

Whose Words Are We Reading?

The Cartelisation of Anglophone Trade Book Publishing and Its Postcolonial Impact: The Case of India

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Abstract

Due to the global structuring of Anglophone trade book publishing, Indians can easily access books published by UK and US multinational publishers. Yet, Indian local publishers and authors often do not access an international readership nor the associated economic and social rewards. This thesis examines the contribution of cartelisation and multinationalisation in furthering postcoloniality in Indian Anglophone trade publishing. It also analyses the extent of that postcoloniality, how cartelisation has impacted Indian publishing and writers, and the role that multinationalisation has played.

To meet these aims, I build upon secondary literature in publishing studies, book history and postcolonial theory. I conducted primary research via semi-structured interviews with senior publishing professionals in the UK and India. As a decolonising research method, I include my professional, personal and academic engagement with the research topic through autoethnographic vignettes.

This research has enabled a unique contribution to scholarship. I found that territorial rights are perceived as normative practice within publishing. In this system, British multinational publishers claim the export markets of most former British colonies while US multinationals claim exports to Canada, Puerto Rico and the Philippines. Due to this cartelisation and the cultural hegemony of the UK and the US, Indian Anglophone trade books cannot match the revenue generation of foreign books in both Indian and international markets. Thus, India is perceived as a ‘market’ territory, not a source of literature worth promoting abroad. Cartelisation became an ingrained practice because of multinationalisation since local publishers – which aid the development of the national literary space – cannot compete with the multinationals’ resources. My research centres on India and can be extended to comparative nations. This thesis focuses on the historical context and contemporary scenario of cartelisation, but I also offer recommendations to be executed within and outwith publishing to combat the postcoloniality of cartelisation.

Formal Confirmation of Ethical Approval

The primary research of this thesis was conducted after the ethical approaches of this project were approved by the University of Stirling's General University Ethics Panel (GUEP) on 29 September 2020. The GUEP number for this research is: GUEP (20 21) 1015.

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The past four years have been the most fulfilling, yet the hardest, of my life. I began my PhD research; the COVID-19 pandemic struck; my debut book released; I presented my research at various conferences to positive engagement; I won three writing awards and a spot on a Swedish writing residency; I faced loss in the family and personal crises; and I began my professional academic career as a Lecturer in publishing studies. Through it all, my family has remained steadfast in their support and encouragement. My brother Kartik always celebrated my successes, and my dog Rico stayed by in those late writing nights in my visits to India. This research is dedicated to my parents, Rajan and Alka Misra – all that I am and all that I do is because and for you. Thank you.

Declaration

This thesis is presented in accordance with the regulations for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy. It has been composed by myself and has not been submitted in any previous application for any degree. It contains no material extracted in whole or in part from a thesis by which I have qualified for or been awarded another degree or diploma.

Signature: *Sonali Misra*

Date: 7 April 2024

Abbreviations and Acronyms

ANZ: Australia and New Zealand

API: Association of Publishers in India

BAME: Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic

CEO: Chief Executive Officer

DGA: David Godwin Associates

EY: Ernst & Young

FMCG: Fast-moving Consumer Goods

GBP: Global British Pound

IBH: India Book House

Indie: Independent (used for publishers/presses in this thesis)

INR: Indian Rupee

LGBTQIA+: Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer/Questioning, Intersex, Asexual and more within the community

MD: Managing Director

MNC: Multinational Corporation

MRP: Maximum Retail Price (used in India)

NATO: North Atlantic Treaty Organization

NCR: National Capital Region (of India)

NGO: Non-governmental Organisation

OUP: Oxford University Press

P&L: Profit and Loss

POD: Print on Demand

PRH: Penguin Random House

Rep: Representative (as in a person's professional designation)

RRP: Recommended Retail Price (used in the UK)

Rs: Indian Rupees

SAARC: South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation

TMA: Traditional Market Agreement

UCC: Universal Copyright Convention

UNESCO: United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

USP: Unique Selling Point

VP: Vice President

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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Words and Borders

In the summer of 2018, I was working on my MSc in Creative Writing dissertation in the UK and co-founding a digital international literary magazine to promote and publish minoritised voices. For the magazine, I interviewed the UK CEO of a large multinational trade book publisher. In a half-hour slot, the CEO and I covered several topics: we spoke about his publishing career, a scheme the company ran for aspiring publishing professionals hailing from marginalised sections of society, and the impact Brexit would have on the industry. I remember that while compiling the questions, I had inserted one without having given its topic much thought before. When we arrived at this question, I felt my tone impassion, and I realised that it was something I had felt uneasy about for years. I asked the CEO whether readers from Commonwealth nations – i.e., former British colonies and markets that British publishers usually have rights to – could see representations of themselves in the books that the publisher produced.

‘Commonwealth rights’ was a term my former colleagues and I had used without deep reflection in my time at the Indian subsidiary of the multinational that the CEO led. For us at the Indian branch, Commonwealth rights had been a matter of fact while deciding which books to import to India for circulation, books that were published by the head office in London. What had also been a matter of fact was that most of the revenue of the Indian branch was generated by the sale of London-produced books. I had heard this phenomenon was common across all Indian subsidiaries of multinational publishers. It had not surprised me. Had I not grown up reading stories that were primarily foreign in their source, characters and context? Would I have even read any Anglophone books by Indian authors had I not been forced to in just one-and-a-half papers among nine in my undergraduate degree in English literature at the top arts college of India?

Hearing the CEO’s response, which emphasised that the foreign subsidiaries of their company produced their own local lists, I found myself satisfied for the moment. However, something nagged at me later. Yes, multinational publishers have foreign subsidiaries in several countries that also produce local literatures, but why were those local literatures not as easily

available in the UK and the US, as British and American books were in the rest of the world? Why could not the same publisher provide an equitable platform to all its authors – whether they were published by the head offices in London and New York or by the subsidiary in Delhi (let alone homegrown Indian publishers having the kind of access to an international readership that the multinationals do)? How could the present systems change so that Indian writers and publishers could reach readers beyond the nation's borders in significant numbers? What have the impacts of consuming foreign literature been on Indian writers and readers? These questions led me to my research: to analyse the impact of Commonwealth rights and multinationalisation on Indian Anglophone trade publishing as well as on India's writers and readers.

In the introductory chapter of this thesis, I first discuss the need for my research. I follow this by establishing the context of the research. I do so by sharing an overview of the spread of the English language in India as a colonial remnant and focusing on the English-language/Anglophone trade book publishing industry in India. Afterwards, I lay out my research questions and objectives and describe the thesis structure.

1.2 Significance of the Study

India is a key player in global book publishing. As per the *India Book Market Report 2022* by Nielsen BookData in collaboration with the Federation of Indian Publishers, total Indian print book publishing revenue in 2021–2022 was approximately INR 580.3 billion (roughly GBP 5.5 billion, as per Oanda.com 2024). This makes book publishing one of the largest media industries in India, beating the likes of film, social media and newspapers and magazines (API and EY-Parthenon 2021, p 4). Though these book publishing activities are carried out in a range of languages, India is also the third-largest producer of Anglophone books (API and EY-Parthenon 2021, p 4). Bearing these statements in mind, it is peculiar that little research is available on contemporary Indian book publishing.

While specialists in the areas of publishing and intellectual property have written extensively on the history of copyright, territorial rights and multinationalisation in publishing, it has mostly been from the perspectives of Europe (especially the UK) and the US (Bryant 1979; Seville 2006, 2019). Nitasha Devasar's *Publishers on Publishing: Inside India's Book Business* (2018) is the only full-length analytical book dedicated to Indian publishing in the twenty-first

century. Fraser and Hammond's *Books Without Borders, Volume 2: Perspectives from South Asia* (2008) focuses upon India, but in its colonial era and the twentieth century. Philip G Altbach, an American researcher, authored *Publishing in India: An Analysis* (1975), but this book focuses on non-trade publishing, i.e., educational and academic, and that too before physical operations of Anglophone multinationals were set up as Indian subsidiaries post 1985. Altbach, at times with other editors, has also generated significant work on 'third world publishing' (1992, 1998), in which the Indian scenario has been covered briefly. Other accounts on publishing, book history and copyright – such as Nash et al's *The Book in Britain Volume VII: The Twentieth Century and Beyond* (2019) and Seville's *The Internationalisation of Copyright Law: Books, Buccaneers and the Black Flag in the Nineteenth Century* (2006) – do not examine the case of India in depth, or if they do, they only view India as an export market. They also do not consider the health of local Indian publishing. Most significantly, they do not distinguish between the success of the local books produced by multinationals in India versus the books that they import, i.e., foreign writing. This distinction is especially important since the latter's success cannot be equated with the success of Indian writing in English. Furthermore, as non-trade publishing forms the majority of the Indian book business (approximately 96% as per the *India Book Market Report 2022* and 95% as per API and EY-Parthenon 2021, p 8), it is no surprise that of the little publishing research available on India, most focuses on non-trade publishing, such as the Association of Publishers in India (API) and Ernst & Young (EY)-Parthenon report 2021.

The reason for the prevalent research focus on educational and academic publishing in India can be attributed to India's status as a (relatively) newly independent nation. Education is among the primary goals of newly independent nations, as was the case in India. It is harder to quantify the benefits of reading for pleasure, which is usually done with trade books, i.e., fiction, nonfiction and children's books. Thus, while Anglophone trade books in India only form 2.08% of the total books published in the country (*India Book Market Report 2022*), the segment requires study – a gap this thesis addresses. My research thus focuses on books that are read as an act of leisure – trade books – in the English language. Specifically, my aim has been to create a record of contemporary Indian and British publishers' perspectives on Commonwealth rights and multinationalisation in publishing.

Another gap in existing literature that I address in my research is the hierarchy in publishing due to cartelisation. 'Cartelisation' in this context refers to the division of Anglophone book

markets between US and UK publishers due to territorial rights, in which American and British multinational publishers and authors are in advantageous positions to the detriment of Indian local publishers and Indian authors publishing in India. In this thesis, I examine how current publishing structures using territorial rights, such as Commonwealth rights, are antiquated and are performing the role of gatekeeper as opposed to facilitating a truly free flow of books. In my research, I refer to ‘gatekeepers’ as those with the power to control the selection and dissemination of books. The situation today had eerily been forewarned by Singh in 1992, who stated that unless indigenous (local/homegrown) publishers could combat the domination of transnational publishers, a ‘new form of colonialism’ would emerge (p 248). Therefore, current publishing structures are rooted in colonialism and are feeding into postcolonialism – i.e., the continuing legacy and negative impact of having been a British colony as well as suffering from the neocolonising power of the US (discussed in Chapter 3) – in which trade bestsellers in India comprise books written by foreign authors published overseas. Whereas, Indian Anglophone writing is rarely able to cross the Indian border to access an international readership and the economic and social advantages associated with that. This unequal power dynamic results in India being treated as a market or export territory, as opposed to a producer of literature worthy to be consumed in other Anglophone nations.

Altbach in 1992 raised concerns about cartelisation and asked pertinent questions about its impact on India:

For many in the publishing business in India, there is more profit in importing and selling foreign books than in producing domestic titles [...] What are the implications of book imports for indigenous Third World publishing? Do imported books take market share from domestically published volumes? Does the import trade, which is part of the business of many Third World publishers, significantly help those publishers survive in a difficult economic environment? How can imports be discouraged and indigenous publishing be advanced without at the same time restricting access to information? (p 12)

This is the context I explore through my research. Moreover, Altbach states that ‘India is a useful focus for analysis’ due to being one of the largest among the developing countries and with a long history of publishing (1975, pp 1-2) and that ‘Indian publishing exhibits most of the problems and possibilities that exist in other developing countries’ (1975, pp 1-2). Thus, while I examine the case of India, the research on cartelisation, multinationalisation and postcolonialism can be applied

to not only other Anglophone developing countries – such as Kenya and South Africa – but also Anglophone developed settler colonies such as Canada and Australia that look towards the US and the UK for book content.

1.3 The Research Context

The Indian book publishing industry is non-homogenous. It comprises publishers that are large, medium and small; conglomerate and independent; foreign subsidiaries and local Indian; academic, educational and trade; children's, reference and adult; Anglophone and engaged in regional languages. My research focuses on a particular section of the industry: Anglophone/English-language trade publishing. To better understand the context of my research, it is imperative to establish a brief history of the spread of the English language in the country as well as its reception. I then describe the publishing landscape in India.

1.3.1 English: Colonial Remnant That Became the International Language

A major consequence of British colonisation has been the spread of the English language to such an extent that it has achieved its current status as an 'international language' (Trivedi 1993, p 20; Chakava 1996, p 92), 'the world's main commercial language' (Graham 1998, pp 25-26), 'the global language of employment' (Narayanan 2012, p 15, cited in Gonsalves 2015, p 434), or 'the language of world communication' (Graham 1992, p 31). Along with Britain's wide-ranging colonial conquests, Barnes et al include the dominance in trade by the British merchant navy and the 'linguistic policies and assumptions of the United States of America on assimilating immigrants' in the list of reasons that made English a 'world language' by the end of the nineteenth century (2009, p 27). Thereafter, the global dominance that the US and the UK have held over other nations has ensured that the rest of the world looks to these two giants for movements within culture and media, especially through the lens of the two superpowers' primary language – English.

In India, research has been conducted to trace the beginnings of the print industry in the country with special regards to the English language. This is because the advent of printing in India tied in with missionary work, travelling salesman from British publishing companies and the teaching of the coloniser's language, English (Altbach 1992, p 5; Balan 2006, p 274; Chatterjee 2009, pp 624-625). English also had the advantage of being instated as the official administrative

language of colonised India in 1835 (Trivedi 1993, p 11; Balan 2006, pp 274-275), after Macauley's infamous 1835 Minute on Indian Education that declared that a 'single shelf of a good European library was worth the whole native literature of India and Arabia' (cited in Trivedi 1993, p 11) and:

The intrinsic superiority of the Western literature is indeed fully admitted by those members of the committee who support the oriental plan of education [...] It is, I believe, no exaggeration to say that all the historical information which has been collected in the Sanskrit language is less valuable than what may be found in the paltry abridgments used at preparatory schools in England. (Macauley's Minute on Indian Education submitted to the Governor General on 2 Feb 1835, cited in Said 1983, p 12)

Davis creates a connection between British imperialism and publishing when she states that '[i]n the first half of the twentieth century, India was at the heart of British imperial strategy, and was a major export market for British commodities, including books' (2019, p 680). The spread of the English language is significant in this matter as, according to Gandhi, Anglophone education in India was a façade for British colonising intentions:

The planned dissemination of English literature, Viswanathan tells us, was intended to manage negative perceptions of empire, not only by representing colonial rule as an educational mission, but also—and more insidiously—by circulating and popularising the human face of English culture and Englishmen. (1998, pp 144-146)

Tiffin and Lawson also discuss how 'imperial relations [...] were maintained in their interpellative phase largely by textuality' (1994, p 3, cited in Gandhi 1998, p 142). The concept of using English language and literature as a colonising tool has crossed into the field of literature itself: J G Farrell's Booker-winning mutiny narrative, *The Siege of Krishnapur* (1973), 'wittily dramatizes the postcolonial axiom that English literature is highly effective as an instrument of imperial power' (Huggan 2001, p 113).

Post India's independence in 1947, it was easier for the newly formed Indian government to establish English as the official language, and this was not uncommon across nations that had been colonised:

The language of the colonizer generally became the language of the colony. Used for government, the legal system, commerce and, perhaps most significantly, for education, the colonial language naturally became the main language of intellectual life and of books. The dominance of the colonial language continued after independence[.] (Altbach 1992, p 5)

The preference for English over other languages in India was aided by the politics surrounding Hindi. Hindi was not widely accepted as the national language due to its rarer usage in southern and eastern India, as Altbach explains:

[T]here has been continuing opposition in India to using Hindi as the sole national language. English remains a key language for commerce, politics, and intellectual life—40 years after independence close to half the books published in India are in English. (1992, pp 5-6)

Davis echoes Altbach by stating that ‘the spread of English constituted the most enduring impact of the British publishing industry in its former Empire’ (2019, p 682). It is key to note that the current reach of English has pushed its status from a colonial remnant to making it a global language, as can be seen in the case of the Chinese mainland, which was not colonised by the British yet is still influenced by its imperial activity as well as the cultural hegemony of the US and the UK, and the two nations’ primary language (discussed in Chapter 3). As Guangwei reports, the Chinese mainland in 2005 comprised ‘the largest English-learning population’ in the world as it placed an emphasis on bilingual education (2005, p 73). All of these circumstances have resulted in English enjoying a ‘special advantage’ (Chakava 1996, p 31) over native languages. Chakava speaks of the case of Kenya when he states that ‘[the use of English] still carries a certain amount of prestige in public life [...] [I]t is still seen as the language of the “properly educated”’ and that ‘education, class status, and an ability to speak “standard English” will usually be synonymous’ (1996, p 31, p 77). The same can be said of India. In fact, Huggan states that the English language has:

served as a lingua franca for [India’s] highly disparate intelligentsia [...] [though] the artificial dominance of English [...] overlooks the obvious fact that the vast bulk of the literary intelligentsia in India is not and has not been very proficient in English, even as a reading public[.] (2001, p 80)

In 1966 – almost two decades after Indian independence – 30% of the Indian population was literate and 2% was literate in English; yet approximately 15.5% of the reading public was literate in English (Altbach 1975, p 34). This led to Altbach stating that ‘English dominates written expression and, in a sense, intellectual life in a manner disproportionate to its numerical strength in the population’ (1975, p 34). The numbers have changed over the years, but the pattern has not. In 1993 when approximately 40% of the Indian population knew Hindi and only 2% knew English, Trivedi stated that the minority of Anglophone speakers formed the ‘privileged, prosperous, decision-making new ruling caste of the country’ (1993, p 20). Similarly, Gonsalves cites Narayanan (2012, p 13) to discuss the ‘benefit from colonial and neocolonial structures’ that the speakers and writers of English face in India, ‘including the lucrative Anglo-American publishing circuits’ (2015, p 434). In 2015 – almost seventy years after Indian independence – Gonsalves cited Bangay and Latham (2013) and Härmä (2011) to state that the growing Anglophone aspirational lower and middle classes in India include a significant number of people who focus on English education yet may be illiterate in their own mother tongues (p 431). This surge in English literacy has led to an increased number of Indians writing fiction in English (Gonsalves 2015, p 431).

The politics of language do not exist within simplistic splits between different languages; the politics are also shaped by the treatment of those individual languages. When the English spoken by Indians is compared to British or American English, the issue of dialect arises, as well as what constitutes as ‘correct’ or ‘Standard’ English (Chakava 1996, p 77). Though there exist dialects within British and American English too, it can be argued that Indian English is even further removed from standardised English. Ashcroft et al differentiate between **English**, which is received from the ‘centre’, and **english**, which is part of an:

act of appropriation which brings it under the influence of a vernacular tongue, the complex of speech habits which characterize the local language, or even the evolving and distinguishing local english of a monolingual society trying to establish its link with place. (1989, p 39)

Indeed, various countries have appropriated English to enter the field of Anglophone publishing, as Chakava argues:

Not only have the traditional English-speaking countries like the United States, Britain, and India grown in importance among the world's major book producers, non-English-speaking countries such as Germany, the Netherlands, Sweden, Norway, and, to a smaller extent, Japan have increased their publishing output in that language. (1996, p 92)

It is interesting that Chakava counts India as a 'traditional English-speaking' country, even though the language arrived in India through colonisation. The English used within India has been appropriated and adapted to create many kinds of English within the country, as Prasad (2011, p 76) and Snell and Kothari (2011) discuss (cited in Gonsalves 2015, p 434). These 'Indian english' dialects – as Ashcroft et al (1989) would refer to them – are not seen to be at par with their UK and US cousins. In fact, Indians still view English literature created outside India as superior to Indian-english writing, as evidenced by the fact that Indian universities focus on mostly British writing in their English literature degrees (University of Delhi BA (Hons) English Syllabus 2017); in the discussions by Viswanathan (1989), Trivedi (1993) and Huggan (2001); and the conversations I had with some of my interviewees (discussed in Chapters 3, 4 and 5).

Adopters and adapters of English hold contrary views regarding the widespread usage of the language. Some such as Viswanathan believe that the language served as a 'mask of conquest' (1989). However, many consider English an advantage since it can be used to 'resist the imposition of power' (Currey 2008, p 159) by fighting back against the oppressor through their own tongue. Balan believes that English enabled Indians to 'overthrow the colonial yoke in a little over 100 years' (2018, p 275), and Joshi posits that the English novel 'emerged in India as one of the most effective vehicles for voicing anticolonial and nationalist claims' (cited in Davis 2019, p 680). Due to the current status of English as an international language, directly writing in English or translating works originally written in other languages to English can help access an international audience (Chakava 1996, p 45; Currey 2008, p 164, p 172). Thus, choices regarding language are of political but also sociocultural significance.

Though English has been claimed and moulded by different nations, it does not mean that literature written in English from these countries is given equal opportunity or consideration. After a written work is completed, it is circulated by the publishing industry, which displays a clear hegemony of the US and the UK when it comes to Anglophone trade book publishing. The next

section discusses the hierarchy that exists within Indian publishing due to this hegemony, while describing the publishing landscape of India.

1.3.2 Anglophone Trade Book Publishing in India

As discussed, the focus of this thesis is on a small yet significant segment of the book publishing industry in India: trade books – i.e., books read for pleasure – written in the English language. Apart from the privilege associated with having a disposable income and the time to spend on hobbies, the language in question is also connected to privilege since English-language education is usually accessible by higher socioeconomic classes in India (Gonsalves 2015, p 434). Book publishing is a prominent industry in India in terms of revenue contribution, and books in English comprise a considerable portion of it – a bit over half of the trade print books in India are in English (*India Book Market Report 2022*).

Though over the years India has grown in rank globally as a producer of books over the years, even in 1975, UNESCO statistics indicated that India was among the world's largest publishers and ranked about eighth in terms of the volume of books produced annually (cited in Altbach 1975, p 33). India continues to be among the largest producers of print books (API and EY-Parthenon report 2021; *India Book Market Report 2015*), with an annual revenue in 2021–2022 standing at around INR 580.3 billion (*India Book Market Report 2022*) (approximately GBP 5.5 billion, as per Oanda.com 2024). To put this into global perspective, UK publishing contributed GBP 11 billion to the UK economy in 2023 (Publishers Association UK 2024). The Indian and British publishing revenues are not unrelated, since book publishing revenue from India contributes to the British publishing revenue due to cartelisation and multinationalisation, as will be discussed in this thesis. Across all languages, the majority of Indian publishing is educational and academic: 96% by revenue (*India Book Market Report 2022*). Of the remaining 4% that is trade publishing, Anglophone publishing made up 52% in 2019–2020 (*India Book Market Report 2022*). Therefore, Anglophone trade publishing comprises roughly 2.08% of total Indian print book publishing. Though this figure seems small, the Indian Anglophone trade publishing segment is a significant one to examine since – as discussed in 1.3.1 – those literate in English in India form the intellectual elite and hold sociopolitical power in the country, and thus this segment too holds symbolic power. Unsurprisingly, UNESCO designated Delhi as a World Book Capital in 2003, and in 2006, the Frankfurt Book Fair declared India its guest of honour, making it the first Asian

country to receive this distinction twice in twenty years, the first instance occurring in 1986 (Balan 2006, p 279). Still, Anglophone trade publishing in India has long been ignored in scholarship and this thesis aims to address that gap.

Trade publishing in the English language is thus thriving in India and takes place in various scales: multinational, large, medium, small and micro. India's National Capital Region (NCR), which includes cities such as Delhi, Gurgaon and Noida, is home to the Indian subsidiaries of the Big-5 Anglophone trade publishers, which dominate their publishing field – Penguin Random House (PRH), HarperCollins, Hachette, Pan Macmillan and Simon & Schuster (Gonsalves 2015, p 429) – as well as other multinational publishers such as Scholastic and Bloomsbury. NCR is also where the head offices of local publishing companies are based, such as Rupa Publications, Juggernaut Books, Srishti Publishers & Distributors, Speaking Tiger Books and Yoda Press. The annual revenues of the different publishers vary according to the scale of their operations. For instance, on the Big-5 multinational front, PRH India reported an annual turnover in 2021 of approximately INR 2.64 billion (roughly GBP 25 million as per Oanda.com 2024) (PRH India Annual Return 2021–22 2022); Hachette India had an annual turnover in 2023 of approximately INR 1 billion (roughly GBP 9.48 million, as per Oanda.com 2024) (stated in interview by Thomas Abraham, MD of Hachette India); and HarperCollins India had an annual turnover in 2023 greater than INR 3 billion (roughly GBP 28.43 million as per Oanda.com 2024) (stated in interview by Anantha Padmanabhan, CEO of HarperCollins India). On the other hand, the local independent Juggernaut – whose focus is on producing ebooks for their app but also publish print books – had an approximate annual turnover in 2020 of INR 180 million (roughly GBP 1.7 million as per Oanda.com 2024) (stated in interview by Chiki Sarkar, Founder–Publisher of Juggernaut).

The multinational Anglophone trade book publishing scenario in the country was not always so varied. Historically, the first three foreign publishers to launch their expansions in India were Longman in 1895, Macmillan in 1901 and Oxford University Press (OUP) in 1912 (Davis 2019, p 680). They focused on importing books from England and to some extent on reprinting or developing original books for educational use (Altbach 1975, p 38). Thus, British firms produced some of the first scholarly books published in India (Altbach 1975, p 38), which has traditionally had an oral culture (Gonsalves 2015, p 432). Post India's independence in 1947, restrictions were placed on foreign direct investment (Davis 2019, p 687), leading to the situation where Longman Green divested its foreign holdings to become Orient Longman, the Macmillan Company of India

became Macmillan India Limited and OUP in India became a branch of OUP UK and a department of the University of Oxford (Balan 2006, p 276). The first among the Big-5 *trade* publishers to establish operations in India post independence was Penguin in 1985 (twenty-eight years before its merger with Random House), and the remaining Big 5s followed suit in the 1990s and early 2000s. Since then, their Indian subsidiaries have not only directly imported titles from their British offices using Commonwealth rights, but also locally reprinted the foreign lead titles (titles expected to have great sales potential are categorised as ‘lead’ and ‘superlead’ to separate them from the rest of the publishing list) to save on printing and transport costs. The Big-5 and multinational publishers have created Indian publishing lists as well. But rarely have the books published within the local lists proved as successful as the imported ones, in terms of sales outwith India but also within India. For instance, on 29 July 2020 on the bestsellers lists on Amazon.in, Indian authors comprised seven of the top twenty in crime, thriller and mystery; nine of the top twenty in fantasy, horror and science fiction; eight of the top twenty in contemporary fiction; and just two of the top twenty in classic fiction – as shown in Fig 1.1:

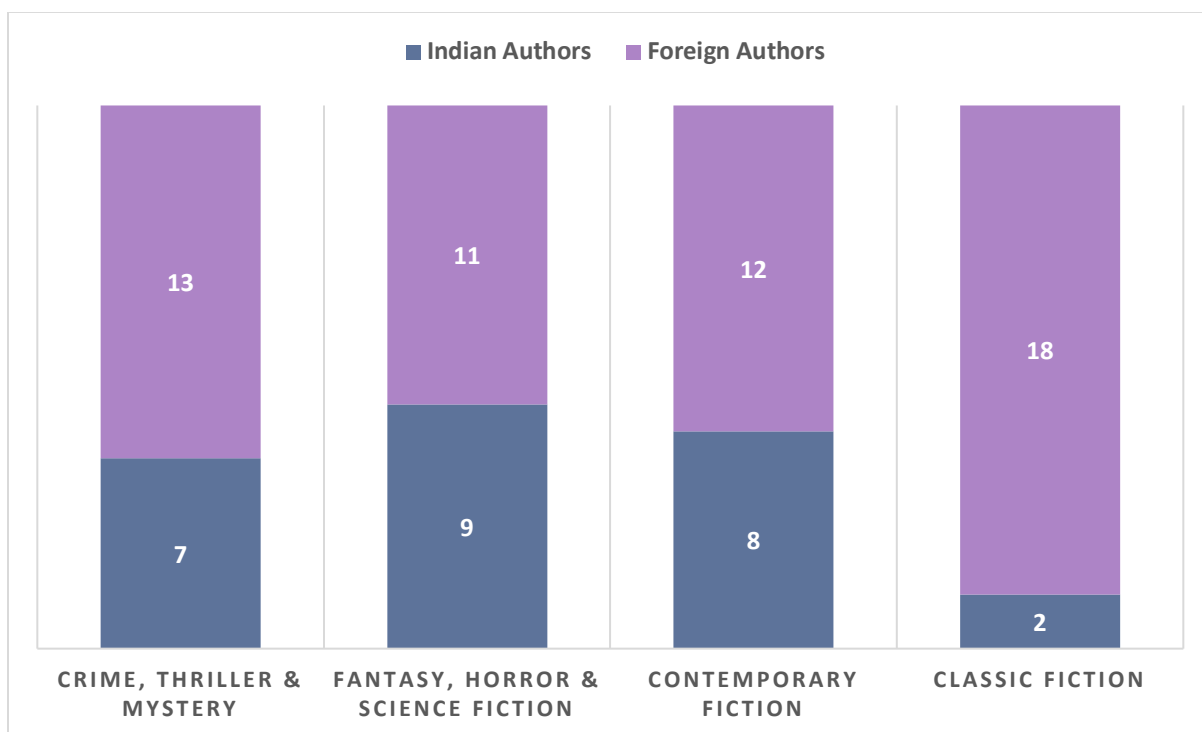


Fig 1.1: Amazon India top twenty bestsellers on 29 July 2020, split across books by Indian and foreign authors (created using data from Amazon.in)

This reinforces the hierarchy within multinational publishing in which the Indian subsidiary is just that, a ‘subsidiary’, defined as ‘*less important* than something else with which it is connected’ (Collins Dictionary [no date]; emphasis added).

When it comes to the birth of Indian local publishing, the efforts were ‘overshadowed by the British firms’, even when ‘*ad hoc*’ Indian publishers propped up temporarily with nationalist political motives before Indian independence (Altbach 1975, p 38). Post-independence, a few firms were established in the 1940s, such as Padma Publishers and Hind Kitabs (Altbach 1975, p 38). However, they too were short-lived, owing to the ‘[m]isperception of the market due to the largely political motivations of the firms, *harassment by the British authorities*, lack of professional and business expertise and experience, and *inadequate capital resources*’ (Altbach 1975, p 38; emphasis added). A few publishing houses erupted to answer the growing need for educational books in independent India, such as Asia Publishing House (founded 1943), Allied Publishers (founded 1947) and Popular Prakashan (founded 1962) (Altbach 1975, p 39). So, Indian publishing models as we know them in the twenty-first century were birthed in the mid-twentieth century, in terms of ‘outlook, financial basis, modes of operation’ (Altbach 1975, p 42). Also in the 1950s, paperbacks arrived on the Indian scene via Jaico Publishing House (which published mostly in English and is still in operation today) and Hind Pocket Books (which published in English, Hindi and other languages) (Altbach 1975, p 42). Many of these Indian publishers first started out as distributors, importers and booksellers, and then began their own publishing activities. Asia Publishing House, which abandoned most of its book import activity to focus only on publishing books, suffered losses because it could not sustain itself on the publishing activity alone (Altbach 1975, p 46). Thus, even then ‘[b]ook imports were [...] an important aspect of the publishing enterprise in India’ (Altbach 1975, p 40). International book trade agreements, such as the Berne Convention and Traditional Market Agreement that led to the current cartelisation of the Anglophone book market (discussed in Chapter 3), ‘left the Indian export market largely in the hands of British publishers, sometimes to the disadvantage of the Indian importer and reader’, as stated by Altbach (1975, p 40). Especially with the establishment of Indian subsidiaries of the multinationals, the revenue generated from import activity – critical to the survival of the publishers as discussed above – has been reserved for the multinationals while the local independent publishers have had to rely solely on their local publishing lists. Due to the

postcoloniality of literary tastes (discussed in Chapter 3), this reliance upon local Indian writing – though significant for developing a national literary space as a decolonising step (discussed in Chapter 3) – has been limiting for Indian local publishers. Thus, this thesis focuses on the postcoloniality of cartelisation and multinationalisation in the book industry.

On the *trade* publishing front, Indian local firms having a publishing journey going back several decades is rarer. Some exceptions include Jaico that was founded in the 1950s (Altbach 1975, p 42), Rupa Publications in the 1960s (RupaPublications.co.in [no date]) and the feminist independent publisher Kali for Women in 1984 (ZubaanBooks.com [no date]). More usual is the establishment of local companies in the early twenty-first century, frequently with a specific social cause – carrying on a tradition started by their predecessors that were founded with nationalist political motives. Gonsalves states that ‘[a]s the literary field changes to accommodate growth of various kinds [...] numerous small independent publishers have entered the field to speak specifically for particular sections of Indian society which have been underrepresented in Indian literature’ (2015, p 434) and cites examples:

Zubaan and Kali for Women focus on publishing work by and about women, Navayana focuses on work engaging with caste from an anti-caste perspective, and Queer Ink focuses on work by and about India’s sexually diverse and gender diverse communities. (2015, p 434)

These different players within publishing vary not only in terms of scale, but also reach (distribution), economic capital, social currency (prestige and brand recognition), answerability and publishing catalogues (discussed in Chapter 5). While discussing the layout of the Frankfurt Book Fair, Gonsalves states that in publishing, it is ‘the survival of the friendliest, not the fittest, or the richest, that matters’ (2015, p 429). Being friendly while networking at events such as the Frankfurt Book Fair may perhaps be the only recourse available to Indian local publishers, because they do not have the economic and cultural capital to support them in the way that the London branches of the Big 5 do. Rupa Publications may be an exception, having published a few local bestsellers, such as Ruskin Bond (Ghosh 2019) and Chetan Bhagat (Greenlees 2008), though Rupa still cannot directly access an international market for its print books (discussed in 4.1). Furthermore, it is more usual for Indian publishers to stay small and independent, or risk being bought by the Big 5, as Carter and Galligan (2013, p 7) said for the Australian book market. For

instance, a popular children's books start-up Duckbill was acquired by PRH India in 2019 (Penguin.co.in 2019).

While the Indian subsidiaries of Big-5 publishers may have brand recognition, they too cannot match their London counterparts in terms of economic power due to the lower revenues that the Indian branches generate. Abraham, MD of Hachette India, states in his essay in *Publishers on Publishing* (2018) that margins in India are lower compared to the rest of the world, especially the US and the UK that can have a mark-up of ten to twelve times' the cost of production; whereas in India, it would be two-and-a-half to five times' that cost (p 264). These lower margins do not leave enough to spend on marketing and promotion (Abraham 2018, p 264). The lower margins are there to keep trade books at accessible price points, since India has a low per capita income (Singh 1992, p 245). As per Anand, the 'guesstimate for per capita spending on books in India is an abysmal Rs 80 per person per year' (2018, p 209). These are 'guesstimates' because accurate statistical analyses of book sales are impossible in India due to the inability to capture sales in smaller towns and villages and those made by street peddlers or the 'wheelers' at railway and bus stations. While sales could be tracked in-house for each publisher, pirated books are frequently available, especially of lead titles, thus skewing actual sales figures. According to Indian publishing industry expert Seshadri, Nielsen can map only 50% of Indian book sales data (2018, p 113). Nonetheless, patterns of which companies' and authors' books are selling the most still emerge from this data, which is useful to consider. These especially helped me analyse which Anglophone trade books – foreign or local Indian – are more popular in India and what this implies for Indian publishing, writing and readership. This analysis ties in with conversations around postcoloniality and representation.

There are of course concerns regarding representation and diversity within the borders of the UK and the US as well. Studies such as Ramdarshan Bold's *Inclusive Young Adult Fiction: Authors of Colour in the United Kingdom* (2019) and Saha and van Lente's *Rethinking 'Diversity' in Publishing* (2020) have been conducted to examine this intra-national issue of 'diversity' (or lack thereof) within British publishing. My research adds to these conversations by considering diversity through the lens of national identity. I examine the international influence of UK and US publishing firms and the role they play in gatekeeping authors of other nationalities from accessing global Anglophone markets. My research also contributes to the deep historical contextualisation of this lack of diverse ethnic and international voices in Anglophone trade book publishing. Murray

et al have also conducted research on the challenges faced specifically by Indian publishers, agents, authors, translators and industry bodies in promoting Indian literature internationally in *India Publishing and Literature Sector Study* (2021). However, their study focuses on English translations of works written in Indian languages, which is different to the focus of my thesis – trade books originally written in English by Indian writers.

Though India's publishing scene contains a mixture of subsidiaries of foreign publishers and local indies, the former dominate the market due to their advantages (discussed in Chapter 5), which promote the already-famous foreign authors that they publish using Commonwealth rights (discussed in Chapter 4). Therefore, within this research, I examine the business practices of the Big 5 and the Indian local publishing companies to better understand why Indian authors find themselves at a disadvantage at the global Anglophone scale. Next, I discuss the research question and objectives that resulted out of the research context I discussed above.

1.4 Research Question and Objectives

The aim of this research is to analyse the inequities in global publishing structures affecting Indian publishers and thereby blocking them from promoting Indian authors at a global Anglophone scale. To do so, I ask the following research question:

What roles have cartelisation and multinationalism played in furthering postcoloniality in Indian Anglophone trade book publishing?

To address the research question, I asked the following sub-questions:

- a. To what extent are the present structures within global Anglophone trade book publishing postcolonial in nature?
- b. How has the cartelisation of Anglophone trade book publishing impacted Indian publishing and writers?
- c. What role has multinationalisation played in furthering cartelisation and its postcoloniality in Anglophone trade book publishing?

Keeping these sub-questions in mind, I also set out the following three objectives for my research:

- to contribute to scholarship on contemporary Indian Anglophone trade book publishing, thereby expanding available research in the field

- to include the perspectives of Indian publishing professionals (and mine as an Indian author, academic and former publishing professional) on the topic as a decolonising research method
- to examine the postcoloniality of present Anglophone trade book publishing structures so that my study, which focuses on India but has used literature from comparators to inform the theoretical framework, could be extended to other developing nations or former colonies

Through the learnings from secondary and primary research, I also offer recommendations so that Indian local publishers and writers can better access a global Anglophone readership. In the next section, I describe the structure of the thesis that enabled me to answer the sub-questions and the main research question as well as helped me meet my research objectives.

1.5 Structure of the Thesis

The focuses of the six chapters in my thesis are: the research topic, context and question; the methodological approach of the thesis; the postcoloniality of present structures within Anglophone trade book publishing; cartelisation caused by Commonwealth rights; multinationalisation in Indian publishing; and conclusion and recommendations. Since my research is interdisciplinary and encompasses three major themes (postcolonialism, cartelisation and multinationalisation), I chose not to have one expansive chapter dedicated to literature review. Instead, I grouped the literature review and primary data analyses in different chapters according to their theme and focus to make the thesis more readable and the discussions easier to cross-reference. I also include in each chapter – like this one – an autoethnographic vignette relevant to the focus of that chapter (discussed in Chapter 2). The structure of the forthcoming thesis is discussed in detail below.

In **Chapter 2: Methodology**, I place my research within an organisational analysis research paradigm developed by Burrell and Morgan (2016). I discuss my subjectivist ontology and why a mixed-methods approach with a significance laid upon qualitative methods suited my research best. I describe the secondary academic and industry-based literature I utilised to develop my arguments before engaging with primary research in the form of autoethnography and semi-structured interviews of elite participants engaged in Anglophone trade book publishing in London and Delhi. Additionally, I discuss the ethical considerations I made as well as how my original plans evolved over the course of the research.

Chapter 3: Postcoloniality of Anglophone Trade Book Publishing Structures in India

examines the theoretical framework underpinning my research, i.e., postcolonial theory, and places it in a book publishing context. I use this chapter to bring together ideas of the dual identity of the publishing industry as a for-profit business that has a sociocultural impact; the creation of a nation after colonial independence; the significance of developing a national literary space and the role of local/indigenous publishing in developing it; and the postcoloniality of present Anglophone trade book publishing structures. This complex theory is foundational to contextualise the research I have conducted on the cartelisation caused by territorial rights and multinationalisation and how they further the ill effects of postcolonialism in developing countries, especially former British colonies. I utilise both available literature and primary interview data within the chapter.

I focus on the cartelisation of Anglophone trade book publishing within **Chapter 4: Cartelisation Through Commonwealth Rights**. This chapter posits the theory that forms the crux of my research – that due to international copyright conventions and the resulting territorial rights categorisations, the Anglophone literary world has been split into two divisions, one which is controlled by multinational US publishers and the other by multinational UK publishers. I showcase this cartelisation of Anglophone territories through a map I created from primary interview data and existing literature. Since copyright was invented as a response to piracy, I also examine piracy within this chapter, especially the rampant physical book piracy in India. Due to the dearth of scholarship on contemporary Indian trade book publishing, I discuss and extend the literature on copyright conventions in other countries such as Kenya, China and Australia. Within the primary interview data analysis, I focus on the interviewees' responses to copyright, piracy, Commonwealth rights as well as, significantly, the perception of India as a market territory for book exports, rather than a source of literature to be imported in other Anglophone nations. For the latter, I utilise internal publisher sales data shared by the interviewees as well as data shared by Nielsen BookData India.

In **Chapter 5: Multinationalisation in Indian Anglophone Trade Book Publishing**, I continue the discussion of cartelisation to examine the role that multinationalisation has played in furthering its postcoloniality. I extend the research context discussion in Chapter 1 of the non-homogenous Anglophone trade publishing landscape of India, which includes a mixture of multinational and local publishers. Similarly, I further develop the history of multinationalisation in the Indian Anglophone publishing industry. Since within India local publishers are usually

independents, I identify six factors that impact their operations. These players – depending upon their multinational/local status – usually vary in terms of scale, reach, economic capital, social currency, answerability and publishing catalogue. I continue the argument in Chapter 3 that an indigenous publishing industry is required to develop a national literary space, which is a decolonising step for a former colony. I do so by examining the disadvantages that Indian local publishers face when competing with the multinationals. I again use a mix of secondary and primary research within the chapter. This chapter is the longest in the thesis as, along with presenting research on multinationalisation, it consolidates the discussions in Chapters 3 and 4 of cartelisation and its postcoloniality.

I utilise **Chapter 6: Conclusion and Recommendations** to recap my thesis and offer suggestions to improve the current cartelised publishing scenario. First, I highlight the contribution of my thesis to new knowledge, summarise my key arguments and answer the research question. Then I utilise the primary research I conducted and the literature I examined to offer recommendations for improving current publishing structures. Since my research falls within the radical humanist and not the radical structuralist paradigm (discussed in Chapter 2), I opt for a more pragmatic approach in offering ways to improve the scenario for Indian local publishers and writers within the existing system of cartelisation. My aim with these recommendations is to gradually encourage change to lead the book industry to a day when cartelisation is an archaic practice and international book trade can function with ease in multiple directions among equivalent national literary powers. Finally, I recommend areas where further research can be carried out and end with an autoethnographic vignette – the same way this thesis began.

Chapter 2: Methodology

2.1 How will I relay my research?

Before beginning the PhD, I was not well-versed in research design. But I did know that along with filling gaps in existing research, I wanted to maintain my professional connection with the book publishing industry. In fact, I wished to utilise the research to further build my industry network. That would prove especially valuable in case I wanted to return to a career in publishing. I had enjoyed interviewing authors and publishers for the literary magazine that I had co-founded in 2018, so everything clicked into place. Since there is not much available scholarly research on Indian trade publishing featuring contemporary publishing professionals, I would address those absences. I decided to platform leaders of Delhi and London trade publishing via semi-structured interviews to discuss a publishing landscape that was not commonly included in academic study, i.e., the Indian publishing industry.

I was anxious about academic writing and research. Granted, I did an undergraduate degree in English literature, but I completed that years ago in 2013, and since then I had only written short critical analysis essays for my master's, with the prime focus laid on creative writing. The imposter syndrome reared its head when it came to academic writing. What I did feel confident in was creative writing, and it seemed a shame that I could not share my personal experiences as a publishing professional, author, reader and student of literature in India, when all of these different aspects of my identity had been shaped by British publishing and birthed this research topic in the first place. Without knowing the term 'autoethnography', I asked my supervisors if I could introduce the thesis chapters with vignettes, which I was encouraged to do, and I have since learnt that their addition is more than a stylistic choice. The more I read about autoethnography and practiced it, the more I realised that it is a valid research form in itself. It enables the platforming of first-hand experiences relevant to the research, which is the perfect fit for my academic and professional background and the research topic at hand. The autoethnographic vignettes gently pull the reader in and emphasise that my research has not been conducted in some feigned objectivity, in a vacuum. My research is deeply personal, and the vignettes allow me to share my experiences to show how copyright laws and other business practices established by

people long dead still impact real, live people today. So, while the creative vignettes first arose out of a fear of the academic machinery, I now realise that they not only make the thesis accessible and lend it a human touch, but they also substantiate my arguments as a research method.

This chapter is dedicated to the methodological approach of my thesis. I situate my research within the organisational analysis paradigms developed by Burrell and Morgan (2016), as well as within theory development approaches and designs. I discuss the rationale behind my chosen methodology: mixed methods with qualitative research having a dominant role. I describe the secondary research I have used for this research. As discussed in – and shown via – the vignette above, I have taken an autoethnographic approach to introduce (or conclude) each thesis chapter, and I examine the theories surrounding autoethnography and the purpose the approach fulfils in my research. I then detail the processes of organising and conducting interviews; analysing interview data; and gaining ethical approval. I conclude by sharing the original plans I had and how – and why – they evolved over the course of the research.

2.2 Research Paradigm, Theory Development Approach and Design

While this thesis examines business practices within book publishing, my research is interdisciplinary in nature. Along with business and book publishing, my research also falls within the fields of literature, politics, history, postcolonial theory and law. Overall, my work is situated within the arts and humanities, and I take a subjectivist ontological approach in my thesis. As per Saunders et al, a ‘subjectivist researcher is interested in different opinions and narratives that can help to account for different social realities of different social actors’ (2023, p 137). My aim has been to record and examine the social (as well as cultural and economic) realities of different stakeholders – or social actors – influencing or participating in Indian Anglophone trade book publishing. Saunders et al also state that subjectivists ‘believe that as they actively contribute to the creation and use of these data they cannot detach themselves from their own values’ (2023, p 137). Thus, I am reflexive about my positioning within the research and how the research topic is impacted by my experiences of being a reader, student of literature, author and publishing professional in India through the autoethnographic vignettes, which I discuss in detail in 2.4.

To situate my research within a research paradigm, I utilise Burrell and Morgan's (2016) 2x2 matrix of four distinct paradigms of organisational analysis, which have been discussed and graphed by Saunders et al (2023):

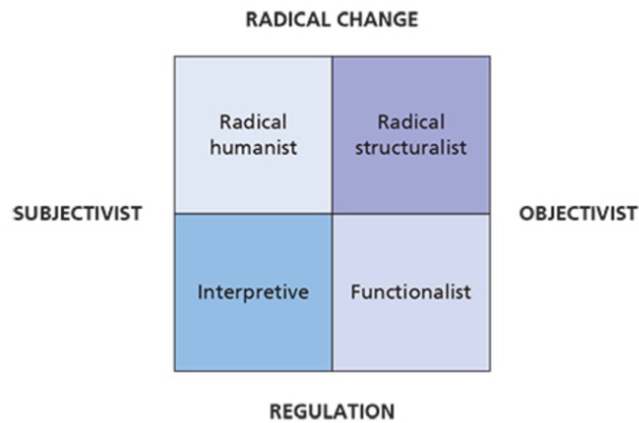


Fig 2.1: Four research paradigms of organisational analysis developed from Burrell and Morgan (2016) (Saunders et al 2023, p 142)

My research relates to the 'radical humanist paradigm' as defined by Saunders et al, which they describe as being:

located within the subjectivist and radical change dimensions. [...] [T]he radical change dimension adopts a critical perspective on organisational life. [...] Working within this paradigm you would be concerned with changing the status quo. As with the radical structuralist paradigm, your primary focus would concern the issues of power and politics, domination and oppression. However, you would approach these concerns from within a subjectivist ontology, which would lead you to emphasise the importance of social construction, language, processes, and instability of structures and meanings in organisational realities. (2023, p 144)

As my ontological approach is subjectivist and I am concerned with examining the negative postcolonial impact of the publishing status quo and thus seeking radical change, my research can be placed in the radical humanist dimension within this matrix.

My research is not action-based research as my primary focus has been on examining the postcolonial publishing problem as opposed to providing solutions, though I do offer some recommendations in the final chapter. Moreover, I engaged in my interviews with a hope of

initiating dialogue on the cartelisation of Anglophone trade publishing and its postcolonial impact. My interviewees considered my hypothesis through my questioning. A few, such as Stephen Page (Executive Chair, Faber & Faber), even asked at the end of the interview whether my research showed the systems in which British and American publishers distribute Anglophone trade books to be ‘anachronistic’. I regarded this question coming from an industry leader such as Page significant, since it is hard to take a step back and consider the larger picture when one is involved in the day-to-day grind of publishing. Indeed, I myself had not considered why the system is set up in the way it is when I worked with Commonwealth rights in publishing. It took me the distance of a few years and a few thousand kilometres from my publishing career to begin this path of questioning.

Though I knew that my theoretical framework would be shaped by postcolonial theory, I took the abductive reasoning approach to fully develop the theory. The abductive approach is ‘open and sensitive to data while also using pre-existing theories for inspiration and to help identify and interpret patterns’ (Saunders et al 2023, pp 157-158). Saunders et al mention that the abductive approach ‘begins with the observation of a surprising phenomenon or fact’ (2023, p 158) and autoethnographers often discuss a moment of epiphany (Ellis et al 2011; Adams et al 2015, pp 26-27) that impacts their work. My epiphany was realising that the current publishing systems are having a damaging postcolonial impact on Indian publishers, writers and readers. Through abductive reasoning, I worked backwards to establish its historical context (Saunders et al 2023, p 159) to understand the causal relationships between colonialism, piracy, copyright, territorial rights, multinationalisation and the postcolonial scenario. I also employed abductive reasoning to create my six-factor framework of publishing capitals (discussed in 5.2.3): I used Bourdieu’s (1986), Thompson’s (2012) and Gonsalves’s (2015) forms of publishing capitals to create questions for my primary interviews and then redeveloped their theories for the Indian publishing landscape, with a focus on my research topic, using the knowledge I gained from the interviews. Abductive reasoning helped me in another way. While I could find relevant information on other publishing contexts, such as Kenya and Australia, I could not find enough scholarship on the Indian context. The abductive approach enabled me to relate the research on other publishing landscapes to the Indian publishing context to address that gap in scholarship (Saunders et al 2023, p 160).

To address such a complex interdisciplinary research topic, my research purpose has involved combined studies (Saunders et al 2023, p 181), with elements of exploratory (beginning

with a broad focus and narrowing it as the research progresses), descriptive (describing the research context) and explanatory (studying the problem to establish causal relationships between different variables) studies (Saunders et al 2023, pp 180-181). The exploratory study enabled me to examine how Commonwealth rights and multinationalisation are intrinsically tied with colonisation. I engage in descriptive study to create a record of contemporary Indian Anglophone trade book publishing and encapsulate its concerns for my research context. Through an explanatory study, I establish causal relationships between piracy, birth of copyright and territorial rights, multinationalisation in the publishing industry and the postcolonial impact of British trade publishing upon Indian publishing.

To conduct the combined studies, I adopted a mixed-methods approach, laying significance on qualitative methods. Erickson describes qualitative inquiry as the quest to ‘discover and to describe narratively what particular people do in their everyday lives and what their actions mean to them’ by asking: ‘What are the *kinds* of things (material and symbolic) to which people in this setting orient as they conduct everyday life?’ (2018, p 36; emphasis added). Erickson distinguishes between qualitative and quantitative methods by considering their word roots: the Latin *qualitas* focuses on the qualities or features of entities whereas the Latin *quantitas* focuses on the variances in amounts (2018, p 36). My study does not focus on quantifying the impact of cartelisation of publishing but seeks to understand the *kind* of impact it has had, i.e., postcolonial. Therefore, the primary research method has been qualitative in nature: semi-structured interviews with elite participants in London and Delhi publishing (discussed in 2.5) and autoethnography (discussed in 2.4). The literature review I conducted was also primarily of qualitative sources. In some cases I performed a quantitative analysis of qualitative data, such as analysing the ratio of Indian to non-Indian authors winning international literary awards in Chapter 3. To a limited extent, I utilised secondary quantitative data such as Nielsen BookData India reports and internal company sales data offered by the interviewees to add detail to the arguments I make with qualitative methods. While most of the questions asked in the interviews sought qualitative data, I asked a few questions seeking quantitative data. These questions included the impact of piracy on publishers’ sales, the split in the revenue generated by publishers’ local and foreign print lists, and the ratio between importation of foreign books and exportation of or sale of rights/licenses of their local books. Rather than exact numbers, the quantitative data responses to these questions were approximations (and have been indicated accordingly), which still help in furthering my arguments.

To understand the need for my primary research, I next discuss the available secondary research I referred to for my thesis.

2.3 Secondary Research: Developing My Research and Addressing Gaps

Through my exploratory and explanatory research, I realised that my thesis would have three main themes: postcolonialism (which is also the research theory underpinning my work), cartelisation through territorial rights, and the role that multinationalisation plays in advancing cartelisation. To collate the secondary research for these three large fields within a single chapter would have made for a disorganised writing and reading experience. Instead, I present the relevant secondary research across three chapters focusing on the major themes of this work in Chapters 3, 4 and 5. This structure also makes for easier cross-referencing between the primary and secondary research within the chapters.

I examine scholarly and industry-based literature as secondary research for this thesis. Among academic works, I refer to books, journal articles and recorded online webinars from the fields of book history, publishing studies, literature, research methodology and postcolonial theory. These helped me conduct exploratory research and develop my arguments. Since my research is in the intersection of postcolonial theory and publishing/book history, I refer to works by Altbach (1975, 1992, 1998); Trivedi (1993); Barker et al (1994); Gandhi (1998); Huggan (2001); Bhabha (2004); Casanova (2004); Brouillette (2007); Saha (2016); and Davis (2019), among others. Since this research also involves contemporary professional practice in an industry, I utilise industry-focused literature. This includes a range of publishing journals such as *The Bookseller*, data from publishing bodies such as Publishers Association UK and industry reports such as Nielsen BookData's India Book Market reports from 2015 and 2022, and API and EY-Parthenon report 2021. Furthermore, as I add context to my research with descriptive analyses of the sociocultural landscape in India, I refer to news sources like *Hindustan Times*, *The New York Times*, *BBC* and *Reuters* and Indian and British governmental websites. This rich mix of data helps me address the multidisciplinary nature of my research, whereby I can balance theoretical and professional elements and use industry data to showcase how the theory of postcolonialism impacts the publishing industry and the wider sociocultural landscape.

I found a dearth of academic scholarship on the twenty-first century Indian Anglophone trade book publishing landscape. Nor is there a dedicated national book industry journal in India

as there is *The Bookseller* in the UK and *Publishers Weekly* in the US. As discussed in Chapter 1, the only books and research fully/primarily dedicated to Indian publishing are Nitasha Devasar's *Publishers on Publishing: Inside India's Book Business* (2018), Philip G Altbach's *Publishing in India: An Analysis* (1975), Robert Fraser and Mary Hammond's *Books Without Borders, Volume 2: Perspectives from South Asia* (2008), and Padmini Ray Murray et al's *India Publishing and Literature Sector Study* (2021). Devasar's 2018 book provides a wide-ranging but brief overview of Indian publishing. It includes short essays from Indian publishing professionals and other book-industry stakeholders on varied aspects of the industry, such as the Indian publishing landscape, policy, publishing languages, literary festivals, translations, self-publishing, streams of publishing (academic, educational and trade), and so on. This book provided me a starting point to better understand the landscape, and I used learnings from it to develop my research, which has a narrower focus: Indian Anglophone print trade book publishing. Altbach's 1975 book was helpful in tracing patterns from a recently independent India to the current scenario, as it examines the Indian publishing landscape prevalent in the 1970s. However, it focuses primarily on educational and academic publishing and ignores trade publishing, as mentioned by Altbach himself on the first page: the volume is concerned only with 'that aspect of publishing which contributes directly to the creation and diffusion of knowledge' and has omitted 'mass market fiction' (Altbach 1975, p 1). Fraser and Hammond's 2008 book aided my understanding of the publishing context in India in the colonial period though it does not in detail address the twenty-first century Anglophone trade publishing landscape. I engaged with Murray et al's 2021 research as a reader but also as a focus group participant. It enabled me to learn more about the Indian local languages book market and translations, which is an area worthy of study but beyond the purview of my research.

Since I was unable to locate many contemporary accounts of the Indian Anglophone book trade, I expanded my area of research to other countries where I thought a similar phenomenon may occur. In doing so, I learnt more about the publishing industries of Kenya, South Africa, China and Australia, as mentioned in 2.2. Interestingly, though these countries have varying relationships with the UK and the US, scholars from these regions have spoken about the disadvantaged position their indigenous writers and publishing companies find themselves in when compared to UK and US writers and publishers, especially on a global Anglophone platform. I found that the postcoloniality of a cartelised Anglophone trade publishing world affected other nations too, especially former colonies and developing nations. Therefore, I adapted their findings to my

research to fill some gaps within this field in India but also to showcase that the publishing hegemony of the UK and the US is negatively impacting other countries as well and requires more attention. The lack of extensive reading material on the Indian publishing landscape made the need for my primary research even more urgent and significant. I discuss my primary research in the following sections.

2.4 Primary Research: Storytelling Through Autoethnography

As touched upon in this chapter's opening vignette, I had a few aims regarding the presentation of this thesis. I wanted the writing to be accessible and even enjoyable, I wanted to utilise my experiences to add qualitative data to my research, and I wanted to be a reflexive researcher by describing how I am impacted by the research topic. The answer to all these goals was autoethnography, combined with more standardised research.

Carolyn Ellis, who has written extensively upon autoethnography, breaks down the term 'autoethnography' to its three elements. 'Graphy' is the writing that seeks to describe and systematically analyse the 'auto' – personal experience – with the aim to understand 'ethno' or the cultural experience (2004). A prominent point of critique of autoethnography is its focus on the self and thus being 'self-indulgent, narcissistic, introspective and individualised' (Atkinson 1997 and Coffey 1999, cited in Méndez 2013, p 283). However, as Ellis and Bochner clarify, the emphasis on the three elements of auto, ethno and graphy can vary (2000, p 740), and in this variance, as well as in the way I have utilised autoethnography, I address the 'self-indulgent' concern. Firstly, I do not employ the autoethnographic approach through the entirety of the thesis; instead, I introduce (or conclude) each chapter with a vignette. Secondly, I focus on the self to comment on culture: I use personal stories rooted in my experiences of being a reader, student of literature, author and publishing professional in India – experiences highly relevant to the research topic – to describe the culture I grew up and worked in. Lastly, I use a multi-method qualitative approach with the inclusion of literature review and interviews to bring in other perspectives and experiences, and not just from India but also Kenya, South Africa, China and Australia. Furthermore, I disagree with the view that researchers must be 'objective' and distant from their work, especially in subjectivist research such as mine that is grounded in my personal and professional experiences of the publishing industry, which has a dual identity of being a for-profit business having a sociocultural impact (discussed in Chapter 3). Denzin and Lincoln state that

‘[o]bjective reality can never be captured’ (2000) and Ellis et al state that ‘autoethnography is one of the approaches that acknowledges and accommodates subjectivity, emotionality, and the researcher’s influence on research, rather than hiding from these matters or assuming they don’t exist’ (2011). Therefore, the data derived from the interactions of my ‘self’ with my cultural and social context have resulted in creating a rich subjectivist account (Méndez 2013, p 284).

Using my experiences to capture my social and cultural context become even more significant when considering that autoethnography rose in response to the colonial nature of ethnography: ‘From the 1700s to the early 1900s, ethnography was developed to study cultures in societies that had been brought under the rule of a colonial power, to facilitate imperialist control and administration’ (Saunders et al 2023, p 197). Conquergood (1991), Riedmann (1993) and Ellis (2007) also discuss the colonialist attitudes in entering a culture and writing about it as an outsider, often motivated by monetary and/or professional gain (discussed in Ellis et al 2011). Since autoethnography captures an individual’s experiences, it resists the ‘master, universal narratives’, for which there is no desire as per de Certeau (1984) and Lyotard (1984); those narratives are in fact impossible to create (discussed in Ellis et al 2011). Therefore, as an approach, autoethnography ‘treats research as a political, socially-just and socially conscious act’ (Adams and Holman Jones 2008, cited in Ellis et al 2011). As discussed in 2.2, my research falls within the radical humanist research paradigm, and thus the autoethnographic approach lends itself to the political and socially conscious act of my work. Considering Linda T Smith’s view that no method is neutral (discussed in 2.5), the choice I made in including autoethnography adds to the decolonising nature of my work, which lines up perfectly with the research theory. As a participant of the context that I am writing about, I am engaging with a decolonising research method. Therefore, autoethnography has performed three functions in my thesis: stylistic, as a vehicle to create data out of my experiences and as a decolonising research method.

2.5 Primary Research: Semi-structured Interviews and Their Analysis

Since my research takes an interpretivist philosophical position, in which I ‘emphasise [the] interviewees’ views and cultures; considering them as social actors who interact with, interpret, and create their social world as well as being shaped by it’ (Saunders et al 2023, p 441), semi-structured interviews were more appropriate over structured interviews in my research. Semi-structured interviews allowed me to ask questions, respond to the interviewees’ responses and

interpret the data (Saunders et al 2023, p 441). I had a list of questions arranged thematically that I asked the participants, but I allowed space for following their lines of thought and modified the flow of questions accordingly, thus following exploratory and explanatory research purposes.

Author of *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples* (1999) Linda T Smith states that ‘methods are not neutral’ (2021). It is evident through my chosen research method (conducting web-based interviews with participants engaging in publishing books in a language of privilege in India) that I am engaging with a privileged space in publishing. However, to address the gap in scholarship on contemporary Indian Anglophone trade book publishing, I considered the kind of questions I asked and whom I asked them. Not only was the focus of my interviews on Indian publishing, but I ensured that Indian voices would be well represented in the interviews. Thus, out of the seventeen interview participants, ten were Indians working in the Indian publishing landscape. I interviewed seven British publishing professionals based and working in the UK, but their publishing activities and work were relevant to Indian publishing. Their names, designations and organisations are given in Table 2.1:

Category	Name	Designation	Organisation
British Big-5/Multinational Publishers	Ben Wright	International Sales Director	HarperCollins UK
	Chris Turner	International Sales Director	Penguin Random House UK
	David Shelley	Group CEO ¹	Hachette UK
	Jonathan Atkins	International Director	Pan Macmillan UK
	Stephen Page	Executive Chair	Faber & Faber
	Will Atkinson	MD & Publisher ²	Atlantic Books
British Literary Agents	David Godwin	Co-founder–Literary Agent	David Godwin Associates
Indian Subsidiaries of Big-5/Multinational Publishers	Anantha Padmanabhan	CEO	HarperCollins India
	Nandan Jha	Executive VP: Sales & Product	Penguin Random House India
	Rajdeep Mukherjee	MD	Pan Macmillan India
	Shantanu Duttagupta	Publisher ³	Scholastic India
	Thomas Abraham	MD	Hachette India
Indian Local Publishers	Arpita Das	Founder–Publisher	Yoda Press
	Arup Bose	Publisher	Srishti Publishers & Distributors
	Chiki Sarkar	Founder–Publisher	Juggernaut
Indian Literary Agents	Anish Chandy	Founder–Literary Agent	Labyrinth Literary Agency
	Kanishka Gupta	Founder–Literary Agent	Writer’s Side

Table 2.1: List of interviewees for the research

¹ Shelley became CEO of Hachette Book Group US along with Hachette UK in January 2024 (Anderson 2023). As I interviewed Shelley when he was Group CEO of Hachette UK, that is what I refer to in this thesis.

² Atkinson stepped down as MD and Publisher of Atlantic Books in 2023 (Bayley 2023). As I interviewed Atkinson during his time at Atlantic, that is what I refer to in this thesis.

³ Duttagupta left Scholastic India in 2022 (stated by Duttagupta in an email exchange) and is now working as Executive Publisher for Fingerprint Publishing, which is the publishing arm of one of India’s largest book distributors, Prakash Books. As I interviewed Duttagupta during his time at Scholastic, that is what I refer to in this thesis.

I had originally planned to conduct the interviews in person in fieldwork trips to London and Delhi. However, I had to adapt the interviews to the virtual sphere due to the COVID-19 pandemic and its associated lockdowns in UK and India. I conducted the one-on-one interviews over MS Teams between November 2020 and January 2022 and created audio recordings of our conversations that I later transcribed and analysed (discussed in detail below).

Having worked at the Indian subsidiaries of a few multinational publishers, I already had three points of contact to begin my primary research: two in India and one in the UK. I first reached out to a former colleague and a former boss in India due to our prior working relationships and rapport, which I also relied upon when asking them to introduce me to other prominent publishing professionals. Since no incentive was offered for research participation, I had to rely upon the interviewees' goodwill. After utilising my network to interview a few leaders of the industry, I then 'cold-emailed' the ones I did not know and attempted to persuade them of my legitimacy by describing the contribution I would be making to contemporary Indian publishing scholarship and the names of the people I had already interviewed. Since publishing is a highly networked industry, I hoped that the names would carry weight and credibility. This method often worked, and I continued by asking each interviewee if they had any recommendations of people I should speak with and if they could introduce me to them. Similarly, I had been acquainted with one interviewee in London publishing and requested him to connect me to others there. I then used a similar technique to reach participants I had not met before. Since the interviewees agreed to be named in the research (discussed in detail below), I was able to follow this technique to obtain more interviews.

I organised my interviewees into different categories: British Big-5 publisher, British independent publisher, Indian subsidiary of multinational publisher, Indian local publisher, Indian literary agent, and British literary agent. For each category of interviewee, I created an interview guide that I utilised. A few participants, such as Shantanu Duttagupta (Scholastic India), Chris Turner (PRH UK) and Nandan Jha (PRH India) asked for an overview of the planned questions before agreeing to the interview. I spoke to Duttagupta on the phone, describing the direction of my questions, and sent the interview guide to Turner and Jha (I discuss PRH asking to see the questions in Chapter 5). Thomas Abraham (Hachette India) asked for a written set of questions that he could respond to in writing as well due to screen exhaustion, so his was the only interview I did not conduct orally, though I did ask for clarifications over email exchanges. As it happened,

my first five interviewees shared specific insights into the industry, and I could anonymise their views and use them as bases for questions in subsequent interviews. For instance, Arpita Das (Yoda) stated that she would be happy if her books were pirated and sold on footpaths, as that would imply that her political books were bestsellers (discussed in Chapter 4). I then shared this view – anonymising the source – in later interviews and asked others’ perspectives on it. Though I do not ultimately anonymise the interview sources in the thesis, I anonymised them in this process to reduce biases and because a few interviewees had asked to see their quotes before they were publicly shared (discussed in 2.6). I also informed the interviewees at the start of each conversation that while I had a topic guide and questions in place, I was happy to follow the flow of the conversation as these were semi-structured interviews. We often did so, though I usually managed to ask all my pre-planned questions too. The semi-structured nature of the interviews allowed me to ‘probe’ my interviewees and ask for clarifications or more details, especially when they used certain phrases that added depth to the conversation (Saunders et al 2023, p 451), like ‘logistical sense’ while referring to the system of cartelisation (discussed in Chapter 4).

For the interview data analysis, I used a thematic analysis approach, which involves ‘coding qualitative data to identify themes or patterns for further analysis, related to [the] research question’ (Saunders et al 2023, p 665). This approach enabled me to organise wide-ranging topics such as postcolonialism, copyright, territorial rights, piracy, the Indian publishing landscape, the perception of Indian writing, and multinationalisation in the publishing industry into the three chapters and conduct a comparative analysis of the different interviewees’ responses. Thematic analysis also allowed me to follow an abductive approach, in which I began interview data analysis with theoretically derived themes that I continued modifying as I explored more interview data (Saunders et al 2023, p 665). For most of the first draft of the thesis, I organised the data from the interviews under different themes in a word processor document. However, for Chapter 5 – and second draft onwards for the rest of the thesis – I used NVivo, a qualitative data analysis software, to organise the interview data. I uploaded the interview transcriptions to the software, created ‘nodes’ (topics/themes) for the different chapters and coded the transcriptions using these nodes. I tallied the first drafts I had already written against this method to ensure that I had not missed anything pertinent and filled the gaps accordingly. Both approaches were similar in nature – I chose and tagged data under a particular topic/node either in a word processor document or on NVivo – but the latter allowed an easier method of storing and referencing the data. Thus, I

followed Saunders et al's six phases of thematic analysis: 'data familiarisation; data coding; initial theme generation; theme development and review; theme refining, defining, and naming; writing up' (2023, p 665) through the acts of transcription, coding in two mediums, writing multiple drafts and rechecking the transcripts and coded data.

I followed these rigorous processes because it is especially significant to clarify meaning within the thesis itself and during the research process. Saunders et al state that in qualitative research 'meanings are derived from words and images, not numbers' (2023, p 186) and can lead to multiple meanings. Similarly, it was necessary to clarify the meanings of my words with the research participants as ethical practice. The steps I took to address these concerns are discussed in the following section.

2.6 Ethical Approval

I applied for ethical approval before the end of the first year of my PhD with the General University Ethics Panel (GUEP) at the University of Stirling. I received the approval – reference number GUEP (20 21) 1015 – before the start of the second year of the PhD. Thus, I was able to focus on generating primary data from the second year onwards. However, due to the COVID-19-related distress and health concerns impacting the interviewees or their families, I paused my interviewing out of respect and rescheduled a few interviews as well.

I was granted ethical approval for conducting both semi-structured interviews and focus groups, the latter of which I later abandoned (discussed in 2.7). I submitted the general ethical approval form to the panel, along with a fieldwork risk assessment form, participant recruitment guidance sheets, sample letters requesting interviews and focus group participation, participation information sheets, consent forms and topic guides for the different categories of interviewees (discussed in 2.5). The ethical approval was straightforward as I carefully considered my research methods, I did not seek interviewees' confidential information, and the fieldwork risk was low due to adapting my primary research to the virtual sphere because of COVID-19. Furthermore, I did not engage with any minors or vulnerable groups. I interviewed industry leaders, or elite participants. I opted to seek my interviewees' permissions to quote and name them in this thesis, as I wished to contribute credible scholarship to the field and because words arising from the expertise of an elite participant carries more heft. A few, such as Thomas Abraham (Hachette India), Anish Chandy (Labyrinth Literary Agency), David Shelley (Hachette UK) and Ben Wright

(HarperCollins UK), asked to see their quotes before the thesis was submitted. They shared that they had been misquoted in the past – if not directly, then in the context in which they were quoted – and wished to avoid that. I shared my research at conferences, seminars and a research showcase, and while I used quotes, I anonymised the sources until I received their permissions just before this thesis submission.

It is a concern in research, especially qualitative, that the researcher holds power over the participant. While it is true that the primary data was in my hands to excerpt, interpret and share, I provided an extra option in my participation consent form that allowed the interviewees to see their quotes before I shared the sources publicly. Thus, I took steps to ensure that the participants were comfortable with the quotes I used. Additionally, since my interviewees are senior members of the publishing industry – Chief Executive Officers (CEOs), Managing Directors (MDs), Founders, Chairs, Publishers, Sales Directors and Literary Agents – our power dynamic was not the same as me interviewing a peer or someone with fewer years of experience working in publishing. In fact, I had to balance doing justice to the research with crafting questions in such a way so as not to cause offense or embarrassment. I had to take this care into account because the topics of racism and postcolonialism are sensitive in professional settings, especially as I may want to return to work for multinational publishers and do not wish to burn any bridges (discussed in this chapter's vignette). So, at the start of each interview, I mentioned that the participants could skip any question or end the interview at any time without offering an explanation, and that they had thirty days to request to be removed from the study. Still, I sought the interviewees' permissions to cite them as sources of their quotes as their names and designations showcase the professional expertise I utilise to substantiate my arguments. As there is a dearth of research on contemporary Indian Anglophone trade book publishing, the collection of views from current leaders of the industry that I present in this thesis also makes a unique contribution to the field of publishing studies and book history.

2.7 Evolving Research Plans

My research started off with a much broader focus. Along with examining the contemporary scenario in publishing, I wished to create a narrative history of Anglophone trade publishing in India from 1985 – when the first multinational trade publisher, Penguin India, established its operations in the country after Indian independence – to 2020. However, I soon realised that the

scope would be too large for a single PhD project and thus focused more on the contemporary scenario instead though I provide a historical context to it. Similarly, alongside semi-structured interviews, I considered the possibility of conducting focus groups with Indian readers of Anglophone trade books to understand the postcolonial impact that consuming mostly foreign literature was having on them. However, I discarded this method by the end of the first year because the project was shaping to concentrate more on the perspectives of publishing professionals. Furthermore, I could refer to secondary research regarding the postcolonial impact on readers, so my time was better spent on the interviews to contribute new knowledge to the field and address existing gaps.

I began this research in October 2019, and in March 2020, the first COVID-19 lockdown was instated in the UK. The pandemic and its associated lockdowns had their own impact on my research. I had planned to make fieldwork trips to London and Delhi to conduct interviews, which had to then be adapted to the virtual sphere. There were postponements and cancellations due to the interviewees – or their families – catching COVID-19 or grieving deaths in the family. I also experienced personal losses. Due to the upheaval the pandemic caused, I adapted and mitigated the risks of my research plan.

While I may have reduced the scope of my research due to logistical constraints caused by time and a global pandemic, I have set the other methods aside as options to explore in the future to expand upon my research. I discuss this in more detail in Chapter 6: Conclusion and Recommendations.

2.8 Conclusion

For a multidisciplinary project such as mine, I required a well-thought-out research design. In the axes of subjectivist–objectivist and radical change–regulation paradigms as developed from Burrell and Morgan (2016) by Saunders et al (2023), my research lies within the radical humanist paradigm, thus the field between subjectivist and radical change research. My research is not fully action-based research as my prime focus was on first recognising and examining the postcolonial problem of cartelisation before future research can offer solutions for it. Still, my intent with the interviews was to spur dialogue about the ills of a cartelised Anglophone trade book publishing system, and I also offer some recommendations in Chapter 6. The decolonising purpose and spirit of the research required decolonial methods to match it. This guided my research design, especially

the autoethnographic vignettes and the focus on including Indian publishing professionals' perspectives in the thesis.

To understand the research that has already been carried out on the topic, I referred to secondary literature from academic and industry-based sources from a range of countries, especially since not much research is available on the Indian context. To address this gap within scholarship, I conducted primary research in the form of autoethnographic vignettes to open/close each chapter and semi-structured interviews of elite participants from London and Delhi publishing. The former enabled me to utilise my personal and professional experiences to comment on the wider Indian literary and publishing culture, while the latter platformed voices of contemporary Indian and British Anglophone trade book publishing industry leaders engaging with Indian publishing. I also utilised a mixed-methods approach and thus included book sales data, though I lay a significance on qualitative research as that best suited my interpretivist philosophical position.

Having discussed the methodological approach to my thesis, I progress with the research from the following chapter onwards. I next focus on the research theory, i.e., postcolonial theory, and how that plays into my research in Chapter 3.

Chapter 3: Postcoloniality of Anglophone Trade Book Publishing Structures in India

3.1 *We are speaking, but who is listening?*

I grew up in a multilingual household in Delhi, India. My parents spoke in Hindi and English (and their combination, Hinglish) with my brother and me, in Punjabi with their siblings and extended family, in Hindi in more local affordable restaurants and dhabas⁴, and in English at posher restaurants and more formal settings. At school, English was called my 'first language' and Hindi my 'second language' (and French the 'third language'). Since I learnt to read, I have only consumed stories as pleasure reading in English. I have been creating my own tales in the same language from the age of eight. However, to receive a visa to study in the UK, I had to take an English proficiency test, comprising reading, writing, listening and speaking components. For someone whose entire schooling had been through the medium of English (I was in fact taught the English alphabet before the Hindi one); who studied English literature for her undergraduate at India's top arts college; who worked in the Anglophone publishing industry, editing textbooks and even a dictionary; and who had been admitted into a creative writing master's programme at one of UK's top universities on the basis of her writing sample, the concept of English-proficiency tests seemed absurd, and lest we forget, expensive. When I finally arrived in the UK, many 'complimented' my English-language skills and asked me how I had become proficient. For the first year or so, I provided a sincere explanation. But then fatigue set in. I began responding with, 'Oh, due to a little thing called colonialism'.

Colonialism and its after-effects have impacted not only the language I was speaking, writing and reading in, but also the kind of writing I read and did. Until my undergraduate degree – which primarily focused on British literature but featured Indian voices in one-and-a-half units – I had only read one Anglophone novel written by an Indian. It was by the nationally bestselling author Chetan Bhagat, and I despised it and was confused by its mass popularity. All of the books I read were primarily by British or American authors, who were almost always white and wrote

⁴ Hindi term for roadside highway restaurants in India

about a mostly white cast of characters in settings and contexts alien to me. So, when I myself wrote, I based my tales in suburban US, or metropolitan New York or London – places I had never been to – featuring blonde-haired, blue-eyed protagonists. For had I not been informed by the fairy tales I had read as a child that that was the epitome of all that is good and beautiful, and the characters who resembled me – with my dark hair, skin and eyes – were usually the witches and the villains? Even if the protagonists’ hair and eye colours varied in the novels I read as I grew older, their skin remained white and the settings still far away from mine. Why did it take a lecturer to point out that I should write about places I am familiar with for me to eventually try that at age eighteen? Why did it take a prescription of Indian writing at university for me to finally explore and enjoy it? Though if I am honest, I have not read work by more than a handful of Indian authors since. I even moved to the UK hoping to ultimately work for multinational publishers in London. I wanted to help create and sell books by authors I actually read, although they do not speak of my community or experiences living in India and I find myself growing excited whenever I see (even the very limited) recent representation of South Asian actors and stories in mainstream TV series⁵. On the screen, I can finally see myself on a global Anglophone platform and share it with my white friends in the UK – yet the page still awaits.

My conversation with the CEO of a London-based multinational publisher may have inspired this research (discussed in 1.1), but my experiences of growing up primarily reading British and American literature in turn inspired the question I asked that spurred our dialogue. I asked the CEO whether readers from Commonwealth countries could see representations of themselves in the books that the publisher produced, because I had not. This is true for other multinational publishers too, and I also know that I have not been alone in this experience. Thus, the question led me to explore what the sociocultural impact has been on readers who have grown up reading a foreign literature without seeing themselves or their experiences reflected within.

In this chapter, I utilise scholarly and industry-based literature – as well as the interview data I gathered via primary research – to discuss the impact that the literature we consume has on us as publishers, readers and writers. In 3.2, I establish the theoretical framework underpinning my research, i.e., postcolonial and neocolonial theories, and I examine how my own research in

⁵ *Never Have I Ever* (2020), *Ms Marvel* (2022) and *Bridgerton* season 2 (2022)

the field of publishing studies fits within the two theories and traditions. As both terms ‘postcolonial’ and ‘neocolonial’ can be ambiguous, I utilise existing scholarship to define them with regards to my research. In 3.3, I discuss the contribution of literature and publishing to the creation of a nation. I do so by describing the dual nature of publishing – of being a for-profit business with a sociocultural impact – and examining the links between national literature, nationalism, decolonisation and nation-building after colonisation. As discussed in 2.3, I utilise scholarship on the publishing industries of Kenya, China, and Australia, along with India. To bring together these discussions to fill gaps within existing research about Indian Anglophone trade book publishing, I then employ my interview data regarding this theme in 3.4, before concluding the chapter in 3.5.

3.2 Theoretical Framework: What Comes After Colonialism?

Postcolonialism and neocolonialism have moulded Anglophone media organisations and their processes in favour of British and American influences. The resulting hierarchy is mirrored within Anglophone culture and media, in which US- and UK-based multinational publishers and authors dominate overseas markets. I speak specifically of print trade book publishers as that is the field of my research. However, book publishing is just one – though significant – output of media, and the postcolonial hierarchy within media and culture can be traced in other media forms as well (Altbach 1975, p 19). Before proceeding, I define the terms ‘postcolonialism’ and ‘neocolonialism’ and examine their relevance to my research.

On the surface, ‘postcolonialism’ can be described as the critical theory examining the political, economic and cultural legacy of Western colonisation. Literary and cultural theorist Leela Gandhi states in *Postcolonial Theory: A Critical Introduction* (1998) that although much has been written about ‘postcolonialism’, the term remains a ‘diffuse and nebulous’ one as ‘it seems to lack an “originary moment” or a coherent methodology’ (p viii). Like Gandhi, I have employed the unbroken ‘postcolonialism’ as opposed to the hyphenated ‘post-colonialism’ in my research to question the implied temporal marker between colonialism and the decolonising process in ‘post-colonialism’ ‘on the grounds that the postcolonial condition is inaugurated with the onset rather than the end of colonial occupation’ (Gandhi 1998, p 3). Similar views have been expressed by McClintock (1994, p 254) and Bhabha (2004, p 6). Theorists discuss the pitfalls of the term ‘postcolonialism’; for instance, the term implying a universality in the experience of being

postcolonial when in fact, '[d]ifferent forms of colonisation have [...] given rise to different forms of decolonisation' (McClintock 1994, p 257). Still, Gandhi and McClintock agree that these issues do not lie with the theory itself but the nomenclature mostly.

As per Gandhi, a drawback of the way 'postcolonialism' has at times been theorised is that it creates a binary axis between the West/non-West, the North/South, the First World/Third World (1998, pp ix-x). In the Anglo-American academy, this binary treats as 'revolutionary' what has been canonical in India, such as teaching the thinking of Mahatma Gandhi in political theory (Gandhi 1998, pp ix-x). Such practices marginalise the knowledge systems of former colonies (Gandhi 1998, pp ix-x). Therefore, Gandhi states that postcolonial studies for many scholars 'directs its critique against the cultural hegemony of European knowledges in an attempt to reassert the epistemological value and agency of the non-European world [...] [as] a refutation of Macaulay's infamous privileging of a single shelf of a "good" European library over the entire corpus of "Oriental" literary production' (1998, pp 44-45) (Macauley's statement is discussed in 1.3.1). Gandhi cites Dipesh Chakrabarty (1992, p 3) to discuss how historians in former colonies and developing countries refer to works in European history not to seem 'outdated' or 'old-fashioned' while European historians do not feel the need to reciprocate. This unequal exchange in knowledge systems is especially harmful when considering that, as Gandhi adds, European philosophers for generations have been shaping social science by making universal statements that have been 'produced in relative, and sometimes absolute, ignorance of the majority of humankind i.e., those living in non-Western cultures' (Chakrabarty 1992, p 3, cited in Gandhi 1998, p 44). These are considerations I have taken within my research as I study the impact of India's former imperial power on its book production and knowledge distribution. My primary research methods comprised interviewing elite participants engaging with Indian publishing, which includes both British and Indian publishers. By interviewing both, I provide a balanced image in my research; and I have ensured to incorporate the narratives of a higher number of industry leaders within Indian publishing to ensure knowledge from India is shared and platformed in a thesis submitted at a British educational institution. Moreover, my research is foregrounded in my own experiences of working in the Indian publishing industry and, through my autoethnographic approach, I platform a voice that may not be heard in discussions about postcolonialism and publishing business practices, namely, myself as an Indian researcher, author, reader and publishing professional.

Returning to the binary axis discussed by Gandhi, it appears that postcolonial theory is not only required to interrogate the sociocultural histories of former colonies, but also the colonising powers. Edward Said states in *Orientalism* (1978) that the ‘West’ emerged as a structure and system because the colonised ‘Orient’ ‘helped to define Europe as its contrasting image, idea, personality, experience’ (p 2). That contrasting image has been applied in developing stereotypes about the ‘Orient’ as the Other – one that is barbaric (Marx, cited in Said 1978, p 153) or comprises ‘heat and dust, the teeming marketplace, the terrorist, the courtesan, the Asian despot, the child-like native, the mystical East’ (Gandhi 1998, p 77). The West has emerged as the antithesis of the ‘Orient’, of being the civilised, rational, enlightened educator. This binary, instead of leading to the simplistic ‘implacable enmity between native and invader’ (Parry 1987, p 32), has resulted in a complex relationship between the colonised and the coloniser in which the former longs for the latter. Albert Memmi discusses this tension between hatred and admiration for the coloniser (1968, p 45, cited in Gandhi 1998, pp 11-12), which Gandhi builds upon as the ‘colonised’s predicament’ of being ‘shaped and troubled by the compulsion to return a *voyeuristic gaze* upon Europe’ (1998, p 11; emphasis added). This voyeuristic gaze has helped establish the hegemony of British media and culture across the Anglophone world, especially considering the widespread colonial conquests of Britain. English being the ‘international’ language (discussed in 1.3.1) is a consequence of the scale of British colonisation and abets the voyeuristic gaze. India is among the colonies this has been true for, impacting the country’s literary tastes – a discussion pertinent to my thesis and one I return to in 3.3.

For the better part of the twentieth century, colonies such as India were involved in the struggle for independence from their imperial powers. Being colonised has had a far-reaching impact, not only in terms of the scale of peoples affected – more than three-quarters of the living global population in 1989, as per Ashcroft et al (1989, p 1) – but also in terms of the reverberating effects for future generations born within communities having colonised pasts. The British established a base in India through a trade post of the East India Company in the seventeenth century. But, as stated on the British Parliament website, Britain gradually ‘continued to add territory to the Company’s holdings in India through conquest and alliance’ so that by ‘1856, with the annexation of Oudh, all the Indian subcontinent up to the Himalayas, and much of Burma, was ruled directly by the Company itself or by local allied rulers’ (Parliament.uk [no date]). India gained independence in 1947 and became a republic in 1950 and unsurprisingly has had a complex

relationship with its former imperial power. Most of history education in Indian schools is preoccupied with the struggle for independence, and Indians can recall from memory the dates of significant colonial events such as the Revolt of 1857, the Dandi Salt March and the Jallianwala Bagh Massacre. Yet simultaneously we Indians are taught Shakespeare and Wordsworth at school in a ‘neocolonial education system in which excessive weight is still given to traditional “English literature”’ (Viswanathan 1989, cited in Huggan 2001, p 80; also discussed by Trivedi 1993, p x, pp 20-22) and are encouraged to read Austen, Blyton, Dickens and Hardy by our parents instead of local Indian writers. The friends I went to the Indian university with to study English literature dreamt of reading at Oxford and Cambridge, and that is how I landed in the UK myself.

However, it is not simply this voyeuristic gaze – a mixture of trauma from the colonial past and a longing to emulate the coloniser (Memmi 1968, p 45, cited in Gandhi 1998, p 11) – upon the UK that has influenced media and culture within India because books (and other media) produced by the US dominate the Indian market too. Altbach discusses neocolonialism in publishing: ‘the role of industrialized nations in developing areas, often referred to as neocolonialism, has been evident in publishing’ (1975, p 3). There is no clear-cut differentiation between postcolonialism and neocolonialism: ‘Postcoloniality, for its part, is a salutary reminder of the persistent “neo-colonial” relations within the “new” world order and the multinational division of labour’ (Bhabha 1994, p 9). Bhabha further states:

Despite the claims to a spurious rhetoric of ‘internationalism’ on the part of the established multinationals and the networks of the new communications technology industries, such circulations of signs and commodities as there are, are caught in the vicious circuits of surplus value that link First World capital to Third World labour markets through the chains of the international division of labour, and national comprador classes [...] [T]here is a sharp growth in a new Anglo-American nationalism which increasingly articulates its economic and military power in political acts that express a *neo-imperialist* disregard for the independence and autonomy of peoples and places in the Third World. (1994, pp 29-30; emphasis added)

The older imperialism couched in administrative, religious and/or educational narratives has thus taken on the guise of a ‘neo-imperialist disregard’ or of ‘revamped economic imperialism’ (Payer 1974, 1982, cited in McClintock 1994, p 263) that has ‘ensured that America and the former

European colonial powers have become richer, while, with a tiny scattering of exceptions, their ex-colonies have become poorer' (Payer 1974, 1982, cited in McClintock 1994, p 263). In fact, Spivak expresses her wish to reconfigure the relationship between the First and the Third Worlds through Marxist accounts of the globalisation of capital and the international division of labour: 'the so called "Third World" [...] *produces* the wealth and the possibility of the cultural self-representation of the "First World"' (Spivak 1990, p 96, cited in Gandhi 1998, p 74), thus providing another neocolonial reading of the scenario. Gandhi describes the roots of neocolonialism as being 'held in place by transnational corporations and the international division of labour, linking first-world capital to third-world labour markets' (1998, pp 174-175). Ashcroft et al also examine the US's power and influence in the world and the neocolonising role it has played (1989, p 2), while Barker et al state that the effects of being an imperial power can still be seen in the UK's political life and continue to permeate its cultural production (1994, p 3). For the purpose of this research, I have employed the term 'postcolonial' to also discuss the neocolonial role that the US has played from the latter half of the twentieth century due to what McClintock describes while rationalising using 'postcolonial' without a hyphen:

Since the 1940s, the United States' imperialism-without-colonies has taken a number of distinct forms (military, political, economic and cultural), some concealed, some half-concealed. The power of US finance capital and huge multinationals to direct the flows of capital, commodities, armaments and media information around the world can have an impact as massive as any colonial regime. It is precisely the greater subtlety, innovation and variety of these forms of imperialism that makes the historical rupture implied by the term 'post-colonial' especially unwarranted. (1994, p 258)

The impact that US capital and multinationals have had on the rest of the world is similar to imperialism, yet its process is different from ruling a colony as the British did. So, both postcolonialism and neocolonialism have led to a pattern in which the US and former European colonial powers are advantaged while former colonies are disadvantaged. Therefore, in this thesis I use 'postcoloniality' to signify the negative impacts of being postcolonial as well as suffering from the neocolonial structures of power.

While it may be more straightforward to observe the negative effects of colonisation on former colonies in political and economic spheres, the postcolonial impact on the *cultures* of these

communities is more complex to trace. It is made more complicated by a mixture of the positively coded effects of ‘globalisation’ – or the world becoming smaller and coming closer supposedly for the benefit of all – and the negatively coded effects of postcoloniality. Literature is one of the significant mediums through which formerly colonised communities can convey how their identities have been shaped by the scars of their pasts (Ashcroft et al 1989, p 1), and I next examine the links between nation-building, national literature and a local/homegrown/indigenous publishing industry.

3.3 Imagining a Nation with Literature and Publishing

In the previous section, I scrutinised the relevance of postcolonialism – which in my thesis refers to the negative consequences of both postcolonialism and neocolonialism – to my research. What also follows a fight against colonisation is the creation of a nation. The purpose of discussing non-publishing theories of postcolonialism and nation creation in this thesis is to establish the significance of homegrown literature and publishing in the decolonisation process, and therefore to combat postcoloniality. The title of this section has been adapted from Benedict Anderson’s *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (1983), since Anderson’s theories on print nationalism have been foundational to my research (discussed in 3.3.1). In this section, I examine the contribution of indigenous literature and book publishing to imagining a nation, especially one that has struggled with colonisation and entered the global market later than developed nations, or former colonising powers.

I accomplish the mentioned aim in this section with a focus on Anglophone literature in traditional publishing in India. My thesis focuses upon traditional print publishing as it enables authors to reach readers in far-off locations but is usually conducted with a business motive. Books, like other media, are artefacts that have a sociocultural impact on their consumers. Scholars and publishing industry participants posit that book publishing has a dual nature of producing consumer goods that are also carriers of ‘social and cultural significance’ (Curtain 1993, cited in Carter and Galligan 2013, p 3). For instance, Gupta states:

Books have always been regarded as an important medium for the development and promotion of human values. They record new ideas, preserve and communicate knowledge, impart education and values, and aid the overall development of an

individual. Books serve as the backbone for creation of knowledge economy. (2018, p 120)

Publishers thus bear the responsibility of being ‘de facto promulgators of both culture and education in many ways through their publications’ (Rajagopal 2018, p 133). Borghino and Einarsson examine the role of publishers as gatekeepers and influencers/tastemakers: ‘through their commissioning or selection of material and as a result of the works they decide to disseminate—[publishers] influence both what is discussed in society and how those works are received (2018, p 143).

My reason for focusing on Anglophone literature is due to the status of English as a colonial remnant and an international language (discussed in 1.3.1). Directly writing in English or translating to English can help access an international audience (Chakava 1996, p 45; Currey 2008, p 164, p 172). In fact, the expansive reach of English was utilised during India’s freedom struggle (discussed in 1.3.1). Post-independence, English was not required to fight off the colonial oppressor but – as discussed in 1.3.1 – the language was adopted and adapted in India and has been a vehicle to reach an international readership. Still, Graham states that in nations such as India, Canada and Australia, British publishers that use the language of the old colonial powers have been accused of ‘cultural colonialism’ (1992, p 32). Altbach posits that the colonial past of many nations overshadows their intellectual and educational life due to the privileging of the coloniser’s language:

European languages were imposed at the higher levels of the educational system, government, and eventually for purposes of scholarship [...] and gradually this language became the medium for government, politics, commerce and science. The publication of books followed this current. [...] The controversy between Bengali and English among intellectuals in Bengal in the nineteenth century is indicative of the divided loyalties and confusion which imposition of the Western languages caused. (1975, p 22)

Thus, language remains a ‘politically sensitive topic in many developing countries’, as Altbach and Teferra state (1998, p xv) and relates to the subject at hand, imagining a nation using:

- a. a country’s indigenous literature, and
- b. a country’s indigenous publishing industry,

where ‘indigenous’ means locally produced and/or established. Along with being politically sensitive, Anglophone literature and publishing are also made complex due to postcoloniality. Next, I describe these complexities before delving deeper into imagining a nation using indigenous literature and publishing.

First, while writing in English can help Indians share their lived experiences as a people internationally and thus aid in building a nation, Indians themselves hold postcolonial biases regarding Anglophone literature produced by Indians. Gandhi analyses the ‘selective literary “taste” of Indian readers’ with regards to their ‘judgement of the European canon’ due to being ‘recipients of English education’ (1998, p 155) and the ‘marginality and [perceived] inferiority of colonised cultures and their books’ (1998, p 145). Casanova states that the privileges of canon formation and a country’s literature being categorised as ‘classics’ or ‘universal’ lie with the ‘oldest literary nations’, thus giving British literature the notion of ‘literary legitimacy’ (2004, pp 14-15). These views are also reflected in my own experiences – discussed in the vignettes in 1.1 and 3.1 – as well as the interview data I gathered.

Second, India may be among the global leaders in book publishing today (discussed in 1.2), but its Anglophone trade book publishing industry is dominated by multinationals. Altbach and Teferra state that though ‘leaders have resorted to using languages imparted to them by their former colonizers’, ‘governments have a very important and decisive role to play in supporting publishing, especially for minority groups, as part of promoting the cultural heritage of the nation’ (1998, p xv). English is a colonial remnant, but it has been claimed by former colonies such as India, who have created their own dialects and publish within the language too (discussed in 1.3.1). Thus, it is crucial to analyse how the structuring of Anglophone trade book publishing has impacted the promotion of the cultural heritage of India through the international dissemination (or lack thereof) of Indian literary voices, or whether this structuring is postcolonial in nature – which is the aim of this chapter.

In the following two sub-sections, I focus on the roles of literature – local and diasporic – and publishing in the act of nation-building.

3.3.1 The Role of Literature in Nation-building

The delineation of the formerly colonised as their own entity and the role of literature in that process draws upon Anderson’s *Imagined Communities* (1983), which was developed from

Habermas's idea (originally published in 1962) that the development of the printing press led to the 'bourgeois public sphere' (1989). Gandhi states that in *Imagined Communities* (1983), Anderson declares nations 'imaginative and cultural artefacts rather than empirical and scientific entities' (1998, p 151). Political borders are marked on maps or even land (though these marks are not always agreed upon by all nations, leading to border conflicts), but nations are ultimately imagined because 'the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion' (Anderson 1983, p 14; also discussed in Rosaldo 1994, pp 246-247). Media is one of the primary methods through which citizens of a nation imagine their collectivity, with Anderson specifically discussing newspapers but also novels (1983, p 25). Similarly, Ashcroft et al establish a link between national identity and literature: 'Nigeria, Australia, and India [...] [t]heir literatures could be considered in relation to the social and political history of each country, and could be read as a source of important images of national identity' (1989, p 17). Casanova also creates connections between the nation, language and literature, using Anderson's theory:

From the existence of an organic bond, or interdependence, between the appearance of national states, the expansion of vernaculars into common languages, and the corresponding development of new literatures written in these vernaculars, it follows that the accumulation of literary resources is necessarily rooted in the political history of states. (Casanova 2004, pp 34-35)

Casanova emphasises this interdependence between political and literary spaces by stating that due to the spread of nationalist ideas in the nineteenth century, emerging literary spaces used political authority as their foundation, thus leading the world literary space to be constructed through national rivalries that were both literary and political (2004, p 35). However, Casanova does not restrict this phenomenon only to the nations emerging within the nineteenth century; she also includes the period of decolonisation within the twentieth and states that 'the emergence of a new literature is indissociable from the appearance of a new nation' (2004, p 104). Similarly, Gandhi states that the novel and the newspaper help represent 'the impossible diversity that is the nation' (1998, p 151), which would be especially true in a country as large and varied as India: 'the newly discovered textures of realist prose in colonies like India [...] quickly lent themselves to the sociopolitical concerns of nationalism' (Gandhi 1998, p 152). Likewise, Said does not underestimate the role of literature in advancing the cause of anti-imperialism in the post-1945 era:

[I]n the decades-long struggle to achieve decolonisation and independence from European control, literature has played a crucial role in the re-establishment of a national cultural heritage, in the reinstatement of native idioms, in the re-imagining and re-figuring of local histories, geographies, communities. As such, then, literature not only mobilised active resistance to incursions from the outside, but also contributed massively as the shaper, creator, agent of illumination within the realm of the colonised. (1990, pp 1-2, cited in Lazarus 1994, pp 218-219)

With the rising conservatism (and indeed authoritarianism and fascism) in some countries in the twenty-first century, it must seem strange to speak of nationalism in a thesis that ultimately aims to make a case for equity for minoritised voices. In fact, in her interview with me, Chiki Sarkar (Founder–Publisher of Juggernaut, an independent publishing company in India) likened the train of my questions with the extreme nationalism and ‘Make in India’ slogans of the current central government in India (*The Economic Times* 2014; Cherian 2022). Her arguments – that her local publishing company is not small as a result of the competition from large multinationals and that if the best children’s literature happens to be American or British, she will gladly buy it for her children since she wants the best for them – initially threw me in a quandary. I agreed with her. Like Sarkar, I too am thankful that Indians can easily access foreign knowledge and literature at price points catered to the Indian market and I am not arguing against the idea of a positively coded ‘globalisation’ that supports trading across national borders. I am also aware of the pitfalls of extreme nationalism, since European imperialism was just another facet of that (Anderson 1983, p 82; Gandhi 1998, pp 115-116), as is the violence related to ‘the idea of a pure “ethnically cleansed” national identity’ (Bhabha 1994, p 7). However, it cannot be denied that literature is still organised along national lines, as seen in these quotes by Casanova (2004):

As a result of the appropriation of literatures and literary histories by political nations during the nineteenth century, although we do not always realize it, our literary unconscious is largely national. Our instruments of analysis and evaluation are national. Indeed the study of literature almost everywhere in the world is organized along national lines. (p xi)

[L]iterary capital is inherently national. [...] Because language is at once an affair of state and the material out of which literature is made, literary resources are

inevitably concentrated, at least initially, within the boundaries of the nation itself. Thus it is that language and literature jointly provide political foundations for a nation and, in the process, ennoble each other. (p 34)

To illustrate her point, Casanova describes the Irish Literary Revival as being influenced by the country's late nineteenth-century nationalist movement in politics (2004, pp 189-190). It is also significant to note that the relationship between literary freedom and political independence is reciprocal: the independent nation allows its writers to create their own literary legacy (Casanova 2004, p 185). While Casanova echoes Larbaud (1925) to state that literary borders do not coincide with political ones, Casanova admits that literature does somewhat remain dependent on politics, especially in nations that are 'relatively unendowed with literary resources' (2004, p 39). That these dominated literary nations are also developing nations – especially those undergoing decolonisation – is no coincidence. In turn, Casanova equates colonising nations with dominant literary nations (2004, p 116). Graham identifies this inequivalent relationship between the publishing industries of developed and developing nations as a postcolonial concern and states:

The challenge to build a publishing industry rapidly from scratch is entirely a postcolonial phenomenon. Imperial powers regarded colonies as markets, not as producers. *Most of the strong publishing countries of today are, not by chance, those which were colonial powers until midcentury, whether the classic European imperialism; the economic colonialism of the United States; the military colonialism of Japan and Germany; or the political imperialism of the USSR.* None of these can claim to have fostered nascent publishing in the lands they have ruled or influenced. (1992, p 32; emphasis added)

So, it is unsurprising that for the Anglophone territory, the centre(s) that control and attract the literary productions dependent on them and 'exert a literary form of political power' are New York and London, with the latter being 'central for Australians, New Zealanders, Irish, Canadians, Indians, and English-speaking Africans' (Casanova 2004, pp 116-117) due to cartelisation caused by Commonwealth rights (discussed in Chapter 4).

Thus, at the surface level, the interviewee Sarkar is right: competition is usually healthy in industry and consumers should be able to access the best available knowledge and literature. I also recognise that the nation-state is not without its flaws. Though Lazarus calls our attention to the

‘indispensability of national consciousness to the decolonising project’ (1994, p 198), as Said argues, anti-colonial nationalism that has an exclusively anti-Western focus ‘can become a panacea for *not* dealing with economic disparities, social injustice, and the capture of the newly independent state by a nationalist elite’ (1993, p 262). Even within publishing in India, the literary landscape is much more complex than the simple binary of native vs foreign writers, or local vs multinational publishing. The politics surrounding language, gender, class, caste, religion and region add to the intricacies in Indian publishing. While acknowledging this, I have limited the scope of this research to only Anglophone trade book publishing, for which the considerations surrounding anti-colonial nationalism are especially relevant. Furthermore, this thesis at no point pretends to speak for the entirety of Indian writers, literature and publishing or their myriad concerns, as Spivak mentions that Indo-Anglian fiction cannot do justice to the many ‘Indias’ represented across the many Indian literatures (1996, pp 126-127). Through my research, I have also strived to analyse literature and publishing along national lines without teetering into extreme nationalism. I have done so by considering Gandhi’s crucial question: ‘[I]s it possible to reconcile the often-aggressive particularism of Asian and African nation-States with the late twentieth century dream of internationalism and globalisation?’ (1998, p 103) as well as Fanon’s and Bhabha’s warnings about the ‘dangers of the fixity and fetishism of identities within the calcification of colonial cultures to recommend that “roots” be struck in the celebratory romance of the past or by homogenizing the history of the present’ (discussed in Bhabha 1994, p 13). I discuss both of these considerations below, starting with Gandhi.

Though Gandhi groups both ‘internationalism’ and ‘globalisation’ together, if one scratches a little deeper at the surface, the nuanced differences between the two are revealed. The ‘neutralizing term “globalization,” [...] suggests that the world political and economic system can be conceived as the generalization of a single and universally applicable model’ (Casanova 2004, p 40), and Gandhi herself states that postcoloniality is ‘another name for the globalisation of cultures and histories’ (1998, p 126). However, internationalisation of literature refers to writers across the world entering ‘the same race’ in which ‘all of them struggle, albeit with unequal advantages’ (Casanova 2004, p 40) due to the ‘unequal structure [...] of literary space, the uneven distribution of resources among national literary spaces’ (Casanova 2004, p 83). Thus, internationalisation acknowledges that writers in different national literary spaces work with different obstacles. These variances are not always recognised, especially by the privileged

national literary spaces. Due to the ethnocentrism of privileged national literary spaces, literature there is often perceived to be free from national and political connotations; writers in the centres occupy universalised positions that prevent them from seeing the inequalities of literary spaces that are lived by the writers at the fringes (Casanova 2004, p 178, pp 352-353). Moreover, Lloyd argues that one must be wary of the ‘good’/‘bad’ and ‘legitimate’/‘illegitimate’ categorisation of nationalisms of the West vs the East, respectively, as the ‘selective and current bias of Western anti-nationalism [...] emerges out of a historically deep-seated metropolitan antipathy toward anti-colonial movements in the third world’, giving Western anti-nationalism a ‘history in imperialist thought which postcolonialism cannot afford to ignore’ (1993, cited and discussed in Gandhi 1998, p 103; also discussed by Fraser and Hammond 2008, p 4). This is especially key to consider since ‘nationalism has been an important feature of decolonisation struggles in the third world’ (Gandhi 1998, p 102). Therefore, I believe it is crucial to analyse the hegemony within Anglophone trade publishing along national lines.

To fully address Fanon’s and Bhabha’s warnings (discussed in Bhabha 1994, p 13), romanticisation and exoticisation of place in diasporic writing must be examined. So far, I have discussed local writers based within India. But nationalism and its relationship with literature are also made complex with the movement of people – especially writers – across borders. While nationalism is a necessary immediate step in the anti-colonial/decolonising process, the sign of a truly emancipated nation is literary autonomy, one that is not bound in national goals (Casanova 2004, p 193). Thus, the Asian novelists that Saha interviewed for his research did not want to be constrained by being ‘*Asian* writers’; they wanted to be known simply as writers (2016; emphasis added). Therefore, theorists such as Bhabha (1994), Gandhi (1998) and Said (cited in Gandhi 1998, p 153) believe that the ‘transnational histories of migrants, the colonized, or political refugees – these border and frontier conditions – may be the terrains of world literature’ (Bhabha 1994, p 17). Moreover, Gandhi states that ‘the counter-textual mood of anti-colonial or nationalist writing finds its apotheosis in the cosmopolitan restlessness of writers such as Salman Rushdie, Ben Okri, Michael Ondaatje and Bharati Mukherjee’ since ‘[p]ostcolonial literary theory [...] tends to privilege [...] multicultural “syncretism” over cultural “essentialism”’ (1998, p 153). However, as Huggan points out, though many of these writers have long been residents of the UK and the US, they are still seen as either ‘marginal’ or representing the regions they were born in, such as the Caribbean, India and Pakistan in the cases of V S Naipaul, Salman Rushdie and Hanif Kureishi,

respectively (2001, p xii). Brouillette also discusses Chaudhuri's introduction to an anthology on Indian writing where he states that Rushdie's writing has become 'a key to the way Indian writing is supposed to be read and produced' (2001, cited in Brouillette 2007, p 86). Rushdie himself has commented on the backlash he received about 'historical inaccuracies' in *Midnight's Children* (1981) and for not representing the entirety of India (1991, p 25, cited in Huggan 2001, p 71) – as if any one writer or piece of literature could represent an entire nation. But the idea of representing a nation becomes even more complicated for an author who writes about a place that he has not lived in for many years. Kannada novelist U R Ananthamurthy says of Rushdie's dismissal of local-language Indian literature: 'Rushdie does not even live in India. How can he make such an enormous assumption?' (1997, p 19, cited in Huggan 2001, pp 63-64). Even Huggan admits:

Rushdie, after all, has lived for most of his life away from India, and continues to be seen by many Indians as a purveyor of marketable Euro-American fantasies about Indian and other 'Oriental' cultures. In addition, he has situated himself within a largely mainstream tradition of highly mobile cosmopolitan writers, a privileged group to which few resident Indians – and fewer still from non-English-speaking backgrounds [...] – have gained admittance. (2001, p 70)

Similarly, Arundhati Roy, though resident in India but publishing internationally, has been accused of catering to foreign readers to tap into that international readership. She has received critique for engaging in exoticism from fellow writers for the Booker-winning *The God of Small Things* (1997), which catapulted her to fame. Huggan refers to Dalrymple's (1997) and Mongia's (1997) comments on Roy's work to state that Roy's is a "'tourist novel" recycling intoxicating myths of a fabulous but dangerous Orient to an eager Western readership already attuned to the exotic formulae of Indian fiction' (2001, p 76).

Nevertheless, if diasporic voices are supposed to transcend 'cultural "essentialism"' as per Gandhi and literature in a globalised world should not be judged along national lines, why are these transnational writers facing the burden of representing the nations of their origin? Even Casanova clarifies that a writer's work must be characterised by keeping in mind 'the place occupied by the native literary space within world literature and [the author's] own position within this space' (2004, p 41). However, Gandhi conflates 'postcolonial' with 'migrant' texts and singles out Rushdie, after the controversy surrounding the publication of *The Satanic Verses* (1988), as 'the voice [...] of postcolonial heterodoxy' (1998, p 154), thereby displacing the value and

contribution of domestic Indian writing and representation. It is only in the ending pages of *Postcolonial Theory* (1998) that Gandhi discusses the ‘dangerously prescriptive’ tendency of postcolonial literary theory – especially with regards to Ashcroft et al’s *The Empire Writes Back* (1989) – by making the ‘cosmopolitan’ or ‘migrant’ writer the authentic representative of the ‘third world’ (pp 162-163). Huggan accuses writers such as Rushdie and Roy of participating in ‘strategic exoticism’ (p 77) or ‘staged marginality, adapted from the work of Dean MacCannell [1989], [which] denotes the process by which marginalised individuals or minority groups dramatise their “subordinate” status for the imagined benefit of a majority audience’ (2001, p xii). Similarly, Brouillette develops Ghosh’s (2004) argument to state that cosmopolitan migrant writers such as Rushdie have participated in a ‘fetishistic localism’ (discussed in Brouillette 2007, p 88). According to Ghosh, Brouillette and Huggan then, through their writing, Rushdie and Roy show an awareness of the exoticisation of their work and take advantage, from within, of the system that is stacked against them.

The publishing industry also plays a role in this stereotyping; Saha and van Lente discuss how the British publishing industry perpetuates the exoticisation of ‘BAME’ (Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic) writers in order to cater to the industry’s perceived core audience (2020, p 21, p 25). Therefore, inadvertently or not, writing by authors of Indian origin that travels outwith India to an international readership participates in the act of exoticising India. Of course, literature is just one of the media outputs that does so. After the release of *Slumdog Millionaire* (2008), I was asked by non-Indians whether India truly contained the criminality and poverty displayed within the film, as if the response could have been as simple as a ‘Yes’ or a ‘No’. Of course, there are layers to that response, as there are in Spivak’s warning against the fallacy of interpreting the Anglophone work of Indian writers as ‘direct expressions of cultural consciousness, with no sense of the neo-colonial traffic in cultural identity and the slow and agonising triumph of the migrant voice’ (1996, p 127). Thus, within my research, I do not enforce any artificial distinctions between postcolonialism and neocolonialism (discussed in 3.2), and I do not ignore either the domestic/local writer or the migrant/diasporic writer.

It is imperative for authors writing from India to be able to access an international readership to represent (their chosen facets) of India within their work, if they choose to do so. In fact, Barker et al use Spivak’s (1994) careful reading of *The Guide* (Narayan 1958) to discuss the significance of taking ‘seriously – from a postcolonial perspective – the realist fictions associated

with an emerging sense of nationhood' (1994, p 14). Clearly, as discussed above, literature is still perceived along national lines, and therefore – though it may not be ideal – we must consider the existing structures and analyse literature and publishing along those lines too, especially since Casanova states:

The absence of any distinctive identity therefore prevents native works from being published and achieving recognition. Only works that are conceived and promoted as national productions can help put an end to the dependence of writers in relation to the dominant literary (and political) space. (2004, p 221)

Usually, the process of '*becoming* postcolonial' as per Gandhi has been 'legitimated through the foundation of independent nation-States' (1998, pp 110-111) and an 'indomitable will-to-difference [...] [by naming] its insurgent cultural alterity through the nation – "Indian", "Kenyan", "Algerian"' (1998, p 113). She cites Ranajit Guha to discuss Indian nationalism, which 'achieves its entitlement through the systematic mobilisation, regulation, disciplining and harnessing of "subaltern" energy' (1992, cited in Gandhi 1998, p 111). In *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961), Fanon, though ambivalent towards a centralised nation-State, still supports anti-colonial agitation organised at a national level (cited in Gandhi 1998, p 111). However, as per Gandhi, thinkers such as Fanon (1961) – along with Edward Said (1993), Mahatma Gandhi (discussed in Gandhi 1998, p 121) and Stuart Hall (1989) – agree that such oppositional nationalism should be a 'transitional and transitory moment in the decolonising project' (Gandhi 1998, p 122-124) to lead us to what Said calls 'postnationalism' (1993). That is a notion I agree with as well, but I qualify it with nuances regarding my field of study: to attain postnationalism, it is pertinent to acknowledge the disparities among various national literary spaces and to provide equitable opportunities to all. This is akin to a common misconception regarding racism: it is not currently enough to say that one does not 'see colour'; if people face discrimination on basis of the colour of their skin, it is important to acknowledge and examine those inequalities within societal structures and offer solutions for the present while we work towards a future where skin colour truly does not matter. Thus, as long as inequalities in global publishing are divided along national lines, we cannot ignore national literary spaces and their ties to developing the idea of a nation in the process of decolonisation, as is currently the case with India.

3.3.2 The Role of Publishing in Nation-building

I have so far discussed the significance of having a national literature in the act of nation-building. In this section, I turn to the contribution of a developed local/indigenous publishing landscape to nation-building. In 3.3.1, I examined the dual nature of traditional publishing, of being a for-profit business having a sociocultural impact. Additionally, as per Galligan, publishing could be ‘regarded as an essential contributor to the national literary estate, or an institutional agency of record’ but it could also profit from this nationalising work by ‘appropriating the national storehouse for purely commercial advantage’ (2013, p 34). Altbach states: ‘Although fairly insignificant in terms of economic impact, publishing is of central importance to the cultural, intellectual, and educational life of a nation’ (1998, p 1), though publishing can also have a significant impact upon the national economy, as is the case in the UK and India (discussed in 1.3.2). Specifically then, publishing has a direct impact on a nation’s literary estate and culture. Since publishing is key in shaping the self-perception of its readers at an individual level but also at a communal level, the source of the literature plays an important role; it matters who is *doing* the writing and who is being written *about*. Therefore, after attaining independence, one of the acts of nation-building could be the establishment of a local publishing industry fostering local voices that can convey experiences rooted in a common history of a people as well as their variances. Altbach and Teferra thus state that ‘publishing remains central to [developing] countries’ educational systems, to the creation and distribution of knowledge, and to the nurturing of an independent intellectual culture’ (1998, p xiii). Yet, this has not always been the case.

In **Kenya**, while education – and, in turn, books – were given attention post Kenyan independence from British rule in 1963, the government did not lay out any policies regarding the books’ source or method of production. Thus, Chakava believes that ‘a major opportunity to propose a national book publishing and distribution policy was lost’ (1996, p 8). At the time of independence, Kenya had neither a privately owned publishing house nor a national one (Chakava 1996, p 7). This was indeed a loss, and its effects can be seen in cases such as Kenyan children encountering foreign books once schools were desegregated after independence. They read about alien surroundings and people, with the result that:

the country found itself producing *a new breed of black Europeans, who began to despise their own skin and background*. This process, which started at independence, is still going on today. Reading lists from most primary schools in

Nairobi still contain such titles as *Famous Five Stories*, the Nancy Drew Series, *Janet and John*, the *Hardy Boys*, *Topsy and Tim*, and *Reading 360*. (Chakava 1996, p 23; emphasis added)

This brings to mind Macauley's wish to utilise British literature to create a people colonised in the mind in India: 'a class of persons Indian in blood and colour, but English in taste, in opinion, in morals, and in intellect' (1835, cited in Trivedi 1993). Therefore, it matters whether a community can see itself reflected in the books it reads, and in Kenya, this was unfortunately not just a fault with children's literature. Chakava noted in 1996 that a majority of the books written about the country were not only published outside the country, but they were also written by non-native Kenyans – usually ex-colonial settlers and administrators – creating a 'colonial subculture in independent Kenya' (p 25). This was true for other Anglophone African countries as well. In fact, as Currey tells it, Chinua Achebe was inspired to write back to the linguistic centre about his native Nigeria because he read Joyce Cary's *Mister Johnson* (1939), which was also set in Nigeria and did not do any justice to the depiction of Nigerians (2008, p 160). Even the leading fiction writers hailing from the African continent publish in the centres of their linguistic territories or the 'North', i.e., the UK, the US and France, as these writers sprang up in the 1950s and 1960s when local African publishing industries were nascent. Although local industries have since developed, they have not developed enough to provide the authors with 'maximum exposure', i.e., distribution through African countries as well as outwith the continent, or the writers are still bound by contractual agreements to their original publishers (Chakava 1996, p 81). Hence, writers from Africa still publish in the centres of their linguistic territories (Chakava 1996, p 81). Altbach and Teferra also locate the issue to a 'lack of awareness of the role of publishing, inadequate technical and managerial expertise, and the daunting bureaucracy afflicting the government offices that regulate infrastructure', which have resulted in publishing not fulfilling its potential in the role of nation-building (1998, p xiv). It is no surprise then that in his model of a publishing house, Chakava includes the following two as aims: 'through its publications help in the popularization, dissemination, and preservation of the cultures and languages of the peoples of the country' and 'guard its independence and not succumb to external political, financial, and ideological pressures' (1996, p 66). Therefore, Altbach calls attention to the dual nature of publishing – of performing an economic role but also impacting the cultural, scientific and educational life of nations (1998, p 1, p 14) – and states:

Indigenous and autonomous publishing is especially important in the context of the Third World. Many Third World nations are in the process of modernizing or reinterpreting their cultures. The means of communicating these insights is of special importance [...] Yet, books are a key part of national development, and it is simply insufficient to have access only to imported books—books created abroad for different purposes. *Third World nations need books that reflect their emerging needs, and only they can determine these needs.* (1998, pp 2-3; emphasis added)

Even in **Australia**, which became a nation in 1901 but gradually gained its independence from Britain over the course of the twentieth century, ‘one of the more profound effects of the British presence [...] has been the discouragement of national publishers with any thought of producing nationally inspired books for the local market’ (Nile, cited in Galligan 2013, pp 35-36). It was in the 1940s, when a new sense of nationalism sprouted – coupled with the Second World War that made the importation of books impossible – that created a demand for Australian books, leading OUP to print local Australian editions of foreign titles and branch into local general and children’s publishing (Galligan 2013, p 26). However, it was not an overnight change. According to Flanagan, the 1950s and 1960s witnessed little development of the local publishing market, which remained a ‘milch cow’ for English publishing (2013, p 124), with Gough Whitlam, former Prime Minister of Australia, describing Australian readers as ‘a captive British market, a subject people’ in 1964 (cited in Flanagan 2013, p 134). In the 1960s, local independent publishers felt the need to produce illustrated books for the Australian market since ‘Australians had seldom seen their country represented pictorially, because the books they read and the films they viewed mostly came from Britain or America’ (Lee 2013, p 31). With the rise in governmental support in the 1970s for literature and publishing, there was an immediate increase in the volume and quality of locally produced texts (Galligan 2013, p 39). There were changes in Australian copyright laws in the 1990s that enabled Australia’s local industry to flourish, even with most of its publishers being owned by US and UK conglomerates (Murray 2013, p 59). These multinationals that maintained local publishing divisions in Australia – ‘in the overall management and financial agendas’ – treated Australia primarily as an export market rather than a source of literature (Galligan 2013, p 44). Therefore, it took concerted effort over a long period of time to grow a readership of Australian material and to legitimise the Australian context for reading, cultural contemplation and critical examination (Galligan 2013, p 35). However, some critics still question the anxiety among

Australians in deeming local works representing Australian experiences ‘worthwhile’, their priority being to judge whether their works suit other nations’ ‘fashions’ or not (Flanagan 2013, pp 132-134).

It is not just former British imperial or settler colonies that are impacted by the cultural hegemony of the two Anglophone centres, the UK and the US. When the reading habits of a nation like **China** were examined by Xin Guangwei in 2005, he observed similar patterns regarding the rising popularity of American literature due to the US’s neocolonial powers:

For the fiction category, despite the fact that English, French, and Russian literature all have a long history and far-reaching impact in China, American Literature has been gaining popularity among Chinese readers. (2005, p 234)

Furthermore, bestsellers in China in several categories, including English-language, children’s and some nonfiction, have been dominated by foreign books, whereas ‘local-themed books have had mediocre performances’ (Guangwei 2005, p 225). Guangwei states that there are insufficient native Chinese authors in children’s book publishing and identifies it as a problem (2005, pp 51-52). While Australia and Kenya may be direct consumers of Anglophone books and the majority of the Chinese population may still read in Chinese (Guangwei 2005, p 169, p 209), it is significant to note that even in translated forms, books originally written in English are superseding local fiction writing in China. Though Chinese regions (barring Hong Kong, which shares a complex relationship with both China and the UK) do not share the colonial relationships with Britain that India, Australia and Anglophone Africa do, Chinese publishers also face unequal structures with regards to the Anglophone literary centres. Inbound rights licenses far exceed outbound ones (discussed in Chapter 4). Significantly, the few Chinese books that were being licensed for foreign distribution comprised books stereotyping ‘exotic’ China: Chinese culture, arts and language (Guangwei 2005, p 229), and not its local literature (similar to the Indian literary vs genre fiction debate discussed in the interview data analysis in 3.4.2). Therefore, even when a book must be translated to be understood by the majority of a country’s population, the hegemony of the US and the UK come into play, a factor that Guangwei takes into account when he states that ‘China is still a developing country and its global influence is still limited’ (2005, p 230). China’s economy may have developed at an accelerated rate in the past two decades since Guangwei’s book, but it has not gained similar momentum in terms of cultural influence with book imports into China

increasing even more while book exports have fallen further (Thomala 2024; discussed in Chapter 4).

Publishers in **India** produce works by Indians, but their sales do not match the sales of bestselling foreign writers. While Altbach states that ‘Indian publishers [...] do not follow a consciously neocolonialist policy of trying to maintain foreign influence on the sub-continent’ (1975, p 23), Indian publishers follow the perceived demands of the market, shaped by the cultural hegemony of the US and the UK. Enid Blyton to this day is one of the top picks of Indian parents and teachers for Indian children (echoed by Duttagupta, Scholastic India, in his interview), although Blyton books portray contexts far removed from their realities. Only a handful of authors of Indian origin appear on international bestseller lists or win prestigious awards. For instance, only once has an Indian author won the Nobel Prize for Literature since its establishment in 1901, i.e., Rabindranath Tagore in 1913 (NobelPrize.org [no date]). Since their creation in 1948 and 1962, respectively, the Pulitzer Prizes for Fiction and General Nonfiction have only been awarded to one author of Indian origin each: Jhumpa Lahiri in 2000 and Siddhartha Mukherjee in 2011 (Pulitzer.org [no date]). The Pulitzer Prize for Biography (established 1917) has never been awarded to an Indian (Pulitzer.org [no date]). Between 2005 and 2015 – i.e., the establishment of the International Booker Prize and when it last awarded books written directly in English – authors of Indian origin won once and were shortlisted thrice (see Table 3.1). Since the establishment of the Booker Prize in 1969 (though only in 2015 it allowed authors from any nationality to be eligible, as long as their works were written in English and published in the UK) (TheBookerPrizes.com [no date]), authors of Indian origin won the Booker Prize four times and were shortlisted eighteen times (see Table 3.2).

Year	Winner	Shortlist
2007	Salman Rushdie	Salman Rushdie
2009		Mahasweta Devi
2013		U R Ananthamurthy
2015		Amitav Ghosh

Table 3.1: Indian-origin winning and shortlisted authors of the International Booker Prize, 2005–2015 (created using data from TheBookerPrizes.com [no date])

Year	Winner	Shortlist
1980		Anita Desai
1981	Salman Rushdie	Salman Rushdie
1983		Salman Rushdie
1984		Anita Desai
1988		Salman Rushdie
1991		Rohinton Mistry
1995		Salman Rushdie
1996		Rohinton Mistry
1997	Arundhati Roy	Arundhati Roy
1999		Anita Desai
2002		Rohinton Mistry
2006	Kiran Desai	Kiran Desai
2007		Indra Sinha
2008	Aravind Adiga	Amitav Ghosh, Aravind Adiga
2012		Jeet Thayil
2013		Jhumpa Lahiri
2014		Neel Mukherjee
2015		Sunjeev Sahota
2019		Salman Rushdie
2020		Avni Doshi
2023		Chetna Maroo

**Table 3.2: Indian-origin winning and shortlisted authors of the Booker Prize, 1969–2023
(created using data from TheBookerPrizes.com [no date])**

As can be seen, between the International Booker Prize and the Booker Prize, Indian-origin authors have claimed five wins and twenty-six shortlist positions across sixty-six possible prize wins. Only once has more than one author of Indian origin been shortlisted in a single year, i.e., 2008. However, often the same suspects are repeated, so the distinct number of authors who have won or been shortlisted is sixteen. Publicity owing to such prizes is crucial as it pushes the winning books' sales within India. This is because Indian readers are influenced by internationally recognised 'good literature' – such as the titles listed in *The New York Times* or shortlisted for literary awards such as the Pulitzer, Booker and Nobel – more than books recognised by even Indian literary awards. Sarkar of Juggernaut states in a news article:

[U]nlike the West, we still have not seen a rise in book sales of [Indian books winning Indian literary awards] [...] The Booker and, on occasion, the Pulitzer are the only prizes that have sales impact in India [.] (cited in Verma 2018)

Even as I have discussed the Pulitzer and the Booker, their eligibility criteria would ignore most Indian authors in current publishing structures. The Pulitzer Prize for Fiction is awarded to American authors for works ‘preferably dealing with American life’ (Pulitzer.org [no date]) and the Booker Prize is only reserved for writers whose books in English have been published in the UK and Ireland (TheBookerPrizes.com [no date]), thus creating another barrier for Indian authors publishing in India and whose books are not published abroad. Most of the winners and shortlisted authors in Tables 3.1 and 3.2 are Indian in origin but have never resided in India or have not for years and do not publish first within India either, such as Rohinton Mistry, Salman Rushdie and Anita Desai. They still write about Indian settings, leading to the discussion surrounding the exoticisation of India in expat literary fiction in 3.3.1. Still, the success of these expat authors or the burgeoning Anglophone trade publishing industry in India do not equate to the success of Indian writing in English, as Huggan states:

[The thriving of Anglophone publishing in India does not] mean that these books will be widely read outside of India; for most Indian publishers, like their Third World counterparts, find it hard to compete in the global marketplace. All of these factors contribute to the common – and of course thoroughly mediated – perception that Indo-Anglian writing is the product of a roving band of privileged diasporics; that it has become the happy hunting ground of a fairly small group of clubbable cosmopolitans, who are producing a self-consciously globalised literature ‘written by elites, and defined and canonized by elites’ (Boehmer 1995: 239 40). (2001, p 79)

Therefore, domestic Indian voices are not being platformed in these prestigious international literary awards and are unable to access an international readership – unless they publish directly in the UK or US, which happens rarely and, if so, usually for migrant writers. Barnes thus states: ‘While the proposition that whatever succeeded “at home” would succeed in the colonies remained generally true, what succeeded in the colonies did not necessarily succeed

“at home” (2009, p 618), ‘home’ here being the UK in the case of India. Indian writers suffer in this unequal commercial relationship between the UK and India, as described by Altbach:

As in most other relationships between the developing and industrialized nations, intellectual trade relations are unbalanced. Industrialized nations export their products, in this case books and expertise, to the developing countries. Commercial relationships of dependence, built up over many years of colonialism, as well as more recent intervention of foreign aid, are part of the equation. (1975, p 6)

While India was a focal point of British imperialisation and a significant export market for British books in the first half of the twentieth century (Davis 2019, p 680), the unequal structures have persisted within publishing even today. Due to the lower sales compared to their foreign counterparts and the limited access to readers, few Indian writers can support themselves on their writing. Thus, with this orientation towards the West, ‘many authors prefer to have their books published in London, New York [...] because of the added prestige (and perhaps income) that foreign publication means’ (Altbach 1975, p 23).

While Kenya, Australia, China and India have disparate histories, cultures and relationships with the UK, their publishing industries still display two common features: first, books in these nations are carriers of culture; and second, books originally produced in the English language in the centres of Anglophone publishing, i.e., the US and the UK, dominate their markets, whether in original or translated forms. Thus, Altbach states:

Patterns of commerce established in the colonial period continue to be important and these affect publishing [...] [U]ntil recently, commercial agreements gave the British virtual domination over their former colonies [...] In many Third World countries, American firms have joined with those from the former colonial power. (1992, p 5)

Therefore, it is imperative to consider the US’s neocolonial powers when discussing the postcoloniality of Anglophone trade publishing. Ultimately then, former colonies and developing nations are at the mercy of the US and the UK in Anglophone publishing, making Altbach state:

In general, the industrialized nations which use a ‘world’ language dominate the flow of books, and to a considerable extent the flow of knowledge and ideas as well. In a sense, these nations, especially the United States, Britain [...] constitute the

intellectual ‘centres’ of the world. Most other nations, and particularly the Third World, are the ‘periphery’, and are dependent to varying degrees on knowledge, and often books, produced at the ‘centre’. (1975, pp 10-11)

Altbach adds, ‘Decisions made by the dominant powers in the knowledge network are made, in general, with their own interests in mind and without regard to the needs of the Third World’ (1992, p 4). However, as per Altbach, the dominant players are not *deliberately* trying to weaken book development in former colonies; it is just that the ‘interests of the publishers in the West do not always coincide with those of their compeers in the Third World’ (1992, p 4).

For Flanagan, such a phenomenon in Australia has resulted in a ‘strange, newly founded colony of the mind’ (2013, p 132), echoing Kenyan writer Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o’s concept of ‘decolonising the mind’ (1986). It is this ‘newly founded colony of the mind’ that my research focuses on, namely, the postcoloniality of global Anglophone trade publishing, in which books produced by the UK and the US dominate other markets. This is mostly because although publishing in countries such as Australia can be dated as far back as the European settlement, *Australian* publishing – i.e., local publishing – is only a few decades old, leaving it ‘with little sense of its own history and achievements, because it has been so determinedly battling to survive and then prosper’ (Flanagan 2013, p 134), and this has been true for other nations as well. The differences between having *a* publishing industry (usually controlled by firms from the former imperial power) and having a *local* publishing industry are discussed further in Chapter 5.

3.4 Interview Research Data Analysis: Postcoloniality of Anglophone Trade Book Publishing

Though I utilised interviewee Sarkar’s statement in 3.3 to frame my argument regarding the necessity to consider nationalism, national literary spaces and an indigenous publishing industry in a postcolonial world, the previous section focused on existing literature. In this section, I use relevant primary data that I have gathered from the interviews I conducted to expand my argument and fill gaps within existing academic knowledge. I begin by examining the interviewees’ responses to the dual nature of book publishing, then lead into a discussion about postcoloniality within publishing.

3.4.1 The Dual Nature of Publishing

All of the interviewees agreed that publishing exhibits a dual nature within the structures of traditional publishing, whereby their products – books – generate revenue and also hold the power to impact culture. Depending on the interviewee, the priority between the two aspects of publishing nature varied. For Das of the indie Yoda Press, the priority was to ‘keep shining light on the truth which is not the [...] mainstream version of the truth’, which is a charged action in a country that has seen a decline in the freedom of its press (Goel and Gettleman 2020; Malik 2023; Yadav 2023; Palepu and Kay 2024). More common were views like Padmanabhan’s (HarperCollins India), who believed that their job as publisher is to ensure that the author’s voice reaches the largest possible readership, the publisher does not stifle the author’s voice, and the publisher maintains a diversity in the writing as well as author selection regarding their backgrounds. His British colleague, Wright (HarperCollins UK) stated that their ‘responsibility is to serve and to represent the community of readers where we publish. [...] I think we have a responsibility to being culturally sensitive to the markets we sell into’. Duttagupta (Scholastic India) stated that ‘[a]t the heart of it all, the business of publishing cannot be the sole purpose of publishing because you’re essentially serving a public good by putting ideas out there’, thereby creating a link between the key asset of publishing – intellectual property – and impact on society and culture. On the other side of the spectrum, Sarkar (Juggernaut) stated that publishing can influence culture, but she does not feel any responsibility as a cultural institution. Abraham (Hachette India) clarified that one should not equate publishing companies with organisations such as the Sahitya Kala Akademi (India’s National Academy of Letters), that publishing is:

first and foremost a business. It is not subsidized and is not an NGO⁶ type of activity. That said, it is a *business that is different—that has elements of cultural and philosophical impact* (if you are publishing narrative books i.e.), and every publisher will have to stand up for ‘freedom of speech’ (in books that have been legally vetted of course). [emphasis added]

Shelley (Hachette UK) referred to Hachette’s and its many imprints’ long history and stated that he and his colleagues are the ‘custodians of those cultural institutions’ and they feel the weight of the responsibility to ‘deliver value for shareholders, but also to [...] modernise and be progressive’

⁶ Non-governmental Organisation

(the responsibility to shareholders is examined as ‘answerability’ of the multinationals in Chapter 5). While Chandy (Labyrinth Literary Agency) agreed that it was his responsibility to put out work that he was proud of, he did not see any ‘responsibility as a literary agent that the work needs to be particularly diverse’. Godwin, who co-founded the literary agency David Godwin Associates (DGA), is the Literary Director of the Jaipur Literature Festival and renowned for representing Indian authors on an international scale, such as Arundhati Roy and Vikram Seth. Still, Godwin does not conduct his work with a social aim in mind, as he described:

[Arundhati Roy] said: Are you interested in Indian novels? I said: No, I’m not; I’m interested in your novel. So, as it is, we do loads of people from India, but I don’t do it for any ‘worthy’ reasons, helping diversity or helping underrepresented writers. I’m just focused on voices that I’m interested in, who’ve got something new to say. [...] [B]ut I have no social agenda as a literary agent, except to find people whose books I think are interesting and trying to make sure they are published and published properly.

Godwin prefers literary fiction and has his own biases regarding genre fiction, but he did not seem to hold any against finding good stories in India. His way of working may in fact be the idealistic way of platforming writing from less explored spaces as he is not motivated by meeting a diversity quota, echoing some of the calls to action that Saha and van Lente’s 2020 report lays out. Having said that, Godwin prefers not to conflate politics with literary recognition. He was also not in support of authors utilising the spotlight of winning the Booker Prize to highlight that they were the first person of their background to win the Award:

I didn’t feel happy with the politicisation of colour in— I think people are underrepresented and I think it’s their loss because I think some of the most interesting voices are Indian writers and I think they bring something very new to what— we want to hear new people, we want to hear different things. I’ve done that for thirty-five years frankly, and that’s how I do it.

Godwin’s attitude to representing authors has worked for him and his writers. However, many others hold biases – conscious or not – regarding literature hailing from outside the linguistic centres, and this cannot be separated from politics. This is also evidenced in Padmanabhan’s

(HarperCollins India) statement regarding Indian authors winning prestigious international awards and the impact that has on other Indian writers and the perception of the Indian literary space:

I think *The God of Small Things* winning the Booker Prize really switched the needle for one into confidence, of Indian writers writing in English and writing more of. The world recognising the fact that we are also a market where writers write in English; it's not just a UK, US thing.

Thus, not only does publishing have a sociocultural impact but the wider literary landscape – such as literary awards and international recognition – impact Indian writers and the perception of a national literary space.

Jha (PRH India) provided an intriguing way of reconciling the tension between the two faces of publishing. He suggested that by converting as many titles of theirs into backlist titles – i.e., books that continue selling year on year with limited marketing and publicity – the books could ‘have the long-term impact culturally as you say as well as in terms of profit to us’. Atkins (Pan Macmillan UK) added the interesting point that having an Indian subsidiary enables them to locate new voices in India or doing justice to the publication of diverse voices in the UK within India. Wright (HarperCollins UK) stated that they ‘counterbalance’ their publishing activity ‘into a market as large as India [...] by being a proud, vibrant, well-reputed properly financed local publishing company with integrity and with values that are relevant to the market in which we operate’. This becomes especially pertinent when considering the ‘old-style colonial approach’ in which British publishers foisted their books onto the Indian market (Shelley, Hachette UK).

In response to whether Abraham (Hachette India) feels any responsibility in the *national* context, he clarified:

If you mean is it our stated mission to set out to do reform, then no... we're not political activists in that sense. If you mean... do we – within the stated guidelines of our publishing philosophy – represent voices who are part of national debates, then yes we may well be agents of change activism.

He added that their ‘current UK leadership puts a lot of emphasis on “Changing the Story”, which has multiple planks including representing diverse voices to reflect all sections of society one publishes to’. Thus, the UK branch of Hachette is addressing issues pertaining their national diversity at least, which is not the same as platforming voices from all countries and cultures that

multinationals such as Hachette have access to due to current publishing structures. I examine this underrepresentation of other national literary spaces, especially the Indian, in my research.

A publisher such as Yoda Press can choose to prioritise activism if that is a part of their ethos, but it is not necessary that every publisher – especially in a larger corporation – does so. As Turner (PRH UK) said, large publishers ‘have to balance the commercial versus the creative or the culturally responsible’. Nonetheless, the interviewees displayed awareness that their work impacts culture and should be conducted with thought: ‘at the end of the day the business of publishing is a business as well as a big social service’ (Duttagupta, Scholastic India). Interestingly, Mukherjee (Pan Macmillan India) connected this dual side of publishing with foreign writing being popular within India: ‘Reading itself forms your ideas, informs people. One of the reasons why maybe international books are so popular [in India is] because people want to know about other cultures, about other countries, about other ways of life’. But then, the lack of international sales of Indian writing implies that the West is not interested in learning about the East, other than the popularised versions satisfying the exoticised views that the West holds of the East and is delivered via award-winning literary fiction (discussed in 3.3.1).

With the awareness held by all interviewees and responsibility felt by most of being purveyors of sociocultural artefacts, publishing becomes a gatekeeper or platform for authorial voices. Thus, Duttagupta (Scholastic India) stated that ‘the position of a publisher is a very important position because you need to be very careful about what you put out there’. In the next section, I examine the publisher’s position as a platform or gatekeeper in postcolonial publishing structures.

3.4.2 Postcolonial Impact

As discussed in 3.2, print books are just one format of media and postcoloniality impacts other forms as well, which in turn affect each other. Former colonies like India must battle a ‘500-year-old history of one nation exporting their cultural and intellectual thought into the world’ (Duttagupta, Scholastic India), which has played a part in the current postcolonial flow of media from the US and the UK to other Anglophone territories. For instance, Duttagupta stated that he could publish thousands of books on an Indian context featuring Indian children as protagonists, but if Indians follow American celebrities on social media, then that flow of media will disrupt his publishing intentions. Page (Faber) stated that some American commercial fiction is successful at

reaching readers overseas due to the domination of Hollywood, thus again creating a link between book publishing and the dominance of the US in other media formats. Casanova also discusses the US's economic dominance, especially in cinema and literature, which 'has created a global market for its popular national novels [...] on the basis of the worldwide familiarity with Hollywood culture' (2004, p 170). Similarly, Abraham (Hachette India) attributed the rather strong role that press, film, TV and the internet have had in the creation of a 'middle class and an English elite that definitely is a bit deracinated' in India. These media formats do not only impact reading habits within India, but also the rest of the world, leading Gupta (Writer's Side) to state:

Most of the markets in Europe follow the bestsellers and the leaders in the UK and US. So, whenever I announce a US/UK deal, immediately I start getting queries from Germany, China, Turkey because of Publishers Marketplace.

Conversations surrounding representation in literature are carried in the US and the UK, but they focus on literature from 'BAME' sources within their own nations (see Ramdarshan Bold 2019 and Saha and van Lente 2020). Duttagupta (Scholastic India) felt that these dialogues are thus restricted to their own diverse citizens. It is not the aim of these discussions in the UK and the US to encourage seeking voices from other countries like India, though UK and US publishing firms impact other nations' publishing and literary landscapes due to their cultural hegemony and the cartelisation of Anglophone trade publishing (discussed in Chapter 4). Still, Duttagupta was hopeful. He believed that the economic booms in China and India have forced the rest of the world to 'look at' the two as 'growth markets', making them especially appealing when considering the 'saturated markets' of the UK and the US. Yet, Duttagupta stated that the West has not appreciated the 3000-year-old ancient histories of the two civilisations, but once the West does, it would lead to an exchange of multicultural content. To achieve this, he stated that young, dynamic publishing staff is needed who can create a new publishing ethos.

Within India, Mukherjee (Pan Macmillan India) believed that the readership is gradually changing and demanding more Indian content. He stated that along with the new Jeffery Archer or David Baldacci novel that is always in demand in India, Pan Macmillan India's 'bestselling fiction and nonfiction titles are [by] Indian authors'. However, he was not sure that this translated to international markets. He mentioned the few exceptions of literary Indian authors but stated that Indian commercial or genre fiction is not among them. With many of the interviewees, I brought up the puzzling question of why Indian readers are more open to reading genre fiction based in

other settings, yet the same cannot be said in return. Shelley (Hachette UK) agreed with me that readers in the UK look towards India for literary fiction and not genre fiction. Wright (HarperCollins UK) stated that it has been easier for literary fiction from non-UK nations to be received well in Anglophone nations but not so much for commercial books. Atkins (Pan Macmillan UK) also said that the books by Indian writers that have been picked internationally and won awards are on the literary end of the spectrum. Gupta (Writer's Side) was blunt in his assessment. He called publishers in the UK and the US 'insular people' who 'keep finding faults in the [Indian] books' that Gupta pitches to them. Yet, Gupta stated, UK and US publishers publish 'mediocre stuff in the UK/US, which is not even as cutting edge as some of the books published' in India. He added about Indian diasporic writing:

A lot of these literary fiction writers, they're American or British writers of South Asian origin, so I mean they're born and brought up there. They've studied there, done creative writing there, they have their own agents [...] So, there are a lot of these diasporic writers who get these big deals. [...] It's just that most of the books haven't taken off like the way *The God of Small Things* did. [...] It's very difficult for an Indian writer, living in India, writing in the YA/children's space to get published in the UK.

This assessment applies to other commercial fiction genres as well. In the interviews, I mentioned the example of the children's Greek mythological fantasy series, *Percy Jackson and the Olympians* (2005 onwards) by American author Rick Riordan – which has been popular in India – and the Hindu mythological fantasy series *The Shiva Trilogy* (2010 onwards) by Indian author Amish Tripathi – a bestselling series in India that has not been successful abroad. Mukherjee (Pan Macmillan India) stated that within commercial fiction, people want to read things that they can relate to, and thus non-Indians would not be as interested in reading fantasy books inspired by Hindu mythology. His response to the *Percy Jackson/Shiva Trilogy* conundrum was that though the former has sold well in India, it cannot match the sales figures of commercial fiction in the West. However, attempts have been made to sell Tripathi's trilogy abroad⁷ 'with mixed results' (as per interviewees such as Chandy, Labyrinth Literary Agency), let alone achieve the form of

⁷ Quercus, an imprint of Hachette UK, acquired Tripathi's trilogy (Hindustan Times 2013).

success that the *Percy Jackson* series has in India. Atkins (Pan Macmillan UK) said the following on this topic:

Chetan Bhagat and Amish Tripathi are speaking to an audience that is very Indian and therefore probably culturally specific. I mean, even for the Indian community that lives overseas, they haven't really been able to tap into that overseas market, those authors I don't think.

Atkins added that this is not an Indian-specific problem but applies to countries like Australia as well, which has many local authors who do well within the country but not overseas, which Abraham (Hachette India) also stated in his interview. Page (Faber) mentioned Scandi and French crime being the European genre fiction that seems most popular in the UK, with the rest of European fiction 'failing to find publishers, partly due to the prohibited costs of translation on often small sales'.

The debate surrounding the lack of international reach and success of Indian commercial fiction is a significant one. We must not congratulate ourselves or the Indian literary space on the select few Indian literary writers doing well overseas. As Abraham (Hachette India) stated, mass market/commercial/genre fiction is an important marker of a nation's literary estate:

I do believe that the acid test of any market's health and business potential is its mass market and not just its literary market (which in India) has evolved strongly from RK Narayan downwards. Our literary brands are on par with any writers in the West [...] *Reading for leisure in a large demographic is the mass market and a key marker of true bibliodiversity*. Both bestsellers and midlist across different genres is what is needed as a measure of a vibrant market. Otherwise, there is a danger that we may soon just become the equivalent of an open market – with a few bestsellers dominating the market and everything else being niche. [emphasis added]

Atkins (Pan Macmillan UK) expanded on his reasoning behind Indian literary fiction succeeding over Indian commercial fiction overseas: 'it tends to be in that literary area or I suppose writers who aren't quite as focused on the local culture [...] they have an opportunity to sell overseas'. He added that novels written for the 'mass market' are 'culturally specific' and not 'particularly global even in this world where social media allows that message to be transmitted

quite quickly and easily and swiftly'. Yet, mass market fiction from the US and the UK often travels overseas, so this theory does not apply to all national literary spaces, only the less privileged ones (discussed in 3.3.1). Even Sarkar (Juggernaut) admitted to reading and enjoying 'junk books from the West', giving the example of Daniel Silva's works. Such a non-reciprocal book distribution system makes the UK and the US, what Atkins (Pan Macmillan UK) called, 'publishing markets rather than distribution markets'. Furthermore, I would argue that most of the Indian literary fiction that have been successes internationally, such as writings of Salman Rushdie and Arundhati Roy, are heavily entrenched in Indian culture. Perhaps they portray the exoticised version of India (discussed in 3.3.1 and 3.4.1) that comforts international readers by reiterating stereotypes of the Other that they have learnt in a postcolonial media network. As Godwin (DGA) said, 'Sometimes I think some Indian novels can be romanticised for the West'.

These postcolonial reading tastes of the publishers' perceived 'core audiences' (white and middle class) (Saha and van Lente 2020) in turn impact the kinds of books that the publishers produce. This only reinforces the reading habits of the UK and US publishers' actual audiences, which include readers within India. If books by local Indian authors are not available internationally and British publishing continues the same pattern of publishing, then how are reading tastes and demands supposed to change? In this manner, publishers play the part of gatekeeper and actively shape the canon and what is considered 'good' and 'bad' literature (discussed in 3.3 and 3.4.1), thus directly engaging with postcoloniality. Furthermore, what these postcolonial reading habits and business practices have led to is lending a flavour of internationalism to British and American writing, with Indian writing being considered parochial and lower in quality. Therefore, Chandy (Labyrinth Literary Agency) stated:

Most Indian commercial fiction, I actually don't think is very good. But that's just my view. They're not really fun reads, you know, *from a universal standpoint*. I have nothing against commercial fiction, but *really great commercial fiction that comes out of the US or the UK, they can be read everywhere* and they're skilfully written. [...] India's biggest commercial fiction hits have not sold overseas and that's just proof. (emphasis added)

And Indian publisher Sarkar (Juggernaut) stated: 'I think [British and American writing is] better, as simple as that.' Interviewees such as Sarkar, Chandy and Abraham (Hachette India) stated that India lacks a leisure or hobby culture, whereby people often do not read for pleasure, and thus

Indian writing in English is not yet as developed as its British or American counterparts. Indian publishers like Sarkar added that their mission is to publish Indian stories for the Indian reader, thus ignoring the potential of Indian commercial writing to be sold abroad. Padmanabhan (HarperCollins India) said it would be ‘unfair’ to examine whether ‘Indian writers can compete globally’ as they are meant to ‘write for India’ and that if they are good books and the ‘right match’ comes along, then interest for them can be generated globally – which hardly happens, as discussed. Why are there different expectations for the writing of one national literary space over another? These expectations are not harmless, as they do not exist in a vacuum. They are accompanied by actions that determine the books’ distribution and longevity as well as the career and economic gains of the author. This limiting aspect of Indian writing has made literary agents like Gupta state that they do not even pitch most of their authors because ‘their content we don’t think will travel outside of let’s say the Indian diaspora’.

I continue my discussion by embedding it more deeply within the business of publishing in the next chapter by examining the role of cartelisation in the postcoloniality of publishing.

3.5 Conclusion

By perceiving neocolonialism as a part of postcolonialism, it is easier to trace the divide between the First and the Third World, the East and the West, and the North and the South due to an international division of labour (Bhabha 1994). Though it may seem strange to discuss nationalism in the twenty-first century, it cannot be denied that literature is often examined across national lines (Casanova 2004). In the current setup, the privileged national literary spaces – that coincide with the imperial powers and neocolonial powers in the Anglophone world, i.e., the UK and the US – dominate media and culture in the rest of the Anglophone world (Casanova 2004), and even beyond, as seen in the case of China (Guangwei 2005). This domination also impacts literary taste and canon formation (Gandhi 1998; Casanova 2004) and results ‘primarily in the spread of new forms of intellectual domination while simultaneously stifling the growth of indigenous authorship and of a true local publishing industry’ (Singh 1992, pp 254-255). While traditional publishing is often conducted with a profit motive, the dual nature of book publishing – in which its end products impact society and culture – cannot be disregarded (Ashcroft et al 1989; Curtain 1993; Altbach 1998; Borghino and Einarsson 2018; Gupta 2018; Rajagopal 2018). Thus, the source and the content of the literature matters.

Developing a national literary space with indigenous or homegrown writing and publishing helps in the creation of a nation, which is a key step in the decolonising process. In the current scenario, hardly any writers who reside in India can access an international readership. Most of the Indian authors who can have done so while residing outwith India and usually by publishing directly with a foreign publisher (Huggan 2001). These writers also tend to write literary fiction, which can veer into exoticisation and romanticisation of India (Huggan 2001). Successful Indian commercial and genre fiction is a sign of true bibliodiversity and reflects the mass market (Abraham, Hachette India), and thus it is significant to examine its lack of success overseas. Though Kenya, Australia, China and India have differing relationships with the UK and the US, the postcoloniality of Anglophone trade publishing structures impacts all in similar ways (Chakava 1996; Altbach 1998; Guangwei 2005; Carter and Galligan 2013). It can be argued that these postcolonial effects can be combatted with the development of local publishing industries that promote local authors on an international stage:

Changing tastes and weaning the elite away from their Eurocentrism are more difficult tasks but essential nonetheless. The first step in this battle is for Third World publishers to display a commitment to indigenous authorship. Publishers in developing countries often belong to the same elite (or aspire to join it) and, hence, display similar prejudices and biases, which are reflected in the books they publish. (Singh 1992, p 248)

The ‘voyeuristic gaze’ (Gandhi 1998, p 11) that Indians view the UK with combined with the elitism (or aspiring elitism) of publishers in developing countries reinforce postcolonial literary tastes and must be challenged.

In this chapter I discussed the theoretical framework of my research, i.e., postcolonial theory. But as British colonisation was couched as a moral mission to civilise ‘semi-barbaric’ lands like India (Marx, cited in Said 1978, p 153) while economically exploiting the colonised lands, it would be remiss to only focus on theory in the postcoloniality of Anglophone publishing while ignoring economic realities. This prioritising of the role of economic capital also places this thesis firmly in the realm of publishing studies. Some interviewees like Sarkar (Juggernaut), Chandy (Labyrinth Literary Agency) and Abraham (Hachette India) attributed Indian writing not being of the same calibre as British or American writing to India’s lack of a hobby culture. This is associated

with issues surrounding class disparity, poverty, infrastructure and education, as mentioned by Sarkar:

We haven't had a history of reading, scholarship, literacy work that's being done. The West has had all of the nineteenth century where you even have working-class people wanting to educate themselves after hours and it was kind of connected to the Church and you had reading groups. The place where a middle-class British person could read a novel by a Nigerian has been 200 years in the making of institutions, of small groups, of small movements, of the role of public education that charge – the building blocks of those countries and we have not had that.

However, these issues themselves are a consequence of the postcolonial scenario, thus making the writing and publishing debate a postcolonial one as well. As seen in the interview data, the focus of local indie publishers is on Indian stories for the Indian reader. However, reading culture in India cannot be truly changed until the dominating players within Indian Anglophone trade publishing – i.e., the multinational subsidiaries – are able to generate competing revenues from local titles as they do from the sale of imported titles. Regarding this intermix of business and culture, Altbach states: 'There is an international aspect to the intellectual system which includes the import and export of books and other mass media, copyright arrangements' (1975, p 4), which I discuss in the following two chapters.

Chapter 4: Cartelisation Through Commonwealth Rights

4.1 Who will read my words?

In 2018, I was commissioned to write a self-help book for the leading Indian local publisher, Rupa Publications. I considered myself only a fiction writer, but I knew how large the commercial nonfiction market was in India. It would have been foolish to pass up such an opportunity. So, I wrote a sample chapter, which they liked, and I was offered a publishing deal.

Publishing, like other creative and cultural industries, occupies an odd space: it is a for-profit business that enables us writers to share our craft with the world, which can impact culture⁸. In my case, the financial returns have not matched the effort that went into researching and writing a fifty-thousand-word book, but I knew that going in. I did the maths while signing the author contract: 8% royalty on the maximum retail price (MRP) of INR 299 meant that I would receive about INR 24 for each paperback copy sold, or approximately a measly GBP 0.23 (GBP 1 is roughly INR 105⁹). An aspect of the royalty terms that was unclear, and therefore induced some hope, was the royalties on ebook sales in India and abroad as well as the international Print on Demand (POD) book sales. There was no way for me to estimate a sales figure there. Moreover, since the royalty was higher on ebook sales (25%) and both the ebook and POD book would be sold at higher prices internationally (though I was unsure what my exact cut would be in those cases as Amazon sets the price and my royalty would be on the net receipts and not MRP/RRP [recommended retail price]), there was a chance I could see some exciting financial gains with these sales.

However, I had reservations about these internationally available ebooks and POD copies. In the contract, my publisher wanted to purchase world rights for my book, which I was aware was an industry norm in India due to my prior experience of working in Indian publishing. Although I already knew the answer, I asked my publisher: What will you do with these world rights? Where and how will you sell my book abroad? I got the usual response of ebook sales and

⁸ The dual nature of publishing is discussed in Chapter 3.

⁹ Oanda.com (2024)

Amazon Print on Demand. Therefore, my book would be available in digital and print copies online, if a reader were to go looking for it. But as the (a) debut book of an average-sized print run, (b) written by an unknown author and (c) published by an Indian local company that does not have branches in other countries, my book would not be accompanied by a paid-for marketing and publicity campaign in India, let alone internationally. When my book finally released, that too during the COVID-19 pandemic, I tried to spread the word about it through the limited reach of my social media and via online events. There was only so much an author in my position could do. My book was not reviewed by journalists, though it was by some aspiring Instagram ‘bookfluencers’¹⁰ whom my publisher sent free reading copies. By the one-year mark, I received my first royalty statement and found that I had sold less than half of the print run and no remarkable sales occurred in ebook or POD forms either.

Three years later, I have finally (and slowly) sold the full print run and moved on from what should have been a joyful experience of publishing my first book to concentrate on future writing projects. However, I still ask myself: What could I have done differently to boost sales? Did I ever stand a chance? Do other Indian writers who publish in India? Even if I had published the exact same book with the Indian subsidiary of a multinational, I probably would have had the same experience: limited print run in India, with the ebook and Amazon POD available internationally, accompanied by a short social media campaign though perhaps this one may have been paid for due to the greater resources of multinational subsidiaries¹¹. While I wrote the book while keeping a global Anglophone readership in mind, it does not seem likely that the US or UK offices of that multinational would have selected the book for international dissemination, though the Indian office usually distributes books that the UK office produces. This is something I know from my experience of being a publishing professional, author and reader in the Indian literary landscape. As a result, Indian authors often cannot access a global readership even when they write in English, the ‘international language’¹², and India is considered a consumer market rather than a source of ‘good’ literature by other nations.

¹⁰ ‘Bookfluencer’ is a portmanteau made up of ‘book’ and ‘influencer’; it refers to social-media influencers whose channels/profiles specialise in promoting or reviewing books.

¹¹ Discussed in Chapter 5

¹² Discussed in Chapters 1 and 3

Having traced the roots of Anglophone trade publishing in India and addressed the postcolonial impact of the hegemony of the UK and the US upon Anglophone trade publishing in the previous chapters, I now discuss the cartelisation of Anglophone trade publishing caused by territorial rights. In this chapter, I create a link between international copyright conventions and the birth of territorial rights, such as Commonwealth rights, whose practice has adversely affected Indian local publishing and writing. I use both primary and secondary research within this chapter. In the literature review section of this chapter, 4.2, I present a condensed history of copyright. I also discuss how copyright conventions have been perceived in India along with a few other countries, namely, China, Kenya and Australia, as I have done in Chapter 3. To fill gaps in existing literature, in 4.3 I present and examine the relevant primary data I have collected through semi-structured interviews. The purpose of this chapter is to explore my hypothesis that copyright conventions and territorial rights have played a key role in the cartelisation of Anglophone trade publishing, which – as discussed in Chapter 3 – has had a negative postcolonial impact on former colonies such as India.

4.2 The Four Cs: Copyright, Colonisation, the Commonwealth and Cartelisation

I use the term ‘cartelisation’ in my thesis title and Chapter 1; in this chapter I explore it further in the context of Anglophone trade book publishing. Since cartelisation is a consequence of the practice of Commonwealth rights and other territorial rights, which were in turn a result of copyright conventions and British colonisation, I examine their links within this section. I utilise existing literature to present a brief history of copyright and then discuss how copyright conventions have been perceived internationally. But first, I establish the term ‘cartelisation’ in the context of this research.

4.2.1 What Is the Cartelisation of Anglophone Trade Book Publishing?

As discussed in 3.3.2, Casanova (2004) lays out two centres of power of the Anglophone territory: London and New York. The headquarters of major Anglophone trade publishing houses are based in both cities. The two cities ‘exert a literary form of political power’ (Casanova 2004, pp 116-117), and this form of power has led to the division of Anglophone territories into two segments – one that US multinational publishers control and the other that UK multinational publishers do – or the *cartelisation* of Anglophone trade publishing. Katz and Mair state that ‘it is possible to

produce the effects of collusion’ in any form of cartelisation ‘without any illicit communication or covert coordination’ (2018, p 9), but there existed formal agreements that led to the cartelisation of global Anglophone trade publishing. Though this cartelisation endures post the banning of the formal agreements too (discussed in 4.2.2).

The exact rights territories can vary according to author contracts, but I discuss two of the more accepted divisions. I arrived at this data using book history and publishing literature (Bryant 1979; Davis 2019) as well as my primary research¹³:

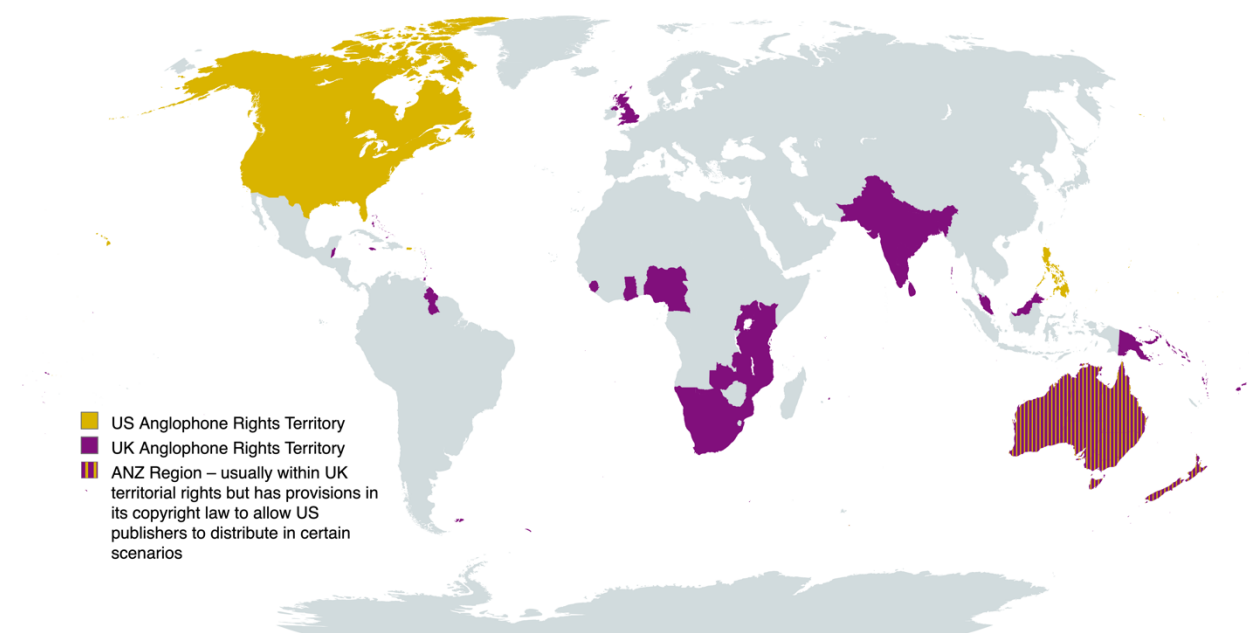


Fig 4.1: Cartelisation of Anglophone trade book territorial rights by US and UK publishers (created using primary interview data and secondary literature) [map not to scale]

The areas coloured in yellow on the map denote the territories that US multinational publishers usually ask for in their author contracts. These include the US, Canada, Puerto Rico and the Philippines (and sometimes Latin America though not shown here). The areas coloured in purple denote the territories that UK multinational publishers usually ask rights for in their author

13 Interviews of Anantha Padmanabhan (CEO, HarperCollins India), Chris Turner (International Sales Director, Penguin Random House UK), David Shelley (Group CEO, Hachette UK), Jonathan Atkins (International Director, Pan Macmillan UK), Stephen Page (Executive Chair, Faber & Faber) and Thomas Abraham (MD, Hachette India), and an email exchange with Caro Clarke (Founder– Literary Agent, Portobello Literary)

contracts. These include the UK and Commonwealth territories – or former British colonies – excluding Canada. Due to Canada’s proximity to the US, US publishers insist on rights to it. Australia, New Zealand and the surrounding areas (ANZ region) have been marked in purple-and-yellow stripes since Australia has provisions in its *Copyright Act* that allow US publishers to distribute to Australia if UK publishers do not meet certain criteria, such as delivering in a timely manner and at a price sensitive to the Australian market (discussed in 4.2.3). The territories in grey are usually considered the ‘open market’ or ‘non-exclusive market’, and both US and UK publishers can distribute their editions there, along with the publishers of other countries. To address the issues surrounding legacy and tradition that have made cartelisation the norm within Anglophone trade book publishing, it is imperative to understand the history of copyright – which led to the birth of territorial rights – and the international reception of both. I do so in the following sections.

4.2.2 The Birth of Territorial Rights

The business of book publishing is based on the ownership of the industry’s core asset – intellectual property. The rights that the publisher holds over its assets (and the author over theirs) are defined and legally bound in various copyright laws. These are shaped by international conventions that countries can opt to ratify and also nationally at government levels. Copyright thus protects authors’ and publishers’ interests from piracy and assures them financial returns from the sale of the books that they own. In the process of establishing this ownership internationally, the book’s sale is further protected by territorial sales rights to demarcate world regions for transnational dissemination (which is easier for multinationals with their already-established international operations, discussed in Chapter 5), especially when more than one publisher is interested in selling the title. Commonwealth rights are among these territorial rights; they grant British publishers publication and distribution rights to former British colonies. In this section, I present the history of key copyright conventions and examine their connection to territorial rights and the resulting cartelisation.

Much like the way that the developmental stage of indigenous publishing varies from country to country, so varies the overall impact of international copyright conventions and territorial rights on different nations. So, while territorial rights confer a ‘significant advantage on copyright owners’ – i.e., the West, in the case of Anglophone trade book publishing – territorial

rights ‘can be seen as a corresponding serious disadvantage to consumers and users of copyright material’ (McKeough et al 1997, cited in Wiseman 2013, p 190), i.e., the non-West. On this topic, Altbach adds that copyright ‘reinforces a system of knowledge inequality and creates a kind of monopoly dominated by the owners of knowledge’ (1998, p 10). He explains this by stating:

Copyright has emerged as one of the most important means of regulating the international flow of ideas and knowledge-based products, and is a central product for the knowledge industries of the twenty-first century. Those who control copyright have a significant advantage in the emerging knowledge-based global economy. The fact is that *copyright ownership is largely in the hands of the major industrialized nations and of the major multimedia corporations—placing low per capita income countries as well as smaller economies at a significant disadvantage.* (1998, p 4; emphasis added)

Thus, on the one hand copyright is used for protecting authors’ interests but on the other it is a tool deployed in postcolonial knowledge and culture systems. Still, it is hard to conceive of publishing without copyright law, as they have developed side by side. Both the introduction of copyright law and the creation of the publishing industry were prompted by the same circumstances, namely, ‘the development of the printing press, the decline of the Stationers’ Company [...] and changes in state censorship’ (Wiseman 2013, p 177). At the time, the printer acted as the publisher and, while the author’s right over their work was not recognised by law, it was customary for authors to receive a fee for selling their work to a government-authorised printer (Gleason 1998, pp 49-50). The **Statute of Anne**, enacted in 1710 in the UK, extended the ownership of copyright to authors, from formerly just printers (Gleason 1998, p 50; Seville 2006, pp 11-12).

Books were thus protected within the British national border. But ‘as trade, travel and communication increased’ (Gleason 1998, p 52) and the influence of the British Empire spread beyond Britain’s border to its colonies, new measures were needed to protect works against international piracy (Seville 2006, p 2). Nations required a ‘common international framework for copyright protection’ and the International Literary and Artistic Association prepared a draft copyright convention, which ultimately led to the creation of the **International Convention for the Protection of Literary and Artistic Works (1886), or the Berne Convention** (Gleason 1998, p 53). The Convention required its signatories to extend the same protection under their laws to works emerging from outside their borders (Gleason 1998, p 53). The Berne Convention was

ratified by Belgium, France, Germany, Great Britain, Haiti, Italy, Spain, Switzerland and Tunis – but notably not by the US (Seville 2006, p 25). Britain ratified the Convention on behalf of its colonies in the British Empire (Seville 2006, p 25), significantly bringing ‘300 million people within the Union – more than double the combined populations of the other original signatories’ (Seville 2019, p 581). While Seville states at several points that Britain was conscious of signing on behalf of its colonies and did so with their consent, this could only be in reference to self-governing dominions like Canada and not countries like India that were under direct imperial rule (Shah 1973, p 646). Therefore, India’s participation in the Berne Convention is rooted in colonial history and is a part of colonial legacy.

Gradually, the US became amenable to an international copyright convention, though it still did not wholly agree with the Berne Convention. Thus, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) convened a conference in 1952, and it resulted in the **Universal Copyright Convention (UCC)** that the US signed along with most of Latin America, and UCC took effect in 1955 (Gleason 1998, pp 54-55). Though the US did not ratify the Berne Convention till 1989, from 1928 onwards US publishers used it to their advantage: they could claim protection under the Berne Convention by printing the first editions of their works within any of the signatory nations (Gleason 1998, p 54). Furthermore, the US government enabled its citizens to produce bestsellers from England without making payment to copyright holders (Gleason 1998, pp 52-53), thus indulging in piracy. Shah notes that ‘right from the day the US became independent, it disregarded the “intellectual property rights” of other countries for over two centuries’ (1973, p 646). It is interesting that the US did not ratify international copyright conventions till its own domestic market developed, especially since indigenous publishing and a national literary space are considered to play key roles in imagining and decolonising a nation, as discussed in Chapter 3.

Creating measures to protect books against piracy in foreign territories through copyright conventions, especially during British colonial rule, resulted in the demarcation of the Anglophone world for publication and distribution – or the *cartelisation* of Anglophone book markets – through territorial rights. In this system, UK and US multinational publishers control exports to nations they have laid claim to, as discussed in 4.2.1. The UK has been able to do so because of its early industrial revolution (supported by its imperial rule), and the US has been able to do so because it did not ratify the Berne Convention while still profiting from its mandates to develop its local

industry and infrastructure as well as its national knowledge systems. However, former colonies such as India never had the option of abstaining from international copyright conventions until they could develop their local industries, because Britain ratified these agreements on behalf of its colonies, as discussed above. Since former colonies did not have a say in these agreements, it must be questioned whether their interests were given priority, and I discuss this in 4.2.3.

The Berne Convention was created to protect artistic works against piracy by illegalising the reprinting and selling of content owned by publishers without permission and offering repayment, or in practical terms, licensing content or purchasing territorial distribution rights. The 1947 **Traditional Market Agreement (TMA)** cemented cartelisation. TMA was established by British publishers in response to the US's actions, i.e., originally not signing the Berne Convention and conducting activities that were 'clearly piracy in the eyes of Europeans' (Gleason 1998, p 52). TMA was a 'pact among British publishers designed to secure overseas markets for their publications' that claimed 'a group of about seventy countries as their "traditional market"' (Bryant 1979, p 371). This 'traditional market' comprised widespread Commonwealth territories such as India, Sri Lanka, Pakistan, Singapore, Australia, Fiji, Gibraltar, Northern Ireland and South Africa, among others (Bryant 1979, p 394). The signatories decided not to engage in buying or selling publication and distribution rights with US publishers, 'unless the rights for [the traditional] market remained intact in British hands' (Bryant 1979, p 371). TMA was formally put into effect in 1947, but its adherence had been a common practice even earlier in the century (Bryant 1979, p 371).

TMA was significant for the revenue that export generated for British publishers due to the UK's 'relatively small domestic market' (Bryant 1979, pp 374-375). Even today, export income comprises 60% of British publishing, making the UK the largest exporter of books in the world (Publishers Association UK [no date]). The driving force behind TMA was (and still remains) the belief that the markets of former British colonies are '[Britain's] prerogative [...] In the book trade – both in Britain and in many of its former colonies – the structures and hierarchies of imperialism long survived the demise of colonial rule itself' (Davis 2019, p 697). This is voiced by Bryant too: 'the British pointed out that they had originally created and developed their "traditional market" and needed to (and should) reap the benefits of those early efforts in order to remain an economically viable institution' (1979, p 377). This is where the link between copyright, colonisation, Commonwealth rights and cartelisation becomes clearer. Along with creating

safeguards against piracy, the Berne Convention had also been an attempt at formally staking claim on markets that were at the time within the remit of the British Empire but were beyond Britain's national border. Therefore, the practice of territorial rights goes back to the 1800s, clearly implicit in Britain's unease with American editions of British books entering their territories – especially Canada and other colonies (Seville 2006) – and continues today.

Although TMA was passed within the UK, the even-then hegemony of British book publishing forced upcoming American publishers to abide by it, for fear of being boycotted and forfeiting the possibility of having their American books distributed in the UK (Bryant 1979, p 374). Therefore, due to the UK's TMA, the 'worldwide English language book market became divided into two spheres, the British and the American' (Bryant 1979, p 371), or as Davis puts it, 'In effect, [TMA] led to the creation of *two national cartels* which carved up world rights' for Anglophone books (2019, pp 686-687; emphasis added) – leading me to use the term 'cartelisation' in this thesis.

TMA would not last long, at least officially. In 1974, the US Department of Justice intervened, following which TMA was abolished in 1976. In the next section, I discuss how the US, as a nation with neocolonial powers, was able to end TMA, yet the same cannot always be said of less privileged nations as they have not been in positions to challenge conventions spearheaded by the UK and the US. I also examine the effects that territorial rights have had on the publishing industries of a few other nations that did not play primary roles in shaping copyright conventions and find themselves at a disadvantage regarding them.

4.2.3 International Reception of Commonwealth Rights and Cartelisation

The Traditional Market Agreement worked well for British and American publishers, who were, Bryant states, 'each other's biggest customers (when combining actual export values with rights sales)' (1979, p 374). This efficient system was put above the long-term needs of then-colonies and other developing nations: 'Rivalry from the *market countries* themselves was not a significant factor since indigenous publishing industries were not developed enough to compete for the purchase of rights on an international scale' (Bryant 1979, p 378; emphasis added). That their indigenous publishing industries were not developed enough to compete with British and American publishers on an international scale is but obvious, as these 'market countries' were under colonial rule (or newly independent from it) and not at the same developmental stage as the

UK or the US. Moreover, the reason the US could co-lead this cartelisation was precisely because it had engaged in piracy to aid its country's education and the growth of its home industries, as discussed in 4.2.2. However, as times changed, so did the stance of developing countries, which Bryant tellingly conflates with 'market countries':

Growing feelings of nationalism and new-found political independence resulted in a growing need for books and, in the more advanced countries, the development of an indigenous, independent publishing industry. *Market countries* became increasingly discontented with *publishing agreements made without their consultation or consent*, agreements which denied them both their freedom of choice and, especially in poorer countries, access to the cheapest available editions. (1979, p 380; emphasis added)

As mentioned, TMA was eventually abolished in 1976 due to the intervention of the US Department of Justice. While *The Bookseller* hailed this as the end of 'an epoch' (cited in Bryant 1979, p 389), 'the principles of international copyright, including that of territorial exclusivity were specifically preserved' (Bryant 1979, p 390). Therefore, while TMA may no longer exist, in practice British publishers still expect Commonwealth rights for the titles they publish (see Table 4.1 in section 4.3.2). The far-ranging impact of this 'territorial exclusivity' would not have been possible without the establishment of foreign subsidiaries as the concept of multinationalisation entered publishing, which is discussed in Chapter 5.

Unlike the US, other nations have not been as successful in challenging copyright conventions disadvantageous to them. To an extent, **Australia** has been able to protect its interests through national legislations. With the 1991 amendments made to Australia's *Copyright Act*, the country allowed 'free importation of non-infringing copies of books from abroad where there was a failure to supply the Australian market' within thirty days of the book's overseas release in certain conditions (Wiseman 2013, p 190; also discussed in Lee 2013, p 26), thus giving priority to Australian consumers in extreme circumstances. This amendment resulted in 'bypassing the London bottleneck and giving Australian readers almost immediate access to imported books' with a decrease in the British book import and an increase in American book import in Australia (Lee 2013, p 26). However, there were still concerns that the books sold in Australia were significantly more expensive than those sold overseas, forcing the Australian Attorney General to state in 2002:

[T]he current outdated copyright law creates a lucrative distribution monopoly for foreign multinationals and prevents local retailers from sourcing cheaper copyrighted materials from overseas, even though individuals can make purchases directly over the Internet. (Alston and Williams 2002, cited in Wiseman 2013, p 191; emphasis added)

The Australian Attorney General's 2002 statement emphasises the linking of copyright with cartelisation through the distribution systems of foreign – UK and US, when speaking of Anglophone publishing – multinationals. Moreover, accounts from Australian publisher and academic Jenny Lee clarify that Commonwealth rights are rooted in colonialism. Lee states that when she began working in publishing in the late 1980s, she 'occasionally heard publishers referring to Commonwealth rights as "colonial" rights, a revealing slip of the tongue' (2013, p 28). Still, Lee recognises that the 1991 amendments to the *Copyright Act* improved how publishing conglomerates view Australia. Over the years, interactions have also increased between Australian publishers and other Asia-Pacific regions, but unfortunately, this has not been a reciprocal exchange, as per Lee:

[O]fficial Australian cultural policies seem to envisage this as a one-way process; the emphasis is on selling Australian works overseas rather than on establishing reciprocal communication. The British do not have a monopoly on colonialist attitudes. (2013, p 32)

It could be asked whether nations such as Australia (and the US, earlier), who are able to develop their local publishing industries, are destined to follow postcolonial footsteps.

China joined the Berne Convention and the UCC in 1992 (Guangwei 2005, pp 29-30). Before it, trade in copyright remained the most common business between British and Chinese publishers and 'British books already accounted for a large percentage of foreign books published [...] The UK has kept the number two position in copyright trade among all countries' (Guangwei 2005, p 239). As discussed in Chapter 3, though Chinese regions (barring Hong Kong) do not share the colonial relationships with Britain that India, Australia and Anglophone Africa do, Chinese publishers also find themselves in weaker positions within bilateral copyright trade with nations such as the US, the UK, Germany and France:

According to incomplete statistics, 51,500 book copyright deals were made with overseas publishers from 1990 to 2002. Of these, 44,300 were deals that licensed works from overseas publishers, and 7,200 were deals that licensed works to overseas publishers. (Guangwei 2005, p 213)

Therefore, of all mapped copyright deals between 1990 and 2002 in China, approximately only 14% were the buying of Chinese book licenses by overseas publishers. Rights acquisitions of foreign books by Chinese publishers increased further post 1995, making the ratio of inbound to outbound rights licenses ten to one (Guangwei 2005, p 214). In fact, in 1999, ‘the UK acquired just 20 titles, which was a record year’ and it was only ‘*one-fiftieth* of the number of titles acquired from the UK in the same year’ (Guangwei 2005, p 242; emphasis added). Furthermore, as discussed in Chapter 3, overseas publishers displayed an interest in Chinese books that exoticised China (Guangwei 2005, p 229) and not Chinese literature. This has resulted in a scenario in which ‘local-themed books have had mediocre performances’ in China: most of the bestselling (nine out of ten) titles in China International Trust Investment Corporation’s 2005 top ten bestsellers were foreign books (discussed in Guangwei 2005, p 221). The situation is revealed to be even direr for local Chinese authors when one realises that the ‘prices of licensed foreign books are generally a bit higher than that of local books’ (Guangwei 2005, p 221), thus leading Chinese authors to make lower royalties due to lower price points in their own national market (which is true for Indian authors in India as well, discussed in the interview data analysis in 4.3.3). In the almost two decades since Guangwei’s work, it seems that the patterns have not changed as the 2022 book import revenue was approximately one-tenth of book export revenue in China:

Despite China’s prominence as a major producer and exporter of various commodities, the export of literature is subject to numerous obstacles, including language barriers, censorship restrictions, *limited international marketing efforts*, and *competition from internationally recognized publishing houses*. These factors explain why China’s book export value fell below the 33 million U.S. dollars mark in 2022, despite peaking in 2012 and 2017 when values exceeded 60 million U.S. dollars. On the other hand, [...] [i]n 2022, China imported 332 million U.S. dollars of books, almost triple that of a decade ago. (Thomala 2024; emphasis added)

When it comes to **Anglophone Africa**, the international copyright system has been explicitly called ‘highly unequal’ by scholars such as Altbach (1996, p x). While accepting that international copyright is necessary to protect intellectual property, Chakava significantly states that trade in copyright is reasonable only when it is applicable to partners who hold equal power; otherwise, it can become a ‘tool of capitalistic selfishness and protectionism’ working against the developing world (1996, p 76). He further adds that, as per the 1993 UNESCO *Statistical Year Book*, Africa had 12% of the world’s population yet only produced 1.2% of books globally (cited in Chakava 1996, p 79). Keeping in mind that, in 1996, almost two-thirds (thirty-four out of the total fifty-four) of the members of the Berne Convention were African countries (Chakava 1996, pp 76-77), Chakava asks whose interests are really being protected by these international regulations (1996, p 79). The relevance of these conventions for protecting African interests are further brought into focus when Chakava states that having signed or not signed copyright agreements has in no way impacted book piracy in African countries:

[A] lack of publishing capacity, resources, and training makes it difficult to say whether it is Africa’s adherence to international copyright or its lack of capacity that has prevented it from engaging in the unlawful reprinting, photocopying, and pirating of copyrightable materials. (1996, p 79)

It is the same lack of publishing capacity, resources and training that put former colonies and developing nations squarely behind developed nations in strengthening their local publishing, especially in time for the passing of international conventions. Therefore, it seems that rights holders ‘are using copyright as a weapon to maintain the dependency relations that currently exist’ (Chakava 1996, p 80), thus emphasising the postcoloniality of publishing and literature, as discussed in Chapter 3. This unequal treatment can be observed in the rare cases when European publishers granted rights to African publishers but usually on ‘harsh and unfavorable terms’: one print-run only, license only for the African publisher’s own national territory, high royalty in the range of 15–20% to be paid upfront or a sizeable advance to be paid; some British publishers could even stipulate what local price was to be set, what printers to be used, what trade discounts to be offered to their favoured booksellers and distributors in the territory (Chakava 1996, p 84). In reverse scenarios, the European publisher ‘determine[d] the terms’: low royalty at 5–7%, access to all subsidiary rights including translation rights, only a nominal advance (Chakava 1996, p 84). British publishers have even gone so far as to claim in their blurbs that they *discovered* the author

whose work they were reprinting (Chakava 1996, p 85) – much like already-inhabited lands were ‘discovered’ by European explorers a few centuries earlier. This ‘North-South vertical axis’ also hinders intra-African trade since ‘each state or publisher is made to sign a separate contract with the foreign publisher on the same title in the same region’ (Chakava 1996, p 85). Therefore, Chakava states ‘fair play’ (1996, p 93) in international copyright conventions should be instituted, namely against ‘hoarding of copyright’ (1996, p 84) and introducing a softer stance regarding same-language reprint rights as the role that English plays in the dissemination of research, education and literature becomes more key (1996, p 83, p 92). The last point has recently been highlighted in the Indian publishing ethos, which I examine below.

Even in colonised **India**, the ideal scenario for Indian writers was to publish in the UK since ‘publication in the colonies meant small circulation and lack of critical interest’ (Barnes 2009, p 616). It is no wonder then that Indian writing broke out on the global scene in contemporary times through the likes of Salman Rushdie¹⁴ and Vikram Seth¹⁵ (Balan 2006, p 281), who first published outside India; their books automatically trickled into India with the rest of the foreign list, i.e., non-Indian import list (Brouillette 2007, p 84; Gonsalves 2015, pp 430-431) (discussed in Chapter 3). Even as far back as 1973, Shah could note that international copyright conventions were not working in the favour of India’s indigenous publishing or writing:

What the conventions safeguard is not so much the author’s right to reward and protection of intellectual property, but the commercial interests of the foreign copy owners and publishers. What they amount to is the Western countries claiming an unrestricted right to exploit our markets, retarding in the process the development of indigenous book manufacturing activities. (p 645)

Gonsalves’s stance agrees with Shah’s, even forty-two years later, that India is seen by British publishers ‘as a profitable market rather than as a source of new content’ (2015, p 431). Books published in India do not become available in foreign markets like the books by British multinational publishers do in former colonies. However, whenever talk of selling rights of Indian

¹⁴ Though not his first book, Rushdie gained popularity with *Midnight’s Children* in 1981, published by Jonathan Cape in the UK, which is now an imprint of Penguin Random House UK.

¹⁵ Though not his first book, Seth gained popularity with *From Heaven Lake* in 1983, published by Chatto & Windus in the UK, which is now an imprint of Penguin Random House UK.

titles does occur, it focuses on ‘the cash cows that [Indian publishers] imagine the American and British markets to be’ and not other developing countries. As a result of this, trade channels between developing countries have not been properly developed, especially for the indies (Singh 1992, pp 250-251; Menon 2018, p 204), in the same way that intra-African trade channels have not been developed, as discussed above.

In *Publishing and Development* (1998), Altbach analyses the case of India by stating that India was originally a critic of traditional copyright and engaged in some book piracy itself, but after the development of its local publishing industry, began supporting copyright (p 10). But Altbach does not question how much of a role the incoming multinationals played in supporting copyright in India, so I discuss different Indian publishing players’ views on piracy and copyright in the interview data analysis in 4.3. Still, there have been exceptions to copyright in India. To bring back into focus Chakava’s view that copyright conventions should hold a softer stance regarding same-language reprint rights due to the role that English plays in the dissemination of research and education (1996, p 83, p 92), the 2012 University of Oxford v. Rameshwari Photocopy Service case must be examined. In this instance, in 2016 the Delhi High Court was able to dismiss the lawsuit made by multinational publishers Oxford University Press, Cambridge University Press and Taylor & Francis Group against a small photocopy shop on a Delhi college campus by adhering to Section 52 (1) (i) of the *Indian Copyright Act (1957)* that ‘allows the reproduction of any copyrighted work, during the course of educational instruction’ (Oberoi 2016). Authors and academics, some of whom had contributed work to these photocopied books, banded together against the foreign publishers in an open letter:

As authors and educators, we would like to place on record our distress at this act of the publishers, as we recognize the fact that in a country like India marked by sharp economic inequalities, it is often not possible for every student to obtain a personal copy of a book. [...] The argument made by publishers for strong copyright enforcement is based on presumed losses caused to them. [...] We would also like to refute the claim that academic publishing is sustained by the investments made by publishers. This claim hides the fact that most academics are able to write books because they are supported by public infrastructure and money by virtue of being employed by universities or research centers. [...] Academic authors could not possibly make anything close to a living from the royalties that publishing houses

offer them. This means in effect that the profits of academic publishing houses are under-written by tax-payers' money, and there is a huge public contribution to the profits made by academic publishing houses. (SACW 2013)

This copyright infringement case, the Delhi High Court judgement and the open letter bring up key points about copyright and publishing in developing countries. Firstly, while this thesis discusses trade publishing, not academic, and though the royalty-based revenue systems vary in both, it is pertinent to state that most authors of trade books also cannot make a living off their writing in India, especially if they are restricted to the local market (discussed in 4.1 and interview data analysis in 4.3.3). Secondly, the statement put forth by the authors in the open letter directly refutes the argument made by publishers regarding the significance of copyright to protect authors' interests, as – at least the academic authors here – are not directly impacted by pirated sales. Lastly, although this was a triumphant victory for students, it must be recognised that such a judgement may not have been made regarding trade books. The positive impact of literature or fiction on society is harder to trace in developing countries that focus on traditional education emphasising the hard sciences.

With licenses, copyright and territory rights playing such a key role in global publishing, Australian academic Mark Davis therefore likens book publishing to an information industry as he believes 'it has become a business oriented not so much around the manufacture of goods for sale but on the generation of rights for sale' (2013, p 125). Additionally, industry participants such as James Fraser of Pan Macmillan Australia even regard guaranteed subsidiary rights as an 'absolute deal breaker' (also echoed by some of my interviewees, discussed in 4.3.2) and place electronic rights within this deal (cited in Murray 2013, p 65). In order to protect these rights – copyright over the content and transnational sales rights – international conventions have been posited and ratified by nations across the globe. Yet it is evident – as seen in the cases of Australia, China, Anglophone Africa and India – that these regulations do not equally protect the interests of all nations' publishers, writers and consumers. In the next section, I examine these points through the primary data I have gathered.

4.3 Interview Research Data Analysis: Copyright and Commonwealth Rights

In this section, I discuss the primary data I collected through semi-structured interviews pertaining the topics of copyright and Commonwealth rights. I explore the link between piracy and copyright,

the perception of piracy by different players within publishing and the leeway needed regarding copyright in developing nations – which is something I touched upon in the previous section with the 2012 *University of Oxford v. Rameshwari Photocopy Service* case. I then bring the discussion to Commonwealth rights and their impact on my interviewees’ work. Following this, I examine the impact of cartelisation on the Indian publishing industry in terms of India being perceived as a market/export territory rather than a source of literature.

4.3.1 Copyright and Piracy

India is seen as a significant territory for Anglophone trade book publishing, as voiced by all of my interviewees working for multinationals. Yet, ‘India’s influence either in the domestic market or in the international scene [in terms of copyright conventions] is non-existent’, as stated by Abraham (Hachette India). In contemporary Indian Anglophone trade publishing, copyright is normative practice. Even so, Duttagupta (Scholastic India) emphasised the nature of publishing being relationship-based while stating that ‘a lot of trust is inherent without the paperwork. When you have that kind of a situation, the questions of copyright and all – while they are important – [...] are often overlooked’. Duttagupta, however, mentioned that the situation is slowly changing. Copyright is seen as necessary, as without it, there would be no system of ‘checks and balances’ and, while copyright laws may be flawed, having ‘some sort of a body or a structure is important’, according to Duttagupta.

These ‘checks and balances’ are an important measure against piracy. As discussed in 4.2.2, copyright and territorial rights were born out of a need to protect books from being pirated. Despite copyright laws, piracy is a concern in contemporary Indian publishing. Piracy occurs in India in four forms. First, street vendors selling pirated editions of print copies¹⁶ (see Figures 4.2–4.4 below). Second, pirated print editions being sold online on e-commerce websites such as Amazon, Flipkart and Snapdeal¹⁷. Third, PDFs of books being uploaded online or being circulated

¹⁶ Stated by Arpita Das (Founder–Publisher, Yoda Press), Arup Bose (Publisher, Srishti Publishers & Distributors), Ben Wright (International Sales Director, HarperCollins UK), Chris Turner (International Sales Director, Penguin Random House UK), David Godwin (Co-founder–Literary Agent, David Godwin Associates), David Shelley (Group CEO, Hachette UK) and Nandan Jha (Executive VP: Sales & Product, Penguin Random House India) in their interviews.

¹⁷ Stated by Anish Chandy (Founder–Literary Agent, Labyrinth Literary Agency), Arup Bose (Publisher, Srishti Publishers & Distributors), Ben Wright (International Sales Director, HarperCollins UK), Nandan Jha (Executive VP:



Fig 4.4: Pirated books sold at a Gurgaon, India, traffic light – most books are by non-Indian authors (2023)

In my conversations with publishing professionals through the interviews, I learnt that a publisher's view on piracy could vary depending upon the position their company occupies within the industry, in terms of scale, whom they are answerable to and the type of books that they publish (discussed in Chapter 5). As a children's publisher, Duttgupta (Scholastic India) stated that piracy rarely affects his company. He attributed this to the fact that four-colour printing is a key aspect of most children's books, especially ones aimed at younger readers, which is an aspect pirates cannot viably replicate. Another reason for the difficulty in pirating children's books is that pirated editions are limited to paperbacks of more popular formats, such as a B-format (129 mm × 198

mm), and children's books rarely follow usual printing formats. Books aimed at younger readers, such as picture books and board books, are larger in size or use a different material altogether, as per Duttagupta. However, this limitation that piracy has on printing certain format paperbacks is especially detrimental to adult trade book publishers. Since India is a price-sensitive market – 'guesstimate for per capita spending on books in India is an abysmal Rs 80 per person per year' (Anand 2018, p 209) (discussed in 1.3.2) – consumers are more likely to buy cheaper pirated paperback editions rather than the more expensive original hardcovers. Furthermore, the availability of these cheaper pirated paperback editions also impacts the publisher's expected paperback sales in forthcoming years, as Padmanabhan (HarperCollins India) said: 'Piracy can almost kill a paperback edition of the book that you're trying to sell as a hardback, because the pirated edition comes out as a paperback. So, it literally wipes out your second format opportunity.' Due to these factors, Wright (HarperCollins UK) stated that they often publish directly in paperback in India:

In the Indian market, we publish most of our book straight into paperback rather than a hardcover or a larger format which we use elsewhere because we recognise that even the standard Rs 250/295/325 – that's still an expensive product by Indian market standards. But it is perhaps affordable to the majority of our readership. One of the important roles that the Indian company plays is to help us understand what those price points and formats are so that we can get those books to our Indian audience as soon as possible and avoid the need for people to pirate.

Unsurprisingly then, the heads and sales directors of the multinational Indian subsidiaries publishing adult trade books that I interviewed held negative views towards piracy. Each time I asked, 'Is piracy a concern for you?', I was met with a resounding 'of course' and an incredulous smile. How to map the loss of revenue due to piracy is another matter altogether, though Padmanabhan (HarperCollins India) cited the sales loss figure as 50–60% regarding bestselling titles while Jha (PRH India) stated that the overall loss could be 25–30%. It is not only pirated editions that impact the publishers' sales. Abraham (Hachette India) focused more on remainders from publishers/distributors in other territories that disregard rights agreements and enter the Indian market. He called them 'almost as destructive as piracy', though Jha stated that remainders are no longer a massive problem in India 'unlike a decade ago when bulk shipments of all bestsellers would be brought in by the deal-hunters, wholesalers and retailers regularly'. Even

foreign publishing professionals Atkins (Pan Macmillan UK), Shelley (Hachette UK) and Wright (HarperCollins UK) discussed how extensive the issue of print piracy was in India in their interviews. Pirated copies are openly sold at traffic lights and on footpaths, and Bose (Srishti) added that they are even sold at the entrance of the World Book Fair in Delhi and outside publishers' offices. The foreign publishing professionals also discussed how these pirates operate on e-commerce platforms in India too. Shelley mentioned that at the end of the day, he is answerable to the company's shareholders and authors and that no author would appreciate it if he told them that though their book is doing well in India, the majority of it is pirated, so the author will not see any financial returns on those sales. Similarly, Atkinson (Atlantic), Jha (PRH India), Mukherjee (Pan Macmillan India) and Wright (HarperCollins UK) stated that their first responsibility is to defend and uphold their authors' copyright and pirated editions do not contribute to the authors' revenue. Although Abraham (Hachette India) did not mention it in his interview, Shelley (Hachette UK) stated that:

[Abraham is] quite sanguine about [piracy], in terms of that there is an argument I suppose about it driving literacy and that although it might hurt individual books at particular points, ultimately the more people who are reading, the more people are sort of addicted to books and fiction and the more it lifts the market – there is an argument there.

This was echoed by Duttagupta (Scholastic India) when he stated that the 'moral questions to the whole concept of knowledge sharing and copyright' are 'very, very complex'. Similar views have been expressed by authors such as Paulo Coelho (discussed below) and scholars such as Shah (1973) and Chakava (1996) (discussed in 4.2.3). Abraham's viewpoint (as voiced by Shelley) is shared by Das, who runs the indie Yoda Press that specialises in activist books. Das stated in her interview that the issue of piracy was 'retrogressive', considering the digital sphere that publishing has entered. Moreover, she said that she would love to see her activist books being sold on Indian footpaths, as that would imply her books were bestselling titles worthy of being pirated – as only pirating the bestsellers makes economic sense for the pirates. When I used this (anonymised) response as a prompt in other interviews, Atkinson was the only one who laughed and agreed that in some ways he would be happy if books from the independent Atlantic Books were pirated, precisely due to the correlation with the bestseller status, but he stated that he would feel differently if he were looking after the *Harry Potter* estate with its high sales. While other publishers such as

Bose (Srishti) and Mukherjee (Pan Macmillan India) agreed that pirated editions being sold on footpaths would imply the bestseller status of a title, they stated that most publishers would not wish for that due to the loss that their organisations and authors would incur. Bose laughed and added that he wished his longtail list would be pirated because that would imply it was successful.

As listed above, it is not just physical books that are pirated today. Sarkar (Juggernaut) stated that digital piracy – whether the PDFs available online or in WhatsApp circulation – also impacts sales. *Perhaps* this would not be in the same scale since Indian publishing earns most of its revenue through print sales: Wright (HarperCollins UK) stated that the Indian company earns about 5% of its revenue through ebook sales while in the UK ebook revenue can be as high as 20% or even upwards of 50% for some titles. I have used ‘perhaps’ regarding ebook piracy because there is presently no way to measure the loss due to digital piracy (discussed by Mukherjee, Pan Macmillan India). Several years after setting up her publishing company that specialises in digital publishing through the Juggernaut app, Sarkar was unsure how piracy impacted her sales: ‘What I don’t have a sense of is how much it hurts me. Is [the revenue loss] 5%, 10%?’. But she believed that the loss was ‘not massive yet’. In contrast, for the British publishers I interviewed, digital piracy was the top concern in the UK. British publishers cited the difference in priority between combatting digital piracy in the UK and print piracy in India to emphasise the slow uptake of ebooks and audiobooks in India (discussed by Atkins, Pan Macmillan UK; Shelley, Hachette UK; Wright, HarperCollins UK).

Although Bose (Srishti), Das (Yoda) and Sarkar (Juggernaut) fall into the category of Indian local publishers, they provided varied insights into piracy. This is due to the scale of their organisations and mission statements (discussed in Chapter 5). Bose held negative views towards piracy – like the multinationals – though he was more concerned with bad-quality pirated editions marring his company’s reputation for the average consumer, especially since such pirated copies are easily available from online retailers and the consumer may not always be aware that they are buying a pirated edition.

In the discussion of the necessity of copyright to protect books from piracy, the assumption must be examined that someone who buys a cheaper pirated print edition or downloads a free pirated PDF would convert into a legitimate book-buyer if the pirated copy was not available. One who takes something for free (or cheap) may not necessarily suddenly pay the full price for it if

they cannot afford it or do not prioritise it high enough in their spending. Atkinson (Atlantic) mentioned this point:

Generally, piracy happens in the places where people can least afford books, so in some ways if you were selling the books in that country, you wouldn't be making that much money anyway.

As did Turner (PRH UK):

I don't think that [roadside piracy] takes a significant portion away from our sales. I think it's targeting different markets and different people, to be honest, with different abilities to be able to buy books.

Thus, not every pirated print book sale or free PDF download would translate into book sales of the originals. Furthermore, in his interview, Bose (Srishti) spoke of a story that he had heard about the bestselling self-help author, Paulo Coelho, urging his readers to pirate his books because Coelho sees piracy ultimately amplifying his career. Coelho states on his blog that pirated editions allows new readers to 'discover' his writing and in fact boosts his sales, so he is in favour of book piracy. His method must be working, as even with the high piracy in India, Coelho's *The Alchemist* (2005) is ranked third on Nielsen BookData India's 2011–2021 trade books chart (see Table 4.3 in section 4.3.2). Similarly, another self-help book *Ikigai* (2017) by García and Miralles is present in all three photographs of pirated books (see Figures 4.2–4.4 above; the top of the *Ikigai* cover can be seen in top-left of Figure 4.3) and was especially mentioned by Turner (PRH UK) as a popularly pirated book in India. Yet *Ikigai* is ranked second in the same Nielsen chart that records book sales of the publishers' editions (see Table 4.3 in section 4.3.2).

Piracy and copyright remain a nuanced issue. Similar to the dual nature of publishing of being a for-profit business yet having a sociocultural impact discussed in 3.4.1, Atkinson (Atlantic) put it best while expressing the two sides of piracy and copyright – on the one side the concern is to protect authors' and publishers' interests while the other is about encouraging readership in developing markets:

All publishers are passionate about reading, so piracy is kind of interesting. Clearly, my first duty is to make sure we stay in business [...] that's the first duty we have to our authors. So, staying in business of course is important, so therefore the money is important, and if we're not getting any money when people read our books then

clearly that's a problem. If it's about growing readership in different countries around the world, then you might think: actually, that's OK. We don't know – is the quick answer.

This holds true in an emerging market like India, where the monetary value of a book can often be correlated with its printing cost (Mukherjee, Pan Macmillan India) or the number of pages it contains (Atkins, Pan Macmillan UK) and books are still seen as luxury goods. While reading times and book sales of the conglomerates increased in the UK during COVID-19 (Squires 2021), during the strict COVID-19 lockdowns in India, book publishing suffered (*The Economic Times* 2021). Amazon India was inundated with orders for necessities and therefore stopped selling 'non-essential items' (*Reuters* 2020) such as books, as they were not considered necessary for survival in the way that groceries and healthcare are. Similarly, Indian publishing was impacted in the 2016 demonetisation, wherein the Indian central government stopped the usage of Rs 500 and Rs 1000 banknotes to reduce the circulation of black money in the country (*The Indian Express* 2022). At the time, I worked in publishing in India and we were instructed by our superiors to postpone big releases by at least three months as people would choose to focus on necessities and not luxury goods such as books.

Therefore, even while stating that they are against piracy due to the harm it does to their for-profit publishing organisations and the authors they represent, interviewees such as Atkinson (Atlantic), Duttagupta (Scholastic India) and Shelley (Hachette UK) agreed that there was no easy answer regarding piracy in emerging markets. Piracy can help educate the country and encourage a growing readership, as is reflected in the 2012 Delhi High Court judgement of the University of Oxford v. Rameshwari Photocopy Service case (discussed in 4.2.3). Copyright was established to protect artistic works against piracy but cannot meet the demands of a former colony and developing nation such as India, where exceptions are needed for education and book piracy still occurs. Thus, current international copyright conventions are not suitable for Indian consumer needs or robust enough to tackle its market operations. In the next section, I utilise my interview data to discuss Commonwealth rights, a consequence of creating copyright as a safeguard against international piracy to ensure that editions from US publishers did not enter the markets that British publishers perceived as their rightful domain due to colonisation.

4.3.2 Commonwealth Rights and Their Perception

Commonwealth rights significantly shape the business of the Indian subsidiaries of multinational publishers, but they are not questioned or considered much on a daily basis. In fact, before I moved to the UK to pursue the PhD, I discussed my research topic with a former manager who for over a decade had worked on importing books from the London office for the Indian market, and they confessed that it had not struck them to question why territorial rights existed in their particular form. Abraham (Hachette India), however, showed an awareness regarding the history of cartelisation and stated: ‘*Logically given our history*, British spelling etc, it would probably make sense for India to be linked to British rights (where a local Indian publisher was not buying rights)’ (emphasis added). Thus, Commonwealth rights are connected to India’s colonised past in a matter-of-fact way. Most of the other publishing professionals I interviewed were not aware of the history of copyright and territorial rights discussed in 4.2.2, as can be seen in this response from Duttagupta (Scholastic India):

The political aspect of [Commonwealth rights] is one would ask as to why would you still be part of an old arcane system, the Commonwealth? Now, I don’t know the exact nature of why it still exists [...] but my understanding is that there must be some political reason for it, whether it is to gain more international solidarity with certain groups, whether it’s like other organisations like SAARC²⁰ or NATO²¹ and all of those organisations that were created for a certain amount of [...] political gain or mileage [...] in the world politics. So, I expect Commonwealth exists still because of that and last when I checked, there are some benefits of being in the Commonwealth. [laughs] I don’t know what the benefits are, but they are certainly there.

Turner (PRH UK) even added that he learnt more from me about the history of copyright and Commonwealth rights and their postcoloniality than he knew from having worked for more than a decade in the industry. Often in my interviews, I had to provide a condensed history of the development of copyright and territorial rights to elicit some responses, as the interviewees did not understand what I was seeking without those prompts. All of them either saw Commonwealth

²⁰ South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation

²¹ North Atlantic Treaty Organization

rights positively – if their work involved dealing with those rights – or with indifference if they had always worked in Indian local companies. It became clear that cartelisation through Commonwealth (and other territorial) rights is part of the infrastructure that subjugates the Indian publishing industry, but the system is so ingrained that it does not necessarily hold significance for those enmeshed in the business.

Commonwealth rights inform Indian multinational subsidiaries which titles produced by their foreign/head offices they can legally import or locally reprint in India. These territories are explicitly stated on bibliographic databases such as Biblio and ONIX for Books that the publishers access. As Padmanabhan (HarperCollins India) stated:

When an author sells a work, I think it's very clear that you're able to establish what territory is available as rights. Could be any number – it could be just India; Indian subcontinent, plus or minus Pakistan, including or not Southeast Asia [...] And the same applies even from the rest of the world. So, there is UK; UK plus; US; US plus – you can literally identify all of these territories. [...] Predominantly, publishers know what rights they own, know what rights they have to exploit, and especially know what territories they have those rights to exploit from.

This demarcation of territories is linked to issues regarding copyright and piracy, as discussed in 4.2.2 and 4.3.2. Turner (PRH UK) emphasised their connection by stating the following while discussing Commonwealth rights:

I think if you moved to a model where you just said like free-for-all, anyone can do anything, I think that's when you would run into big issues of piracy. We wouldn't know where books were going, we wouldn't know who bought them, who was pirating it – that's when it does become hard.

Padmanabhan (HarperCollins India) called the acquiring of Commonwealth rights by a UK publisher an 'advantage' for the Indian subsidiary. Shelley (Hachette UK) said that the current system works well for Indian consumers. It must be acknowledged that Indian readers benefit from Commonwealth rights due to the easy access to foreign literature and knowledge at prices sensitive to the Indian market: often, paperbacks range from INR 150–500 (equivalent to GBP 1.5–5 approximately as per Oanda.com 2024), significantly less than the pricing of GBP 6.99 upwards in the UK. A few interviewees such as Mukherjee (Pan Macmillan India) stated that the lower

prices of books in India compared to the UK and US markets exist also to counter piracy and encourage the growth of an Indian readership, with Bose adding that his organisation Srishti has priced their books low in India so that even a pirate cannot beat it. Bose stated that one of the larger Indian publishers, Rupa Publications, followed this guideline too with their paperback fiction till recently. However, Atkins (Pan Macmillan UK) disagreed with this tactic and said that lowering prices to combat piracy has come to an end for the multinationals and is not the answer anyway; publishers must play to their strengths, remind consumers of the value of reading and literature, and tighten security. Turner (PRH UK) too was against prices dropping low as he believed that that ‘strongly devalues the author’s work and the race to the bottom isn’t good for anyone’.

While it is understood that Commonwealth rights positively impact the Indian consumer by enabling foreign literature to enter India at lower prices than foreign editions, there is unease regarding the term itself:

[I]n this day and age, there’s something that sounds kind of strange, quite uncomfortable talking about the ‘Commonwealth’. It *doesn’t feel appropriate* anymore really, but at the same time, book publishing is such a sort of heritage business, I guess, and we still got books in print that were first published in the 1930s and 1940s. So, often the rights situation does go back a very, very long way, and I think that really explains why rights are still carved out in that way, because UK publishers do have the rights in Australia, New Zealand, India, South Africa in that way, and it wouldn’t make *logistical sense* at this point I suppose to carve them out differently. (Shelley, Hachette UK; emphasis added)

I paraphrased this anonymised quote in other interviews to elicit responses about the term ‘Commonwealth rights’. Turner (PRH UK) called it ‘potentially problematic’; Atkins (Pan Macmillan UK) referred to it as ‘slightly archaically termed’; Page (Faber) said that he tried not to refer to the term at all as he does not see it as ‘relevant’ and instead refers to the list of territories mentioned in their contracts where they have exclusive rights; and Atkinson (Atlantic) said that it felt ‘sort of weird saying [Commonwealth]’. Atkinson added:

It is feels incredibly old-fashioned to talk about UK and Commonwealth. You get immediately thrown back into a sort of *imperial standpoint*, which is quite old really. You’re reminded that there used to be a *British Empire* [laughs] and we’re

allowed to publish our books in that place, so it's pretty odd, I have to say. [...] So, it seems to me that even though it's an odd and possibly vestigial protocol, it actually works. It *certainly works for UK publishers* – no doubt about that. (emphasis added)

This viewpoint reinforces the discussions in Chapter 3 about the postcoloniality of world Anglophone trade publishing structures. Atkins (Pan Macmillan UK) also indirectly referred to the colonial history of the British Empire while discussing the current territorial rights split and the significance of Commonwealth rights for British publishers, so far as to be a dealbreaker in book acquisitions:

Our history has allowed us to build up networks in the English-speaking world of Australia and India and South Africa and other parts of Asia, and as a result of that that's why UK publishers have much bigger export departments than US publishers, because *it's up to us to support those markets* where we sell English-language territory. So, it's a crucial part of the landscape that we acquire Commonwealth rights, and we will very often not take part in an auction if Commonwealth rights aren't available. *It's unlikely that we would be particularly interested in publishing a book just for the UK and Ireland these days. It's so important that we're able to publish to the rest of the world.* (emphasis added)

Atkinson (Atlantic) echoed this by saying that 'it feels quite naked' when they only get UK rights for a title, since being able to distribute books into Commonwealth territories offsets the risk in publishing. Atkins (Pan Macmillan UK) emphasised the small size of the UK domestic market – roughly 60 million people – and said that because the 'international markets are growing faster than [the] domestic markets', it is important for Pan Macmillan UK to 'invest in those international markets and make sure that we can sell and market into those international markets really well'. Shelley stated that exports generate 30% of Hachette UK's revenue, thereby reiterating the viewpoints expressed by Atkins and Atkinson and the discussion in 4.2.2 regarding the export market being significant for the UK. Shelley added that the UK has invested a lot in India as a 'publishing market' and the low prices afforded by the current system 'probably keeps [India] a vibrant market' and thus works well for Indian consumers. Atkinson (Atlantic) also called the system of Commonwealth rights a 'flexible' one since, if they publish an Indian or Australian

writer, the UK publisher would not receive the rights to the writer's local country; those would be reserved for the local subsidiary of the publisher. Therefore, while the word 'Commonwealth' may be perceived as problematic, the cartelised structure it creates is believed to be an efficient and normative system through which books produced by US and UK publishers can be distributed across the world. However, it is not a two-way street; books published in India – or Australia, New Zealand and South Africa – either by the subsidiaries of the multinationals or by local publishers, do not access a similar global Anglophone readership.

Nevertheless, there was a consensus that copyright is required to assure the author's and publisher's returns and that Commonwealth rights grant Indians easy access to foreign literature. Still, Padmanabhan (HarperCollins India) stated that India's influence over copyright conventions that have given birth to these territorial rights (discussed in 4.2.2) is not something that creeps into their daily work:

As a publisher operating out of India importing books from the UK and the US, and publishing writers for specific territories, [copyright conventions and India's influence over them are] not something that come in the way of our life or our authors' lives daily.

Similarly, Abraham (Hachette India) said that Commonwealth rights do not affect his work since they are a 'territorial classification battle largely between the UK and US in terms of historical territory delineation', or the cartelisation of global Anglophone publishing (discussed in 4.2.1); that as long as Abraham had a clear indicator about the rights regarding India, the rest did not bother him. While I agree that the conversation surrounding Commonwealth rights may not be something that arises daily in the lives of authors, their careers are definitely impacted every step of the way due to territorial rights. Almost all of the Indian publishing professionals I interviewed stated that they prefer acquiring world rights – especially due to ebook sales (as Abraham mentioned) – as can be seen in Table 4.1:

Category	Source	Organisation	Territorial Rights Most Popularly Acquired	Territorial Rights Second-most Popularly Acquired (if mentioned)
British Big-5 Publishers	Ben Wright	HarperCollins UK	UK & Commonwealth (excluding Canada)	World/World English
	Chris Turner	Penguin Random House UK	UK & Commonwealth	
	David Shelley	Hachette UK	World/World English	UK & Commonwealth (excluding Canada)
	Jonathan Atkins	Pan Macmillan UK	World	
British Independent Publishers	Stephen Page	Faber & Faber	UK & Commonwealth	World/World English
	Will Atkinson	Atlantic Books	UK & Commonwealth	
British Literary Agents	David Godwin	David Godwin Associates	World	
Indian Subsidiaries of Big-5/ Multinational Publishers	Anantha Padmanabhan	HarperCollins India	Indian subcontinent	
	Nandan Jha	Penguin Random House India	World (approx 50% of their titles)	
	Rajdeep Mukherjee	Pan Macmillan India	World	Indian subcontinent
	Shantanu Duttagupta	Scholastic India	World	
	Thomas Abraham	Hachette India	World (due to ebooks)	Indian subcontinent
Indian Local Publishers	Arpita Das	Yoda Press	World (approx 70–75% of their titles)	South Asia
	Arup Bose	Srishti Publishers & Distributors	World (approx 95% of their titles)	Indian subcontinent (approx 4% of their titles); India-only (0.7% of titles acquired from foreign publishers)
	Chiki Sarkar	Juggernaut	World	
Indian Literary Agents	Anish Chandy	Labyrinth Literary Agency	World	
	Kanishka Gupta	Writer's Side	World	South Asia (often excluding Pakistan and Sri Lanka due to political troubles)

Table 4.1: Interviewees' preference of territorial rights acquisitions (created using primary interview data)

However, when I asked the Indian publishers what international sales they have to show for these authors' works that they have acquired world rights for, their answers were along the lines of 'negligible' (Duttagupta, Scholastic India) or '[g]enerally, ebook only and small numbers at that' (Abraham, Hachette India). Padmanabhan (HarperCollins India) said that he has seen foreign sales revenue being as high as 40% of the domestic sales revenue when their books have had the potential to sell internationally, but he added:

It's important to remember that if a book has a lot of international potential, the chance of the author having a foreign agent is very high, and therefore being published in those markets directly. *For an Indian book, [international markets are] only seen as a sort of complementary market, not as a primary market. And we publish primarily for the Indian audience.* (emphasis added)

Thus, according to Padmanabhan, in the few cases that a book by an Indian author may have international appeal, it would be pitched and published overseas directly and thus the remaining Indians' books would be made available in the 'complementary' overseas market again in ebook or POD forms. However, most of HarperCollins India's list is directed at the Indian readership and thus limited to the domestic market. Abraham also mentioned that Hachette India's books are not available internationally in bookshops. Mukherjee (Pan Macmillan India) further explained: 'UK buying from India is not something which hasn't happened, but even just making books available in that market doesn't mean sales. Physical availability doesn't guarantee anything.' It is true that just having physical copies available in a market will not ensure sales, though occupying shelf space in a bookshop would lead to higher chances of discoverability than an ebook being listed on Amazon. But one would assume that if Pan Macmillan UK imported Pan Macmillan Indian titles to push in the UK market, they would accompany the book launch in the UK with a marketing and publicity campaign, as Pan Macmillan India does for Pan Macmillan UK lead and superlead titles. Alas, that is not the case: 'We have limited marketing opportunities on the international side, largely on online platforms in terms of digital marketing and deals' (Jha, PRH India). Atkinson (Atlantic) added:

I bet Penguin India, Hachette India will find it hard selling their books when they've got Commonwealth rights or world rights into the UK and America. What you want

is to get those rights and for them to be taken on properly by an American or UK publisher. It's not necessarily an Indian problem.

Why is it that, even when the Indian subsidiary of a multinational has world or UK and Commonwealth rights to an Indian title, a separate US or UK publisher is still needed to push the book into their nations? In relation to this, British literary agent Godwin brought up the problem of postcoloniality in culture, literature and media:

I think it's just not a matter of availability; it's to do with publishing, it's to do with having these books getting some recognition for them, getting them read, getting them reviewed [...] So, it's a massive job of cultural knowledge of books. I don't think any culture has a right to have their books—I think there should be a proper recognition of Indian literature here. [...] So, I think it's not just a matter of the books being available, but a sense of our culture also ought to embrace more widely different voices at different times. But even then, we don't know much about who wins the Prix Goncourt. Britain can be quite culturally isolated, which is another problem.

Promotion and recognition of national literary spaces is as important as having books physically available. Indian writers have fared well in the few cases where Britain has published and promoted Indian writers – thus granting them a wider readership and media attention. For instance, Padmanabhan (HarperCollins India) mentioned the case of Avni Doshi, who was first published in India then the UK and went on to be shortlisted for the Booker.

The sales figures are not much better for the Indian local companies. Sarkar, whose company Juggernaut like HarperCollins India focuses on 'Indian stories for the Indian reader' (Sarkar), said that she sells international rights for her titles much less frequently than other Indian publishers. This must be a dismal figure considering that multinational Indian subsidiaries hardly sell their titles internationally either, as discussed above. Moreover, the Juggernaut app is currently not available outside India; on Kindle and on Amazon POD, she does not see many sales outside India. On the other hand, before the COVID-19 pandemic struck in 2020 and India's relations with China soured due to border disputes in the Himalayan region (*BBC UK* 2022), Bose (Srishti) had seen a 'marked increase in interest for acquisition of both international language rights and territorial rights for some of [their] fiction titles' by publishers in countries such as China, Vietnam,

Turkey, US, Germany and Italy. Similarly, Gupta (Writer's Side) had been working with writers and publishers in Pakistan and Sri Lanka before the trade cessation between India and Pakistan in 2019 (Laskar 2022) and Sri Lanka's 2022 economic crisis (Perera 2022).

Though Indian local publishers like Bose (Srishti) and Sarkar (Juggernaut) state that their books are aimed at the Indian market, international sales can prove significant for local publishers and authors. This is because not only are they able to tap into a new readership but also because – since books in India are priced low as discussed above – revenue from the international sales of higher-priced books in Europe, the Americas, Australia and Southeast Asia can be hefty. Das (Yoda) stated that when her books were picked internationally, though they may not have sold in huge numbers, their revenues were significant. The higher prices of the international editions made the returns she and the author got on those smaller unit sales a significant portion of the book's total revenue. Das said that more than 60% of the author royalties can be generated by international sales. This high return on international sales of one title enabled Das to reinvest in her business and publish two more titles (Das). Padmanabhan (HarperCollins India) echoed this by saying that selling 20,000 hardbacks in the US is entirely different from selling 20,000 copies in India, due to the differences in prices and thus royalties.

Amazon has also played a role in international book sales, as mentioned in 4.1. Interestingly, Das stated that though everyone seems to bemoan the loss of brick-and-mortar shops and the rising dominance of Amazon in India, she – and other indie publishers – have benefitted from this change as most bookshops, especially in Delhi, did not directly engage with indie publishers without the medium of book distributors that usually only larger publishers or multinationals use. The bookshops provided the reasoning that due to high overheads, they could not risk storing niche publishers' books in the limited physical of their shops (Das). This positive impact of Amazon on Indian indies was echoed by Indian literary agent Chandy. Thus, the rise of Amazon in India has levelled the playing field for publishers like Das. She also predicted my line of questioning regarding the international sales she has achieved with the world rights she has acquired. Das clarified that she has been able to sell her books internationally as ebooks on Kindle – as expected – but also in physical format via partnerships with international publishers:

I know what your logical next question would be, that how do we give [our authors] what's due to them in a sense, because it's difficult getting the books out. For instance, before Amazon came along, I don't think our books used to ever reach the

US. But this problem forced me to think of some solutions. About six years ago, I started a joint imprint, which is the first of its kind in our industry, with Sage India. All our original academic books now actually go through the Sage–Yoda imprint. So, what’s happening is that distribution gets taken care of by Sage. What that means also is the day the book goes live on the Sage India website here, it also goes live for pre-orders on the Sage UK and the Sage US websites. That problem gets solved and authors are really happy.

Though Das admitted that the books she did in partnership with Sage have done well internationally, this did not hold true for all of her books, for which international sales have not been ‘terribly good, because I don’t think we do a good enough job of pushing them’. It is evident that other publishers in India have faced the latter with their local lists, whether they are a multinational with its already-existing international network (discussed in Chapter 5) or a local company.

Thus, while ebooks and Amazon POD enable the international availability of Indian titles, just availability is not enough to ensure sales. Cartelisation via commonwealth rights has led to a scenario in which Indian authors and publishers often do not tap into an international market. Though, theoretically, authors can deny surrendering world rights to their Indian publishers:

Basically, it’s a very structured way that publishing works. It starts from the contract that you sign with the author and once that contract is signed, the author decides what rights the author is willing to part with for which territories. If the author feels that they’ll be better represented by other publishers in other regions, they could hold back those rights and *if they feel that the publisher can justify through their presence across the globe then they sell the world rights*. (Mukherjee, Pan Macmillan India; emphasis added)

Most of my Indian interviewees stated that they prefer acquiring world rights, and if the power dynamic between the publisher and the author is not equal (as is the case usually), then the author would have to abide by what the publisher dictates or risk losing the contract. Moreover, in a market where some publishers are open to unsolicited manuscripts, not every author is receiving the right care and advice regarding selling world rights, or – such as in my case (discussed in 4.1) – the authors realise that the best that they can hope for are ebooks and POD books being made

available internationally. Thus, Indian publishers may *choose* to create Indian books for the Indian market, but most Indian authors are *forced* to just the Indian market.

In the next section, I focus on the multinational subsidiaries and their revenue split between local and foreign titles. I also examine the perception of India as a ‘market territory’ rather than a source of literature due to the postcoloniality of Anglophone trade publishing.

4.3.3 India as a ‘Market Territory’

In Chapter 3 and sections 4.1 and 4.2.3, I discussed the international perception of India as a ‘consumer market’ rather than a source of literature, and this viewpoint was not refuted by the British and Indian publishing professionals I interviewed. According to Duttagupta (Scholastic India), ‘Indian books, for some reason, don’t travel too well when they go into the West’. Abraham (Hachette India) stated that the books they commission and publish for local markets ‘do not have enough saleability in overseas markets’, though he added that they do not import books that are ‘very UK centric’ either. However, it is easier for British authors localised in their writing such as Enid Blyton and PG Wodehouse to attain internationalism (discussed in Chapter 3) and become big sellers in India (Das, Yoda; Godwin, DGA; Shelley, Hachette UK). In his roles at different publishing companies, Atkins (Pan Macmillan UK) stated that he has brought back locally published nonfiction and fiction titles from his trips to the companies’ foreign subsidiaries and presented them to the UK editors, but the editors have often brushed off the titles with the response that the foreign books were not relevant for the UK market. Jha (PRH India) stated that the books they publish are ‘quite local, quite regional’, so ‘only some books are of international interest from the local publishing side’, highlighting ‘translations from various Indian languages, or a political or film celebrity’s memoir’. Shelley (Hachette UK) said that he admired some of the cookbooks produced by Hachette India, but their sales potential would be low in the UK as the ingredients would not be as easily found in the UK. Abraham (Hachette India) and Gupta (Writer’s Side) stated that only the Indian diaspora would be interested in reading books by Indian authors in terms of a broad range. However, Abraham added that even those numbers were small because no one has found a way to tap into the diaspora effectively, though Duttagupta (Scholastic India) and Bose (Srishti) stated that the diaspora demands books by Indian authors. Thus, Duttagupta said that the ratio between overseas Scholastic offices buying Scholastic India titles and the reverse was ‘unhealthy’, and Abraham stated that in Hachette India’s fifteen-year history, overseas offices had

only purchased one Hachette India title. He added that a similar history exists for Penguin India, which Abraham ran prior to Hachette (before Penguin's merger with Random House), and 'in Penguin India's near forty-year history, just a couple of books were picked up from India. Generally, it's the books agented from overseas that have global publication'.

Significantly, publishers such as Abraham and Sarkar (Juggernaut), stated that commercial Indian writing was not comparable to writing from the West, though there are other mass-market genres like the Indian campus novel that are unique to India. When I brought up the genre of the 'campus novel' – which was popularised by Chetan Bhagat in India – interviewees such as Sarkar, Chandy (Labyrinth Literary Agency) and Atkins (Pan Macmillan UK) stated that such genres would not translate to the foreign market, as campus novels like Bhagat's are uniquely Indian in their context and target audience. Though in contemporary times, a title like Sally Rooney's bestselling *Normal People* (2018) could be compared to Chetan Bhagat's books in terms of being an erotic romance set in a university environment, Bhagat's Indian English writing is widely considered 'low quality' in India and understandably might not appeal to foreign readers. But as Sarkar stated, Bhagat's work is not to be scoffed at as he has accomplished the extremely hard task of convincing Indian non-book readers to pick up their first books read for pleasure and Bhagat is undeniably one of India's top-selling authors.

Bhagat is not the only success story in contemporary Indian genre writing. As discussed in Chapter 3, attempts have been made to internationally promote Amish Tripathi, author of a bestselling commercial Hindu mythological fiction series, but his books had a mixed response abroad (Chandy, Labyrinth Literary Agency). I discussed this case with a few other interviewees, as I thought Indian mythological fiction would be one genre that foreign readers would be interested in due to foreign interests in Yoga and Indian philosophy and religion. However, Mukherjee (Pan Macmillan India) said that Tripathi's was too Indian a subject matter while Jha (PRH India) guessed that Indian mythology may be a bigger genre in the US than the UK due to the Indian diaspora in the US being more than double than that in the UK (Indian Ministry of External Affairs 2023). As discussed in Chapter 3, genre writing by American and British authors has achieved the status of internationalism whereas Indian Anglophone genre writing is perceived as local or parochial. Commercial novels by American authors steeped in Christianity (Dan Brown's *The Da Vinci Code* [2003]) and Greek mythology (Rick Riordan's *Percy Jackson and the Olympians* series [2005 onwards]) have sold well in India and were not considered too alien in

their scope by Indian readers. In fact, two of Brown’s Robert Langdon novels centred around Western religions (*Inferno* [2013] and *Origin* [2017]) are among the top fifty Anglophone trade titles by value in the Nielsen BookData India 2011–2021 chart.

Such postcolonial literary tastes are mirrored in editorial decisions and then impact international interest in Indian writing. Godwin (DGA), who has worked with the likes of Arundhati Roy and Vikram Seth and is well-known in the industry for signing authors from India, stated that while he visits the Jaipur Literary Festival every year, he only sees one or two other non-Indian literary agents there. Godwin added that it has always surprised him that more people are not publishing Indian writers and how ‘narrow-minded’ people are in the UK. It seems this narrow-mindedness impacts cooperation among the branches of multinationals too: Gupta (Writer’s Side) stated that he has heard stories of British publishing professionals not taking recommendations from their Indian counterparts seriously.

Therefore, while books published by the Indian subsidiaries of multinationals may appear on bibliographic metadata feeds such as ONIX for foreign offices (Abraham, Hachette India), the books are often not picked for printing, promotion and distribution by the foreign offices. In contrast, 65% – and sometimes even 90% – of the revenue of the Indian subsidiaries is generated by the sale of foreign titles, as shown in Table 4.2 that I created using primary interview data:

Source	Organisation	Total Subsidiary Revenue Generated by Local List (approx)	Total Subsidiary Revenue Generated by Foreign List (approx)
Anantha Padmanabhan	HarperCollins India	30–35% ²²	65–70%
Nandan Jha	Penguin Random House India	30–35%	65–70%
Rajdeep Mukherjee	Pan Macmillan India	10–15%	85–90%
Shantanu Duttagupta	Scholastic India	30%	70%
Thomas Abraham	Hachette India	10%	90%

Table 4.2: Revenue splits between the local lists and the foreign lists of the Indian subsidiaries of multinational publishers (created using primary interview data)

²² Anantha Padmanabhan (CEO, HarperCollins India) added in his interview that though their local list generates 30–35% of the company revenue, it uses 70% of their resources.

This imbalance between the revenue generation by foreign books over Indian writing is also evidenced in Figures 4.2–4.4 (in section 4.3.1), the photographs I captured of pirated books sold on Indian footpaths and at a traffic light in 2022 and 2023. As the interviewees indicated, pirating implies a title’s popularity in India. The pirated books in the three photographs are mostly by non-Indian writers. When it comes to book sales recorded by Nielsen BookData between the year of its establishment in India (2011) to 2021, a similar trend emerges, as indicated in Table 4.3:

Rank	Title	Author	Publisher	Pub Year	Volume (2011/Pub Date–2021)	Value (2011/Pub Date–2021) (INR in million)
1	Harry Potter Box Set: The Complete Collection	JK Rowling	Bloomsbury Publishing	2014	104,198	266.46
2	Ikigai: The Japanese Secret to a Long and Happy Life	Héctor García & Francesc Miralles	Random House UK	2017	513,947	185.71
3	The Alchemist	Paulo Coelho	HarperCollins India	2005	732,221	155.30
4	The Subtle Art of Not Giving a F*ck	Mark Manson	HarperCollins US	2016	452,225	148.39
5	The Secret	Rhonda Byrne	Simon & Schuster UK	2006	277,126	138.19
6	The Intelligent Investor	Benjamin Graham	HarperCollins US	2003	296,070	126.91
7	The Oath of The Vayuputras: The Shiva Trilogy	Amish Tripathi	Westland Books	2013	444,240	123.12
8	Sapiens: A Brief History of Humankind	Yuval Noah Harari	Random House UK	2015	331,961	115.97
9	The Immortals of Meluha: The Shiva Trilogy	Amish Tripathi	Westland Books	2010	569,283	112.70
10	Harry Potter and the Cursed Child – Parts One and Two	JK Rowling & Jack Thorne	Little, Brown Book Group	2016	184,346	104.96

Table 4.3: Top ten Anglophone trade books in India by value (2011 or year of publication to 2021) recorded by Nielsen BookData India

Due to the rampant book piracy and the inability to track book sales in smaller towns in India, Nielsen BookData can only map the sales of approximately half of the bestselling titles (Seshadri 2018, p 113). Still, the pattern displayed in the mapped books can add value to the argument. Among the top ten largest revenue generators in trade books in India between 2011 and 2021, only two titles are by an Indian author (in bold in the table). Both books are in *The Shiva Trilogy* by Amish Tripathi, which did not perform well overseas (discussed above and in Chapter 3). The only Indian local publisher on the list is Westland, which was bought by Amazon in 2013 and unfortunately shut down in 2022 (Bagchi and Upadhyay 2022) (post the data recording in Table 4.3). The rest of the eight books, as well as the top-selling book, are by foreign authors and publishers. The only exception regarding the publisher seems to be Coelho's *The Alchemist* (2005), whose publisher is indicated as HarperCollins India, implying that the Indian subsidiary has purchased Indian rights for the title.

What is interesting is that when it comes to volume, the number of books by Indian authors supersede those by foreign writers in the Nielsen BookData India top ten, as seen in Table 4.4:

Rank	Title	Author	Publisher	Pub Year	Volume (2011/Pub Date–2021)	Value (2011/Pub Date–2021) (INR in million)	MRP (INR)
1	The Alchemist	Paulo Coelho	HarperCollins India	2005	732,221	155.30	350
2	Half Girlfriend	Chetan Bhagat	Rupa Publications	2014	702,022	96.77	195
3	The Immortals of Meluha: The Shiva Trilogy	Amish Tripathi	Westland Books	2010	569,283	112.70	295
4	One Indian Girl	Chetan Bhagat	Rupa Publications	2016	526,641	62.72	176
5	Ikigai: The Japanese Secret to a Long and Happy Life	Héctor García & Francesc Miralles	Random House UK	2017	513,947	185.71	550
6	Revolution 2020	Chetan Bhagat	Rupa Publications	2011	472,417	54.73	140
7	The Monk Who Sold His Ferrari	Robin S Sharma	Jaico Publishing House	2005	469,958	69.35	195
8	The Subtle Art of Not Giving a F*ck	Mark Manson	HarperCollins US	2016	452,225	148.39	499
9	The Oath of The Vayuputras: The Shiva Trilogy	Amish Tripathi	Westland Books	2013	444,240	123.12	395
10	Life is What You Make it	Preeti Shenoy	Srishti Publishers & Distributors	2011	404,235	32.98	150

Table 4.4: Top ten Anglophone trade books in India by volume (2011 or year of publication to 2021) recorded by Nielsen BookData India

When it comes to bestselling titles by volume, the entries in bold, i.e., seven out of the ten, are by authors of Indian origin. This is a marked change from Table 4.3. The obvious contributing factor is the added last column, MRP (maximum retail price). As can be seen, the Indian books are priced much lower than the foreign ones: the average MRP of the seven Indian titles is INR 228.3 (INR 170 without the two more expensive mythological fiction *The Shiva Trilogy* books since speculative fiction books are usually priced higher) and the average MRP of the three foreign

books is INR 424.5. Thus, Indian writing is literally being valued less than foreign writing. How much of a role is the lower price playing in the bestselling status of the Indian titles? Would their unit sales remain the same with prices equivalent to the foreign books? What must also be noted is that all the seven Indian books in this top ten are by Indian local publishers, thus reiterating my arguments in Chapter 3 about the contribution of indigenous publishers to the national literary space. Ultimately, Indian authors – and publishers of Indian books – are not earning as much as their foreign counterparts, even in their primary (and often only) market – India – whereas India is a complementary market for the foreign titles.

The overall trend is unsurprising, considering the popularity of foreign authors in India as well as the sheer depth of the foreign catalogues that new, growing Indian lists struggle to compete with for shelf space in the bookstores (Abraham, Hachette India; Jha, PRH India; Mukherjee, Pan Macmillan India; Padmanabhan, HarperCollins India) (discussed in Chapter 5). This phenomenon is not unique to India either:

Overseas publishing will always be the dominant strand for [Hachette India]. Even in a mature market like Australia (where Hachette has been in existence for long as Hodder), the turnover split [between foreign and local books] is about the same (88:12). (Abraham)

However, the imbalance in the revenue generated by local titles could have been offset if the Indians subsidiaries were able to access a foreign readership either through licensing, the sale of international rights or intra-company importation. Yet, that has not been the case, as discussed above.

It must be clarified that while the British offices may purchase Commonwealth rights for a title, there is no compulsion on the Indian subsidiary to push the book in their market, as mentioned by interviewees like Duttagupta (Scholastic India) and Turner (PRH UK). For big acquisitions where India would be an obvious market, the British and Indian branches often make a joint bid, as in the case of Lilly Singh's and Sachin Tendulkar's autobiographies and books by Raghuram Rajan and Ramachandra Guha (Mukherjee, Pan Macmillan India; Padmanabhan, HarperCollins India; Shelley, Hachette UK; Turner, PRH UK; Wright, HarperCollins UK). Though the organisational layout may be federal in nature for both PRH and Hachette (Jha, PRH India; Turner, PRH UK; Abraham, Hachette India; Shelley, Hachette UK) (discussed in Chapter

5), the Indian subsidiary relies on foreign books produced by the British branch for most of the subsidiary's revenue and thus a dependency relationship continues.

Take the case of Penguin Random House: post its 2013 merger, PRH changed its global structure from the Indian branch reporting into the UK, as was tradition, to now reporting to the Global CEO based in the US, lending each branch autonomy in this federal structure (Jha, PRH India; Turner, PRH UK). One would think that this approach would remove the influence of British trade publishing upon India. The shift in reporting lines may lessen the influence, but Indian trade publishing cannot be independent of British trade publishing as it is not just the reporting layout of the multinational that influences Indian publishing. PRH India's relationship with the UK office is that of a customer, as stated by Turner. He likened that relationship to what PRH UK has with Waterstones and Tesco; though Wright (HarperCollins UK) in his interview clarified the UK–India publishing relationship by adding nuances:

[HarperCollins India is] a key customer. They're our exclusive distributor in that market, so we can give them all the information and all the support that we can in order for them to sell and promote the international lists as effectively as they possibly can. I'd also say they're a unique type of key customer and they're also a strategic partner. They're in the position where if they don't like our books, they can't just buy them from Penguin or Random House or Hachette. So, they're invested in our success in a way that a regular customer who picks and chooses from amongst all publishers isn't. Then there's a sort of general strategic collaboration like working with the editorial teams to try and bring big global acquisitions into all the different markets.

Thus, the Indian branch is not precisely a customer like Tesco that has the choice among different publishers. The Indian branch is restricted in its import selection and is invested in promoting the foreign titles produced by the UK branch.

Turner (PRH UK) added that for specific genres that work especially well in India, such as business or children's, it is imperative for PRH UK to obtain Commonwealth rights to meet the book's profit potential. Furthermore, as shown in Table 4.2, two-thirds of the PRH India revenue is generated by the sale of foreign titles. Jha (PRH India) called India's 'Commonwealth' status helpful, as they are able to distribute a title whether it comes directly to PRH India or through PRH

UK due to Commonwealth rights. Therefore, PRH India is still heavily dependent on the UK branch:

Our model with India is obviously they locally publish lots of stuff and they have local authors, but a large percentage of their business and the way they're setup is from the UK buying Commonwealth rights and selling into those Commonwealth markets. (Turner, PRH UK)

This brings to mind Chakava's statement discussed in 4.2.3 that trade in copyright is reasonable only when it is applied to partners who hold equal power; otherwise, it can become a 'tool of capitalistic selfishness and protectionism' working against the developing world (1996, p 76). Clearly, Indian publishers and British publishers are not operating on an equal footing, yet they are engaged in trade in copyright, which further feeds into the unequal power dynamic.

4.4 Conclusion

Copyright came into being to protect books against piracy. Yet the eventual consequence has been the carving up of the Anglophone world according to the practices birthed by the Traditional Market Agreement, itself a result of the Berne and other international copyright conventions. TMA was created to protect the interests of British publishers in former colonies, markets they believed they had a right to due to the colonial relationship (Bryant 1979, p 377; Davis 2019, p 697; echoed by British interviewees such as Atkins, Pan Macmillan UK, and Shelly, Hachette UK). TMA no longer formally exists, most former colonies have become independent, yet the practice of cartelisation continues. Thus, international copyright conventions began the current cartelisation of global Anglophone trade publishing – in which a section is controlled by US publishers and the other by UK publishers.

This system of slicing the Anglophone world using territorial rights (such as Commonwealth rights) is still considered an efficient one that makes 'logistical sense' (Shelley, Hachette UK) to the publishers I interviewed. Commonwealth rights enable Indian consumers to access foreign literature and knowledge at prices sensitive to the market, but the way they are currently used treats India as a market territory – an export or consumer market – rather than a publishing market or a source of literature worthy to be read internationally. This system is upheld by the beliefs of the Indian and British publishing professionals I interviewed, that Indian books are not relevant for overseas markets (Abraham, Hachette India; Atkins, Pan Macmillan UK;

Shelley, Hachette UK) and that only the Indian diaspora would be interested in them (Abraham, Hachette India; Gupta, Writer's Side). Still, most of the Indian publishing professionals I interviewed prefer acquiring world rights (see Table 4.1). Even so, most Indian writing – especially genre or commercial writing – is available internationally only as ebooks or Amazon POD books and not in physical form in bookshops (Abraham, Hachette India; Padmanabhan, HarperCollins India), thus limiting their discoverability. If Indian books are accompanied by any marketing and publicity on the international side, they tend to be limited (Jha, PRH India), making their international availability more of a formality rather than a genuine attempt at tapping an international readership. Publishing is often a self-fulfilling prophecy (Murray 2013, p 58): an investment in a book and author in terms of advance, print run, marketing and publicity usually results in high book sales. But if the investment is never made into these Indian voices on the international stage, the chances of them becoming overseas successes are slim. In this way, publishing is also a gatekeeper and tastemaker. This limiting of readership restricts Indian authors and publishers to mostly the Indian market, reducing their revenue-generation potential.

Even within India, trade books by Indian writers are not the highest revenue generators. As a part of the postcoloniality of culture and media, the gatekeeping and tastemaking abilities of publishing have resulted in a scenario wherein the top-grossing bestsellers in India are usually foreign books (see Table 4.3). Padmanabhan (HarperCollins India) called overseas markets 'complementary' and not the primary market for Indian writers. Yet the Indian market for foreign writers – even with India's low book prices (Mukherjee, Pan Macmillan India; Shelley, Hachette UK; Wright, HarperCollins UK) and thus lower royalties – is significant and a dealbreaker if not included in rights acquisitions (Atkins, Pan Macmillan UK; Atkinson, Atlantic). Therefore, the path to access readers in other nations is not even, to the disadvantage of Indian writers. Furthermore, due to the popularity of foreign books and the depth of the foreign catalogues (Abraham, Hachette India; Jha, PRH India; Mukherjee, Pan Macmillan India; Padmanabhan, HarperCollins India), 65–90% of the revenue of multinational subsidiaries in India is generated by the sale of foreign books (see Table 4.2). Though Indian local publishers and agents focus on Indian books for Indian readers (Bose, Srishti; Chandy, Labyrinth Literary Agency; Sarkar, Juggernaut), the local publishers' revenue cannot compete with the multinationals nor are they able to push Indian authors internationally in most cases. Therefore, Indian Anglophone trade

writers are not generating incomes equivalent to foreign writers *either* within India or internationally, due to cartelisation and its postcoloniality.

The cartelisation of world Anglophone trade publishing would not have become the ingrained practice it is today without the existence of foreign subsidiaries of multinational publishers. In the next chapter, I continue the discussion of cartelisation in the context of multinationalisation in the Indian publishing landscape.

Chapter 5: Multinationalisation in Indian Anglophone Trade Book Publishing

5.1 *Whose words are we promoting?*

After studying English literature for my undergraduate degree in India, the only desk job I could envision myself working in was one that was all about books, and thus I landed in publishing. I grew up in the Indian middle-class ethos – before the start-up trend really hit India – that told me I should aim to work at a multinational due to its international standards and work culture. So, a month after sitting for my final year exams, I joined Macmillan Publishing Services as Associate Copyeditor, believing it still held links with the multinational Macmillan group. I slowly discovered that the organisation had been bought by an Indian company, and the dour work atmosphere confirmed the impression I had held of local Indian office settings. I soon moved to Scholastic India, the Indian subsidiary of a multinational children's publisher. I happily worked there for two years as Editor in its education department – reporting to and working closely with the Singapore office – before transitioning to a trade business role at Hachette India as Senior Product Executive, where I was in daily contact with the London office. At Hachette, since the titles I focused on were produced by the London branch that we imported for the Indian market thanks to Commonwealth rights, it was the first time I worked on books that I myself read– which is what I had always visualised publishing would be like.

However, some distance still remained between those books and me. As a product executive in the sales department, I could only work on fully finished products for which we held Commonwealth rights. I had no say in whom we published and how we published them. The sole exception was the local publishing arm. I was involved in acquisitions meetings for the local list and could share my opinion on manuscripts, though the meetings were led by editors, who at times faced push-back from sales officers. Even during the one-and-a-half-year stint at Hachette, I read only three locally produced titles for a mix of work and leisure reasons, holding on to my lifelong preference for foreign writing.

The past few years have altered how I view different players within publishing as I have engaged with small independent publishers in Scotland's rich literary landscape, especially as the

two-time Co-chair of the Society of Young Publishers Scotland. Small and indie for-profit presses in Scotland, such as 404 Ink, Barrington Stoke, Charco Press, Haunt Publishing, Knight Errant Press, Luna Press Publishing and Monstrous Regiment Publishing, have specialised in their niches. They produce excellent titles, providing thoughtful author care and publication opportunities to new voices, often local and Scottish, that may not be prioritised by the multinationals. In fact, owing to this conducive indie environment, I – along with a few friends from my master’s degree at The University of Edinburgh – founded our own digital international literary magazine called The Selkie in 2018. We established it as a community interest company for which we volunteered. Our aim was not to generate profit but to platform minoritised voices like ours.

However, the hard work of the indies in Scotland that have a profit-generation model often does not translate to international sales or economic independence. So, even after learning to appreciate the work that the smaller players are doing in the publishing landscape, if I were to rejoin trade publishing in the way it functions today, I would do so with a Big-5 or multinational firm. I would like to utilise my knowledge of the industry in India and the UK. But more than that, I wish to make an impact across borders. I want to work on books that I know will reach international territories and the hands of peoples from multiple nations – and as the current system of cartelisation and multinationalisation stands, I can only do so by working for a multinational.

In Chapter 3, I laid the context to this thesis by discussing the postcoloniality of the current global Anglophone trade book publishing structuring. In Chapter 4, I began the discussion of the cartelisation of the same industry across two divisions, one controlled by US publishers and the other by UK publishers. Cartelisation using Commonwealth rights plays a bigger role for publishers that have subsidiaries in other nations or distribution agreements with foreign publishers, printers or distributors. Therefore, the discussion would be incomplete without examining multinationalisation in Anglophone trade book publishing and how that aids the cartelisation of the industry. In this chapter, I start by examining the literature surrounding multinationalisation in the publishing industry. To include views of contemporary Indian and British publishing professionals engaged with multinationalisation, I then delve into the primary data that I have gathered.

The aim of this chapter is to differentiate between multinational and local players to showcase that in the cartelised publishing system, multinationals have a better chance of promoting and publishing Indian authors internationally. Yet, as discussed in Chapter 4, multinational Indian subsidiaries are unable to tap into an international readership. Furthermore, as discussed in Chapter 3, local or indigenous publishers are needed for the development of a national literary space and for building a nation in the process of decolonisation. Thus, I examine the advantages that both kinds of players – multinationals and locals – can offer local Indian authors so that they can access readers beyond the Indian border.

5.2 The Players Within Publishing: Multinationals and Locals

As this chapter examines the last piece of the puzzle – multinationalisation – but also brings together the arguments of the preceding chapters, I first discuss the process of multinationalisation in Anglophone trade book publishing and locate its position within the wider discussion of cartelisation and postcolonialism. I then present a brief history of multinationalisation in Anglophone publishing in India. This provides a historical context to this chapter, whose focus is on the Indian publishing setup of the early twenty-first century. Next, I lead the discussion to the differences between a multinational and a local publishing firm across six factors that enable me to holistically analyse publisher operations: scale, reach, economic capital, social currency, answerability and publishing catalogue. These are foundational for the analysis of my primary interview data, which I discuss in 5.3.

5.2.1 The Links Between Anglophone Trade Book Publishing, Postcolonialism, Cartelisation and Multinationalisation

While the roots of multinationalisation in book publishing can be traced to the establishment of export branches in colonised nations (discussed in 1.3.2), there was a thirty-year process of concentrating publishing interests from 1960 to 1990, which was initially a national phenomenon (Graham 1998, p 20). It turned international due to the ‘common ownership of the English language in Britain and the United States, and the expansion into the English language by the continentals’ (Graham 1998, p 20; discussed in Chapter 1). Therefore, even before the Traditional Market Agreement (TMA) (discussed in Chapter 4) was abolished in 1976, there had begun a ‘clear trend toward consolidation in the publishing industry as large publishing firms acquire[d]

smaller ones and as media corporations move[d] into publishing’ (Altbach 1998, p 9). However, the end of TMA spurred the trend even further by encouraging larger US trade publishers to retain world rights of the books that they published and to increase their acquisitions of European publishers (Graham 1998, p 20). Acquisitions also occurred in the opposite direction, wherein European publishers acquired US firms (Graham 1998, p 20). Such developments favoured larger publishing units that later became *multinational* (Graham 1998, p 20). These multinational publishers also moved into developing countries – including former colonies – to establish local subsidiaries (Altbach 1998, p 9; discussed in 1.3.2). Altbach predicted in 1998 that these publishers’ ‘global reach can come to dominate publishing in many developing countries’ (p 9), and that has certainly been the case.

What does the term ‘multinational’ mean in the context of publishing though? Altbach states that ‘multinationals’ in publishing can simply be equated to large corporations that have the ‘resources and initiative to have affiliates in other countries, generally those which are good export markets for the “home” countries’ (1992, p 30). Though the book language this thesis focuses on – English – has grown into its status of an international language due to colonialism and the cultural hegemony of the US and the UK, the popularity of English has at least been helpful for the multinationals. English has alleviated the risk of miscommunication across countries and thus not been a barrier in multinational operations. Even in India, translations to Indian regional languages are not required to reach a significant number of readers, considering the vast population of the country:

Probably by the beginning of [the twentieth] century and certainly by the time of Eliot’s rise as an internationally reputed poet, the tribe of Macaulay’s children had sufficiently multiplied in India for [Indians] to be able to receive him direct and unmediated. (Trivedi 1993, p 69)

The 2011 Census showed English is the primary language—mother tongue—of 256,000 people, the second language of 83 million people, and the third language of another 46 million people, making it the second-most widely spoken language after Hindi. (Rukmini 2019)

However, it would be erroneous to equate the sum of all these multinational corporations to an actual *global* business, no matter what the terms ‘international’, ‘transnational’ or ‘multinational’

may imply. These firms often focus on the Anglophone market – which may be large but does not encompass the globe.

Graham states that while publishers may themselves prefer descriptors such as ‘global’ or ‘international’, ‘multinational’ is apt for organisations having branches that operate as equal partners in two or more countries (1998, p 21). Power is concentrated in the two Anglophone centres defined by Casanova (2004) (discussed in Chapter 3), which is reflected in the birth of multinational operations in publishing: Graham states that multinational corporations are ‘largely the outcome of organic growth in and mutual colonization between Europe and North America’ (1998, pp 22-23). Their multinational status also engenders a mixed response, where whilst the organisations:

are regarded with suspicion—occasionally verging on dislike—by those who see them as profit-obsessed behemoths—including those authors, librarians, and booksellers who believe that the book is the province of the creative individualist, their power and influence are widely admired, not least by their shareholders. (Graham 1998, pp 22-23)

Graham adds that:

the leading British houses of the first half of the century—Collins, Macmillan, Longman, Oxford University Press, Butterworths, and others—which established branch houses in Canada, Australia, New Zealand, India, and South Africa primarily as sales agencies but progressively as regional publishers, were an earlier version of publishing multinationals. With the ending of the empire, these ‘overseas branches’ continued, where permitted by the postcolonial governments, to conduct their business [...] *These activities, which often preferred the adaptation of the British books over the generation of local manuscripts, aroused political and commercial opposition, and still do. The postcolonial ‘cultural imperialism’ has lent pejorative overtone to the word ‘multinational’ in the developing world.* (1998, p 21; emphasis added)

Since the British multinationals prioritised their books over encouraging a local literariness in erstwhile colonies, it is understandable why multinationals are viewed with scepticism yet admiration in the developing world. This is the role multinationals play within postcolonialism,

similar to the postcolonial ‘voyeuristic gaze’ (Gandhi 1998, p 11) with which Indians view the UK – a mixture of trauma from the colonial past and a longing to emulate the coloniser (Memmi 1968, p 45, cited in Gandhi 1998, p 11) (discussed in Chapter 3). Altbach expands the overlap between postcolonialism and publishing in developing countries by stating:

The traditional role of Western influence on Third World publishing stems in part from the heritage of colonialism. In those parts of the Third World that were under colonial domination until fairly recently, and this includes much of Africa and Asia, the impact of colonialism often remains significant. The colonial power determined the nature of the development of publishing in the country as well as the modern educational system. (1992, pp 4-5)

As mentioned in Chapter 3, Casanova (2004) lays out London and New York as the two centres of Anglophone literature, and the multinational branches in both cities (often the head offices or headquarters) usually operate on equal footing or within a federal structure – thus making them ‘multinational’ by Graham’s definition (1998, p 21). Subsidiaries in other countries are usually lower in the hierarchy. In large Anglophone nations such as India and Australia, the subsidiaries are not simply distributorships or sales offices but often have local publishing operations. However, due to the cartelised structuring of territorial rights and the outflow of books from the UK and the US to the rest of the world without an equitable inflow of titles from other territories (discussed in Chapter 4), the Indian and Australian branches wield lesser power than the London and New York offices. Therefore, Casanova does not limit the power of the multinationals in London and New York to just the distribution of literature; their influence also impacts the *kind* of books selected for publication. Casanova states that ‘owing to the power of international publishing giants’, in the ‘oldest national fields’ New York and London, ‘the appearance and consolidation of an increasingly powerful commercial pole has profoundly altered publishing strategies, affecting not only patterns of distribution but also the *selection of books and even their content*’ (2004, p 169; emphasis added). Casanova also links the ‘international’ flavour that writing from the US is perceived to have (discussed in Chapters 3 and 4) with American large-scale literary production. Thus, more than any other branch, the US and UK offices of multinationals act as gatekeepers and tastemakers within publishing, which is made possible by and further aids the cultural hegemony of the US and the UK. Granted, trade book publishing is only one output of media, but it is the focus of this study and a key form, as Altbach states in his research as well:

It is not argued here that books are the sole requisite for modernization or cultural development, but only that books and publishing are a part of the intellectual equation of any nation and deserve attention and analysis. (1975, p 19)

Thus, it is important to examine the postcoloniality of publishing as a media industry.

Returning to the definition of a ‘publishing multinational’, Altbach believes that in an ideal scenario a multinational company would ‘shed any sense of nationalism’ (1992, p 30) and:

would consist of a group of *companies of equivalent status in at least three countries*, each company run and staffed by nationals of the country of location; *each company trading on equal terms with the other*; each company ploughing back its profits into the country of location; each company with a high degree of delegation from the *corporate headquarters, which would preferably be located in none of the operating companies* and should concentrate its efforts on financial and group management. (1992, p 30; emphasis added)

The three emphasised attributes in Altbach’s quote do not reflect the current multinational publishing scenario. Firstly, the US and UK branches may trade on equivalent terms with each other but not with the others (discussed above), thus restricting the number to two companies and not three. Secondly, all the branches do not trade on equal terms as the subsidiaries are reliant on the books of the UK and US branches for the majority of their revenue (discussed in Chapter 4). Thirdly, while the parent companies may be based in Europe for some multinationals, the subsidiaries often report to Global CEOs in the UK or the US (as in the case of PRH and Hachette, discussed in the interview data analysis in 5.3.3.1). This combination defeats a ‘literary internationalism’ – one that should be free from the ‘power of international commerce’ (Casanova 2004, pp 171-172):

The rise of multinational conglomerates and the very broad diffusion of internationally popular novels that give the appearance of literariness have called into question the very idea of a literature independent of commercial forces. (Casanova 2004, pp 171-172)

Since literature is not free from commercial and political forces, this chapter examines the impact of multinationals on national literary spaces.

As mentioned in Chapter 4, the cartelisation of global Anglophone trade publishing due to territorial rights would not have had its forceful impact without multinationalisation. Bryant links the selling of rights with multinationalisation by claiming that the former would ‘remain the most effective way to maximize distribution, at least until publishers establish their own distribution infrastructures in each others’ markets’ (1979, p 392). Therefore, until US and European publishers could establish physical branches in other nations, they controlled other territories through copyright and territorial rights. Unsurprisingly then, Graham states:

The one situation in which multinational publishers are bitterly resented is when they move into countries where the local publishing industry is struggling for viability. *The multinationals are then accused of stifling the development of a genuinely national literature.* Then the indigenous publishers form alliances with the trade and cultural ministries of their governments to contain or repel the invaders. (1998, p 23; emphasis added)

This has been true for India post its independence in 1947, whose ‘government oscillated between protectionism and liberalism: until 1957, books were imported into India on the Open General License, but from 1957 to 1977 the importing of books was regulated to conserve foreign exchange and protect the Indian book industry’ (Davis 2019, pp 687-688). In turn:

[t]he British, in general, pursued a more laissez faire policy and permitted indigenous publishing to develop, although they did not encourage it. British firms also entrenched themselves in the colonies, often dominating the most important market for books—the school text market. Expatriate firms in some cases continue to be important in local publishing, while in others, such as India, governmental action forced foreign companies to sell a majority control to local people. (Altbach 1992, pp 4-5)

Indian publishers such as Shyam Lal Gupta spoke against Britain’s dominance over the Indian market even before Indian independence: ‘British books were marketed in India through the Indian branches of some British publishing houses and there was *neither any competition nor any choice* in adopting other books’ (cited in Davis 2019, p 681; emphasis added). Post Indian independence, foreign trade publishing companies entered the country through partnerships with local publishers until they could establish their own branches from the 1990s onwards with the easing of

protectionism. For example, one of the leading Indian local publishers, Rupa Publications, was originally established as a distribution house for multinationals such as Penguin and HarperCollins (stated in interview by Das, Yoda; Bose, Srishti; Abraham, Hachette India). Today, Anglophone trade book publishing in India comprises a mix of the subsidiaries of multinationals, such as Penguin Random House, HarperCollins, Hachette, Pan Macmillan, Simon & Schuster, Scholastic, Bloomsbury; distribution agreements between Indian organisations and foreign independent publishers such as Atlantic Books, Canongate Books and Faber & Faber; larger-scale Indian local publishers such as Jaico Publishing House, Rupa Publications and Srishti Publishers & Distributors; and smaller indies such as Yoda Press and Tulika Books. The differences between the various players are discussed in 5.2.3, but before that, I examine the history of multinational publishers in India to better understand the contemporary scenario.

5.2.2 History of Multinationalisation in the Indian Anglophone Book Publishing Industry

As discussed in Chapter 1, the spread of the English language in India was caused by British colonisation. A significant reason the imperialists chose to educate Indians in English was for the ease of trade and governance. Publishers such as Longman, Macmillan and OUP established branches in major Indian cities, such as Mumbai, Kolkata and Chennai, in the early twentieth century (Bell 2009, p 608; Davis 2019, p 680). Schoolbooks were the most commercially successful book trade. For instance, for Macmillan by 1901, 80% of foreign book sales came from India, and by 1943, Macmillan was the largest educational publisher in India with an annual turnover of GBP 250,000 (Davis 2019, p 680). Davis states that India was of prime importance in British colonisation and a critically important export market for British books in the first half of the twentieth century (2019, p 680). Therefore, upon India's independence in 1947, the British keenly felt the loss of a significant export market:

Michael Joseph wrote in 1949 that 'the partial disintegration of the British empire has deprived English publishers of some hitherto exclusive markets.' All foreign firms at this time were required to reduce their equity in Indian subsidiaries, leading Macmillan and Longmans to undergo 'cataclysmic restructuring', according to Chatterjee[.] (Davis 2019, pp 687-688)

However, India's independence did not immediately restrict the import of British books into the country as they were still key in the continuing British educational system (Davis 2019, pp 687-688). Soon, British publishers gradually branched into trade books – the focus of this thesis.

As discussed in Chapter 3, it is imperative for a newly independent nation to foster its native publishing, authorship and readership, and oftentimes the first step in this journey is developing educational publishing. In Kenya, that unfortunately was not the case. Chakava acknowledges how significant education is in national development but states that the government of the newly independent country did not create any policies regarding the role of books in education and thus lost the chance to 'propose a national book publishing and distribution policy' (1996, p 8). Chakava connects this with the lack of a local Kenyan publishing industry in the late twentieth century:

There are many reasons why indigenous publishing has not taken off during the thirty years of Kenya's independence. In my view, the principal reason is that the government has never had a publishing policy or a book policy or even a broad information policy. *Although it has adhered to the international conventions providing for copyright and the free flow of books, it has allowed multinationals to operate in the market freely and without any conditions or restrictions for far too long.* On the other hand, it has itself attempted to dabble in commercial publishing at the expense of the local publishers. Sandwiched between the state and the multinationals, the local publisher, too weak to have a voice, has been squeezed into oblivion. (1996, p 50; emphasis added)

Thus, besides the lack of a book policy, the free reign that the Kenyan government granted multinationals and the government's own commercial publishing activities proved to be detrimental for a local publishing industry. Upon India's independence, on the other hand, the Indian government swayed between protectionism and liberalism via the Open General License and tried regulating the import of foreign books (Davis 2019, pp 687-688) (discussed in 5.2.1). The government took other steps to encourage an indigenous publishing industry, such as establishing 'the National Book Trust in the mid-1950s, a textbook subsidy scheme and special tax concessions for Indian publishers' (Davis 2019, pp 687-688). Despite such protectionist measures, Davis adds that the Indian book trade showed 'a deficit until 1980, and the rate of book imports was almost five times in value that of book exports' (2019, pp 687-688). This is because

many other factors come into play, such as an undeveloped infrastructure, poverty, low disposable incomes and low literacy rates.

Davis continues discussing the effects of the Indian government's policies and schemes to successfully foster a national publishing industry in the early twenty-first century. Citing the academic Suman Gupta and *2008 UK Publishers Association Report* on Indian publishing, Davis states that the Indian market contains a variety of publishing players in terms of size and the languages that they publish in, and they successfully coexist (2019, p 695). The smaller of these players – indigenous or homegrown independent publishers – began in India with the establishment of Kali for Women, which was founded in the mid/late 1980s and published feminist books (Chandrasekhar 2018, p 196). Following this, independent publishing proliferated and flourished in the 1990s leading to a landscape today that comprises several notable independent publishers (Chandrasekhar 2018, p 196).

Apart from size, multinationals differ from local publishers in another aspect: the multinationals are not interested in publishing in local languages, often restricting themselves to Anglophone publishing, a field in which they hold dominance over local players. Devasar presents a contrary view to the 'happy coexistence' that Davis (2019, p 695) discusses:

The Indian market for publishing is quite fragmented and that has over the last 70 years created both challenges and opportunities. As a result, many publishing universes *coexist and rarely come together* [....] Local players and multinational ones are separated by size, scale and often perspective. (Devasar 2018, pp xi–xii; emphasis added)

This difference in perspective could be because '[p]ublishing systems in Third World countries have been invariably inherited from colonial masters' by following the operational patterns of industrialised countries, which often do not address the needs of developing nations (Arboleda 1998, pp 79-80). Although Arboleda counts India as an exception by having tailored its local publishing (1998, p 80), the advantages that multinationals enjoy over local publishers in India cannot be ignored. Such advantages must be considered, in light of the differing perspectives and mission statements of the multinationals and the locals. The next section presents a comparative analysis of these two kinds of players within the Indian publishing landscape and their relationship to postcolonialism.

5.2.3 Multinationals vs Locals: A Six-factor Framework of Publishing Capitals

I have created a six-factor framework of publishing capitals to understand the advantages and disadvantages that multinational and local trade publishers contend with while engaging with the same market forces. My framework is informed by existing theories: I redeveloped Bourdieu's capital theory (1986) and Gonsalves's adaptation of it (2015). I shaped the framework with the information I gained from my primary research.

Bourdieu's theory posits that people can establish their positions in society based on the kinds of capital they have, which in turn influences their social behavioural patterns (1986). The four kinds of capital identified by Bourdieu are: economic capital (funds/cash flow), cultural capital (educational qualifications, skills and credentials), social capital (friends-circles, networks, and resources based on connections and group membership) and symbolic capital (prestige, renown, reputation and status) (discussed in Gonsalves 2015, pp 427-428). Gonsalves combines Bourdieu's four kinds of capital with Thompson's (2012) two additional kinds of capital, namely, human capital (staff employed by publishing firms and their collective knowledge and skills) and intellectual capital (the rights that a publisher owns or controls in intellectual content) (Gonsalves 2015, pp 427-428). These are useful factors to distinguish between the statuses and behaviours of publishers, as I realised through interviewing different kinds of publishing players for this research.

Gonsalves (2015) discusses Bourdieu's capital theory and Thompson's additional two kinds of capital in the context of the different publishing players at the Frankfurt Book Fair, ultimately to provide a counterpoint to Bourdieu's theory. Gonsalves argues that small, newer Indian publishers successfully utilise 'friendliness' to compete with larger, legacy publishers at the Frankfurt Book Fair:

I suggest that the field rewards friendliness. This is because it operates mainly as an economy of symbolic exchanges, where symbolic capital – prestige, renown, reputation – is highly prized. It is the survival of the friendliest, not the fittest, or the richest, that matters in such fields of cultural production. (2015, p 429).

I agree that symbolic capital is a significant publishing capital, but it does not exist in a vacuum; it is impacted by economic capital, scale and reach (discussed in 5.2.3.4). My argument is that small Indian publishers have to resort to 'friendliness' as a form of symbolic capital because they cannot compete with the other capitals that the multinationals lead in. Thus, I do not undermine

Bourdieu's and Thompson's other forms of capital in my framework as they influence publishers' positioning within cultural and literary fields.

In my primary research, when discussing how my interviewees' status of being a multinational or local/indie firm impacted their work, six common themes emerged. Four of these overlap with Bourdieu's capital theory and Gonsalves's adaptation of it using Thompson's work. The four overlaps in my framework are: economic capital; social capital in terms of networks, which I consider playing a role in distribution or 'reach'; symbolic capital in terms of prestige and brand value, or 'social currency'; and intellectual capital, which I analyse as 'publishing catalogue'. Beside these, I consider two more factors: the 'scale' or size of the publisher, and the reporting line in their operation or 'answerability'. This is not to say that Bourdieu's, Thompson's or Gonsalves's theories are invalid. They proved useful for me to develop this framework to analyse my research subject, but the framework required adjustment to include the publishing literature I reviewed on multinationalisation and the insight that my interviewees shared. Specifically, the topic of human capital and cultural capital – in the way Bourdieu, Thompson and Gonsalves discuss them – rarely arose in my interviews. When it did, I received contradictory views in that both multinationals and local publishers believed that they had the better staff, either due to the professional standards in the former or the thought and care that they could provide in the latter. Ultimately, the focus of this research has been on structures within publishing rather than the individual staff, and thus I do not include human and cultural capitals in my framework. I discuss the six factors in my framework – i.e., scale, reach, economic capital, social currency, answerability and publishing catalogue – in detail in the following sub-sections using existing publishing and book history literature.

5.2.3.1 Scale

Different publishing models exist within the industry, with variations in size and vision. This variation includes large multinational conglomerates on the one end of the spectrum, and independent micro-publishers on the other end. Permutations and combinations exist between the two: large independents like Faber & Faber that do not have physical subsidiaries but have partnerships with foreign bodies to access international markets, and small independents like Yoda Press that have a limited staff and niche publishing list but have relationships with multinational publishers and British bookshops to distribute their books outwith India (discussed in the interview

data analysis in 5.3.3). As the purpose of this research is to examine the postcolonial impact of the British publishing industry upon the Indian publishing industry, I have categorised the publishers as ‘multinationals’ – having an international reach through either physical branches or partnerships – and ‘locals’ – often restricted to their home markets. However, I do distinguish between ‘multinational’ and ‘Big-5’ publishers. Scholastic, Atlantic Books and Faber & Faber have multinational operations but are not counted among the Big 5 within Anglophone trade publishing. Nonetheless, multinationals are among the larger corporations, just by the fact that they can engage in multinational activities:

Semantically, there is no reason why a multinational company should not be small and specialized, but the term has come to be identified with scale. The concept includes an assumption of sufficient financial resources to enable entry into foreign countries, whether by acquisition or start-up. (Graham 1998, p 22)

Thus, scale is associated with economic capital (discussed in 5.2.3.3). Acquisition is a key point – it is often the easiest way to expand operations. While multinationals may ‘come to dominate publishing in many developing countries’, ‘new technologies, the development of “niche markets” that had been abandoned by the large firms, and increasing specialization in the book industry have permitted small firms to survive and even prosper’ (Altbach 1998, p 9). Therefore, in the current publishing landscape, there is room for diverse publishing models. However, it is hard for small local publishers to grow in scale and compete with multinationals on an equal footing. In fact, to tackle this problem, a group of independent publishers came together in the UK to form the Independent Alliance (spearheaded by Faber & Faber) so that, together, they could compete against multinationals in sales and distribution negotiations (Murray and Squires 2013; Faber.co.uk [no date]). But the fear of acquisition persists. As Carter and Galligan argue with regards to Australia: ‘independent Australian publishers will mostly need to stay small, often very small, or specialise, or they risk being merged or swallowed’ (2013, p 7). This pattern has led to a scenario in Australia in which ‘all but a few of the dominant brands are owned by global media conglomerates’ due to the ‘taking over [of] independent publishers, along with the right to use their imprints’ (Lee 2013, p 17). While Carter, Galligan and Lee speak of the Australian publishing industry, the same can be applied to other nations, especially considering the acquisition of the independent children’s publisher Duckbill by Penguin Random House India in 2019 (discussed in 1.3.2). Ghosh presents a differing view by stating that due to the involvement of foreign publishers

in India, Indian local publishers can gain ‘new heights in business with partnerships and collaborations’ though he admits that they would have to do so while ‘facing stiff competition’ from the multinationals (2018, pp 4-5). This has been true in the cases of Yoda Press and Juggernaut that have partnered with multinationals for mutual benefit while retaining their independent identity, which I discuss in the interview data analysis in 5.3.

Still, as Gonsalves states, it cannot be ignored that Anglophone trade publishing ‘continues to be territorially hierarchised’ in which UK- and US-based multinationals occupy the centre whereas Indian local publishers are ‘on the periphery as outsiders and newcomers’ (2015, p 427), and this is substantially due to their variances in scale.

5.2.3.2 Reach

Publishers offer key services such as editorial, design, production, marketing and publicity. But none of it would amount to anything without the distribution and sale of the books, which I categorise under ‘reach’. Reach – national and international – is another aspect that usually differentiates multinationals from local publishers and is among the primary duties of a publisher. Singh states: ‘An important part of a publisher’s task is to ensure the widest possible dissemination of the books he/she publishes, and that means both nationally and internationally’ (1992, p 249).

Reach in a country as large and varied as India – with its mix of Tier 1–6 cities, towns and villages (Reserve Bank of India [no date]) – is a complex feat. Amazon’s entry into India has eased distribution but been met with mixed responses in publishing due to the consequential closure of physical bookshops that could not match Amazon’s heavy discounting in a price-sensitive market like India (discussed in 4.3.2). But even before Amazon entered India, Singh wrote about the disservice that physical bookshops did to local publishers and local authorship due to postcoloniality:

[B]ookshops tend to be very conservative in their stocking habits, preferring to sell international bestsellers or topical quickies or textbooks. They take little interest in what is being published locally. This is not entirely surprising since the intellectual elite is their main clientele. And this elite in most developing countries is mainly interested in what is being published out of London and New York and, conversely, tends to look askance at indigenous authorship, both in literary and scholarly areas. (1992, p 247)

Since physical bookshops and distributors usually prioritise larger publishers in India, Amazon has been a boon for small Indian publishers by offering a more equitable platform (discussed in 4.3.2).

It is not just distribution within the country that the multinationals have an upper hand on. The ease with which books produced by the literary centres, the US and the UK, are made available in India is because of both cartelisation and multinationalisation, i.e., Indian subsidiaries of the multinationals importing books using Commonwealth rights from overseas branches. Therefore, Graham's statement must be kept in mind: 'The transnationalism that corporations can bring—for example, through intertrading among sister companies in many countries—should give the book scope that the small independent publisher cannot achieve' (1998, p 25). With this significant advantage, Brouillette states that multinational:

[c]ompanies solidify their dominant positions by incorporating postcolonial writers for global distribution, and also by opening branch offices in the regions from which their authors emerge. These offices attract local authors who would likely seek publication abroad in any case, and they distribute them at the local level while also arranging international publishing contracts for global release. (2007, pp 57-58)

Due to industry norms, local publishers still ask for world rights in author contracts although they cannot offer the same sales avenues as the multinationals (discussed in Chapter 4). The Indian subsidiaries of multinationals have an existing international network that they could utilise to distribute their lists. However, this occurs infrequently, as mentioned in Chapter 4 and will be examined in depth in the interview data analysis in 5.3. Moreover, as discussed in 4.2.3, trade channels within the Global South have not been properly developed, as Indian publishers tend to focus on American and British markets for international sales. Thus, Menon states that:

in South Asia, there is no trade as trade between countries is not easy. So, we have to go through distributors but realization of money and sending books across are not easy. So, no matter how valuable or useful your books might be, we are still not able to get them to places where we know there is readership. (2018, p 204)

Though multinational and local publishers both prefer acquiring world or UK and Commonwealth rights (see Table 4.1), multinationals can technically access better distribution networks – though not truly global ones – on national and international scales.

5.2.3.3 Economic Capital

While scale and transnational operations may be the most obvious markers of a multinational, the one factor that impacts (and is impacted by) all the other factors is the organisation's economic capital. Large multinational firms have access to considerable funds and cash flow, and small local firms have restricted budgets. The two already-discussed factors, scale and reach of publishers, are usually directly proportional to their economic capital. Graham states that the availability of funds for the corporates should come along with 'stringent financial checks' (discussed in 5.2.3.5 Answerability) and that corporates can acquire various lists and transfer them within the company, from one division to another and one country to another (discussed in 5.2.3.6 Publishing Catalogue) (1998, p 25). Economic capital of the multinationals also aids in the development of their branding and prestige, which is attractive to authors (discussed in 5.2.3.4 Social Currency).

Economic capital dictates various aspects of a publisher's activities: the number of books it can acquire and publish; how much it can spend on author advances and in bidding wars to acquire high-profile authors; marketing and publicity spends; staff size; the size and number of its offices and international subsidiaries; production value of its books; inventory and warehousing; acquiring other publishers and imprints; and how much more patient it can be with long credit periods that have become a staple in Indian publishing. Ghosh calls these long credit periods the 'weakest link in the Indian publishing industry' and adds that in such circumstances, it is difficult to establish a new publishing company in India (2018, p 6). Gupta explains why long credit periods are unsustainable for smaller publishers:

Book publishers have to provide long credit period to their distributors/customers, hold large inventory for a long period, and struggle to keep prices of books low to ensure affordability. As our credit period is the longest compared to any other industry, the entire value chain works on publishers funding, until the time the reader buys the book. (2018, pp 125-126)

While the initial investment in publishing may not be as high as compared to other media industries, due to the restrictions on cash flow, it can be difficult to sustain a local independent company or resist the acquisition power of the multinationals. Carter and Galligan speak of the Australian context – but it can apply to the Indian publishing industry too – when they state that:

book publishing as an industry is characterised by ‘ease of entry’ – relatively small amounts of capital are required to publish a standard book, hence the typically large number of (small) book publishers compared to publishers of newspapers or owners of radio and television [...] [In] the Australian industry, [...] small local publishers have consistently arisen since the late nineteenth century and continue to do so today, only to fall victim to the lack of capital needed for sustained growth, or, where success is sustained, to the takeover ambitions of larger companies (2013, p 4)

Lee adds to this dynamic between Australian independents and global players in publishing by comparing their relationship to a ‘cat-and-mouse game’, wherein ‘[t]akeovers usually occur when local firms experience commercial crises, often created by lack of sufficient capital to fund their publishing programs’ (2013, p 23). This has not only been true for the Australian market, but the Indian (discussed regarding the Duckbill acquisition in 5.2.3.1 Scale) and the South African as well:

As African publishing grows and shows potential, the multinationals will seek to dominate. It is a paradox that indigenous publishers will be left alone as long as they are unsuccessful. Once market potential has been demonstrated, outside pressures become evident. (Altbach 1996, p ix)

Saha also discusses the ‘ascendency of neoliberal economics in the West from the 1970s onwards’ that has spurred on the acquisition of independent publishers by large corporations, leading to ‘noticeable changes in their cultures of production, particularly at the commissioning and acquisition stage’ (2016) (discussed in 5.2.3.5 Answerability and 5.2.3.6 Publishing Catalogue).

In 5.2.3.2 Reach, I addressed why Indian independents have praised Amazon for easing distribution and sales. Continuing this example of Amazon, I argue that even with the advantages that Amazon offers local independents, the playing field is not truly level if the locals cannot match the spending powers of the multinationals regarding paid-for banner ads and sponsored posts. These help consumers discover new titles among the thousands released every month, which is significant because the publishing catalogues of the Indian local publishers focus on local Indian writers and thus aid in creating a national literary space (discussed in 5.2.3.6 Publishing Catalogue). Thus, as seen in this section, economic capital impacts all other aspects of a publisher’s

work and the locals cannot be on a par with the multinationals if their access to funds is not the same.

5.2.3.4 Social Currency

With scale, reach and economic capital comes brand value as a form of social currency. This social currency impacts various points of a book's journey: which publishers are preferred by authors, distributors and bookshops, media, and readers. Gonsalves states that publishing 'operates mainly as an economy of symbolic exchanges, where symbolic capital – prestige, renown, reputation – is highly prized' (2015, p 429; discussed in 5.2.3). Though she concludes that symbolic capital takes precedence over even economic capital, I would argue that the two are closely interlinked and, in many ways, prestige, renown and reputation would not have as substantial an impact if it were not for the influence that economic capital allows multinational publishers. This phenomenon is reflected in the priority that distributors and bookshops grant larger publishers (discussed in 5.2.3.2) as well as the preference that 'the majority of indigenous authors who are of any standing' give to being 'published by publishers in developed nations' (Singh 1992, p 247) (discussed in Chapter 3). Managing Editor of Indian independent publisher Tulika Books, Chandrasekhar, speaks of losing authors that she has spent time and energy nurturing: 'once they become established names, they often abandon indie publishers and opt for the "brand" of bigger publishers' (2018, p 198). Parallels can be seen in Australia, where it is to the authors' benefit to publish and distribute as widely as possible, as per Murray:

Increasingly, authors may perceive publishing an Australian title with a multinational subsidiary not as capitulation to imperial cultural hierarchies, but as a conduit to well-subsidised promotion and distribution in international markets – an erosion perhaps of the previously prevalent notion that Australian literature worthy of the name must convince first on the home ground. (2013, p 60)

Though Murray distinguishes between 'imperial cultural hierarchies' and multinational subsidiaries being a 'conduit to well-subsidised promotion and distribution in international markets', I posit that the latter is the postcolonial form and consequence of the former (discussed in Chapter 3). Nevertheless, in the current publishing landscape, authors – who aim more towards

a ‘world market’ (Graham 1992, p 31) – can usually only do so by publishing with the US or UK offices of the multinationals, as discussed in Chapters 3 and 4.

Thus, social currency is intrinsically linked with economic capital, scale and reach of publishers. Multinationals are more privileged when it comes to these factors. They have better public recall and seem more attractive to authors, like publishing with them is a badge of honour and can grant opportunities that publishing with the locals cannot.

5.2.3.5 Answerability

A key factor that defines the operation – and vision – of publishing firms is whom they are financially answerable to: is it shareholders, a firm, a family, an individual or even oneself? And where are they based with respect to the Indian branch? It is not necessary that every multinational must be accountable to shareholders or a board and meet specific profit targets – but that is often the case²³. The reasoning behind book publishing attracting diversified media conglomerates has been identified by Wirtén and Lee as the ‘growing recognition of the strategic importance of “content” as a corporate asset’ (Wirtén, cited in Lee 2013, pp 20-21). This corporate asset can be ‘parlayed into multi-format media phenomena’ (Murray 2004), which ‘command ready-made audiences of millions’ (Lee 2013, pp 20-21). Therefore, books have become a type of media output through which intellectual property owned by corporates can be disseminated. Book publishing can no longer consider ‘itself as a discrete, even somewhat rarefied, industry answering to literary-critical high-mindedness rather than shareholder profit’ (Murray 2013, pp 52-53). Still, as discussed in Chapters 3 and 4, publishing has a dual identity. It is a for-profit business selling a product that has a sociocultural impact, and this tension is made more complex within larger corporations:

While [big publishing corporations] have public consciences and goals, these are circumscribed by their fiduciary duties to be financially prudent. *Boardroom decisions are taken always with a watchful eye on the trading value of a company’s shares*, and there is no reason why those in the communications business should

²³ Among the Big 5, the exception would be Macmillan, which is owned by the Holtzbrinck Publishing Group, a privately held German company. The trade division of Macmillan was described by Rajdeep Mukherjee (MD, Pan Macmillan India) as ‘a 100%-owned Holtzbrinck family business’ in his interview. Still, there is an international reporting line in place, discussed in the interview data analysis in 5.3.3.2.

differ in this respect from those in oil, transport, or pharmaceuticals. Nevertheless, all of the corporations display an awareness that the merchandise in which they deal has a unique potential for good or ill, as the messages in their annual reports never fail to state. (Graham 1998, p 28; emphasis added)

This tension within large publishing corporations is translated into their vision and operations. Casanova cites noted independent publisher André Schiffrin to discuss the neocolonial impact that the American economic publishing model has had on the rest of the world (2004, pp 170-171). In the American model, the focus shifts to profitability in the short term by having a vaster frontlist – i.e., new titles published every year – in smaller print runs at incrementally higher prices. This is in opposition to the long-term investment that books and authors require to convert frontlist titles to significant backlist titles – i.e., older titles that do not require active publicity and marketing to be sold year on year – as Murray states:

Specifically, multinational ownership shifted the major revenue stream for publishing houses from the slow-selling backlist to frontlist sellers, failing to understand that many classic texts that guarantee strong sales for houses over long periods may take months or even years to establish their public profile. (2013, p 56)

Schiffrin points out the increased acquisition by communications conglomerates that expect book publishing profits to be comparable to their other media divisions (discussed in Casanova 2004, pp 170-171). Casanova adds that this results in ‘greater participation by technical and marketing staff in editorial decisions’ (discussed in the vignette in 5.1), which has ‘led to the dissociation of intellectual purpose and editorial policy’, provoking ‘a profound crisis in the publishing industry’ (2004, pp 170-171). This difference in publishing attitudes is especially noteworthy between multinationals and local indies (discussed in the interview data analysis in 5.3) and impacts their interaction with local literature and culture:

These ‘multinationals’ are seen as powerful, uninvited guests, who regard the countries of the poorer continents either as mere export markets, or, should the visitors get into local publishing, as a source of benefit for their shareholders ‘back home.’ They do not—cannot, their critics say—identify with local cultures. They are seen as indifferent to the interests of the local publishers. (Graham 1992, p 29)

Thus, the more answerable a publisher is to foreign shareholders or a board who view books as comparable to other media products, the less free the publisher's decisions to invest in passion projects or provide the time and patience that a frontlist title needs to convert into backlist. This is especially important to consider since the backlist conversion of titles plays a role in canon formation and shaping literary tastes. If there is a slow uptake of new voices into the canon, the postcoloniality of literary tastes will remain unchallenged. In this respect, local indies serve well cross-genre authors or authors who play with forms, and local indies are often better at creating new trends and bestsellers (discussed in 5.2.3.6 Publishing Catalogue). Unfortunately, as Chandrasekhar mentions (discussed in 5.2.3.4 Social Currency), once these new authors become established names with the help of the local indies, they often jump ship to the multinationals for the services that they can provide due to their greater advantages (2018, p 198).

5.2.3.6 Publishing Catalogue

The focus on generating profit for shareholders 'back home', as Graham states (1992, p 29), in turn impacts the publishing lists/catalogues of multinationals and differentiates them further from local independents. As discussed in Chapter 4, though all of the Big 5 have Indian operations and publishing lists, most of the revenue of the multinational Indian subsidiaries is generated by their foreign lists. This is due to the depth of the foreign catalogue and their dominance in Anglophone media and culture. This can also be seen in the case of 1996 Kenya. Chakava states that the challenge with Kenyan publishing was to 'Kenyanize' publishing lists (1996, p 37). He says that while erstwhile multinationals came under local control, the majority of Kenyan books were still 'written, developed, and printed out of the country' (1996, p 37). On the other hand, homegrown firms in Australia almost exclusively publish local authors, oftentimes providing first publication opportunities to new voices and investing in untested waters, as per Galligan:

Whether inspired by social, political or aesthetic motivations, [small independent] publishers offered an outlet for emerging authors, built new lists and explored new directions. Small presses also conducted a kind of cultural research and development for the industry, and often acted as a 'sieve or conduit for new authors'. (2013, p 40)

Echoing similar sentiments and speaking specifically of the Indian publishing landscape, Gonsalves states: 'Bereft of the prestige of antiquity, international literary prizes, and position in Anglo-American publishing circuits enjoyed by the Big 5, smaller Indian publishers commission works that may not become bestsellers but may introduce fresh voices, and/or experimental, cutting-edge works into the field' (2015, p 433) (discussed in the interview data analysis in 5.3). This is true for the Scottish publishing landscape as well, as mentioned in the vignette in 5.1.

As discussed in Chapter 3, a national literature is significant for a newly independent country and is generally developed by an indigenous publishing industry. Davis creates a connection between answerability, publishing catalogue and the development of national literary spaces by stating that since the 'primary fiduciary duty of globally owned publishing houses is to their shareholders and (offshore) owners', multinationals 'tend not to see themselves as custodians of national literary cultures' (2013, p 122). This is especially devastating in Australia – the context Davis speaks of – where nine of the top ten publishers are multinationals and dominate book sales (2013, p 122). Similarly, the owner of the independent Indian bookshop chain Bahrison's, Anuj Bahri, states that the 'real flavour' of Indian writing can be found only within its local writing, which homegrown publishers are focused upon, whereas multinationals prioritise big author brands, which are mostly foreign (2018, p 65). Gedin echoes the spirit of these points and adds that an indigenous publisher is not altruistic when investing their profits in new talent; they do so to invest in the future of publishing, specifically, their own publishing landscape (1992, p 44) (also stated by Das, Yoda, in the interview data analysis in 5.3.3.2).

Though Gedin states that multinational subsidiaries would not reinvest their profits in the developing country, especially not on 'nonprofitable' fiction, and would have no interest in developing a new generation of writers within a country they could exit if the market slows down (1992, pp 44-46), that has not wholly been the case in India. Books are priced low in India (discussed in 4.3.1) and yield low returns as compared to other countries, but multinationals deem investing in India important (discussed in the interview data analysis in 5.3.1). However, their investment is due to viewing India as a significant export market rather than as a source of new literary voices to be disseminated internationally (discussed in Chapters 3 and 4 and the interview data analysis in 5.3.1).

Another element that is impacted by the variance in publishing catalogues is the reduction of the 'midlist' title. At the beginning of the twenty-first century, the bulk of global publishing

revenues began to be controlled by a handful of multinationals that acquired the backlists of many midlist-publishing independents (Lee 2013). In the American economic model of publishing – which Schiffrin goes as far to call the ‘[c]reeping philistinism of modern commercial publishing’ (cited in Murray 2013, p 57), the focus is on calculating the profit of every title (a practice occurring in Indian trade publishing too, as per interviewee Sarkar, Juggernaut). This is in direct contrast to the ‘André Deutsch school of publishing’, in which bestsellers are used to cross-subsidise worthwhile, though not as bankable, titles and thus encourage first-time authors (Murray 2013, p 57). Murray adds that the growing preference of the American economic model of publishing has created ‘self-perpetuation within the publishing fold’, where ‘publishable topics’ are becoming limited and new ideas are ignored (2013, p 57). Carter and Galligan state that large publishers ‘can be squeezed by profit regimes that restrict the kinds of new titles taken on’, which puts ‘pressures toward quick returns from new or frontlist titles with the potential for larger sales, at the expense of slower-selling titles’ (2013, pp 6-7) (also discussed in the interview data analysis in 5.3).

Therefore, publishing lists of multinationals tend to be more conservative due to their higher overheads (Flanagan 2013, p 138) and responsibility to their shareholders (also discussed in the interview data analysis in 5.3). Flanagan states that multinationals in Australia, for instance, focus on print runs higher than 5,000 copies, which is why they need the experimental drive of local firms to spotlight new writing movements and voices that are worth being published, even in smaller print runs (2013, p 138). However, as discussed in 5.2.3.4 Social Currency and 5.2.3.5 Answerability, once the local independents prove such investments to be profitable and establish new authors, the same authors turn to the bigger brands of the multinationals for all the advantages that they can offer them, or the multinationals acquire the independent firms.

While scale and wider reach via transnational operations may seem the most obvious differences between multinational and local independent publishers, economic capital is what enables multinationals to conduct transnational operations in a larger scope and impacts all the other factors, i.e., social currency, answerability and publishing catalogue. Multinationals find themselves at an advantage in most factors, except with greater economic capital investments come greater restrictions and financial responsibilities. In that respect, local independent publishers can explore new voices and invest in untested talent and are thus needed to revitalise the literary

landscape, especially develop national literary spaces. I next discuss the differences between multinationals and locals – and their positioning in a postcolonial world – applying my six-factor framework in the interview data analysis.

5.3 Interview Research Data Analysis: Multinationalisation in the Indian Anglophone Trade Book Publishing Industry

The available scholarly and industry-based literature on the topic of multinationalisation in the publishing industry discussed sets the context for my primary data. Specifically in this section, I use interview data to examine the role of multinationalisation in the cartelisation of Anglophone trade book publishing and why indigenous publishers are needed to develop a national literary space to combat the postcoloniality of cartelisation.

I begin by further analysing why the Indian market has been a significant investment for multinational publishers before giving an overview of multinationalisation in Indian publishing, thus adding to the points discussed using secondary literature in 5.2.2. Next, I delve deeper into the dynamic between contemporary UK offices of multinational publishers and their Indian subsidiaries, followed by a comparative analysis of the relevant players within the Indian publishing landscape, i.e., multinational Indian subsidiaries and Indian local publishers (usually independent companies). I utilise the six factors from my framework in 5.2.3, i.e., scale, reach, economic capital, social currency, answerability and publishing catalogue to examine the primary data. Finally, I lead the discussion to the interviewees' views on multinationalisation in the industry before concluding the chapter.

5.3.1 Why Is the Indian Market Attractive to Multinational Publishers?

In the interview data analysis in Chapter 4, I discussed India's position as a market territory rather than a source of literature to be distributed internationally. As this chapter focuses on multinationalisation, I now turn to the interview data to understand why India is an appealing market to foreign multinationals.

Many of my interviewees working in London publishing spoke of the significance that the Indian market holds for their organisations. This would seem counterintuitive since profit margins are low in Indian publishing (discussed in Chapter 4). Despite this, foreign interests remain constant in the Indian market, and Shelley (Hachette UK) explained why:

In my mind India is about the extraordinary growth potential of that market and the investment in that market, because [...] [t]here are very few countries where the growth in reading and writing in English and literacy and a kind of social mobility are quite at the same level. So, for me it's not even about so much what happens while I'm still in my role at Hachette, but what happens for my successor when they're in their role. That there aren't that many areas of the business that we see such vibrant growth. [...] India is one of those areas that I would perceive as being an incredibly exciting market for the future.

Similarly, Atkins (Pan Macmillan UK) said that though their Indian branch does not generate great profit, it does generate some, which is important to sustain their confidence in growing the Indian business and therefore called the investment a 'long-term game'. Atkins added that the drive is to support the Indian office to thrive locally and flourish on its own feet, and he stated that this was true for the South African office as well. This is interesting to note, especially considering that in his previous role at Simon & Schuster UK, Atkins's 'most important role was making sure that the Australian business was prioritising the same titles and had the same focus that we [at the UK office] had', thus prioritising exporting the UK list rather than encouraging the flourishing of a local Australian one.

Turner (PRH UK) brought up the dual nature of publishing to discuss Penguin Random House's 'longer-term aspirations' in India. He discussed their responsibility as a publisher to 'get the best books into the hands of as many people as [they] can' and generating profit. PRH has been able to do the latter with higher price points for landmark titles in India such as Barack Obama's *A Promised Land* (2020) (hardcover at INR 1,199) and Michelle Obama's *Becoming* (2018) (2021 paperback at INR 699). Turner hoped that with India's upwardly mobile society, PRH could continue to reach more readers with time and increase prices for similarly big titles, thus overall generating more profit with increased volumes and prices. For Shelley (Hachette UK), the foreign subsidiaries are significant even in their present form as they generate 30% of Hachette UK sales. Shelley also noted a similarity between the Indian and Australian markets in that 'a lot of the bestsellers come from the UK and US' and there are 'fewer locally originated bestsellers', even compared to Ireland. He added that the situation seems to be changing, which he was in favour of.

Even foreign independents like Faber & Faber and Atlantic Books – that do not have their own subsidiaries in India but have agreements with the Indian subsidiaries of the Big 5 to distribute

their lists – concurred in the importance of being present in the Indian market. Page (Faber) stated that India is one of those markets that recognises the Faber brand (its social currency), probably due to the role that the literary writers on Faber’s list have played in the Indian education curriculum (depth of the publishing catalogue). Thus, publishing in India holds ‘cultural significance’ for Faber (Page). Similarly, Atkinson (Atlantic) called India ‘culturally important’. Moreover, due to the growth potential of the English-reading Indian population, Atkinson called Atlantic’s presence in the developing country a ‘defensive position in some ways’ before India becomes a ‘world superpower’. Page (Faber) added:

With the growth of the Indian economy, the sense of economic and cultural power growing between India and China, we always felt like— perhaps that’s another reason why people are holding on to that notion of publishing into the Indian market in the English language, that there is still a prospect that the *market will become as commercially and financially significant as it is culturally and business-wise*. (emphasis added)

However, there are caveats to this investment within India since, as Atkins (Pan Macmillan UK) stated, the cost of conducting the business of books in India is not significantly cheaper than the UK and with lower gains:

We still need to have an office in Central Delhi, we need to have a team of people who are paid reasonably well. It’s not the low-cost environment that it used to be I think and it’s an inflationary environment still. Yet the prices of the products are still significantly cheaper than in the UK, so the margins are always going to be relatively thin.

Therefore, Atkins said that the investment within India is ‘on the basis of the potential of the population and the fact that that population will become more educated, will have more disposable income and will have more leisure time to read in the future’. Page (Faber) and Atkinson (Atlantic) both spoke of the notion of multinationals holding on to the hope that the burgeoning Indian middle class will propel the book-buying market, which unfortunately has not happened in the expected scale. A possible reasoning behind this was discussed by Atkinson, that while the middle class surely has grown, ‘if you see a book in a certain amount of rupees and it represents a certain percentage of someone’s weekly pay then clearly hoping that you’re going to sell a lot of books in

India would be ludicrous'. Jha (PRH India) pointed out the weaker monetary value of the Indian rupee compared to the US dollar but stated that if each rupee is equated to a dollar and the volume of book sales in India is considered, then it is clear why the Indian market is significant for foreign publishers.

The 'leisure time to read' that Atkins (Pan Macmillan UK) mentioned is another aspect that some Indian interviewees spoke about. In a developing country such as India, where books are still treated like luxury goods (discussed in 4.3.1), the act of reading as a hobby has not been inculcated. Sarkar (Juggernaut) stated:

[Indians] don't have hobbies. The idea that you have to enrich yourself outside your world of work and your family is something that hasn't yet really happened in India [...] Putting such an undue expectation on a small poor country that's still learning to be whatever it is. Struggling with education, struggling with literacy, struggling with limited resources.

Chandy (Labyrinth Literary Agency) echoed Sarkar's views by saying that Indians do not cultivate hobbies such as reading, a habit that he believed is key for writing quality fiction. Thus, Chandy felt that there is a dearth of quality fiction writing in India, which is harder to fix using editors or ghostwriters, in the way that nonfiction can be improved with their help.

Therefore, according to my interviewees, even with lower profit margins compared to the UK and the US, India remains an attractive investment to multinational publishers because of the Indian market's cultural significance and growth potential.

5.3.2 Multinationalisation in the Indian Anglophone Trade Book Publishing Industry: An Overview

Having discussed why multinationals continue to maintain their stake in India, I now expand the overview of multinationalisation in Indian Anglophone trade book publishing, which I began using secondary literature in 5.2.2. As Abraham – former CEO and President of Penguin India and current MD of Hachette India – stated in interview, it would be incorrect to assume that multinational publishing operations within India started in 1985 with the establishment of Penguin India (also stated by Brouillette 2007, p 57). According to Abraham, Penguin India was:

the first MNC²⁴ publishing trade books locally in India under its global imprint (others didn't want to come because of the laws and the protectionism prevalent then²⁵), but there were many companies representing foreign publishers from the early 1900s – Blackie, Heinemann, etc, and by the 1940s there were Indian companies set up to be the conduit for these overseas books. Rupa was set up as a distribution house for Penguin and Harper etc. As were Wilco, IBH²⁶ and Jaico later.

Similar to Rupa's former relationship with Penguin and HarperCollins, Mukherjee (Pan Macmillan India) shared an insight about Pan Macmillan's entry into India. Before establishing Indian operations, Pan Macmillan held partnerships with exclusive distributors in India who would import the books from the UK. Therefore, Abraham insisted that 'products rather than legal entities' must be considered to fully comprehend the impact of multinational publishing in India. Moreover, while Penguin India was established in 1985, it published its first local titles in 1987, as Jha – who now heads product and sales at PRH India – shared. With time, other Big-5 and multinational publishers established their own Indian operations, with a focus on producing Indian lists as well as distributing their foreign lists in the country. In 1997, with Arundhati Roy's Booker Prize win, Das (Yoda) stated that multinationals such as HarperCollins in India began indiscriminately publishing Indian authors in the hope to ape the Booker win and its corresponding boost in sales (discussed in 3.3.2) – but with no reward. Atkins (Pan Macmillan UK) echoed this by stating that the emergence of Indian literary authors such as Roy, Rushdie and Seth on the global scene led to UK publishers investing in local Indian lists, to discover more Indian voices and publish them around the world. However, how frequently Indian authors are discovered within India to be published beyond the Indian border is another matter altogether, as discussed in Chapters 3 and 4 as well as later in this chapter.

By around 2010, other multinational publishers such as Hachette, Pan Macmillan and Random House had founded their Indian subsidiaries. Literary agents were still not an integral part of the publishing machinery. As per Sarkar (Juggernaut), without the selection and support

²⁴ Multinational Corporation

²⁵ Discussed in 5.2.1 and 5.2.2

²⁶ India Book House, now a major Indian book distributor

provided by literary agents, publishers ended up taking more risks on new authors. Interviewee Gupta (Writer's Side) was among the first agents on the Indian scene. Gupta's agenting plans formulated precisely due to the gap in the market, the need for capable literary agents, as he mentioned that he himself was conned by an agent in his writerly journey. It was slow-going for Gupta, with author-agent clauses not being an industry norm in publishing contracts and even some independent publishers misleading him about their policies on not paying author advances (Gupta). His agenting fees were therefore at the mercy of the authors (Gupta). He credited the growth of the 'bargaining power of the middleman' – the literary agent – to the growing number of publishers in India.

Thus, the first trade multinational publisher to establish its formal Indian operations was Penguin in 1985, and the easing of Indian protectionist policies in the 1990s aided the arrival of other multinational publishers. Along with this increased foreign investment in the Indian market, literary agents also appeared on the scene. But, as Abraham (Hachette India) stated, 1985 must not be perceived as the year that India began engaging with multinational trade publishers, since foreign books arrived in India long before that through distributors as well as the Indian bases of OUP, Longman and Macmillan (discussed in 1.3.2) due to colonisation and Commonwealth rights (echoing Bryant 1979, p 392 – discussed in 5.2.1).

5.3.3 Multinationals vs Locals

I now further develop the comparative analysis of multinationals and local/indigenous publishers, which are often independents in India, using interview data about the Indian publishing landscape. The aim is to examine the power dynamics among the different kinds of Anglophone trade publishing players in India:

- a. London branches of the multinationals that use Commonwealth rights to export their books to India,
- b. Indian subsidiaries of the multinationals that import the books produced by London offices and also publish a local Indian list, and
- c. Indian local publishers that focus on Indian books for Indian readers.

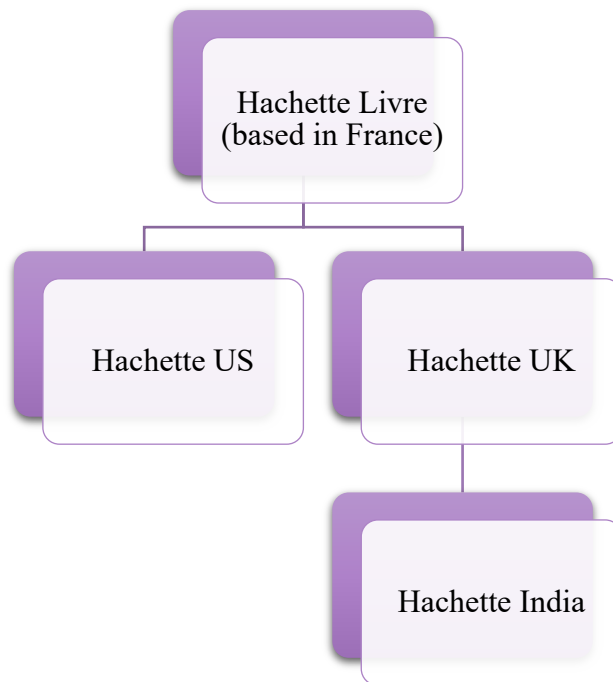
This comparative analysis is required to understand how the structuring of global Anglophone trade publishing contributes to the cartelisation of the industry and its postcoloniality. To do so, I utilise my six-factor framework of publishing capitals in 5.2.3, i.e., scale, reach, economic capital,

social currency, answerability and publishing catalogue. I first examine the power dynamics between the foreign head offices/London branches of the multinationals and their Indian subsidiaries, followed by the variances in power wielded by multinational Indian subsidiaries and Indian local publishers. Though some Indian local publishers such as Rupa and Jaico have become large, none have become multinational and so continue to focus on the Indian market. The examples I take of Srishti, Juggernaut and Yoda as local publishers are medium or small independent players within the country.

5.3.3.1 Multinational Foreign Offices vs Indian Subsidiaries

Not only is the English language a colonial remnant in India (discussed in 1.3.1), but the structuring of many multinational publishers mimics British imperialism: the Indian subsidiaries have local publishing programmes but often report into the UK office. This is true for Hachette, Pan Macmillan and HarperCollins (Abraham, Hachette India; Mukherjee, Pan Macmillan India; Padmanabhan, HarperCollins India), and I discuss one of these cases – Hachette’s – below. This system of reporting into the UK logistically makes sense because of cartelisation due to Commonwealth rights and the fact that, as discussed previously in this chapter, Indian subsidiaries were first established to distribute the UK print lists, treating India like an export market for the goods produced in the UK.

Hachette India is a wholly owned subsidiary of Hachette UK and thus reports to its local Indian board and also the UK board (Abraham, Hachette India). Both Hachette UK and US report separately into their parent company in France (Shelley, Hachette UK). Since I interviewed Shelley in 2021, he has been named the CEO of Hachette Book Group in the US too, so he would report to Hachette Livre in France on behalf of both the US and UK companies (Anderson 2023). Abraham added in an email exchange in 2024 that Hachette India still reports into Hachette UK. So, Hachette’s organisational layout looks as shown in Figure 5.1:



**Fig 5.1: Organisational layout of Hachette (with a focus on Hachette US, UK and India)
(created using primary interview data)**

Abraham stated that Hachette India does not import books that are entirely UK-centric or ‘have a pretence of “global catalogues”’, which he likened to ‘pure tokenism’. He further said that while Hachette India has ‘certain authority limits, authorization procedures and legal guidelines in place, which are mainly fiscal in nature’, due to ‘Hachette’s strong federalism’, there is no ‘interference’ from Hachette UK in decision-making, that Abraham and his team at Hachette India are ‘free to publish what [they] want and how [they] want to’. Other interviewees such as Duttagupta (Scholastic India), Jha (PRH India) and Turner (PRH UK) also voiced that while the UK or US offices may acquire books that have Commonwealth or world rights, there is no compulsion on the Indian offices to distribute those books within India (discussed in Chapter 4). Shelley (Hachette UK) insisted on this federal structuring of Hachette UK’s subsidiaries, saying that Abraham ‘decide[s] what books [Hachette India is] going to publish, how they’re going to market them, how much money they’re going to spend on them, how many copies they’re going to print’. Shelley added that all the managing directors of Hachette UK’s foreign subsidiaries have local autonomy. Though Abraham can authorise author advance offers and print numbers up to a certain limit before consulting Hachette UK, Shelley said that Abraham rarely consults Hachette UK for the

authorisation of advances since ‘in the Indian market the advances don’t tend to be huge, so most advances are covered by [Abraham’s] authorisation’. This federal structure is especially interesting to think of, as Shelley stated, ‘all the money comes into the accounts of Hachette UK’:

There’s an arrangement that [Abraham] has – an internal financial arrangement – where he buys Hachette UK books to distribute at a certain price, so he makes a certain margin on those books. But *all the money obviously is... it’s sort of theoretical because all the money is Hachette money anyway*, but to make sure that everyone kind of runs a good business, there’s a sort of level that he buys at than the local level that he sells at, if that makes sense. (Shelley; emphasis added)

However, at the end of the day, majority company revenue of the Indian offices is generated by selling the foreign list as discussed in Chapter 4, and thus this ‘federal’ organisational layout requires a deeper examination.

Among the Big 5, the exception to the global operational layout wherein the Indian office reports to the UK would be the largest multinational – Penguin Random House (PRH). Turner (PRH UK) stated that PRH Global CEO Markus Dohle²⁷, who is based in the US, refers to PRH’s organisational layout as a ‘multi-local approach’. In this, the international branches individually report into Dohle in the US, thus looking after themselves as their own profit centres. Before the Penguin–Random House merger in 2013, the ‘Group companies’ (the subsidiaries) reported into the UK, which in turn reported into the US (Turner). Turner believed that the change in operational layout has led to more local autonomy, since PRH believes that the Group companies are the experts in their own markets. Jha (PRH India) corroborated this:

Each country is responsible and they’re very individual choices, individual publishing. It’s recognised the world over within PRH that each entity is a publishing centre; they decide what to publish, what to sell, and there is no kind of decision which is enforced from any one particular headquarters. So, I think till at least a year after [Penguin–Random House] merger we were reporting into UK, and I think that was *a historical thing that India is a Commonwealth, so mainly books published in the UK and Commonwealth have India rights because the bulk of the*

²⁷ Dohle left his post in December 2022 (Albanese 2022).

business happens for UK books in India, so the responsibility and the accountability is towards that. But that changed in 2015, when our reporting moved to US. That was not just for this country; it was also changed for Penguin Random House Australia, Penguin Random House New Zealand, South Africa – even the other Commonwealth countries, all of them, moved the reporting structure to the US. (emphasis added)

Significantly – especially in the context of this research – Turner emphasised that a hierarchy in which the Indian office reports to the UK can be dangerous: ‘There’s always a bit of a danger if you report to someone that it becomes like: what are the *UK priorities*? And it’s *pushed down* to the Indian company, or the South African company, or the Australian company’ (emphasis added). In the current PRH global layout, there is no cash flow between PRH UK and India apart from their straight sales relationship, as Turner stated:

We [PRH UK] have fixed group trading terms with [PRH India], so we sell a book to them at X fixed discount and they buy them. [...] [W]e wouldn’t tell them how to price, they decide, they’re the experts. Ultimately, we’re all chasing a global target, I guess there is a benefit there, but there’s not a cash flow from us to India back to us. We sell the books to India, India sells the books into the market and ultimately that kind of profit sits globally as the PRH Global and Bertelsmann, I guess if you take the next level as our parent company.

The PRH organisational layout as described by Jha and Turner is represented in Figure 5.2:

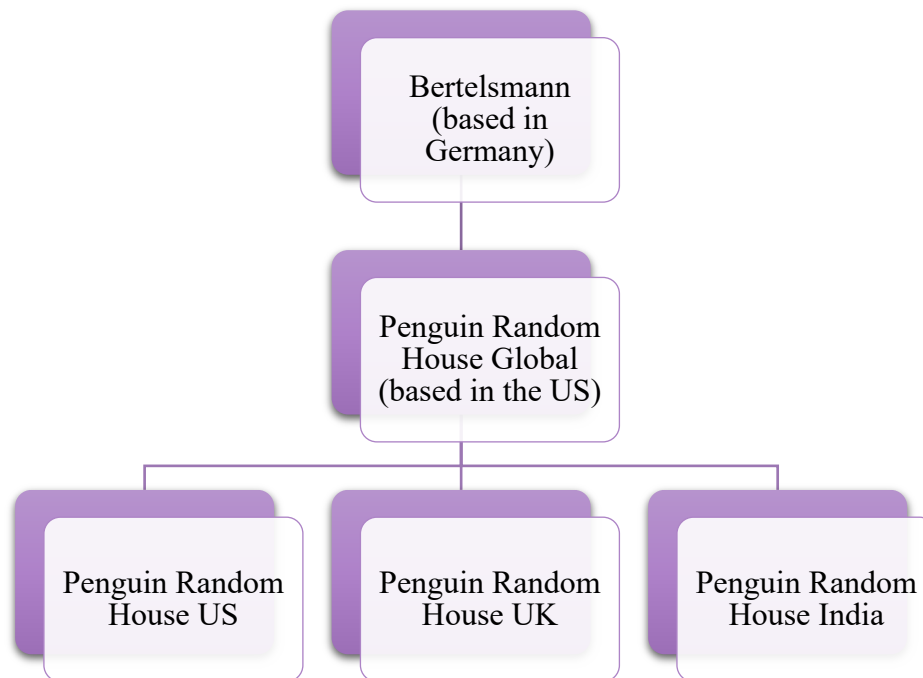


Fig 5.2: Organisational layout of Penguin Random House (with a focus on Penguin Random House US, UK and India) (created using primary interview data)

One of the instances in which the different PRH offices come together is when they bid for a book that has multi-territorial appeal, such as an Indian author who is publishing internationally, like YouTuber Lilly Singh’s *How to Be a Bawse* (2017) (Jha; Turner). This is also true for other multinationals like Hachette, HarperCollins and Pan Macmillan (Shelley, Hachette UK; Padmanabhan, HarperCollins India; Wright, HarperCollins UK; Mukherjee, Pan Macmillan India). Furthermore, Turner stated that if PRH UK wishes to heavily invest in a business book – a popular genre in India – believing that it would be a success in India, PRH UK would first consult the Indian office, who would feel no obligation to buy anything that PRH UK publishes. In this same setup then, Turner felt that if there were an Indian author published by the Indian office who has the potential to sell globally, then PRH UK would look to push it, or – significantly – the author ‘would be published by the UK in the first place’. As I discussed in Chapter 4, the first scenario does not often happen, and therefore, if Indian authors wish to access a readership beyond India, they look to the UK and US branches of the multinationals.

However, as I also discussed in Chapter 4, in a previous role Atkins (Pan Macmillan UK) tried to introduce Australian titles that he saw potential in to his UK editors, but they did not find

them relevant for the UK market. Even in his present role of looking after Pan Macmillan UK's sales outside of the UK and Ireland, Atkins mentioned that UK editorial teams display a gap in understanding overseas markets. Atkins said that he has had to remind UK editors that the 'books that work in the UK don't necessarily work overseas, and books that work overseas can be in completely different categories than those successful in the UK', and he specified the business books category that works well in the US, India and other parts of Asia. British literary agent Godwin stated that he prefers making multi-territory deals with different publishing branches himself, rather than selling rights in bulk and letting the book trickle within the Group companies because he believed:

I don't think sometimes British corporate publishers take their Indian counterparts as seriously as they should. So, I think that's a problem. I think it's much easier for me to make the deals [in the UK] – rightly or wrongly – I mean I think there are issues here about companies. But I think they should take the Indians more seriously than they do, but they don't, so I have to find my way around it.

Indian literary agent Gupta has had a similar experience pitching Indian books to publishing branches in different countries. He stated that though he has had some success with joint UK–India deals, they happen rarely. In a blunt moment, Gupta painted a gloomy picture of multinational cooperation:

I'm sorry to say but – because we're talking about British and Indian publishing – that the UK editors are very condescending. They don't even respond to their own [Indian] counterparts. I've heard some [Indian] publishing directors of major MNCs complaining about their counterparts in the UK. They don't respond, nothing. Sometimes they'll send a random acknowledgement, no follow-up, nothing. Sometimes they respond. Maybe they have their own agenda, their own important books.

Therefore, even if the logistics are in favour of a give-and-take of books between different multinational branches, if the British branches do not consider the publishing catalogues of the Indian branches worthy of attention, then the Indian branch cannot be their equal and will remain a 'subsidiary' in the full extent of the word. Moreover, among the different multinational models discussed here, none adheres to Altbach's (1992) ideal vision of a multinational company

discussed in 5.2.1. As federal as the structures may be, there is a hierarchy present wherein certain authorisations must be taken from the headquarters based in a nation of one of the operating companies, and clearly the different branches are not operating on equal terms if the publishing lists of the Indian branch are not considered worthwhile. Such views of the UK editors are due to postcolonial literary tastes and, in a vicious cycle, further postcolonial structures within publishing.

5.3.3.2 Multinational Indian Subsidiaries vs Indian Local Publishers

Applying my six-factor framework to my interview data, I now conduct a further comparative examination of Indian subsidiaries of multinationals and Indian local/indigenous publishers, which are usually independent and do not have extensive multinational operations. While focusing primarily on British large multinationals and Indian local publishers in this section, I also refer to the British indies Faber & Faber and Atlantic Books that have multinational operations but not through their own physical subsidiaries (unlike the independent Pan Macmillan, discussed later in this section). Faber's and Atlantic's cases are interesting in this context as they can speak to the experiences of being both an independent and a multinational. Due to their scale being larger than the Indian independents and the cartelisation of publishing, Faber and Atlantic can access markets outside the UK through partnerships with distributors in other countries.

Out of the six factors in my framework in 5.2.3, local publishers find themselves in favourable positions regarding answerability. Alongside, their focus is usually on Indian writers and – as discussed in Chapter 3 – this is significant in the context of this research, because local/indigenous publishers are the ones who can help develop a national literary space, which is required in decolonisation and nation-building. My argument in this section is that due to being less answerable to foreign profit centres and focusing on Indian-centric publishing lists, local publishers are in the best positions to combat the postcoloniality of world English literature. However, as local publishers are in disadvantaged positions regarding other factors – scale, reach, economic capital, social currency and (depth of) publishing catalogue – local publishers are unable to promote Indian authors internationally in this cartelised and multinationalised publishing structure.

Though Sarkar has worked in multinational firms and now runs her own independent Juggernaut, she did not associate any 'romantic' notions to being a small firm. She stated that just because a company is small, it does not mean it is 'more innovative, braver':

I've noticed a lot of small Indian independent companies, they really play out this idea of being an independent company, they talk a lot about it, they take a lot of pride in it, but they never say what it is the reader wants. That is the hallmark of a great publisher. I find that the multinational companies always ask that more. There's more rigour in the way they commission, relatively speaking, and especially if you look at the West, absolutely. Here [in Indian independent publishing], there is a kind of – you pat yourself on your back for being supposedly brave, but you're not really that brave; you pat yourself on the back for making more unusual choices, I'm not sure you do.

Indeed, Das of the independent Yoda Press – who has also worked for multinational publishers such as HarperCollins and OUP in India – passionately spoke of her work as that of a small independent company. But her talk was not without credibility. Yoda competed against large houses like HarperCollins and PRH in 2016 and won Publisher of Year at India's 'only serious publishing event', Publishing Next (Das). Das has now reached the stature where she is invited to speak at panels at the Frankfurt Book Fair and can network with other independents the world over (Das). Yoda's LGBTQIA+ books were also cited during the landmark Indian Supreme Court judgement of decriminalising homosexuality in 2018 (Das). Das stated that though she focuses on a political publishing list and 'prioritise[s] the sociocultural responsibility more than the profitability of the business', her venture Yoda is not a non-profit – echoing Gedin's argument (1992, p 44) about indigenous publishers not being altruistic when investing in new voices (discussed in 5.2.3.6 Publishing Catalogue). In contrast, Bose (Srishti) believed that the label of being a local independent company does not affect him, because it does not affect the reader. He gave the example of witnessing a group of teenagers poking fun at the name 'Rupa' – of the leading Indian publisher Rupa Publications – at an Indian book fair (there is a brand of undergarments in the country with the same name), until the teenagers saw banners informing them that Rupa Publications published the popular Indian author Chetan Bhagat. So, as per Bose, to the average reader it does not matter whether a firm is an indie or a multinational, as long as the publisher stocks the authors that readers want. But of course, in order to establish authors who become beloved by readers, the factors impacting a publisher – scale, reach, economic capital, social currency, answerability and publishing catalogue – all come into play. As Bose himself said, every

new publisher will take time to build those author brands and the publishers will use whatever advantages they have at their disposal to do so.

While local independent publishers cannot access the same opportunities that the multinationals can due to variance in scale, Page (Faber) also presented an interesting view of scale, i.e., the great advantage of the ‘intimacy of scale’ in smaller organisations, which includes ‘editorial centrality’:

If you look at an independent like Profile or Granta or Pushkin or Canongate or Faber or Fitzcarraldo, you’re dealing with editors who have agency to create a list that they believe in. When I was Sales and Marketing Director at HarperCollins, I sat at a table in acquisitions meetings and the editors came and paraded their things they wanted to buy, and I got to shoot them down or told them they couldn’t. And I resisted that because I kept saying: Why would I know? You’ve read the books, tell me which the best one is.

This experience echoes mine as a Senior Product Executive at the Indian subsidiary of a Big-5 firm, where I – along with sales, publicity and marketing – sat in on acquisitions meetings and shared our opinions (discussed in the vignette in 5.1). Due to similar occurrences, British literary agent Godwin preferred ‘the French model of publishing, which is independent publishing houses, quite [more] intellectual than the Anglo-American model’. He strongly believed that the ‘role of editors in choosing books is diminishing’, which he attributed to multinationalisation and conglomeration. Godwin spoke of his prior experience of working in editorial at Jonathan Cape and how the publishing environment changed to involving publicity and sales departments in book-acquisition decisions, and he subsequently left because he felt his editorial freedom was being curtailed. This reduction of an editor’s freedom in the multinationals adds to the ‘self-perpetuation within the publishing fold’ (Murray 2013, p 57) (discussed in 5.2.3.6 Publishing Catalogue) that would not bet on new local Indian voices as they would not seem ‘relevant’ to the UK market (discussed in 4.3.3 and 5.3.3.1) and would continue backing the old bestsellers from the UK and the US.

With so many different voices involved in decision-making at the multinationals, it is no wonder then that their processes take more time, which Sarkar (Juggernaut) spoke about. She was empathetic to these scenarios, especially at a corporation like Penguin that she stated ‘occupies a

certain cultural position in the world and [has] a financial clout in the field of publishing, so its actions mean so much more than the actions of a smaller company’:

The capitulation of the biggest is often more terrifying than the capitulation of the smallest. The capitulation of the smallest is understandable in any system, again not just publishing, anywhere in the world. But when the big capitulate, it says something more about the world we occupy. The big in some ways – big companies, big countries – they create invisible working forces. (Sarkar)

Interestingly, PRH – both India and UK – were among the few organisations that asked me for a summary of my interview questions when I reached out for my research. When I brought this up with Turner of PRH UK at the interview, he was not surprised. He said that while the weight that PRH holds has been advantageous – in attracting author talent, conversations with retailers, in publicity and all other aspects of their work – their scale also presents a challenge that echoes Sarkar’s point above:

Any decision we [PRH] make has the potential to sort of set precedent and almost become a story in itself. So, the result is that we have to be very mindful, and actually the one place that we work very closely globally is around that. If there’s a precedent, be it in terms of certain business models or be it in terms of rights or anything around there – we would always be very joined-up in our approach because the last thing you want is PRH UK agreeing to something that PRH US completely disagree with. Then you end up in a scenario where we don’t look as though we’re one company. (Turner)

Related to this, Turner also commented that PRH does not share its international sales data externally, even when publishing awards are at stake, unlike other large publishers. It must be considered whether the slower, more rigorous processes of large organisations like PRH may result in slower adaptation to platforming new Indian voices and thus combating postcoloniality. This is especially important to deliberate since the same larger scale that adds time to a firm’s processes and heft to its decisions also adds heft to the firm’s negotiating power and the ability to influence the industry, thus their social currency. This heft has had both positive and negative effects in India.

Sarkar (Juggernaut) and Bose (Srishti) discussed some of the negative impacts of the multinationals' large social currency. While Sarkar stated that she was sure distributors offer multinationals and local companies the same terms, she admitted that the multinationals would have a quicker turnaround on their repayments and their books would be more visible to book retailers and end consumers. Bose said that multinationals have normalised activities that have been harming the industry in the long run: namely, 100% sale or return, higher discounts for distributors as well as longer credit periods (discussed in 5.2.3.3 Economic Capital). These measures – which began to push superlead titles by the multinationals – have now become the industry standard and are increasing the entry barrier for new indies and also negatively affecting local publishers that do not have the cash flow that the multinationals do. Therefore, Bose claimed that if anyone asked him for guidance to start their publishing company within India today, he would advise the person not to, unless they had:

a proper clear plan of action; a line of finance set up for the next five to seven at the very least and, if possible, up to ten years; and requisite [connections] inside the industry, both with authors and trade.

Bose stated that the problem also lay in the fact that insider-industry information is not easily accessible; one cannot simply search it online. One needs to work within the industry and build those relationships and networks to eventually create their own firms. Indian literary agent Chandy also spoke of the difficulties of the Indian book distribution system due to prolonged payment cycles and the occurrence of bad debts, which is easier for multinationals to navigate with 'their sheer scale and muscle'. Thus, multinationals are in an advantageous position again at fighting these battles more effectively. This results in the books of the multinationals being more easily discoverable for the reader, and thus more sales for the multinationals, which tend to be of more foreign than local Indian books (shown in Table 4.2).

The other side of the coin of the multinationals having better negotiating power and the ability to influence the industry is that if the multinationals came together, they could innovate and action improvements for the whole industry, whereas independents are consumed by their day-to-day survival (Sarkar, Juggernaut). Sarkar felt that multinationals 'can ask the biggest questions of publishing':

How do I improve my distribution, how do I get books faster to the farthest parts of the country, how do I get printing done so fast that I can print a book in a week, how can I publish really high-quality colour picture books at a low price?

These big questions matter as they impact the end consumer and, as per Sarkar, these questions ‘will be addressed by scale’. Bose (Srishti) agreed and stated that multinationals have been instrumental in bringing international standards and methods for conducting publishing work that have aided progress in Indian publishing, such as within production and supply-chain management. Thus, multinationals also lead the way for technological and process development in the industry, with the independents following suit. So, if large multinationals were to embrace voices from more nations on an international scale, they could pave the way for the wider industry.

Of course, working for a multinational such as PRH also provides staff with job security (Sarkar, Juggernaut), and, according to Sarkar, this can attract higher-quality publishing professionals. The other advantages, as per Shelley (Hachette UK), include having a ‘fantastic back-end’, such as well-developed IT, higher royalties, better distribution, a full-fledged HR department, and overall professional services that they offer to their authors. Sarkar also stated, taking the example of Penguin India when she worked there, that large organisations have sales and marketing teams with years’ worth of experience selling books, which helps them manage bigger book campaigns. Though multinationals may have better back-end support, Das stressed the excellence of her editorial team at the indie Yoda (discussed further in 5.3.4). Nonetheless, the well-developed departments of multinationals aid the process-driven work of the firms, which can also make them ‘slow-moving’ (Sarkar).

This again relates to answerability: the process-driven work in multinationals is in place because of the chain of command and specific profit targets. Shelley stated of his role as the Group CEO of Hachette UK:

I’m obviously also responsible for the P&L²⁸ of Hachette UK. I’m judged – you know we’ve got shareholders – I’m judged on the business performance of Hachette UK. And I’m tasked with continually growing Hachette UK. So, that’s the sort of fiscal environment that I work in and my role.

²⁸ Profit and Loss

In the independents, as the heads are usually accountable to themselves or another individual or a family running the business, there is more leeway to take risks, and this reflects in their publishing lists. Atkinson of Atlantic stated:

There are books in the independent sector we would publish far better than some of the others. If we go to a corporate, it wouldn't fit the channels; it needs to tick some boxes. [...] It hasn't been done before and that's why there are no channels available to it. [...] [Independents] can afford a portfolio where quite a few books might not make any money and they might lose money, but you have the freedom to have a go. It's our money – I mean it's all [the owner of Atlantic Books'] money but it's close to us and therefore— if you're playing with stakeholders' money and shareholders' money, you have to be pretty clear about what you're doing and that's probably the difference between the corporate. You have to be able to explain why you're paying all this money for this author. If it's John Grisham, that's easy to explain.

On the topic of experimenting with publishing lists, Sarkar stated: 'I am bolder in my publishing choices in Juggernaut not because I'm small, but because I'm less accountable to other people.' However, I would argue that scale and answerability are often directly linked. Take the case of Pan Macmillan as a technically independent publisher that is also part of the multinationals and Big 5. Atkins (Pan Macmillan UK) stated:

What I think we can offer as an independent publisher, as an independent company – we're not dictated to by the stock market in New York; we don't have to answer to shareholders. We have a certain amount of freedom to decide our own destiny. We don't have to report every quarter to Wall Street. As a result of that, we have a certain amount of independence to do what we like. We still are a global group, we have a good reputation in all of the key markets where books are published and so we can offer ourselves as a unique, slightly less corporate and long-term solution for a lot of authors. I think that is quite appealing for a lot of authors. Some authors just want to be published by the biggest and to know that they are going to be dealt with in a really professional manner. We are as professional as all of those big

publishers, but we have the ability to give them slightly our own unique twist to being published around the world and a slightly more personal touch maybe.

Pan Macmillan is a family-owned business, but it is a multinational operation rather than a local business, due to its scale and multinational structuring with foreign subsidiaries. Though Pan Macmillan UK may not be answerable to the stock market, as per Mukherjee of Pan Macmillan India, a reporting hierarchy is still in place within the company: the Indian CEO reports to the UK CEO, who in turn reports to the board in Germany. Thus, with scale and multinational operations come hierarchy and its associated answerability. Moreover, due to the sales relationship between Pan Macmillan India and the UK – and the resistance of UK editors to promote books from other countries (discussed in 4.3.3 and 5.3.3.1) – the Indian branch is still reliant on the British publishing catalogue.

Therefore, in terms of answerability, *local* independent publishers are in advantageous positions. Even by her own admission, Sarkar (Juggernaut) left the larger corporates to start her own small firm, a place where she could question the set ways of doing things and innovate with digital and print publishing forms:

It wasn't just PRH India; it was all the companies. I felt I wanted to ask certain questions that I would never get out of being in a traditional company and then I thought: well, let me do it myself.

Das (Yoda) also left multinationals because she wanted to publish narrative nonfiction that excited her, especially in the LGBTQIA+ space, and was different from the 'formulaic' approach that the multinationals took (Das). Atkinson (Atlantic) also spoke of the 'formulaic' publishing approach of the multinationals in his interview. Thus, while multinationals may lead in process-related innovation, independent firms innovate with form and publishing lists. These publishing lists are often India-centred (Sarkar). Even Bose (Srishti) spoke of creating five new author brands every year from India and prioritising Indian content for young Indian readers. Thereby, local publishers aid in the development of a national literary space, which is required in decolonisation and nation-building (discussed in Chapter 3).

The development of a national literary space by local independent publishers is limited by the other factors that they are disadvantaged in. Once the vision for the publishing list that favours local Indian talent is ready and authors need to be acquired and their books sold, the other factors

– in which multinationals are in favourable positions – become impactful. Sarkar (Juggernaut) has been restricted in her work as an independent company – and felt a stark difference after working for multinationals – due to economic capital: ‘in the end, you are affected by how much money you can spend on the whole, and we definitely have less money to spend than a bigger company’. Atkinson (Atlantic) commented on PRH ‘using their size [scale] and their clout [social currency] and their cash [economic capital] to corral extremely good writers’. Abraham (Hachette India) stated that their brand name and publishing legacy – or their social currency – assist them in acquiring Indian authors:

because authors may like the pedigrees of quality imprints going back; and we are after all the oldest trade publisher still extant. So perhaps yes, an author would like to be part of the list that published Darwin or Flaubert or Jane Austen.

Similarly, Mukherjee (Pan Macmillan India) credited the legacy of the Macmillan brand in ‘open[ing] a lot of doors’ but clarified that that must be backed by good publishing content. Page (Faber) also spoke of how ‘cash is king’ and that the acquisition of ‘Bedford Square publishers’ such as Jonathan Cape, Harvill Press and Chatto & Windus by the multinational Random House was due to the independents running ‘low on cash’. Faber has been an exception; it is an independent company that has survived since 1929. Page attributed their success to widening their scope from being a publisher of just literary works to including more commercial writing. What has also benefitted them is Faber’s Independent Alliance, which represents a collection of British independent publishers (including Atlantic) to distributors and bookshops (Murray and Squires 2013; Faber.co.uk [no date]). Still, Atkinson of the multinational indie Atlantic believed that the larger multinationals or the Big 5 are able to sway authors and agents with higher advances and the prestige associated with their brand names, or their economic capital and social currency:

We only sell through [the Alliance] in places where we need to, so we have our own relationship with Waterstones and Amazon and all that. So, we have a sort of artificial heft in the market through [the Alliance] and that is a fairly critical thing. But otherwise, I think we miss out on some opportunities because agents – if they can get a senior editor at one of the corporates to take that project seriously – then *they’ll buy that book for more than we will. There’s just a general sense of momentum about books that come out of slightly bigger places; they’re just used to*

selling more books than the smaller ones. There's something intangible about that.
(emphasis added)

Atkinson distinguished between the struggles that the multinationals and independents face, of them respectively being 'internal' – dealing with larger teams and more bureaucracy – and 'external' – dealing with authors, distributors, booksellers, readers and the media:

The Alliance is very, very important to us, but we're not across the globe in a way that the [multinationals] are. But at the same time, if you're an imprint within Penguin, you have to fight internally in a way that we don't. We have to fight externally.

Interestingly, Sarkar (Juggernaut) said that she used her constraints with economic capital to become the '*desi* publisher for the *desi* reader' ('*desi*' is the Hindi word for 'Indian'): 'Because I had these limits, I couldn't spend a lot of money; I didn't want to go and buy a lot of agented books from abroad'. Her focus is primarily on commercial Indian writing, and she can target a few high-profile authors, like famous Bollywood actors, by being selective in her book acquisitions. Therefore, she felt that the size of her company did not impact her sales:

[Having less money] doesn't affect my sales. Books I can acquire because there are some books I won't acquire. It affects how big my team can be; it affects the salaries I pay my staff; it affects how big my marketing budgets can be. [...] Do I have big giant hits that sell 100,000 to 200,000 [copies]? Yes, I do, like any other big company. (Sarkar)

Similarly, Page stated that Faber could compete with large multinationals on advances – but not always. He added that Faber's brand value 'ensures that in the vast majority of cases we retain authors, and also attract important new authors'. Though Sarkar can acquire limited numbers of high-profile authors, she added that '[t]he biggest complaints smaller publishers have against larger publishers – they can't go and buy the big-hit book'.

In contrast to Bose (Srishti) (discussed in this section above), Das (Yoda) and Sarkar (Juggernaut) thought that it is viable to run an independent publishing company in India, but Sarkar stated that the scale of the firm must be smaller. The scale must be smaller in terms of staff size, budgets, international offices (which is why Sarkar's focus is on creating Indian books for Indian readers) but also the size of the publishing catalogue. Abraham said that Hachette India has a

foreign list catalogue that has a ‘greater range than most local publishers, and therefore more spread-out presence’. This foreign list, according to Abraham, is there to ‘help the local list find its feet and then it is supposed to move on to being an independent, profitable and self-sustaining division’. Abraham added in an email exchange in 2024 that Hachette India has accomplished this goal: ‘Hachette India’s two local publishing divisions are profitable both at the frontlist and divisional levels’. Still, the Hachette India revenue split would be unequally in favour of the foreign list due to the depth of the foreign catalogue and the cultural hegemony of British and American writing, thus not making it a wholly self-reliant division. Turner (PRH UK) also discussed the relationship between the company scale and the catalogue size. Due to its scale and acquisition of other publishers, PRH has books in ‘almost any genre, any nationality of author, any topic’. Padmanabhan (HarperCollins India) spoke of the catalogue size too and considered being a part of a multinational operation a huge ‘two-way advantage’. The advantage lies in, firstly, having access to books from foreign countries and that ‘big books can be bought for across territories and authors can be promised markets’ (Padmanabhan). Secondly, in the cases where books by Indian authors may be relevant in foreign markets either in the English language or translated to foreign languages, then HarperCollins – through its international network – can make the book sales larger and widespread (Padmanabhan). Padmanabhan discussed ‘the benefits of having a uniform vision customised to what the local market is, for the strategies can be different for different countries’ in a multinational.

Multinationals have higher revenues because of the depth and range of their publishing catalogues – of especially ‘books that are hits across various territories, so they have at their disposal international bestsellers and a depth of range’ (Sarkar, Juggernaut), which impacts the overall volume of books they sell. Higher sales volumes due to vaster catalogue sizes leads to greater economic capital, which is key in publishing:

In publishing you put out a lot of money upfront, you pay in advance, you print the book, you store the book, you then market and publicise the books, and then revenues accrue to you only later. In the West those revenues come to you faster; I don’t know the repayment times [in the West], but in India your repayment times are shocking. They’re some of the longest repayment times in the world; they’re about six months plus. (Sarkar)

Repayments from distributors and bookshops thus play a key role in the success of a firm, and distribution is not something that can be sidestepped. As discussed in 5.2.3.2 Reach and 5.2.3.4 Social Currency, authors look for as wide a distribution of their books as possible. While comparing his time at the independent Allison & Busby and now running Hachette UK, even Shelley stated in his interview that at the end of the day, publishing at any firm is similar because the aim is to get the authors' books to as many people as possible. This works on two levels: national and international. According to Sarkar (Juggernaut), independent publishers in India cannot invest their limited economic capital in warehousing and sales representatives for Indian distribution. So, for her print books (as Juggernaut also sells ebooks through its own app) she has partnered with a multinational subsidiary, HarperCollins India, for printing, warehousing and distribution within India:

A smaller company doesn't on the whole invest in sales and distribution, which is having a sales rep in various regions. Certainly, you wouldn't invest money in your own warehouse. So, I do what all small companies do – I work with a larger multinational company who distributes me and that means I use their warehouse for storage. I actually use their printers, I use their sales team to sell my books, and then when my revenues come, I give them a percentage of that revenue. (Sarkar)

Similarly, Yoda Press had earlier partnered with Cambridge University Press for distribution and now with Atlantic Publishers & Distributors (an Indian company, not to be confused with the British independent Atlantic Books) for its narrative nonfiction and academic lines (Das). But Das has to herself push her fiction, poetry and graphic books to bookshops and online on Amazon India (Das). On the other hand, Bose's Srishti Publishers & Distributors have accomplished impressive national distribution, even into Tier 2 and 3 cities (Bose). Bose added that Srishti's lower price points (INR 150–199, as opposed to the multinationals' foreign books that are often priced at INR 399) help in accessing a widespread market in India. But this earns Indian authors less revenue, as discussed in Chapter 4.

It is not just national distribution that is a concern. In order for India to be recognised as a legitimate national literary space and not just an export market for books, books by local Indian writers must reach readers abroad. As discussed in Chapters 3 and 4, postcolonial biases are an obstacle that denote Indian writing as parochial and US and UK writing as international. Another key aspect to international distribution is the logistics of promoting print books abroad, not just

ebooks or POD books without any marketing and publicity (thus without helping discoverability). Local publishers have to rely on ebooks and uploading files on Ingram for POD (Bose, Srishti; Das, Yoda). There may exist some special relationships with foreign bookshops, as Das's with Shalimar Books in London, UK, which stocks Yoda books and places them in other shops across the UK such as Blackwell's and Gay's the Word (Das). Atkins (Pan Macmillan UK) spoke of the multinational infrastructure of the organisation that can offer Indian authors the chance 'to reach an audience beyond India'. Padmanabhan (HarperCollins India) and Wright (HarperCollins UK) stated that HarperCollins has an inter-company route called Harper360 through which branches in the US and the UK can import books from other subsidiaries and send them to US and UK bookshops. Shelley (Hachette UK) stressed the significance of on-the-ground sales representatives in different countries who can tackle localised issues to keep authors happy. The PRH international team is well-developed and structured, as per Turner (PRH UK):

Our international team is made up of forty-seven people at the moment, in terms of the direct sales team. That is split into almost six sub-teams, each one run by a sales director, which is five territorial sales directors and a business development director. So, they're my kind of senior team, and then my responsibility is looking after our English-language sales for everywhere outside of the UK.

Even within India, Turner discussed the investment in distribution in terms of sales representatives: 'I think there's twelve [sales representatives] who are out, they each have a territory that they work around India as well as someone who looks after Sri Lanka and Bangladesh sales.' Jha (PRH India) added that a new publishing office opened in Singapore in 2019, which falls under the purview of PRH India. Out of the multinational subsidiaries in India, PRH India is among the few that has succeeded in making its books available internationally in hard-copy format via Trafalgar Square Publishing, which distributes their books into the US, Canada, the UK, rest of Europe and Australia (Jha). Jha said that they could only do this for books that they have world rights for, which is roughly half of their catalogue.

Thus, while international sales of books by Indian authors currently take place infrequently (discussed in Chapters 3 and 4), they can for the multinationals due to the existing mechanisms. Furthermore, multinationals can achieve international distribution of their books at a level that the Indian local independents cannot. Atkins (Pan Macmillan UK) linked international distribution, multinational operations and territorial rights by stating:

The importance of Penguin Random House having offices and publishing companies around the world is that they will increasingly retain world rights in authors and make sure that their own companies are exploiting those rights. HarperCollins are also very strong in trying to attract authors to them by promoting their ability to exploit those rights all around the world. I think as these corporate groups have become bigger, that has become the trend in a way that exists in other industries.

Thus, the cartelisation of the Anglophone trade publishing world through territorial rights would not be as successful as it is without acquisitions and multinational operations. Multinational Indian subsidiaries are in better positions than Indian local independents to distribute their Indian authors' books outside India due to the advantages the multinational subsidiaries have in scale, reach, economic capital, social currency and depth of publishing catalogue. However, many interviewees mentioned that not all Indian writing can be published internationally (discussed in Chapter 3) and that it would depend upon the quality of the writing (Jha, PRH India) and the bestselling status of the writer (Atkinson, Atlantic), thus reiterating the postcoloniality of Anglophone literature and publishing.

5.3.4 Views on Multinationalisation and High Imports in Indian Publishing

In this section, I focus on the views of the interviewees regarding multinationalisation in the publishing industry, which has assisted in bringing high volumes of foreign books to India, and the resulting postcolonial impact on readers and writers. As discussed in Chapters 3 and 4, multinational subsidiaries and Commonwealth rights help in making foreign literature and knowledge accessible to Indian readers at prices sensitive to the Indian market and without delays – and the interviewees echoed this. Indian literary agent Chandy felt that because of the more reliable multinational structures in publishing, Indian readers can access 'almost any popular book' that they want. Without the importation of foreign lists, Duttagupta (Scholastic India) asked: 'Where would we be if we didn't have all the books we grew up with? What would we be reading?'. As per Chandy, imports have allowed Indians to interact with other cultures. Shelley (Hachette UK) stated that this interaction, especially between the UK and India due to the colonial relationship and reading cultures, enables people from both nations to have a 'cultural shorthand'. Sarkar (Juggernaut) said that access to this wide-ranging international list has only been good for

the ‘social and cultural development of India’, and while it affects the small Indian independent publisher, Sarkar felt that it is due to the variance in scale and not due to the nature of imports or ‘because of a new form of empire’:

Indian publishers aren’t at a disadvantage because of a new form of empire; they’re at a disadvantage in the same way that any business with small and large, with lack of resources. This system isn’t gamed against them. India remains a country where our development is at a certain place. In the end, it’s what defines the industry.

However, this postulation ignores that India’s ‘developing country’ state is precisely due to British colonialism and the cultural hegemony of the US and the UK, which have indeed led to a new form of empire caused by postcolonialism (including neocolonialism):

Today, I can sit here and publish thousands of books on an Indian context with Indian children as the protagonists, but if I’m still following the Kardashians and Justin Bieber and they’re my exposure when I open Instagram or Facebook or Snapchat – you see flow of the media. That’s how it works, but the more the conversations start—and you know books can’t be expected to change all of that.
(Duttagupta, Scholastic India)

It is true, literature is only one form of media impacted by postcoloniality, and it cannot solely be the responsibility of literature to improve the situation. But it is still a significant media format with the ability to initiate change within culture and media.

Shelley (Hachette UK) admitted that he can see both sides of the question of high book imports to India, the negative aspect of which would be that ‘maybe Indian readers have read more UK, US writers than Indian writers [...] [O]bviously I think it’s negative in terms of: does that mean some Indian writers have been neglected by Indian readers because of this US–UK thing?’. Turner (PRH UK) placed the decision-making power regarding balancing imports and local publishing with the local offices:

We very much trust in our local office and they are the experts and they’re in a way the gatekeepers to the market, so we trust that they know what’s the right thing to do and what people want to read.

Wright (HarperCollins UK) placed value in his international sales team to be that bridge between UK and Indian offices, while being conscious that the UK office must be culturally sensitive with their export list:

I think we have a responsibility to being culturally sensitive to the markets we sell into. That's a large part of what my team does is to be that sort of filter between the UK outputs and the markets we sell to.

On the topic of the unequal book import relationship between the UK and India, Atkins (Pan Macmillan UK) was hopeful about Indian voices flourishing with time. He added that this change would help their Indian subsidiary meet the expectations of being a profit-making venture unto itself. He stated that he has seen a shift in the last ten years:

Authors like Sidney Sheldon and Jeffrey Archer [...] have dominated the bestseller lists in India in a way that has maybe not allowed new voices to flourish in many ways. *The conservatism of the market has slightly hindered the opportunity to publish new voices and get new books into the market.* [...] But, as we discovered yesterday, the number of titles – the majority of titles – in the top 100 I think you would see on the BookScan charts are of Indian origin these days. (emphasis added)

At least in terms of longer sales spans, Indian books do not dominate the bestselling charts in India. I checked the Nielsen BookData India 2011–2021 top 100 by value and by volume charts. When it comes to value, only twenty-six books in the top seventy-five²⁹ (34%) were by local Indian authors. In the remaining titles, forty-four were by foreign writers and five by authors with Indian connections who reside and/or publish abroad first, such as Robin S Sharma and Jay Shetty. Thus, foreign writers still form the majority (59%) in the bestselling titles by value in India (see Figure 5.3):

²⁹ Nielsen BookData shared top 100 'trade' bestsellers in India 2011–2021 by value with me; however, I found twenty-five titles to be academic and educational books and thus removed them from consideration as the focus of this thesis is on trade books.

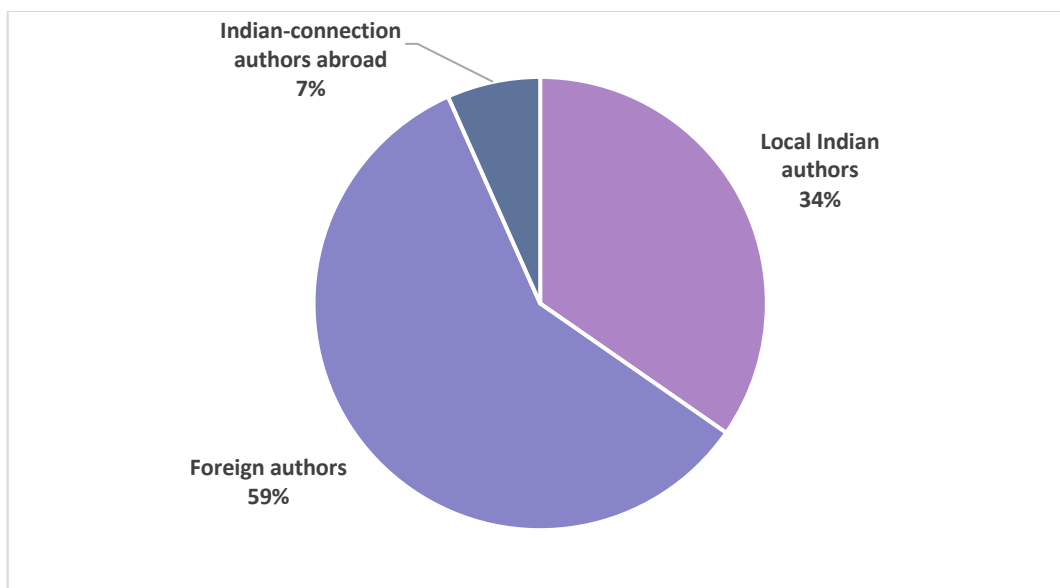


Fig 5.3: Nielsen BookData India 2011–2021 top seventy-five trade titles by value, split between titles by local Indian authors, foreign authors and authors abroad with connections to India (created using Nielsen BookData India)

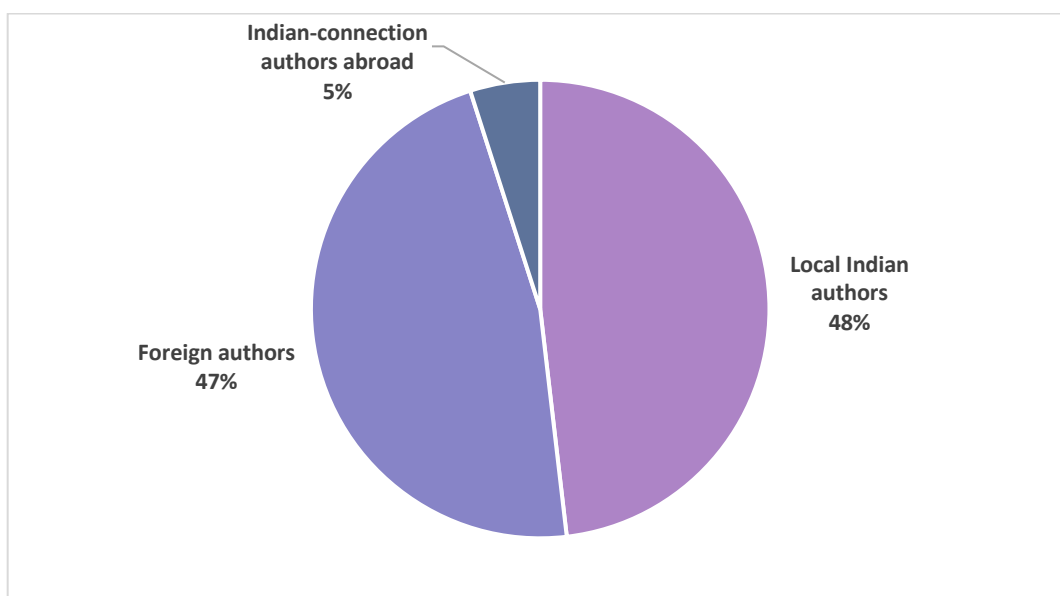


Fig 5.4: Nielsen BookData India 2011–2021 top eighty-one trade titles by volume, split between titles by local Indian authors, foreign authors and authors abroad with connections to India (created using Nielsen BookData India)

When it comes to volume, books by local Indian authors have a better showing, at thirty-nine books out of the top eighty-one³⁰ (48%). In the remaining forty-three, foreign books were thirty-eight – about the same as books by local Indian writers – and four books were by authors abroad who have connections to India (see Figure 5.4).

So, within the top eighty-one, an equivalent number of local Indian books and foreign books are reaching the hands of Indian readers. But the Indian books generate lower value due to their lower prices, which impacts the livelihood of local Indian authors and the revenues of the publishers investing in them (discussed in Chapter 4). Atkins (Pan Macmillan UK) mentioned that he saw a majority of Indian-origin titles in the top 100 Nielsen BookData chart, so perhaps he checked the by volume chart or the live on-the-day chart in 2021 (when we spoke) and patterns could slowly be changing. Indeed, Jha (PRH India) stated that he has witnessed changes especially within children's publishing, from the traditional focus on just mythology to the establishment of local author brands in different genres, though still there are popular international brands:

What we do now is very different from what used to happen ten years ago or even six to seven years ago. The variety is great, it takes care of all those societal issues or questions like fair skin or dark skin, adoption or divorce. But children still look forward to the international authors like Jeff Kinney's *Wimpy Kid*, or *Dog Days* or *Dog Diaries*.

As seen in the previous sections in this chapter, there is a hierarchy present within the publishing landscape in which local publishers usually find themselves at a disadvantage in different aspects: scale, reach, economic capital, social currency and depth of the publishing catalogue. Yet, Sarkar (Juggernaut) as well as the heads of the subsidiaries I interviewed did not consider the disparate power dynamics – in terms of economic capital to afford higher marketing budgets and staff wages as well as the funds to acquire in-demand authors – between multinationals and local companies disconcerting. While discussing the possible merger of PRH and Simon & Schuster (that eventually did not happen), Sarkar stated that monopolisation in any industry is harmful but mentioned that she had no qualms against publishing companies acquiring other

³⁰ Nielsen BookData shared top 100 'trade' bestsellers in India 2011–2021 by volume with me; however, I found nineteen titles to be academic and educational books and thus removed them from consideration as the focus of this thesis is on trade books.

companies to become bigger and have footholds in many countries. In fact, she stated that that is what she would want for Juggernaut too. Similarly, Padmanabhan (HarperCollins India) said that the key is growth, whatever strategies publishers may utilise; mergers or acquisitions, as long as they follow non-monopolisation, would only help grow the market and, thus, he had no concerns regarding multinationalisation.

Therefore, Sarkar (Juggernaut) explained that while she has the disadvantages of being a small company, it is because of the scale of her company and not the threat of a multinational entering India with its foreign list. She felt ‘small and large are not qualitative terms’ and being a multinational firm did not equate to being ‘horrible, evil, robotic villains’. Similarly, Abraham (Hachette India) stated that multinationalisation within publishing works positively and is not viewed in the same frame as other industries like FMCG (Fast-moving Consumer Goods) as the ‘big bad devourer of local markets killing off local competition’ as ‘[b]ooks are [a] varied product, and local companies can thrive as well’. Still, he linked multinationalisation in Indian publishing with British colonisation by stating that multinationalisation is not a new phenomenon and has been a part of publishing since the 1900s, ‘[w]hich is completely natural given that we’re a large English market as a part of our colonial legacy’. Furthermore, Abraham said that conglomeration – mergers and acquisitions – within publishing is ‘inevitable in the current market scenario’. Turner (PRH UK) echoed this inevitability and further stated that as conglomeration is contracting the publishing industry, the world is getting smaller, and he only expected for this to carry on.

In this contracting publishing world, where foreign books are easily accessible in India, Sarkar (Juggernaut) stated that she wanted to compete with the best to become better and create Indian versions of international brands like John Grisham. She pointed out that the biggest Indian author successes have been created by local Indian publishers due to their focus on the home market:

Because I’m a homegrown company with a focus only on India, I have the psychological focus to create that homegrown John Grisham in a way that my partners, my multinational company partners, don’t. There’s no coincidence that our biggest hit, commercial hit books, in India have been created by *desi*³¹

³¹ Hindi word for ‘Indian’

publishers. Chetan Bhagat and Amish [Tripathi] were done by Indian publishers, not by multinationals – why do you think that? Focus.

This pattern can be seen in Table 4.4 (in section 4.3.3), wherein all the local Indian titles in the top ten bestselling titles by volume Nielsen BookData 2011–2021 chart have been published by local Indian publishers. Thus, Sarkar explained that local publishers are not at a disadvantage because they are local, but because they are small:

Yes, [local publishers like us] have less advantages, but you don't have less advantages because you're *desi*³² and they're international. You have less advantages because you're small and they're big. And that is the disadvantage and advantage of any small and big company. I'm not a victim. I've chosen to be a small company and I want to get bigger. It's not unfair. All those companies started out small and struggled and became big. No one was given scale and size and success. Every company's had to fight for it in some ways.

But perhaps this is more of a surface-level interpretation. Indian local publishers cannot compete with multinationals at their scale precisely because the US and the UK have had more time to develop their publishing industries, along with their countries' literacy rates and infrastructure, while former colonies such as India did not (discussed in Chapter 3). Yet, both must compete in the same market forces today, where the Indian book-buying market is not proportionate to its population and books are still considered a luxury item and thus Indian readers are restricted in the number of books that they buy (discussed in 4.3.1).

In contrast to Sarkar's aspirations for Juggernaut, Das (Yoda) was happy to remain a small independent. She believed that being small was their 'USP' (unique selling point) and enabled them to publish the kind of books they wanted and that scaling up would impact their list:

If we scaled up and became large and overheads went through the roof, we would not have the guts to do the kind of publishing that we're doing. We would not be able to say: I can't raise the money for this from the books we've published this year, so I'm going to crowdfund for it, because then suddenly it'll be like 'Oh you're big and you have—' ... the bigger you get, the bigger your ego gets, right?

³² Hindi word for 'Indian'

Thus, while it may be harder to enter the Indian publishing industry today and sustain one's business as a start-up, Das discussed the importance of local publishers and even found significance in the work that she does as an indie in the publishing landscape:

I try to use [the label of being an independent] to our advantage because I think there's tremendous value attached now. It wasn't; when we started, there wasn't that much value attached to indies and the value that indies bring to any industry. Now there is. The millennials – you guys – changed it forever. The value attached to start-ups and indies; you guys brought it in.

Even while stating that multinationalisation 'distresses' her, Das raised an interesting point about the resilience of independent publishing within capitalist systems:

On one hand you have Amazon, which is like this mammoth, and then PRH and Bertelsmann which is now this behemoth. Of course, that upsets me, [...] but then I also feel that Goliaths have always been there in capitalism. But there are innumerable more Davids. It's almost as if, as publishing history has moved towards this convergence of capital in one location, there has been this creation of [...] unbelievably varied, myriad independent publishing spaces. What's a Goliath without Davids? What's the value of Davids without a Goliath?

Thus, according to Das, local independent publishing companies are not just significant due to the books that they produce but also as the foils, the Davids, to the multinational Goliaths. In turn, multinationals lend meaning to smaller local companies by the virtue of their existence as an intimidating foe to compete against. Das felt that if all firms within publishing were small independents, then there would be no 'challenge', echoing Sarkar's point about wanting to compete against the best to become better. Eventually, due to the dual nature of publishing, even independents who are 'married to the idea of knowledge production and dissemination and [...] sociocultural responsibilities' are 'still functioning within a capitalist system' (Das).

Mukherjee (Pan Macmillan India) also believed that publishing lends itself to different players:

There is space for large conglomerates, there is a reason for them to go into that format. There is space for mid-sized companies like Macmillan. And also

independent publishers who are creative, who make their own space and publish wonderful content. Publishing has got that quality, that it can accommodate.

When asked about his views on multinationalisation and conglomeration within publishing, Atkinson (Atlantic) laughed and exclaimed that there was no-one left to buy. However, he also mentioned a positive impact that one specific instance of conglomeration has had for independents:

When Penguin and Random got together, at that point I think Amazon were a real threat because it's not that they don't understand our business, it's just that their culture is so strong in terms of what needs to happen in order for Amazon to continue to be Amazon. Penguin Random did actually operate as some kind of bulwark against them, and Amazon won't change what they're doing; they're monopolistic. [...] So, from that point of view, these big corporates do in some ways fight the good fight, and independents do take some advantage of that.

Thus, as discussed in 5.3.3.2, multinationals can come together and lead movements within the industry for the better too, using their scale to their advantage. Atkinson also stated that in the current scenario, the largest among the Big 5 (PRH, HarperCollins and Hachette), the next set of publishers such as Macmillan and Bloomsbury, the independent publishers within Faber's Independent Alliance, and the smaller publishers are all thriving in the market as 'everyone seems to have worked out their own place in the ecosystem' (though he mentioned that he could not speak for the micro-publishers). In the same vein, Shelley – who came from the independent space running Allison & Busby to now heading Hachette UK – said that while he has mixed feelings about multinationalisation in the industry, he believed that conglomerates and independents could coexist. British literary agent Godwin attributed the emergence of independents to the corporatisation of publishing, echoing Das's point above.

In terms of a longer-term view of publishing, Shelley (Hachette UK) stated:

I think there is a natural cycle, where independent publishers often will do it for a certain period of time – maybe twenty years, thirty years – and then the owner of that business or the founder will want to retire or to do something else and then they'll want to monetise that business that they put so much into. Personally, I think that's absolutely fair enough. We've acquired a lot of companies in that way. At the same time, I've seen then other companies spring up into that space. So, I don't

think that multinationals and sort of corporatisation – I don't think it threatens independents actually, because I think there will always be that space for independents.

Atkins (Pan Macmillan UK) too presented a longer-term view of the industry, using his own experiences of being a participant of it since 1985. In the manner that publishers went from selling exclusively hardback or paperback editions when he first joined the industry to eventually selling both formats, Atkins felt that the division of rights across territories will gradually end and, instead of selling rights to their foreign offices or competitors in other regions, publishers will retain world rights. As per Atkins, this will allow publishers to:

benefit from the global marketing that they can provide for an author or for a series of books so that they can control the marketing and control the message and focus on the priorities that they have for big authors.

This has already happened for the two books by the Obamas with PRH discussed in 5.3.1 (Atkins; also mentioned by Turner, PRH UK). Gradually, the threshold for how big an author or a book has to be for the world rights to be retained will lessen, and, in that scenario, Atkins felt multinationalisation and having offices across the world will be key.

Thus, while the interviewees were against monopolisation and some expressed distress at the convergence of capital to create fewer, but bigger, players in the industry, all the interviewees felt that multinationalisation and conglomeration were inevitable in publishing. A few interviewees such as Shelley (Hachette UK) admitted that the resulting high imports of foreign books into India may have been detrimental to local Indian writing, but other interviewees such as Duttagupta (Scholastic India), Sarkar (Juggernaut) and Chandy (Labyrinth Literary Agency) felt that access to foreign books is necessary for the growth of Indian society. Nonetheless, all felt that the publishing landscape holds space for different kinds of players, who bring different offerings to the table.

5.4 Conclusion

Though Penguin India was the first Anglophone trade book publisher to establish Indian operations and did so in 1985, India has engaged with multinationalisation in the book industry from before. This engagement took the form of the import of books produced by British firms, which arrived in

India through distributorships or the local operations of OUP, Longman and Macmillan. These imports were carried out with the help of Commonwealth rights and the attached belief that the Indian market was for the British to exploit due to the colonial relationship (discussed in Chapters 3 and 4). The Anglophone Indian trade publishing landscape today comprises a mix of publishing players, ranging from the subsidiaries of multinationals to large, medium, small and micro local independents. According to the interviewees, there is space for all players to happily coexist.

Competition is not unhealthy, as Sarkar (Juggernaut) stated in her interview. But in this system of cartelisation, it is important to analyse whether all voices in publishing and literature are being heard and at the same volume. It is evident that multinationals occupy an advantageous position in the publishing industry, specifically with regards to five out of the six factors in my framework discussed in 5.2.3: scale, reach, economic capital, social currency and depth of the publishing catalogue. Multinationals can utilise the heft of their scale to lead change in the publishing industry regarding innovation, processes and trends. However, with the same scale comes heft to decisions and the public perception of those decisions, making large publishers such as PRH more cautious about their steps (Sarkar, Juggernaut; Turner, PRH UK). Though Carter and Galligan state that '[o]wnership does not, of itself, tell us about the "health" of the Australian industry, nor whether a particular house will have a commitment to Australian books' (2013, p 6), the answerability to foreign heads usually leads to fewer risks in experimenting with local voices.

Thus, the one significant advantage that local independent publishers have is that they are not answerable to foreign shareholders or private groups. This, in turn, leads to quicker decision-making and the freedom to promote new local Indian voices. The investment in local Indian voices and a healthy local publishing are necessary to develop a national literary space in the process to decolonise India (discussed in Chapter 3). Thus, Altbach states that:

all but the smallest countries need an indigenous publishing industry and the ability to produce the books and periodicals that they need. It is simply not advisable to rely on imported books. *Publishers in other countries—and particularly the multinational firms in the industrialized nations—cannot be counted on to meet local publishing needs.* The key concepts here are autonomy and indigenization. Publishing is closely linked to culture and to education and these are deeply rooted in national goals. [...] Indigenous and autonomous publishing is especially important in the context of the Third World. [...] Third World nations need books

that reflect their emerging needs, and only they can determine these needs. (1992, pp 2-3; emphasis added)

Indian subsidiaries of the multinationals also produce local Indian titles, and thus an interviewee at an Indian subsidiary, Duttagupta (Scholastic India), described the significance of their branch:

When you touch so many children across the vast geography of India, you know you have the opportunity to expose them to so many Indian stories – whether it is Indian folk tales, Indian heroes and heroines, or just a straight-up Indian suburban sort of a story about a boy and a girl.

Still, the subsidiaries rely on imports to generate the majority of their revenue (discussed in Chapter 4) and – in the organisational layout in which they report to foreign centres – are answerable to foreign heads regarding their P&Ls. Furthermore, though multinationals already have a well-established transnational distribution system in place, they are unable to boost international sales of the Indian books that they produce due to the postcoloniality of Anglophone world literature (discussed in Chapters 3 and 4). This scenario aids in the Indian literary space remaining ‘provincial’ (Altbach 1975, p 10) and perpetuates a new form of empire via publishing. That is why local publishers are needed to combat this postcoloniality, as per Don and Barbara Dodson (1972, p 6, cited in Altbach 1975), when they speak of Nigeria:

To establish an indigenous publishing house is an act of liberation, and therefore, a necessity because it breaks the control, indeed the monopoly, which the white races have had over world literature, for which reason they have controlled the mind of the African.

Thus, Indian local publishers – the Davids – provide a platform to Indian writers while facing the dominance of the multinationals, the Goliaths. Yet, each also create meaning through the work that they do as well as the purpose that they serve in the marketplace. Perhaps the best way forward in this multinationalised capitalist setup is for the Davids and the Goliaths to drop their swords and offer their advantages to the other for the establishment of India as a renowned national literary space, as opposed to just a market to export foreign works to. I explore this further in the concluding chapter.

Chapter 6: Conclusion and Recommendations

6.1 The Contribution of This Thesis to Scholarship

This thesis extends the scholarship of publishing studies in India. It engages in a complex historical analysis of the relationship between cartelisation and colonisation. This thesis also creates an overview of the twenty-first century Indian Anglophone trade publishing landscape and examines it in relation to the postcolonial debate by asking the research question: What roles have cartelisation and multinationalisation played in furthering postcoloniality in Indian Anglophone trade book publishing? My work also raises the element of *international diversity* – the need for UK publishers to increase their inflow of books from other countries due to UK's cultural hegemony and their dominance in former British colonies in a cartelised publishing structure. Thus, this thesis adds to the critical conversations around the lack of *national diversity* in British publishing by researchers such as Ramdarshan Bold (2019) and Saha and van Lente (2020).

To answer the research question, the focus of this research was threefold, as laid out in the research sub-questions. Firstly, this thesis analysed the extent of the postcoloniality of present publishing structures in Anglophone trade book publishing. Then, this thesis examined the impact that cartelisation has had on Indian publishing and Indian writers. Finally, this thesis explored the role that multinationalisation has played in furthering cartelisation and its postcoloniality. To answer these sub-questions, this thesis used decolonising primary research methods: autoethnography and platforming the voices of contemporary Indian publishing professionals through semi-structured interviews. Moreover, this thesis contributes to contemporary publishing scholarship by including the perspectives of elite participants engaging with Indian Anglophone trade book publishing – CEOs/MDs, Founders, Chairs, Publishers, International Sales Directors and Literary Agents – working in India and the UK at multinational and local firms.

In this concluding chapter, I revisit the significant points made across the previous chapters – with a special focus on Chapters 3 to 5 – to bring together the overall argument of the thesis regarding cartelisation of Anglophone trade book publishing. Additionally, I offer recommendations to improve current industry practices. I then discuss the limitations of this research and areas where future research can be carried out on the topic. Unlike previous chapters,

I end and not begin this chapter with an autoethnographic vignette – a kind of Afterword – by discussing how engaging in this research has impacted my possible future relationships with publishing as a researcher, publishing professional and author.

6.2 Thesis Recap: The Role of Territorial Rights and Multinationalisation in Cartelisation, and Its Postcolonial Impact

This thesis began in **Chapter 1** with a brief history of the popularity of English as a literary language in India and a description of contemporary Indian Anglophone trade book publishing to contextualise the discussion to that publishing landscape. Though Anglophone trade publishing occupies a minority chunk of the overall Indian book publishing landscape (2.08% as per *India Book Market Report 2022*) – as opposed to educational and academic publishing (in all languages) that generates 96% of the total Indian print book revenue that stood at INR 580.3 billion in 2021–2022 (*India Book Market Report 2022*) – it is pertinent to examine postcoloniality in Anglophone books read for pleasure. This is because the English language was a colonial remnant that has been adopted and adapted for Indian use (Prasad 2011 and Snell and Kothari 2011, cited in Gonsalves 2015, p 434). It is a popular language within India for communication that also carries sociocultural prestige (Altbach 1975, p 34; Chakava 1996, p 31, p 77; Huggan 2001, p 80). Additionally, trade books, i.e., fiction and nonfiction books, reflect culture. Not much scholarship exists on contemporary Indian Anglophone trade book publishing and thus required a closer inspection. Though the focus of this thesis has been on the Indian publishing landscape, the larger discussion of the cartelisation of Anglophone trade book publishing and its postcoloniality can be applied to other developing nations as well, relating to Altbach's comment that 'India is not a paradigm for all Third World countries, nor are India's experiences directly applicable to other nations. Yet India serves as an excellent case study of publishing in developing countries' (1975, p 33).

Chapter 2 detailed the methodology I used to conduct this research. Mine is a radical humanist research based in Burrell and Morgan's (2016) four distinct paradigms of organisational analysis, and my research is subjectivist in nature. I offer recommendations for the improvement of the cartelised scenario in 6.4, but my research is not wholly action-based research. The problem must first be recognised and understood before solutions can be offered to it, and thus the emphasis of this research has been on examining the postcoloniality of cartelisation.

In my research, I chose a mixed-methods approach, with emphasis laid on qualitative methods as I was examining the *kind* of impact that cartelisation has had as opposed to quantifying the impact. I employed some quantitative methods, such as mapping literary prize wins by Indian authors and analysing Nielsen BookData and internal company data shared by my interviewees to evidence the arguments I made via my qualitative methods: autoethnography and semi-structured interviews. The chapter explained how my autoethnographic vignettes add value to the thesis as a research method. Autoethnography took my personal and professional experiences as an Indian reader, student of literature, publishing professional and author to help me comment on the wider Indian publishing landscape. Moreover, the vignettes humanise the research. For primary research, I also conducted semi-structured interviews with senior publishing professionals in the UK and India. The expertise and experiences shared by the interviewees fill the gaps in scholarship on contemporary Indian Anglophone trade book publishing. The chapter also discussed the multidisciplinary nature of my research and thus why a mix of secondary literature – in terms of academic and industry-based from the fields of book history, publishing studies, literature, law, politics, business and postcolonial theory – was apt for this thesis. Furthermore, the chapter reasoned my utilisation of secondary literature about the publishing and literary landscapes in other nations such as Kenya, South Africa, Australia and China to examine the wider topic of cartelisation and postcoloniality in Anglophone trade book publishing. The relevance of the literature about these other countries shows that though this thesis focuses on India, the research regarding cartelisation and its postcoloniality can be applied to the publishing industries of other non-West nations, especially erstwhile colonies.

In **Chapter 3**, the focus was on examining the theoretical framework of my research, i.e., postcolonial theory, and its relevance to my research in contemporary Indian Anglophone trade book publishing. In my research, I use the term ‘postcolonial’ to refer to the negative impact of postcolonialism caused by British imperialism as well as the neocolonialism of the US from the twentieth century onwards. Though the US neocolonialising process is different from ruling a colony as the British Empire did, the impact that US multinationals have had on the rest of the world is similar to imperialism, leading McClintock to state: ‘The power of US finance capital and huge multinationals to direct the flows of capital, commodities, armaments and media information around the world can have an impact as massive as any colonial regime’ (1994, p 258).

Adapting Benedict Anderson's *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (1983) and Pascale Casanova's *The World Republic of Letters* (2004), I discussed the significance of a national literary space and an indigenous publishing industry in building a newly independent nation, one free of the colonial yoke. Due to the dearth of literature on the Indian publishing context, I referred to the publishing landscapes of Kenya, China and Australia to examine how the postcoloniality of Anglophone trade book publishing structures impact their countries too and related those theories to India. Since India has not succeeded in establishing a literary space and a publishing industry that are independent of imports and foreign multinationals, I examined what the impacts of consuming foreign literature have been on Indian readers and writers but also what the perception of India is to other publishing nations. These concerns were also raised by Altbach in 1992 (p 12). A question posed by Altbach – 'How can imports be discouraged and indigenous publishing be advanced without at the same time restricting access to information?' (1992, p 12) – has especially been key for me in this research. I considered: How can the current postcolonial one-sided flow of literature be addressed while ensuring that Indians can continue accessing foreign literature easily? Though the primary role of this thesis has been to examine the postcolonial problem, I have offered some recommendations in 6.4 to answer Altbach's and my questions.

As seen within the primary and secondary data discussed in the thesis, India is perceived as a consumer market rather than a nation producing literature worth being imported to other nations for a global Anglophone readership. This is the result of literary tastes being shaped by the beliefs that Indian trade books are 'provincial' (Altbach 1975, p 10) in nature and specific to the Indian context whereas the books produced in the US and the UK are capable of transcending borders and cultures due to their internationalism. The root of these beliefs lies in postcolonialism: utilising Leela Gandhi's *Postcolonial Theory: A Critical Introduction* (1998), I discussed how postcolonialism has led to a scenario in which the colonised simultaneously detests and wants to echo the coloniser by returning a 'voyeuristic gaze' (p 11) upon the coloniser. This, combined with the status of English as an international language (another consequence of widespread British imperialism), has shaped the literary tastes of colonies such as India.

It is not just trade channels between the former coloniser and the former colonies/developing nations that are in play here. Even trade channels among developing nations have not been fully developed, as they look towards the developed nations for content and

validation. Thus, Altbach adds that it is ‘typically very difficult for Third World books to be sold in the industrialized nations, and just as difficult to reach audiences in other developing countries’ (1992, p 12). Furthermore, due to the prestige associated with winning international literary awards like the Nobel, Pulitzer and Booker and the higher economic returns from accessing an international readership, Indian writers look towards the West for publication opportunities, but this happens rarely and usually for expat authors.

The ‘unrelatability’ of Indian literature for international readers due to the difference in cultural contexts is especially considered true for genre fiction. I took the case of mythological fantasy – the *Percy Jackson* series by Rick Riordan (2005 onwards) and *The Shiva Trilogy* by Amish Tripathi (2010 onwards) – to illustrate this. As stated by Abraham (Hachette India), mass market books, such as genre fiction, are a ‘key marker of true bibliodiversity’ and thus received special focus within this research. However, the only Indian writing that has had any notable sales or recognition through literary awards and media outwith India has been literary fiction, often by authors of Indian origin who do not reside in India. This led to Huggan stating that the thriving of Anglophone publishing in India does not ‘mean that these books will be widely read outside of India [...] [T]he common – and of course thoroughly mediated – perception [is] that Indo-Anglian writing is the product of a roving band of privileged diasporics’ (2001, p 79). Therefore, Indian writing is being represented on a global stage through a limited perspective, that of the ‘diasporics’. This is especially made troubling when analysing the content of the books by the diasporic writers, which can be guilty of romanticising and exoticising India.

It may seem strange to focus on nationalism or ‘made in India’ literature in the positively coded ‘globalised’ world of the twenty-first century, but it must be remembered that in the right context, Mahatma Gandhi’s use of the spinning wheel was an act of rebellion. Mahatma Gandhi chose the symbol of a spinning wheel as a self-reliance campaign during colonial rule in India to promote Indian industry and labour in the face of high textile imports from Britain (Neuman 2013). In the postcolonial world we live in, literature is still perceived across national lines (Casanova 2004, p xi). I also agree with Said’s ideal of ‘postnationalism’ (1993), but in order to work towards that future, considerations must be made today so that equitable opportunities are provided to authors from all national literary spaces. Knowledge and stories by Indians read for pleasure must be produced and distributed not just within India, but abroad. This is not to say that Indians should boycott foreign literature. In a truly internationalised world, each nation’s literary space should be

able to access similar opportunities and resources to compete on a levelled playing field. Since this is not the case, concerted efforts are required to promote Indian Anglophone trade writing internationally. India may have achieved independence and be among the leaders in global publishing, but the present postcolonial structures are only a modern form of Macaulay's damning statement: 'a single shelf of a good European library was worth the whole native literature of India and Arabia' (cited in Trivedi 1993, p 11).

In **Chapter 4**, I discussed the cartelisation of Anglophone trade book publishing due to territorial rights and I established links between copyright, colonisation, Commonwealth rights and cartelisation. In order to protect books against piracy and save authors' and publishers' interests, copyright was developed in eighteenth-century Britain. With international trade becoming more accessible – due in large part to imperial conquests – international copyright conventions were needed to protect books against international piracy. The US refrained from signing the first such international convention, the Berne Convention (1886), so that it could continue engaging in book piracy while taking advantage of the Convention's mandates to develop its local industries and national knowledge systems (Shah 1973, p 646; Gleason 1998, pp 52-54). However, Britain signed the Convention on behalf of its colonies and thus former colonies such as India could not follow the US's route by abstaining and focusing on their own industries.

The Traditional Market Agreement (TMA) (1947) cemented the cartelisation of the Anglophone book world, in which US publishers usually control distribution to North America, the Philippines and Puerto Rico, whereas UK publishers control distribution to Commonwealth territories – or former British colonies – such as India, South Africa and Australia through Commonwealth rights. This pattern continues even after the official abolishment of the TMA in 1976. In fact, Shelley (Hachette UK) and Atkins (Pan Macmillan UK) stated in their interviews that not acquiring rights to sell their titles to India was non-negotiable as India is a promising developing book-buying market, although the returns in terms of revenue were not significant³³. Thus, international copyright conventions formulated an efficient distribution system in international book trade, which was further solidified by the consolidation of publishing houses – whether it was the buying of US publishers by European ones, and vice-versa, or the establishment

³³ In 2019, Hachette India contributed 0.6% of Hachette UK's revenue and 1.6% of Hachette UK's unit sales, as shared by Richard Kitson (Deputy Group CEO, Hachette UK) in an email exchange.

of subsidiaries in developing countries. In this system of cartelisation, it is in the interest of multinationals to retain set territorial rights.

Therefore, it is not just literature from the West/developed nations that secures a primary position in the literary world; it is also true for Western publishers due to the structuring of copyright and territorial rights. I took the examples of other nations such as Kenya, China and Australia to discuss how the postcolonial impact of cartelisation affects other nations in varying degrees as well, as discussed by Altbach: ‘Third World nations do not control the international environment of publishing. [...] The international copyright apparatus is controlled by the industrialized nations’ (1992, p 4).

Commonwealth rights are hence a consequence of copyright, which was created to protect books against piracy and protect authors’ and publishers’ interests. However, even with copyright being a normative practice in India today, book piracy is rampant, both in physical and digital forms and both on in-person and e-commerce platforms. Scholars such as Shah (1973) and Chakava (1996) as well as a few of my interviewees like Atkinson (Atlantic), Duttagupta (Scholastic India) and Shelley (Hachette UK) all agreed that there is an argument to be made about the need to infringe copyright in developing markets to encourage a growing readership and to educate the country.

On the other hand, Commonwealth rights have positively impacted former colonies such as India, insofar that foreign literature can be quickly made available and priced to the local market. Though Indian publishers – whether subsidiaries or local companies – prefer to purchase world rights of Indian books, they are unable to sell either the print books or their licenses/rights in foreign territories in any notable number. Usually only ebooks or Print on Demand copies are made available by publishers internationally. But without an accompanying marketing and publicity campaign or the discoverability factor in placing physical copies in bookshops, international readers cannot be expected to chance upon books by Indian authors. Therefore, Indian authors whose books can potentially sell in foreign territories (usually literary fiction due to postcolonial literary tastes) oftentimes prefer publishing with UK or US publishers, as can be seen in the cases of Rushdie and Seth discussed in Chapter 3. Publishing with UK or US organisations allows authors more global Anglophone access, the chance to be eligible for international literary awards like the Booker and the Pulitzer, and a better chance of earning a livelihood through their writing due to higher royalties on more expensive foreign editions. Furthermore, their books would reach

the Indian market through Commonwealth rights anyway (Barnes 2009, p 616; Gonsalves 2015, pp 430-431). However, cases of Indian authors' books being picked up internationally are rare because Indian writing – especially genre writing – is not considered relevant enough for the UK market (Atkins, Pan Macmillan UK; Shelley, Hachette UK). Even if an Indian author publishes with the Indian subsidiary of a multinational, their book would still not receive the same opportunities outwith India as the imported titles from the UK and the US would by the same multinational subsidiaries. Ultimately, Indian writing is treated as less than British and American writing, thus adding to the vicious cycle of postcolonial literary tastes. This inequivalent power dynamic led Chakava to state that 'trade in copyright makes sense only when applied to equal or almost equal partners, who buy as much as they sell from each other' (1996, p 76) and Singh to state: 'Free enterprise is a useful concept only when those competing do so from positions of equal strength. This is patently not true for publishers from developing countries trying to sell their books in developed nations' (1992, p 257). Even so, the cartelised Anglophone trade publishing world makes 'logistical sense' to interviewees such as Shelley (Hachette UK), and Jha (PRH India) was 'thankful' for India's 'Commonwealth' status in the cartelised publishing structuring as it helps Indians have an easy access to foreign books.

I explored the power dynamics within publishing enterprise further in **Chapter 5**, in terms of multinationalisation in the Anglophone trade book publishing industry and its impact on Indian publishing and literature. A 'multinational' in the publishing context can refer to large companies that have the resources and initiative to have distribution within other countries, especially those that are 'good markets for the "home" countries' (Altbach 1992, p 30). I situated the conversation of multinationalisation in the wider discussions of Anglophone trade book publishing, copyright, territorial rights and postcolonialism. English-language publishing was encouraged and shaped by the former colonising power, the UK, and the neocolonial power, the US, in Anglophone territories. Before physical branches could be established in Anglophone territories to control the distribution of books, the two Anglophone centres as defined by Casanova (2004) – New York and London – utilised rights to maximise distribution (Bryant 1979, p 392). However, this multinational business must not be mistaken for a global operation, as the use of the language restricts the publishing to Anglophone territories. Furthermore, even this transnational business does not meet the definition of a true 'multinational' publisher as defined by Altbach (1992, p 30), as the publishers do not comprise a group of companies with equivalent branches in three or more

countries, each company of the publisher does not trade with each other on equal terms, nor do the global head offices usually exist in a country other than a base of publishing operations.

Though publishing operations in India are not significantly cheaper to conduct than the UK while monetary returns in India are significantly lower than the UK (Atkins, Pan Macmillan UK), multinational publishers are keen to invest in the Indian market. The reasoning for this was explained by my interviewees to be that India holds cultural significance and shows great growth potential due to a burgeoning educated middle class with high English-speaking literacy rates. Multinational trade publishers invested in India after the easing of its protectionist policies in the 1990s, with most Big 5s establishing their branches by 2010. Abraham (Hachette India) pointed out that though the first foreign trade publisher to establish Indian operations post Indian independence was Penguin in 1985, the year must not be conflated with India's first contact with multinational trade operations. He clarified that India's engagement with foreign trade books, through prior books imports, must be considered.

The Indian Anglophone trade book publishing landscape comprises a mix of multinational subsidiaries with Indian publishing operations as well as medium, small and micro local publishers that tend to be independent with primarily domestic distribution. While Davis states that the players within this heterogeneous industry happily coexist (2019, p 695), Devasar presents a contrary image to this happy coexistence on the first page of her book by stating that though these different players coexist, they 'rarely come together' (2018, p xi). Due to the variance in mission statements and perspectives guiding the work of the multinationals and the locals – and thus the significance of an indigenous publishing industry for decolonisation – I differentiated between the two kinds of players using a six-factor framework of publishing capitals that I created. I developed this framework from Bourdieu's capital theory (1986) and Gonsalves's adaptation of it (2015) using Thompson's additional two kinds of capital (2012). I adapted these different capitals to the twenty-first century Indian publishing field I examine in my research by using primary data from my interviews. The six factors in my framework are: scale, reach, economic capital, social currency, answerability and publishing catalogue. Economic capital tends to define most other aspects of a publisher. Multinationals are advantaged in having larger scale and acquisition powers, transnational distribution to a wider reach, healthy cash flow due to considerable economic capital, prestige and brand value in terms of social currency, and a depth of the publishing catalogue that ensures backlist sales and thus continual revenue generation. Though multinationals can offer a

transnational distribution to Indian authors through their already-established international offices, it rarely happens. Often, UK editors and publishing directors do not take their Indian counterparts as seriously (Godwin, DGA; Gupta, Writer's Side) or think that overseas books are not relevant for the UK market (Atkins, Pan Macmillan UK). Thus, even with 'federal' operational structures that I examined regarding PRH and Hachette – postcolonial beliefs and literary tastes hamper Indian authors utilising the multinationals' full potential.

The one aspect that Indian local publishers have an upper hand in is that they are not answerable to a foreign board and are thus freer in decision-making. This impacts the experimental nature of the locals' publishing lists, while the multinationals can be guilty of 'self-perpetuation within the publishing fold' (Murray 2013, p 57). Moreover, the disadvantage that the locals face in usually being able to access only a domestic market makes them further focus on Indian local publishing (Sarkar, Juggernaut) – and this is key. This demonstrates the argument in Chapter 3 that an indigenous publishing industry is needed to develop a national literary space, which is required to build a nation in the process of decolonisation. However, as seen through the interview data and the Nielsen BookData, multinationals and their foreign book lists dominate the Indian market. Thus, as Graham states, the 'postcolonial "cultural imperialism" has lent pejorative overtones to the word "multinational" in the developing world' (1998, p 21), and as an extension, to territorial rights as well.

To foreground the recommendations I offer in 6.4, I next discuss a thought experiment that I ran with some of my interviewees by asking them to visualise a more hopeful future for Indian Anglophone trade publishing and writing.

6.3 Thought Experiment: Possible Future of Indian Anglophone Trade Book Publishing

Interviewees such as Abraham (Hachette India), Chandy (Labyrinth Literary Agency) and Sarkar (Juggernaut) stated that publishing sets trends (thus acting as a gatekeeper and tastemaker), but the industry also responds to trends and cultural movements. After our discussions about Commonwealth rights and the multinational Indian subsidiaries' and local publishers' international sales being negligible in most cases, I asked some interviewees to engage in a thought experiment on possible positive futures of Indian publishing and writing. Even in today's 'globalised' world, it is harmful to pretend that current publishing structures lend themselves to a

‘free flow of books’, as Singh explains: ‘In practice, [the ‘free flow of books’] has come to mean that publishers from developed countries should be free to export their books to the developing world but that they have no obligation to ensure a reverse flow’ (1992, p 257). Thus, the aim of this research project has been to pinpoint and examine the problem causing the unequal flow of books from the UK and the US to India and the difficulties it causes in Indian publishing, which led me to my prompts for the thought experiment.

In the thought experiment, I asked some interviews to visualise a scenario in which the rights of the author and publisher were protected, Indians could continue to access foreign books easily but also Indian print books were easily available internationally. The interviewees either did not have an answer or stated that publishing norms and reading habits (postcolonial literary tastes discussed in Chapter 3) would have to change for that to happen. For example, Abraham (Hachette India) stated that multiculturalism would need to become ‘much more mainstream than it currently is’ as the ‘BAME’ author category currently feels a bit perfunctory, like an item to be ticked off a publisher’s list. Abraham added that ‘with affirmative action, this could grow into genuine mainstream levels from being a diversity initiative’. Godwin (DGA) said that there would need to be a proper recognition of Indian books in the UK. Turner (PRH UK) also brought up the significance of ‘a change in people’s reading habits’ to fully utilise the existing publishing structures than can make authors of other nationalities available in the UK. Therefore, the key factor is a change in reading habits, or a decolonisation of literary tastes. Improvements within publishing infrastructure to actively encourage and respond to decolonising tastes are also needed, as both would run in unison.

The change in reading tastes is especially important, since channels already exist to distribute books internationally, as Turner pointed out. This is because just making physical books available internationally is not enough (discussed in Chapter 4). Atkins (Pan Macmillan UK) stated that the problem lies with not being able to prioritise all the books a publisher produces:

In a digital world, we should be able to make all of those books available in the UK, US, Australia simultaneously. It’s a question of whether they get the marketing support that allows people to really find them, that they’re not just sitting there waiting for people to—that they’re getting some sort of promotion. In order to get that sort of marketing support and promotion, they have to I suppose tap into something that’s relevant here. We as a company can provide the infrastructure to

make them available. It's not as simple as it sounds, but it's reasonably straightforward with digital developments as they are. But, with all the millions of books being published all around the world, it's about making sure that they get the priority that they deserve if they've got the potential to really succeed.

When publishers have to prioritise promotion among millions of books published every year, it might be easier to return to tried-and-tested hits and not risk new voices from countries viewed more as market territories rather than sources of literature (discussed in 5.2.3.6 Publishing Catalogue). Fortunately, many interviewees were hopeful about British reading habits changing to be more open to content from other nations and cultures. For instance, Atkins (Pan Macmillan UK) stated that British readers are 'very open and publishers are becoming more aware of the importance of having diverse voices'. Shelley (Hachette UK) said that 'people are starting to realise more and more how closed they've been in their own reading and how they need to diversify their own reading'. Atkinson (Atlantic) added that he has already witnessed a change through his generation to the ones below it, pinpointing to the 1980s that saw the successes of Salman Rushdie and Kazuo Ishiguro. However, he stated that it is a slow process and:

it probably will take another generation of readers to really get there. And as publishers, we need to look to ourselves. Clearly if we're just publishing in the UK – OK we're UK publishers – why ignore in terms of people writing in English, why ignore the rest of the world? Someone else has got something else to say. [...] To go back to how easy it is for UK writers to sell into India and how difficult it is for Indian writers to sell into the UK – that will change because I think those cultural barriers are kind of breaking down. It'll be seen as, for a certain type of cultured individual, I think it'll be seen as very gauche not to read internationally.

The hope is that reading internationally will not be the domain of the elite 'cultured' individual and thus my focus is also on mass market fiction. Abraham (Hachette India) stated that though he can visualise a structure in which Indian titles are sold more frequently abroad, he also said that it will take time and he does not 'see it happening over the next decade or two'. To aid this process, I offer some recommendations in the next section that I arrived at through the discussions in my interviews, the literature I examined for this research and my own professional experience working in publishing.

6.4 Recommendations for the Publishing Industry to Address the Postcolonial Impact of Cartelisation

It is my hope that we can work towards a world that is no longer cartelised; one in which everyone can engage with a *world* literature, in the true sense of the word. However, that is the ideal scenario. Using the learnings from this research, I offer recommendations keeping the current cartelised publishing structure in mind to overcome its postcoloniality. This also implies that the recommendations can be applied today, while we work towards dismantling cartelisation. The recommendations I make to aid this process are divided along two lines, i.e., changes within publishing companies – partnerships/collaborations, internal company scouts and decolonial publishing training – and externally – involving other literary landscape stakeholders and the Indian government.

6.4.1 Changes Within Publishing Companies

I begin with recommendations for the publishing industry – to change from within – to address its postcoloniality. In this section, I discuss three solutions: partnerships/collaborations between multinationals and local independents; creation of internal company scouts that focus on literature imported from non-US/UK sources; and training within publishing to decolonise the workforce's mindset.

6.4.1.1 Partnerships/Collaborations Over Acquisitions

As discussed in Chapter 5, one of the easiest ways for a publishing firm to become larger and multinational is by acquiring other firms. By doing so, the original firm also acquires others' publishing lists. Atkinson (Atlantic) presented a very pragmatic – if dispiriting – picture of the economic side of the process, whereby, if Atlantic Books is today acquired by a Big 5, they would immediately turn a profit of over a million pounds:

We're a £7 million business; let's say we have a gross profit of 50%, so that's three-and-a-half million quid there, which we spend somehow. One-and-a-half million of that is people. We don't make much money; we make a few hundred grand each year, but if we were bought by Hachette, that one-and-a-half million pounds salary bill would probably be, let's say, only half a million. So, they could buy us and

make Atlantic make a million pounds a year, just like that, because we wouldn't have a sales force, we wouldn't have a finance department, we wouldn't have a production department, we wouldn't have me.

Atkinson added that this would also lead to 'a huge upset in terms of the passion with which new books are sold and how close [the team was] and the shortcut that you have with the small company', which is a loss that Atkinson felt can be ignored in this era of global capitalism. He mentioned that he sometimes joked that 'another word for "independent" is "temporary" [...] but in the end, it's a bit like death: it all ends up with some kind of corporate entering'. The interviewees agreed that the publishing ecosystem allows for diverse publishing models (discussed in Chapter 5), yet there is a fear that economic capital is getting concentrated in smaller and smaller spaces. Das (Yoda) wondered if it would ultimately lead to publishing corporations concentrating from the 'Big 5' into the 'Big 1'. Das has managed to keep operations at her small independent going precisely through collaborations and partnerships with firms larger than hers, such as her partnership with Sage to distribute Yoda's trade titles internationally (discussed in 4.3.2). Similarly, Sarkar (Juggernaut) tied up with HarperCollins to design, print, stock and distribute her print list within India. The Independent Alliance, spearheaded by Faber & Faber, to represent a collection of independent publishers to select customers in the UK is another kind of collaboration since there is strength in combining their scales.

According to Das (Yoda), publishing must find different ways of knowledge-sharing and its monetisation, that 'instead of divvying up the world, what needs to happen is more of a collaborative kind of way of dealing with [territories]'. Gupta (Writer's Side) also mentioned 'co-publishing agreements' as a possible solution. Hearing these interviewees' views and learning about the successes that the Indian local publishers have had in partnering with the multinationals, I recommend collaborations between the US/UK offices of multinationals and the local publishers, in which the locals can utilise the multinationals' trade channels to distribute their books outwith India. This would not be a sacrifice or charity on behalf of the multinationals; the multinationals would profit by the sales of those books too by taking a cut from the sales. In this way, without a loss in staff expertise that Atkinson (Atlantic) feared (discussed above), local/independent publishers can maintain their publishing lists focusing on local Indian writers (discussed in 5.2.3.6 and 5.3). Similarly, the locals can keep their closer working environments, without the pressure of answerability that large multinationals face (discussed in 5.2.3.5). Moreover, the extra revenue

generated by the international sales would fund more investment in local Indian writing (as Das, Yoda, stated she was able to – discussed in 4.3.2). Such distribution arrangements already exist for British independent publishers such as Atlantic Books, Canongate Books, Faber & Faber and Profile Books with the Indian subsidiaries of the multinationals. I recommend that US and UK multinational branches should follow this model to collaborate with Indian local publishers to represent their lists in the UK and other Commonwealth territories that British multinationals usually distribute their books to.

6.4.1.2 Internal Company Scouts

Having been the International Sales Director of a few multinational firms, Atkins (Pan Macmillan UK) considered it a part of his role – though it was a ‘*relatively* formal part’ (Atkins; emphasis added) – to recommend books produced by the non-UK branches of his firms to his British colleagues. However, these were disregarded by British editors due to the belief that the foreign books were not relevant enough for the British market (discussed in 4.3.3). Similarly, Gupta (Writer’s Side) discussed how British publishing professionals do not take seriously their Indian counterparts’ recommendations (discussed in 4.3.3). Therefore, I recommend a change in the *formal* infrastructure of the multinationals’ London offices that would make it a part of the employees’ work to consider, publish and promote books produced by the Indian subsidiary – through the creation of an internal scout. Currently, scouts within publishing are third-party agents that scour overseas markets to pitch manuscripts to multiple clients (GreyhoundLiterary.co.uk [no date]). I suggest an internal company scout in the London and New York offices whose main job would be to examine the publishing lists of the company’s non-UK/US subsidiaries and create a UK/US local list comprising them. Thus, this role would fall within the realm of the product department. As discussed in the vignettes in 1.1 and 5.1, I worked as a Senior Product Executive for the Indian subsidiary of a multinational, wherein my job was to select and import books from the British branch for the Indian market and manage the stock. I had annual sales targets that I fulfilled by deciding the import quantities and offsetting them against the risk of returns or no sales. I recommend a similar role at the UK and US branches that works in the other direction, i.e., they would import books from non-UK/US branches for the UK and US markets as well as export them to other territories using their existing trade channels.

6.4.1.3 Decolonial Publishing Training

The mere fact that the British editors disregarded the books from other territories (Atkins, Pan Macmillan UK), that British publishing professionals do not respond to their Indian counterparts' recommendations (Gupta, *Writer's Side*), or that most of my interviewees felt that Indian books – especially genre fiction titles – were too local in their contexts and not relevant for the UK market is due to the postcoloniality of literary tastes (discussed in 3.4.2 and 4.3.3). Since publishing decisions are often self-fulfilling prophecies (Murray 2013, p 58; discussed in 4.4) and publishers act as gatekeepers and tastemakers, changes in company ethos would impact publishing lists and wider literary tastes. Thus, I recommend formal training at publishing firms to create an awareness about the colonial roots of copyright, territorial rights and Anglophone trade publishing structures. It was evident in my interviews that most of my interviewees – even being elite participants and heading their departments or the overall companies – were not aware of the history of copyright and territorial rights or the cartelisation of Anglophone trade publishing (discussed in 4.3.2). It is my hope that by initiating this dialogue with senior participants of the British publishing industry, I made them acknowledge and consider the postcoloniality of cartelisation, which can lead to organisational change in the future. In fact, Turner (PRH UK) mentioned in an email after his interview that since speaking to me, he has 'read and discussed the topic a number of times, a sure sign of increasing consciousness around the issue'. However, I had these single conversations with individuals at a handful of organisations, albeit the largest publishers. My argument is that along with diversity and sensitivity training at publishing firms – which are important and necessary but diversity within a nation does not equate to international diversity – training should also be given regarding cartelisation. These training are especially key for publishing professionals at the US and UK branches that participate in cartelisation and dominate other national literary spaces. The training would enable publishing staff to make more conscientious decisions and would impact publishing in the longer term. Publishing is an industry that is notorious for underpaying its employees (Comerford 2020; Cerézo 2023), so people who enter the publishing workforce often do so for the passion for books and literature (Atkinson, *Atlantic*; Das, *Yoda*; Godwin, *DGA*; Gupta, *Writer's Side*; Sarkar, *Juggernaut*). Such training would help raise awareness of other cultural perspectives and create more empathy in a workforce that is already passionate about the products that they create and sell.

6.4.2 Changes Outwith Publishing Companies

So far, I have made recommendations pertaining the operations of publishing companies. There are also changes that can be made to the wider landscape to address the postcoloniality of cartelisation. In this section, I focus on steps that other stakeholders within the publishing landscape and the Indian government can take.

6.4.2.1 Other Publishing Stakeholders

My first recommendation is to do with improving the standing of indigenous publishers in India so that they become more desirable to authors. As discussed in Chapter 3, 5.2.3.2 and 5.2.3.4, authors prefer publishing with multinationals due to the social currency and the possible international distribution that they can provide the authors. Shelley (Hachette UK) in his interview added that the UK branch of Hachette can pay higher advances than is the norm in India, which is also attractive to authors. While multinational Indian subsidiaries publish a local list and can platform Indian voices, we cannot solely rely on them. As discussed in Chapter 3, indigenous publishers are the ones who aid in creating a national literary space and are necessary for decolonising and building a nation. To change the authors' attitudes towards Indian local publishers, Singh suggests:

If the *media* gives enough prominence to indigenous authors and publications, it will make it that much easier to encourage *bookshops* to stock those books. And it will not be long before the intellectual elite begins to pay at least some attention to the homegrown product. If indigenous authors see this growing commitment and awareness combined with good publication and effective marketing, they will be more ready to publish their books locally rather than seeking out the transnationals. (1992, p 249; emphasis added)

Therefore, other stakeholders such as book distributors, bookshops and the media can work together in a concerted manner to encourage the local publishing industry and home readership. This would ultimately lead to decolonising the current Western dominance in canon formation and literary tastes. It is imperative because until developing countries challenge that Western dominance, 'they will continue to be slavish apes of the same colonial masters they profess to dislike' (Singh 1992, p 249).

6.4.2.2 The Indian Government

With regards to the steps that the Indian government can take, I am not recommending any amendments to Indian copyright law. Shelley (Hachette UK) in his interview laid the importance of getting British editions of books into the ANZ market in a timely manner so that Australians cannot use their amended national copyright law to import American editions instead (discussed in 4.2.3). I found it interesting that a country's amendments to its national copyright law could help protect its citizens' interests, and a similar incident occurred in India too with the 2012 *University of Oxford v. Rameshwari Photocopy Service* case (discussed in 4.2.3). However, the Australian government made the changes to their *Copyright Act* because their citizens were having trouble accessing foreign books, and that is not the problem India is facing. India's concern is the opposite, that not enough Indian books are being exported, and Indian copyright law cannot change the importing trends of other nations. Singh states that since publishers in developing countries do not have the resources to promote their books abroad, their main consideration when it comes to the 'free flow of books' is not hindering book *imports* (1992, p 257; emphasis added). This was echoed by my interviewees regarding Indians being able to access foreign literature (Das, Yoda; Duttagupta, Scholastic India; Sarkar, Juggernaut). Therefore, I address the issue that would make the flow of books actually free, i.e., by encouraging the *export* of Indian writing.

Creating channels for the export and promotion of Indian books abroad is where the Indian government can help. This was also discussed by Singh:

Books are among the best ambassadors of a country and can go a long way toward fostering better relations and understanding between nations. It is primarily with this objective in mind that the British and American governments spend substantial amounts (through organizations such as the British Council and the United States Information Agency) on promoting books from their countries all over the world. Governments in developing countries should give importance to the dissemination of indigenous books abroad. Besides promoting them through embassies and existing export organizations, they can assist book publishers by setting up cooperative marketing operations in developed nations. These organizations can not only stock and sell indigenous publications but can participate in important book fairs, sponsor author tours, and provide information on books. (1992, p 253)

Bodies such as the British Council, German Book Office and French Book Office work within India to promote authors resident in their countries, foreign or Indian-origin; for instance, by flying the authors to India for events. Das (Yoda), who talked about this in her interview, mentioned that multinational subsidiaries in India and local independents usually operate through the same channels – other nations’ cultural centres named above – to bring international authors to India. However, she felt that though local independents have worked hard to build these relationships with the foreign bodies, the bodies still prefer the big-brand multinationals and their authors due to their social currency. Das specifically named the British Council/British High Commission for prioritising multinationals and ignoring Indian local publishers. Therefore, it is not enough for Indian local publishers to rely on foreign bodies, but especially because the foreign bodies’ concern is to promote the authors and brands in their countries and thus aid imports into India. I recommend that the Indian High Commission perform a similar role in other nations to create channels for Indian publishers and authors to promote local Indian writing internationally. This would be especially instrumental for promoting the writing of Indian authors that are published by Indian local independents, since they do not have the distribution and marketing channels internationally that the multinationals do but are key for promoting the Indian national literary space.

6.5 Limitations and Areas for Further Research

This research focused on a small – but significant – segment of the Indian publishing industry: trade books originally written in English. Therefore, the discussions surrounding distribution and bookselling trends in India and abroad were limited to that segment and cannot be applied to books in other categories written in other languages. Of course, there is also the matter of translating literature in different Indian languages into English to utilise the language’s international reach. Das (Yoda), as a reader of English, Hindi and Bangla books, did not think that ‘a lot of literature written first in English in India has that complexity and richness as we would find in narrative in Indian languages’. Sarkar (Juggernaut) also praised the quality and ambition of Indian writing in regional languages and their translations. More research on the publishing industry engaging with Indian languages would aid research on the cartelisation of publishing. Murray et al (2021) have conducted research on making Indian literature written in Indian official languages, excluding English, more widely available to an international Anglophone readership, and more studies with a focus on cartelisation can contribute to the field.

Academic and educational works form the majority of the Indian book market. Yet, they also suffer from research and publishing centres being placed outwith India and an overflow of expensive editions into India that students and institutions cannot afford. This was the prime reason for the piracy in the 2012 University of Oxford v. Rameshwari Photocopy Service case that I discussed in this thesis. Thus, the postcoloniality of academic and educational publishing also requires research.

I dedicated Chapter 3 to examining the postcoloniality of the cartelisation of the Anglophone trade book publishing industry. In it, I utilised existing literature and the interviews of publishing professionals to discuss the impact that consuming foreign literature has on Indian readers. By conducting focus groups of Indian readers from different regions, socioeconomic classes and ages, this phenomenon can be better understood.

I interviewed a range of publishing professionals in India and the UK between 2020 and 2022, but I restricted my participants to senior professionals within NCR and London working at multinationals, local independents and literary agencies. The perspectives of other stakeholders – such as book printers and distributors, booksellers, organisers of literary festivals, heads of professional publishing bodies in India and book reviewers (within formal journalism but also on social media) – would add to this research. Additionally, I was able to share my experience of being an Indian author publishing with an Indian local company through autoethnographic vignettes, so interviews of authors in a similar position and those publishing with the Indian subsidiary of a multinational and directly with the UK/US branch of a multinational would add rich data to the research too.

As like any industry, some changes have taken place within Indian Anglophone trade publishing since the interviews (prices of Indian titles have risen, book piracy in India has risen and Indian titles are selling in greater quantities within India – as stated by some interviewees in email exchanges in 2024). Further research can be carried out in the Indian context based on both global and local changes. New data could inform this research field while centring the importance of the historical and structural shaping of publishing in India, which my thesis contributes to, especially since the overall patterns of cartelisation and its postcoloniality have not yet changed.

My research is centred on the Indian publishing landscape and the relationship between the UK and India due to colonisation and Commonwealth rights. However, as I have shown with my references to literature about publishing landscapes in other nations, such as Australia, China,

Kenya and South Africa, cartelisation of Anglophone trade publishing and its postcoloniality are not unique to India. I recommend that further (updated) research is carried out on the topic with a focus on other nations, including those that are cartelised by US publishers – such as the Philippines, Puerto Rico and Canada – so that the wide-scale impact of this cartelisation can be understood and coordinated efforts can be made across the Anglophone world to address it.

Lastly, having been an Indian reader, student of literature, publishing professional and author who conducted these activities while resident in India, I am directly impacted by this research and therefore I cannot separate myself from it. To address this and for the sake of transparency, I acknowledged and emphasised my personal biases in this research through the autoethnographic vignettes and ensured to also bring in perspectives of interviewees in other positions with different worldviews. Further contributions from Indian scholars, publishing professionals and authors will address the dearth of knowledge on contemporary Indian publishing and will act as a decolonising research method.

My aim has been to examine a problem that I, and many others within India and other countries, face. The division of Anglophone territories between UK and US multinational publishers has been a norm in trade publishing for over a century. While ‘cartelisation’ has been used in other industries to call attention to harmful practices, the senior publishing professionals I spoke to had not examined territorial rights distribution in the context of postcolonialism. My research has been driven by the need to address gaps in existing scholarly research on contemporary Indian Anglophone trade publishing but also with the aim to initiate dialogue to impact change. Since this thesis affects real, living people in the present, my research examined publishing structures while always centring the voices of those affected: Indian publishers, authors and readers. This research was imperative to work towards a future publishing landscape in which readers all over the Anglophone world are *aware of* and *able to* access books from different nations. A future in which Indian writers can demand of their publishers what writers in the US and the UK can while signing over world rights: that our words and stories reach the minds and hearts of people across the world.

6.6 Words Through Borders

Growing up, since the literary media I consumed was set in the US or the UK – or fantastical settings inspired from them – the short stories I wrote mimicked those foreign contexts. My characters were called Adam and Jane and lived in bustling New York or quaint British villages. I had never been to these places, but the books I read allowed my imagination to travel and learn about other cultures. In fact, I knew the word ‘scone’ before I ever laid eyes on one upon first setting foot in the UK at age twenty-five.

Things gradually changed as I learnt to question why my characters did not look like me or were from places that I had not resided in. I arrived in Scotland for my MSc in Creative Writing degree in 2017. This time around, I was the Indian author writing a story set in my country, believing it worthy to be published and sell well. I made a conscious decision to focus on a commercial genre: fantasy. I did this not only due to my personal interest in reading fantasy, but because I wanted an Indian author in a mainstream genre to be read internationally. In my time working in Indian publishing, I had recognised a gap in the market: Indian genre fiction did not cross the nation’s border, and I wanted to change that with my work.

Still, it is hard to tackle a lifetime’s worth of prejudices and that has been true for me as much as for others engaged in publishing. While I felt that my creative journey was evolving in shedding postcolonial biases (though not entirely, since the language I wrote in was introduced by my nation’s former coloniser), the publishing industry’s changes did not match my pace. A feedback session with a British literary agent left a bitter taste, after they (not explicitly, but their meaning was clear) asked me to amplify the ‘Indianness’ of my novel’s setting. I wondered if a setting devoid of swinging monkeys, snake-charmers and mangoes did not fit their vision of my country.

I do not wish for my novel to stay buried in my computer files. I want my novel to be published and reach innumerable eyes in the Anglophone world (and beyond, with the power of translation). Knowing what I do – from my professional experience working in the industry and all that I have learnt over the course of this research – I would have the best chance of reaching an internationally wide readership by publishing with the London office of a multinational. I know that, since my book is written by an Indian and set in India, if it were published by a multinational in London, it would definitely be picked up by its Indian subsidiary. The subsidiary can sell the book in the Indian subcontinent because of Commonwealth rights. I also know that I would find it

easier to publish within India because British publishers may find my fantasy series ‘unrelatable’. But if I were to directly approach an Indian subsidiary or local publisher, they would ask for world rights but not ensure the distribution and promotion of the physical book abroad, repeating what happened with my debut nonfiction book. My aspirations for my novel are higher; I know the storyline, humour and themes can appeal to an international readership. I want to earn a livelihood from my writing too and not just publish for the sake of seeing my name on spines on bookshop shelves. I am also confident that the novel is representative of a contemporary (urban, middle-class) India. The lens with which I view the country and its people are personal to my own lived experiences and not romanticised in any exotic notions of the place. So, do I not have a choice but to feed into the cartelised machinery?

The conversations with my interviewees for this research introduced me to new ideas. What if collaborations between Indian local publishers and multinationals became more frequent? What if British and American multinational branches created the new role of an internal scout? What if British publishers instituted decolonising training? I would have options then – I could feel comfortable in the author care offered by Indians at local indies or Indian subsidiaries, with the idea that their collaborative multinational partners or the Indian government would help disseminate my book abroad. Or, perhaps I would not have to turn to Indian editors for their understanding of my India, and the decolonial training would facilitate better-informed and open dialogue with British publishing professionals.

In a perfect world, minoritised voices would not have to work twice as hard to avail the same opportunities – but we do not live in that world. I have already seen how my interventions with a Scottish literary body impacted policy to make its prestigious writing awards more accessible to immigrants. And that change enabled me to win that writing award myself a few years later. So, I have done the work before, and I would do it again for the future of my writing career, and other Indians’.

The road is tough, change is necessary, but hope is prevalent.

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