

Principles of Literary Study

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review

- ▶ Rich: allegory?
 - ▶ diving = exploring history; mermaids = history's victims
 - ▶ gets tricky: equations rarely explain it all
 - ▶ in fact, it's...watery
- ▶ Ramanujan: metabolism (“eating, / being eaten”)
 - ▶ oppositions undone by the list form: myth vs. religion vs. science; personal vs. cultural; diseased vs. integral; lost vs. found; static vs. changing; English vs. Sanskrit
 - ▶ but Tamil form digests them all
 - ▶ but the Tamil form has been Englished by AKR
 - ▶ but who is AKR? “Composed as I am, like others...”

Anglophony

As we grew up, Sanskrit and English were our father tongues, and Tamil and Kannada our mother tongues. The father tongues distanced us from our mothers, from our own childhoods, and from our villages and many of our neighbors in the cowherd colony next door. And the mother tongues united us with them....

Sanskrit stood for the Indian past; English for colonial India and the West, which also served as a disruptive creative other that both alienated us from and revealed us (in its terms) to ourselves; and the mother tongues, the most comfortable and least conscious of all, for the world of women, playmates, children, and servants....Each had a literature that was unlike the others'. Each was an other to the others.

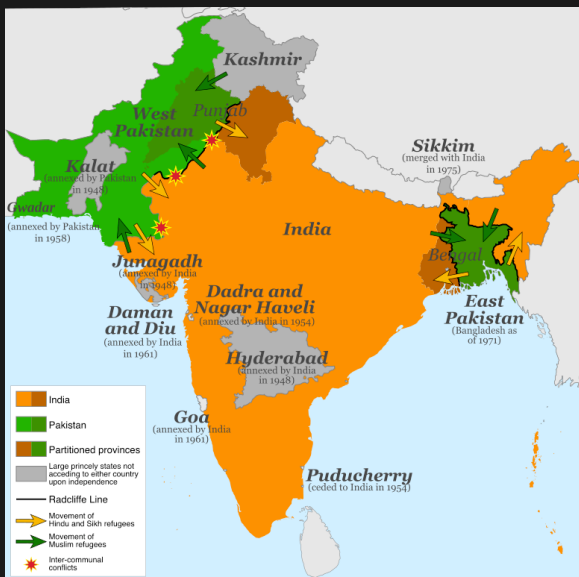
A.K. Ramanujan, "Telling Tales," *Daedalus* 118, no. 4 (Fall 1989): 241–42.

English literature

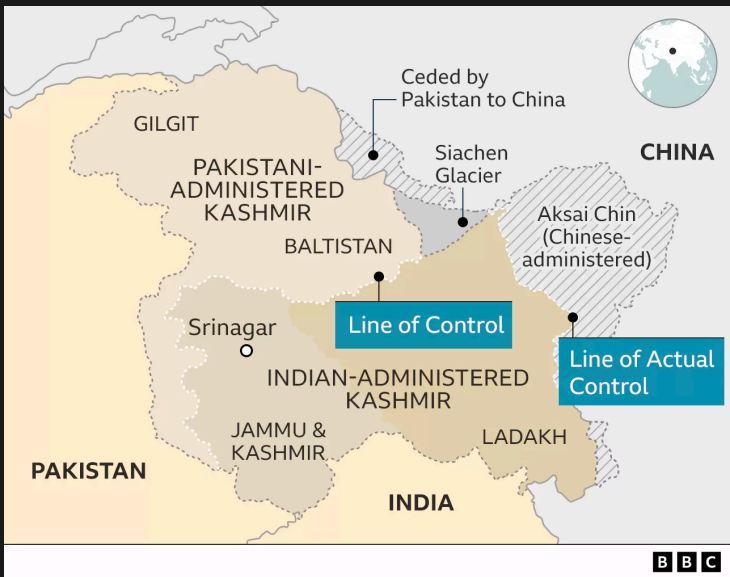
- ▶ Where is English literature written?

English literature

- ▶ Where is English literature written?
- ▶ What traditions are important for English literature?



Partition of India in 1947, Wikimedia Commons.



“Kashmir Profile,” January 24, 2023, [BBC](#).

the location of Agha Shahid Ali

- ▶ Where is Agha Shahid Ali's poetry located?

1949	Agha Shahid Ali b. in New Delhi, India. Childhood in Srinagar, Kashmir.
1951-3?	In Indiana with his parents.
1968	BA University of Kashmir, Srinagar.
1970	MA University of Delhi, where he then teaches.
1972	<i>Bone-Sculpture</i> (Kolkata: Writers Workshop).
1975	Moves to the US permanently.
1979	<i>In Memory of Begum Akhtar</i> (Writers Workshop).
1984	PhD in English, Penn State (diss. on T.S. Eliot).
1985	MFA, University of Arizona.
1987	<i>The Half-Inch Himalayas</i> (Wesleyan UP).
1987	Professor, Hamilton College (NY).
1991	<i>A Nostalgist's Map of America</i> (Norton).
1991	<i>The Rebel's Silhouette</i> trans. Agha Shahid Ali.
1993	Professor at UMass Amherst.
1997	<i>The Country Without a Post Office</i> (Norton).
2000	Agha Shahid Ali, ed., <i>Ravishing DisUnities</i> (Wesleyan UP).
2001	d.
2003	<i>Call Me Ishmael Tonight</i> (Norton).

▶ What does “shahid” mean?

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They ask me to tell them what *Shahid* means—

Listen: it means “The Beloved” in Persian, “witness” in Arabic. (“Arabic”)

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It means “The Beloved” in Persian, “witness” in Arabic. (“In Arabic”)

“Beyond English”

No language is old—or young—beyond English.
So what of a common tongue beyond English?

I know some words for war, all of them sharp,
but the sharpest one is *jung*—beyond English!

the form

- ▶ What makes a ghazal? Describe the form.

the form

- ▶ What makes a ghazal? Describe the form.
- ▶ *aa ba ca...* rhyme (monorhyme)
- ▶ every couplet has repeated final word (Farsi *radīf*) after rhyme
- ▶ includes pen-name or *takhalluṣ* in last couplet
- ▶ (usually) every line has the same syllable count
- ▶ couplets are end-stopped, almost independent

so what?

- ▶ What does the ghazal form make Shahid do?

The first line (same length) of every succeeding couplet sets up a suspense, and the second line (same length but with the rhyme and refrain—the rhyme immediately preceding the refrain) delivers on that suspense by amplifying, dramatizing, imploding, exploding. (“The Ghazal,” 19)

your choices

next

- ▶ intro exercise due Weds.
 - ▶ bring in a copy as well for Thursday
- ▶ keep rereading *Call Me Ishmael Tonight*
- ▶ three Shahid-related poems on Canvas