinking which embraces liminality and difference, Desani's revisions suggest that whilst both undoubtedly exist in a purely practical capacity, as an attempt to locate oneself culturally (and for Desani, artistically), ambivalence or the inhabitation of the gaps that occur between meaning, is unsettling at the very least.

If Bhabha's intention is to create a space from which culture is to be re-negotiated or challenged, to create a position from where nothing is as it had first (or traditionally) been seen, then Desani in his multiple revisions of Hatterr's narrative, creates in his avatar, possibly the ultimate dweller of liminal space. As Desani selects his material in the first instance, it would seem to be the case that the images and language he selects are, to the best of his knowledge at the time of writing, the most pertinent and perhaps even poignant indicators of the cultural and social community that Hatterr is a part of, or is seeking inclusion within. However, over a passage of time, as Desani re-reads his text, there is an awareness that neither himself, as author or H. Hatterr as narrator, the explorer and conveyor of meaning, have selected appropriately.

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[56] In a paper delivered in 1978, Desani makes it clear that he considered *Hatterr* to be untranslatable due to its 'difficulties of style and the personal syntax [...]'., G. V. Desani, 'Difficulties of Communicating an Oriental to a Western Audience', in C.D. Narasimhaiah, (1978), pp. 401-7, p .403.

It is clear that Lévi-Strauss places the emphasis within his thesis on the binaries created within the world of food, the raw and the cooked being just one. As such, as an interpretative principle this division into binaries is useful, if somewhat restrictive. As Desani revises he embraces notions of the raw and the cooked in a dynamic and creative way as he reviews the raw product of his earliest narrative; the first attempt at creating a character and dialogue that is accurate and persuasive, and the cooked which is revealed in the re-inspected and organically altered material[57] which emerges in the revised editions. It is important for Desani that, like Lévi-Strauss, he acknowledges the significance of the indicators of culture and society that he chose in the first instance but like Bhabha, his final insistence must lie on the importance of the gaps that surround and lie between meaning if he is to be able to create a newer, more dynamic, and above all, more accurate narrative of the experiences of a man who is caught between cultures, between societies and embraces a profound sense of marginality at all times.

For G. V. Desani, the gaps between are seldom better explored as he locates his avatar within the confines of the meal. The term 'confines' is used intentionally, as it becomes increasingly evident that almost all the meals that Hatterr consumes are invested with meanings and significance which he is frequently unable to interpret at the time. Meals come to constitute pivotal moments within both the text and Hatterr's exploits. They are frequently awkward, silent, ascetic, overwhelming, pressurised or expectant. The food ingested at each meal is often indicative of the company Hatterr is keeping at that particular moment in his narrative. For example, he eats 'a few stunned kippers' and 'roland-marj' with the Smythes at the circus,[58] and the cold baked potato with the *Naga.* The ways in which Desani revises the references to food becomes a fascinating exploration of his ability to play with signs and images which allocate meaning and which hint at certainties yet reveal themselves to be flexible and ambiguous. For Bhabha, 'certainties' exist only to be challenged. This is undoubtedly the case for Desani and indeed for Hatterr, both of whom emphasise the potential of the discrepancies within life to begin the process of securing meaning which is not static but which is creative, fluid and positive.

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[57] Clearly, not all of Desani's revision are of such proportions. However, it is clear that many of his revisions, no matter how subtle the changes may appear to be, have been scrutinised and re-worked by Desani until what emerges in the 'new' edition is *not* what it was, but is something invested with new meaning.

As Desani revises his text, the subject of food, its gathering, preparation, sharing, consumption and its tendency to be unavailable to H. Hatterr, becomes an area which is both the focus of Hatterr's existence and equally, the focus of Desani's need to provide an accurate and truthful account of the experiences of his avatar H. Hatterr.[59] For Desani, selecting food as a primary area for revision becomes an important act of disclosure, debating as it does, power relationships, locational devices available to writers and the areas of liminality naturally arising in every text. These areas are seldom explained but close inspection of several versions of one text, creates an area for debate which can consider the before and after, the within and without of both character and experience.

Section 3

For the purposes of this chapter the biological needs of the body with regard to food is of secondary importance.[60] It is the preparation, the consumption and the symbolic overtures made by food and by Desani's revisions to this particular aspect of the text, that is of prime importance with regard to power and control within *All About H. Hatterr.*

Food is a constant reminder to man of his dependence on availability of food for survival and of his essential powerlessness in the grip of hunger, and although Hatterr is seldom hungry to the point of desperation, he is frequently subject to discomfort when food is in short supply. In Desani's text it is the availability and ownership of food which ultimately distinguishes those who have power from those who do not. Food simultaneously identifies the motivating factors propelling or impelling action by one individual, a whole community or a society. It is the ways in which individual actions, thoughts and identities are structured through social norms such as the routine of meal times which delimits power relations and creates societal structures. As such, a level of

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[58] *Hatterr*, (1949), p. 52.

[59] Despite the fact that Desani claims to be a liar, suggesting therefore that Hatterr would naturally inherit the traits of his creator, both Desani as creator and Hatterr as narrator aim to establish a narrative which is truthful to their unique experience.

social order is being investigated by Desani as he creates moments within the text which have their focus on food, on sharing and on consuming and if this is considered in the light of revision, then it would seem that Desani is making an interesting statement about the potential for reinvention or reclassification of the 'norms' in question. The norms dictating modes of behaviour and the nature of experience are challenged as they are re-inscribed and expectations are subtly reworked. If such norms have been replaced with a new, revised set of fundamental survival techniques then the question of authority and ownership becomes central to an understanding of the ways in which power is delivered and debated in the text. Issues of power and language are intrinsically linked by the process of revision as it centres around the subject of food. When the subject is either radically or marginally revised, issues of power necessarily require re-evaluation to begin the process of comprehending and debating the developing sensibilities within the text and the writer's consciousness.[61] Simultaneously, with revision, the nature of the 'norms' dictating the power relationships, will become caught in a bind that narrates the struggle to find a language both adequate for narrating Hatterr's experience yet capable of re-working the original, investing it with new knowledge and experience.

Within *All About H. Hatterr* there are multiple revisions centring on food and issues of power. One of the earliest occurs in an incident as Desani outlines his attempts to get his book published. He has been advised that he should send out unsolicited copies of his manuscript to 'a Book-keeper, a Cashier, and an Allied Soldier', so he arranges to meet with a 'sergeant of military police, in civil life, baseball coach'.[62] In the 1970 edition Desani inserts a further detail that 'Americans [are] partial to bourbon and milk'[63] an addition to the first editions which simply describe Americans as 'partial to milk'[64]. For Desani, the American in question represents power in the form of acceptance. If the American likes the book it may get published. This is more than a simple revision as the pertinence of such an amendment would not have been lost on its reading audience, or its author who was well aware of the need to publish on both sides of the Atlantic. However,

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[60] Naturally it can not be overlooked entirely as Hatterr has to eat but it is the food and the circumstances of Hatterr's encounters with food which are of prime importance.
[61] It should be remembered that Desani and Hatterr are both the authors and narrators of the text.
[62] *Hatterr,* (1949), p. 4.
[63] *Hatterr,* (1970), p. 15.
[64] *Hatterr,* (1949), p. 5.

what is interesting is the fact that Desani missed an obvious opportunity to include this particular revision in the first American edition published in 1951 by Farrar, Straus and Young.

However, the issue of milk is not simply an aside here, nor is the amendment to 'bourbon and milk'. The inclusion of alcohol is important. In Roland Barthes's essay 'Wine and Milk' he discusses the properties of wine and its symbolic representation of all that is French and then places it alongside milk, claiming that:

> [milk] is now the true anti-wine:[...] because in the basic morphology of substances milk is the opposite of fire by all the denseness of its molecules, by the creamy, and therefore soothing, nature of its spreading. [...] milk is cosmetic, it joins, covers, restores.[65]

He goes on to claim that it possesses '[...] a strength which is not revulsive, not congestive, but calm, white, lucid, the equal of reality'.[66]

Clearly Barthes views milk as restorative and pure and for Desani the Milk Bar is an obvious choice as a location that identifies itself with such purity and, if Barthes is correct, reality, as a location familiar to the American. However, as Desani revises this particular incident and adds alcohol to the equation he adds the suggestion of fire; something stronger, more potent than milk and perhaps, the suggestion of an element which may be far more persuasive than milk.[67] Simultaneously, he highlights the sense of desperation he is beginning to feel with his inability to impress anyone with his novel. At this point Desani is aware that passivity and patience are no longer an option in the quest for recognition, respect and publication. This revision becomes a fascinating exploration/manifestation of the symbiotic relationship between inside and outside, between inclusion and exclusion and between acceptance and refusal. Ultimately what Desani does as he revises in this instance, is to lay out all the possibilities for seizing power, including bribery, intimate knowledge of the 'opposition' or simply a heavily sycophantic interpretation of the 'other' which relies on stereotypes and tropes but which may or may not secure power. The obvious pandering to the American, knowing that he is partial to both milk and alcohol and the final observation made by Desani regarding the visit to the milk bar, that there was actually neither milk nor alcohol available, is a blatant admission of the futility of the exercise and one of the first indications of the dynamics of the power relationships within *All About H. Hatterr*. As far as the narrator is concerned, even an acute sense of the 'other' in any equation is not sufficient to guarantee success, or perhaps more importantly, an elevated position within the power structure. It is clear that although Desani is aware of this, the attempt to secure an appropriate position within the power structure is not ended here and all further revisions become a way of negotiating the boundaries that define and restrict movement within the power dynamic. This dynamic reveals itself to be governed by an apparently random criteria of acceptance, which, despite textual changes, fails to secure acceptance, and it becomes evident that although Desani chooses to revise his text, and by extension, Hatterr chooses to re-work the account of his experience, the process itself looks set to fail in its attempt to re-negotiate the boundaries within the power dynamic.

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[65] Roland Barthes, 'Wine and Milk', *Mythologies,* Selected and Translated from the French by Annette Lavers, (London: Vintage, 2000). (First published in 1957 in French). P. 60.

[66] *Ibid.*

[67] It should also be noted that Hatterr's own experiences with alcohol are always disastrous. He becomes drunk on *todii* on the way to interview the Sage of the Wilderness and is too hung-over to accurately assess the situation he finds himself in, (1949, p.32) He is also plied with drink by a money lender who tricks him into borrowing a sum of money then seeks to extort several times the amount borrowed from a bewildered Hatterr (1949, p.86) and he has run into trouble spending all his wages with Mr Ginger, a local inn owner, (1949, p.135).

However, it is possible that what Desani is doing is exploring the nature of the boundaries and their relationship to society and for him, the revisions he undertakes become a way of debating societal structures which are in a constant state of flux and indeed revision, but remain, on the whole, adherents to a single pattern with distinct borders and it is the fluidity of the space that exists between the poles which interests Desani and which creates a space for him to revise his text.

Milk becomes an important element within Desani's own struggle for survival and frequently appears as a kind of mediating vehicle, becoming a device for negotiating a closer inspection of his characters. Its traditional role as a pure, refreshing, innocent drink is challenged by both Desani and Hatterr throughout the text and while the suggestion is always there, that milk is being used to suggest a type of restoration as described by Barthes, it is also clear that Desani has a far more significant role for milk in his narrative and that by subverting the traditional images both in the original version and in all his revisions, the role of milk becomes an interesting dynamic through which his exploration of power and powerlessness can be debated.

The second important mention of milk occurs as Desani takes his manuscript to Pius Prigg Pilliwinks and accepts a glass of milk. The 1949 edition states:

> I pointed at the exquisite stem of the 17th century wine glass in the display cabinet [...]. He poured me one, and we conversed.[68]

In all subsequent editions it reads:

> I pointed at the exquisite stem of the 17th century wine glass [...]. *He had it dusted, washed*: then he poured me one, and we conversed. [69]

Desani feels the need to clarify the situation here and makes it plain to his audience that either his host Pius Prigg Pilliwinks, or the author himself insisted on a thorough cleaning of the antique glass which, although being more suited to wine, is used here for milk. This seemingly overt attention to detail raises an interesting point concerning Desani's references which, as previously stated, draw on an almost global frame of reference.

At first glance Pilliwinks appears to be a reincarnation of a Dickensian style character, living a closeted existence in a world frozen in time, with ancient glassware in cabinets, but the choice of name and indeed setting is absolutely intentional. A Pilliwinks is a medieval device for inflicting finger and thumb torture,[70] and indeed as Pilliwinks sits in his cosy rooms his torture of the aspiring writer is profound. As he criticises Desani's style and choice of material, and by extension therefore, his literary and creative skills, the poignancy of the image of finger torture, of punishing the physical tool of creativity and production is intense. Of Hatterr's narrative he says:

> You are wasting your talents. The public is easily offended. In your own interest, it is a risk you can't afford to take. Not speaking to you. Why don't you write something different? Shan't tell you![71]

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[68] *Hatterr,* (1949), p.7.

[69] My italics.

[70] The Pilliwinks is an instrument of torture used for squeezing fingers and pulling out finger and toenails.

[71] *Hatterr*, (1949), p. 7. It is possible that this is a reworking of George Orwell's comments on the early manuscripts of *Hatterr.* (See Chapter 2. Footnote 6.).

Thus, the apparently incomprehensible change to the text here with regard to the cleaning of the glass, attaches further significance to both the character of Pilliwinks and the creative process. The insistence (by either party) on cleaning the glass, subtly refocuses the reader's attention on to the act of cleaning as an action relying, to a great extent, on the hands and the link between the dusting and washing of the glass and the dusting and washing by Pilliwinks of Desani's creation is complete. The power balance within the confines of Pilliwinks' room is intricate, as each man challenges the power of the other. The first shift in the power struggle occurs as the scene is set in Pilliwinks' room. He has ancient wine glasses, locked in a glass cabinet and when offered a drink Desani points to the glasses and then at the 'after-tea left over jug of milk'[72]. In the next edition of 1951, either Desani or Pilliwinks has had it 'washed and dusted' and the milk is drunk.

Just who holds the power here appears, at first to be a complex amalgam of both men and neither man, yet it is clear that the ultimate power within the room, despite Desani's apparently bizarre, yet acutely engineered challenge in his choice of drink and drinking vessel, lies with Pius Prigg Pilliwinks who holds the power to dismiss Desani's work or to accept it.

Here, the revisions continue the process of delicately reminding both author and reader that there are boundaries within the power dynamic which appear to be insurmountable and can not be traversed under any conditions, except, perhaps by changing the words within the text, which can then, at the very least hint at alternatives.

The physical consumption of food within Hatterr's account becomes one of the most interesting areas as the dynamics and manifestations of power relationships are discussed. Throughout the narrative, control over consumption of food is a major issue and reveals the inequalities of the power balance as Hatterr is almost always an unwilling guest at mealtimes. Hatterr is seldom in charge of the food and on only a couple of occasions is able to share his meals, and both experiences reveal that although Hatterr was technically the one in charge of the food, thereby possessing some power, the power he has is entirely undermined by subsequent events.

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[72] *Hatterr,* (1949), p. 7.

Meals are important to Hatterr, not only for the physical purpose they serve to fortify the body, but also for the potential they possess for sharing experiences, opinions and advice. The amount of food shared may be considered as a barometer of the depth of the relationship. Deborah Lupton discusses the links between the interaction of food preparation and eating with the hero's emotional states and posits the view that food engenders a sense of kinship and of society, revealing itself as a token of love, and possibly, in more extreme circumstances, appears as a gesture of sacrifice when an already spartan meal needs to be shared.[73] This is frequently the case in *Hatterr* and the number of meals shared, 'Roland-marj', kippers, tea and stout with the Smythes, the meal shared with the 'Naked and Enlightened One', is balanced by attention to the details of the solitary meals taken such as the meals the Sage of Madras[74] itemises for Hatterr as evidence of his experiences in the wider world, but which are all meals which have been consumed alone. However, in the encounter with the Sage of the Wilderness it is the meal, its preparation and consumption which is the focus of Desani's revisions.

At this point, before analysing Desani's changes to this episode, it may be useful to return, for a moment, to Claude Lévi-Strauss. In *The Raw and the Cooked*[75] the author aligns cooking and language as a system which has opposition as its fundamental mode of operation and which regards the cooked as a cultural transformation of the raw which incorporates an underlying meaning that the raw and the cooked represent the uncivilised and the civilised respectively. There are some obvious limitations to his argument within the more general scope of postcolonial writing, but within the confines of this discussion, I am accepting Lévi-Strauss's view that such terms explain the polarities of human existence which define the process of transformation from one state to another and the impossibility of reversing the process. Lévi-Strauss also suggests that nothing is 'simply' cooked but that every meal, every item of food which undergoes the process of cooking becomes a manifestation, a revelation of implicit cultural norms revealing aspects of culture. Meals also reveal aspects of the power relations at work, identifying the act of food preparation and consumption as acts which are culturally derived and which present intimate yet overt details of the dynamics of power as it exists in a given community. This observation takes on heightened significance when considered in the light of revision which always seeks (at least in the first instance) to clarify systems and images. As such the words of the original are clearly revealed as something far from simply words and re-emerge as highly crafted images which attempt a more adequate conveyance of intended meaning. It is clear that Lévi-Strauss is searching for a single meaning of food, something which is universally recognisable and it is equally clear that he fails to complete his task.

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[73] Deborah Lupton, *Food, The Body and Self,* (London: Sage Publications, 1996), p. 30.

[74] G.V. Desani, *All About H. Hatterr,* Chapter III, 'Archbishop Walrus Versus Neophyte the Bitter-One'. All editions.

[75] Claude Lévi-Strauss, (1970).

Neither Desani nor Hatterr seek or find a single indicator which is an adequate identifier and negotiator of experience, preferring instead, to examine the ways in which symbols can be perpetually re-worked into newer, more appropriate describers of experience. However, the concept of Lévi-Strauss's quest to find a single meaning which encapsulates entirely the definitive aspects of an image, is useful in a study of revision which also seeks to find a single meaning but is perpetually informed and confused by all previous versions, seldom allowing the final version to remain as the definitive meaning.

Just as the text represents a particular way of writing, conforming to some rules and complying with some literary traditions and norms, so too does food, as the various categories outlined previously, conform to a specific social boundary system. As such organisation of the food into meals becomes a way of creating order from disorder. This last point is perhaps the most significant within the context of *Hatterr* where traditional meanings attributed to food are subverted, not only by the process of revision, but by the way in which Hatterr chooses to elaborate on his meals, confounding norms as he describes rudimentary meals as banquets and elaborate, gourmet meals as deeply unsatisfying. On the few occasions that Hatterr takes consumption into his own hands, he reveals himself to be reckless. This is particularly evident in the encounter between Hatterr and the disciple of the Sage of the Wilderness.

To return to the Sage of the Wilderness. Hatterr has been expelled from his Sahib club after the unfortunate incident with his *dhobin*. Banerrji helps Hatterr to find a job with a newspaper and his first assignment is to interview the Sage of the Wilderness. Heat and thirst on his journey compel him to drink heavily of the alcoholic *todii* and he arrives for the interview somewhat inebriated. He encounters the Sage and his disciple and is invited to stay for a meal. This part of Hatterr's narrative concerns a literal transformation of the raw into the cooked as the disciple prepares a meal, and a linguistic transformation, perhaps not of the 'raw' into the 'cooked' but potentially, of the rudimentary into the elaborate as the Disciple cooks the meal and Desani revises and reworks the 'original' account into the new. In the earliest editions (1949 and 1951) Desani pays scant attention to the details of the experience, especially with regard to the preparations for eating that the disciple undertakes. At this particular moment the earlier editions barely touch on the details of the food preparation:

> After some time, the disciple returned with rice, salt, greens and onions.[76]

which becomes:

> After some time, the disciple returned with rice, *oil*, salt, *garlic*, greens, *spice* and onions.[77]

In the first edition, rice fails to describe adequately both Hatterr's position within the community he finds himself in, and the significance of the meal he is sharing. It appears, in hindsight, to be too simple, too rudimentary an accompaniment to the awe he experiences and later, to the profundity of the experience he narrates. It would appear that as Desani re-read the text, the first edition seemed inadequate with regard to the description of the meal and the need to add emphasis to the experience became an imperative. Within the account of Hatterr's experience with the Sage and his disciple, the meal becomes a pivotal moment. For Hatterr, the disgrace of coming to see the Sage without bringing food is a stark reminder of the intricate 'rules' which denote and indeed delimit, cultural inclusion and exclusion. As such, although Hatterr is rescued from social disgrace by the disciple who is willing to accept Hatterr's money in lieu of food, an intensifying sense of unease/discomfort has set in. The revised version of the meal and the final additions to the text with regard to the disciple's obvious enjoyment of a meal paid for by somebody else, becomes one of the most uncomfortable episodes within this particular chapter of Hatterr's narrative and as such, requires distinct revisions to highlight the growing liminality of Hatterr as a character who has been chastised, emotionally, if not physically, by the disciple. It is important to note that although Hatterr is a guest at the meal, his sense of marginality is intensified by Desani's revisions as he is excluded from the meal. although not physically as such, but by dint of his earlier foolishness in drinking too much and feeling unwell, but also by a complex emotional state due to a mixture of awe for the Sage and abhorrence, yet respect, for the disciple.

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[76] *Hatterr,* (1949), p. 34.

[77] *Hatterr,* (1970), p. 52, my italics.

Clearly then, each attempt to clarify or elaborate the situation, highlights a drive to find a set of images and a language which is able to describe exactly the experience for H. Hatterr, either in a positive or a negative capacity. By the end of Hatterr's encounter with the Sage, it has become clear that both the Sage and his disciples are charlatans. They admit to owning a second-hand clothing business and to duping unsuspecting interviewers into parting with their clothing before sending them packing. Although Hatterr is duped, robbed of his clothes and publicly humiliated as he is forced to return to the office wearing nothing other than a small towel bearing the inscription 'Great Indian Peninsular Railway' and some ash, the experience is valuable to Hatterr. It is due to the importance, to the intrinsic worth of this particular experience, that Desani's revisions are necessary to attempt to outline the position of H. Hatterr within the context of both this episode and within the larger space of the text itself.

For Desani the addition of oil, garlic and spice may be an obvious act of explanation to a curious Western audience who may have been familiar with the idea of Indian cooking but as yet, had little or no actual experience of it. It is, however, more likely that Desani felt the original version to be somewhat bland and the introduction of the extra ingredients act as valuable locating images which place this experience in a certain place at a certain time - creating an image to stimulate the senses and intensify the focus of the reader onto the food and its preparation. The ingredients themselves are profoundly evocative of the East and if the reader was in any doubt of the intrinsic

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differences between East and West, the introduction of these token ingredients shortly followed by a revised explanation of the cooking process leaves the reader in little or no doubt that what is being undertaken here is not simply cooking or listing of ingredients but a less than subtle reminder that what the reader is experiencing is absolutely familiar to Hatterr, yet even this familiarity does not equate to belonging. For Hatterr, being aware of the importance or relevance of cultural indicators such as the addition of spices here, is not sufficient to grant him the sense of belonging he craves which is inextricably linked to his quest for acceptance and elevation within the power structures he experiences. Even before the cooking begins Hatterr is alerted to the fact that he has committed a profound faux-pas by neglecting to bring the food with him and comments on his own flimsy knowledge of local culture:

> I remembered too late, alas, the wholesome Indian custom of never going to see a holy man empty-handed.[78]

This lack, when laid alongside the heightened description of the meal preparation and consumption, reveals the possibility that Desani's own awareness of Hatterr's relationship with his cultural heritage is tenuous, relying as it does on indicators provided by others. It is interesting, therefore, that Hatterr is aware of the indicators but that for one reason or another he has organised the indicators in a sequence of priority which does not adhere to the preferred cultural norms of the community he is desperately seeking to be a part of.

The following quotes indicate Desani's attention to detail and serve to highlight both his awareness of the need to clarify unfamiliar details for a Western audience as well as to embellish Hatterr's account to the point where he reveals himself to be a narrator with an eye for detail. They also begin the process of exploring the need to realign Hatterr's own norms into a more familiar pattern:

> Yonder, under a palm, he made a fire, and began curry-cooking.[79]

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[78] *Hatterr,* (1949), p. 34.

Which becomes:

> Yonder, under a palm, *he made arrangements for a cook-out* and began curry-cooking *on a cow dung fire and the set-ups: now and then drumming the aluminium stew-pan with a ladle.*[80]

For Desani the simple act of preparing a meal requires some clarification and the introduction of the details above completes the scene, leaving the reader in no doubt about the rudimentary and familiar duty of cooking as seen through the eyes of H. Hatterr in a new, revised way. Although it is clear that this is a fairly basic example of cooking it is interesting that an increase in the amount of detail offered with regard to the preparations and process of cooking, increases both the reader's and the narrator's interest in this man who looked, at first to be a mere minion, working for the Sage of the Wilderness. Later events in this particular chapter make it clear that the disciple has an active role to play in the 'work' of the Sage and as such the increase in detail, setting up an image of a far more intricate meal ensures that the reader is alerted to the potential of the disciple for playing a key part in the ensuing encounter.

The second, and potentially more significant revision of this particular incident occurs as Hatterr, is forced to partake in the meal. He is an unwilling participant due to his 'terrific hang-over'.[81] He claims:

> I entered the hut, and joined-in in the meal.[82]

Which becomes:

> I entered the hut, and joined-in the meal: *the rice spread on banana leaves and the sauce crowning it.*[83]

For Hatterr, this is no longer 'simply' a meal. It is an ordeal to be endured in order to secure his goal; an audience with the Sage. His discomfort is propounded by the extra

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[79] *Ibid.*

[80] *Hatterr,* (1970), p. 52, my italics.

[81] *Hatterr,* (1949), p. 35.

[82] *Ibid.*, p. 35.

details which do not, for Hatterr, create a comfortable sensory experience such as a mouth-watering anticipation of the food to come, but intensify the almost overwhelming feeling of discomfort and nausea created by his previous over-indulgence. The sauce 'crowning' the meal becomes a pivotal image for Hatterr, revealing his heightened sensitivity and awareness of his own, self-inflicted anguish. For Desani, however, the ability to revise the original account allows him to compound the images of the meal until it is clear that the power balance within the very small confines of this meal time are being explored using an intricate framework of reference and suggestion. Hatterr has been forced to admit that he lacks cultural awareness, as he forgot to bring the food in the first place and the disciple who is originally viewed by Hatterr as nothing more than a servant, becomes symbolic of the gap between power and powerlessness as a mediating being who seems to represent powerlessness, as a disciple, but who is in fact, the holder of power, able to grant or deny access to the Sage.

The enormity of Hatterr's discomfort is highlighted further as the meal progresses. As the meal is served to Hatterr by the disciple, Hatterr's account is as follows:

> I was heavy with a terrific hang-over, a brick in the head larger than any yielded by any peg in the Eastern Club-history, but, as the disciple beckoned me, I entered the hut, and joined-in in the meal.
> [...] I had a bucket of water, and less than my share of rice.
> The disciple went into the attack, however, in a big way, gorging, and doing himself proud.[84]

By 1951 the account has begun to change shape:

> I was heavy with a terrific hang-over, a brick in the head larger than any yielded by any peg in the Eastern club-history, but, as the disciple beckoned me, I entered the hut, and joined-in in the meal.
> [...] I had a bucket of water, and less than my share of the *chow mein.*
> The disciple went into the attack, however, in a big way, *shoving the stuff in with full five of his fingers,* gorging, and doing himself proud.[85]

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[83] *Hatterr,* (1970), p.52, my italics.
[84] *Hatterr*, (1949), p. 35.
[85] *Hatterr,* (1951), p. 26, my italics.

By the final revision the account is complete:

> I was heavy with a terrific hang-over, a brick in the head bigger than any yielded by any peg-*session* in the Eastern club- history, but, as the disciple beckoned me, I entered the hut, and joined-in the meal: *the rice spread on banana leaves and the sauce crowning it.*
> [...] I had a bucket of water, and less than my share of the *chow, gulped down awkwardly by plying the ladle which I fetched in from under the yonder palm.*
> The disciple went into the attack, however, in a big way, shoving the stuff in with full five fingers, gorging *and gormandising* and doing himself proud: *and belching mightily too.*[86]

This final account leaves the reader in no doubt as to the character of the disciple who, as it turns out, is a charlatan. The original account where the disciple does himself proud re-emerges in the final account as a picture of a greedy, gluttonous being who, as he gorges on the food in front of him, metaphorically feasts on the gullibility of H. Hatterr and the 'gormandising', gulping and belching all serve to make Hatterr uncomfortable both socially as he is unable to enjoy the meal in a like manner, and physically as his hangover prevents him from appreciating the gourmet qualities of the meal. The revision to 'chow mein' is suggestive of a mixture of the oriental and the colloquial, although it should be pointed out that it may indeed be neither. Whilst chow is slang for food, chow mein is a very specific description of a dish consisting of fried noodles with shredded meat or shrimps and vegetables.[87] At this particular moment within Hatterr's account any cultural indicators which he was aspiring to tap into, look to be beyond his reach. He cannot enjoy the meal with the disciple and although the revised accounts reveal Hatterr's increasing interest in the ingredients and the preparation of the meal, the culmination of this encounter with food, despite the elaborations to the account, becomes an indigestible and largely negative exploration of the power structures at work here. As a guest Hatterr had assumed that he was being honoured in some way and the realisation that he has created a set of circumstances, as he gets drunk, that deny him any claim to 'honour' is almost more than he can bear. At this moment, the tone is set for almost all of Hatterr's encounters with food and this individual experience becomes a guiding pattern for all others.

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[86] *Hatterr,* (1970), pp. 52-53, my italics.

[87] From the Chinese, *chao mian,* meaning fried flour.

For Desani, Hatterr, Lévi-Strauss and for Homi Bhabha, power structures are intrinsically linked to a particular set of significant cultural meanings which may appear to be very general but ultimately possess the potential to dictate and prescribe experience and identity. Lévi-Strauss embraces them, Bhabha, subverts them, Desani uses them in an attempt to erase any gaps/ellipses/unintended meanings and Hatterr struggles continually, to understand and order these cultural indicators in an attempt to extort the meaning of his life. An example of how Desani and Hatterr work together to create a dialogue which both embraces and challenges the rigidity of significant cultural meanings occurs in Hatterr's description of a 'share of the chow' with its suggestion of the Oriental, or at the very least, of a 'foreign' yet familiar food. For him, and for his narrator, chow is not meant to be just chow mein, not just 'foreign' or unfamiliar food. It becomes a vehicle for debating societal location as much as textual ambiguity, insisting as it does on the impermanence of every sign, which in turn, calls in question the validity of mythic structures which derive meaning from distinct collections of signs or cultural indicators. Whilst this appears to contradict much of Lévi-Strauss's arguments regarding myth, it is possible to align both arguments. For Claude Lévi-Strauss, myth is both a unique interpretation of a collection of signs or signifiers, as well as an intrinsic part of the whole of myth as a way of debating culture. For Desani, myths provide the basis for change. They do not necessarily provide a definitive interpretation of any given sign, cultural or linguistic. As such, any exploration of the relationship between cultural indicators and culture itself, requires elements of both structuralism and contemporary literary theories such as Bhabha's to explore the ways in which a debate on culture within such an extensively revised text can be undertaken. It is clear that such a text derives much of its power from the attempt to create a definitive account whilst simultaneously creating a text revealing the gaps between what was and what is. As such neither Lévi-Strauss nor Bhabha alone will suffice. It is clear that Desani's selection of material is not representative of a unique interpretation of culture but is an ongoing negotiation of what constitutes culture and the language best employed to describe. As such, it will require an interpretation which acknowledges the role of the binaries whilst exploring and then exploiting the very notion of fixity that they suggest.

Conclusion

This chapter set out to debate Desani's revision in *All About H. Hatterr,* focussing on the issue of food and consumption, power and location. It has become evident that revision, as a subject is deeply problematic, relying on interpretation of intention at every turn. Such a reliance requires a way of interpreting the text that attempts to understand authorial intention whilst exploring the text using all the tools available. By considering Desani's work in the light of what would appear, on first inspection, to be two diametrically opposed modes of interpretation, the ambivalence and ambiguity suggested and explored by the process of revision can be located within an interpretative framework which is both innovative and thorough.

For H. Hatterr both food and power are compelling issues whose possession requires his undivided attention throughout the duration of his adventures. His own access to power is severely restricted for a number of reasons; his own unique and unorthodox ordering of cultural norms which is at odds with the culture which surrounds him, as witnessed during his visit to the Sage of the Wilderness; his inability to adequately inscribe and describe his experiences which necessitates a re-working of the text in the form of revision, and finally, his inability to assess accurately the level of power held by any individual he encounters, including himself. As the accounts of food preparation and consumption are amended from one edition to another Hatterr strives to order his experience so that he can begin to re-assess issues of power and impotence. Food becomes a vehicle for debating and negotiating ways of seeing by relating the process of transforming the raw into the cooked and then re-working it into a re-evaluation of the power structures which dominate a given society.

Ultimately Desani's food revisions, with regard to issues of power, liminality and control, come to represent a way in which the author, Desani and the narrator, H. Hatterr can explore and attempt to clarify significant moments within the text. Such moments exist as

Desani explores the preparation and consumption of food, experiences which place Hatterr within a context set to challenge his personal understanding of cultural norms with which he can identify himself as a member of the society he seeks inclusion within. With the American in the Milk Bar, Desani adds alcohol in an attempt to be topical, to introduce something which will be familiar to the American. With Pilliwinks, the battle between the two men begins with the selection of milk and the antique wine glass and ends with Hatterr being summarily dismissed. The most significant exploration of the links between food and power occurs as Hatterr encounters the Sage of the Wilderness and is forced, not only to re-assess his relationship with the Sage and the disciple but is further driven to re-write the account, adding emphasis simultaneously to reveal the gaps in his own understanding of both culture and power, and to invest the text with a more significant dialogue with power and culture.

When taken as a topic for debate in such terms, food becomes a useful and fascinating tool for the exploration of meaning ultimately to reveal the tenuous but tangible binds which create a coalescence between man and food, man and body, man and power and man and consumption. Within the boundaries of this debate, food and all it symbolises at both a personal and universal level, becomes a useful tool for investigating the changes that G. V. Desani made to the references to food and provides a way of looking into the mind of the artist who creates and then recreates, investing the symbols and the gestures with new meaning.

As such what Desani undertakes is not so much a progression from the ‘raw’ to the ‘cooked’ but is nonetheless a complete metamorphic change, enacted upon the text through the process of revision. Desani’s insistence on the validity of food images as a site for re-evaluation and his propensity for viewing the original version as a raw product becomes the medium through which the ‘cooked’ version can be investigated. This insistence reveals the possibility that the original version, the ‘raw’ product, serves its purpose only as a base material to be redefined in terms deemed to be more suitable, more articulate, more decisive or frequently, simply more contemporary. For Desani the drive to revise Hatterr’s account of food and of eating is a definitive attempt to elaborate and locate both character and food within a specific framework which in earlier editions appeared to be made of the flimsiest materials, allowing for either of two literary projects: complete and absolute insistence on the intrinsic image presented as a concrete and inflexible one, or alternatively, as an image so vague as to warrant no further inspection of the particular choice of food mentioned.

The revised and compounded images reveal the author's insistence upon the metaphysical and allegorical implications of each and every image. As such Desani's food revisions become a 'matrix of meanings', always referring back to an original and forward to a newer version. As Levi-Strauss suggests:

> [...] the cooking of a society is a language in which it unconsciously translates its structure, or else resigns itself, still unconsciously, to revealing its contradictions.[88]

For Desani, the temptation to investigate the unconscious here is overwhelming and every account of food presents the possibility of exploring the contradictions structuring the framework of culture and which create the separations between inclusion and exclusion and between the powerful and powerless using the culturally-defined image of food. Desani views both his account and his revisions as intrinsic to the process of negotiating a structure such as culture which is simultaneously rigid, as it creates borders of inclusion and exclusion[89], and fragile as the borders may be arbitrary. It is clear that Lévi-Strauss's argument regarding cooking, is one Desani enacts through his revisions, presenting the reader with evidence of the contradictions which underpin society and make it difficult for H. Hatterr to experience the sense of belonging that he seeks. For Hatterr the contradictions existing in society are relived as his account is changed from one edition to the next and reveal that although he controls the narrative he is unable, in earlier accounts, to find adequate language for describing his perception of his role or position within society.

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[88] Claude Levi-Strauss, 'The Culinary Triangle', in Carole Counihan and Penny Van Esterick, *Food and Culture: A Reader,* (London: Routledge, 1997), p. 35.

[89] It is also possible to view culture as externally defined (by another culture) and as such the borders are perhaps more rigid still, yet equally, are more arbitrary, being entirely dependent on those outside of the culture for determination.

It is clear that later revised accounts aim to locate Hatterr centrally within the narrative, yet it is equally apparent that the elaborations he undertakes appear to remove Hatterr further from the action, creating a distance between him and the action, only serving to highlight his position as a marginal character who occupies some form of centrality to the action by the mere fact of his liminality.

Ultimately, as Desani revises Hatterr's encounters with food he creates an awkwardness that is difficult to penetrate. Hatterr reveals himself through his narratives, to be a perpetually marginalised figure whose interaction with others is complex, and for the most part, unsatisfactory. The social occasion of the meal, with its possibilities for fellowship serve only to exclude Hatterr, forcing him to acknowledge that being a part of an experience is not necessarily the same as belonging.

Chapter Four

Shirtdom and Skirtdom: Women in *All About H. Hatterr*

Where I come from, [...] we recognise only *two* kinds of Woman. The good and the rotten.[1]

Men have been known to nurse a private image of a cherished woman, as a source of all physical, psychological, spiritual and *financial* comfort. If you would lay claim to velvet, wealth is a necessity. Well, after a fierce encounter, involving excessive familiarity, adherence (overt and clandestine), bruised, the same men are known to name such a treat of a woman *hog!* and address all womankind with a hidebound hate thereafter.[2]

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[1] G.V. Desani, *All About H. Hatterr,* (London: The Saturn Press, 1949), p. 26.

[2] G.V. Desani, *Hali and Collected Stories,* (New York: McPherson and Company, 1991), p. 105.

This chapter will consider the role and depiction of women in *All About H. Hatterr* and the revisions Desani makes to his text with regard to Hatterr's relationship with women. From the earliest mention of women in Hatterr's narrative, it is clear that the dynamics of this relationship are complex and that only a detailed analysis of the devices and language used to convey Hatterr's experience of women, can begin the process of critically examining this particular aspect of the text.

The first section deals with issues of feminist interpretation of a text which appears to resist the possibility of such interpretation. This section considers the construction of and dialogue with women in *All About H. Hatterr*, a text which presents itself as a projection of Hatterr's developing mistrust of women and all they stand for. However, it is clear that there are a number of factors influencing Hatterr's particular interpretation of women, and whilst these factors do not excuse his deepening resentment, they are worthy of discussion. For Hatterr, women are complex, indecipherable beings, perpetually seeking to undermine his highly developed sense of self. As such, his narrative becomes an attempt to align both his own sense of identity as a man in the world, with a powerful, instinctive urge to understand and align women, within this world.

The second section provides a detailed textual analysis which considers both the progressive deterioration of Hatterr's relationship with women as well as the textual changes, inserted by G. V. Desani. It considers the revisions as they occur in each chapter and thus, provides some sort of progression from Hatterr's initial question which asks if a 'feller can survive the kiss of an embittered woman?'[3] The revisions are intended to enhance Hatterr's account, albeit to the detriment of the women he encounters and describes, and to a certain extent they do. However, it is clear that a detailed analysis of the revisions reveals an awkwardness between accounts which, in turn, suggests that Hatterr's understanding of women and the narrative strategy he employs when discussing women is dependent on all past accounts of women. As each new edition of *Hatterr* appears, it becomes easier for H. Hatterr and for Desani, to consider Hatterr's experiences with women in all accounts. This provides a space from which G. V. Desani is able to renegotiate Hatterr's dialogue, taking into account all versions of his experience and to return repeatedly to the question regarding the possibility of recovering from the 'kiss of an embittered woman'.

Section 1

This section sets out to chart the progression of Hatterr's attitude to women in *All About H. Hatterr,* whilst aligning it with some current critical work focussing on the position of woman as other. The discussion will set up a dialogue between the fragility of Hatterr's own identity in relation to the women he encounters, and the need he has to set himself as diametrically opposed to all that women stand for, whilst revealing his own deeply problematic combination of avowal and disavowal of the importance of women in his life. Far from creating a dialogue with misogynism, this chapter seeks to reveal the ways in which Hatterr uses women to explore and debate his own sense of identity, ultimately revealing the complex dynamics of his relationships with women.

Within the discourse of feminist writing the issue of writing back is a persistent theme. There is an almost overwhelming desire to address the narratives imposed upon women which deny them both the right and the access to a sense of autonomy. Whilst Desani's text *All About H. Hatterr* reveals itself as exactly the type of narrative requiring such a close inspection of the role of women and the way in which their experiences are prescribed by the narrator H. Hatterr, there are some difficulties inherent in reading a text in this way. The women within the text are given very little voice. On the whole, their experiences are narrated by H. Hatterr and his deteriorating relationship with women, beginning at the commencement of the text, influences every encounter, speech by, or concerning, women and images of women in general. Whilst this looks to be the type of text requiring a radical investigation and re-inspection with regard to the role and account of women, the aim here is to debate the ways in which Hatterr uses women as the boundary markers to define his own existence. Clearly this suggestion is profoundly problematic and requires further investigation.

Anne McClintock discusses the role of women occupying such a boundary situation within the context of colonialism and imperialism as a position that required and indeed adopted a 'strategy of violent contamination' in what appeared to be the 'predominantly male

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[3] *Hatterr,* (1949), p. 12.

agon of empire'.[4] Clearly, the project of imperialism and the project Hatterr undertakes to narrate his experiences both with and without women, are two separate entities. However, there are links and it is these links and the dynamics of the relationship between Hatterr's account of women and his acute awareness of the fragility of his own identity in the face of the potential power of women, that will be explored in this chapter. Anne McClintock considers women as boundary figures who literally mark the margins of a new world and as such, possess the potential to challenge the male thus creating what she describes as an 'anxious vision'. She claims that:

> This anxious vision marks one aspect, [...] of a recurrent doubling in male imperial discourse. This may be seen as the simultaneous dread of catastrophic boundary *loss* (implosion), associated with fears of impotence and infantilization and attended by an *excess* of boundary order and fantasies of unlimited power. [...] [It] becomes a scene of ambivalence, suspended between an imperial megalomania, with its fantasy of unstoppable rapine - and a contradictory fear of engulfment, with its fantasy of dismemberment and emasculation. The scene [...] is a document both of paranoia and megalomania.[5]

At this particular point in McClintock's argument she is assessing the importance of Theodore Galle's engraving, 'America' ca.1600, after a drawing by Jan van der Straet (ca. 1575) which depicts the 'discovery' of America. A naked woman steps from a hammock to greet a 'fully armoured Vespucci'. McClintock points out that first appearances would suggest that her nakedness and her hand extended to the newcomer, indicate both a sexual invitation and submissiveness. She goes on to say that there is a double story being played out here. In the background, what appears to be two females are 'spit-roasting a human leg'. She suggests that the foreground may suggest a woman who is 'naked, subservient and vulnerable to his advance' but the background reveals the male body 'literally in pieces, while the women are actively and powerfully engaged'.[6] McClintock points out that this represents a crisis in male identity which is then projected onto the women within the particular context and as such suggests that there is an element of wholeness, of completeness within the women that is absent in the male. Clearly then, issues of power allocation are not as they may first appear.

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[4] Anne McClintock *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest,* (London: Routledge, 1995), p. 24. McClintock's text considers the nature and dynamics of the 'dangerous liaisons' between gender, race and class that both shaped and dismantled British colonialism. She explores the sexualizing of the *terra incognita* employing feminist, postcolonial, psychoanalytic and socialist theories to narrate the moment of contact between coloniser and native, as well as the period following this primary encounter.. As such, her discourse concerning women as boundary markers is of some significance in this debate on Hatterr and the women in his life.

[5] *Ibid.*, pp. 26- 27.

[6] *Ibid.*, pp. 25- 26.

For Hatterr, the projection of his own weakness onto an admittedly influential and powerful other is essential to his personal survival. As Hatterr is discussing women he considers the validity of a fictitious parliamentary bill:

> ([...] "*All women of whatever age, rank, profession or degree, whether virgins, maids or widows, that shall impose upon, seduce, and betray into matrimony any of His Majesty's subjects, by scents, paints, cosmetic washes, artificial teeth, false hair, Spanish wool, iron stays, high-heeled shoes, bolstered hips, shall suffer the penalties of witchcraft, the marriage standing null and void.*")[7]

This speech comes directly after Hatterr's diatribe against his wife who he feels failed him in her duty to provide a son and heir for him. He feels that he was tricked into marriage and that as a result, all women who commit the same offence should be severely dealt with. The images of women outlined above are representative of the constant struggle within Hatterr's narrative which seeks to align women and to order their existence in such a way that his own identity can be moulded. It would be plausible to suggest that Hatterr's relationship is built less on a complex amalgam of paranoia and megalomania, and more on paranoia and lust, both infused and inflected with a deepening sense of the vastness of the gap between man and woman and between his expectations for the relationship between man and woman and the reality and experience of his life. As such, the ambivalence which is the forceful undercurrent to imperialism emerges within Hatterr's narrative as an ambivalence drawing its strength from lack of understanding and a genuine and violent unwillingness to attempt to consider women as anything other than diametrically opposed to all that he stands for and believes in.

McClintock goes on to explore the ways in which feminist writers have considered women. She discusses Luce Irigaray's work and quotes her as claiming that 'the male insistence on marking ('the product of copulation with *his own name*') stems from the uncertainty of the male's relation to origins'.[8] As such, this direct reflection of the roots of power is particularly relevant to H. Hatterr, a man whose own origins are not uncertain but are nonetheless somewhat ambiguous. As the son of a Malay woman from whom he was separated at a very early age, and a European father who is dead, he feels that he is a neither/nor, either/or type of figure, potentially able to draw on both sites of origin, yet practically, unable to utilise either effectively. He views procreation as a possible means of redeeming himself but this possibility is denied him '[...] *despite days and days of biological observation and anticipation, it didn't come off*'.[9] With this denial comes the need to accept that his 'own name' and all that it has come to mean to Hatterr, will disappear with him. He makes it clear that his chief concern when entering into marriage was to produce a son and heir:

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[7] *Hatterr*, (1949), p. 194, (Author's italics).

[8] Luce Irigaray, *Speculum of the Other Woman,* Trans. Gillian C. Cill, Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 1974, p. 23, quoted in Anne McClintock, *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest,* (London: Routledge, 1995), p. 29.

> [...] *an heir presumptive to survive me* [...].
> *Bred me a young feller, whose achievements might have compensated me for my own delinquency, checkmates, and labours-in-vain. A scion, who might have exalted me, and maybe - I wouldn't have minded - hurt me.*[10]

Clearly, just as Irigaray suggests that procreation is necessary to order man's existence, it is apparent from the above quote that Hatterr requires an heir (male of course) not only to continue the Hatterr line, but more importantly to establish a line, a sense of heredity projecting both backwards to the past and forwards into the future, which Hatterr feels to be absent in his own life. It is interesting to note that Hatterr's desire for an heir is not entirely restricted to a biological son. In the chapter entitled 'Walrus Versus the Bitter-One' Hatterr encounters Always-Happy XX just as he has been speculating on his own lack of success as a beggar. He says:

> As beggars go, I had been a hell of a lonely one. I did not know the technique of solitary meditation, and I had failed to attract a disciple, a chap who might have served one, begged for one, scouted, and worshipped one into the bargain [...].[11]

Clearly for Hatterr, he requires someone to exalt or worship him. In the absence of a biological heir, he had assumed that his wife (and of course, much earlier on, his mother) would fulfil this need in him. His narrative becomes an exploration of his pursuit of unconditional love which he assumes will include a level of worship.

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[9] *Hatterr*, (1949), p. 193, (Author's italics).
[10] *Hatterr,* (1949), p. 193, (Author's italics).

The origins and subsequent possession of power, reveals itself traditionally in a patriarchal discourse of male superiority and suggests that continuance of the dialogue equates to a continuance of the power structure. For Hatterr, having a son would not only continue the process he has begun, but more importantly, begin to create a past which is not Hatterr's past. He wants not only a new future, but more insistently, a new and re-invented past, free of mistakes, misconceptions, and perhaps free of the ambivalent and distressing origins responsible for creating a life for H. Hatterr. His life has been based on separation, attempts at renewal and above all, an instability which can only be negotiated through a series of encounters and experiences designed to order Hatterr's life at the expense of the 'other'. In most cases the 'other' is Woman who frames the narrative from its opening moments as Hatterr outlines the details of his birth and subsequent separation from his mother, to the end of the narrative as Hatterr's wife returns to him unexpectedly and embarrasses him in front of respected guests, making him a laughing stock in his own home.[12] It should be noted that there is one final reference to woman as Hatterr concludes his narrative. He is summing up his life experiences and is debating his future, in either Heaven or Hell. As he discusses the possibility of going to Hell he considers being rescued by some 'Rev. lamah' who could consult the Vicar the 'pallid phantom of the jute merchant, who forever parted me from my mother', and of being sent to Heaven instead.[13] This final reminder, to the reader, of his separation from his mother and the image of the separator as a pallid phantom, is a poignant one. Although Hatterr has managed to succeed in some measure, despite this early separation, he is eternally scarred by the experience.[14]

The mother who could not keep him and the wife whom he could not keep become profoundly symbolic of his relationship with all women who fall into one or other of these two irreconcilable categories. One further point that McClintock makes with regard to origins and perpetuation of the power base is that, 'The insistence on the patrimony marks a denial: that something different (a woman) is needed to guarantee the reproduction of the

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[11] *Hatterr,* (1949), p. 95.

[12] Although technically, not the end of the narrative, this is the last point that Hatterr mentions women to any great extent. The remainder of his narrative is taken up with one last encounter with the Sage of All-India and becomes a philosophical, introspective analysis of his life thus far and his conclusions as to the nature and experience of Life.

[13] After the death of his parents Hatterr became the ward of a Scottish Jute merchant who promptly had him adopted by the English Missionary Society as an 'orphan-ward'. The vicar Hatterr refers to is the head of this society and is his mentor. He was also responsible for Hatterr's choice of name, "(H for the nom de plume 'Hindustaaniwalla', and 'Hatterr', the nom de guerre inspired by the Rev. the Head's too-large-for-him-hat!)"

[14] *Hatterr,* (1949), pp. 238-9.

same – the son with the same name as the father'.[15] The emphasis on the 'need' to create a replica of the father is, for Irigaray, the prime motivating force behind patriarchal projects such as Imperialism and H. Hatterr has a similar motivation. It is interesting to note that just as Imperialism requires the power to conquer, procreate and re-create, Hatterr, as a result of his early history and his subsequent failure to engage with women in the sense he feels he should engage, is unable to forget or forgive his experience of marriage. It is Hatterr's extraordinary lack of power that compels him in the first instance to seek to 'conquer' women and then when this fails, as it surely must, he readjusts his quest and employs the only true weapon he has at his disposal, that of language.[16] When he wields this at the women he encounters, they stand little chance of emerging in a positive and constructive light. When this weapon is combined with the 'interference' of an author (Desani) who chooses to revise previous versions of the encounters, the end result becomes a fascinating insight into the progression of a deteriorating relationship between man and woman which spans a life time and whose outcome is predicted within the very first encounter.

The construction of women in *All About H. Hatterr* poses some interesting questions which begin the process of debating this progressively deteriorating relationship between H. Hatterr and the women he encounters. Perhaps the first question that arises is, what are some of the difficulties in the relationship between the ideological and the experiential in the text, that is, the ways in which the women in the text are portrayed? In order to be able to answer this question it is necessary to analyse the text and to consider the language and the images that are carefully selected in order to create and describe the lives that the women in Hatterr's life lead, their relationships with both him and the other characters, and the ideological constructions employed to 'describe' them, all of which are of prime importance.

Just as the women in the text, the *dhobin*, Hatterr's wife the Kiss-curl, Rosie Smythe, Sundari and even Mrs Banerrji, are representative of the complex dynamics of the relationship between the ideological (in this case, the way in which Hatterr views them) and the experiential (the ways in which they live), they also become perhaps the most incisive indicator of the limits of Hatterr's own comprehension of the world around him. For him, the world is constructed of numerous sets of 'us and them', or more acutely of 'same and other' and the language and the images Hatterr selects to describe women and ultimately to prescribe their experience within his account, are of prime importance.

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[15] Irigaray, (1974), p. 74.

[16] It should be noted that Hatterr does not set out to 'conquer' women but as his encounters and relationships with them fail to develop appropriately (for him) it becomes a quest to get beneath the skin of woman and understand her. This is, of course complicated by the fact that Hatterr, even at the beginning of the narrative, has a well-developed and well-practised understanding of woman, uniquely created from past experiences.

Perhaps the most telling remark made by Hatterr with regard to this dependence on maintaining binaries occurs in the opening chapter (quoted at the beginning of this chapter), as women are divided into two sorts, the good and the rotten. It becomes clear as the narrative develops that Hatterr is unable to locate woman in any category that might/does exist between the two. As such, this dependence on binaries and the ability to maintain them through language, takes on heightened significance when viewed in the light of the multiple changes G. V. Desani makes to Hatterr's narrative with regard to women. It becomes indicative of the growing resentment Hatterr feels towards, in the first instance, a single woman, and then progresses to a universal mistrust of women. For Hatterr, it becomes impossible to view his individual life encounters as anything other than progressive, and just as he concludes his narrative with the summation that Life is Contrast, so all his encounters with women become one experience, revealing the incommensurable gap existing between who and what he is and all that women represent. Women are not like him, they do not possess any of his attributes and are therefore, in his eyes, the ultimate 'other'. It is an interesting concept that Hatterr, above all other characters in the text, is the character who is most acutely aware of his weaknesses and failings. As such, his reflections on women serve a dual purpose, that of revealing the power that women hold to expose and manipulate the weaknesses in men, and of the intrinsic weakness that is present in Hatterr, to be eternally duped by others. It is not only the discrepancy between the ideological and the experiential that exists in the account of women in *All About H. Hatterr* that stands out in the narrative, but a similar discrepancy exists in Hatterr's attitude towards women. His ideological construction of women is so fragile that it threatens to overwhelm him time and again. He wants to believe that women are beautiful, sensuous, intelligent, fertile and attracted to him, but is acutely aware that they only appear to be all of these things whilst they continually reveal themselves to him to be duplicitous, manipulative, scheming and superficial.[17] His experience with women reveals that women are actually a complicated, and for him, confusing, combination of all of the above. However, this is not acceptable and his own confusion of emotions can only find one outlet, a damming indictment of women in general which grows over time and through experience.

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[17] There are numerous points within his narrative where Hatter enters into a tirade against women. He berates Rosie Smythe for her ability to manipulate his feelings (1949, p. 55-56) and send him into a 'state of intellectual wipe-out, [...]'. He curses his wife for trapping him into a sterile marriage when he only married in order to have children, (1949, p. 192-3). He is appalled by his weakness in his encounter with Sri Harrow-voo who tells the story of Sundari as a salutary lesson against the perils of lust but manages only to inflame Hatterr's desire to an extraordinary pitch, ' I would have given pints of blood for a few moments with A. Singha's fairy! And more pints of the luck for sinning with her!' (1949, p.143).

The second question regarding Hatterr's understanding of and dialogue with women may be: what view of women is Desani attempting to create in the text and what is it in the original view/portrayal that fails to maintain its significance over time? It is clear within the text, as a whole, that Hatterr is seeking enlightenment and perhaps more importantly, a sense of belonging which he hopes will engender a new awareness of his own identity. He is confused by his mixed race heritage, the separation from his parents, and his unorthodox childhood spent at a Mission where the burden of his parental loss is acute:

> It was then that I found the constant childhood preoccupation with the whereabouts of my mother unbearable: [...].[18]

It is important to note the emphasis that Hatterr lays on the loss of his mother from whom he was forcibly removed and that this image of separation is one that haunts him throughout his adventures. This would seem to suggest that Desani is aiming to create an image of woman within the text, reflective of this sense of loss, a loss that is irreversible and permeates and influences all Hatterr's other encounters with women. In order to be able to convey his feeling Hatterr requires a focus with which he can explore all the discrepancies in his life. Women provide almost all of the material he needs. There are moments in the text when Hatterr is unable to articulate himself well and he projects this sense of lack onto women who are frequently denied the power to speak for themselves. What Hatterr does is to describe the women he encounters in terms of his own emotions, actions and speech, emerging as a direct reflection of his own inability to consider them as anything other than diametrically opposed to all that he represents, experiences and desires.

Finally, it is impossible to consider Hatterr's dialogue with women without giving some consideration to the development of his attitude in direct relation to the project of revision. Therefore it is pertinent to ask to what extent are Desani's seemingly progressive, misogynistic revisions, an attempt to constitute or reconstitute the patriarchies within the communities Hatterr moves in and between?

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[18] *Hatterr*, (1949), p. 18.

The tone for both Desani's revisions concerning women and Hatterr's account of his relationship with women is set at the very beginning of Hatterr's narrative with a change which, although apparently minor, is none the less interesting. The 1949 and 1951 editions are dedicated to Kanhayalal Savaldas, who was a modest benefactor and a friend of Desani's during his time in London. Within the body of the text Desani in his 'All About Mr. Hatterr' claims that the book is written to '[...] KANHAYALAL SAVALDAS, the most loyal and faithful of friends'.[19] The later editions carry a dedication before the main body of the text which reads, 'For Kanhayalal Savaldas to acknowledge a debt of gratitude'. However, within the body of the text Desani acknowledges that his book is written for:

> [...] Kumari ... the most loyal and faithful of friends. [...] I wanted to thank her for being, er, absent. (Acknowledging her singular virtue, I had once toyed with the idea of marrying her, y'see.)[20]

Kumari is a purely fictitious creation which makes the discrepancies between the formal dedication of the book and the dedication within Hatterr's narrative interesting. With the introduction of a female character in the later editions the text then requires revision with regard to gender in the chapter entitled 'All About ...' and also adds a significant dimension to the warning from the palmist Hatterr and Kumari encounter on the road. The palmist informs Hatterr that he will die by assassination, thereby forcing Hatterr to confront the fact that his companion would become a widow if she marries him. This apparently ominous warning, concerning, for Hatterr, the indelible link between love/marriage and death, is to haunt him throughout his multiple encounters with women and to remain, although never referred to again, as a warning impelling Hatterr both to write his account and constantly to challenge the authority of the warning. The one constant between revisions with regard to the dedication is that Hatterr is unable to tell the truth to this 'most loyal and faithful of friends' regardless of sex or type or depth of relationship.

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[19] *Hatterr*, (1949), p. 3. It should be noted that subsequent editions vary in the titling of this introductory chapter. In 1951 it is 'All About H. Hatterr', in 1970 and all further editions it is 'All About ...'.

[20] G.V. Desani, *All About H. Hatterr,* (New York: Farrar Straus and Young, 1951), pp13-14. It should also be noted that it is here that the distinction between actual author and the fictional author (Hatterr) is first seen. Throughout the text this distinction is continually put under pressure positing particular problems of authorial credibility – especially in the light of Desani's claim that nothing he says is the truth (*Hatterr,* 1949, p. 3).

Section 2

With regard to aspects of revision within the text, one of the chief focuses for revision lies in the subject and description of women and their relationship with Hatterr as well as with the other men in the text. By considering individual revisions concerning women, it is possible to chart the progression of an intensifying yet ambivalent attitude towards women which raises interesting questions with regard to the dynamics of the relationship between H. Hatterr and women and between G.V. Desani and the women in his texts.

The progression of this apparently deteriorating relationship within the text is of prime interest and when aligned with a detailed analysis of the individual and collective revisions regarding Hatterr's relationship with women, becomes an intriguing insight into the developing consciousness of a man who is seeking autonomy through any means possible. If one of the means is by creating an immutable chasm between himself and women, then questions regarding the dynamics of the autonomy he is seeking have to be addressed.

Ultimately Hatterr is seeking involvement/inclusion within a society (either in England or in India) yet his deepening resentment towards women threatens to overwhelm his quest. It is clear that Hatterr's profoundly ambivalent attitude towards women lies close to the heart of his crisis of belonging. At every turn he is embraced then dismissed by women. The first woman in his life was his mother from whose care he was taken at an early age:

> Biologically, I am fifty-fifty of the species.
> One of my parents was a European, Christian-by-faith merchant merman (seaman).
> [...] The other was an Oriental, a Malay Peninsular-resident lady, a steady non-voyaging, non-Christian human (no mermaid).
> [...] Barely a year after my baptism, [...] I was taken from Penang [...] to India [...]. It was there, that my old man kicked the bucket rather in a hurry.
> Whereupon, a local litigation for my possession ensued.
> The odds were all in favour of the India-resident Dundee-born Scot, who was in the jute.
> He believed himself a good European, and a pious Kirk o' Scotland perisher,[21] whose right-divine Scotch blud mission it was to rescue the baptised mite me, from any illiterate non-pi heathen influence. She didn't have a chance, my poor old ma, and the court gave him the possession award.[22]

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[21] In the 1970 edition, 'perisher' is changed to 'parishioner' (p. 32).

[22] *Hatterr,* (1949), p. 17.

As a result of this early re-possession, his relationship with women becomes an almost overwhelming barrier in his quest for autonomy in a place and within a society which looks to be familiar to him but reveals itself to be unfamiliar at every turn. He is unable to forget this early trauma and at moments of stress or deep reflection the image of his mother returns to haunt him. It is interesting to note that the images deteriorate over time. In his first encounter of his quest, with the Sage of the Wilderness his sense of being overwhelmed in the presence of greatness, exposes Hatterr's emotional fragility:

> [...] I wanted to cry on his shoulder, lie prone at his feet in abject adoration, and tell him all about my troubles: about my unhappy birth and after, about my constant search for my mother, about giving the old lady everything she should want, [...].[23]

He returns to the remembrance of his mother much later in the text after his disastrous encounter with the Maaga, which results in Hatterr finding himself broke and having to beg on the streets until Banerrji comes to the rescue with some money to bail him out. [24] Banerrji and Hatterr discuss the Maaga who claimed to have medical knowledge - especially regarding Hatterr's psychological health - Hatterr's propensity for attracting the attention of doctors comes under scrutiny. The link between the Maaga and doctors is somewhat tenuous but it would appear that Hatterr is impressed by his ability to dispense wisdom and medical advice, like a doctor. Hatterr's love of doctors (he keeps a list of some fifty doctors in his pocket at all times, *Hatterr,* (1949), p. 47) becomes symptomatic of his constant fear for his health, mental, physical and emotional. Hatterr also admits to the fact that a head injury early on in his life has meant that he has had to be careful with his health:

> Several doctors have warned me that I might develop mental disorder. I am afraid, old feller. I might lose my reason. I am afraid.[25]

As there is no mention of an actual head wound incurred by Hatterr, it is likely that the injury to his head is of a psychological nature and that the far-reaching effects of this premature separation from his mother (and indeed, his father) poses the greatest threat to his mental and emotional health. The reiteration of 'I am afraid' in both the above quotation and further on during this particular dialogue with Banerrji, reveals the depth of Hatterr's feeling, his sense of being bound by a past and by a genuine terror of what the future might bring. All of his worst fears are realised at this point in his narrative as the past, a newly reworked and re-imagined past of nightmarish visions of her spill over into the present and Hatterr confides in Banerrji:

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[23] *Hatterr,* (1949), p. 33.

[24] Hatterr is duped by the Maaga, 'the naked and enlightened one' into parting with all his money. The Maaga believes that 'Evil boils down to possessing and making money'. (*Hatterr,* 1949, p. 188) and in an attempt to instil this belief to Hatterr, a fight ensues in which Hatterr's money is thrown to the winds and disappears.

[25] *Hatterr,* (1949), p. 189.

> "I am scared, [...]. I still hear the drums I used to hear when I was in the school. [...]Sometimes, I see things. My mum. I see her. Sometimes, like I remember her. Sometimes, just her skeleton. Soft, porous bones, like honeycomb,[26] and awful-smelling blood oozing out of them. The other night, I saw her, like I remember her, but with lumps of raw meat hanging from her chest and her elbows. She had no eyes. Just blood-stained holes, and filled with bits of pointed glass. Wounds, lacerations, and bites all over her. As if she had been savaged. Her head was split, just like an orange, same colour. She called me Baby. She was crying, poor darling! Then I heard the drums. They seem to be saying, 'Come to mamma!' 'Come to mamma!' Then they beat faster, 'Cometomamma! Cometomamma!' I felt as if my mouth was full of pus. It was horrible. I wished I were dead. I wished I knew where my poor old mum was!"[27]

His memories (or rather a lack of memories) of his mother have taken on a nightmarish quality that is imbued with all the insecurities he has developed since this early separation. The gory images of blood, skin and bone, the very things that bind a child to a mother, have disintegrated and become a site of horror and revulsion. This image of death and disintegration re-emerges for Desani at a later date. Desani's Journal, in the entry for London, 1952, says this:

> I am going back to India. I expect to return. [...] I can truthfully say that all my ambitions and expectations from this city have been fulfilled. Yet, I am not happy. This is a defeat. I am ashamed to admit it to anyone.
> I have boarded the Norwegian Freighter Trianon, sailing to India.
> We are carrying all sorts of cargo[...]. There are a few hundred acid bottles green glass - poised on the open deck. I have twice imagined awful things if these should break [...]. Broken glass, for me, is a terrible image. " She had no eyes. Just blood-stained holes and filled with bits of pointed glass."
> (I have written this in "H. Hatterr.")[28]

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[26] The image of honey-comb is re-worked in the short story 'Mephisto's Daughter' which introduces the daughter as a temptress who plays on the weakness of the narrator. Mephisto and his daughter live in ' a sticky honeycomb' which eventually traps the narrator. G.V. Desani, *Hali and Collected Stories,* (New York: McPherson & Company, 1991), pp. 35-38.

[27] *Hatterr*, (1949), pp. 189-190.

[28] *The New Yorker,* Special Fiction Edition, June 23 and 30, 1997, ', pp. 62- 68, p. 62.

Clearly then, the image of broken glass has powerful psychological meaning for both Desani and H. Hatterr. With its certainties of fragmentation, the impossibility of perfect reconstruction and the associated hazards of the sharp edges, broken glass comes to epitomise the fragmentation and the quest for a type of wholeness within Hatterr's narrative.

There is no point in the narrative which reveals, with any certainty, that Hatterr's mother is dead and for Hatterr, the images he has of his mother become a manifestation of his uncertainty regarding both his mother and women in general. The above quote would suggest that she is dead yet calling to him, suggesting that Hatterr is unable to distinguish memory from reality and as a result creates a personal interpretation of his relationship with her, based largely on a violent combination of anguish and guilt. He sums up his sense of loss as he tells Banerrji:

> "I haven't had my mother to love me. Not long enough, [...] I am afraid, can't you see? [...] I don't ask God any favours. [...] I only ask Him to love and look after my poor old mum for me. Wherever she is. [...] Maybe, one day, I will be a success. Then I won't be afraid. [...] I shall find her, old feller. My mum."[29]

For Hatterr, the quest for a sense of identity has become a necessity due to his lack of maternal love and as such, the early separation from his mother becomes the framing device of his narrative and the image of his mother, both dead and/or alive, looks set to affect and prescribe all his relationships with women. For Hatterr, his mother and all that she stands for may only be reachable through success which, in turn, will begin the process of ridding him of his fears.

His encounters with women, both first-hand and second-hand appear to ratify his early opinions.[30] However, his relationship with women is not simple. Despite multiple attempts to categorise women; into good and bad, beautiful and ugly and honest and deceitful, he is forced to acknowledge the very real possibility that however he attempts to 'order' women, he can not understand them[31]. For Hatterr, this sense of lack is overwhelming and ultimately suggests the potential for the creation and establishment of an apparently immutable set of binaries setting women apart as eternally other. It then becomes Hatterr's project, intentional or otherwise, to maintain the boundaries distinguishing him from this other, in whatever way and though whatever means he has available to him.

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[29] *Hatterr,* (1949), p. 190.

[30] This is the case as he encounters Ananda Giri-Giri a 'great leader. [who] leads a school of practising mystics'. (p.136) and hears the story of Sundari, 'literally, the Beautiful One'. p.142, whose beauty is used to ensnare '[...] all who sought sin[...]' (p. 143). Later, his experience with the *Naga* introduces him to Bee Bee Jaan who, in league with her brother, swindles a shopkeeper out of a large sum of money. The intention behind both stories is made clear to Hatterr. Never trust a woman.

[31] It becomes clear that the more Hatterr attempts to order and understand women, the more confused he becomes. As his past history with women begins to work insidiously within his current relationships with women, the present becomes invested with much of the bitterness of the past.

From the beginning of Desani's text there is a persistent and obvious ambiguity which looks set to govern Hatterr's relationships with, and attitude towards, women. His account is dedicated to a woman whose identity is questionable; variously a girlfriend, a betrothed and a good friend. Betty Bloomsbohemia holds the power to Hatterr's very existence as a writer but dismisses him because she is unable to 'understand' him. His *dhobin* seeks payment in kind for a debt and when refused, creates a scene at Hatterr's club, the bastion of British male pride, and he is summarily expelled.

As a result of the *dhobin*'s public display of betrayal his wife leaves him, only to return in dreams/nightmares, and then physically, much later in his travels. Rosie Smythe taps into Hatterr's need for female company and realising his neediness, exploits his devotion in a fascinating scene where Hatterr's encounter with the man-eating lion comes to mirror his relationship with both Rosie and Bill Smythe. It is interesting to note that Desani's early manuscripts of *Hatterr* present Rosie as also possessing the Kiss-curl and there are a small number of occasions when she, according to Hatterr, uses the kiss-curl as a device for bartering.[32]

As Hatterr's quest for inclusion continues, he is introduced to various women (though often not at first-hand) and is encouraged not to trust women by the men he meets who have been duped by them. Women are frequently used as indicators of the frailty of man to be eternally lured, tempted and duped by women, (and potentially, by other men) and the ambiguity of Hatterr's reaction to these tales is of prime importance to this discussion. Often as the tales about women are recounted to him in order to act as a warning, exactly the opposite message reaches Hatterr who becomes increasingly terrified of his reactions to women.[33] Ultimately, what is revealed on a close inspection of Desani's writing concerning women is that frequently, if not always, women hold the power in the narrative and it is the eternal struggle of the male characters either to tap into this power or to extract power by whatever means are available.

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[32] Private papers, Austin, Texas. Desani wrote at least four versions of *Hatterr* which he had printed and then revised them himself. The manuscripts are difficult to date precisely but they date from late 1943/44 as one of them is signed with an address that Desani was living at during the early part of 1944. There is also an interesting amendment to the second manuscript which is crossed out and does not reappear. It reads:

> I apologise, if, in the course of this autobiographical, I have to report a few derogatory remarks to the ladies. It is a dam' awkward position for a feller to be in. I hold the lady readers in the highest esteem, but my present function (Betty Bloomsbohemia and Prig. B. not withstanding) is, to render brutal true-to-life pictures. If there are fellers who hold the ladies in the derogatory, I must faithfully report same.

That's Life and contrast!

It should be noted that this particular manuscript does not contain the passages referring to Betty Bloomsbohemia or Pius Prigg Pilliwinks.

The first introduction to women, within the body of the text itself occurs in the first Chapter which opens with the words: [34]

> Raises the *questions*: Can fellers claim blood from lice? Has a man a chance in the world, or is it the fate of an icicle in Hades? By St. Mungo, is there any Justice in the Globe? Or, is it survival of the fittest and yet another man gone West? If a feller can survive the kiss of a cobra, can he survive the kiss of an embittered woman? Has endurance any antiseptic influence on men and things? [35]

The 1951 edition is altered only slightly at the end:

> [...] Has endurance any antiseptic influence on men and things? *Read on, fellers ...* [36]

By 1970 the text has altered again:

> The following raises the questions: Can fellers *reclaim* blood from lice? Has a man a chance in the world, or is it the fate of an icicle in Hades? By St Mungo, is there any justice-*giustizia* in the Globe? Or, is it survival of the fittest and yet another man gone West? If a feller can survive the kiss of a cobra, can he survive the kiss of an embittered woman? Has endurance any antiseptic influence on men and things? *What say you of this secondhand goods dealer*? Read on fellers...[37]

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[33] This is particularly the case in the chapter entitled 'Apropos Supernatural Agent', which outlines the 'wickedness' of Sundari who tempts men with her beauty, 'The female's arms are a trap, he motioned, of false, sinful love, absolutely'. p.141, *Hatterr,* (1949.) The story is told to Hatterr as a warning against women but the images created by the storyteller and the language used to describe her power results in Hatterr becoming more intent on leading a life of degradation.

[34] Whilst there are many references to women in the preceding 'All About...' and 'Mutual Introductions' which do indeed set the tone for many future references, for the purposes of this debate, Hatterr's narrative, not Desani's, is the one under inspection.

[35] *Hatterr,* (1949), p. 12.

[36] *Hatterr,* (1951), p. 11, my italics.

[37] *Hatterr,* (1970), p. 39, my italics.

Hatterr's choice of language here is of prime importance and sets the tone for his profoundly ambiguous relationship with women. His pairing of such images as claiming blood from lice, of icicles in Hades and the kiss of a cobra, a combination of old and new binary pairings, is to become familiar over the following chapters and experiences. This chapter recounts Hatterr's experiences in the hands of a series of charlatans masquerading as doting wives, dutiful servants, wise men and fellow sahibs. His wife has left him due to a 'shortage of cash' and he is employing a *dhobin* who collects his washing for him. As he is unable to pay her she decides to 'collect her bill' by 'carrying on' with him. Hatterr is shocked and throws her out. As a result of this expulsion the *dhobin* reports him to the Sahib Club and he is summarily expelled. Between the 1949 and the 1951 editions the following conversation with Banerrji reveals some interesting changes. As Hatterr explains his wife's defection he claims:

> And, it is amazing, how, out in the Orient, the shortage of cash gets mixed up with romance and females somehow![38]

Which becomes, in 1951:

> And, it is amazing, how, out in the Orient, the shortage of cash gets mixed up with females, somehow![39]

For Hatterr, the romance has gone and does not return in any subsequent editions. Indeed, it is arguable whether Hatterr is ever seeking romance from women, seeming, instead to pursue them driven by lust rather than love. The omission of romance also sets the tone for many of the following references to and encounters with women. In one of many of Hatterr's pronouncements on women he declares:

> [...] we recognise only *two* kinds of Woman. The good and the rotten. This one is rotten.[40]

In the 1970 edition Desani has changed the wording slightly but places an unmistakable emphasis on the position in society that this particular woman occupies as he claims:

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[38] *Hatterr,* (1949), p. 25.
[39] *Hatterr,* (1951), p. 14.
[40] *Hatterr,* (1949), p. 26, Desani's italics.

> [...] we recognise only two kinds of Woman. The good and the rotten. This *dhobin* woman is rotten.[41]

Hatterr's obvious disgust for the *dhobin* is also revealed as he discusses her with Banerrji. In the earliest editions he refers to her as 'my *dhobin*' as he claims responsibility for her as an employee whilst simultaneously laying the emphasis on her position in his household. The simple statement apportions both a sense of ownership and of betrayal which Desani was obviously unhappy with. This causes him not only to rephrase the sentence in later editions, but, more importantly, to remove any sense of ownership or blame from his gullible avatar as he states:

> She is my *dhobin*, isn't she? You referred her to me as my washerwoman?[42]

Thus, Hatterr passes the blame to Banerrji who is willing to accept responsibility for the *dhobin* but not for the actions of either Hatterr or his washerwoman. The incident with the washerwoman, intrinsically linked to the defection of his wife, sets the tone for all his encounters with women and the changes Desani makes to the references to women become of increasing importance as the narrative continues. Ultimately, the combination of his premature separation from his mother, and the incident with the *dhobin* becomes the catalyst for his quest to re-examine his sense of identity in the light of his experience with women.

Few if any of the changes Desani makes and Hatterr narrates concerning women, soften their image. Indeed the majority of the revisions reveal a rapidly growing resentment and antipathy towards women in general. The final reference to women in this particular chapter occurs as the *dhobin* goes to the Sahib Club to plead her case. She takes up residence on the lawn outside the club and begins wailing:

> Facing the sundry sahibs and memsahibs, poised at 'em at an angle of forty-five degrees, the woman pulled her hair, tore up her clothes, and wailed, 'O my mothers-and-fathers! I am a poor woman! I am starving! My children are starving! H. Hatterr sahib owes me money! He 'owes me money!'[43]

In the later edition Desani elaborates on the incident:

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[41] *Hatterr,* (1970), p. 43, my italics.

[42] *Hatterr,* (1970), p. 43.

[43] *Hatterr,* (1949), p. 28.

> Facing the sundry sahibs and memsahibs, poised at 'em at an *alternating* angle of forty-five degrees, *a living metronome, the woman swang*, pulled her hair, tore up her clothes, and wailed, 'O my mothers and fathers! I am a poor woman! I am starving! My children are starving! H. Hatterr sahib owes me money! He owes me money!'[44]

The introduction of the image of the living metronome becomes a subtle indication of Hatterr's assessment of the woman as calculated yet rudimentary. As she sways on the lawn the mathematical precision of her position and her movements, whether intentional or otherwise, encapsulates the seemingly clinical determination of the woman (in Hatterr's eyes) to cause a scene. Her precision pays off, she is paid and Hatterr is ejected from the club. This particular scene with its overt images of betrayal based on mistaken beliefs in friendship and familiarity, becomes an extraordinary parallel to the scene which follows next. Following Hatterr's expulsion from the club and his subsequent misery regarding his condition, Banerrji comes to visit armed with a gift. He brings Hatterr a present of 'an all-in-one pantie-vest'. which is described thus:

> Its colour is a charming peach, with a stylish elastic round the waist and the knees. Also it has got gay little le-dandy motifs in lazy-daisy stitch,[...].[45]

The emphasis that both Banerrji as speaker, and Hatterr as writer, lay on the simple beauty of the garment is important. The present is an attempt to erase the unpleasant memory of the experience with the *dhobin* and as such acts as both appeasement and comfort. The intricacy of the lazy-daisy motif and the soft peach colour are in strong contrast to the brash *dhobin* who is described as rotten, indecent, virile[46] and a Judas. Hatterr is duly overwhelmed by the offering and it is interesting that Desani inserts a revision as Hatterr accepts the present. In the 1949 edition he says:

> This spontaneous gesture from a true friend, the gift of a valuable garment, and made out of pure love, braced me up both spiritually and mentally.[47]

By 1951 he revises this to:

> This spontaneous gesture from a true friend, the gift of a valuable garment and made out of pure love, braced me up *instantly*.[48]

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[44] *Hatterr,* (1970), p. 45, my italics.

[45] *Hatterr,* (1949), p.30.

[46] According to H. Hatterr virilism in women is objectionable, 1949, p. 27.

[47] *Hatterr,* (1949), p. 30.

The removal of the spiritual and mental restoration- mentioned in the earlier quote - occasioned by the gift is important here. It is the immediacy of its restorative powers that is so vital to Hatterr and the change to the single expression of 'instantly' becomes a powerful 'cure' for the 'evils' of women and the qualification of mental and spiritual healing are now unnecessary. This single word is a striking parallel to the numerous adjectives appended to the *dhobin* which include comments such as, 'I loathed the very sight of her' and references to her being rotten, indecent, trying to 'remove her reach-me-downs in my presence!' and as a 'Job's Comforter'. She is also described as a reptile, and as a snake.[49] Clearly the revisions here reveal Hatterr's profound appreciation for friendship, albeit among members of the same sex. As far as Hatterr is concerned, his relationship with Banerrji is one of emotional stability and equality and is in direct contrast to love between a man and a woman which Hatterr considers himself to be a slave to and is always unsatisfactory. As such, by the end of the first chapter Hatterr's relationship with women is already in trouble.

In the second chapter the progression in Hatterr's ambivalent antagonism towards women continues. It details Hatterr's brush with love in his encounter with Rosie and Bill Smythe. This chapter becomes the locus for a complex discussion on women, sex and fallibility and is one of the finest chapters of the book, containing scenes and dialogue of extraordinary poignancy.

The Digest for this chapter, like many of the others, undergoes some interesting changes between the 1949 and the 1970 editions. The 1949 edition poses Hatterr's question thus:

> All apropos of Female, the Cause of causes: the eternal la dam' dame sans mercy! A bourgeois feller's frau – no sweet Genevieve, but a regular fever-fraught mamma – is being claimed by her secret lover and muchacher. He's seeking more than bachelor-fun! *Questions*: Is Woman worth it? Why did she commit arson upon his emotion? Set Lucifer match to his hopes? A woman, who was only good for bad purposes?[50]

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[48] *Hatterr,* (1951), p. 20, my italics.

[49] *Hatterr,* (1949). All these descriptions of the *dhobin* come from pages 26-27.

[50] *Hatterr,* (1949), p. 12, Desani's italics.

By 1951 Desani has begun the changes:

> All apropos of Female, the cause of causes: the eternal la dam' dame sans mercy! A bourgeois feller's frau – no sweet Genevieve, but a regular fever-fraught mamma – is being claimed by her secret lover and muchacher. *He's shook on her.* He's seeking more than bachelor-fun! *Questions*: Is Woman worth it? Why did *this très bon M'dame* commit arson upon *t*his *M'sew's* emotion? Set *a* Lucifer match to his hopes? A woman, who was only good for bad purposes?[51]

In the 1970 edition Desani has changed it for the final time:

> All apropos of Female, the cause of causes: the eternal la dam' dame sans mercy! A bourgeois feller's frau – no sweet Genevieve, but a regular fever-fraught mamma – is being claimed by her secret lover and muchacher. He's shook on her. He's seeking more than bachelor-fun! *He is, consequently, face to face with a Portuguese-speaking lion.* Questions: Is Woman worth it? Why did this très bon M'dame commit arson upon this M'sew's emotion*s*? Set a Lucifer match to his hopes? A woman, who was only good for bad purposes: *if she was any good at all?*[52]

The introduction of the lion in the final revised edition is an indication of the experience Hatterr is about to undergo with the Smythes, not only in the physical location of the lion's den, but also in the complex scenario he creates for himself with Rosie. He is forced, in this relationship, to confront aspects of himself he has tried to conceal up to this point and the confrontation with the lion becomes a confrontation with the self at both a conscious and a subconscious level. The amendments to the final sentence quoted above, come to represent a footnote by H. Hatterr himself who, having undergone the experience with Rosie and with Charlie the lion, now considers himself to be able to comment on women in general and his summation that they are no good at all is only made possible by the final question mark acting simultaneously as a full stop whilst positing the potential to question the 'fact' as pronounced by Hatterr. This chapter also poses the thesis that:

> Cupid is blind, non-rational, anti-intellect, sense-enemy: and so are his victims... *Cupid blindens the retina of a man's eye with stunning patterns, till he cannot tell a mule from a monkey!* [53]

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[51] *Hatterr,* (1951), p. 37, my italics.

[52] *Hatterr,* (1970), p. 62, my italics.

[53] *Hatterr,* (1949), p. 45, Desani's italics. The 1951 edition is the same.

However, in the later editions it appears thus:

> Cupid is blind, non-rational, anti-*intelligent*, sense enemy: and so are his victims ... Cupid *blinds* the retina of a man's eye with stunning patterns, till he cannot tell a mule from a monkey *or one female from another!*[54]

This revision highlights one of Hatterr's main themes; that all women are bad, even those who appear to Hatterr, at least in the first instance, to be honest. The change from 'anti-intellect' to 'anti-intelligent' becomes representative of almost all of Hatterr's encounters with women who confound him by causing him to challenge his assumptions about both himself and women in general. However, it is clear that although Hatterr's narrative is fraught with numerous encounters and challenges, the development of his relationship with women is not a positive one, creating in him a deepening sense of betrayal, resentment and confusion, which he fails to come to terms with.

Chapter Two is the pivotal point in Hatterr's relationship with women, and one that returns to haunt him on numerous occasions. The collection of images Desani chooses within this chapter are among the most poignant and powerful images of women and of the relationship between man and woman and between lust and power, that emerge from Hatterr's narrative.

At the beginning of the second chapter Hatterr's wife has left him as a result of the *dhobin* incident and he is 'suffering' with his libido. Banerrji suggests that the antidote to this particular problem is to form a liaison with a woman at a purely platonic level and suggests befriending the Smythes.[55] For Hatterr, this suggestion, with its potential for another relationship with a woman, platonic or otherwise, is somewhat unwelcome, coming as it does after an embittered tirade against his wife in which Hatterr lists her chief faults. In particular Hatterr has taken exception to her repeated use of 'as it were' which follows every sentence. As he elaborates on this in a short speech her rhetoric becomes the locus for a subtle but important revision for Desani:

> "The woman's mannerisms!- especially her phrase 'as it were'. 'Darlin' [...] the Mayor spoke so beautifully, as it were', 'Darlin', it was a lovely sunset,

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[54] *Hatterr,* (1970), p. 63, my italics.

[55] The Smythes, Bill and Rosie are a London impressario and his wife, touring India.

> as it were',[...] 'Darlin', shall we ask the Browns to tay, as it were?' 'Darlin', why don't you improve your English, as it were?"[56]

This changes in the 1970 edition:

> 'The woman's mannerisms!- especially her *canting* phrase "as it were". "Darlin' [...]the Mayor spoke so beautifully, as it were," "Darlin', it was a lovely sunset, as it were,"[...] "Darlin', shall we ask the Browns to tay, as it were?" "Darlin', *why don't you tuck in your pyjama jacket, like everybody, as it were?*" "Darlin', why don't you improve your English, as it were?" '[57]

It is clear that by 1970 Desani felt that Mrs Hatterr's overuse of the 'as it were' phrase needed to be brought home to the reader, and the general comments culminating in the plea to improve English, needed a little clarification. For Hatterr and for Desani her particular phrase goes far beyond simply being annoying. The inclusion of the request to tuck in the pyjama jacket and the suggestion that refusing to do so denotes a level of exclusion from society in general which Hatterr's wife is unhappy with, is important here. [58] With the added inclusion of the term 'canting', meaning insincere pious or moral talk, Hatterr's scant disregard for both his wife and her sentiments is complete. The removal of his wife and more importantly, for Hatterr, her body is a constant reminder of how his life was. Her 'as it were' phrase haunts him, constantly reminding him that both he and his relationship with his wife is/was not perfect and that the past has gone and the chasm caused by her departure, however welcome at the time, has left a space which Hatterr is finding very difficult to negotiate positively. However, his memories do not impel him to win her back, rather, at Banerrji's suggestion, he forges forward into a new and potentially exciting relationship with Rosie Smythe. [59]

One final point with regard to Hatterr's attitude towards women at this particular moment in the narrative, is revealed in an aside made by Banerrji regarding his own wife. As he expounds the virtues of his own wife (and insists upon the virtues of monogamy and marriage), he states:

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[56] *Hatterr,* (1949), p. 45

[57] *Hatterr,* (1970), p. 64, my italics. It should be noted that the 'everybody' in this quote is italicised by Desani, thereby laying insistence on Mrs. Hatterr's view that everyone is educated and civilised, except her husband.

[58] Hatterr's wife is very much a part of Western society in India. Her friends include English dignitaries and her fashion sense 'the waxed kiss-curl' who 'used to wear the Piccadilly Fringe- Paris mode introduced by Mademoiselle Française, about the year 1868' (1949, p. 45), all have their roots in the West. For her 'society' is English society and not Indian.

[59] It should be noted that Banerrji's motives are honourable, his suggestion is that a platonic relationship with a woman may restore Hatterr's faith in women in general.

> I am happily married. Even though I say it, my own wife, Mrs Banerrji, is a perfect gentleman.[60]

In the 1951 edition Desani has re-phrased this:

> I am happily married. Even though I say it, my own wife, Mrs Banerrji, is a *pukka lady.*[61]

Clearly, referring to Mrs Banerrji as a 'perfect gentleman' is a somewhat peculiar phrase but nevertheless, is well in keeping with Banerrji's elaborate speech patterns which frequently weld together unusual and contrasting phrases creating an extraordinarily symbiotic relationship which as it confuses, begins the process of commenting on notions of belonging and of identity.[62] Just as the Waxed Kiss-curl creates a personally developed and maintained sense of belonging using repeated 'as it weres' and insisting on tapping into the aspects of English society which she feels to be important, Banerrji too, selects carefully, if not always wisely or correctly, the language he feels is best suited to the purpose in hand. Here, he is attempting to convey to Hatterr the esteem with which he values his wife, an esteem as he places her on a par with his male friends. However, for one reason or another, Desani decides that although this may be the case, the phrase can not stand and he changes it to 'pukka lady'. It is entirely possible that the change is intended to act as an insistence both on Mrs Banerrji's Indianness, in stark contrast to Mrs. Hatterr's identification with Englishness, and her authenticity, also in contrast to the 'waxed kiss-curl'. However, one last point on the subject of Mrs Banerrji, the *pukka* here becomes a slightly more ambiguous term when remembered in the light of the final, concluding 'With Iron Hand[63] [...]' and the 'pukka muggers' who haunt the author and become the locus for a damning indictment of people who pretend to be one thing whilst actually being another. Whether or not this is intentional is debatable, but it certainly adds a note of scepticism to Hatterr's understanding not only of Mrs Banerrji but of women in general. It must be remembered that although it is Banerrji who makes the claim about his wife, it is Hatterr who conveys it to the written page and places it within the context and framework of a dialogue directed towards an indictment of women. Indeed, the end of the chapter, as Hatterr and Banerrji are reunited after the experience of the lion's den, recalls this early conversation as Banerrji congratulates Hatterr on his restraint and assures him that he, himself will 'keep off the libido':

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[60] *Hatterr,* (1949), p. 48.

[61] *Hatterr,* (1951), p. 42, my italics.

[62] Banerrji's highly developed language is considered, in depth in Chapter Seven of this thesis.

[63] This comes from 'With Iron Hand I Defend You, Mr H. Hatterr, Gentleman!' which is present in all editions from the 1972, Penguin edition of *All About H. Hatterr.* (It also appears in the 1952 edition but is shorter)

> I faithfully promise to keep off the libido. It is only right that you should advocate purity and celibacy. This won't be hard, thank God, because I am married, and good luck to me. As regards the last night's example, I must say, I have seen ideals lived before my own eyes! You are a true divine. You are no admiral of the Swiss Navy. I recognise in you a great modern Cæsar and Augustus of the spirit! [64]

This is extended in the 1951 edition:

> I faithfully promise to keep off the libido. It is only right that you should advocate purity and celibacy. *It is the angelic virtue. Only angels can observe it.* This won't be hard, thank God, because I am married, and good luck to me. As regards the last night's example, I must say, I have seen ideals lived before my own eyes! You are a true divine. You are no admiral of the Swiss Navy. I recognise in you a great modern Cæsar and Augustus of the spirit![65]

The final revision occurs in the 1970 edition:

> I faithfully promise to keep off the libido. *I humbly agree. One must purge oneself of the original sin.* It is only right that you should advocate purity and celibacy. It is the angelic virtue. Only angels can observe it. *I am only human.* For me, this won't be hard, thank God, because I am married, and good luck to me. *My wife alone will enjoy me.* As regards the last night's example, I must say, I have seen ideals lived before my own eyes! *Vatsayana, the author of the Hindu erotic classic vade-mecum the Kamasutra, himself observed strict celibacy! You have done it too. If I may say so* you are a true divine. You are no admiral of the Swiss Navy. I recognise in you a great modern Cæsar and Augustus of the spirit![66]

Although Banerrji is clearly proud to be married and to be in a position to offer advice to Hatterr, his choice of idioms is curious. For Banerrji, marriage and love are a complicated mix of lust (the mention of the *Kamasutra*) and of heroic battle (the mention of Cæsar and Augustus), not to mention the obvious implications of being able to maintain a celibate lifestyle *because* he is married. Whilst it is clear that Desani is unhappy with Banerrji's original speech the references to 'original sin', celibacy and angels are curious revisions, although entirely in keeping with Banerrji's speeches and, as the chapter clearly demonstrates, with Hatterr's view of women in general as an uneasy and almost indescribable amalgam of sin and virtue, devil and divine.

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[64] *Hatterr,* (1949), p. 74.

[65] *Hatterr,* (1951), p. 75, my italics.

[66] *Hatterr,* (1970), p. 97, my italics.

As this chapter progresses it becomes clear that Rosie Smythe is only interested in Hatterr for one thing, to become the main attraction in the famous 'Human Plate' or the 'Charlie Plate' act where Charlie the lion eats a steak from the chest of a man. Despite Hatterr's awareness of Rosie's motives he is besotted with her and complies with her request to take part in the act.

One area of major changes between the texts occurs in the 'Nirvana' sequence as Hatterr performs his act in the lion's den. Hatterr has been bribed by Rosie into performing a dangerous act with the lion. She has (or so Hatterr believes) promised him a kiss if he will perform in the circus ring. Close reading of this episode reveals the tenuous links that Desani, via Hatterr, is drawing between Hatterr's experience with his wife and with Rosie and the experience in the lion's den where he is at the mercy of the unpredictable behaviour of a creature who definitely has the upper hand. As Hatterr experiences a form of terror previously unknown to him, he passes into a trance-like state invoking images of his own funeral and later, himself on an operating table where the surgeon is none other than Charlie the lion. There are a few important changes which precede the dream sequences.

As Hatterr slips into his nirvana state he reflects on the way in which the experience he is undergoing will be documented:

> What would posterity call this chapter? " H. Hatterr- and the hug of a harlot at cut-throat rates"? Should I get eaten up, and be plucked away for evermore, my historian would note, that I was kicked into the Beyond, not even boasting the professional status of a lion-tamer.[67]

In the 1951 edition this has been slightly revised:

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[67] *Hatterr,* (1949), p. 65.

> What would posterity call this chapter? " H. Hatterr- and the hug of a harlot at cut-throat rates"? Should I get eaten up, and be plucked away for evermore, my historian *Desani* would *mock*, that I was kicked into the Beyond, not even boasting the professional status of a lion-tamer*!*[68]

This is revised further in the 1970 edition:

> *How* would posterity *headline* this chapter? " H. Hatterr and the hug of a harlot at cut-throat rates"? Should I get eaten up, and be plucked away for evermore, my *biographer, the no-scruples feller* would mock, that I was kicked into the Beyond, not even boasting the professional status of a lion-tamer![69]

Unusually,[70] the 1972 edition also carries a small, yet important revision in the footnote which makes a reappearance in this edition. The footnote reads:

> Don't be ridick! "die for adultery! No: the wren goes to't, and the small gilded fly does lecher in my sight. Let copulation thrive!"(Lear to Gloucester.) G'wan, do some *deed*, and die deserving an undeserved death! That's *manly*, and good luck to us (me, you and Socrates)! G.V.D'.[71]

The changes here are particularly important as it is clear that a battle is going on between the author (G.V. Desani), who is urging Hatterr to be manly and accept his fate, and Bill Smythe who is tempting Hatterr into undertaking the act in order to impress Rosie. This authorial intrusion is not allowed to pass unnoticed by Hatterr who includes Desani's views in his own narrative. This is revealed in the textual changes with regard to the identity of the chronicler of experience, variously known as 'historian', 'biographer' and 'no-scruples feller'. These changes are interesting, especially the later edition which is signed G.V.D. Hatterr is dependent on an authentic account of his experience and the fragility of the line between writer and narrator is put under pressure at this point. The reader is already aware that Desani can not tell the truth[72] and that Hatterr frequently discusses the account he wants to give as directly opposed to a 'truthful' account. Here, the reader is further confused as Hatterr suggests that the true chronicler here is Desani and not himself. Far from revising to clarify, Desani manages to create a level of ambiguity which is particularly fitting to H. Hatterr and which reveals not only Hatterr's propensity for invention, re-invention and personal re-definition of his experiences, but the supreme power of the true author of the account, G.V. Desani who is alone in his ability to change the text.

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[68] *Hatterr,* (1951), p. 63, my italics. This revision is accompanied by a footnote which states: 'Don't be ridick! "die for adultery! no: the wren goes to't, and the small gilded fly does lecher in my sight. Let copulation thrive!"(Lear to Gloucester.) G'wan, do some *deed*, and die deserving an undeserved death! That's *manly*, and good luck to us (me, you, and the Greek)!' (p. 63), Desani's italics.

[69] *Hatterr,* (1970), p. 86, my italics. This edition carries no footnote.

[70] Revisions to this late edition are extremely rare.

[71] *Hatterr,* (1972), p. 85.

Up to this point Hatterr has been able to locate himself in relation to women although this is not just a case of binary moments. For Hatterr, who loves and hates women, who both praises and derides women and who needs female company yet resents this drive, the truth of his account is of utmost importance. Now, it looks as if the opinions he has been forming as a direct result of life experience have been exposed to external interpretation in the form of G. V. Desani in whose ' no scruples' hands lies the ability to 'name' the chapter and thereby define and prescribe experience.

Whilst Hatterr is still in a trance the scene changes to the operating theatre and the focus moves away from Hatterr's internalisation of the experience in the lion's den and returns, slowly but insidiously to his speculation concerning women. An interesting change to the text occurs at the point where Hatterr is observing the operating theatre attendants. He notices that one of them is his ex-wife and that she is:

> [...] looking so ribald in her starched nigger-minstrel attire: sleek slacks, striped blazer, cad-shoes, her kiss-curl down to a single screw-driver wave, and a wreathed straw-hat. She was holding in her hands a bouquet of artichokes, crested with raison-stones.(The *Green Pastures?*)[73]

This description undergoes some changes in the 1970 edition:

> [...] looking so ribald in her starched nigger-minstrel attire: sleek slacks, striped blazer, cad-shoes, her kiss-curl down to a single screw-driver wave, and a *butcher's* straw-hat. She was holding in her hands a bouquet of *Brussels sprouts.* (The *Green Pastures?* The *Elysian Fields*?) [74]

The change from a simple straw-hat to the butcher's straw-hat is in line with Hatterr's previous dialogue with Banerrji which outlined his particular feelings about women. In this instance the mention of the butcher highlights both the immediacy of his surgery and would

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[72] As detailed in 'All About...', *Hatterr,* (1949), p. 3. and onwards.

[73] *Hatterr,* (1949), p. 70, Desani's italics.

[74] *Hatterr,* (1970), p. 93, my italics.

seem to be in keeping with Hatterr's image of his wife as powerful, destructive, perhaps even as a man-eater. Although the image of the 'single screw-driver wave' in his wife's hair remains intact from one edition to another it is an extraordinarily powerful image. Any softness traditionally engendered by a kiss-curl has been eroded until it remains no longer an adornment, but as far as Hatterr is concerned is now a weapon, a symbol of the potential power of this woman to literally rip his insides out. For Hatterr any compassion or love he felt for his wife is, at this particular moment, severely undermined.

The culmination of this chapter occurs as Hatterr awakes from his trance, Bill Smythe puts the lights on, the act finishes and Rosie leads him out of the ring. It is difficult not to view this final action as a fitting end to Hatterr's experience with women. Just as lust for Rosie led him into the situation in the first instance his final realisation that he is nothing more than a pawn in the Smythe's tawdry game is complete as Rosie leads him away from the circus ring and that he had lived a fantasy of his emasculation and death as he lay in the lion's den.

Ultimately this chapter of *All About H. Hatterr* is less about the lion's den as a physical location but is more concerned with the metaphorical lion's den Hatterr enters as he attempts to understand women and his relationship with them. The revisions Desani undertakes within this chapter are important indicators of Hatterr's growing resentment which, over the years and over several revisions, culminates in the final revised text which now incorporates clear and concise indicators of just how the reader is to interpret the text and, specifically, Hatterr's relationship with women. This particular chapter reveals women as man-eaters, insatiable, deceptive, manipulative, 'virile' and above all, diametrically opposed to all that Hatterr desires in women and opposed to all that he believes himself to be. Hatterr never forgets this encounter and it frequently re-emerges in later encounters as he recalls the moment he was face to face with both death and supreme life.[75]

The single other experience in the book as profoundly moving as the lion's den experience occurs as Hatterr meditates on the beauty of the River Ganges and is once again struck by the wonder of nature and its ability to simultaneously diminish and empower man.[76] The moment occurs as Hatterr is beginning to doubt the honesty of the 'Wise man' Always-Happy and in turn, is experiencing some reservations concerning the validity of his quest for meaning. The language chosen by Hatterr to describe experience is always of utmost importance. In the passage which follows, Hatterr decides to 'go religious' having encountered Always-Happy XX. They join forces to obtain money from a gullible public, and whilst they bide their time, Hatterr observes the beauty and tranquillity of the Ganges. The meditation of the river comes at the point when Hatterr and Always-Happy realise that someone else has already begun the charade they intend to carry out. Diamonds and Rubies, 'a cardinal of the Order of mendicants called the Mukties'[77] who is a genuine churchman has got there first. The feelings of respect for this man are challenged by Always-Happy whose hatred for the man is profound. He persuades Hatterr to join him in removing the opposition. Hatterr's unhappiness and sense of unease are temporarily allayed by the scene he observes. As he describes the river he says:

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[75] For Hatterr, life is an uncomfortable mixture of conflicting emotions and experiences. However, he appreciates that neither good nor bad can be truly experienced in the absence of the other- its opposite.

> She is betimes, like an exquisite woman: winning, over-powering, awe-inspiring![78]

In a later edition, Desani revises this to:

> She is betimes, like an exquisite *being*: winning, over-powering, awe-inspiring![79]

By 1970 this has changed again:

> She is betimes, like a *supernal being*: *mystic, ethereal*: winning, over-powering, awe-inspiring![80]

The changes here from 'exquisite woman' to exquisite being' and finally to 'supernal being' are important. Although Desani does not amend his previous and later references to the river being female as it is traditionally depicted, his withdrawal of the image of the river in this particular instance as being like an 'exquisite woman' is profoundly resonant. For Hatterr, having been betrayed by Rosie Smythe and his wife, his current opinion of women is poor. It is interesting that although Desani removes this single image of the river as a woman, Hatterr's subsequent dialogue reveres the true beauty of the river as a celestial, holy woman, 'the little goddess', the 'mother of man', the 'angel'. For Hatterr and for Desani using the

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[76] *Ibid.*, pp.104-5.
[77] *Ibid.*, p. 97.
[78] *Ibid.*, p.104.
[79] *Hatterr,* (1951), p. 113, my italics.
[80] *Hatterr,* (1970), p. 133, my italics.

traditional image of the Ganges as a mother or as a woman becomes insufficient for the depth of emotion Hatterr experiences as he observes the scene before him. At this point it is pertinent to note that Desani is happy to leave the following account largely unchanged and the images, language and style of the remainder of Hatterr's Ganges experience retains its beauty and eloquence, unchanged in all editions. For Desani, this passage must surely have presented itself as a prime site for revision, yet for one reason or another, he chooses to leave it intact.

Although this chapter considers the revisions Desani made to his texts, it is interesting to find a passage which remains virtually intact, especially as this scene is abundant in detail and description. It is not completely without changes but the revisions Desani does make are relatively minor and add/detract very little to the original account. This is not to say that they are unimportant changes, but simply, that the potency of the original version remains intact, despite a few stylistic changes.

At the close of this particular chapter Hatterr is appalled but finally appreciates the potential duplicity of man both to enlighten and deceive. Hatterr concludes this experience with a speech about the nature of truth and man's relationship with it. He claims:

> I am a mere nobody, but I have carried on some research on my own. And I say to posterity, in Twentieth Century, '*Life is contrast*'. [...] Take anything, and you will find the opposite! [...] I have indexed for reference purposes! I have been working very hard, old feller.[81]

In the 1970 edition Desani has made some changes:

> I am a mere nobody, but I have carried on some research on my own. And I say to posterity, in Twentieth Century, 'Life is contrast.' [...] Take anything, and you will find the opposite! [...] I have indexed for reference purposes! *Example, man-woman, honesty-dishonesty, day-night, perfume-stink, saints-swine.* I have been working very hard, old feller.[82]

Clearly, Desani saw the need to illustrate and itemise Hatterr's conclusions and this is very much in keeping with Hatterr's fondness for lists. It is however, a useful list. By this particular part of the text the reader is already aware of Hatterr's previous encounters with Rosie and Bill Smythe and with his wife and the *dhobin*. It has become clear that Hatterr's view of women is profoundly ambiguous, a curious mixture of love and hate, delight and resentment. The opening example cited by Hatterr of man-woman and the subsequent examples of absolute binaries, whether intentional or not, add insistence to his previous tirades. His opening statement here of 'take anything and you will find the opposite' is considerably more selective than the 'anything' he proposes to discuss. For Hatterr, the experience with Always-Happy has been profoundly disruptive. Previously, he had encountered women and begun to consider them as duplicitous, false and manipulative. Although Banerrji does his very best to persuade Hatterr that not all men or all women are bad, Hatterr has become disillusioned. Hatterr also suggests that although he (Hatterr) has only recently discovered the frailty of man, it may have always been there.

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[81] *Hatterr,* (1949), p. 128.

[82] *Hatterr,* (1970), p. 159-160, my italics.

As the account moves on, the ways in which Hatterr explores the image of women develops. Chapter Four entitled, 'Apropos Supernatural Agent' begins as Hatterr is acquainted (via the Sage of Bombay) with the tale of the Princess of Bhoongal who advertised for a husband who would 'agree to be slapped [...] a thousand times a day'.[83] The Princess marries a 'mere cutler' who teaches her a lesson by demonstrating his reaction to anything or anyone who crosses him. He catches a monkey and beats it with a slipper five thousand times. The Sage of Bombay considers this to be an indirect lesson to the Princess. Undoubtedly the lesson is directed at Hatterr whose own understanding and estimation of women is based on an unstable composite of fear, lust and curiosity.

This chapter is perhaps the most confusing of all of the incidents involving women. Hatterr attends a concert where the singer is a Sri Harrow-voo, a man who studied at Harrow and invented an Indian form of Tyrolese and Swiss yodelling.[84] He begins to sing a diatribe on the wickedness of women:

> The female's arms are a trap, [...] of false, sinful love, absolutely. [...] stated that the vile craft of Woman: the celebrated side-long glance, the shadow of the inscrutable smile playing her lips, her hair done up so cunningly, those caprices, those caprices, those superb tricks, of the beast that is Woman; but, hail and hallelujah, effective only upon the blighter who is caught in the trap[...]. [85]

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[83] *Hatterr,* (1949), p. 131.

[84] Sri Harrow Voo is the pseudonym of A. Singha who claims to have studied at Harrow. There is an interesting revision to the final additional chapter ('With Iron Hand I Defend You[...]') in the 1972 Penguin edition. It is a letter sent from Harrow school claiming that there has never been an A. Singha at Harrow and is signed by the Headmaster, Dr. R.L. James. This letter actually exists among Desani's private papers as a response to a letter from Desani. The letter is dated 15th September, 1961.

[85] *Hatterr,* (1949), pp. 141-142.

It is remarkable that Desani chose not to revise this particular part of the text, saving his changes for the detailed description of the woman who, for Harrow-voo, epitomises the treachery of women; Sundari. He claims that women 'are only beautiful in anatomy: but not so, in the spirit'.[86] The first change made to the text here occurs as a curious revision to the description of Sundari's attire. In the 1949 edition Desani describes it thus:

> In the parenthesis, her *sari*, the blue raiment which she is wearing, and over which are embroidered silver butterflies, is softer to touch than a cloud, but not softer than her body.[87]

In the 1970 edition Desani has made a few subtle changes:

> In the parenthesis, her *petticoat, and the diaphanous* blue raiment which she is wearing *as a scarf* and over which are embroidered *gold* butterflies, is softer to touch than a cloud, but not softer than her *incomparable bosom...*[88]

The changes here are interesting. The revision of sari to petticoat may simply be explained by the edition it appears in. The 1970 edition is not the first American edition. The 1951 Farrar, Straus and Young was the first such edition and it is interesting that Desani does not insert the changes here but for one reason or another chooses to leave it to the later edition. It is possible that the change in the attire of Sundari is one which creates a more familiar image to the Western audience. However, there are implications to this change which cause a sense of unease in the reader who is aware of the changes. It is extremely unlikely that the image of the sari was unfamiliar to the Western audience and Desani does not change the identity of the woman in this example of the wickedness of womankind. This would begin to suggest that Desani's need to Westernise and therefore, by extension, perhaps to universalise the image of woman is curious on several levels. It compounds the process, already begun, which focuses on and intensifies Hatterr's own ambiguous relationship with women, creating a feeling that it is no longer just the women he has encountered but is now, quite possibly all women. The intensification of the image in the revised edition which inserts the description of the petticoat worn as a scarf and the embellishment of her attire with gold butterflies, manages to heighten the sense of opulence, decadence and luxuriousness of this woman. Her attire is no longer simple but is overlaid with meaning to the point where the image of the scarf as a final adornment seals the picture. As Desani changes the butterflies from silver to gold the image is complete and the final amendment of the incomparable bosom becomes almost superficial as Harrow-voo's description begins to overwhelm Hatterr. It is the final mention of the woman's bosom leading to a further description of the woman, dripping with powerful, erotic images which, for both Harrow-voo and Hatterr become directly aligned with both men's extraordinary perception of women as equally cursed and blessed, magnetic and repulsive. Despite the singer's outright condemnation of women, Hatterr finds himself profoundly attracted to this image of woman:

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[86] *Ibid.*, p.142.

[87] *Ibid.*, p.142, Desani's italics.

> [...] the feller had *reminded* me of things, [...] I was, as a consequence, more than ever I was, bent upon degradation, ruin, be beggar and all, get caught in the trap, nose-dive into the deeper depths of sexaltation, and to Hull, Hell and Halifax with mystic love![89]

In the later edition it reads thus:

> [...] the feller *by his sumptuous Boswelling of Woman,* had reminded me of things, [...] I was, as a consequence, more than ever I was, bent upon degradation, ruin, be beggar and all, get caught in the trap, nose-div*ing* into the deeper depths of sexaltation, *orgy, outrage upon modesty shame and womanhood,* and to Hull, Hell and Halifax with mystic love![90]

The rapid intensification of Hatterr's perception of women is stark. For him, women are not simply a trap into which man falls, rather, they become the embodiment of shame. The addition of the words 'orgy, outrage upon modesty shame and womanhood' represent far more than a temptation. The final mention of Hell, present in all editions, suggests that Hatterr's opinion of women is being aligned with and prompted by a rejection of spirituality. As the singer continues with his song, it becomes apparent that Sri Harrow Voo (who believes that God 'inhabits all creation, despite any apparent non-uniformity and dissimilarity in the appearance of thing') is doubting that the same God who made him, also made woman. For him, and indeed for Hatterr, woman is challenge to this belief. For both men, the enormous power women possess over men, does not suggest any equality. Both men agree that the 'female's arms are a trap, [...] of false, sinful love [...]'.[91]

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[88] *Hatterr,* (1970), p. 175, my italics.

[89] *Hatterr,* (1949), p. 144, Desani's italics.

[90] *Hatterr,* (1970), p. 177, my italics.

[91] *Hatterr,* (1949), pp. 140-141.

What remains of interest then, is that for both men, women are incommensurably other. For Hatterr, woman is sinner and saviour, degradation and hope. Unlike the singer, who claims to have eventually freed himself from the 'trap' of women, Hatterr is now a victim of the song's message. He admits to a 'craving, yearning, and *wanting* the exquisite creature of whom he sang!'[92] At this point Desani makes a move that appears to take Hatterr's narrative away from the subject of women.

Hatter is summoned to the side of Ananda Giri-Giri who has already been described thus:

> [...] the feller was *beautiful*!
> His entire person was pure charm. I have yet to encounter a female to match that chap's pagan attraction.[93]

It is clear from the above quotation, that although the narrative has moved on from Sundari, she is now being compared – albeit somewhat obscurely- to a man. Despite the warnings Hatterr has received so far, from the Sages, from Banerrji and from almost everyone he has met, he is duped by Ananda Giri-Giri. The following scenes as Hatterr tries to escape from Ananda Giri-Giri who believes himself to be a ghost requiring Hatterr's body to find peace is a fascinating exploration of Hatterr's relationship with his fellow man.

All of the warnings Sri Harrow-voo gave in his song with regard to women, become the essence of Hatterr's relationship with Ananda Giri-Giri. Hatterr is beguiled by him, by his beauty, by his presence and above all, by his apparently honest and genuine nature. The revisions within the remainder of the text of this chapter are largely stylistic changes which, generally, add intensity to Hatterr's actions as he tries to escape from his captor. One further point worth mentioning is that Desani introduces a character to this chapter called Govinda; a character who hovers on the peripheries of the action, observing and offering suggestions but very little practical help. Govinda, (a version of Desani's own name Govindas), becomes the dictator of the actions within the hut where Hatterr and Ananda Giri-Giri are captive. Is this perhaps a further indication of the authorial presence? Govinda refuses to let Hatterr out, insisting that he stay and finish the experience and by association, the narrative. For Govinda, outside the hut, the need to know what is going on inside is an imperative. In order to be able to control both the narrative from within the hut and the narrative without, Govinda has to ensure that Hatterr remains inside. The battle both within and without the hut becomes a battle not only for physical survival but for authorial ownership of the narrative and the interactions between the two men are extraordinary.

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[92] *Ibid.*, p. 143.
[93] *Ibid.*, p. 139.

In one particularly interesting passage, Hatterr is arguing for his release after Govinda informs him that the possessed spirit of Ananda Giri-Giri will set fire to the hut. He shouts through the door to Govinda, demanding his release and threatening him with legal action. His need to impress his personal worth on Govinda is of prime importance and in a particularly Banerrji-style invocation, Hatterr introduces lists of 'foreign' terms:

> [...] Govinda, I am *not* a Pundit at all! I am a married man! Been marching to Mendelssohn! Ask Ivan Ivanovitch! Or would you prefer Widow Jones? *Ha,ha, ha, ha, ha!*[94]

In the 1951 edition Desani, and indeed Hatterr, see fit to compound the references:

> [...] Govinda, I am *not* a Pundit al all! I am a married man! Been marching to Mendelssohn! Ask Ivan Ivanovitch! Or would you prefer Widow Jones? *Hogy van, Widow Jones? Kazét csokólom, nem? Ha,ha, ha, ha, ha!*[95]

Hatterr, realising that he is unable to rescue himself by appealing to Ananda Giri-Giri, resorts to an attempt to impress Govinda. An attempt which ultimately fails and Hatterr is left to secure his own release and emerge from the hut, narrowly missing being burned alive, a wiser and a richer man, having extorted one thousand 'chips'.

Perhaps the most significant decline in Hatterr's relationship with women is that once again Hatterr is forced to acknowledge his weakness which is so extreme that even a description of a woman confuses him to such an extent that his emotions overwhelm him, leaving him visibly shaken by both his own weakness and the power of women. Ananda Giri-Giri and Govinda become extensions of this fear and become useful devices for both Desani and Hatterr to debate the nature and dynamics of captivity. His incarceration within the hut becomes a blatant and powerful reworking of his relationship with women which he feels governs and defines his own experience. It does, of course, also reworks his encounter with Charlie the lion and the Smythes.

Many of the issues surrounding Hatterr's relationship with women and his way of understanding and describing them re-emerge in the next chapter, Chapter 5 'Assault Below the Belt'. This chapter examines the fragility of the line between good and evil and once again introduces a woman who is used in a story to illustrate the perfidious nature of women. As Hatterr begins this encounter he is heading off on a pilgrimage which he hopes will secure some long lost treasure. He decides that the most discreet way of undertaking this exercise is to dress as a holy man and to cover himself in ash, begging meals wherever he can. Two months into the journey he encounters a *Magaa*[96] who, far from restoring his faith in simplicity and a life of poverty, manages to relieve Hatterr of his money, destroy his faith in the holy men and reveal to him the duplicity of mankind in general.

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[94] *Hatterr,* (1949), p. 155, Desani's italics.

[95] *Hatterr,* (1951), p. 176, my italics.

The account begins with some words from the Sage of Delhi who offers the tenet that 'all Appearance is false. Reality is not Appearance'.[97] Slightly later on in his lesson to Hatterr he points out that 'The wise should discriminate between Reality and Appearance'. He also prompts Hatterr never to 'postpone investigation because a disguise is complete'.[98] It is difficult to consider this advice as a separate consideration to Hatterr's view of women which has been developed as a result of his previous encounters and experiences. For Hatterr, women have proven themselves (or perhaps, more insistently, been proved) to be duplicitous, complex, capable of withholding information[99] and sexual favours.[100] Above all, the theme of disguise and duplicity in this particular chapter foreshadows Hatterr's next experience which debates notions of kismet and begins with a tirade condemning women for being so necessary to man's continued existence on the planet, whilst simultaneously exalting the power they have over men.

One of the more unusual revisions occurs in this chapter. Although Desani is thorough in his revising there are only a few instances in which he chooses to revise all the editions. This is not to say that there are not changes in all editions but for the most part Desani confines himself to revising the first three editions with only very minor revisions occurring in the 1972 edition. [101] However, towards the end of Hatterr's account of the experience with the *Maaga*, he is reduced to begging for enough money to contact Banerrji in order for him to send him enough money to return home. By now Hatterr is almost naked:

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[96] The *Magaa* belongs to the 'Order of the Naked and Enlightened'. All the editions after the 1949 edition refer to the man as a *Naga*.

[97] *Hatterr*, (1949), p. 162.

[98] *Ibid.*, p. 162.

[99] It is possible to view the incident with the *dhobin* in this light. She is in full possession of the facts (at least according to Hatterr) yet withholds them from the Sahib Club, thereby ensuring Hatterr's dismissal.

[100] This is particularly the case with Rosie Smythe who promises a kiss if Hatterr will undertake to participate in the circus act. It would also be possible to consider Hatterr's wife as falling into this category. As far as Hatterr is concerned, her inability to present him with a child is all her fault.

> Maybe, my hard-luck story wasn't good enough for them: maybe, it was my fig-leaf slip: maybe, my charity-organising copy wasn't psychologically sound enough an appeal to (with the few honourable exceptions) the will-to-kicking of the self-seeking, pitiless, preoccupied and selfish sons of the non-aristocratic, pedigree-less mongrels I was begging from![102]

The 1951 edition reads thus:

> Maybe, my hard-luck story wasn't good enough for them: maybe, it was my fig-leaf slip: maybe, my charity-organising copy wasn't psychologically sound enough an appeal to (with the few honourable exceptions) the will-to-kicking of the self-seeking, pitiless, preoccupied and selfish sons of the non-aristocratic, pedigree-less mongrels I was begging from*: Maybe!*[103]

The 1970 edition is revised once again:

> Maybe, my hard-luck story wasn't good enough for them: maybe, it was my fig-leaf slip: maybe, my charity-organising copy wasn't psychologically sound enough an appeal to (with the few honourable exceptions) the will-to-kicking of the self-seeking, pitiless, preoccupied and selfish sons of the non-aristocratic, pedigree-less mongrels *and the sons of mongrels, and their bitches,* I was begging from: maybe![104]

The final revision occurs in the 1972 edition:

> Maybe, my hard-luck story wasn't good enough for them: maybe, it was my fig-leaf slip: maybe, my charity-organising copy wasn't psychologically sound enough an appeal to (with the few honourable exceptions) the will-to-kicking of the self-seeking, pitiless, preoccupied and selfish sons of the non-aristocratic, pedigree-less mongrels and the sons of mongrels, and their *myopic* bitches, I was begging from: maybe![105]

It is this final revision that is the most interesting. Hatterr is discussing the similarities in the traits of men and of dogs. The insertion of 'myopic' here with its intimations of not only physical short-sightedness, but also of both imaginative and intellectual shallowness or lack, adds an edge of bitterness to his attack on his fellow man, and more importantly, on women,

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[101] 1949, 1951 and 1970 editions.

[102] *Hatterr*, (1949), p. 187.

[103] *Hatterr*, (1951), p. 217, my italics.

[104] *Hatterr*, (1970), p. 226, my italics.

[105] *Hatterr*, (1972), p. 219, my italics.

in an account already full of anger and resentment. For Hatterr, (despite the fact that the following paragraph in the text, outlines his gratitude to the 'good ladies and fellers[...]' who help him out) this becomes another opportunity to re-open the wounds caused to him when his mother was taken from him and when his wife left him, and which will be further explored in his next encounter.

Chapter 6 'Salute the Kismet' continues Hatterr's exploration of his relationship with women. The Digest of this chapter is, unusually, only marginally changed. The first edition asks the question: 'Is there anything in this "*Kismet*" notion?[106] This is revised, in all subsequent editions to 'Is there anything in this *here* "Kismet" notion?' Clearly the inference in the later editions is to the narrative itself, making it a more specific and less general question. However, as Hatterr seldom asks such specific questions it is prudent to assume that even though he has added the 'here', it is the wider implications and manifestations of 'kismet' that holds a grim fascination for him.

This chapter provides another opportunity for Hatterr to seek inclusion in a society which seems designed to exclude him.[107] Hatter has lost his job and Banerrji hires an expert in Indian music who will bestow an honour on Hatterr which his ex-employer will accept for the honour that it is and reinstate him. Needless to say the whole experience is disastrous. In the midst of this account of Hatterr's deepening despair is one of Hatterr's most poignant remarks. He is discussing women, love and marriage and is speculating on the reasons for his particular marriage to the Waxed Kiss-curl. It is clear to Hatterr that his marriage is loveless and only at this point, almost at the end of his narrative, the reasons become apparent:

> *I would have loved and honoured this queer-card of a woman for keeps, had she but been the mother of my son. Bred me a young feller, whose achievements might have compensated me for my own delinquency, checkmates, and labours-in-vain. A scion, who might have exalted me, and, maybe[...] hurt me. But, as to her own Kiss-curl self,*
> *"Woman go to hell, for heaven's sake!" would have been the wiser vow.*[108]

The 1951 edition contains some interesting changes:

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[106] *Hatterr,* (1949), p. 13.

[107] Desani's text and Hatterr's narrative become an account of inclusion and exclusion at both a domestic and a public level. Hatterr has lost his wife, his job, his money and above all, he feels himself to be without self-esteem/self-worth. His quest becomes a search for a level of inclusion which is based less on external or superficial values such as money or the ability to speak properly (see for instance Chapter 2 'Versus the Impresario' in which Hatterr's wife maligns him for his poor English, p. 45,1949). What Hatterr is seeking is acceptance at the most fundamental level; as a human being.

[108] *Hatterr,* (1949), p.193 Desani's italics.

> I would have loved and honoured this queer-card of a woman for keeps, had she but been the mother of my son. Bred me a young feller, whose achievements might have compensated me for my own delinquency, checkmates, and labours-in-vain. A scion, who might have exalted me – *been an emir, a cral, a boyar, tsár-ût, a khan or a freeman millionaire*, and, maybe[...] hurt me. But, as to her own Kiss-curl self, "Woman go to hell, for heaven's sake!" would have been the wiser vow.[109]

The 1970 edition is further changed:

> I would have loved and honoured this queer-card of a woman for keeps, had she but been the mother of my son. Bred me a young feller, whose achievements might have compensated me for my own delinquency, checkmates, and labours-in-vain. A scion, who might have exalted me – been an emir, a cral, a boyar, tsár-ût, an aga, *a two-tailed pasha, a maharaja's kumar,* a khan or a freeman millionaire, *an industrial mogul* and, maybe[...] hurt me. But, as to her own Kiss-curl self, "Woman go to hell, for heaven's sake!" would have been the wiser vow.[110]

The final version appears in the 1972 edition:

> I would have loved and honoured this queer-card of a woman for keeps, had she but been the mother of my son. Bred me a young feller, whose achievements might have compensated me for my own delinquency, checkmates, and labours-in-vain. A scion, who might have exalted me – been an emir, a cral, a boyar, tsár-ût, an aga, a two-tailed pasha, a maharaja's kumar, a khan or a *Yankeedom* freeman millionaire, an industrial mogul and, maybe[...] hurt me. But, as to her own Kiss-curl self, "Woman go to hell, for heaven's sake!" would have been the wiser vow.[111]

As Hatterr adds, with each new account, to the list of attributes for a potential son and heir, his own sense of disappointment is apparent. It is clear he lays the blame with his wife, opening his meditation with the reference to her as a 'queer-card' and concluding with a damnation of the woman who failed to live up to his expectations. What also emerges at this point is the emphasis that Hatterr lays on the potential for his progeny to exceed his own life experiences and to become everything that he is not and never will be. For Hatterr, the inability of his wife to give him a son becomes far more than a simple biological denial. She has robbed him, as he sees it, of the chance to improve on life, to create a future and a past which looks to be more positive.

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[109] *Hatterr,* (1951), p. 224-5 my italics.
[110] *Hatterr,* (1970), p. 234-5, my italics.
[111] *Hatterr,* (1972), pp. 226-227, my italics.

This chapter provides some of the most interesting analysis of Hatterr's understanding of women and the role they play in his life, and more importantly within the framework of society, as seen through his own eyes. Hatterr is contemplating the extraordinary power of love (and women) to defy rationale and to dictate social and personal experience. The above quotations outline his reasons for marrying the Kiss-curl, to give him a son and it would seem that *her* failure to produce the son and heir are grounds enough for regretting the marriage. However, within this introductory and explanatory speech is perhaps the most assertive indicator of Hatterr's complex emotions concerning women. He is providing the reader with the details of his life with Mrs Hatterr and inserts a number of snide comments regarding her sexual history – intended to acquaint the reader with the nature of the trials Hatterr has been forced to experience during his marriage. He comments that:

> *(Intimate note: " A woman is apt to feel," [...], "a peculiar attachment and dependence on a man to whom she has lost her virginity."* I would confirm, [...] feeling a peculiar attachment and dependence on the Kiss-curl, to whom I had lost *my* virginity. Towards whom did *she* feel the pec. attach. & dep.? Didn't know the blighter, else I'd have asked!)[112]

This remains unchanged in all subsequent editions and the bitterness and resentment is so profound that the reader is left in no doubt as to Hatterr's current state of mind. However, it is the few lines added to this speech which conclude his narrative to the reader at this point. He adds:

> *(Additional note: "... In fact, the lady is worth washing in asses' milk,"* [...] There are females, who are lofty; and unselfish; and *suttees*. If it's so, I love 'em. And this applies to any lady – from Lilith down to the future-century petticoat.)[113]

The insertion of the suttee women, women who traditionally immolate themselves on their husband's funeral pyres, is a worrying image of Hatterr's 'desirable' and 'worshipable' woman. The suggestion would seem to be that to H. Hatterr, women are essentially selfish, base individuals but the intrinsic selflessness of the suttee appeals to him.

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[112] *Hatterr,* (1949), p. 193, Desani's italics.

[113] *Hatterr,* (1949), p. 194, Desani's italics.

Arguments surrounding issues of women, sati or suttee and power are numerous and complex. Susie Tharu posits the suggestion that as a result of an emergent nationalism, the image of Indian women, necessarily had to undergo a dynamic change.[114] She suggests that the image was no longer one of the socially victimised but as a woman who chose 'the path of suffering and death in order to save her people'.[115] Thus, she becomes an heraldic device. Whilst this particular idea, with its reference to the practice of sati, is an uncomfortable one, it is difficult to ignore some of the images created by this 'idealised' woman. She is both powerful and determined, selfless and essentially, divine. Tharu extends this image as she considers the changing image of women in India during the Victorian era.

> The Victorians laid great stress on sexual restraint and moral uprightness in women, for without systematic control, women's sexual powers and appetites were considered dangerous to 'civic' society as a whole. The still familiar logic of the myth runs something like this proposition; ' a pure woman excites no sexual response'. [...] a woman who arouses a man is not pure, and [...] a woman's infallible protection against male aggression is her virtue'[116]

This image of woman would appear to be one that appeals to Hatterr, yet it is clear that that the women he encounters are most definitely not this type of woman at all, begging the question as to exactly what it is that Hatterr is seeking in a woman. If the above statement is to be believed then it would seem fair to argue that Hatterr chooses only women who look, on a first inspection, to have no virtue to defend. Rosie Smythe is married,[117] Sundari is used as an image of a woman with no virtue at all, the Kiss-curl is perhaps the least virtuous of women in the text, according to Hatterr's suggestion about her pre-marital sex life.[118]

As this chapter progresses, once again Hatterr is confused by the images of women as they are presented to him. In order to impress a boss who has just sacked him, Hatterr, on Banerrji's insistence, invites some pundits to the house to bestow a *Sangita Kala Sangara.*[119] Hatterr's wife is away and with all the ceremony of a religious meeting, the service begins.

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[114] Susie Tharu, 'Tracing Savitri's Pedigree', in *Recasting Women: Essays in Indian Colonial History,* eds. Kumkum Sangari, Sudesh Vaid,(N.J: Rutgers University Press, 1990).

[115] *Ibid.*, p. 262.

[116] *Ibid.*, p. 260.

[117] This does not mean that she is without virtue, but suggests that Hatterr feels she no longer has to defend it.

[118] *Hatterr,* (1949), p. 193.

The chief speaker is 'The Roarer' who begins his 'exquisite vernacular'[120] and very quickly his subject turns to women as he begins to extol the virtues of his wife. The images used and the compounding image of woman as exquisite, beautiful, alluring and above all tempting, realise, acutely Hatterr's own ambiguous attitude to and experience of women. The Roarer claims of woman that:

> "Her beauty without a parallel in this land, in the land of the departed forefathers, and the land of the moon! Her charm equal to no-one's, her wit as sparkling as the lightning! Her laugh enshaming heaven's silvery bells, her complexion as bright as burnt copper! Her hair as wavy as tendrilled, coiled
>
> vipers! Her pleats as artful and many as the brooks of yonder Northern Hills, and those beyond!"[121]

This description undergoes some changes in a later edition:

> "Her beauty without a parallel in this land, in the land of the departed *fathers*, and the land of the *regents of the* moon! Her charm equal to no-one's, her wit as sparkling as the lightning! Her laugh *superior to the rejoicing in heaven,* her complexion as bright as *gold*! Her hair as wavy as tendrilled, coiled vipers! Her pleats as artful and many as the brooks of yonder Northern Hills, and those beyond!"[122]

The change from the original, 'laugh enshaming heaven's silvery bells', clearly intended to be an indication of the purity and jubilance of the wife's laughter, a laugh so pure that heaven is put to shame next to it, is a particularly curious and ambiguous image. As the final account of the speech issues from Hatterr's lips (or pen) there is something unnerving in this image. By this point in the narrative the reader is acutely aware of Hatterr's history with his wife, as well as with the other women he has encountered, and it has become clear that he views women as a curious, and on the whole, unequal mixture of angel and sinner and object of love and of lust. With this knowledge the image of the enshaming laugh becomes indicative of what Hatterr views to be the evil of women, an evil so profound that heaven is ashamed. The final images of the snake-like hair and of the bronze skin of the woman in question is a

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[119] Banerrji translates this for Hatterr into ' Ocean of Musical Art', *Hatterr,* (1949), p.199.
[120] *Ibid.*, p.205.
[121] *Ibid.*, p. 208.
[122] *Hatterr,* (1970), pp. 208-209, my italics.

clear indication that a Medusa-like figure is being described.[123] As the Roarer completes this part of his song he ends with a reference to the woman's 'pleats'. This is a profoundly ambiguous image, creating as the speech ends, an image of a sexually provocative and alluring female. As the Roarer continues with his song the images are compounded until they threaten, like the tale of Sundari, to overwhelm Hatterr.

Just at the point where Hatterr feels that he is losing control of the situation, the Kiss-curl returns, accompanied by Sir Appadine Sinclair and a 'middle-aged female ('known locally as Lydia Ltd, Les Modes').[124] His wife's horror at the scene she witnesses, (the Roarer prostrate and crying and Hatterr squatting on the floor clad only in a loin cloth) is immense and reactionary and is compounded, as Hatterr claims, by the fact that the servants 'aren't in the verandah to unload her meagre bags and offer garlands of roses to appreciate her unexpected home-coming!'[125] She casts a look around the room and exits, only to return with a six-bore, threatening to shoot all present and promising 'to dispatch the remains to the home counties!'[126] This particular image is a reworking of one earlier in Hatterr's narrative when he confronts Charlie the lion. As Hatterr is faced with the lion he considers ways to end the show once and for all. One option is to use a gun, ' With a double bore, all of a doodah, I can shoot Charlie to smithereens and dispatch the bits to hell!'[127] Here, the man-eating Charlie comes to represent the potential of Rosie Smythe to consume Hatterr and the gun becomes the sole method of controlling the situation. As Hatterr places the gun in the hands of his wife and endures her threats, it becomes obvious that within the relationship with his wife, he is powerless. There is one final twist to this already powerful image of woman as Desani chooses to revise the Kiss-curl's re-entry. In the earliest editions it is described thus:

> Then she re-enters the drawing-room.
> She enters, wham, plus a six-bore!
> And she threatens to shoot all present, and promises to dispatch the remains to the home counties![128]

The 1970 edition reads thus:

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[123] Medusa and her sisters, the Gorgons are described thus, 'Their hair was made of angry serpents, [...] their hands were made of bronze and they had golden wings'. Fernand Comte, *Mythology,* (London: Chambers,1993) p. 91.

[124] *Hatterr,* (1949), p. 255.

[125] *Ibid.*, p. 212.

[126] *Ibid.*, p. 213.

[127] *Ibid.*, p. 62.

[128] *Ibid.*, p. 213.

> *Too soon, she returns to* the drawing-room.
> She enters, wham, plus *the* six-bore*: and the steel clip over-size cartridge belt!* And she threatens to shoot all present, and promises to *consign the cadavers* to the *Ganges*![129]

The cartridge belt is a clear indication that the Kiss-curl is powerful and determined. She is no longer simply carrying a gun, sufficient in itself to scare everyone present, but is now fully equipped with enough ammunition to actually carry out the threat she presents. The cartridge belt becomes a highly visible indicator of the level of power she wields. For Hatterr, this final realisation and his subsequent marginalisation to the garden as his wife and her guests consume the food he had prepared for after the festivities completes and consolidates all of his early fears regarding his own weakness in the light of female power.

As Banerrji leaves, Hatterr remains in a kind of limbo, unable to follow him, or to enter the house, '[...] I am unable to accompany Banerrji, being in the semi-nude, I am loitering in the garden, the hearth's border-line, seeking shelter from the downpour'.[130] Clearly, Hatterr is less afraid of the rain, than of his own wife and the shame of having to watch his wife and her guests eat the special meal whilst he hovers in the garden suggests that Hatterr has just about reached the end of his relationship with women.

Just as he set out to locate and develop his own sense of identity by contrasting himself with women in the hope that constant denigration and denial would empower him, Hatterr is forced to realise that his sense of autonomy can not be developed in such an antagonistic yet ambiguous way. His summation of the events is this:

> It was "*Kismet,*" pure and simple – or what do you think?
> I married a woman like the Kiss-curl, because it was Fate (as it were)![131]

The simplicity of this statement and the clear lack of a question mark at the end of the statement reveals that Hatterr is no longer in any doubt regarding his relationship with women. As far as he is concerned fate decreed that he should have relationships with women and that he should learn from the experience. This conclusion remains to the end of his narrative. His complete insistence on the power of fate to dictate experience and indeed identity looks to be a handy, if somewhat naïve conclusion to draw. However, for Hatterr, the only way to consider women in direct relation to himself is as a peculiar yet necessary distraction, sent to test and confound him at every turn and despite his very best intentions, from the moment that his mother was taken from him until his wife returns to the house with the loaded shot gun, he fails, completely, utterly and admittedly, to understand them.

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[129] *Hatterr,* (1970), p. 257, my italics.

[130] *Hatterr,* (1949), p. 213.
[131] *Hatterr*, (1949), p. 214.

Conclusion

In this chapter, which charts the relationship between H. Hatterr and the women in his life, it has become evident that although the presence of women is strong throughout, they are denied the power to talk back, to redress the images created by Hatterr and to give their account. What the reader is presented with is Hatterr's own, highly developed, and even more highly-flawed subjective account of women in general, based on his experiences from his early separation from his mother, to his sterile marriage to the Kiss-Curl, to his encounters with Rosie Smythe and the other women he meets. Each encounter draws on the past encounters and each woman becomes less of an individual aspect of womankind, but more insistently, further proof for Hatterr, that all women are the same.

It becomes clear during Hatterr's narrative that his own sense of identity is so precarious that the challenge women pose to his already fragile ego, proves to be a challenge which he is only able to utilise and order to the detriment of the 'other', in this case woman. Hatterr's resistance finds its first voice in Desani's opening account as he presents a diatribe against all the women who failed to appreciate his novel for what it was. He blames them for being prudish,[132] frightened of its content,[133] and ultimately he is forced to consider the probability that they are simply too foolish to understand it.[134] As Hatterr's narrative takes over, the incident with the *dhobin* sets the tone for all further encounters with women.

Ultimately, Hatterr's narrative becomes a fascinating exploration of the psychological processes at work in a man whose relationship with women falters at an early age and is unable to recover. As Desani revises the original account, his ability to draw on an already complete account, allows him to inflect his characters and, more importantly, Hatterr's new re-worked narrative, with the emotive responses Hatterr experienced at each encounter with women. Thus, each new revised edition can relive the old and become a more intensely worked account of one man's mission to understand women and his failure and subsequent sorrow that he is unable to do so.

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[132] This is the typist who considered the manuscript to be the 'sort of nonsense young girls in the office' should not be exposed to. *Hatterr,* (1949), p. 4.

[133] The clergyman's sister who was afraid that he might see it, *Hatterr,* (1949), p. 4.

[134] Betty Bloomsbohemia who is treated with thinly veiled sarcasm as she refuses to publish it, '[...] whoever asked such a cultivated mind such as yours to submit your intellectual acumen or emotions to this H. Hatterr mind?' *Hatterr,* 1949, p. 6.

Chapter Five

Hali: Describing the Indescribable (or Expressing the Inexpressible)

> Mr Desani's writing has the special kind of originality which comes when a foreigner with a sense of style and an inventive, sensitive mind writes in English. It has passion and tenderness, and the apocalyptic diction is quite extraordinary. [...] In spite of its fragmentary condition, however, it is perhaps the most striking poetical composition in English since Mr. Auden's 'For the Time Being'.[1]

> [...] His lyrical prose-play, *Hali* written in London during the post-war years, discusses philosophically, with a grandiloquent strain of mysticism, and imagery of occasional power, the sufferings, tragedy and yearning of man. The play has the blessing of T. S. Eliot and E. M. Forster and its fundamental quest is for a 'virtue beyond good or evil'.[2]

> [...] To call it a play, in the European sense, is absurd.[3]

> [...] of *Hali* he [Eliot] writes [...] 'a striking and unusual piece of work'. When even *the* poet of modern times and a master critic cannot do better than that, it would be presumptuous and foolhardy for lesser mortals to rush in with an opinion.[4]

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[1] *Manchester Guardian,* March 10th,1950.

[2] *Liverpool Daily Post*, March 1950, from a review by Sydney Jeffery.

[3] *The Listener*, June 8th 1950.

[4] *Forum*, (Bombay), July 30th, 1950, author's italics.

In a paper delivered by G. V. Desani in 1970 entitled, 'How is the 'Inexpressible' to be Expressed?' he concerns himself with attempting to describe the 'inexpressible' which he defines as a certain 'kind of intense or heightened experience[...]'[5]. He discusses the technique required to describe an experience which is not necessarily mystical but still surrounds itself with suggestions of impossibility whilst simultaneously resisting articulation. For Desani, conventional language will not always do, it is simply inadequate.

He claims, as a certainty, that there are experiences which defy traditional terms and language, or at the very least are best described (if that is at all possible) using language that is not/would not be traditionally used to describe the experience. He suggests that if this is achieved then the following occurs. He cites an example from *All About H. Hatterr*, as Hatterr is contemplating the beauty of the Ganges.[6] Desani claims that if conventional terms are not used then something other than the river can be, and is being described:

> a) Without these words, these 'limbs', it is not the body of the river that is described: rather, it is an incantation or what looks like an incantation, addressed to the Spirit of the river.
> b) And the Spirit is here treated as 'God', as "Something" "to which worship is due."
> c) Further, the Spirit is described in the text as a process, as an action, and [...] as far as the reader/listener is concerned [...] an entity is expected to be 'intuited' or 'abstracted' from it. That is as far as, in my view today, communication can go.[7]

What Desani is insisting on is a way of writing using a language to suggest images rather than to describe them, a language and style that evokes an 'essential' image of the river. In the above quotation his 'limbs' are the conventional terms employed to describe the image and what he is seeking is a way of tapping into the 'essence' of the image, (this is the river as *he* sees it) which he believes, possesses the ability to evolve over time, both in the short term within the text itself and in the long term as the text stands its ground within the literary tradition. What Desani is attempting to do is to create a way of describing *the* river that manages to encapsulate both the here and now of the river as he sees it before him, as well as creating an image of *a* river that will be familiar to the reading public. However, the final section of his outline suggests that the success or failure of his scheme is dependent on the reader's intuition and ability to abstract the correct image indicators and to use them in the manner in which the author intended them to be used. Clearly, such a profound reliance on the reader presents a number of problems for the author whose language and style present themselves as somewhat unfamiliar to its audience.

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[5] G.V. Desani, 'How is the 'Inexpressible' to be Expressed?, Dept of Philosophy, University of Texas, 1970, p.1. This paper is an extended version of a paper given at the 3rd Seminar and Conference, Union for the Study of Great Religions, Annamalai University, Chidambaram, India, 1963.

[6] *Hatterr,* (1949), pp. 100-102.

[7] This is a direct quotation from G. V. Desani, 'How is the 'Inexpressible' to be Expressed' *?,* (1970), p. 2. All underlining is Desani's.

Desani goes on to claim that two of his later pieces of writing concern themselves with this attempt to express the 'inexpressible'. The two pieces are 'The Bell' which appears in its complete form in the 1991 edition of *Hali and Collected Stories* (McPherson) – it is absent until this date- and the second piece of writing he titles 'Of Blessedness' which undergoes a few changes to emerge as 'A Rose and Lilac Light' in *Hali and Collected Stories.* There is one further item of interest regarding Desani's particular selection of 'appropriate' terms for use within his works. It comes from a press release from the Central Office of Information, the British Information Service and is dated March 25th, 1951, and titled 'Indian author to visit U.S.A,' and includes a mention of Desani's style. It cites the Ganges river experience from *Hatterr* and claims that Desani:

> [...] began by making a note of all the words he could find which were conventionally used to describe a river, then he proceeded to write his word picture without using a single one of them.

By constructing a list of adjectives and then choosing a different set to illustrate the narrative, Desani may be seen to be perversely handicapping himself, but it is clear that his intention here is to move away from traditional and conventional terms and look beyond both in an attempt to find something new and dynamic.

In the conclusion to his piece, Desani suggests that the inability to express the 'inexpressible' is dependent on the relationship between reader and writer. He stresses that achieving the goal of describing the inexpressible is only possible if the reader/listener is 'equipped with an emotional and linguistic maturity or refinement and, indeed, experience, far above the average. It is to such a reader/listener that the imagery might appeal and make sense'.[8] (He adds in an aside that it is not his job to define the average reader). His final comment on the subject is that:

> The measure of success in expressing or communicating the 'inexpressible' must depend on the total effect brought about by evocative imagery, by yielding to it, and not by analysis, discussion, debate.[9]

This chapter, contrary to Desani's particular theory concerning the expression of the inexpressible and his suggestion that debate will not necessarily bring about the success of a piece, will consider G.V. Desani's play *Hali* (1950) and will also debate the nature of the responses it received. Above all, this chapter will examine Desani's prose/poem/play as a work which attempts to express the inexpressible and to explore the assumptions and manifestations of total 'otherness' Desani introduces in both style and content within *Hali* and the ways in which this challenge to 'accepted' literary technique, style and subject matter, was received.

The first section gives a brief outline of the story of *Hali* and includes some contemporary suggestions regarding the reading of the work. The second section of this chapter considers the early attempts by Desani's contemporaries to understand and articulate an 'appropriate' response to *Hali*. Their responses also reveal some important details about the English literary scene at the end of the 1940s/beginning of the 1950s. This section also contains detailed analysis of some of the first-hand impressions of *Hali* by writers such as Eliot and Forster. The final section outlines the limits of early criticism of Indian writing in English with regard to the original confusion surrounding *Hali* and the inability to label the work.

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[8] *Ibid.*, p. 2.

[9] *Ibid.*, p.2. Underlining is Desani's own.

Section 1

Hali was first published in 1950, two years after *Hatterr* and according to Russell and Singh it was originally a work of nearly 300 pages 'written and planned as an epic'[10] outlining a search for perfection. If this was the case, then it would seem that this was to be a very ambitious work, potentially longer than *Hatterr*. *Hali*, according to Ramanujan is about 6,000 words long, although this estimation predates the final and somewhat longer version published in 1991 by McPherson. The final length of *Hali* did not pass without comment – especially among the Indian audience, for whom the price of paper dictated the price of the book. The first edition of *Hali* consists of 29 pages of which almost half are only half pages of writing. With regard to this use of paper, one reviewer wrote:

> Three points of criticism arise from a reading of this self-important book: first, that of the 53 pages given to the alleged play 16 are blank, for which the buyer of the book has to pay; second, that it is said to have a foreword, while it has two short letters, one from E.M. Forster, which is a politely stated drastic criticism of the book, one from T.S. Eliot, agreeing with Forster, and both declining to regard it as a play, but rather as poetry; third, that it has not the remotest connection with drama, being a succession of rhetorical speeches in which there are irrelevant mixtures of metaphor and meaningless repetitions of phrases, occasionally of a very ugly kind.[...] [11]

The above criticism, beginning with a complaint regarding the value for money, or lack of it, that the text represents, soon moves on to more specific criticism. This criticism suggests that the public may have been misled on numerous accounts. It is poor value for money, the introduction is merely a couple of sceptical letters and the body of work does not adhere to any kind of familiar literary type. This quotation pinpoints exactly the 'difficulties' of Desani's text.

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[10] Peter Russell and Khushwant Singh (eds), *G. V. Desani: A Note*, (Amsterdam: Szeben, 1952), p. 21.

[11] *The Hindu,* 23rd, April 1950.

When *Hali* was first published it was variously claimed as a masterpiece or 'eloquent and emotional splurge'.[12] First appearances would seem to suggest that the majority of the criticism (good and bad) pertaining to *Hali* focuses on its mysticism, exoticism, or simply its difference or alterity from contemporary literary models. As such, a large number of critics deftly skirt around defining *Hali*, offering little or no interpretation of the work, preferring instead to identify features of the text which appear easiest to categorise/label. All of this reveals the possibility that, despite the undoubted intellect and well-developed powers of interpretation, few, if any of the contemporary critics were able to describe *Hali* adequately. Part of the confusion surrounding the text is the inability to label the piece accurately. Desani referred to it as a play, Eliot and Forster as poetry (an interesting choice by these two writers who provide a foreword for *Hali*: *A Play*).[13] Molly Ramanujan refers to it as a 'prose poem, pageant play, words for a symphony, or multimedia theatre [...]'.[14] Later classification selected 'prose-poem play' as the most suitable title for the work.

It is necessary, at the commencement of this chapter, to outline briefly the story of *Hali*. It is the story of the 'grandeur and the ideal of human aspiration, in a language of strange power and beauty', claim Russell and Singh.[15] It is described later in Russell and Singh's text as '[...] a work of art, a poem of love. Being an allegorical work, it, too, can be interpreted in various senses'.[16] Hali the man is the 'centre of all value' and sets out on a quest to discover and then explore the nature of ideal Love. Singh and Russell point out that the poem's 'obvious theme' is self-love as opposed to other-love. It is about love and death, life in death and death in love. It deals with issues of separation and loss, most importantly, the loss of love in the form of firstly Hali's mother, and secondly his beloved Rooh.

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[12] Terence Rogers Tiller, in an internal memo within the BBC, undated but somewhere in the region of 1948/9.

[13] Forster and Eliot provided the Foreword for the first edition of *Hali* (London: The Saturn Press, 1950)

[14] Molly Ramanujan, *G. V. Desani,* (Liverpool: Lucas Publications, 1988), p. 86.

[15] Russell and Singh (1952), p. 5. It has been suggested that this work was in fact, written by Desani and edited by Russell and Singh. The tone, language and style of the piece would seem to support this suggestion, but for the purposes of this thesis the authors/editors are assumed to be Russell and Singh.

[16] *Ibid.*, p.12.

It opens with Hali and his mother living an idyllic existence of peace, love and beauty, with both mother and son basking in the perfection of their love for each other. One of the earliest indications of the destiny planned for Hali occurs at the beginning of the narrative as the gods 'conspired and made him beautiful'. This beauty attracts the unwanted attention of other women, but *Hali* has eyes for nobody but his mother. However, this almost pre-lapsarian existence can not continue; the gods ordain that Hali must be put to the test, and so decree that his mother must die:

> From the foot of a hill he saw his mother climb the rocks. Her pale face seemed to him like a flower of the hills and her lips the colour of gold. As he looked up, her yellow robe appeared crimson, for behind her was the setting sun. He saw a halo of light around her head, and he thought she was divine, and made of love. He heard her call. He ran to meet her.
> Then he saw her fall from a rock and saw the Ganga make her a grave. [...] From hill to hill, forest to forest, Hali searched for his mother, [...] till the gods in their mercy took away his strength.[17]

Hali's final glimpse of his mother as an ethereal, transcendent beauty is important. Later editions of *Hali* revise this last vision. Hali considers his mother as 'divine and made of love' in the first edition, later amended to 'he thought she was divine, deathless, and made of love'.[18] For Hali, his mother's death challenges all that he believes in, undermining his faith in love, life and above all, in the strength of maternal love that will overcome all, including death. This early shock to the young Hali is reminiscent of Hatterr's deprivation of his own mother, and the search for a replacement which Hali undertakes begins to mirror that of H. Hatterr. For both men, the withdrawal of mother-love sparks a chain of events designed to test and explore all aspects of human relationships to the full.[19]

With the death of his mother, Hali is lost. Waiting in the wings is Maya, 'a good woman from the plains[...]'[20] who rescues him, takes him home and nurses him back to health. Whilst being nursed back to health, physical and emotional, Hali finds love again with Rooh:

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[17] G. V. Desani, *Hali*, (London: The Saturn Press, 1950), pp. 17-18.
[18] G. V. Desani, *Hali and Collected Stories,* (New York: McPherson and Company, 1991), p. 4.
[19] It could of course be argued that Hali is not a human (the profoundly spiritual tone of the narrative suggests that he is no mere mortal) but the complexity of the relationships of both Hali and Hatterr suggest that Desani is intent upon exploring the dynamics of all relationships, spiritual, physical and emotional.
[20] *Hali*, (1950), p.18.

> Then he found a beloved being, the most beloved being God ever made. Rooh was her name. And Rooh is dead.[21]

Clearly, Hali's troubles are far from over. In the midst of his renewed grief, his mother calls to him from the grave pleading for forgiveness for their early separation and claiming her unceasing love for him, a love that is not curtailed by death. Into this scene of bewilderment and loss comes the voice of Raha, in whom 'sadness was born':[22]

> [...] I, the Lord Keeper of all, am the Great Will Accursed, the Eternal Insatiable, the Immeasurable Abandoned, and I will and hunger to die, not be, if be, be what I was, when time was naught, ere I became an Eye, a shape, a form, and die I cannot![23]

Raha foretells that Hali will lose again and Hali is impelled to offer his own life to spare the life of another. Molly Ramanujan offers the suggestion that 'HISTORY EQUALS DESTINY'[24], insisting that Hali's early life is set to find a reflection in his later experiences, a not dissimilar concept to that explored by Hatterr in the chapter entitled 'Salute the Kismet' which debates the relationship between fate and experience and the inevitability of fate overcoming all else. On Rooh's death Hali is consumed by death, not literally as he continues to live, but now his life has become a life-in-death experience. Into this half-life come dreams and visions as Hali relives his short relationship with Rooh and secures for himself a fleeting peace:

> And I felt at peace with the makers of my fate and with all things seen and unseen. Then I picked up the warm ash in my hands and wondered why she, of all, had been my love and my Rooh.

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[21] *Ibid.*, p.18.

[22] *Ibid.*, p. 23. It should be noted that Raha becomes Rāhū in *Hali and Collected Stories,* (1991).

[23] *Ibid.*, p. 23.

[24] Molly Ramanujan, (1988), p.107.

> [...] Why would I let my destiny be linked with a clan, a country, a faith, and a place of birth? Nay, I would be free, free, and know no loves, no hates, for all my cares would belong to my queen.[25]

At this point Hali is determined to sever all connections with 'home', claiming that all the time man is attached to the forms of being which would seem to determine him, he is vulnerable. Thus, this particular point in the narrative becomes the locus for Hali's movement from attachment to detachment. As the action moves on and the time since Rooh's death grows, Hali seeks renewal with the Magician. Maya accompanies him, introducing him to the Magician as, ' [...] like my own little one, [...]'. The Magician does something that changes Hali's life forever; he gives him a vision:

> And I saw a hill. Upon the hill, a man. His face was pierced, fissured, full of holes. Holes, sweating wax. Adhering wax. There was no blood in him, but oozing wax. Adhering wax. His hair was like spikes. He was panting. Panting from pain. His eyes were orange, rust-like, and half-seeing through torn and swollen lids. Upon his chest were the letters 'Hali' written in wounds. And he cried. He cried like an infant in pain.[26]

The horror of this vision is such that Hali, prompted by the Magician, sets off to discover a sort of personal sanctuary, a divine place where all meaning may be found. The directions he is given are clear. He is to go on a boat, will see a hill, will see a cave, will enter the cave and will see the image of the Goddess. In short, what follows is a dawning awareness within Hali that he has begun to move beyond his grief for Rooh but at the same time, a new and more insistent grief is developing within him. He looks back to his idyllic childhood when he dreamed of a world without stain, an Eden where tyranny was unknown. Into this world Rooh was to come as queen. When Hali became aware that the world was not, nor ever would be, the Eden of his dreams, all of his imagined potential for goodness and redemption lay in Rooh. With the death of Rooh the threat of tyranny returns in a formidable and apocalyptic image:

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[25] *Hali*, (1950), p. 38.

[26] *Ibid.*, p. 41.

> [...] Affliction approaches! Awed, frenzied, thy brothers and sisters shall war upon one another, and they shall shed their skins, and be drained of blood. And their ribs shall break, and their bones shall point to the sky, point like fingers to the sky. Ants shall nest in thy brother's jaws and flies shall feed upon thy sister's breasts. Mothers shall make their wombs the flesh tombs of their young, a sea of blood shall be upon the burnt purple earth, [...]. And thou shalt seek flesh, Hali, seek and violate the flesh of thy chosen, thy chosen sister, [...] and thy forehead shall be upon her forehead and thy lips upon her lips. Then thou shalt burn, burn from desire, the desire for her flesh, and comfortless, in anguish, thou shalt be like a beast of prey, thirsting for blood, the blood of thy chosen, and she shall die of terror! terror! her horrored heart torn, torn of terror![27]

The Manichean view is of a world where terror and tyranny triumph now that Rooh is not in the world. However, just at the moment when Hali looks set to give in, the redemptive power of the imagination to rescue the soul is revealed. For Hali, the imagination can provide all that life does not and to this end Hali is determined to find goodness on earth. In order to follow this decision, he must give up everything he knows, home, country and faith, all tokens of the attachment he is attempting to remove himself from. At the point of departure (both physical and psychological) Hali realises that neither life nor death are what he wants. Exactly what it is that he desires is left to the reader to decide. Whatever decision is reached, Desani's play ends with the death of Hali. Whether it is suicide or not is debatable. What is clear is that Hali felt a need to move from attachment to detachment, to seek an ideal world, to give up all that is familiar and reliable in order to achieve some kind of peace in a world designed to corrupt.

This somewhat rudimentary outline of the plot of *Hali* reveals that its subject matter, its tone and language are unusual and unfamiliar. Desani's attempt at creating a text which draws on a structure of unfamiliar idioms and linguistic tricks in order to attempt to express the inexpressible, looks to have been at the very least, begun. As Hali removes himself from everything that binds him to his previous sense of self, his home, his love for his mother and for Rooh, he moves into an unfamiliar world which requires a new set of interpretative structures and a new, more dynamic language with which it can be described and inscribed. Desani attempts, and I would suggest, achieves this inscription through the use of unusual and unfamiliar material, language and images. Whether or not the over-all effect is persuasive is what is being debated here.

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[27] *Ibid.*, p. 48.

Contemporary comment suggest that it was a work designed to be read aloud and that such a treatment *may* offer new interpretations of a text that was proving difficult to categorise and understand. The need physically to read/articulate *Hali* was of prime importance to Desani and the driving force behind his numerous attempts at getting it broadcast by the BBC.

In July of 1950 *Hali* appeared on the stage of the Watergate Theatre in London. The theatre was located in Buckingham Street, London, W.C.2 and the brochure produced by the theatre contains the following information:

> For some years there has been no avantgarde theatre in London, where the latest developments at home and abroad could be followed, as once at the old Gate Theatre. The aim of the Watergate is to fill this lack, and to provide a permanent London home for poetic drama. It offers all those concerned with contemporary theatre an opportunity to develop new methods of expression and to keep in touch with the experimental work of other countries.

Regarding the performance of *Hali*, a quotation from *The Stage* (June 1950) says:

> [...]Ram Gopal transformed the Watergate into a miniature palace. [...] the stark white walls of this grotto theatre, hung with carpets and silks that Mr. Gopal must have brought to us along the golden road from Samarkand, [...] are glowing with rich crimsons and purples. [...] Flooded with the tender rosy light of a Kashmir sunrise, the theatre makes an ideal setting for Mr. Gopal's fascinating narrative.

It seems likely that it was performed for one night only on Monday 19th June, 1950 at 8 pm. In a letter to Desani dated 10th June 1950 Velona Pilcher, one of the directors for *Hali* and an owner of the Watergate, wrote saying that the producer, Martin Starkie, 'has ideas about lights, unseen readers, projected pictures etc'. She adds later that Ram Gopal 'will lend us some saris and such to make the stage beautiful'.[28] Russell and Singh comment on the play, claiming that it 'was an effective production - aided by visual devices only - the actors being invisible and present only as "voices".[29] Desani's correspondence with the BBC at this time was to reveal the difficulty inherent in any production of *Hali*, that of the ability of the actor to interpret Desani's vision for his characters adequately. The short run of the play and suggestions that Desani called a halt on any further productions of the piece, suggest that the play was not a success either for the audience or its author.[30]

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[28] Ram Gopal was well known in London during the late 40s and 50s as an Indian dance expert who worked at the Watergate teaching Indian dancing.

Whatever the audience response was to the play, it is clear that *Hali* is a complex work, difficult to define, to interpret, to perform and to categorise, all of which at least begins the process of understanding the discrepancies that lay between Desani's expectations for *Hali*, the public's ambiguous reception to the public work, and the difficulties Desani was to experience as he attempted to obtain some radio airtime for his then unpublished project.

One final facet of the complexity that is *Hali*, lies in the fact that Desani left Britain in 1952. The reason for his return to India is unclear. However, what little discussion there is on the sudden departure from the land which was intended to be the land of opportunity for G. V. Desani, comes from the pen of Desani himself:

> I am going back to India [...] I can truthfully say that all my ambitions and expectations from this city have been fulfilled. Yet, I am not happy. This is a defeat. I am ashamed to admit it to anyone.[31]

The sense of dissatisfaction is a reflection of an earlier confession by Desani which appeared in the 1951 edition of *All About H. Hatterr*, the first American edition. It is dated October 1950 and runs thus:

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[29] The production was Directed by Elizabeth Denby, Velona Pilcher and Elizabeth Sprigge. Produced by Martin Starkie. The cast included Michael Flanders (Hali), James Thompson (Raha), Irene Sutcliffe (Rooh), Freda Hodgson (Mira). Information from Russell and Singh, (1952), p. 22.

[30] There is a note in Russell and Singh (1952) that the play was also produced in India in 1950 and 1951. (p.22).

[31] G. V. Desani, 'India, for the Plain Hell of it'., in *New Yorker: Special Fiction Edition,* 23-30th June 1997, p.62. The journal entry is dated 1952 (London).

> October 1950, and I see the memorable events of my recent past are again III. I The publication of *H. Hatterr.* Through H. Hatterr I offered a portrait of Man. I found him entertaining. II The publication of *Hali.* Through Hali I offered my ideal of Man. He made me unhappy. III And now I have fallen a prey to a mortal consuming anger for the offence caused me by Man. I am provoked by the past and I am oppressed by the present. I think I must learn to pray if I am to be relieved of this grievous passion that I feel.[32]

It is not certain what the cause of this 'grievous passion' was but one suggestion would certainly be that *Hali* had not received the 'right' kind of critical attention. One further comment on his reception as a writer in Britain appears in *The Illustrated Weekly of India,* in 1953. It is in the form of a letter from Desani to the paper countering an accusation made by the paper's editor, C.R. Mandy who claimed that Desani spent his time writing 'dreary missives to newspapers'. Desani replied thus:

> Those days [London in 1949-50] I used to think that if I weren't read, understood, worshipped, taken leave of (all that from a distance, and in that order), the person under the moment's casual scrutiny was guilty of overt treason, or worse (folly is implied). One lives and learns.
> [...] As for literature, [...] I am cheered by the thought – that in spite of the guile of the scene – I might do something so deadly clever and stunning, and esoteric, that it would defy *me,* and no lesser.[33]

It is clear that there was some discrepancy between the way in which Desani viewed himself and his creative talent, and the perceptions of the British literary public with regard to his work. However, it is also apparent that speaking with hindsight Desani is aware that his expectations were misguided and the final conclusion he draws, that if he can surprise himself that would be an achievement, is ambiguous. Whether or not Desani considered that he had achieved this with *Hali* is debatable, but the suggestion would be that he *felt* that he had not. This chapter sets out to explore the critical material relating to *Hali* in an attempt at understanding not only the implications of the text within Desani's own literary life, but its position –however tenuous - within the genre of English literature.

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[32] *Hatterr,* (1951), p. 11. This note only appears in this edition, suggesting that some contemporary events had begun to overwhelm Desani.
[33] G.V. Desani, *Illustrated Weekly of India,* February, 1st, 1953.

It is interesting to note that critical work on *Hali* is almost absent between the late 1950s the 1980s when there was some new interest in the work.[34] The fullest examination of *Hali* in recent years is one undertaken by Molly Ramanujan whose book *G. V. Desani* was published in 1984 in India. Although Ramanujan's consideration of *Hali* is lengthy, it offers little in the way of explanation or even an interpretation of the work as such, preferring instead, to give an overview of, or 'commentary' on the narrative. This would seem to suggest that although more than half a century has passed since the first publication of *Hali*, literary criticism may not yet have developed a way of negotiating such a text in a way which looks to engage fully with the subject matter and the literary devices which construct it. The intention here is less to attempt to create a new and compelling interpretation of the text, but rather to consider the ways in which the indescribable can be described or the inexpressible can be expressed, even if this task requires a new mode of inquiry.

In the years running up to the publication of *Hali* in 1950 the British literary scene was embracing new works by Eliot, (*Towards the Definition of Culture*, 1948,) Winston Churchill, (*The Gathering Storm,* the first volume of *The Second World War*, 1948), George Orwell, *(Nineteen Eighty Four,* 1949), Graham Greene, (*The Heart of the Matter,* 1948) and Bertrand Russell gave the first BBC Reith Lecture on *Authority and the Individual* in 1949. Into this melee of literary talent came a piece of work by an author who, by now, was relatively famous for his novel *All About H. Hatterr* and whose number of radio broadcasts for the BBC was impressive. He was a well-known voice during the war years and the number of scripts he submitted to the Readers at the BBC was well in excess of the number of actual programmes he made. All in all, by 1950 Desani had written/produced/been involved in, somewhere in the region of thirty productions for the BBC. These ranged from programmes in Hindi for the Eastern Service to programmes in Urdu for the Eastern Pakistan Transmission and for the Home Service, serving both British and Overseas audiences.[35]

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[34] The single other source of contemporary material on *Hali* appears in Peter Russell and Khushwant Singh (ed), *G.V. Desani: A Consideration of his All About H. Hatterr and Hali. A Note,* (Amsterdam: Szeben, 1952), pp. 12-22. It should be noted that since Ramanujan's publication there has been no other published work on *Hali*.

What emerges on a first glance at the letters, reviews and general correspondence regarding *Hali* is that its reviewers were, on the whole, willing to embrace it as a new and innovative piece of work. However, finding the language to describe a work which does not use instantly recognisable forms, subjects, and language for its basis, required something extraordinary in the way of literary criticism. For many critics, the inability to express this seemingly inexpressible, to describe the indescribable, proved to be a task they were ill-equipped to deal with, despite their obvious proficiency within the contemporary critical and literary scene The very worst critics damned it outright, the very best skirted around locating meaning within the text, preferring instead to speculate on authorial intention.

Criticism on *Hali* falls into two distinct areas; discussion of the written work and its position within the contemporary literary scene which appeared in magazines, journals and newspapers of the day, and opinions which circulated in the BBC and concerned the broadcasting of *Hali*. The latter, although a somewhat unorthodox source of critical material, provides an acute insight into the dual worlds of the media and the literati and into the perceptions of the 'controllers' of radio content, regarding the tastes and intellectual capacity of their audience.[36]

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[35] The Hindi language broadcasts included *Interview with Three Indian Businessmen*, (Desani as interviewer, 1940, *Akram the Sailor,* 1940, *A Hero Alone*, 1941, *A Programme in honour of the Turkish Republic*,1942, *Mahakukarmi*, 1943, *Indian Mosaic*: Sindhi Classical Poetry Reading, 1944
For the Eastern-English Transmission Desani was involved in *Books that Changed the World: The Bhagavat Gita'* 1943, *Radio Roundabout* 1949, *Interview with readings from Hali* (in Hindi and English), 1950.For the Eastern Pakistan Transmission: *Matter of Moment* (Review of *Hali*), 1950. For the Home Service: *Empire Youth talks Things Over,* 1943, *Young India*, 1945 and *India and Pakistan: The Road to Independence,* 1948. All information from the BBC. Sadly, none of these scripts have been archived by the BBC so the content is unknown. However, within the BBC Archives there is a small amount of correspondence relating to some of the material Desani contributed to the BBC which gives timings for production, booking of studio space, sound effects and suggestions for people to play roles etc.

[36] In this instance the 'controllers' at the BBC are not simply the official station controllers but also include the readers and reviewers who worked for the BBC and in whose hands the fate of a script may lie.

Section 2

The first journalistic reviews for *Hali* looked promising:

> [...] Special kind of originality. Passion and tenderness, and the apocalyptic diction is quite extraordinary.[37]

> [...] curious and haunting poem.[38]

> *Hali* is as near a work of genius as one can judge. [...]We share Hali's conception of creation, of good, of evil; the cataclysmic experience of his Rooh: and we experience a great deal more we are not sure of [...]. Yet it has a transcendental quality.[39]

> The reader will find himself lifted out of the recognised relationships of life in this world, of man with man, and man with nature. Rooh - this figure remains abstract, in spite of the terrible account of her betrayal in this world of wars and lusts. She is a sort of Pascalian image, expressing love sublimated and universalised in time and space [...] How Mr. Desani does this it is impossible to say. The whole experience might have been so formless, like most of the essays in English by oriental writers. Mr. Desani has burned his way through that vagueness by sheer strength of spirit.[40]

One or two reviewers claim that:

> While its precise meaning may escape us, we are conscious of being in the presence of a writer more than commonly sensitive to the mystery of human experience.[41]

> Its depth of feeling, hidden it may be in symbolism of which Mr. Desani is far greater a master than his readers can ever hope to be. [...][42]

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[37] *Manchester Guardian,* March 10th, 1950.
[38] *Times Literary Supplement,* April 14th, 1950.
[39] *The Librarian,* October, 1950.
[40] *The Listener: Journal of the BBC,* June 8th, 1950.
[41] *Christian World,* February, 16th, 1950.
[42] *Eastern World,* April, 1950.

Perhaps the most influential opinions and indeed the ones selected by Desani for the dustjacket of *Hali* are these two:

> I have no inner knowledge of the poetry, and so am diffident of my judgements on it, but *Hali* does strike me as genuine, personal, and passionate. I get a view through it, though I should find difficulty in describing what I see. It seems to treat life as if it were what death might be- perhaps that is the method in its wild pilgrimage, and why it keeps evoking heights above the 'Summit-City' of normal achievement. It depends upon a private mythology- a dangerous device. Yet it succeeds in being emotionally intelligible and in creating overtones.[43]
>
> I consider Mr. Desani's *Hali* a striking and unusual piece of work. It is a completely different sort of thing from his *Hatterr,* and often the imagery is terrifyingly effective. It is, of course, as poetry that I take *Hali*. *Hali* is not likely to appeal quickly to the taste of many readers and yet, in general, I find myself in agreement with what Mr. Forster says.[44]

It is worthy of mention that Forster's review quoted above originally appeared in a letter to Desani dated December 13th 1947. The original letter contains the views quoted but also, more importantly, it contained a number of incisive and negative comments. Forster suggested that Desani should change the moral to make it more accessible to the public. He does not however, make any suggestions, either with regard to what he considers the moral to be, or what he feels it should be, only that some clarification on Desani's part would make it more accessible. Forster also writes that he doubts if any publisher would like the poem 'although it certainly ought to appear'. He goes on to say that 'there is certainly not much market for poems at the moment, and yours is not on familiar lines'. It should also be noted that this letter predates the publication of *Hali* by some three years and it is of course possible that, as Russell and Singh suggest, at this stage *Hali* was still the 'epic' Desani planned it to be. Whatever the length of the text it is clear from Forster's original letter that he had a number of reservations regarding the work, not least its accessibility and appeal to a public which Forster considered to be less interested in poetry at this particular time. It should, however, be remembered that verse-drama was particularly popular at this time in England. Eliot's *Murder in the Cathedral* had appeared in 1935, and Christopher Fry had produced several poetic dramas in the period running up to the early 1950s (see for example *The Boy with the Cart* (1939) and *The Firstborn* (1946).[45] This popularity would suggest that it was not so much the form of the work that caused Forster to make his comments, but rather, something in the style, language or subject matter that he found challenging.

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[43] E.M. Forster, 'Foreword' to the first edition of *Hali*, (London: The Saturn Press, 1950). Originally sent as a letter to Desani, from King's College Cambridge.

[44] T.S. Eliot, 'Foreword' to the first edition of *Hali*, (London: The Saturn Press, 1950).

It would seem that Desani cast aside the more negative suggestions made by Forster, preferring to focus on the more encouraging comments. When the original letter is viewed as a whole it is clear that the general feeling the letter evokes is one of gentle but persuasive discouragement, and the positive comments on *Hali* are overwhelmed by the negative. Desani was aware of this but his need for endorsement was compelling and as a result, in true Desani fashion, he wrote to Forster asking him to redraft the letter so he could use it for the dust jacket. The final draft of this letter is what appears in the first edition of *Hali.*[46]

Interestingly, three of the seven reviews quoted here refer to *Hali* as poetry, despite Desani's clear indication within the title of his work, *Hali: A Play,* that it is intended to be a dramatic work (in the most literal sense of the term). The first edition of *Hali* also contains a very short introductory piece, laying emphasis on the theatrical intentions of the author:

> *HALI* A Play:
> The story of his Passion,
> and of his vision of Good and Evil
> and something beyond them both:
> told by his God RAHA,
> his mother MIRA,
> his dearly loved ROOH,
> the ominous spirit BHAVA,
> MAYA (who befriended him),
> the MAGICIAN,
> and himself[47]

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[45] This is of course only a small sample of the verse drama of the period but space here does not permit a more detailed overview or analysis.

[46] This final version of the letter is accompanied by a note from Forster which ends with the comment that he hopes that 'it will do'.

[47] *Hali*, (1950), p. 13. It should be noted that Bhava is not a separate voice but is a voice inside Hali, a voice of Fear and Defeat. This information from Russell and Singh,(1952), p. 16.

Later editions (of which there are several more, in 1952, 1953, 1964, published by *The Times of India's Illustrated Weekly,* 1967, published by the Writer's Workshop, Calcutta,[48] and 1991, by the American publishers McPherson and Co.) change or omit this 'Introduction'. Indeed, the final, and according to Desani, definitive edition, contains a lengthy Preface by Desani which suggests that it may begin the process of explaining *Hali* but manages, true to style, to confuse the reader further.

There is little or no writing by Desani on *Hali* although he does mention this work in a few papers delivered many years later especially in 'A Marginal Comment on the Problem of Medium in Bicultures,'[49] and 'Difficulties of Communicating an Oriental to a Western Audience'.[50]

It is difficult to ignore the particular choice of language and idioms employed by Desani's contemporaries as they struggle to find a way of articulating their personal experience of *Hali*. The reviews quoted above contain a number of ambiguous words or phrases, such as 'curious', 'extraordinary', 'a great deal we are not sure of', 'mystery', 'hidden', 'unusual', 'completely different', 'unlikely to appeal' and 'difficult to describe' and perhaps the most ambiguous, as employing the 'dangerous devices' of private mythology. It is clear that the intention of most of the critics was well-meant and it was their personal inability to adequately categorise the work that they highlighted, as opposed to any particular weakness within Desani's work as such, (although, as has been discussed, it is clear that Forster was able to pinpoint what he considered to be a major flaw in the work). On the whole, the criticisms levied at the work as illustrated above are not insensitive but there is, within each piece of writing, an acute awareness of the liminality of *Hali*, existing as it does, somewhere on the peripheries of literature, not quite English 'as she is wrote and spoke'[51] and not quite anything other besides. The intention here is to consider the ways in which Indian writing in English was regarded in the first half of the twentieth century in the run up to the publication of *Hali* in 1950 and thus begin the process of attempting to place *Hali* in its rightful position within the field of contemporary literature of the late 1940s/early 1950s.

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[48] According to Desani, this particular edition was pirated by the Writer's Workshop.

[49] G. V. Desani, 'A Marginal Comment on the Problem of Medium in Bicultures', in Daniel Massa, (ed), *Individual and Community in Commonwealth Literature,* (Malta: University Press, 1979), pp. 202-209.

[50] G. V. Desani, 'Difficulties of Communicating an Oriental to a Western Audience', in C.D. Narasimhaiah, *Awakened Conscience: Studies in Commonwealth Literature*, (New Delhi: Sterling Publishers PVT Ltd,1978), pp. 401-407.

[51] This is a phrase used by Desani in *Hatterr*, (1949), p. 6, as he tries to defend his particular literary style, his choice of idioms and material.

Before any in depth analysis of the reception of *Hali* can be undertaken, it is necessary to attempt to establish how Indian writing in English was received in Britain during the first half of the twentieth century. Whilst literary critics in England were attempting to establish and implement a way of reading and interpreting new Indian writing, Indian authors were producing works of literature which, in order to gain acceptance in England, had to straddle the fine line between authenticity and familiarity. For writers like Mulk Raj Anand and R.K. Narayan creating a text which offered a new image of India and Indian life had to be determined in terms of what was already known by the British about India. The authors were bound by a sense of authenticity, creating an account which they felt to be valid and realistic, whilst using idioms, language and subject matter which would have some resonance for an English audience, used to images of India created by writers such as Kipling and Forster. Their task was to create a way of writing that could and would pay tribute to both the 'known' India and the 'real' India. Ultimately, this relied upon an acknowledgement that India is not known and as such, a mode of literary criticism that accepted this idea might need to be developed. The answer to 'what is Indian literature?' looked set to remain unanswered for some time.

Meenakshi Mukherjee writes at length on the 'problems' encountered by Indian writers choosing to write in English in the first half of the twentieth century. Discussing Raja Rao's *Kanthapura* she writes:

> Not only did he experiment with language in this novel, striving to make English take on the cadence of Kannada as spoken by women in the Kara district of Karnataka, evoking [...] the rhythm of Sanskrit, but also with narrative mode, challenging the generic expectations of the novel as prevalent in western Europe in the late 1930s.[52]

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[52] Meenakshi Mukherjee, *The Perishable Empire*, (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 167.

She goes on to say that he also:

> [...] integrates myth with history, realism with fabulation, linearity with a cyclic notion of time long ago before post-modernism made such enterprise trendy.[53]

Mukherjee suggests quite rightly that such a text lacked some appreciation in England at the time of publication. However, if Mukherjee was able, some sixty years after its publication, to highlight some of the problems encountered by an author challenging accepted and familiar modes of writing and interpretation, so too was the author himself. Raja Rao says of the writing of *Kanthapura*:

> The telling has not been easy. One has to convey in a language that is not one's own the spirit that is one's own. One has to convey the various shades and omissions of a certain thought movement that looks maltreated in an alien language. [...] English is not really an alien language.[...] It is the language of our intellectual make-up, like Sanskrit or Persian was before- but not of our emotional make-up.[54]

It would seem prudent to suggest that Raja Rao speaks for a number of the Indian writers choosing to write in English as he highlights some of the problematic areas within a scheme of writing that depends on the ability to create something that is familiar to the reading public, yet not alien to the writer himself or herself. Clearly, one of the most problematic areas centres around the issue of identity which needs to be prominently retained and realised within the novel but which is also insidiously linked to prescribed identity. As such the British reading public expects to find a certain type of identity, English and/or Indian, under scrutiny, in an Indian novel in English.

Whilst it is clear that the Indian novels in English in the first half of the twentieth century were created both as a challenge to and as a affirmation of all that the English reading public 'knew' about India, it is the reception of the texts that is of interest. The British reading public, as stated above, felt that it knew India and it seemed likely that any new texts would be judged according to their resemblance to what was 'known' about India and the Indian people. This is not to say that there was not room for more radical depictions of India challenging this knowledge but on the whole, the more familiar the subject and style, the more likely critical acclaim would be.

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[53] *Ibid.*

[54] Raja Rao, *Kanthapura*, (London : G. Allen & Unwin, 1938).

Clearly there are some serious issues of power underpinning both the production and the reception of Indian writing in English. Within the authors there was a need to produce a text which was simultaneously radical and affirmative. It had to be new enough to attract attention and familiar enough to receive positive criticism. Within the reading and the critical public, the text had to fit, however awkwardly, into a centuries-old framework by which literature was classified and critically analysed. The validity and justification for such a relationship is not being debated here. Whilst the fact that there were strict but ambiguous guidelines for acceptance of Indian writing in English is profoundly contentious, this chapter seeks to explore the dynamics of the relationship which created both a type of Indian writing in English that was popular in the first half of the twentieth century, and a way of discussing such literature that depended on the ability to apply a criticism, developed over the centuries and having its roots in English literature. The ambiguity of the relationship between Indian writer and English reader lies at the heart of this discussion on the reception of Indian writing in English and may explain how *All About H. Hatterr* was pronounced a success and *Hali*, although initially lauded as a triumph, became shrouded in critical ambiguity to the point where interpretation and criticism of the piece stopped altogether.

The initial reception of *Hali* in the early years of the 1950s determined much of the criticism on the text which has appeared since. It would seem prudent to suggest that there was something in *Hali* that appeared to be too radical to sit easily with a relatively complacent English reading public who were used to a particular depiction of the Indian and a particular choice of language and idioms, which although Indian, held a resonance for an English public and contained images which were, by now, familiar in their unfamiliarity. Clearly there is a level of patronage at work here, driven both by a political desire to understand and 'know' the Indian subcontinent which had become the home of many Britons, and to encourage and embrace the literature emerging from India at the time.

Some clues with regard to the contemporary criticism surrounding Indian writing in English in the first half of the twentieth century appear in correspondence between Mulk Raj Anand and Margaret Berry in 1971. Anand is considering his own critical reputation and spends a little time on his reception in Britain:

> Edward Thompson and Bonamy Dobrée greeted the first novel of mine (*The Untouchable*) and there was no lack of genuine response even from politically hostile ex-colonials.[55]

It should be noted that the poet and historian Edward Thompson was interested in Indian writing in English and concerned himself, on a number of occasions with the choice of style and subject matter within Indian writing, especially that of Tagore. He wrote in Tagore's obituary in 1941:

> More and more he toned down or omitted whatever seemed to him characteristically Indian, which very often was what was gripping and powerful. He despaired too much of ever persuading our people to be interested in what was strange to them. His work will one day have to be retranslated and properly edited. I am sure that then there will be a revival of his reputation.[56]

Unlike Tagore, Anand felt that the British had looked upon his work more favourably. His correspondence with Berry confirms this:

> Many British critics responded to my early novels and short stories with cordiality and warmth and an objectivity completely devoid of the swagger of the ruling race [...].[57]

Clearly, Anand is well aware of at least the potential for an acceptance and interpretation of his work that contains a level of patronising condescension and which could obscure some or much of the meaning within his novels. His comments above refuse some of the political and cultural positioning allocated to him by the swaggering ruling classes. For Anand, the fake enthusiasm and potentially patronising criticism does not go unnoticed. Whilst he is at pains to point out that this was not the case with the above critics, his mention of the other type of critic would suggest that hostility and swagger frequently greeted the arrival of new works by Indian authors.

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[55] Quoted in Margaret Berry, *Mulk Raj Anand, The Man and the Novelist,* (Amsterdam: Oriental Press, 1971), p.80.

[56] Information from http://www.parabaas.com/translation/database/reviews/tagoreshortstories1.html .

[57] Berry (1971), p. 80.

It would be unfair to suggest that there was not integrity within the English literary scene as there were many critics who were not motivated by a sense of political correctness and who assessed a work, Indian or otherwise, purely on its literary merits. However, it would seem fair to suggest that there were critics whose analysis of new works was informed by the contemporary political situation within India and whose criticism of works emerging from a country undergoing some major political power changes became intrinsically linked with a personal exploration of their particular aspirations for and understanding of the new emerging nation.[58] Critics such as Forster offered what would appear, on first glance, a fair and insightful appreciation of Indian writing in English, but it should be remembered that writers such as Forster had, up until this point in British literary history, been largely responsible for the creation and exploration of a particular image of India and as such, accounts emerging from their creatively imagined homeland, were sure to engender and perpetuate a sense of unease within its previous narrators. This would begin to explain the difficulty Forster, in particular, had with *Hali*. It bore little resemblance to a depiction of India he was familiar with and whether or not *Hali* can be described as a particularly Indian piece of writing, it contained no familiar indicators and little of the typical and familiar images of India. It appeared to straddle a number of genres and styles of writing, occupying, for the English literary public, an uncomfortably liminal position between what was known about India and the realisation that this may be an unknown aspect of Indian life and literature and one which did not sit well with its textual ancestors.

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[58] C. R. Reddy is quoted by K. R. Srinivasa Iyengar as saying:

> Indo-Anglian literature is not essentially different in kind from Indian literature. It is a part of it, a modern facet of that glory which, commencing from the Vedas, has continued to spread its mellow light, now with greater and now with lesser brilliance under the inexorable vicissitudes of time and history [...]. Iyengar, (1993), p.3.

Iyengar suggests that there are (or were by the early 1960s) a number of critics who praised the 'new' literatures emerging from a 'new' India. He suggests that writers such as Edmund Gosse, Arthur Symons, When *All About H. Hatterr* first burst onto the British literary scene in 1948 it struck a familiar chord within its readers and critics. Here was a book with its beginning in London during the war, with a number of spurious gurus, an apparently hapless Eurasian seeking spiritual enlightenment from both East and West, and a constant theme of life as contrast. Arguably, what appealed to the British public most was the comedy of its hero's apparent acceptance and exploration of the power of the British to affect and effect experience.[59] However, Desani creates in his protagonist, H. Hatterr, a character whose refusal of both the British belief that India was a known entity and of the supremacy of the British, politically, spiritually, culturally and in a literary sense, is in marked contrast to the more traditional texts emerging from India in the first half of the twentieth century. To a certain extent *Hatterr* becomes a subtle refusal of what Indian writing was thought to be. It refuses to perpetuate the gap that had grown between India and Britain, a gap that had political, cultural and literary dimensions and borders. It had become something of an imperative, overtly or covertly, to maintain this gap between 'them and us', between the ruled and the rulers. Indian writers who explored the binaries which prescribed their experience were still persuaded to adhere to the 'rules' but could, if they were able, offer a new and dynamic way of viewing their experience. However, newness could only be analysed if it conformed, however obliquely, to the structures binding literary criticism at the time.

Texts falling outside these apparently flexible, yet strenuously rigid parameters would present a number of problems to readers. Perhaps it is the case that texts which challenge everything that seems to be familiar about Indian writing in English, become more acceptable as radical texts, whilst works like *Hali* may not be considered to be radical or familiar and thus become difficult to locate within the fields of what is known. *Hali* looks, on first glance, to be a deeply spiritual work, yet the tone and language do not

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Yeats, Forster, and Graham Greene were doing a good job of promoting this exploration of a new emerging nation.

[59] See for example Hatterr's experience with the English Missionary Society who adopted him and brought him up as a Christian, Mrs Hatterr's obsession with the English and her insistence that her husband be more English and the impetus for Hatterr's journey towards enlightenment as the Sahib Club throw him out for his behaviour towards the *dhobin*. See also, the Sheik's experience with the Laird Sage of County Dundee and Hatterr's final humiliation in front of Major Appadine Sinclair, as he is caught 'going native' and is relegated to the garden to watch his wife and the Major eating *his* food.

adhere to a spiritual work, the characters sound Indian but claim to be representative of everyman/everywoman and the language is an unusual mixture of Indian languages and English. It neither conforms to nor refutes categorisation as Indian writing in English. As such *Hali* looked set to create a number of problems with regard to interpretation and critical analysis. If Anand presents a more obvious refusal of what Indian writing is believed to be, *Hatterr* offers what could be seen as a more subtle refusal, whereas *Hali* could be interpreted as the most clever refusal of what Indian writing is. If *Hali* is to be understood at all, then a mode of critical enquiry that acknowledges the alterity of the work whilst paying tribute to all that it refuses, is fundamental to any interpretation.

Section 3

Initial research into the subject of early criticism began to suggest that critical material addressing the emergence of Indian writing in English within England is scarce. There is a reasonable amount of literary criticism by Indian writers during this period which refers, often somewhat obliquely, to the English literary opinion as possessing the power to decide on aspects of inclusion or exclusion for a particular work or author. The bulk of such criticism engages more with subject matter than with its particular relationship with the British reading public and as such provides only a few clues to contemporary reception and appraisal of Indian writing in English. It would seem that the majority of the criticism on Indian writing in English is considerably less concerned with its impact on the literary scene (at least, this appears to be the case with early criticism), preferring to focus on issues of style, subject matter and language. However, if Desani's work is to be located within the literary scene then some kind of awareness surrounding issues of reception are necessary.

By the time *Hatterr* and then *Hali,* were published, in 1948 and 1950 respectively, British conceptions of India, the Indian and the Indian subcontinent had been firmly established and elaborated on in works by Kipling, Forster's *A Passage to India* (1924), George Orwell's *Burmese Days* (1934), and a wealth of less well known but nonetheless influential writers including Edmund Candler's *Siri Ram-Revolutionist: A Transcript* *from Life, 1907-1910,* (1912) and *Abdication* (1922), J. R. Ackerley's *Hindoo Holiday* first published in 1932, Christine Weston's *Indigo* (1943) and Philip Mason's *The Wild Sweet Witch,* (1947). This list is by no means exhaustive as it excludes 'factual' accounts of the Indians and life in India of which there were plenty during this period. In particular, these texts were published in Britain. There were, of course, a number of fictional accounts of South Asia, written in English and published in America which were also readily available. However, for the purposes of this particular chapter, it is the texts published in Britain that are of prime importance. What this overview represents is a sample of the type of literature that was widely available at the time. More importantly, it reveals the fact that literature on the subject of India was reasonably well established within the English literary canon.

As a counterpart to Anglo-Indian literature was the development of an Indo-Anglian literature which was beginning to appear with more regularity. The following authors had had a number of their works published in Britain in the period running up to the publication of Desani's *All About H. Hatterr* and *Hali.* The Dutt family's poetry was available (published as early as the late 1840s) R.K. Narayan's *Bachelor of Arts,* (1937), a number of Tagore's works including *Gora* (1924) and *The King of the Dark Chamber* (1914), Sri Aurobindo's plays and poems, Mulk Raj Anand's *Coolie,* (1933), *Untouchable,* (1935), *Two Leaves and a Bud* (1937) and Raja Rao's *Kanthapura* (1938). This list is indicative of the diversity of Indian literature written in English that was available to the British reading public during the first half of the twentieth century.

Into this melee of Indian writing in English and English writing of India came *Hatterr* and *Hali.* The former seemed to fit somehow, capturing an essential India through the eyes of a man who was sensitive to the English way of looking at India. Although this may seem to be a somewhat simplistic analysis of Desani's only novel, the success of *Hatterr* in contrast to the ambivalence surrounding *Hali* would seem to suggest that there was, (and, I would suggest, still is) something about *Hali* which simply does not sit easily with its first audience, the British reading public.[60]

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[60] This unease is discussed at length in Chapter 6.

In order to begin to understand the way in which *Hali* fits (or indeed does not fit) into the English literary scene, it may be necessary to consider briefly some of the contemporary theories pertaining to novels written in English by Indians in the first half of the twentieth century. In his essay 'India in Fiction' T. D. Brunton suggests that 'Indianness' in a novel by an Indian author:

> [...] can only be justified if it is Indian in some peculiar and essential fashion. Thus novels come to be valued not so much upon their power as fiction, as upon their content of this national quintessence.[61]

Clearly such a sentiment derives much of its force from the West having been fuelled for many years by the Anglo-Indian fiction being published in Britain which presented imaginative, if not realistic, images of an essential India as seen through the eyes of the colonial power. Brunton does go on to suggest that this particular way of thinking may now be outdated, and indeed, over thirty years later with the emergence and subsequent establishment of a wealth of material from India and Indian writers, he accurately anticipates a renewed way of reading Indo-Anglian literature, (and also Anglo-Indian literature). Later in his essay he considers a theory that he claims George Eliot and Tolstoy both agreed on. He claims that they believed that 'it was the novel's function to extend men's sympathies by freshly revealing the commonplace'.[62] He clarifies this suggestion by assessing that novels choosing to depart from this formula stand, potentially at least, to lose their human quality which is (or should be) the driving force within the novel.

Whilst this sounds reasonable, it necessarily depends upon a shared understanding of what Eliot and Tolstoy (and Brunton) view as the commonplace and indeed, the human qualities of the book. For the English readers of the first half of the century, images of India had acquired a commonplace feel. They were more used to novels where India was depicted in terms of binaries, them and us, natives and colonials, ruling classes and ruled classes where occasionally the binaries became blurred and characters who appeared to 'belong' to one particular type would cross the assumed boundaries. For

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[61] T.D. Brunton, 'India in Fiction', in M.K. Naik, S.K. Desai, G. S. Amur (eds), *Critical Essays on Indian Writing in English,* (Dharwar: Karnatak University, 1968), pp. 51-61, p. 52.

[62] *Ibid.*, p. 52.

Brunton, the commonplace in the novel also comes to represent a shared understanding based on similarities or familiarities in rationale, science and 'inquisitive tendencies', mirrored to some extent in the culture of the West. He claims that this sharing has led to the emergence of the International novel. As such, limited though his argument is by its age, his understanding of the importance of the ties that bind one culture to another whether by choice or by imposition, is entirely relevant to this discussion of the reception of Indian writing in English in the first half of the Twentieth century. Brunton attempts to define the Indian novel in English but finds himself at a loss to do so. His essay does not concern itself with the reception of such novels, but inherent within his argument is the insistence that, even in the 1960s when the piece was written, there was a need for familiarity and order within the novel. If the order itself is unfamiliar then even the familiar loses its potency. Ultimately, the Indian novel in English, if it was to have any real success in England, had to abide by some of the 'rules' for a successful novel. However, just what the 'rules' are remains elusive and it would seem that the rules themselves were flexible enough to consider *Hatterr* as familiar enough (despite its apparently chaotic organisation) and *Hali* as too unfamiliar and too chaotic to present enough of the commonplace to an English audience. Despite the apparent reliance on familiarity and the commonplace, it is also apparent that the British public wanted to read about the 'real' India.

However, for the Indian writer in the first half of the twentieth century finding a way to describe the 'real' India was by no means easy, no matter how real it was to the author himself or herself. Part of the problem lay in the need to create a text which had a more universal appeal, something that would appeal to an Indian and an English audience. As has been stated above, there was a wealth of Anglo-Indian writing and a small but increasing body of work written about India by Indians and written in English, and despite the reluctance of the Indian author to create an India resembling Forster's India, where Indians are dutiful, servile, the other against which the self is examined, in the need to break into the British literary world this became something of a necessity.[63] Once published in England, publication in India would be easier. Publication in India did not necessarily ensure publication in England.

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[63] Clearly, there are issues of inclusion and exclusion which are important here. However, this chapter seeks to explore the early criticism of Indian writing in English and as such, does not contain a debate on the how acceptable/unacceptable this 'necessity' to publish in England/America is.

One of the ways in which Indian writers could ensure some success for their novels was to seek and secure the endorsement of a leading literary figure. Meenakshi Mukherjee is a renowned opponent of the need for such endorsement and has spoken many times of the situation created for Indian writers who choose to write and publish in England who still experience a need for endorsement from someone recognisably literary and 'British'.[64] Although these practices are now obsolete, the wealth of such material from the 1880s up to the years following *Hali*, is remarkable. Toru Dutt's *Ancient Ballads and Legends of Hindustan,* (1882) has an Introduction by Edmund Gosse, Bankimchandra Chatterjee's *The Poison Tree: A Tale of Hindu Life in Bengal* (London, 1884) has a Preface by Edwin Arnold, Sarojini Naidu's *The Golden Threshold* (1905) has an Introduction by Arthur Symons and a later novel, *The Bird of Time* (1912) has an Introduction by Edmund Gosse. Tagore's *Gitanjali,* (1912) has an Introduction by W. B. Yeats, Mulk Raj Anand's *Untouchable* (1933) has a Preface by E. M. Forster, R. K. Narayan's *The Bachelor of Arts* (1937) has an Introduction by Graham Greene as does his 1952 novel *The Financial Expert.*

Apart from these works of fiction there was a small body of endorsed non-fiction and criticism which included Shevantibai M. Nikambe's *Ratnabi: A Sketch of Bombay High Caste Hindu Young Wife* (London, 1895) with a Preface by Lady Harris, T. Ramakrishna's *Life in an Indian Village,* (London,1891) with an Introduction by M. E. Grant Duff and Harihar Das's *Life and Letters of Toru Dutt,* (1921) which has a Foreword by H. A. L. Fisher. This list is by no means exhaustive but does give a sense of the spread of the endorsed text whilst simultaneously providing some evidence of the type of text seen to be deserving of inclusion, albeit on different terms to 'English' literature, within the English literary scene. Clearly if an author could obtain an endorsement by someone such as Forster or Graham Greene the promotional potential is, if not immense, noticeable.

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[64] See for examples her arguments in *The Perishable Empire* and especially her discussion of the wide-spread practice of studying texts in translation (in English) and the relative lack of availability of material in its original language. Whilst this may appear to be a different argument altogether, issues of inclusion and exclusion remain at the heart of her discussion.

A brief review of some of the endorsements listed above reveals that for Yeats, Tagore's *Gitanjali* (1914) has something so new, so different as to make it worthwhile. At one point in his lengthy Introduction Yeats claims:

> He [Tagore] often seems to contrast his life with that of those who have lived more after our fashion, and have more seeming weight in the world, and always humbly as though he were only sure his way is best for him.[65]

He later claims that this way of writing leads to a connection with nature that 'one does not find elsewhere in literature[...]'.[66] For Yeats the novelty of Tagore's particular interaction with man and nature is refreshingly different.

Forster's Preface to Mulk Raj Anand's *Untouchable* (1935) concerns itself more with the subject matter in hand, namely the life of the sweeper and the caste system in India responsible for creating a class of Untouchables. However, there are a few moments when he considers the position of this novel within the English literary tradition. He claims that:

> *Untouchable* could only have been written by an Indian and by an Indian who observed from the outside. [...] He has just the right mixture of insight and detachment, and the fact that he has come to fiction through philosophy has given him depth.[67]

It is the level of detachment Anand shows that impresses Forster. It is a detachment that manages to suggest a profound involvement with the subject. Forster suggests that Anand's philosophical mind has produced a detailed characterisation of the sweeper which is both accessible, and acceptable to an English audience simply because he imagines it to be an 'honest' portrait of the very lowest class of person. There is one further insight Forster offers into the way Indian writing in English was received as he discusses the English character.

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[65] Rabindranath Tagore, *Gitanjali,* (London: Macmillan, 1914), Introduction by W. B. Yeats, 1912, p. xx.

[66] *Ibid.*, p. xxi.

[67] Mulk Raj Anand, *Untouchable,* (London : Wishart, 1935).

In his 1920 essay 'Notes on the English Character', Forster recounts an incident which shaped his impression of Indians. He tells of a trip he took with a friend which ended after a week. His friend, an Indian, was:

> [...] plunged into despair. He felt that because the holiday was over all happiness was over until the world ended. He could not express his sorrow too much.[68]

Forster, on the other hand, reacted differently:

> [...] in me the Englishman came out strong. [...] I could not see what there was to make a fuss about. [...] 'Buck up,' I said, 'do buck up'. He refused to buck up and I left him plunged in gloom.[69]

Forster goes on to suggest that the intrinsic difference between East and West or at very least, Oriental and Englishman, is one of appropriateness. Forster claims that he acted appropriately, meting out the correct amount of emotion for the situation. The Indian, on the other hand claims that he acted with sincerity, his emotions were profound but were sincere. He claims that he 'happened to feel deeply' and, as a result he showed it, saying 'it doesn't matter whether I ought to have felt deeply or not'.[70] Ultimately, Forster cannot accept the concept of sincerity over appropriateness, fearing he would be unable to gauge emotion adequately and would find himself emotionally 'bankrupt'. What emerges here is undoubtedly an insight into a stereotypical version of both Englishman and Indian and regardless of the true validity of Forster's argument, what is important here is the acknowledgement of the 'differences' between the two ways of thinking and acting. If Forster is to maintain his opinions then it would seem fair to suggest that his inability to appreciate sincerity over appropriateness may lead to a particular way of regarding Indian writing in English as emotionally unfamiliar. Potentially, this could create a mode of criticism regarding writing, that considers emotional engagement as either authentic or inauthentic. When this is aligned with subject matter that is not instantly recognisable some caution with regard to interpretation is almost inevitable.

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[68] E. M. Forster, 'Notes on the English Character', in William Smart, *Eight Modern Essayists*, (New York: St Martin's Press, 1965), pp. 41-52, p. 43.

[69] *Ibid.*, p. 43.

[70] *Ibid.*, p. 44.

Indeed, it would seem that much of the early criticism on *Untouchable* and *Coolie* centred on issues of authenticity regarding social situations in India at the time. C. Day Lewis says of Anand's first two novels: 'Mr. Anand indicts social conditions, yet he is no melodramatic doctrinaire; he does not try to gloss over the helplessness and servility of the coolies'.[71] This would appear to suggest that he considers Anand to have created an authentic and realistic account of a particular social group. It is this implied authenticity which Lewis feels allows *him* to interpret the work.

Some of the most relevant comments are made by Graham Greene in Narayan's *The Financial Expert,* (1953) which although later than both *Hatterr* and *Hali* manage to pinpoint one of the themes in of Desani's texts, that of comedy.[72] Talking in general about Narayan's work, Greene claims that:

> Their gentle irony and absence of condemnation remind us how difficult comedy is in the West today – farce, savage, boisterous, satirical, is easy, but comedy needs a strong framework of social convention with which the author sympathises but which he does not share. [...] the life of Malgudi-never ruffled by politics- proceeds in exactly the same way as it has done for centuries, and the juxtaposition of the age-old convention and the modern character provides much of the comedy.[73]

For Graham Greene it is not the familiar which appeals - although he praises the continuity and familiarity of Narayan's fictional town of Malgudi, but it is the unfamiliar way in which Narayan creates a tension between modernity and tradition that enables his use of comedy. This action of embracing novelty and comedy together would seem to echo the sentiments of the majority of *Hatterr's* reviewers who welcomed the novelty of Desani's first book, and may also explain some of the ambiguity and incomprehension surrounding *Hali*.

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[71] Quoted in Margaret Berry, *Mulk Raj Anand; The Man and the Novelist,* (Amsterdam, Oriental Press, 1971), p. 81. Berry claims that the quote comes from the *Daily Telegraph* but gives no date.

[72] Whilst *Hatterr* was acclaimed as a comic masterpiece, *Hali* was not – despite occasional reviewers suggesting that maybe there was a comic undertone. It should be noted that many of Desani's short stories use comedy to negotiate the complex worlds of relationships, spirituality and the creative process. See for example 'With Malice Aforethought', 'The Second Mrs. Was Wed in a Nightmare' and 'Rudyard Kipling's Evaluation of His Own Mother'.

[73] Anand, *Untouchable* (1935). Greene's Introduction concerns itself with all of Narayan's work up to this date, addressing common themes in his work, his style in general and the continuity he achieves in his work.

In *Hali* the tension between the past and the present is barely tangible, death and life have become inseparable, comedy is buried, if it is there at all and the 'framework of social convention' has been removed leaving behind a 'society' which is unrecognisable to a Western audience and a language that describes this 'society' in terms that are unfamiliar and confusing. If it is, as Greene suggests, this framework that is important then what are we to make of *Hali* which seems to have a flimsy framework, susceptible to shifting at any moment and indeed, open to such a level of misinterpretation that Desani, if he had paid any attention to contemporary literary criticism, should have prepared himself for disappointment. One of Desani's critics also questions the unfamiliarity of the society described in *Hali*:

> [...] by a meticulous choice of words, simple in themselves he has built up a brooding atmosphere which prevades [sic] the play. That he is a master of the language, there is no doubt, as reading the play aloud will prove. But whether the play conveys anything to anybody today or a hundred years hence is doubtful. [...]
> Being an intensely personal if passionate work *Hali* cannot be said to constitute great art, which is always social in intent. Yet as nobody can create something out of nothing *Hali* has been conditioned by the social forces at play in the world today. But it shows a desocialised view of the world. In Desani, poetry reaches a new technical height. But it asserts the personal perception of life. Technique by its development has moved always from concrete life and has flown in to a dream-world of the author's own mind. This limits his audience to a very small minority and if carried to the extreme negates the very concept of art which basically must 'communicate'. Therefore, it is doubtful if *Hali* will be anything more than a highly competent, technically near-perfect, literary curiosity.[74]

Despite the suggestion here that the text would benefit from being read aloud, the reviewer can not ignore the possibility that *Hali* will fail as it does not communicate with the reader. Its obscure - if not entirely absent, sense of society, the reviewer suggests, will place the work itself on the very margins of literature and there it will remain as a 'literary curiosity'.

Whilst it should not be forgotten that Desani's work is a verse-drama and that it is possible the reader would not expect such clearly defined 'frameworks', it is nonetheless important to remember that the work itself, constructed from unfamiliar images, subject matter and style, had already located itself somewhere outside of more traditional frameworks. As such, its clear lack of social intent (and indeed, content) ensured its position of liminality. *Hali* needed to fit into some kind of framework and it clearly did not.

The reception and critical analysis of two distinct genres, that of the novel and of the verse-drama, will be dependent upon different interpretative structures and as such, this chapter acknowledges the difference of approach required to assess the individual work. However, the aim here is to locate *Hali* within the more general genre of Indian writing in English. It may be useful, at this point to consider the position Desani already held within the literary circles at the time.

All About H. Hatterr (1948) carried no Introduction, Preface or Foreword (endorsed or otherwise) although the dust jackets did carry endorsements of some sort. The first edition (Francis Aldor) had a review by Eliot which said that it is 'certainly a remarkable book[...] It is amazing that anyone should be able to sustain a piece of work in this style and tempo at such length'. Edmund Blunden claimed that it is 'Something remarkable [...] by this most curious and resourceful among writers[...]' and finally there was a short piece by C. E. M. Joad claiming that it is 'original' and 'remarkable'.

It is pertinent, at this juncture, to consider what may be the first review of his novel that Desani ever received and which he planned to use as the endorsement for *Hatterr*. It came from George Orwell, to whom, it would appear, Desani had sent his manuscript of the first complete draft of *All About H. Hatterr* as early as 1944. Orwell sent a letter to Desani outlining his views of the manuscript and begins his letter with 'You no doubt prefer a frank criticism'. He goes on to say:

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[74] *Forum*, (Bombay), July 30th 1950.

> The chief impression I derived from it was of a considerable talent running to waste. If this is a jeu d'esprit in the tradition which runs from Rabelais to Joyce, it doesn't seem to [...] come off. I think this is not time for literary high jinks of the type of Finnegan's Wake. [...] Certainly an unusual book. I can't help feeling that for the quaint English public the book would need a lot of explanation![75]

The letter continues to reiterate the peculiarity of the book, the inability he (and by extension its publisher and reader) will have in classifying the type of novel it is. At one point Orwell considers the possibility that he may lack the interpretative tools necessary to 'understand' *Hatterr.* He also claims that 'a sense of humour is an individual possession and maybe mine is a little deficient'. Clearly then, the very first review of *Hatterr* locates the difference of Desani's style and choice of subject and unwittingly sets the standard by which both *Hatterr* and *Hali* were to be judged. By the time of the first publication of *Hatterr* Desani had rejected Orwell's summation of his work in favour of other, more encouraging comments.

The second edition (Saturn Press, 1949) has a multitude of endorsements on the cover including Harold Brighouse's comment that Desani is the 'playboy of the English language'. Later editions carried a variety of reviews from literary figures from Khushwant Singh, Anthony Burgess, D. J. Enright, Philip Toynbee and Christopher Porterfield, and the last editions carried reviews from noted journals, papers and magazines rather than individual authors. Among the publications listed which contribute to the promotional material for *Hatterr* are, chronologically, *The Manchester Guardian, The Spectator, The Oxford Mail, The Illustrated Weekly of India, The Listener, The Observer, Time, Newsweek, San Francisco Chronicle, New York Times,* and *The Nation.* *Hali*, having less re-printings carries far fewer reviews. The original 1950 edition contains the forewords by Eliot and Forster and the final edition of *Hali and Collected Stories*, (1991) carries brief notes from the *Kirkus Review*:

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[75] Letter from George Orwell to G. V. Desani, dated October 17th 1944, private papers, Austin, Texas.

> [*Hali and Collected Stories* is] impressive in its use of religious and personal mythology – and lushly descriptive of a sensibility and a culture that is part English, part Indian, and uniquely Desani's own.

and *Publishers Weekly* which claims that Desani is:

> A master of subtle metaphysical comedies, a fabulist, fantasist, moralist and keen satirist of life's follies, absurdities and ego trips.

It is time to return then to the question of how and where *Hali* fits into the literary scene at the end of the 1940s/beginning of the 50s. Earlier works by Mulk Raj Anand were met with great critical acclaim. One of the reasons given by many critics for the popularity of *Coolie* (1936) was that it analyses the structures within society, religion and politics set to test the individual, a theme common to all societies. Apart from this, it is a largely held belief that it was well received due to Anand's understanding of the colonial Englishman, W. P. Englishman - a lack of such understanding was historically considered to be one of the failings of Indian writing in English. What also emerges in his account is an incisive view of the relationship between the colonial power and the Indians themselves which, in some sections of the community becomes one of blind obedience to the English 'power' resulting in loss of humanity and human decency. It was such realism that made Mulk Raj Anand's text popular at its first publication in Britain. Thus, it would seem plausible to suggest that a good reception of an Indian novel written in English might well rest with a choice of subject matter which is both familiar and challenging as is the case with Anand's dissection of the power balance within colonial India. Clearly this is only one reason but its importance can not be ignored.

In an essay entitled 'The Indian Writer in Exile' Saros Cowasjee outlines the position of the writer who writes away from home.[76] Cowasjee is more concerned with the writer who has chosen to leave his or her home in order to write, rather than the exiled writer. None the less, he defines some of the impulses informing and driving the 'writer in exile'. He claims that any serious writer, whether at home or abroad, writes for his or her own people and he quotes Yeats as claiming that

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[76] Saros Cowsasjee, *Studies in Indian and Anglo-Indian Fiction,* (New Delhi: Indus, An imprint of HarperCollins Publishers India Pvt Ltd, 1993), pp. 32-49.

> I understand my own race and in all my work, lyrical or dramatic, I have thought of it [...] I shall write for my own people – whether in love or hate of them matters little – probably I shall not know which it is'.[77]

He then goes on to quote Turgenev who claimed that, '[...] without nationality there is no art, nor truth, nor life nor anything'.[78] Cowasjee adds one further claim of his own; the writer in exile often produces better material away from home. The reason he suggests is that the 'burden' of religion, politics and societal expectations may be removed or at very least, lightened with distance. Those that remain burdensome can be reworked or completely reinvented in the new surroundings, given new colour, perspectives can be altered and old stories can be reworked using both locations as inspiration. One of the more interesting discussions Cowasjee introduces is one concerning Mulk Raj Anand's stay in Britain during the 1930s. Cowasjee adds a lengthy quote from Anand's essay 'Apology for Heroism' (1946) which discusses the literary scene at the time:

> There were the simpletons who believed that an art form like the novel, for instance, was nothing else but reportage about social conditions. There were the subjectivists on the other hand who believed that it was enough skilfully to describe the phantasmagoria of one's psychological states, particularly the subconscious, dream, or clinical experiences. And, of course, there were always the vast bulk of those others, the low pressure artists, the whores of literature, who wrote to provide escape and relaxation to the tired ladies and gentlemen of our suburban civilisation. And they all bandied words with each other.[79]

The kind of blind obeisance Anand explores and challenges in his work as he dissects the relationship between the British and the Indians is reworked here as he examines the roles of the different types of writer. For Anand, the final category of writer is the worst, pandering to a non-discerning reading public who seek only to confirm their own ideas and prejudices in the literature they choose to read. Anand refused to engage with this form of literature, preferring to attack the British rule in India either covertly or overtly as is the case in *Two Leaves and a Bud*, (1946). Cowasjee points out that Anand's attitude towards the British ruling classes in India cost him the friendship and respect of a number of influential literary figures including Stephen Spender, V. S. Pritchett, and Leonard Woolf. He also notes that his contemporaries who 'valued personal relationship above state and politics, [...] remained Anand's friends'.[80]

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[77] *Ibid.*, p. 32, (The extract comes from a letter to Miss A. E. F. Horniman).

[78] *Ibid.*, p. 32.

Clearly then, there were writers whose acceptance within the literary scene in Britain during the 1940s did not prevent them from choosing subject matter which may cause offence, irrespective of the dubiousness of any 'offence' caused. Anand returned to India on the eve of Indian independence and Cowasjee suggests that 'with the removal of the British enemy, he was left without a subject'.[81]

Anand's experience within the British literary scene would suggest that there were subjects still apparently 'out of bounds'. A certain level of tolerance was encouraged but beyond that the writer who continued to challenge the validity and honour of something as close to the heart of the British as their rule in India, was in danger of overstepping the mark and failing either to secure acceptance in the first instance, or to lose the acceptance that had been gained. Whether or not this was acceptable is not open to debate here but it is clear that the experience of some Indians attempting to break into the English literary scene was one defined in terms of inclusion or exclusion. Anand speaks of the relationship between himself and the English writers claiming that he feels there is a 'considerable gap' between them. He says:

> [...] although I received great kindness from them and enjoyed the gift of the most genuine and loyal friendships, there was always a certain kind of self-consciousness in our discussions about India [...], at least well into the thirties. It may have been [...] due to my own inferiority complex, ingrown through insult and humiliations at the hands of authority in India, and leading to a sensitiveness which bordered upon touchiness; but partly, [...] it was due to the acquiescence (conscious or unconscious [...]) by most British writers [...] with the *status quo* and with the arguments used [...] by

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[79] Mulk Raj Anand, *Apology for Heroism*, (Bombay: Kutub Popular, this edition, 1957), p. 85.
[80] Cowasjee, (1993), pp. 37-38.
[81] *Ibid.*, p. 38.

> the most obtuse of publicists against the advancement of the under-privileged both in Britain and the Empire.[82]

Anand's argument continues as he outlines examples of the nature of the gap which he eventually summarises as being one that exists because he feels that the British were not, at that time, in a position to appreciate the enormous power of freedom of speech they had but which was repressed throughout the British Empire. As far as Anand is concerned, without freedom of speech there is no human dignity and certainly, no equality. If as Anand suggests, the inability within the British to appreciate the freedoms they possess and to acknowledge the freedoms denied to their 'fellow' writers looks set potentially to determine the reception of literature emerging from a colonised country, then it is possible that the vastness of the gap between the British and Indian writers is one that contemporary critics were unable to appreciate.

Anand makes a final point as he highlights one of the main divisions between English literature and Indian literature written in English. The suggestion he makes begins the process of recognising the moment at which Desani enters the literary scene in England:

> [...] because Indians of the present generation writing English have completely emancipated themselves from the perverse influence of the King-Emperor's English taught in the Universities, because they have been consciously reorientating the English language and because they are concerned with synthesizing Indian and European values in contemporary India,[...] they form a movement whose contribution will perhaps come to be considered in perspective as one of the most important parts of Indian literature as well as supplying the highlights of the largely superficial mass of Anglo-Indian literature [...].[83]

For Anand, a certain level of subversion of language is important and, as far as he is concerned, is the only way in which Indian writing in English will succeed. However, his insistence on a level of subversion and reinvention, although both innovative and necessary, is undoubtedly an even greater challenge to English literature than his own persistent attack on the British ruling classes. For Desani both *Hatterr* and *Hali* play with subject and language in a way set to challenge even Anand's ideas and assertions. What Desani does is to subvert what Anand sets out above. He taps into the King-Emperor's English and reinvents it as a Eurasian-cum-Anglo-Indian slang that is still recognisable to an English audience and although the subject matter is not consistently recognisable, the language is familiar enough to gain the attention and praise of the literary critics of the time.

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[82] Mulk Raj Anand, (1957), p. 51.

82 Mulk Raj Anand, *The King-Emperor's English*, (Bombay: Hind Kitabs, 1948), p. 20.

Hali is a completely different text altogether. If the British reading public were happy with the slang, mixed idioms, subverted Hinglish of *Hatterr*, it seems that they were overwhelmed, in a negative sense, by the rigidity of the language of *Hali*. It is perhaps closer to Anand's concept of King-Emperor's English than was intended. Yet, however close it is, any familiarity within the language is destroyed by the subject matter Desani chooses.

It would seem possible to suggest that what Eliot and Forster recognised in *Hali* was a language that was familiar to them, a combination of high rhetoric, biblical language and poetry, and the ambiguity within their reviews has been caused by the subject matter and their inability to align subject and language into a recognisable form of literature. This is not to suggest that Eliot and Forster were unfamiliar with the way in which Desani wrote as this is clearly not the case, but what is clear is that there was something about the way in which Desani combined his particular use of language and subject matter in *Hali* that did not sit easily with its reviewers. It would seem that *Hali* was a case of 'not right, not quite', a mixture of too many unfamiliar ingredients which look, on first glance, to be familiar but as the reader moves through the pages, familiarity is obscured by strangeness, by idioms that are at best unusual, and at worst alien, and by language that is neither/nor, English language with Indian idioms and a syntax that confuses.

Conclusion

This chapter set out to identify and debate the position of *Hali* within the British literary scene and to determine the exact nature of its apparent alterity within a literary field equipped to consider Indian writing in English but which, for one reason or another, appears to have lacked the tools for interpreting *Hali*. It has become apparent during this debate that there are few satisfactory answers to be had. Clearly *Hali* was much admired although the reasons and modes of description for this admiration are ambiguous. Within this ambiguity, perhaps, lies the beginnings of an understanding of just where and how *Hali* fits into the literary scene of 1940s/50s Britain. Whilst *Hali* was created to be a play, it was received and critically analysed variously as a poem, prose and a pageant (although this last is a term taken out of its true context, it is nonetheless one of the modes of critical inspection used to 'understand' *Hali*).[84]

The terms used to describe Desani's work reveal the limits of literary criticism at a particular time and in a particular place, suggesting that although Indian writing in English was relatively well established within Britain, *Hali* was a work which challenged the traditional modes of criticism available for a consideration of such writing. The inability to place *Hali*, irrespective of whether or not the ability to position a literary work is a sound judgement on its literary merit, has succeeded, over the years in creating a certain air of mystery around the piece, which presents itself as a resistance to interpretation.

Its liminality, neither in nor completely out of the scope of English literature, when combined with a caution with regard to analysis and interpretation, has meant that *Hali* has become not only a mysteriously evocative piece of work, but perhaps, more incisively, one of the works of the twentieth century to reveal the limits of literary criticism, limits which evoke uncomfortable issues of inclusion and exclusion based on the somewhat flimsy constructs of ability/inability to understand the familiar and unfamiliar. As an indicator of both the limits of literary criticism and of the ability of *Hali*'s critics to embrace such a piece of work without prejudice of any sort, Desani provides a poignant reminder of the fragility of the creative process which is entirely dependent on familiarity, leaving little or no room for experimentation and true novelty. Whether or not it was the ambiguity surrounding the reception of *Hali* that confounded Desani and prompted his move back to India, what remains pertinent is the fact that *Hali* did not receive what Desani considered to be appropriate consideration. His ideology concerning the necessity of expressing the inexpressible and his personal formulation of the methodology of its exploration, reveals his resolve to discover and utilise new terms and ways of describing the essential aspects of an image or experience. Despite the fact that his work on the Inexpressible appears 20 years after *Hali*, it presents the most profound and direct analysis of what Desani had hoped for *Hali*. Not only does it outline his personal goals for writing, but more importantly, it speaks directly to the reader with regard to the limits of communication. For Desani, he writes, the reader reads and absorbs the images and language he creates. If this does not happen, the work will fail on some level (if not all levels). Desani highlights the role of the reader in '*How is the "Inexpressible" to be Expressed?*' as he claims:

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[84] This term is one used by Molly Ramanujan, *G. V. Desani,* (Liverpool: Lucas Publications, 1988), p. 86.

> [...] the reader [...] must be considered. Every practitioner of the craft [...] must visualise a reader/listener, equipped with a certain emotional and linguistic maturity or refinement and , indeed, experience, far above the average, to whom the imagery might appeal and make sense.[85]

This is an early version of the papers Desani delivered in the late 1970s entitled 'A Marginal Comment on the Problem of Medium in Bicultures', and 'Difficulties of Communicating an Oriental to a Western Audience'.[86] It would seem fair to suggest that the English reading public in the early 1950s were not equipped with such an 'emotional and linguistic maturity or refinement' and were unable to tap into a range of experiences which were 'far above the average'. This lack resulted in potentially rendering any piece of work falling beyond their understanding and which employed extraordinary devices and language, as an entirely liminal text, perched on the peripheries of understanding and interpretation.

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[85] G. V. Desani, (1970).

[86] See respectively, Daniel Massa (ed), *Individual and Community in Commonwealth Literature,* (Malta: University Press, 1979), pp. 202-209 and C. D. Narasimhaiah, *Awakened Conscience: Studies in Commonwealth Literature,* (New Delhi: Sterling Publishers PVT Ltd,1978), pp. 401- 407.

Chapter Six

Bugaboo at the BBC: G. V. Desani, *Hali* and the BBC

> Since *Hali* is personal allegory, we cannot be sure whether we have seen too much or too little in it. *Hali* needs to an unusual degree the collaboration of the reader/viewer in order for it to be a living piece of writing.[1]

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[1] Molly Ramanujan, *G.V. Desani*, (Liverpool: Lucas Publications, 1988), p. 126.

This chapter sets out to explore Desani's relationship with the BBC which spanned more than ten years and brought him into contact with fellow writers such as George Orwell, E. M. Forster, Louis MacNeice, Terence Tiller and T. S. Eliot. His work for the BBC began with the submission of some short stories and plays written specifically for radio, moved on to review programmes, reading from scriptures and finally ended with a prolonged attempt to get his play *Hali* broadcast in full, on the BBC.

The chapter is divided into three sections. The first section gives a brief outline of the war-time development of the BBC up to the point Desani began working for it. The second considers some of Desani's early work for the BBC. The final section gives a detailed analysis of Desani's correspondence with the BBC as he attempted to gain airtime for *Hali.*

Section 1

During the war years the BBC was put under the control of the Ministry of Information, a position it resented, as a station which had previously prided itself on its political neutrality. It was to be used in 'the front line in a radio battle against a country whose foreign propaganda directed by Goebbels, was the most sophisticated in the world'.[2] One of the main targets in this radio war was the British in India as well as the large number of Indian soldiers fighting for Britain. It is estimated that there were somewhere in the region of two million Indian volunteers fighting for Britain and these men and their loyalty to the British government were intrinsic to success in the war. The Germans hoped to be able to create a level of civil breakdown within India, which they felt would lead to some instability in the British position in the Middle East. Germany was depending on exiled Indians to add weight to its propaganda campaign.[3] Among the most prominent of these leaders was Subhas Chandra Bose, a member of the anti-British Indian Nationalist Congress Party, whose speeches proved to be the turning point for the

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[2] W. J. West, (Ed.) *Orwell: The War Broadcasts,* (London: Duckworth/BBC, 1985), p.13-14.

[3] It should be noted that these leaders included those who had been imprisoned for insurrection and those who had chosen to make their way to Japan and Germany where they were welcomed. (This information from West (1985), p.14).

BBC.[4] Bose had evaded British house arrest in India and fled, via Afghanistan, to Berlin. On arrival there he sent a list of demands to the German government, requesting the establishment of a Free India Government to be based somewhere in Europe, preferably Berlin, as well as the founding of a new Free India Broadcasting station which would call upon Indians to assert their independence and rise up in revolt against the British.[5] In November of 1941, both requests were granted and Bose began his broadcasts to the Indian people. His speeches were translated into several different languages, (although Bose himself decreed that in the new free India, Hindi would become the national language). By October 1943 Bose had been elected Head of State and The Supreme Commander of the Indian National Army. He died in a plane crash in 1945.

As far as the BBC was concerned Bose became one of the main reasons for establishing a programming section to counteract his 'propaganda'. Among his speeches were a series of broadcasts ranting against the British and incorporating quotes from, among others, Forster's *A Passage to India* as 'proof' that the British themselves had attacked the British presence in India.[6] One of the speeches he made is included in *Talking to India*, edited by George Orwell. This text includes a selection of English language broadcasts to India. Few of the talks are dated but the book was published in 1943 and the Introduction suggests that the talks are all from around this period. However, Bose's speech is dated May 1942 and was broadcast from Berlin. His speech begins with the following:

> Sisters and brothers, on the last occasion when I addressed you a few weeks ago I reminded you again of the deceit and hypocrisy underlying the policy of the British Government which culminated in the journey of Sir Stafford Cripps to India. Sir Stafford, on the one hand, offered independence in the future, and on the other, demanded the immediate cooperation of India in Britain's war effort. The Indian people were apparently expected to accept the proposition. The contemptible offer was,

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[4] Bose managed to evade the British authorities for much of the war. West (1985) claims that his broadcasts from Germany were well-known but it is also believed that he established the Indian National Army from a Japanese base. (p. 14).

[5] These requests were sent in a memo to the German government on 9th April, 1941.

[6] Orwell was later to remark on Bose's speech regarding Forster. He said 'so far as I know they didn't even have to resort to dishonest quotation'. Orwell, 'Through a Glass Rosily', *Tribune*, 23 November 1945.

> however, rejected. This was a matter for joy and pride to Indians in all parts of the world.[7]

The speech goes on to accuse the Indian people of complacency and collusion, especially those leaders who agreed to help the British with the war effort. He suggests that the only hope for India and the Indian people is to join forces with the Japanese, Germans and the Italians and this alone, he believes, will secure independence for India. He ends the speech with the call to 'Gird up your loins! The hour of India's salvation is at hand'.[8] Clearly then, the British government could not afford to remain complacent with regard to broadcasting and an entirely new area of international broadcasting was about to begin.

Even before this particular speech, which is indicative of the tone of many of Bose's broadcasts, the British government had been alerted to the potential hazards of ignoring such broadcasts. The *Daily Telegraph* cabled a message home to England on 6th October 1939, which read, 'German propaganda in English excellently received. Listeners await vainly for refutation from London or Delhi'.[9] As a result of a number of similar reports, the Eastern Service department of the BBC set up an Indian/Hindustani section which would broadcast in both English and Hindi. This section was run by Sir Malcolm Darling, a retired Vice-Chancellor of the University of the Punjab.[10] The intention was that Darling could summon up orators as powerful as Bose who would use their literary skills to counter the accusations being levelled at the British. However, the task of recruiting such talent was to prove difficult. Mulk Raj Anand refused claiming that:

> I am afraid the British Government has done nothing which may help to solve the dilemma which faces some of us: It has declared neither its war aims nor its peace aims - and India seems to be its one blind spot. This enforces on us some kind of neutrality, the strain of which can be very harrowing for the more timid individual, who is torn between conflicting loyalties.[11]

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[7] George Orwell, (ed.) *Talking to India,* (London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1943), p.157.
[8] *Ibid.*, p. 160.
[9] West, (1985), p. 14.
[10] Sir Malcolm Lyall Darling, I.C.S. Assistant Commissioner, Punjab 1904; Tutor and Guardian to His Highness the Raja of Dewas 1907; Financial Commissioner, Punjab 1936.
[11] Letter from Mulk Raj Anand to Sir Malcolm Darling, dated 22nd March, 1941, from West, (1985), p. 15.

Anand was only to agree to work for the BBC in 1942, when Russia entered the war and after he received a letter from George Orwell asking him to do some talks on topics such as 'the Fifth Column, propaganda, living space, new order, pluto-democracy, racialism, and so on'.[12] Eventually Darling persuaded a number of Indian broadcasters to join the Indian section of the BBC and recruited Zulfaqar Ali Bokhari to work with George Orwell, to head the section and to begin the process of countering the German-based propaganda.[13]

However, despite the best intentions of the BBC, there were still some problems with their broadcasts to India. A large proportion of the output was borrowed, for financial reasons, from the Home Service, and consisted mainly of music and comedy shows. Bokhari would contribute a weekly news report and occasional cultural programmes. A major change to the type of news and broadcasts being transmitted to India occurred as a direct result of an editorial in the *New Statesman* on 5th July 1941 which called for an increase in propaganda and an inquiry into the suitability of some of the programming being broadcast by the BBC to India. Its author, Kingsley Martin, highlighted the unsuitability of much of the material being broadcast to India. He commented that the news was being translated from English into Hindustani and that none of its content was changed specifically for the Indian audience, which meant that all they received was a large amount of parochial news, none of which was relevant to India. He gives examples:

> British bulletins to India have included comments on the death of such celebrities as Ethel M. Dell, and on the valuable contribution to British defence afforded by a group of Australian footballers who filled some sandbags before sailing for their homes.[14]

He also offers suggestions for changes within the Indian broadcasts from Britain:

> Plenty of educated Indians would welcome serious talks on literature and other topics which recognise their equality of interests. The Germans, who have made a special study of India, well understand how to meet Indian

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[12] West, (1985), p. 24. Letter dated 27th February, 1942.

[13] Zulfaqar Ali Bokhari eventually became Director General of Pakistan Radio.

[14] West, (1985), pp. 19-20.

> tastes and susceptibilities. The average Indian wants a racy programme in his own tongue about things which concern him.

Martin also comments that there was still a significant amount of European music and Music hall entertainment; the former he claims was disliked by the majority of the Indian population, and the latter was considered to be vulgar. He concludes his article with a plea for programmes in the native tongue and not spoken by a translator, (he suggested that much of the spontaneity of the news and current affairs programmes was lost in the stilted delivery of the translator).[15] This article was to change the Indian section of the BBC and to pave the way for the type of programmes Desani was interested in being involved in, programmes aimed at the South Asian audience, carrying familiar news and covering a range of subjects from comedy to drama to literature.

Until the arrival of the Third Programme, the Indian Section, then headed by George Orwell, was to provide some of the more intellectual material broadcast by the BBC. In an appendix to his book, West includes a listing for one week's radio broadcasts which contains the following:

> Sunday, the 13th December, [...] the Brain's Trust will answer questions sent in by listeners. Those taking part will be Dr. Malcolm Sargent, Leslie Howard, Dr. C.E.M. Joad.
> Monday the 14th [...] Princess Indira continues her usual weekly review of events in Parliament 'The Debate Continues'. This is followed by Radio Theatre, in which John Burrell presents a selection from Nelson, featuring Leslie Howard.
> Tuesday the 15th [...] 'Science and the People'. This talk will [...] be followed [...] by Noel Sirkar's film commentary in which he tells listeners in India about films shortly to be released.
> Wednesday the 16th, [...] Shridhar Telkar, [...] with 'Behind the Headlines' in which he explains to the listeners the importance of some or

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[15] Kingsley Martin had a notoriously bad relationship with the BBC, due to an incident where he breached the censorship regulations during a broadcast and voiced a damning indictment of the Ministry of Information in 1941 which resulted in him being placed on a 'black list'. Orwell was very keen to use Martin in his broadcasts and managed to involve him in several programmes before Martin once again 'disgraced' himself during a broadcast on education some time in 1943. Martin had been asked to speak on a particular report on education and he gave a speech 'slanted to the extreme left'. Despite desperate attempts to censor the programme before broadcast, the programme went out causing a storm of protest (mainly within the BBC). Orwell would not be dissuaded from using Martin again and the restrictive censorship exercised by the BBC both in relation to Martin and programming in general, was to lead to Orwell's resignation from the BBC in September of 1943.

> other current event which may have escaped general notice. This is followed by Lady Grigg's usual Wednesday programme 'Women Generally Speaking'.
> Thursday, [...] Dr Shelvankar will give the [...] talk [...]'The Story of Fascism'.
> Friday, the 18th [...] Norman Marshall, the well-known theatrical producer answers questions on stage technique put to him by Balraj and Damyanti Sahni.
> Mulk Raj Anand conducts the [...] last interview in his series 'A Day in My Life' in which he interviews war workers of various kinds.[16]

West also includes an overview of the programming for the next three months, the beginning of 1943. The schedule is for a series of programmes titled 'Through Eastern Eyes' and Orwell, whose overview it is, makes it clear that he is the only European in this Indian section and is very much under the authority of Z. A. Bokhari. Orwell points out that 'Through Eastern Eyes' as the listener would know:

> [...] is a series of talks in the English language given entirely by Orientals, in most cases Indians. The general idea is to interpret the West, and in particular Great Britain, to India, through the eyes of people who are more or less strangers'.[17]

The material to be included ranges from Sir Hari Singh Gour discussing the proceedings of the House of Commons, Bokhari, debating the current state of the war on a weekly basis, to a weekly airing for the results of the Indian student's writing competition. There were to be some new talks including one by Mr. Appaswami, the London correspondent of *The Hindu* and another by Mulk Raj Anand discussing 'some of the best-known English writers'. Also listed are various new programmes covering issues ranging from education, democracy, liberty, politics and economics, with all the speakers being 'Orientals' who Orwell classifies as 'people whose native land is East of Suez'. Orwell also hoped to introduce speakers from Malaysia, Thailand, Turkey, and Indonesia.

Towards the end of the overview Orwell lists the Indian speakers already familiar to BBC audiences. They include, Balraj Sahni, Venu Chitale, I. B. Sahrin, Anand and

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[16] West, (1985), pp. 284-5. The listing is dated Week 51, 7th December 1942.

[17] *Ibid.*, p. 286.

Tambimuttu. All the talks in this series were to take place at 8.30pm Indian Standard Time.[18]

In 1943 George Orwell edited a slim text which contained a sample of the programmes he had been involved in.[19] The book entitled, *Talking to India,* begins with the words:

> The B.B.C. broadcasts in forty-seven languages, including twelve Asiatic languages. Five of these belong to the mainland of India, but Hindustani is the only (Indian) language in which transmissions are made every day. The Hindustani broadcasts, including news bulletins, occupy eight and a quarter hours a week. [...] The reasons for keeping these [English] broadcasts going is that English, [...] is the only true lingua franca of India. A fairly large proportion of the speakers have [...] been Indians, or other Orientals.[20]

Among the contributors Orwell chooses to put into print are Forster, Cedric Dover, Ritchie Calder, Hsiao Ch'ien, Tambimuttu, K. K. Ardaschir, Venu Chitale, Anand, I. B. Sarin, R.R. Desai and Subhas Chandra Bose.[21] On the whole, the scripts have been selected for their suitability for reproduction in print and the tone and subject matter, naturally, considering contemporary events, centres on issues of war. However, there are some exceptions when literary texts are studied but on the whole, these tend to be English texts such as those by Edward Gibbons, Virginia Woolf, and T. S. Eliot.

Orwell clearly considered his particular choice of material as representative of the type of programmes being transmitted to India. However, there are some obvious gaps and his choice may reflect the inaccessibility of some of the broadcasts, to an English audience, at whom his book was aimed. The enormous range of material, of broadcasters and of subject matter being regularly debated on the Indian service makes it clear that this was an intellectual endeavour, carefully scheduled and aimed, primarily at an educated audience both in India and England. Clearly then, there was room and an audience for Desani's work and the next section outlines the range of material he offered for broadcast to the BBC.

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[18] All information from West, (1985), pp. 286-8.

[19] Orwell was to cease working for the BBC at the end of 1943, having come up against what he considered to be intolerable censorship with regard to what he was and was not allowed to broadcast.

[20] George Orwell, (Ed.), *Talking to India,* (London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd.,1943), p. 7.

[21] The book itself divides the authors into two distinct subject areas, 'General Talks' and 'Political Talks'. Anand, Desai, Sarin and Bose are all firmly placed in the 'Political Talks' category. In his Introduction, Orwell claims that he has included Bose to represent 'the high-water mark of Axis propaganda'. Orwell also pays tribute to the power Bose possessed as an orator as he says, 'Bose [...] is potentially as important a quisling as Laval or Wang Ching Wei'. Orwell then devotes the remainder of his Introduction to an analysis of Bose's style and subject matter, paying special attention to the 'deficits' within Bose's arguments regarding the 'true' state of the war and his tendency to peddle propaganda.

Section 2

Desani's work for the BBC began around 1940 when he submitted a manuscript for a short story entitled 'Princess Lila, Beloved of the Moon'[22] and finally ended on his return to India in 1952. In his years at the BBC he earned somewhere in region of two hundred pounds.[23] His first broadcast was on 21st June 1940 and was entitled 'How can I help? - A Priest', and lasted ten minutes. The talk, commissioned by the Talks Department of the BBC was in Hindi and Desani was the speaker. The programme would eventually be used in the Hindustani Broadcasts, Programme A, Transmission 3. During the remainder of 1940 Desani broadcast a further eight programmes.[24] In the years leading up to 1950, with the exception of 1947 and almost all of 1948, Desani submitted a large number of scripts, some of which were returned by the BBC as 'not suitable for our purposes'.[25]

It is perhaps significant that Desani did not submit or broadcast any programmes during the critical period of Partition in India. The only surviving comments on this dramatic change to the way India was run, appear in a letter to Edmund Blunden dated 21st August 1948, (almost exactly a year after Partition). In it Desani reflects on his changed personal circumstances:

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[22] A manuscript for this story was submitted to the Features and Drama Executive (Play Library) and a reply from them to Desani indicates that they were forwarding the script to the Talks Department. It is dated 23rd January, 1940. A letter to Desani dated 24th January, 1940 informs the author that they do not 'find it suitable for broadcasting'. All information comes from the BBC Written Archives Centre (W.A.C). The BBC did not retain any of Desani's scripts.

[23] For most of his broadcasts, Desani earned seven guineas which was a substantial amount for an average of fifteen minutes of broadcasting. Average weekly rents for flats in London at this time were in the region of two guineas.

[24] These were, 'Interview with Three Indian Business Men', 27th June 1940, in Hindi, (Hindustani Transmission), 'The Lascar', October 1940, (Indian Empire transmission). This particular broadcast was postponed due to the amount of 'important news' on the 28th October. Letters from Desani to Sir Malcolm Darling suggest that the talk had been commissioned by the Ministry of Information. For the programme Desani interviewed crews from 'Mahamadali el Kabir' which was torpedoed in the Bay of Biscay, 'City of Brisbane', bombed from the air, and the two sole survivors of the Indian crew of S.S. Severn Leigh, torpedoed in mid Atlantic. 'The Hero from Poland', 2nd November, 1940, (Indian –Hindustani Transmission), 'Two Brother Sailors', 15th November, 1940, in Hindustani,(Arabic Transmission), 'The Evacuees', 24th November, 1940, in Hindustani, (Indian-Hindustani Transmission), 'Akram Ali the Sailor', 29th November 1940, in Hindustani, (Hindustani-Indian Transmission), 'Three Heroes', 8th December 1940, in Hindustani, (Hindustani-Indian Transmission), 'The Lightship', 28th December, 1940, in Hindustani, (Hindustani-Indian Transmission). Desani was the speaker for all of the above programmes.

[25] Scripts entitled 'Ye *Vo* Chiz Hai' (1942), 'Phillaur' (1943) and 'This Human Nature' (1943) were all deemed unsuitable although no reasons appear to have been given.

> Life goes on very much the same. I do not know if I told you this, but this business of the division of India made us, as a family, lose everything. As a disagreeable consequence of this, this house is no longer mine. [...] I have moved into the basement as a temporary measure.[26]

It is also clear that during this period Desani was trying to find a publisher for *Hatterr*, (he began this quest as early as January 1946), and was busy with *Hali* at the same time. However, in the years following this radio silence, Desani was busy with his work for the BBC. He submitted a number of scripts and was involved in a large number of programmes. Some of the broadcasts were panel-based and on a number of occasions Desani was asked to be 'the Indian' in various discussions on India, Indian Youth and later, on the effects of Partition, a position he appears to have been more than happy to occupy.

In 1945 Desani participated in a panel-based broadcast for the Home Service. His fellow panel members were, Dr. Janaki Ammal, Mrs. Ali and M.R.R. Khan.[27] Dr Janaki Ammal is introduced as a botanist from Malabar, Mrs. Ali, a broadcaster in Bengal and M.R.R (Rafiq) Khan, a medical student at University College Hospital. Desani is asked to introduce himself, although it has already been mentioned that he is a Hindu. Desani says that he is from Sind and a journalist by profession. The programme is introduced by Hilton Brown who concludes the introductions with the comment:

> Here we have four young Indians - east, west, south and central India; two Hindus, two Muslims - two men, two women. [T]he subject that's been given is "What do you want for India?"[28]

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[26] Letter to Edmund Blunden, dated 21st August, 1948. From the Blunden Collection, Harry Ransom Research Centre, Austin, Texas.

[27] Dr E.K. Janaki Ammal was a renowned botanist in India, specialising in taxonomy, the science of identification, classification and naming of organisms and there are now a number of prizes and awards given out each year in honour of her work.

[28] From the transcript of 'Young India Today', broadcast on Monday 1st January 1945, 7.45-8.00 pm, for the Home Service, London. Information from the BBC W.A.C.

The brevity of broadcasting time allocated to the panel - fifteen minutes - results in a somewhat superficial debate. Dr. Janaki Ammal suggest India needs food, Mrs Ali, education and economic independence for women, Rafiq Khan, better health, and Desani suggests that de-coding Hinduism would create a 'rightly conceived religion' and less of the confused and confusing collection of Hindu beliefs, currently being embraced in India. If Desani's idea of what India needs appears a little aesthetic, his fellow panel members are quick to draw attention to it, one of them pointing out that 'there is too much religion in India' already. However, Desani claims only to be concerned with the complexity that Hinduism appears to have embraced, making it difficult to understand, and by association, to follow. As some sort of resolution to this problem he suggests the creation of a Hindu Bible. A memo from the BBC to Desani dated 2nd January, 1945 gives some explanation for the somewhat disjointed nature of the debate. It is from Hilton Brown and begins:

> I hope you were able to listen to 'Young India Today' last night. [...] I expect you noticed that I had to make a considerable cut at the end. [W]e badly over-ran [...] and something had to come out. I thought the bit where we went round the table after Dr. Janaki Ammal's interruption of your speech was the least important so I made the cut there.[29]

The section of Desani's talk, carefully edited out may have given the programme slightly more direction. However, it is impossible to know exactly what occurred here. It is noticeable that within the talk there is no reference to the political scene in India - although it could be argued that each of the panel members highlights a deficiency or need that has something to do with contemporary politics. The programme does include some interesting comments on broadcasting and radios in India. Mrs. Ali remarks on the high level of illiteracy in India at the time of the broadcast - 90% - and recalls an experiment carried out in Russia where almost every home was provided with a radio set. Mrs. Ali then claims that in India at the time, there was one radio set for every 4000 people, with most of the sets located in city homes. She concludes this part of her talk with the statement:

> If we had wireless everywhere, think of the education we could give![30]

Clearly then, the power of radio was never underestimated. It is perhaps worthy of note here that the BBC was aiming, at this time, to reach the Indian masses, yet Mrs. Ali clearly indicates that in practical terms this was unachievable as she points to the discrepancy between visualised audience (from the BBC in England) and actual audience (in India).

Whilst the outline above is somewhat brief, it nevertheless gives a flavour of the type of broadcasting Desani was involved in as a panel-member and remains one of the only complete scripts of a radio programme involving Desani. There is one other single remaining script of a talk Desani gave. The talk was commissioned by the Ministry of Information and was intended to be widely read/performed by Desani during the early years of the war and to attempt to cement relationships between British and Indian. A brief overview is included here simply because it is one of the only remaining scripts and gives a sense of the type of work Desani presented to the BBC. It is not clear if Desani ever broadcast this talk but some of the titles of the programmes he submitted to the BBC suggest that some elements of this early talk may have been used. The piece is titled 'India Invites' and the remaining copy is of a talk he gave at New College Oxford on July 15th,1941.[31] The paper answers the question, 'How can India and Britain be better introduced to each other's cultural productions and ideas?'[32] The paper begins with an invitation from Desani to join him on a flying carpet and head off to Calcutta. He suggests that the task of defining India will be a difficult one but he is able to do it. One of the chief aims of the paper, it would appear, is to highlight the similarities between

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[29] Memo from Hilton Brown to Desani, 2nd January, 1945, W.A.C.

[30] 'Young India Today', (1945).

[31] This paper appears to have been widely circulated and Desani claimed that it was the earliest example of his writing. The paper at Oxford was given during the Summer School.

[32] The BBC also hold a copy of an introduction to this talk (or a version of it), given by Edmund Blunden. The manuscript is undated but BBC sources suggest it dates from late 1941 to early 1942 and it is headed 'Applications for lectures'. There follows a list of locations where the talk is to be given. These are 'The Ministry of Information (Regional Offices), The Imperial Institute (Schools and Teachers' Discussion groups), The Y.M.C.A. Education Secretary, and the London Regional Committee for Education Aming' [sic, possibly, 'among'] 'H. M. Forces (the Services)'.

India and England, between the Indians and the English.[33] Desani quickly defines the similarity:

> Human nature being so much the same the world over, types of men in different countries are the same too. They do not differ in kind; only in degree: and those differences again are relative. All that being true, my people are not different from yours.[34]

He outlines the various groups of people one would encounter in both countries and then moves on to describe his own search for identity He talks about part of his life spent in Baluchistan:

> The people of the district were good, simple and lovable folk; and I was fond of them. An average of one murder a day in that district was a trifle, and the elders of the tribe used to shake their heads with shame at this poor show. Men were not what they once were. Cattle-lifting was both the profession and the pastime of the entire tribe, and wife-lifting the pre-occupation of the menfolk.[35]

Desani explains that this was not *his* India and he moved on to Sarnath where he studied the classics which gave him a 'sense of ownership of property, of a legacy, and a pride-though false – in my racial and national inheritance'.[36] It is here, and on his subsequent travels to Himalaya that he feels closest to the India he imagines is his India. For Desani, India is a spiritual, mystical place where the people may or may not be the same as the British, but it is a country undergoing many of the same experiences as England at this particular time. There is a brief moment when Desani moves from his somewhat speculative and imaginative account of India to the war-torn present. He says:

> My own views on life have lately undergone a radical change. I live, with you, in a distressing period of man's history. Living in a district of greater London, I, too, have been affected by the destruction and suffering willed

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[33] As the paper was sponsored and promoted by the Ministry of Information, this would seem to be a fair summation of the objective of Desani's paper.

[34] G. V. Desani, 'India Invites'. Paper read at New College Oxford, July 15th , 1941, p. 5.

[35] *Ibid.*, p. 9.

[36] *Ibid.*, p. 11.

> by man against man. But can a man afford to commit spiritual suicide, forsake noble quests, abandon intellectual pursuit and adventure, because he is temporarily up against odds and physical distractions.
> Are rivalry, egoism, worship of power, indispensable for the existence of a people? Are the things acquired by these means worth having?[37]

(This speculation reappears in Hatterr's narrative, in the final chapter as he considers life as contrast and concludes that being up against the odds is man's lot in life.) The paper concludes with a description of the beauty and solitude available in particular corners of India and Desani's desire to take the audience there and then leave them to experience *his* India.

Whilst this paper was not broadcast by the BBC it suggests the tone of some of Desani's pieces submitted to the BBC. As none of his submissions are in existence today, the content can only be speculated upon but the above talk is so profoundly indicative of the tone of *Hatterr* and indeed of *Hali* that it is possible to gain a sense of the type of material Desani was interested in broadcasting.

This somewhat rudimentary outline of Desani's relationship with the BBC, the listing of his submissions, his work for the Ministry of Information and his panel-based contributions, is intended to give an idea of the range of material he offered for broadcast as well his dedication to getting himself well-known as both a voice and a personality in the media. However, there were some limitations to his 'success'. Apart from a very small number of programmes broadcast on the Home Service, everything else that Desani was involved in was broadcast on the Eastern/Indian/Pakistani/Hindustani networks. Whilst there was potentially a large audience in India which would hear Desani's programmes, his involvement with some of the most eminent of the British literati, suggests that he was keen to be more widely heard in the land he had chosen as his home. However, what is apparent from the correspondence held by the BBC is that Desani kept proposing scripts and that they were, on the whole, accepted and broadcast. As none of the scripts submitted or broadcast were retained by the BBC it is impossible to know what the content or the style of Desani's work for the BBC was. It is, on the whole, easier to trace the development of his relationship with the BBC through the correspondence that deals with *Hali*.

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[37] *Ibid.*, p. 17.

Section 3

This section aims to chart the progression of Desani's relationship with the BBC, as well as to begin the process of analysing the way in which *Hali* was read and interpreted by the readers of the BBC.

Some time before January 1949 Desani submitted a script for a radio version of *Hali*. It should be noted that this predates the actual publication of his final version of *Hali* by about a year, although publicity for *Hatterr* listed it as a forthcoming publication by Desani, due also in 1948. *Hali* is promoted by Forster and there is also a review of *Gandhi*, 'The first complete life of one of the greatest figures of our time [...] shown against the backdrop of India'.[38] Clearly then, there were copies of *Hali* in circulation. The first person at the BBC to read the script was the poet Terence Tiller.[39] In a letter to Dorothy Baker, dated 20th, January, 1949, Tiller makes his views on the work clear:

> I'm afraid this strikes me as fairly ordinary bugaboo of the Californian type. [...] [T]he present script seems to [...] consist almost entirely of quite aimless rhapsodies [...] not always in correct English [...] though this would be a small thing if there were any real justification within the script for the script.[40]

Clearly, Tiller has little time for the script and the apparently careless reference to the incorrect English does not manage to conceal the possibility that he finds this wholly unacceptable. As his letter continues, his reservations shift to more specific deficiencies within the text. He claims that there would be few listeners who would understand it, containing as it does 'a stream, at once hectic and cloying, of inexplicable imagery' revealing nothing that is familiar. Tiller regards this as an indication of a piece of work lacking any depth at all. He goes on to say:

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[38] The history of Desani's *Gandhi* is a fascinating one. It was to be a great work but for mysterious reasons, never appeared in print, although it is clear from book sellers' pre-publication advertising, and from Desani's own letters, that the manuscript was ready for publication. The reasons for its non appearance are vague. A newspaper article claimed that the secretary responsible for typing it all up, had a fatal accident and Desani was unable to face the task of completing the book without her. Other explanations suggest that Desani became aware that there may be material within the book that was too radical for the British reading public. As the manuscripts are no longer in existence, the real reason may never be known.

[39] Tiller, Dorothy Baker and Louis MacNeice were readers for the BBC during this period.

[40] Letter from Terence Tiller to Dorothy Baker, 20th January, 1949, From BBC W.A.C. All underlining is author's own.

> [N]o doubt there is a meaning but it [...] is hidden under symbolism which is partly private and partly Indian [...] there is no effort at translation for a wider (and a Western) audience. The result is, no doubt, impressive to people who fall for lush, vague, magniloquent orientalism. [41]

For Tiller, Desani's unfamiliar and seemingly unapproachable use of language and imagery creates a text which excludes the majority of readers who Tiller pinpoints exactly as a Western audience. Tiller is unable to find a way into Desani's particular use of language and concludes that that Desani's language, style, subject matter and delivery are products of 'lush, vague, magniloquent orientalism'. Essentially, for Tiller, what is not able to be clearly understood is ultimately 'other'. It seems that like the majority of *Hali*'s critics, Tiller did not understand the play and assumed that it was because of its 'Indianness'. It must be remembered, however, that Tiller held a responsible position within the BBC. It was his job, along with the other Readers to select material that would be appropriate both for broadcast (in a technical sense) and for a particular audience. He felt that this script was not viable on either count. He continues to highlight the unfamiliarities within the text, claiming that the script depends on the ability to translate some of the symbols into 'one's own private mythologies'.

His reference to the 'private mythology' is interesting. It is not known whether or not Tiller had read the version of *Hali* due to be published in 1950 which contained the endorsement by Forster, but it is entirely probable that an edition of *Hali* was available during the late 1940s as Forster had already reviewed it in 1947. (It should be made clear, at this point, that I am assuming that the version of *Hali* submitted to the BBC was a very close copy of what would eventually appear in print. Later letters to Desani and suggestions for changes to the radio script Desani produced, and Desani's subsequent refusal to make any alterations, suggest that the two works were the same).

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[41] *Ibid.*

Tiller's use of the term 'private mythology' is somewhat less positive than Forster's use of it. Forster admitted that such mythologies were dangerous but seemed to be suggesting that if one could tap into ones own mythologies or indeed, if at all possible, tap into Desani's or Hali's private mythologies, then *Hali* would appeal. For Tiller such mythologies are less welcoming and can act only as a receptacle for the unfamiliar, that which can not be located anywhere within one's own experience. This suggestion is clarified as he refers to Desani's particular choice of images and subject as 'fluid, Apocalyptic [...] and pretty poor stuff at that [...]'. The unfamiliar for Tiller is a nightmare territory where vagueness, orientalism and private mythologies are loosely bound together by some unnameable and indescribable fluid, leaving the reader bewildered.

As Tiller's letter progresses he mentions an introduction by Bruce Bain which accompanied the script. He describes this introduction as 'pretentious and silly humbug'. As the script no longer exists it is only possible to speculate about the contents of Bain's introduction. However, there is a review of *Hali*, published in *Tribune*, London, Feb, 1950, written by Bain. It reads thus:

> The allegory gains by the ample, somewhat archaic eloquence of style. Mr Desani shows his mastery of language by the choice of a simple controlled lyricism in heightened speech, adopted with almost complete success to contain the high vague themes of his allegory.

This may not be the particular item that Tiller is referring to but may well be representative of the type of review that Bain gave *Hali*. Tiller goes on to suggest that it is possible that the original book justified the comments although he doubts it. Tiller's argument against the broadcast moves on to more sure territory when he questions the ability of its author to produce a radio script as it is 'full of flaws and clumsiness'. Although he does not elucidate on the flaws, for him this is the final straw. Tiller is clearly unable, like the majority of the eventual readers of *Hali*, to understand the text. He cannot decide if the work is one of mysticism, spirituality, or even if it is a work of literature at all. He concludes by stating that '*Hali* fails even by its own standards. Into outer darkness with it'.

It is clear that Tiller had no time for what Desani considered to be his greatest work. However, as this is an internal memo it is unclear whether or not Desani ever read this particular review. His continued attempts to obtain air-time for *Hali* suggest that he did not, or if he did, he refused to be beaten.

The second letter regarding *Hali* is from Dorothy Baker to Louis MacNeice (the third and final reader for the BBC during this period). The memo refers to Tiller's letter and begins with a comment on it. Baker claims that Tiller's review is more explicit than hers would ever be but she finds herself agreeing with his sentiments. Referring to *Hali* she says:

> I just simply cannot see what it is getting at. It seems to me to be either too private or too Eastern throughout for the Western quarters. [...] I do not agree with Terence in his loathing of what Mr Desani has to say. I do not understand it sufficiently for that. [Q]uite emphatically I do not understand it.[42]

Dorothy Baker does exactly what so many of the critics who eventually reviewed the published edition of *Hali* did, and makes her review ambiguous enough to make it unclear whether or not she was endorsing it. However, the general tone of the correspondence is that her reservations with regard to its appeal to a Western audience are sufficient to turn it down. Her suggestion that it is 'too private or too Eastern' is an echo of Tiller's comments. Unlike Tiller, she is honest enough to admit that she does not understand it sufficiently to pass a truly critical judgement on it. However, she must have been aware that her ambiguity would suffice, when combined with the powerful invective of Tiller, to ensure that this particular script for the broadcast of *Hali* may never gain air-time.

Three days after Dorothy Baker's consideration of *Hali* was sent to Louis MacNeice, she was considering a further offering by Desani. This time, the script is untitled and the only clue to the content lies in a brief résumé that Baker gives, followed by a direct reference to *Hali*:

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[42] Memo from Dorothy Baker to Louis MacNeice, 21st January, 1949, BBC, W.A.C.

> [T]he story of how a Mohammedan gave his life for a Hindu. Apart from that it is very bad radio, the story seems to me most insensitively handled, and as in *Hali* there is a sort of false note about the whole thing.[43]

Once again, although Baker is unable to qualify her reservations, there is something in Desani's script that does not seem to be quite right. Without seeing the script it is difficult to assess the worth of her criticism but what is clear is that it held something of the same unfamiliarity as the *Hali* script did.

By 1950 Desani had managed to secure some air time for *Hali* although it still looked unlikely that the text would be broadcast in its entirety. Following the publication of *Hali* in the early months of 1950 there was a renewal of interest in Desani who had after all produced a book which, according to the reviews, caused a literary storm on its publication in 1948. He was able to gain a fifteen minute slot to review the 'play Hali' on 13th February 1950 within a programme titled 'Matters of Moment' for the Eastern/Pakistan transmission, broadcast in Urdu. Later in February the Eastern/Indian transmission broadcast some readings from *Hali* in Hindi and English. It should be noted that *Hali* was written in English and it would seem that the broadcasts required translation which Desani was in later years to vehemently oppose with regard to his own work.

In February of 1950 the BBC received a letter from J. R. Ackerley who was then the literary editor of *The Listener*. The letter seems to have accompanied a copy of *Hali* sent to Harman Grisewood who was the Controller of the Third Programme for the BBC.[44] Ackerley claims to have been 'struck' on reading *Hali* but is keen to point out to Grisewood that 'only the back-ground is Indian'. Again it would appear that if this work is to be acceptable either to a radio audience or to a literary audience, then it has to be promoted as only partially Indian. Interestingly, Desani himself would have had no problem with such a definition. When he spoke of *Hali* he was keen to promote the universality of the images and language contained within it and to draw the focus away from criticism centring on its worth as a piece of Indian writing in English. For Desani, being wholly Indian would not be compatible with universality which was what he was attempting to describe and narrate in *Hali*. In the early months of 1950 there was one further reading from Hali for the Marathi programme done by Desani.

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[43] Memo from Dorothy Baker to Louis MacNeice, 24th January, 1949, BBC W.A.C.

In June of 1950 interest in a production of *Hali* was aroused by Harmon Grisewood who sent a circular to his readers asking for their responses and asking whether or not it would be 'feasible on the air'.[45] He adds a note which reads, 'I hope you will like it. It's very short and not a 'play' in a formal theatrical sense at all'. The fullest reply he received came from E.J. King Bull (a Drama Department producer) who re-iterated some of the ambiguity brought about by the first reading of *Hali* by Tiller and Baker the previous year. He begins by claiming that it is:

> Not easy to come to a practical conclusion about this, and one must be careful about the words one uses.
> The author calls it a play. One can only suppose that he thinks of it as something to be acted and not merely as a piece of writing, particularly as it is not in any conventional form of dramatic dialogue. Otherwise why should he call it a play?[46]

Like many of *Hali*'s critics King Bull is at a loss with regard to the classification of the work. He goes on to criticise Eliot's review of the work, claiming that although he (Eliot) gives a judgement of the piece as poetry he 'says nothing about its merits, or nature, as drama'. He also considers Forster's comments, questioning his understanding and use of the term 'private mythology'. King Bull suggests that the theme of *Hali,* with its Eastern transcendental values, is familiar enough material to give it a more universal appeal, rather than requiring an investigation of private mythologies. Despite King Bull's disagreements with the promotional material used for *Hali*, his main reservations centre on the suitability of the work for broadcast. He claims that its success would depend on interpretation and 'therefore on a clear understanding by the performers or producer'. This, in itself, suggests a problem. As Desani was to comment later, he required readers with soul to interpret his works. Thus far, nobody who has read the script has understood it and it would seem likely that although Desani had given a review of the play and

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[44] He held the position of Controller from 1935-1959.

[45] Memo from Harman Grisewood to A.H.F. (identity unknown) to be sent on to C.T.P (also unknown) and Mr King Bull, dated 16th June, 1950, BBC W.A.C.

readings from it, the readers of the BBC still had little idea of just what *Hali* was about. King Bull offers no interpretation of the text - this is after all, not his job - but suggests that maybe it would be beneficial to 'treat it as poetry to be read by several voices [...] a kind of cantata in words'. Finally, King Bull suggests that Desani may have the key to any interpretation and ultimately, to the success of the radio production of *Hali*:

> [A]sk the author whether he really intended it for reading, or listening, and if the latter, will he explain it in detail for purposes of production and performance? If he says he can't "explain" it [...] then I consider the answer is that it is not suitable for broadcasting except as a poetry reading. Even in this case, where are the readers to come from who will understand it well enough to venture a reading?

As *Hali*, in its entirety, was never broadcast, it would seem that Desani could not or would not 'explain' his work. King Bull's final comment is perhaps the most telling, and one which troubled almost all of *Hali's* readers at the BBC. There is a note added to the bottom of this letter signed by Sir Malcolm Darling and it asks two questions. 'Would it gain anything by being read? Would it be possible to find the right readers?' These questions were echoed in the press in a review in *Forum* in July 1950:

> That he is a master of the language, there is no doubt, as reading the play aloud will prove. But whether the play conveys anything to anybody today or a hundred years hence is doubtful.[47]

Clearly *Hali* was proving to be problematic. It had been heralded as a fine work on its publication, receiving endorsements by Eliot and Forster (both regular contributors to the BBC), yet not one of its BBC readers was convinced of its literary merits although most agreed that it was interesting. More importantly, the readers for the BBC had a duty to provide the listening public with accessible programmes and *Hali* was proving difficult to view in this light.

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[46] Memo from E.J. King Bull to A.H.F. dated 10th July, 1950, BBC W.A.C.

[47] *Forum,* (Bombay), July 30th, 1950.

If Desani was to ever get *Hali* broadcast in its entirety there would have to be some changes. Rather than allow the producers within the BBC to 'meddle' with his work, he submitted a second radio script. The script, sent by Desani's literary agent, Hope Boutelleau from the A.P.I.A., reached Harman Grisewood in mid July 1950. The letter of thanks to Mrs. Boutelleau comments on the two versions of *Hali* circulating in the BBC. Grisewood tells Mrs. Boutelleau that:

> The play in its published form is at present being considered by our Features Department, and I have at once sent the radio adaptation to Mr. Geoffrey Bridson (Assistant Head of Features), so that he may consider whether the version you have kindly sent us will assist in our production if we decide to broadcast it.[48]

Later that day, Grisewood sent out a memo to various readers at the BBC in which he comments: 'I [...] can come to no conclusion as to whether it is an improvement for radio purposes'.[49] He ends the memo with a note that Desani might be worth attracting to radio as he is 'an interesting person'. The memo was sent to, amongst others, Terence Tiller whose reply takes into consideration his previous encounter with *Hali:*

> I find this work exactly as I found it when it was first submitted to Features some time ago. Dorothy Baker, Louis MacNeice and I, all agreed that it was nothing more than eloquent and emotional splurge- with no real value at all. In short, [...] the play was phoney (though probably unconsciously so!)
> Its suitability for radio [...] seems very dubious. I'm strongly against the whole thing.[50]

This letter from Tiller was sufficient to seal the fate of this particular version of *Hali* and the script was returned to Desani via his agent, Hope Boutelleau, at the A.P.I.A., with a note to say that after careful consideration and having been read by four separate readers, it was considered unsuitable for broadcast performance.[51]

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[48] Letter from Harman Grisewood to Mrs. Hope Boutelleau, 19th July, 1950, BBC W.A.C.

[49] Memo from Harman Grisewood to A.H.F (identity unknown) dated 19th July, 1950, BBC W.A.C.

[50] This memo is undated but its position within the BBC files would suggest that it dates from somewhere around July/August, 1950.

Despite the clear rejection, Desani was not to be deterred; Hope Boutelleau re-presented the script in October of 1951, and it was once again circulated to the readers of the BBC. This time it was John Linton, the Indian Programme Organiser, who took charge of the script. He sent it to Irene Elford in the Overseas Liaison department, for circulation. After a few weeks it was eventually returned to Miss Elford with a note from Donald McWhinnie (Drama Script Unit) that outlined the previous comments made by Tiller and King Bull and contained the comment that his department saw no reason to overturn the decision made a year earlier. From the tone of the correspondence, it would appear that it was the same or very nearly the same script that Desani submitted previously. In December of 1951, the manuscript was returned to Mrs Boutelleau with a note that the BBC had previously received a copy of the script for *Hali* and it had been rejected. Whether or not Hope Boutelleau was aware of Desani's previous attempts at publication is not clear, but the time lapse between submissions and the apparent lack of any major changes to the script, suggest that she was not.

This was to be the end of Desani's correspondence, and his relationship with the BBC which coincided, almost directly, with his departure from England in 1952. The BBC files for Desani were finally closed in 1962 and labelled 'G.V. Desani, Scriptwriter'.

Conclusion

This chapter set out to consider Desani's relationship with BBC radio in its formative years when overseas broadcasting was in its infancy and Desani's literary career was just beginning. The contributions of early Indian broadcasters looked set to pave the way for radio journalism of the type Desani was interested in, yet, the single most important work he had ever completed, proved to be the most difficult to acquire air time for. The length of time and effort expended by Desani in his attempts to secure air time, suggest that this was no run of the mill work. He had a large number of rejected scripts yet there is no correspondence or suggestion that he tried again to have his works broadcast. It is always possible that subsequent programmes, scripted by Desani, contained some of the rejected material but it is clear that none of his work was as important to him as *Hali*. During the years he attempted to gain airtime for *Hali* he did only a small amount of work for the BBC although his correspondence with it was frequent.

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[51] A.P.I.A., Authors Publishers International Agency, Bradbrook House, Kinnerton Street, London, S.W.1. Hope Boutelleau was the London Director of A.P.I.A.

Just as the previous chapter outlined the difficulty the English critics had in locating or categorising the published work, this chapter has highlighted the difficulties inherent in a work that straddles literary norms and as a result, gains the type criticism that eventually manages to locate the seemingly un-locatable, on the margins of literature, art and culture.

Of course, it is entirely possible that one of the reasons Desani's play failed to gain both positive criticism as well as airtime, is that it is not the 'great' work Desani considered it to be. Certainly the ambiguity surrounding it and the lengths Desani went to to explain his play, whilst simultaneously refusing to fully explain it, suggests that Desani felt that here was something worth promoting and protecting. However, there was, and remains, something about *Hali* that the reader cannot identify. It may be an unusual type of literature, with fine language, a 'special kind of originality'[52] and 'a grandiloquent strain of mysticism'[53] but it may also be bugaboo, emotional splurge, full of 'lush, vague, magniloquent orientalism'.[54] Whatever *Hali* is, it remains an elusive work, defying categorisation, conventional literary criticism and above all, it defies and defeats the critics. There is almost no criticism on *Hali* that was not written in the years during and just after its publication. This chapter did not set out to interpret *Hali* but rather to explore the mystery surrounding the work. The more unorthodox approach of analysing the text within the context of the BBC material has allowed for an exploration of *Hali* in both literary terms and as a journalistic enterprise.

Ultimately, both this chapter and the preceding one reveal that *Hali* was a bold creative experiment by Desani, which to some extent failed. He considered *Hali* to be his greatest work to date, far superior to *Hatterr*. He wanted success and he was, on the whole, denied it. Whilst it appears that he was willing to accept Eliot and Forster's comments as positive criticism, when these are combined with the wealth of similarly worded criticism and the frequent references by other critics to Eliot and Forster's ambiguous criticism, what emerges in *Hali* is a work that was and still is difficult to categorise, and even more difficult to understand.

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[52] *Manchester Guardian*, March 10th, 1950.

[53] *Liverpool Daily Post*, March 1950, from a review by Sydney Jeffery.

[54] Terence Tiller.

Chapter Seven

The Patter of Hatterr

A man's choice, Missbetty, is conditioned by his past: his experience. That's true of his words too. I dare you, there are three *other* ways of saying "Aspirin." "Corpse-reviver," "C_6 H_4 $OCOCH_3$ CO_2 H" and "Acetyl-Salicylic compound." To one, M. P. stands for a *Member of Parliament*. To another, it might mean *major parasite*. Depends on his experience.[1]

We must have more literary chow-chows [...]. Shakespeare, literature, Mr. Shelley's heart, flowers and other beauties is what I live for. You might be aware, in about the year 1639, in Holland, as much as 4,203 guilders were paid for a single tulip! [...] Mr. Matthew Arnold rightly says, I am a true scholar gipsy.[2]

I had a motion against you in the Society's Literary Section reading as follows: '*Resolved* the author reprehensibly introduces the authentic name "Sadanand" as "*Always-Happy*" and also an authentic Indian name "Hiramanek" as "*Diamonds and Rubies*". Respectfully submitted, these transmutations *cannot* be Hindu names. This is mocking'. Voices were raised and strong emotion expressed. I appealed for calm and postponement. Eventually, Prof. C., non-member, at our urgent approach for his specialist opinion, sent the following memo: 'Consider the name "Jawaharlal Nehru". It is, literally, "*Jewellery Ruby Canal* or *River*:' His father "Motilal Nehru" would be "*Pearl Ruby Canal* or *River*." "Mahatma Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi" is "*Great-Soul Fascination-Slave Action-moon Grocer*," and "Raja Krishna Hutheesingh" "*Governor* or *Ruler Dark Obstinate-lion*". These are all Hindu names and are correctly translated into English'. The Society yields to you. I concur. Apt to add, Hindu people are *poetic*, hence the above phenomenon is fully explained. It is my view that the more in this style the better. Life is unpoetic, dull and without lustre, least to bewail.[3]

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[1] G.V. Desani, *All About H. Hatterr,* (London: The Saturn Press, 1949), p. 6. It should be noted that the chemical formula only appears in the 1948 and 1949 editions.

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 221, as Banerrji tries to persuade Hatterr that they are both literary men.

[3] G.V. Desani, *All About H. Hatterr,* (New York: McPherson and Co., 1986), p. 312. This quotation comes from the additional chapter 'With Iron Hand, I Defend You, Mr. H. Hatterr, Gentlemen!' (Author's italics).

This chapter sets out to explore the relationship between language and character development within *All About H. Hatterr.* It considers the work of the *bricoleur* who gathers, sorts, uses and abuses items or elements of culture and language in what he hopes will be a positive move towards the creation of a sense of autonomy. As such, language and character development become inextricably linked by the forces within, and indeed without, a given culture, or given cultures, that present the greatest opportunities for exploration of time (now and then), place (here and there) and the self (in direct opposition to the other). This chapter will also consider the main characters in the light of their magpie tendencies to gather and re-use, and frequently abuse, anything they encounter, from language to experience. Ultimately, this chapter seeks to explore the aspects of appropriation and utilisation that can and indeed may have to be employed in order to create a sense of order from a somewhat chaotic series of experiences and encounters in a variety of places, times and cultures.

The first section considers the work of Lévi-Strauss on the *bricoleur* and *bricolage* will be considered as a valuable tool for investigating the attributes, limitations and potential for Lévi-Strauss's definition of the *bricoleur*. It will also consider the potentialities of *bricolage* for the character who borrows or steals from a diverse referential framework in order to consolidate a sense of identity in a location that offers a challenge to identity on grounds of belonging.

The second section considers the figure of the *bricoleur*. This section also considers the way in which Desani introduces a cast of characters who, despite their obviously fraudulent intentions, create a type of reality and life which is familiar to Hatterr and which he considers to be life affirming. It also explores Hatterr as part of a tradition of *bricoleurs*.

The third section considers Hatterr as *bricoleur* and debates the ways in which he chooses to abstract and create order from his experiences. This section also sets the tone for the argument in the final section that negotiates the differences (and indeed the similarities) between Banerrji and Hatterr as they both attempt to create a persuasive dialogue employing a diverse range of cultural *bricolage*. As such, it becomes clear that although Banerrji and Hatterr appear to occupy different ends of the *bricoleur* spectrum, with Hatterr as a prime example of good and innovative use of *bricolage* and Banerrji as superficially persuasive, but actually considerably less innovative, both emerge as men seeking to order the chaos of the world around them, in any way they can, whilst providing the reader with revelatory details of themselves as multidimensional characters.

Section 1

In any discussion on language in *All About H. Hatterr* it becomes evident that Hatterr draws his particular choice and application of language from a set of images and experiences that are unique and dynamic, and as such they reveal important indicators of personality, identity and above all, the world in which he lives and the way in which he interprets this world. In order to be able to explore the dynamics of this vast range of collected material it may be useful to turn to the work on *bricolage* of Claude Lévi-Strauss.[4]

Within the field of literature structures and systems provide a way of negotiating the discrepancies that lie between reality and interpretation, that is, the way in which images, systems, symbols and language are used to provide a way of negotiating some of the more indicative and exploratory facets of culture. Once a structure or system is revealed to be inconsistent, as is the case of Hatterr and Banerrji's use and abuse of literary, medical, philosophical and psychoanalytical information and references, then an alternative mode of inquiry that seeks out some sort of truth within the selection process may need to be developed.

If the images, or elements as Lévi-Strauss refers to them, that are gathered, explored and used within the narrative appear to lack cohesion, then it will become necessary to consider not only the elements themselves, but the mode of extraction and abstraction that represents the lived experience of the narrator himself or herself. However, if (and when) the structures are revealed as inconsistent, there are some choices to be made.[5] The structures can be abandoned and the creation and establishment of a new framework can be attempted. This new framework would, ideally be unflawed. This is clearly an almost impossible task as it would necessitate the denial of the possibility of any interpretation and would insist that all signs, structures and systems be fixed and immutable. Whilst this choice is an impossible one, it is interesting to remember that Desani himself was interested in the possibility of creating a text that dramatically reduces the scope for interpretation and misinterpretation. His repeated revisions of *Hatterr* suggest that although he was aware of the impossibility of creating such a text, he was interested in the possibility of attempting such a project.[6]

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[4] Claude Lévi-Strauss, *The Savage Mind,* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1966).

[5] The choices outlined in the following discussion are based on those drawn by Claude Lévi-Strauss in 'The Science of the Concrete', *The Savage Mind,* (1966), pp. 1-33.

The second choice is Lévi-Strauss's choice and is one that recognises the flawed nature of the system or structure and embraces and utilises the structure as it is, tapping into the potential for subversion that is inherent in a system that is fundamentally flawed. He acknowledges that if such a structure is to be used well, then there may have to be some adjustments in order to renegotiate the truth values the system purports to represent or display. In order to be able to utilise this flawed system it will be necessary to acknowledge that although there is a central idea that holds everything in place (in *Hatterr* this might be the quest for knowledge/autonomy/sense of self), the centre itself may be flawed. Indeed, even if it is not, its relationship with what exists on the margins is ever changing, suggesting that a fluidity or ambiguity of meaning is necessary for the centre to maintain its position. Thus, even if the centre could be considered to be unflawed, its ambiguity and fluidity render it unstable.

This process of choosing to keep the flawed system and to develop it into a personally reworked system is *bricolage*. The *bricoleur* places little emphasis on the stability of any system, preferring instead to use or abuse its inherent flawedness as an enabling device to secure a particular and personal sense of meaning. It is important to remember that this is not laziness on behalf of the *bricoleur*. He can not, and does not simply ignore any particular system, but on closer inspection finds that the systems he can recognise do not reflect his personal sense of culture, location, history or language. As such, a newer, more dynamic structure will have to be created and established. Thus, the *bricoleur* takes what he or she wants from the world around him/her and attempts to create a patchwork whole from the fragments that compose his/her life. What emerges may appear to be a random selection of materials, signs, emblems and linguistic devices, but the order, however unorthodox, is profoundly indicative of the personal experience of the narrator or *bricoleur*. This section aims to explore the world of the *bricoleur* within *All About H. Hatterr* in the light of Lévi-Strauss's work on the subject.

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[6] This idea is explored more fully in the chapters concerning revision.

In the first chapter of *The Savage Mind* Lévi-Strauss begins his discussion by acknowledging that there are different types of intellect and knowledge and he highlights what now seems commonplace in current thinking regarding what were considered to be less well-developed countries; the fact that difference is not indicative of inferiority with regard to language. Lévi-Strauss points out that although the natives do not display the same type of intellect as their Western chroniclers, the knowledge they possess is vital to their survival and should therefore be regarded as evidence of what he terms 'comparable intellectual application'.[7] Essentially, what Lévi-Strauss suggests is that differences in languages, their structures, their frames of reference and their applications - contrary to the then contemporary beliefs - are not indicative of a lack within its speakers. He sets out, here, to explore the dynamics of the relationship between language and its speakers and the world in which they live. For him, language is intrinsic to survival, and the need, for example, to identify particular plants and animals is vital to particular groups of people, whereas reading and writing are not.[8] Language identifies and articulates a particular type of order - albeit an order which eluded or confused Western chroniclers for some time. This order is a manifestation of a particular and profoundly personal inflection of the individual's understanding of the world around him or her. With reference to this order, Lévi-Strauss suggests that the 'thought we call primitive is founded on this demand for order'.[9] He also suggests, quite rightly that any 'classification is superior to chaos and even a classification at the level of sensible properties is a step towards rational ordering'.[10] Clearly then, the particular choice and application of language used by anyone become an indicator of more than intellect, revealing incisive details of personal interpretations of culture and society in a given place at a given time which draw from past, present and future.

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[7] Claude Lévi-Strauss, (1966), p. 3. It should be noted that the 'natives' Lévi-Strauss is discussing come from a variety of countries and the term becomes a somewhat generic one for him within this work.

[8] This is a somewhat simplistic/rudimentary outline of Lévi-Strauss's argument but one which highlights his understanding and exploration of knowledge in this particular context.

[9] Lévi-Strauss, (1966), p. 10.

[10] *Ibid.*, p. 15.

Lévi-Strauss, in an attempt at defining the ways in which language develops through appropriation and a certain level of both instinctive and creative application, introduces the image of the *bricoleur* who gathers, magpie fashion, from everywhere and everyone around himself and attempts, with varying degrees of success, to use the parts in order to create a personally-developed whole. Lévi-Strauss describes this apparently hotchpotch accumulation of material as an attempt at creating a 'heterogeneous repertoire',[11] a collection of useful and universal items. He gives a number of definitions of the *bricoleur*:

> In its old sense the verb 'bricoler' applied to ball games and billiards, to hunting, shooting and riding. It was however always used with reference to some extraneous movement: a ball rebounding, a dog straying or a horse swerving from its direct course to avoid an obstacle. [...] in our own time the 'bricoleur' is still someone who works with his hands and uses devious means compared to those of a craftsman.[12]

His suggestion that the *bricoleur* works within the realms of the devious or duplicitous is an interesting concept. Clearly, for Lévi-Strauss, there exists the possibility that the *bricoleur* is abusing or at the very least, subverting the knowledge he has gained, in order to create an alternative narrative. This is profoundly problematic as it depends upon the ability to define the true intention and meaning of the words and symbols the *bricoleur* selects as representative of the here and now of his or her particular experience. Contrary to Lévi-Strauss's concerns regarding the limits of the *bricoleur*, it would seem possible that the suggested deviousness of the *bricoleur* creates a space within which truth, meaning and clarity become obscured by a personally worked and re-worked attempt at distortion and subversion. It is this personal reworking that is so important. If the *bricoleur* is to create meaning through a patchwork of emblems, language, images and symbols then it would seem possible to suggest that his craft lies in his ability to sew the patchwork into a coherent whole that both represents and acknowledges the fragments *and* the unity within his life. Subversion and distortion become intrinsic to this reworking of any original or traditional meaning and become one of the more incisive indicators of where a character has been, physically, emotionally, spiritually and psychologically.

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[11] *Ibid.*, p. 17.

[12] *Ibid.*, pp. 16-17. Lévi-Strauss's translators, George Weidenfield and Nicholson Ltd, add a footnote here which reads: 'The *bricoleur* has no precise equivalent in English. He is a man who undertakes odd jobs and is a Jack of all trades or a kind of professional do-it-yourself man, but [...]he is a different standing from [...] the English odd job man or handyman'.

Lévi-Strauss goes on to say that the results from the *bricoleur*'s selective gleaning can produce 'brilliant unforeseen results on the intellectual plane'[13] providing insights into culture, history and tradition that are otherwise difficult to locate and identify. It is possible to suggest, therefore, that Lévi-Strauss, whilst acknowledging the deviousness that may be inherent within the work of the *bricoleur*, appreciates the potential it possesses for exploring history, culture, language and experience in a new, more dynamic way. However, it should be remembered that although Lévi-Strauss is willing to embrace the creativity of the *bricoleur*, he is extremely cautious with regard to the potential for boundless exploration. On a number of occasions he remarks on what he considers to be the obvious limitations to the work of the *bricoleur*, claiming that mythical thought which he aligns with *bricolage*, may be extensive but is limited as the *bricoleur* only has his own personally developed 'heterogeneous repertoire' to fall back on.[14] Contrary to Lévi-Strauss' emphasis on the limitations of *bricolage* this chapter sets out to discuss the boundless possibilities of the work and application of the *bricoleur* as well as the number of levels at which the he works.

Lévi-Strauss is not completely satisfied with the work of the *bricoleur* and is not persuaded that he is always successful in accomplishing his objective which is to create order from the seemingly chaotic world around him. As he continues to explore the aspects of the *bricoleur* he compares his art with that of the engineer. He claims that the engineer works by means of concepts and the *bricoleur* by means of signs, suggesting that the binaries that separate the two are concrete and abstract respectively. However clear Lévi-Strauss is with regard to the differences between the two types of person, it is considerably less clear today. It would seem fair to suggest that neither type of man is able to exist exclusively in either the concrete or the abstract and that a large amount of borrowing from each category will be the only way to create and use a language that is dynamic; that continues to evolve and above all that is an adequate tool for investigating the here and now. Despite the somewhat obvious flaws in Lévi-Strauss's discussion of the differences (apparently irreconcilable) between the *bricoleur* and the engineer, it is an interesting analogy in as much as it suggests that *bricolage* is mythopoetic and thus the *bricoleur* becomes a mythopoetic figure creating and using whatever is at hand in order to create and perpetuate a sense of autonomy. This autonomy is new and dynamic, and perhaps, above all, indicative of his particular and personal interpretation of the world around him. However, Lévi-Strauss continues to suggest that there are limits to the creativity of the *bricoleur*:

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[13] *Ibid.*, p. 17.
[14] *Ibid.*, p. 17.

> The '*bricoleur*' is adept at performing a large number of diverse tasks; but unlike the engineer, he does not subordinate each of them to the availability of raw materials and tools conceived and procured for the purpose of the project. His universe of instruments is closed and the rules of his game are always to make do with 'whatever is at hand', that is to say with a set of tools and materials which is always finite and is also heterogeneous because what it contains bears no relation to the current project,[...]. [T]he elements are collected or retained on the principle that 'they may come in handy'.[15]

It would seem that Lévi-Strauss considers that quantity is not a suitable replacement for quality where language is concerned. However, it is his mention of the possibility that what has been collected bears no relation to the project in hand but may come in handy some time, that is of some significance here.

Lévi-Strauss suggests that 'the engineer questions the universe, while the *bricoleur* addresses himself to a collection of oddments left over from human endeavours, --- only a sub-set of the culture'.[16] Whilst he considers this as a potentially limiting and negative experience, it is clear that within the field of postcolonial writing, this apparently random selection and collection of material becomes a dynamic tool in the exploration and the narration of cultural experience, of issues of belonging, alienation, central and marginal positions and the way in which history is absorbed and used as a way of inspecting the present. It highlights and separates out the important aspects of culture and experience as viewed by the individual.

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[15] *Ibid.*, p. 18.

[16] *Ibid.*, p. 19.

Whilst Lévi-Strauss continues to suggest that the difference between the engineer and the *bricoleur* is not absolute, he contends that it is a real one, claiming that the engineer is perpetually engaged in a project of looking beyond the here and now, trying to make his way out of the 'constraints imposed by a particular state of civilization'[17] whilst the *bricoleur*, he claims, 'by necessity always remains within them'. It is the suggestion that the *bricoleur* is bound by restraints that is most problematic in Lévi-Strauss's argument and this chapter sets out to demonstrate both the limits of the *bricoleur* as well as the infinite possibilities inherent in an exploration of the materials selected and used by the *bricoleur* type of character that is H. Hatterr. As such this chapter will also demonstrate the creativity and flexibility inherent in the particular type of composite language within *All About H. Hatterr.*

Section 2

With reference to *All About H. Hatterr,* the choice of language Hatterr uses reflects his mixed parentage, his relocation to England, his choice of friends in Banerrji who is a lover of all things European, and his experience at the hands of his wife and the various gurus and *sadhus* he encounters. He requires a language that will refer to his past, to his cultural relocations, and forwards to the newly reinvented past as part of the present. He needs to articulate his personal experience drawing from a frame of reference that is uniquely his own, one that pays homage to his particular understanding of and investment in the language and culture he is surrounded by. For Hatterr, there are some words which are uniquely derived from a combination of experience itself and the need to articulate his emotional response to the experience. As such, language for H. Hatterr becomes a finely balanced mixture of the spontaneous and the philosophical.

A fine example of this occurs as Hatterr finally realises that the Sage of the Wilderness is a charlatan and he experiences 'extreme spur-of-the-moment dejection'.[18]

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[17] *Ibid.*, p.19.

[18] This occurs as Hatterr is told that the 'Sage' and his 'disciple' are second-hand clothing merchants who have made their living from duping gullible seekers of wisdom who willingly part with their clothing at the

The intensity of the emotion, combined with the feelings of foolishness he suffers after his encounter with the Sage, become a single expression, joined by hyphens, injecting emotional reaction with physical response to create a linguistic expression of some force. Only a combination of linguistic and syntactical devices is able to define adequately and appropriately the response of Hatterr. The dejection experienced by Hatterr is spontaneous and requires a mode of description that sets this experience apart from other moments of dejection. For example, Hatterr is aware, throughout all his experiences, of the dejection he feels as a result of his abandonment by his parents. It is a constant emotion underpinning, and ultimately prescribing much of his experience and many of his relationships, especially with women. His wistful 'I wished I knew where my poor old mum was!' echoes throughout the novel as a stark contrast to the spur-of-the-moment dejection experienced in the incident above. It is clear, then, that Hatterr's choice of language is not random, nor is it chaotic in intention or articulation. It may appear to be disorganised, haphazard and misapplied but his intention is to create an order that is representative of both the profundity of dualities within his composite life, embracing two cultures, neither very successfully, being married but separated, having Banerrji as a friend who loves him but places him in danger with each new adventure, desiring wisdom and guidance and receiving only insults and false, often detrimental advice, and of the order he is seeking that will give his life meaning and direction.

In an article by Haydn Williams entitled 'Hatterr and Bazza: Post-Colonial Picaros', Williams describes Hatterr as the most recent in a long line of comic anti-heroes.[19] His article focuses on Barry Humphries's alter ego Barry McKenzie 'the urban Australian Ocker'[20] who drinks too much, vomits profusely, enjoys 'leering at Sheilahs, watching cricket, deriding all foreigners and migrants (including the loved-hated 'pommy-bastard' British)'.[21] Williams points out that McKenzie is a character created from an amalgam of Australian types as depicted in both Australian and British literature and as such

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Sage's command. Hatterr is appalled by his own foolishness in the face of the duplicitous wisdom of the Sage and his disciple.

[19] Haydn Williams, 'Hatterr and Bazza: Post-Colonial Picaros', *Commonwealth Review,* Vol. 2, (1-2), (New Delhi: 1990/91), pp. 204-211.

[20] *Ibid.*, p. 204.

[21] *Ibid.*, p. 205.

embodies a number of easily identifiable yet grossly caricatured traits of a type of person. As the intention with Barry Humphries's character (and also that of Desani's protagonist) is one of comedy, the reader accepts that the characters are potentially ludicrously over-drawn, as it were, yet it is difficult to ignore the particular choice of traits that have been selected, re-worked and intensified. Williams suggests that there is something unique about Humphries's Bazza who is a creation, as he claims, 'stripped of glory by being presented as continually and unashamedly crude and gloriously ignorant. [...] [A] walking and talking encyclopedia of racial and sexual prejudice'.[22] Although Williams does not suggest that these characteristics belong to Hatterr, it is clear that Hatterr is bound together by a gross mistrust of women and an ambiguous and profoundly fragile love-hate relationship with the English. Hatterr is not ignorant nor is he crude, yet there is something about his seeming gullibility in the hands of those he seeks wisdom from, that suggests his knowledge, and in particular his extraordinary method of processing the information he gains about humanity (himself included), is somewhat crude. He seldom listens to advice, even from his friend and erstwhile mentor Banerrji. Once separated from the seemingly wise figure of Banerrji, Hatterr seldom remembers the advice he has been given. Indeed, it sometimes appears as if Banerrji is in many ways responsible for Hatterr's lack of success in finding money, love and wisdom. Every new experience is prompted by a suggestion by Banerrji which compels Hatterr onto his next quest. Indeed, Banerrji frames each of Hatterr's quests, beginning and ending each encounter. Hatterr truly believes in Banerrji's seemingly dubious wisdom, seldom doubting him. As such, the information gained from his encounters with Banerrji remains unchallenged even when it proves to be flawed advice. The two men argue on a number of occasions. As Banerrji attempts to persuade Hatterr to meet the Smythes Hatterr shows an unusual reluctance to join in with Banerrji's plans for him:

> Banerrji, I am disappointed. You forget the chalk-line, man. I am a refined feller. I have ideals. Been a member of the Club. Have drunk to royalty in the company of sahibs. [...] A feller like me cannot be the social equal of impresarios and showwomen!
> --- Not their kind.
> Be as it may, I advise you, nevertheless, to make hay while the sun shines.

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[22] *Ibid.*, p. 205.

Damme, Banerrji, man, I am not their class, that's all![23]

Hatterr's resistance is not unusual but his objections are. This may be the only time when Hatterr considers himself to be of a particular status within society. However, he agrees to Banerrji's suggestion which becomes a pivotal experience within his quest for autonomy, and one that will haunt him and influence all other encounters. Ultimately, as Hatterr decides that all experiences are part of life and that 'Life is Contrast' perhaps Banerrji's advice, right or wrong, instructive or destructive, is all part of the *bricolage* that is the life of H. Hatterr.

Williams suggests that Bazza lives up to a prototype invented by the Australians themselves, and to a large extent this is what Hatterr is, a character created through contact with the West who is physically half and half, who has lived in both England and India, whose education is a mixture of European and Indian and whose contact with the English is narrated as a series of interactions with characters who themselves represent a highly caricatured and stylised image of the Englishman.[24] Not only is Hatterr a *bricoleur* but is, in fact, also *bricolage*, a manifestation of an accumulation of aspects of the world around him. As such, his character becomes, as Desani intended, an Everyman, invested with a gift for comedy that aims to create a sense of order within the seeming chaos of day to day life.

Williams pinpoints and defines exactly the nature of the comedy at work here (in both Humphries's and Desani's work) that draws on eccentricities, stereotypes, exaggeration and ridicule but also manages to create characters that are wholly believable. Williams compares Desani and Humphries thus:

> Humphries and Desani are linguistic comedians. Desani is the master of deliberate bathos and cleverly collates literary English with slang and with comic-sounding direct translation from Indian languages into English. [...] Desani revels in puns: a body borne to the grave is heralded with the cry 'Coming up, one corpus!' Knickers are referred to archly as 'indecent, Grecian reach-me-downs'.[25]

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[23] *Hatterr,* (1949), p. 49.

[24] See for example, Bill and Rosie Smythe, Pius Prigg Pilliwinks, Betty Bloomsbohemia and even Banerrji who Williams accurately describes as speaking 'almost entirely via quotations from English literature plus clichés'. Williams, (1990/91), p. 208.

[25] Williams, (1990/1), p. 208.

For Williams, the skill of both writers lies in their ability to create unusual yet wholly familiar images of something quite ordinary. The reader recognises the various traits being exploited, thereby acknowledging an empathy for the character that derives its impulses from a shared understanding of the indicators of culture, regardless of the level of exaggeration employed by the author. This would suggest that the types of *bricolage* employed by both Hatterr and Bazza are not just random abstractions but are carefully selected items possessing some kind of universal resonance. Both of these men, Bazza and Hatterr, are *bricoleurs* of the type that Lévi-Strauss is keen to explore. They represent a complex arrangement of actual and fictitious *bricolage*. Both reveal actual, tangible information about themselves and the places they come from. Hatterr, in particular, is open about his mixed parentage, his disastrous marriage and his quest for spiritual enlightenment. However, as a counterpart to the real information received from the characters, they both embody a mythopoetic creation of projected beliefs and stereotypes that ultimately reveal as much about the reader's personality as the fictional character they are travelling with.

Section 3

Lévi-Strauss suggests that the 'elements of mythical thought --- lie somewhere between percepts and concepts'.[26] He claims that finding the dividing line between the two would be an impossible task and for the purposes of this discussion the exact dynamics of the division is largely unimportant. Clearly percepts and concepts are both valid tools for interrogating a text as well as providing a means for the characters to narrate their experience using a flimsy but nonetheless persuasive dialogue of perception and conception. This requires, as a vital ingredient, *bricolage*. In order to create and maintain a narrative that is persuasive, Hatterr draws on the factual (albeit often with a type of mythologised interpretation), the fictional, the eccentric, the emblematic and the stereotypical, abstracting and using either the entire image or one of its components to create a dialogue that is expressive of the here and now of his existence or experience. Ultimately he is seeking to create a symbiotic and dynamic narrative that will achieve some form of unity. The nature of the combination of the vital ingredients of the *bricolage* is of utmost importance, too much subversion in the choice and abstraction will create a dialogue that moves into the realms of fantasy, whilst too much realism in the images selected would remove the possibility of an account that acknowledges and indulges the importance of imaginative interpretation. Perhaps one of the finest examples of this occurs as Hatterr, masquerading as Baw Saw (the uninitiated) and Always-Happy (a fake guru), attack a rival 'guru' in order to force him to leave them to their extortion:

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[26] Lévi-Strauss, (1966), p. 18.

> At first, the feller was inclined to be sleepy, and refused to part company with the sport of his dreams.
> However, he got a sound wallop from my senior partner.
> Thereupon, this dwarf feller, woke up to the situation, with the agility of a streak of lightening!
> Such an ugly ants-in-the-pants reaction!
> A dead dynamo, in sudden post mortem posthumous motion![27]

The image of the dwarf takes on a Walt Disney quality with the mention of him being sleepy in the first paragraph here.[28] The use of the hyphens suggests a motion and agility that seems to be at odds with the original description of the man, adding fluidity to the description. The paradox of a 'dead dynamo' invokes a surprise in the reader mirroring that of Hatterr and his accomplices here. The over-use of clichés is an effective way of expressing Hatterr's own amazement at the reaction of the 'dwarf feller'. It is almost as if the shock of the experience defies a more reasoned and measured response and the only images and language that spring to mind are constructed from these clichés and linguistic expressions of the vivid images imprinted onto Hatterr's mind. The diversity of the images compounded and expanded in Hatterr's account reveals much of his own cultural and linguistic heritage as it combines and finds a voice in his narrative.

In moments of such profound uncertainty, as seen in the example above, the patter he delivers is symptomatic, in equal measure, of both the certainties and the fissures within his life. As such, his cultural mobility requires a language that is, in itself, mobile, able to move freely from one genre to another, from one language to another and from one place to another. The movements themselves, the shifts in tone, in subject matter and in delivery, all illustrate the transient nature of the character of H. Hatterr.

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[27] *Hatterr*, (1949), p. 112.
[28] Walt Disney's screen version of *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* was first shown in 1937. It should be noted that it was Disney who gave names to the dwarfs.

At this point it may be useful to consult some of the secondary material that concerns itself with Desani's only novel. In an essay published in 1985 D. J. Enright considers the English selected and spoken by Hatterr, and whilst not mentioning *bricolage* as such, he suggests that the diversity within the patter that Hatterr creates is a direct result of his cultural mobility, being both Indian and European, babu and sahib.[29] The language emerging from this dual contact is a unique interpretation of his ability (or inability in some cases) to understand his particular environment at a given time. In the opening chapter of *Hatterr* he describes his accommodation thus:

> I was sitting in my humble belle-vue-no-view, cul-de-sack-the-tenant, a land-lady's Up-and-do-'em opportunity apartment-joint in India.[30]

Later on he describes Always-Happy's preparations to enter the town as the new 'holy one':

> Always-Happy was dressed up for the occasion. Altogether, he had a thicker coat of ash than usual; and he paid a good deal of attention to the coiffeur. He rubbed a handful of ash into the mop, clotted up the hair good and proper, gave the mass a sloping pagoda foundation, a pyramid shape, a hill-top illusion!
> I treated the ebony optic with a spot of ash-powder myself. And - the kid's How now Brown Cow? frolic instinct! - he made me touch up the eye-lashes too, [...] as any Paris-London-Hollywood society lady might![31]

Both quotations reveal Hatterr's extraordinary library of references. The images created, whilst often unusual, are representative of a dynamic combination of his here and now and of his past and his present which requires a uniquely blended language which manages to create an impression of wholeness.

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[29] D.J. Enright, *A Mania for Sentences,* (Boston: David R. Godine Publisher, 1985), pp. 180-184.

[30] *Hatterr*, (1949), p. 19.

[31] *Ibid.*, p. 115.

In an article published in 1978 by Peter Goers[32] there is a discussion of the language in *All About H. Hatterr* in which Goers discusses Desani's creative use of language as a type of whole language.[33] He insists that the apparent chaos of Hatterr's narrative demands a language that possesses the potential of ordering experience, dialogue and thought. Goers claims whole language is 'a wondrous, deathless, triumphant deity', which provides a way of negotiating and narrating experience in a way that is truly organic and dynamic. For Hatterr, the complex amalgam of experiences and characters he encounters becomes the embodiment of the inner turmoil of his life thus far. Whilst Goers's claim that Desani uses a type of whole language is a reasonable suggestion, it would seem pertinent to suggest that the language, by dint of its creation from *bricolage*, is less whole than it would, on first appearances, seem to be. The language itself may not be whole language, but the effect created by Hatterr's particular selection and arrangement of the linguistic devices available to him, creates a type of whole. Whether or not this is what Goers means is debatable. What is more certain is that Hatterr is seeking some kind of wholeness.

He sets out on a quest for enlightenment, seeking spiritual, emotional and physical reassurances, all of which have become necessary as a direct result of his experiences to date. He has little sense of family due to the early separation from his parents. His education has been a hotchpotch of English ideas taught to him whilst at the Missionary School. He has also been thwarted in his attempts to create a family of his own as his wife leaves him and, to his great chagrin, fails to provide him with any children. His move to England has left him alienated and despondent in the one place he had felt would be home to him.[34] Having attempted to create a type of order through physical relocation to England and having failed, he turns to India and to a uniquely blended language, viewing it as the most powerful weapon against dislocation and lack of autonomy. If he can write himself into existence, he may begin the process of ordering his life. Words and images become his tools for survival. However, it is clear that no ordinary language will suffice in his attempts at creating something both new and representative of his particular position within the world he inhabits. The language required will have to be extraordinary. As such, his dialogue reveals profound insights into the world of H. Hatterr. The vital ingredients he draws on in order to create a language reveal the particular system of chaos and order Hatterr considers to be representative of his life.

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[32] Peter Goers, 'Kink's English: Whole Language And G.V. Desani's *All About H. Hatterr', New-Literature-Review,* 1978: 4, pp. 30-40.

[33] This suggestion first appears in Anthony Burgess's Introduction to The Bodley Head, 1970 edition of *All About H. Hatterr.*

[34] Hatterr believed England would feel like home, not only as a result of his father being English, but more importantly for him, it was the home of his surrogate parent 'Rev the Head's' mother and father.

The way in which he sorts and prioritises some aspects of his world becomes indicative of both the type of chaos he is attempting to order, and the nature of the order he is seeking to impose on his life. Just as a cook selects, weighs and blends the ingredients of a recipe to create a perfectly balanced and appetising dish that pays homage both to the individual ingredients and to the dish as a whole, so too does Hatterr as he selects and discards linguistic terms and tricks to create a unique narrative. He needs to order it in a particular way that will pay great attention to the details of both his narrative and his life. The ways in which Hatterr organises his personal *bricolage* is best examined hand in hand with an analysis of the way in which his best friend Banerrji presents himself as a type of *bricoleur*.

Section 4

One area of Hatterr's life that requires minute attention to detail is his relationship with Banerrji. The two men are both student and mentor to each other. Whilst it would appear that Hatterr is eternally the student of Banerrji, it becomes clear that Banerrji's character is measured in relation to his ability or inability to 'control' Hatterr. As a controller he exercises restrictions on Hatterr's libido as he cautions him against serious involvement with both the *dhobin* and with Rosie Smythe. He denies him the freedom to spend his money on alcohol claiming that he has a 'moral responsibility to understand' Hatterr.[35] Although this sentiment is expressed as a direct result of Hatterr spending too much time and money in Mr Ginger's pub, it is just one of a number of occasions when Banerrji chastises Hatterr for his moral laxness. On the other hand, it becomes clear that Banerrji is dependent on Hatterr's submission to him if he is to maintain his role in the relationship as mentor and saviour. His ability to influence Hatterr requires a level of gullibility in Hatterr. Just as the reader is unsure of the true validity of many of the quotes and anecdotes Banerrji beguiles Hatterr with, so too is Hatterr. However, unlike the reader, Hatterr trusts Banerrji to be right. Although the two frequently argue, Hatterr will always believe that Banerrji has his best interests at heart. One of the main reasons for this is that Banerrji seeks order in Hatterr's life where there appears to be none. As Hatterr insists that he has not been drinking, despite Banerrji spotting him at Mr. Ginger's, Banerrji argues thus:

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[35] *Hatterr*, (1949), p. 136.

> "If you must be a friend of sinners and publicans, [...] at least, as your best friend, I must seek a promise from you.
> That, for my sake, you will kindly not see Mr. Ginger, or indulge in any drinking fiddle-de-de, to-day, to-morrow, or the day after. That's all."[36]

His intention is to rescue him from moral degradation, at least pointing him in the direction of the moral high-ground, and even if Hatterr never aspires to the particular type of morality that Banerrji subscribes to, the two men have a shared understanding of what is right and wrong (if only in each other). It does not matter that Hatterr will never be like Banerrji, it matters only that Banerrji appears to impose some kind of order on the haphazard, unregulated life of H. Hatterr. For Hatterr, his relationship with Banerrji takes priority over any other, even that of his wife. Indeed, a number of Hatterr and Banerrji's more serious discussions focus on Hatterr's relationship with his wife.[37] His debates with Banerrji frame and enable each new experiences for Hatterr. When things go wrong, Banerrji rescues him; when he is downcast, Banerrji inspires him. Hatterr places his relationship with Banerrji above all things and it is therefore not surprising that some of the most vivid examples of what would appear to be the *bricoleur* at work occur in Hatterr's account of Banerrji's speeches. He equips Banerrji with a vast range of linguistic tools, gleaned from encounters with Indian life, culture and language, with English literature, with philosophy, psychology, religion, psychoanalysis and also, to a certain extent, with the chaos of Hatterr's life. Whilst it is clear that the words belong to Banerrji, it is nonetheless vital to remember that the words are transcribed by Hatterr and given meaning and force as they are located within the framework of Hatterr's own account. There are numerous examples of Banerrji's speeches and this is just one:

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[36] *Ibid.*, p. 218.

> Countryside. Give me country, every time. There is poetry and song in the countryside to-day, because the rains are coming! [...] Birds are there, too. They are brand-new birds of twelve-months' growing, as Mr. Thomas Hardy rightly says. Tulips are opening. The marigolds are beautiful. [...] The countryside under the starry cope, is charming now. As Miss Jane Austen states, The garden is quite a love. God wot, a garden is a lovesome thing, the bard T. E. Brown cordially concurs.[38]

At this particular moment Hatterr requires affirmation of the validity of his quest and Banerrji provides it, using a range of linguistic and literary tools that, in the process of reassuring Hatterr, reveal Banerrji's attempts at locating and maintaining Hatterr's position of Everyman. For both men, the idea of Hatterr as Everyman, weak, vulnerable, gullible, yet rebellious, defiant, subversive and strong, has to be maintained if either man is to emerge from the apparent chaos of day to day life with any dignity at all. It is Banerrji's job to ensure that Hatterr occupies this role with the minimum amount of suffering. As such, Banerrji requires a rhetoric that draws on images that are simultaneously universal and defiantly unique. This need to abstract unique meanings from experience requires the art of the *bricoleur* who can abstract, subvert and utilise a seemingly random and chaotic array of images that would appear to defy any kind of categorisation, and indeed, on first glance, to negate the possibility of locating meaning in such an apparently random selection of abstract images and words. Whilst it would appear that Banerrji is such a *bricoleur*, a close inspection of his methods reveals him to be a less persuasive, yet no less determined *bricoleur* than his friend and student, H. Hatterr.

By combining Shakespeare, Carlyle, Freud, Jung, Indian religious texts, the Bible, Roman and Greek mythology, myth, apocryphal tales and his unique interpretation of some aspects of English (and Indian) life, Banerrji attempts to gather together a cohesive and logical ethos. He needs to persuade Hatterr that life is worth pursuing at all costs and

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[37] Whilst the conversations themselves are serious at heart, the somewhat jocular manner that Hatterr uses to discuss his relationship with his wife presents itself as a defiant cover for the sadness he feels.

[38] *Hatterr*, (1949), pp. 219-220.

his ability to draw from such a range of experiential sources should provide him with an impressive array of tools with which to work. Above all, he seeks some form of logic in his argument, even in the seemingly random selection of images. For example:

> *Please*! Mr. Coleridge rightly implies, a mere dwarf on a giant's shoulder often sees more than his honour himself. I cannot say, Mr. H. Hatterr, that I approve of your sense of humour. Accidents and death, excuse me, are extremely serious events, and Exod. XXI, 12, clearly condemns your sentiment. Anyway, I am saying, now that Mrs. H. Hatterr has left you, and you are living a lonely Y.M.C.A. existence, if I may say, an actual Chelsea College, what are you going to do about it?[39]

As Banerrji refers to Coleridge, the Bible and contemporary and familiar images, he looks for support for his argument. In this particular instance Hatterr's wife has left him following the incident with the *dhobin*. Banerrji offers comfort to his friend in the only way he knows how, by calling on his 'heterogeneous repertoire' of selected anecdotes, images, quotes and linguistic tricks. It is at this point that the difference between Hatterr and Banerrji becomes noticeable. As potential *bricoleur*s their dynamism lies less in the level of care each man takes in his selection processes and more in the personal interpretation of the various linguistic devices they choose to employ in their individual searches for a type of truth. Banerrji abstracts from an immense cauldron of cultural and linguistic tools, piling together the ingredients into a seemingly coherent and persuasive whole. However, due to the proliferation of images compounded into a single speech, he presents himself as a character whose integrity as a *bricoleur* is perpetually challenged. It is noticeable that the two men's use of clichés in the narratives is of different proportions. As discussed earlier, Hatterr uses clichés when more imaginative language ceases for one reason or another. Banerrji, on the other hand, relies heavily on clichés as the starting point for his rhetoric. As such, it leaves him little creative space with which to introduce a more imaginative and dynamic language. The discussion that follows will outline the difference between the *bricolage* techniques of Hatterr and Banerrji and will suggest that whilst one may appear inferior, this is not the case.

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[39] *Hatterr,* (1949), pp. 46-7. The Coleridge quote appears to belong, not to Coleridge but to Bernard of Chartres (c. 1130) who actually said: 'we are like dwarfs on the shoulders of giants, so that we can see more than they, and things at a greater distance, not by virtue of any sharpness of sight on our part, or any physical distinction, but because we are carried high and raised up by their giant size'. Quote from John of Salisbury, *Metalogicon,* [1159], Bk. III. Ch. IV. Exodus XXI, 12 says 'Anyone who strikes a man and kills him shall surely be put to death'. N.I.V. the Y.M.C.A. existence is self-explanatory but the reference to Chelsea College is ambiguous. All italics are the author's own.

Lévi-Strauss suggests that the *bricoleur* gathers together elements that 'may come in handy' and it is then his job to decide when the time and place are right for drawing on these elements. Banerrji reveals himself as a character less able than Hatterr to decide on the appropriateness of the images he chooses to draw on, within a given situation. Haydn Williams's comments regarding Banerrji's heavy reliance on clichés, suggests that for Banerrji the sound of the words and the particular and unique power he personally invests in each image he selects, creates an aura of sound knowledge that is sufficient to persuade Hatterr but ultimately reveals Banerrji as a kind of charlatan figure, posing as *bricoleur*. However, this may not be detrimental to the development of Banerrji's character but may become a fascinating insight into the ways in which the two men gather, sort and utilise certain aspects of culture and language. Whilst Banerrji has gathered the elements, it is clear that he is less able - or perhaps, less willing - than Hatterr to decide when they will be most useful, preferring instead to use any of them, in any order, at any time if it will win an argument and ultimately persuade his friend Hatterr.

Hatterr, on the other hand, is extremely careful with the selection and arrangement of cultural indicators and linguistic tools. They may appear, on a first glance, to be randomly organised and dubiously persuasive but he has chosen with care. The quest he has set out on is a personal one. His responses to the experiences he undergoes and the characters he encounters require a dialogue that reflects his reactions and his emotions to each encounter. His mode of narration has to be different from that of Banerrji.[40] Hatterr is armed with similar elements as Banerrji[41] but would appear to possess the ability to select them with more care. Hatterr's quest is one of reflection and potential emotional and spiritual development and he requires a language that pays homage both to his past, full of feelings of abandonment, despair, loss, disappointment and rejection, his present, packed with hope for the future, the novelty of his situation as a newly single man, his deep-seated need for spiritual and personal renewal and his desire to change. The language he requires also has to reflect the future of hope, change and fulfilment. As such, the images gathered during his years in both India and England need to be ordered in such a way that they reflect all of these aspects of his life.

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[40] It has to be remembered that all of Banerrji's speeches are recounted by Hatterr who holds the narrative.

[41] These include a sound knowledge of Indian life and culture, some familiarity with Western literature, an awesome (though somewhat ambiguous) respect for women and for wise men and a profound need to locate themselves within the place and society they occupy.

Hatterr, unlike his friend Banerrji, reveals much of his character through his speeches. Banerrji reveals only some aspects of his character. He is clearly well-read, widely, if not correctly. He has a love of England that appears to be based on second-hand information that is wasted on Hatterr who has experienced the reality of England and no longer views it through the same rose-tinted spectacles as Banerrji does. The abundance of random, haphazard images and quotes used by Banerrji reveals more of a lack within his character. It would be possible, and indeed, plausible, to suggest that Banerrji lacks some sense of identity. He has become a composite character. Not composite in the same sense as Hatterr who is biologically and emotionally composite but as a character who has lost (or at least, is trying to lose) much of his Indianness and is attempting to replace his own cultural heritage with something else.[42] His vast collection of resources makes it difficult to decide just what else it is that he is trying to replace (or at the very least, obscure) his culture with. This is not to say that Banerrji is ashamed in any way of his Indian identity, but rather that he considers that his identity is composed of much more than just being an Indian gentleman. Whilst this is clearly an attempt by Banerrji (and ultimately by Hatterr who presents the narrative) to refute suggestions of essentialism, unfortunately for Banerrji, his heavy dependence on clichés and randomly selected quotations, creates a character who is so profoundly confused about his identity that when Hatterr is placed alongside the 'learned' Banerrji, it is Hatterr who emerges as the man whose identity is more sure. Perhaps, after all, this is Desani's intention here. For example, as Hatterr and Banerrji discuss the forthcoming ceremony to decorate Hatterr with a musical honour in order to impress his boss, Hatterr suddenly realises who the expected dignitaries are:

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[42] See for example Banerrji's fascination with the Kennel Club of Great Britain, European sanitation and the English classics.

> "It boils down to this, [...] that you are going to have these two dipsomaniacs hit the booze, and get me the title when they have had a drop too much."[43]

Banerrji replies:

> "Excuse me, it is not like that at all. All poets and artists require drink for inspiration. I say, the Roarer and the Killer are neither prohibitionists, nor are they, excuse me, Lushingtons."

Hatterr is quick to reply:

> "Lushingtons, did you say? Damme, Banerrji, your English is getting beyond me! I didn't say Lushingtons. I said, ruddy drunkards!"[44]

There are a number of occasions when Hatterr loses his patience with Banerrji and accuses him of coining meaningless phrases. However, it is clear that however exasperated he gets, Hatterr believes that Banerrji is usually right.

Clearly then, *bricolage* is not a random, imprecise art; rather, it reveals itself as an exact science, which, in order to create a whole, appears to use a seemingly abstract and chaotic collection of cultural images and identifiers. The success or failure of the *bricoleur* to make sense of the chaos and to order it, lies in both the intellectual capacity of the *bricoleur*, and his sensitivity to the prioritisation of the *bricolage* he has so carefully collected in case it comes in 'handy'. Banerrji would appear to be indiscriminate in his abstraction and application and thus suggests a character who lacks authenticity as a *bricoleur*. Issues of authenticity are clearly problematic in as much as they are somewhat imprecise in their definition. However, within the context of this exploration of Hatterr, Banerrji and *bricolage*, the term is used to describe Banerrji's somewhat composite identity that appears to prevent him from identifying with any particular culture, way of living or experience. The ways in which he displays the *bricolage*, as a seemingly haphazard collection of un-associated images, appears to lack the discrimination required to create a character who is authentically persuasive. However, this may not be the case.

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[43] *Hatterr,* (1949), p. 202.

[44] *Ibid.*, p. 202, Hatterr actually calls them 'rowdy drunkards' but his shock and desire to clarify his lowly opinion of the two men causes him to refer to them as 'ruddy drunkards'.

Although Hatterr and Banerrji differ widely in their work as *bricoleurs*, there are some similarities which suggest that Banerrji, a less talented *bricoleur* than his friend, is none the less a *bricoleur* of some type.

Where Hatterr has begun the process of creating a sense of order within the abstracted images, Banerrji appears to be lagging behind. He has all the tools at his disposal yet he is not as selective as Hatterr. Hatterr employs subversion but the intention and original meaning of the indicators he has selected retain, at the very least, a hint of cultural identity and importance (and are, in turn, invested with newer, more dynamic importance in each new situation). The power of the original context from which the *bricolage* has been carefully crafted is not lost on Hatterr. The note of disappointment and despair never quite leaves his references to England and the compounded words such as the 'spur-of-the-moment' and 'strip-tease, not-a-stitch-is-the-limit'[45] hold more than an echo of his old resentments at his treatment in Britain.

Banerrji uses considerably less subversion, preferring instead simply to link the words and images gleaned from his experience of literature and culture. However, it could be argued that what Banerrji does is to employ a different type of subversion from his friend. He piles together literary quotations, often misquoted, literary names, place names and items of particular cultural significance (Job's Comforters, Judas kisses, May-December clandestine love, all come together to persuade Hatterr of the potential trickery of his *dhobin*[46].) His intention is to overwhelm Hatterr with his linguistic dexterity. It almost always works.

The question of use and abuse of language is seldom far from Hatterr's narrative. In the opening 'Mutual Introduction' he explains that he has a 'miff with fate' and that as a result of his past experiences in England he has written the book in 'rigmarole English, staining your goodly godly tongue'.[47] He feels that he has a right to use the English language and apply it in any way he chooses in return for the poor treatment and abuse he received in England. Just as the despair concerning his experience in England resounds through many of his descriptions, so too does his anger at the treatment he received in the hands of women.[48] They are variously described as 'snake', 'reptile',[49] 'perspiring, hip-rolling wife' and as making 'one feel free of all decorum inhibitories'.[50] For Hatterr, language is the most powerful weapon he possesses to combat his feelings of loneliness, desperation and cultural isolation. He considers that he is entitled to use, abuse, subvert and reinvent the language in order to apply it to the present. The past, historically, locationally and culturally, becomes a vital tool for inspecting and reinvesting the present and the future.

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[45] *Hatterr,* (1949), p. 185. This description comes from a passage where Hatterr encounters the *Maaga* (the naked and Enlightened one). The two men get into a fight and the *Maaga* rips off Hatterr's loin cloth.

[46] *Hatterr,* (1949), p. 27.

[47] *Hatterr,* (1949), p. 22.

Whilst it is clear that Hatterr has a past that resounds throughout the present, this is considerably less clear for Banerrji. Banerrji's language does not reveal much, if anything, of his past and although he displays a wealth of 'knowledge', it is difficult to assess just what lies behind the language, suggesting a superficiality within both his understanding or interpretation of his past life and his exploration of the present. This would suggest that although Banerrji masquerades as the prime *bricoleur* within the text, the apparent lack of cohesion implies that the order, so important to the *bricoleur*, is, if not absent, a hazy, fragile order, easily disrupted by closer inspection. It is doubtful that if Banerrji was ever challenged on the validity of a number of his referential comments, he would emerge in a positive light. Luckily for him, Hatterr seldom bothers. The flaws filtering throughout and indeed, characterising, his numerous quotations and historical, literary and philosophical anecdotes are not, as Lévi-Strauss suggests, the type of flaws inherent within any system; rather, they would seem to be the results of a flawed interpretation. Such interpretation works for Hatterr but not for Banerrji. The reason why this is the case is deeply problematic.

Clearly both men appear to have a tenuous grasp on reality and are attempting to locate themselves in a world that appears to be hostile.[51] Perhaps the difference lies in the power both characters invest in their personal *bricolage*. For Hatterr, it will rescue him from obscurity, as he writes his narrative he hopes to shield himself 'from further blows of Fate'.[52] His unique interpretation of the world around him has to ensure that this mission succeeds. He needs to create a dialogue between himself, his experiences and his position in life, a dialogue that is dynamic and organic. This will require reinvention of standard indicators of culture and history and a new way of using and exploring the symbols that surround and threaten to overwhelm him. He has to succeed in this and he has to do so constructively and persuasively.

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[48] Hatterr's treatment of women is discussed in the next chapter.

[49] These descriptions are attributed to Hatterr's *dhobin*. *Hatterr* (1949), p. 27.

[50] Of Rosie Smythe, *Hatterr,* (1949), p. 52

[51] Hatterr is Eurasian and is seeking spiritual and personal support from India. Banerrji is an Indian whose sole goal in life is to be British. See *Hatterr,* (1949), p. 197 where Banerrji reveals his devotion to England and all things English.

Banerrji has an equal amount at stake here. He has to convince Hatterr that he is wise and knowledgeable and that he is a cosmopolitan character able to apply the diverse knowledge he has gained to the world in which he lives. He needs to present himself as the embodiment of the cosmopolitan gentleman. In order to establish how and if Banerrji succeeds in this quest, it might be useful to turn to Homi Bhabha.

In an essay entitled 'The Vernacular Cosmopolitan' Homi Bhabha discusses the dual loyalties that vie for attention within the cultural identity of the modern Indian. Speaking of himself he claims:

> [M]y own life was caught on the crossroads that marked the end of empire, with its push towards the new horizons of a Third World of free nations, and, in the opposite direction, a pull from the past, a power exerted by the art and literature of Europe, that was so much a part of the anglicised world of the post-colonial Indian bourgeoisie.[53]

Bhabha views this dynamic within his life as a positive life force, one that he considers to have given his life a direction that not only underpins his experience, but more importantly has prescribed and thus describes his life:

> [...] I cannot imagine what it would be like to live without that unresolved tension between cultures and countries that has become the narrative of my life, and the defining characteristic of my work.[54]

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[52] *Hatterr,* (1949), p. 22.

[53] Homi Bhabha, 'The Vernacular Cosmopolitan' in Ferdinand Dennis and Naseem Khan, (eds.), *Voices of the Crossing*, (London: Serpent's Tail, 2000), pp. 133-142, p. 134.

[54] *Ibid.*, p. 134.

Perhaps then, the multiplicity of referential devices Banerrji draws on does hint at the narratives of his life. For Banerrji the unresolved tensions, whilst appearing to be less organic and creative, reveal the dynamics of what, for Banerrji, becomes an uncomfortable exploration of the imbalances within his life. For example, he lives in a country where British rule is not wholly popular, yet his allegiance appears to lie with the British. He is aware that his understanding of Western art and literature is somewhat fragmentary yet it possesses the power to overwhelm his ability to identify and employ Indian literary and artistic ideals. He has to find a way of ordering all the images vying for space in the seemingly small space occupied by experience. Banerrji has not been to England (or anywhere else either) and is dependent on second-hand information which has created a certain tension within his life. He wants Hatterr's experience, yet the disparity between reality and myth in his life looks set to remain an unresolved tension.

Bhabha views the unresolved tensions within his own life as a dynamic, enabling device which not only promotes a discourse with identity and culture, but more importantly, provides the linguistic tools with which he is able to articulate his argument. However, he is aware of the potential for chaos to emerge from the collection of cultural and linguistic items, procured as a result of a life lived in more than one country. These items he refers to as the 'baggage' transported from one place to another:

> My sense of 'Englishness' resembled a chest that preserved the foreignness of somebody's past, but was now forced to accommodate the messy but vital bric-à-brac of a quite 'other' present.[55]

This bric-à-brac whose very definition means 'at random' is profoundly suggestive of the work of the *bricoleur*. For Bhabha this collection is messy but vital and bears out the insistence that the work of the *bricoleur* is not to create a chaotic and haphazard patchwork of ideas and images, but rather, to create a representation of a lived life. In the case of both Bhabha and Hatterr, this is a life lived in more than one place that has created a certain level of hybridity and anxiety that can only be addressed by a close examination of the fundamental elements that compose Bhabha's chest of foreignness and H. Hatterr's 'smoked-cane trunk'. Hatterr's sole belongings as he leaves India for England are:

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[55] *Ibid.*, p. 136.

> [...] [T]he American fur coat (the Benjamin), my smoked-cane trunk, and the Missionary Society's stereoscope, complete with 500 slides: views of Florence, Naples, Venice, Paris, Pompeii, Rome, the Vatican, the English Lake District, the Scottish Highlands, and the London West-End.[56]

As Homi Bhabha begins to explore his chest he discovers the potential that exists within an exploration of the diversity of the ingredients gathered. For Bhabha, this leads to the conclusion that 'what one expects to find at the very *centre* of life or literature may only be the dream of the deprived and the powerless; the centre may be the most interesting in its elusiveness, as the enigma of authority'.[57] For Hatterr, this is equally true. He had hoped to discover a new and revitalised sense of self as he embraced the country and culture of his father (and his surrogate father, Rev. the Head). Within a very short time, he becomes fascinated not only with his own sense of alienation within a land he has always imagined as home, but also with the enigma of his life and the various ingredients of it that he now discovers to be intrinsic to his survival in a new place. His is acutely aware of the elusiveness that exists within his experience. He seeks wealth, wisdom and happiness and is forced to realise that these are transient elements, worth seeking yet ultimately elusive. He requires a new dynamic language with which to narrate this dialogue with experience and discovers in the process that the contents of his smoked-cane chest, whilst appearing to be somewhat superfluous and frivolous, are in fact profoundly representative and indicative of his past and his present.

For Bhabha, the realisation that the centre is not attainable creates a new awareness, that of the potential for exploration of the margins as a more dynamic area for analysing issues of culture, belonging and identity. This requires what he refers to as a 'tryst with cultural translation as an act of survival'.[58] For Bhabha this tryst means an awareness and subsequent exploration of the spaces occupied between 'languages, territories and communities' and the discovery of what he terms a 'voice in-between the lines of other people's texts'. This is a unique reflection of the here and now of personal experience that acknowledges the fragmentation inherent in all experience and all lives and ultimately suggests that apparently abstract notions such as culture and identity rely on the ability of a centre to maintain its position as *the* centre. Once Bhabha and Hatterr accept that the position of the centre is both ambiguous and tenuous, then the contents of the chest or trunk can be examined using a whole new mode of interpretation and order that explores, and often exploits the dynamics of the relationship between centre and margins.

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[56] *Hatterr,* (1949), p. 20.

[57] Homi Bhabha, 'The Vernacular Cosmopolitan' in Ferdinand Dennis and Naseem Khan, (eds.), *Voices of the Crossing*, (London: Serpent's Tail, 2000), p. 137.

Bhabha concludes his argument by insisting on the intrinsic worth of an exploration of these areas that exist between cultures, languages and experiences. He claims:

> No name is yours until you speak it; somebody returns your call and suddenly, the circuit of signs, gestures, gesticulations, is established. You are part of a dialogue that may not be heard or heralded at first, but your person cannot be denied. The voices of the crossing, once drawn by the siren's song, may lead you astray, but strangely you find yourself the long way around. In another's country that is also your own, your person divides, and in following the forked path, you encounter yourself in a double movement ... once as stranger, and then as friend.[59]

Thus, it becomes clear that the process of relocation and the unpacking of the accompanying baggage is seen by both Bhabha and Hatterr as a movement of encounter when all aspects of the self require some re-inspection, and indeed, re-invention. The old reveals itself as both old and new, the present as both past and present and the self as both familiar and strange. Both men (Bhabha and Hatterr), one real, one fictional, expose simultaneously the *bricolage* that composes their life and the potential for re-workings of the *bricolage* itself, into a past that reflects onto the present. The familiarity of the past re-emerges in the present and creates a sense of continuity that appears to have been ruptured during the movement from one place to another. Bhabha refers to this as encountering oneself, perhaps not always as a familiar aspect of one's self but

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[58] *Ibid.*, p. 139.
[59] *Ibid.*, p. 142.

nonetheless a particular sense of self which may have 'divided' along the way, perhaps leaving fragments of the self in another place. For both Bhabha and Hatterr, this fragmentation is a necessary part of the quest for autonomy in a place that is not necessarily home and the 'circuit of signs, gestures' and 'gesticulations' is not only established but becomes a single mode of inquiry into the ordering of both old and new. This circuit is Bhabha's *bricolage*, a continuous, ongoing inspection of elements collected over time and place and organised in such a way that, although chaos appears to reign, it is in fact an ordered and unique arrangement of the aspects of experience and language that constitute the self.

One further point of interest regarding the relationship between Bhabha and Hatterr is explored in a BBC World Service programme entitled 'Good Books' in which Naseem Khan and Homi Bhabha discuss *Hatterr.*[60] Naseem Khan brings the discussion round to Hatterr's magpie instincts with regard to 'borrowing' from other cultures:

> I think the thing I enjoyed the most about Hatterr, [...] was the way in which he takes the things he wants from different cultures. You talked about him being a bridge at some point. But I'm not sure if I totally agree with that because a bridge [...] is a passive instrument. I think what he's doing is really quite active, in that he's taking language, he's taking ideas, and he's not creating as you might think a mishmash, a kind of misbegotten type of product.

Homi Bhabha replies thus:

> No I don't think it's misbegotten at all. [...] I was thinking of a bridge as being rather an active place. [...] [W]here thousands of people cross, or even bridges over rivers where lots of people cross all the time, [...] lots of things pass under and over it. It's not a mishmash, but it is a very powerful justification for, and creation of, cultural hybridity.

Bhabha illustrates his point by reading a lengthy section from *Hatterr.* The section outlines Hatterr's intention to travel west which Bhabha describes as indicative of the book and 'its ability to relocate authorities, cultural authorities or literary authorities'.[61] Khan responds by suggesting that Hatterr manages to weave together 'quite disparate, or apparently disparate, influences and strands of thought and strands of philosophy, he does in the end create an artefact that has a particular kind of existence of its own'. Bhabha claims that to create such an artefact requires something of the 'interpretative traditions of psycho-analysis' as he moves from 'language to body to mind to ethics'. Bhabha summarises his theory with regard not only to Hatterr, but perhaps more importantly to the type of cross-cultural person both he and Hatterr are, as he states that 'whatever cultural tradition we know, when we actually interact with others, we actually change it'. Clearly then, for Bhabha what Hatterr does is to relocate the images and language he finds in various locations, into a personal and specific framework that describes himself and his particular outlook on life. Is this then what Banerrji is attempting to do also?

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[60] Naseem Khan and Homi Bhabha, 'Good Books', BBC, World Service, Feb/Mar 1993.

Banerrji is a man whose aim is to replicate the cosmopolitan, the man who 'knows many parts of the world' and is 'free from national limitations or prejudices'.[62] As Bhabha and Hatterr use the *bricolage* of their lives in a continual search for a sense of self that is familiar, Banerrji uses the elements of bric-à-brac he has at his disposal in a less well defined manner. If Bhabha and Hatterr are *bricoleur*s of the first order then Banerrji begins to appear as an odd-job man, highly skilled and adept at using the tools, but somehow, the finished result, his particular patter, is less persuasive. Banerrji's use of the elements he has uncovered is considerably less constructive as his aim is less to consolidate his own sense of identity, but rather appears to be an attempt to create a persona that is, or has to appear to be, radically different from his own. He has to manifest order, calm, wisdom and discretion and will employ any devices he has to hand in order to be able to be this type of man. Banerrji's centre is himself which creates, in turn, some profound problems concerning the dynamics of the relationship between centre and margins. With himself at the centre, the margins become the elements of *bricolage* that constitute his life. They are less of a chest, or smoked-cane trunk that he dives into in order to abstract and subvert the elements of the past. His personal *bricolage* becomes a vaguely scattered, fragmentary collection of articles, images, linguistic tricks and literary nonsense that is there to draw on but appears to have very little effect on the person of Banerrji. As such, his work as a *bricoleur* is deeply flawed, he fails to prioritise the elements correctly and thus what he creates is a mishmash of all the 'signs, gestures, gesticulations' that, unlike Bhabha's circuit which has a resonance of wholeness, of fluidity and of some kind of linear progression, becomes a scattered and broken line that begins and ends abruptly, negating the possibility of wholeness. Rather than delving into the chest of the past, Banerrji extends his hand outwards grasping blindly at the elements he has selected as representative of his experience. Whilst this, in itself, does not suggest a problem, it would suggest that where Hatterr and Bhabha have considered the elements to be of enough importance to store away in the chest or the smoked-cane trunk, Banerrji has left the elements scattered on the peripheries, hoping to devise a way in which the fragments can be ordered at a later date.

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[61] The section Bhabha reads can be found in *Hatterr*, (1949), pp. 126-7.
[62] These are OED definitions of 'cosmopolitan'.

Conclusion

This chapter set out to negotiate the patter of Hatterr and to explore the abstraction and implementation of *bricolage* within the lives of the two main characters in *All About H. Hatterr* and to explore the relationship between Hatterr and Banerrji in terms of the language they use and which is transcribed by the narrator of the work, H. Hatterr.

It would be easy to place Hatterr and Banerrji in binary positions with Hatterr as chief *bricoleur*, employing the cultural identifiers and language into an ordered and self-defining system, and Banerrji as a charlatan odd-job man posing as *bricoleur*, gathering random images and arranging them into a hotch-potch (although superficially persuasive) amalgam of cultural and linguistic identifiers. However, this is not what Desani does, although he may suggest that he does. He creates in Banerrji a character who is empowered by some kind of perverted wholeness which does not make him a charlatan and although he appears to be unproductive and a somewhat absurd example of the *bricoleur*, in Hatterr's eyes his friend is a man with distinct possibilities. He is, after all, a man who has an untarnished view of all things British; he lacks the experience Hatterr has of being in England and as a result is less sceptical of mankind in general. Banerrji has a stable relationship with his wife so lacks Hatterr's jaundiced view of women. As such, he presents to Hatterr a more positive (although not necessarily honest) attitude towards life. Banerrji is not a complete opposite to Hatterr but is a variant of what or who Hatterr may have been. Before Hatterr's experiences in England, it is possible that he would have been more like Banerrji.

Desani needs to present both characters as different, yet fundamentally the same and one of the ways he chooses to do this is using language. Hatterr's language is complex, confused and universal but it is, primarily, indicative of Hatterr's character as fragmentary, lacking cultural identity and above all, open to new experience. Banerrji, on the other hand, whilst appearing to use language in a similar way to Hatterr, is less productive, preferring to recall past experiences and rework them into a language that straddles both the here and now as well as the then and there of his life. Banerrji's language and the sources he derives his linguistic terms from, reveal perhaps, a certain shallowness in his character as a man who appears to be entirely dependent upon borrowed phrases and subverted clichés to narrate himself.

Ultimately, Hatterr and Banerrji are both *bricoleurs* but the finished result of their work, the patterns they create are very different. Hatterr attempts and on the whole manages to create a fine tapestry of experience, both past and present, drawing on the contents of his smoked-cane trunk and using every item in a variety of innovative and dynamic ways. Banerrji possesses a similar receptacle but is less sure of how to use the contents. As a result he patches together images, symbols and language until it appears to present a cohesive whole but when laid against Hatterr's infinitely more persuasive dialogue, Banerrji's lack is clear. He is the odd-job man to Hatterr's *bricoleur*, a position he would never have imagined himself in as a mentor, saviour and guide to his friend.

Conclusion

'Carry on, boys, and continue like hell!'[1]

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[1] *Hatterr*, (1949), p. 239.

This thesis has begun the debate on the writing of G. V. Desani and there is clearly more to be done. Just as much of this thesis focuses on *All About H. Hatterr* so too does the majority of written material concerning Desani and his literary talent. It is surely time for an appraisal of *Hali*, a consideration of the diversity within his short stories and perhaps an overview of his journalistic career. This thesis did not permit time or space for a critical analysis of the latter two and the former, although covered in depth in Chapter Five remains something of a mystery still.

Despite the suggestions of silence surrounding Desani's work in the years preceding his death he was working on a definitive collection of his work entitled *The Rissala*. The dust jackets and promotional material for each new revised edition of *Hatterr* during the early 1980s suggested that *The Rissala* was ready for publication many years before his death. However, it was not to be and Desani died whilst the collection was still a work in progress. The remaining manuscripts suggest that it was a work that would encompass his entire literary career, including his talks, journalism, some poetry and a number of items that may be short stories or may be papers he gave. *Hali* was to be included in this collection, but apparently, not *Hatterr*.[2] The title page of the work reads thus:

G.V. Desani
The Rissala
Being this person's *Millā-jullā Rissālā*
&/or
THE TEXAN FILE[3]

The work was to be divided into six books with the first containing extracts from his column in the *Illustrated Weekly of India*. The second book was to contain the majority of his short stories and contains a note to himself to 'insert the Dean' (a reference to 'The Mandatory Interview with the Dean'). The third book was to contain Desani's two poems although both have been dramatically reworked following his disappointment with the publication of his poems in P. Lal's anthology *Modern Indian Poetry in English* (1969).[4] The fourth book was to contain *Hali* and 'Other Works' which appear to be the short pieces forming the Introduction to the final published edition of *Hali*. The fifth book is entitled 'Selected Lectures' and was to contain a number of works that I have not come across in any form and may provide some insights into both Desani's life and his writing. However, the ambiguity of such titles as 'A No-Image Image' and 'Gandhi's Challenge to Authority' suggests that Desani was keen to introduce his audience to some of his more controversial ideas. The sixth and final book is entitled 'The Book of Essays and Papers' and contains a number of his talks given at Boston and Texas Universities.

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[2] There is no mention of *Hatterr* in the outline of the collection.

Clearly then, Desani was keen to re-introduce (or in some cases, introduce) his work to an audience that was becoming more aware of the contribution he made to literature. His death and the subsequent legal wrangles concerning his estate and issues of copyright look set to make any publication of *The Rissala* unlikely in the foreseeable future. Despite the sense of regret brought about by the current impossibility of airing Desani's work as a whole there remains the feeling that contrary to popular belief, Desani was not a 'one-hit-wonder' and was far from silent for the last half of the twentieth century. This thesis began with the suggestion that in the early 1950s there were some gaps in the ways in which Indian writing in English was assessed and debated and it may be that these gaps still exist. However, this thesis has not attempted to fill all the gaps which would be an entirely separate task, but has, it hopes, identified some of the ellipses occurring when one type of literature is discussed using a mode of critical analysis specifically designed for another type altogether. When the text itself appears to defy categorisation and interpretation the task will be that much more difficult for the researcher.

As this thesis reaches its conclusion it has become clear that for Desani 'Ball-bearings all the way, and never a dull moment!'[5] has come to epitomise his literary

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[3] From private papers, Austin, Texas. *Millā-jullā* meaning Mixed and Miscellaneous, *Rissala* meaning Work

[4] Space here does not permit an analysis of the poems but the newer versions bear no resemblance other than their title, to the older versions.

[5] G. V. Desani, *All About H. Hatterr* (1949), p. 236.

career, as existing in a perpetual state of slippage and uncertainty. Yet despite being strewn with pukka muggers, fake gurus, tempting women and man-eating lions, there have indeed been very few dull moments.

Salman Rushdie's oft-quoted remark concerning Desani's ground-breaking novel should be remembered less for its insistence on an historic and unique achievement but more importantly for its acknowledgment of an on-going debate on the fundamental dynamics of the 'de-colonising pen'. When Rushdie referred to Desani's work he probably had little idea of the stirrings of interest he would create and it would seem that although interest in Desani is growing - it still retains a tendency to consider *Hatterr* as representative of Desani's oeuvre.

A revival of interest in Desani both as a literary figure and as a cultural ambassador during his years in England, is long overdue and it is hoped that the thematic issues debated in this thesis have begun the task. This exploration of Desani's literary techniques and cultural bric-à-brac assembled by him in *Hatterr* as he narrates the experience of a man caught between countries and cultures, who feels his identity to be as superficial as the religious zeal of the gurus he encounters, may go some way towards negotiating the dichotomy of a man who straddles several cultures yet considers himself to belong to none. As such, there are few writers of Desani's period who managed to create a text that so adeptly challenged cultural and literary norms yet succeeded in amazing a British audience who thought they had seen and read everything.

This thesis set out to explore 'Desani's silence' and as such has revealed that far from being silent, Desani has waged a war of words on an unsuspecting (and on the whole oblivious) British audience with a constant campaign of 'billingsgate' 'verbal contortionism' and above all, his 'rigmarole English' all of which has ensured that his occupation of some form of literary third space has become a myth perpetuated in equal measure by his readers and by Desani himself.

Ultimately, this thesis aims to provide the first statement in what it hopes will become a re-inspection of not only the work of G. V. Desani, but also the chronology of Indian writing in English and the way in which Desani fits, or indeed, does not fit into this vast and exciting canon of literature.

Desani's final words in *All About H. Hatterr,* quoted at the beginning of this conclusion have now become something of an imperative to action. For Desani, Hatterr's quest (and indeed his own) for recognition, was not to end as his narrative concluded and neither should the consideration of Desani's work.

Appendix 1

Desani's Private Papers

During the course of my research I learned that on Desani's death much of his written work passed into the hands of his attorney Stephen Greenberg in Austin, Texas. After lengthy correspondence with Mr. Greenberg I was lucky enough to be able to visit Austin, Texas twice. On each occasion I was granted access to documents that had not been viewed by anyone other than Desani for very many years.

Following Desani's death various legal and financial wranglings have meant that the materials are bound by copyright and until Mr. Desani's estate is finally settled, access to reprinting the material is not possible. However, Mr. Greenberg was generous above and beyond the call of duty and allowed me virtually unrestricted access to the materials and allowed me to make copious notes on the manuscripts of *Hatterr*. I was granted access to a number of scrapbooks that contained every review ever published on anything Desani ever wrote, photos of his life from the late 1930s onwards, various letters from well-wishers (including Eliot, Forster, Orwell, and Ruth Prawer Jhabvala), invitations to various literary events and all the publisher's return slips from his attempts at getting *Hatterr* published.

Among Desani's effects were the galley proofs for the last edition of *Hatterr*, *Hali* and *Collected Stories* and *The Rissala*[1] each corrected by Desani himself and printed for him in an oversized font in order to accommodate his failing eyesight.

Since my return from a research trip to Austin Mr. Greenberg has been an invaluable source of information, cheerfully correcting my misconceptions or misunderstandings regarding Desani's life and work and made himself available to check the details of the biographical sketch in the Introduction to this thesis.

His generosity and trust in the integrity of this thesis has compelled me to attempt to maintain his anonymity and as such this Appendix is bound by copyright.

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[1] Information on *The Rissala* can be found in Appendix 2.

Appendix 2

The Rissala

The Rissala was intended to be a collection of all of Desani's shorter pieces of writing. It was to be in five volumes and was in a pre-publication state when Desani died.

Book 1

The title page reads:

G.V. Desani
The Rissala
Being this person's *Millā-jullā Rissālā*
&/or
THE TEXAN FILE

The contents page reads thus:

Book 1: “ Very High” and “Very Low”
Book II: Kahāniyā
  Mephisto's Daughter
  A New Bridge of Plenty
  The Lama Arupa
  A Border Incident
  Sutta Abandoned
  The Pānsarī's Account of the Incident
  With Malice Aforethought
  The Fiend Screams “Kyā Chāhate No?”
  The Second Mrs was Wed in a Nightmare
  Since a Nation Must Export, Smithers!
  Gipsy Jim Brazil to Kumari Kishino

	‘Abdullāh Haii
	In Memoriam
	The Last Long Letter
	The Barber of Sāhibsarāi
	Correspondence with Sister Jay
	The Merchant of Kisingarh
	Country Life, Country Folk, Cobras, Thok!
	(Note here to insert ‘Dean’)
Book III	No Reason, No Rhyme
	An appeal to Ezra Pound
	The Valley of the Lions
	Roaches, Roaches, Everywhere!
	O Edgar Allan Poe!… It’s the Jets and Nothing More!
	Airlines, carry me to Kāhirā
	Major Gagarin, Vandé
	The U.N. Secretary-General
	Ahmed Ben Bella
	Christmas Recess, Forthcoming!
	Cheeni-Hindee Bhaī- Bhaī!
	… Herman, Let the Guy Go By!
	De Profundis
Book IV	Hali and Other Works
	Hali
	This Shrub, This Child of God
	An Invocation (Excerpt from *All About H. Hatterr.)*
	The Bell
	Of Blessedness
Book V	Selected Lectures
	India Invites
	Vipassanā Bhāvanā, Yoga and Other Topics
	Rudyard Kipling’s Evaluation of his own Mother

A No-Image Image
Certain Difficulties in Communicating an Oriental to a Western Audience
Bhaktī, the Highest Love
A Marginal Comment on the Problem of Medium in Bicultures
How is the 'Inexpressible' to be Expressed
Gandhi's Challenge to Authority
Benares, the City of God

Book VI The Book of Essays and Papers
"... Down with Philosophy"
Peanuts Cum Sale
Everest Conquered
More on the Father of Varanasi City
Jawaharlal Nehru—An Assessment
Indian Affairs
Benares, Thrice Hallowed and Thrice Holy
I Believe...
Shri Ramakrishna
Mantra and Tantra
Patanjalis Raja Yoga
Therāvāda Buddhism—Early Buddhism
Mostly Concerning Kama

There follows an explanation of the title in the format of Middle-Man to Author and the Middle-Man suggests the title.
Millā-jullā meaning Mixed and Miscellaneous
Rissala meaning Work.

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