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TRANSLATED PEOPLE: A SOCIOCULTURAL ANALYSIS OF ASIANS IN
GREAT BRITAIN AND A STUDY OF BRITISH RESPONSES TO POST-WAR
MIGRANTS FROM THE INDIAN SUBCONTINENT.

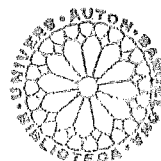
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5. Surviving Stereotypes.

*"Handful of men as we were, we were English in heart and in limb,
Strong with the strength of the race to command, to obey, to endure"*

Alfred Tennyson, *The Defence of Lucknow* (1897)

5.1. Dominating Frameworks.

When the British first gained a foothold in India in the early seventeenth century, their minds were not a *tabula rasa* as regards the Orient. On the contrary, they took with them pre-conceived ideas about the new land and the new people they would finally colonize. The Islamic world, firmly established as Europe's only rival during the Middle Ages, represented barbarism, immorality, cruelty, irrationality, aggression, in short, the complete reverse of European civilization. The Islamic heathen was seen as a kind of uncultured, untutored mirror of what the European would be without the benefit of Christianity. As the reflecting image was disagreeable, the only alternative was to seek to dominate it. By conquering the primitive, the European became more remote from it and consequently more 'cultured', while the Other, in turn, was endowed with increasingly more evil properties. In

the Modern Age, Islam would cease to be regarded as a threat to the integrity of Europe, but would nevertheless continue to embody all those undesirable attributes associated with Otherness. The individual's psychological need to personify evil required such an outlet, and thus the peoples of the newly conquered territories would come to assume this role. (Mason, 1965: 142-3; Said, 1991:188 & 206)

By the seventeenth century, the Arab world, or the Orient, included the Middle East, North Africa and India.

Indians from the East were placed in the same category as those from the New World in the West, the term coming to mean primitive, backward people in dire need of European civilization. The British did not regard India as a threat in the early days of the East India Company, as the Islamic world had been to Europe as a whole. The Mughal Empire was crumbling and this state of affairs presented Britain, as it did France, with an ideal opportunity to establish themselves in the country. The fact that the Europeans were able to take control over such a vast land with relative ease merely gave them more reason to treat the natives with contempt. (Said, 1991:75)

Knowledge about the Orient increased in the latter part of the eighteenth century owing to the colonial encounter and the cult of the exotic which was fast

becoming fashionable. Moreover, a vast body of literature was emerging based on travellers' tales¹, which tended to focus on the more bizarre features of Oriental life, thus encouraging readers to think of the Orient in terms of "a living tableau of queerness". (ibid.,103) However, these new sources of knowledge were not entirely impartial themselves as the Orient that was seen and experienced was not always the Orient that was written about. Opinions that had been formed prior to acquiring actual first-hand experience were rarely radically altered. Sweeping statements about Orientals were glibly repeated, which endowed them with greater authority every time they were uttered until they became 'facts'. The more the West advanced, the further behind lagged the Orient,

"confined to the fixed status of an object frozen once and for all in time by the gaze of western percipients". (Said, 1985:4)

Consequently, from the latter part of the eighteenth century and, paradoxically, because of the growing body of textual information, the Orient was transmitted to Europe through a constraining filter which only allowed the 'truths' which everybody 'knew' to trickle through.

¹ The Voyage of Thomas Best to the East Indies 1612-14 was possibly the first account of Oriental travel to be widely circulated in Britain. It was still considered to be an authoritative source of information about India in 1934 as it was reprinted by the Hakluyt Society. (Ed. William Foster)

From the battle of Plassey (1757) onwards, India would fire the imagination of many Britons, who saw it not only as a place where they could achieve fast promotion and material benefits, but also as a haven of romance, adventure, and above all, mystery. The Indian woman in particular, as the source of boundless desire and sensuality, incarnated eroticism, a fantasy which served as a safety-valve for suppressed Victorian sexuality. On one hand, India and Indians were approached with the caution that stems from the fear of the unknown mingled with a delight in novelty, whereas, on the other hand, an unshakable belief in the expediency of British rule in a land overrun by confusion following the fragmentation of the Mughal Empire gave rise to feelings of superiority. The conviction that India would fall prey to anarchy and invasion if the British should withdraw from the subcontinent proved beyond any doubt that the West was strong and the East was weak. The Orient was still that mirror of what Europe could become, or perhaps return to, were it not for its greater knowledge, discipline and morality. (Kiernan, 1969:32-3; Said, 1991:188)

The rise of scientific racism during the latter part of the nineteenth century provided a convenient framework of biological determinism in which members of the 'coloured races' were viewed as child-like versions of

Europeans. Their indulgence in primitive customs was due to the early stage of development at which they now stood. (Street, 1975:152) In The Descent of Man and Selection in Relation to Sex (1871) Darwin had expounded his theories about a continuity between animals and man, and the existence of enough similarities between the two to prove the evolution of *Homo sapiens* from some lower form. The distance between the two was seen to be too vast to convince many people but the so-called primitive 'races' supplied the missing link between animals and the culturally and technologically advanced Europeans. A biologically based racial hierarchy implied mental and moral differences and, consequently, 'natives' were seen to be inferior in all respects to the white man and could only be launched on the road to progress with his guiding hand. The Indian, and the black man in general, was essentially a passive element in this enlightening process. He was never seen as a person, but as a duty that had to be fulfilled, or a problem that had to be hastily solved and removed from sight. The passivity of the Indian contrasted vividly with the activity of the European, who had had the courage and the initiative to seek out the Indian in order to show him the benefits of Western civilization.

As the East India Company spread its sphere of influence over large parts of the subcontinent during the early nineteenth century, India and Indians ceased to be regarded as such an exotic novelty. The Company employees already 'knew' what to expect and how to behave before they even set foot in India. The Indian had been stereotyped and therefore controlled. If one knew what to expect from the Indian, s/he could not pose a threat to the new arrival. Indians were no longer judged, if in fact they ever were, as a new and intriguing people. The contempt bred from the increased familiarity with the Indians, together with the attitude of racial superiority adopted by the successive generations of British Company employees, prevented individual Indians from being judged on their own merits, instead of which any behaviour, regardless of whether it conformed to the existing patterns or not, was observed through the prism of 'Indianness', that is, what one had been taught to expect from a native. Michael Banton proposes two definitions of a stereotype. One refers to a "tendency for a given belief to be widespread in a society" while the other refers to "a tendency for a belief to be oversimplified in content and unresponsive to the objective factors." (1976:33) Certainly this second definition accounts for the durability of such popularly accepted truths, such as

the inherent cowardice, dishonesty, and childish, effeminate nature of the Hindu; the fanatical and violent nature of the Muslim; the tenacity and bravery of the Sikh; and the submissiveness and allure of the Indian woman regardless of the religion she professed.

Thus, the Europeans 'discovered' India and 'created' a whole nation of colonial subjects. The British would have the power not only to rule over a hundred million 'crouching Hindus', but also to represent them at home and abroad, in history books and in fiction. Indians were their subjects, they knew how to deal with them and keep them in check. Consequently, who else was better qualified for such a task? This chapter will discuss the general tendencies to be found in the rendering of episodes from Anglo-Indian history, in the portrayal of Indians in Anglo-Indian fiction and in the reporting of events related to 'race' or immigration in the press, the majority of which conform to the stereotype image inherited from the first contacts between Britain and India.

5.2. Mythical Pasts.

5.2.1. Promoting a National Identity.

History is far from being a simple record of past events. Because of the assumed objectivity of this discipline, its indoctrinating nature has been, until relatively recently, overlooked and underestimated by many people. As history can be and has been used by ruling powers to promote a sense of unity among their subjects by creating a common past and, consequently, the grounds for shared loyalty, the state has shown a great interest in history as the vehicle of cultural transmission. (Clark, 1990: 98; Tosh, 1991: 5-6) In present-day Great Britain the imposition of a national curriculum with its authorized version of the national past has given rise to much debate and concern over the efficacy and desirability of children being taught from a standardized text. It seems to indicate that the notion of national cohesiveness or 'Britishness' is not readily accepted by enough citizens, which has warranted the introduction of clear and unambiguous guidelines as to what it means to be British. The interest shown by the Conservative Party, currently in power, in encouraging and actively promoting

a mainstream interpretation of the events which shaped the past of the nation suggests that the emphasis will lie on the gradual evolution of constitutional liberties which each and every British citizen first inherits and then bequeaths to subsequent generations. In other words, the history of the United Kingdom has been, and will possibly continue to be, in essence, the story of an island people struggling against the tyranny of an elite minority or the yoke of foreign invaders, from which the inherently fair-minded, honourable, high-principled British character emerged victorious. Although the controversy over the content and method of the national history curriculum is still raging, the Government and the supporters of centralization have won the decisive battle as, regardless of whichever version of history ends up being taught, one, and only one, authorized text must result from the debate.

The historian Raphael Samuel (1990:120) argues that "there has never been an agreed, or authorized version of the national past" as the momentous events of British history, such as the Norman invasion or the Civil War, have been narrated from diametrically opposite perspectives, first by contemporary chroniclers and then by subsequent generations of historians. Samuel also points to popular memory, literature and art as sources of

divergent histories.² While it is true that different schools of thought have brought about varying interpretations, there has been a tendency to view British history as English history, and English history as the history of the South East, especially from the late nineteenth century onwards.

The German historian, Leopold von Ranke, founding father of modern academic history, could be held somewhat responsible for the English dominance in British history as he firmly believed in the 'nation' as the proper framework of historical study. Ranke and his followers considered that the explanation of the evolution of the nation-state was an explanation of the historical process of the people themselves. (Tosh, 1991:13-4 & 84) Consequently, a more rigorous approach to history also brought about more illusive ideas about national boundaries. As far as textbooks were concerned, after their incorporation into the union, the constituent parts of the United Kingdom practically ceased to exist and therefore to influence the onward march of the English

² One of the examples given by Samuel refers to the Civil War. Official sympathies during the late nineteenth century leant towards the parliamentary cause, whereas Yeames' painting And When Did You Last See Your Father? and Captain Marryat's Children of the New Forest (1847) must have won many children over to the Royalist camp. (1990:121-2)

towards nationhood. Thus, the Welsh appear to merge into Englishness after their comparatively early annexation in 1536. Before Scotland joined forces with England and Wales in 1707, it was as much respected and feared as any other foreign power, but from the eighteenth century onwards it becomes another part of the periphery of the dominant South East. As for Ireland, before and after the union in 1800, a large amount of text had certainly been devoted to its history, but the Irish have inevitably been portrayed as a lawless, misguided, conflictive people in dire need of the enlightening hand of the English. Ireland and the Irish were, and possibly still are, shown to be the 'problem' while the English are seen as the 'problem solvers'. (Curtis, 1991:79) As Raphael Samuel points out, the Celtic peoples have tended to be regarded as

"an obstacle to be overcome, or a dimension to be added, rather than an integral part of the whole." (1989:22)

Hugh Kearney, in the introduction to his book The British Isles. A History of Four Nations, suggests that the confusion between 'English' and 'British', or rather English historians' use of the two terms as if they were interchangeable, has emphasized the nation to the detriment of the various cultures that make up the British Isles. (1990:1-2) Such reductionism has contributed to

the emergence of the myth of a homogeneous British culture, by relegating bursts of nationalist spirit to a historical footnote of subversive, unpatriotic behaviour. Kearney goes on to map out the Britannic framework by stressing the common experiences and the interaction of the major cultures of the British Isles. He challenges the widely accepted and overestimated predominance of Anglo-Saxon culture right up to the Norman Conquest and attaches great importance to the often forgotten Scandinavian presence in both islands and the lasting legacy of the Vikings in law, language, art and even in the names of places which seemed to be so far away from Scandinavian settlements, such as Chelsea and Bermondsey in London. (ibid., chapter 4) If the Viking element has been effectively played down and, conversely, the Anglo-Saxon supremacy with its intrinsic germ of democracy which would flower during the Middle Ages has been overdetermined, it seems clear that this is just one of many attempts to forge a national identity out of a very heterogenous mixture of ethnic groups.

Likewise, on a different level, traditional or conservative history has dwelt at length on the gradual evolution of democratic rights and the basically peaceful, orderly, law-abiding British character. Violent outbursts, such as the Peasants' Revolt of 1381, are

dismissed as isolated events, highly untypical of the majority of the population. The outbreaks of urban unrest of the nineteen eighties are frequently quoted examples of the 'un-Britishness' of the black community, who do not conform to 'our' way of doing things. However, rioting was a common British working-class form of protest during much of the nineteenth century in spite of the many Reform Acts and general social improvements. If Disraeli could write in 1845 that Queen Victoria ruled over two nations, one rich and the other poor, (Sybil; or, the Two Nations) the unity of the British nation was far from being a reality. In fact, the upper classes regarded the working classes in the same light as the black colonial subjects: uncouth, barbaric and unfit to participate in the running of their country. (Marks, 1990:115) Incapable of exercising political power though they might have been, the working classes were indoctrinated with the myth of national unity and encouraged to believe in British tolerance and justice. They defended an ideal Britain and an ideal British lifestyle, which they may never have had occasion to experience, but which was nevertheless perceived as a reality. The history books which presented a unifying picture of the British nation tended to concentrate on those moments of victory achieved under a strong leader (the Spanish Armada during the reign of

Elizabeth I; Nelson and Wellington's victories in the Napoleonic Wars are two examples). The predominant tone was one of triumph and jubilation at the defeat of the enemy by a people unified by a common heritage: the struggle for liberty. The moments of conflict within the context of the British Isles have been suppressed or at least toned down so as not to distract from the primary message of unity and power. (Tosh, 1991:5-6) The surge of patriotism that was revived in support of the Falklands crisis of 1982 reveals that this tradition is still very much alive and can be invoked with alarming ease. The texts that have therefore created a British nation have become icons of what is good, just and right and what constitutes essential Britishness.

Another device for unifying the British people was the racial dimension. The imperial and post-imperial experience has played a vital role in the formation of a British nation as Britain's global pre-eminence was depicted in history books as a kind of

"godly crusade by which the white men took the benefits of white civilization into the primitive and barbaric regions of the world." (Walvin, 1984:176)

Victorian schoolchildren acquired an ethnocentric view of the world, bolstered up by the racial thinking of the nineteenth century which placed the white 'race' at the top of the human hierarchy. The imperial history that was

taught highlighted the unique qualities of the British 'race', to which was attributed the rise of the British Empire, as opposed to more mundane reasons of shrewd economic policies. As discussed in 2.1.1., during much of the nineteenth century, there was a consensus among the British, or the Anglo-Saxons as many considered themselves, as regards the 'racial' quality of the Irish. Ideas based on prevailing racial theories encouraged the belief in profound differences between the Anglo-Saxons and the Celts, the latter occupying an inferior position to the former, although, as members of the white 'race', the Irish were superior to the black colonial subjects. (Curtis, 1968: 5-8)

Thus, even among the white peoples of the world, the British set themselves up as a 'chosen race' and this racial superiority was perceived as a more cohesive element than social class. Instead of showing working-class solidarity towards the large numbers of Irish labourers who entered Britain during the mid-nineteenth century, the British workforce resented their presence and saw them as economic rivals. (Holmes, 1991:16-7) Likewise, in later years, when a new wave of immigrants (the Jews from Eastern Europe) threatened to undercut wages and job opportunities, they were seen as aliens rather than fellow workers. Nevertheless, the British and

the Irish workers were both deluded into believing themselves superior to the black coolies in the Empire and the notion of the grandeur of the white man's imperial mission bound them together more closely than their common status as oppressed workers. In spite of the intense poverty and squalid conditions of the low class Briton who received very little material benefit from India,

"as a white man he had the privilege, for what it was worth to him, of seeing all Indians from Highness to sweeper officially regarded as his inferiors." (Kiernan, 1969:58)

Although the loss of empire has pre-empted the traditional approach to imperial history teaching, it was given a new lease of life in Winston Churchill's History of the English-Speaking Peoples (1956-8) and in his war-time speeches³, many of which made overt references to "this island race" and thus subtly revived the old racial discourse of the previous century. (Walvin, 1984:177) This same racial discourse would be adopted by Churchill's successors in the Conservative Party when the immigration issue appeared to threaten the cohesion of the nation during the nineteen sixties and seventies. Furthermore, Margaret Thatcher would use the highly debatable term 'island race' to rekindle war-time

³ See The Speeches of Winston Churchill ed. David Cannadine, Penguin, 1989.

feelings of patriotism during the Falklands crisis of 1982.⁴ Thus, judging by the facility with which 'racial' pride could be hurt, it seems that the lessons of the past had been learnt thoroughly. The following section will look at a cross-section of history textbooks designed for use in junior and secondary schools in order to demonstrate how the most crucial events in the history of Anglo-Indian relationships have perpetuated racial myths and contributed to the consolidation of stereotype images.

5.2.2. Black Holes in History Books.

Schools are responsible for transmitting contemporary moral attitudes and cultural values besides academic knowledge. Officially established interpretations of historical events are usually learnt at school through the medium of the textbook, which is regarded as an authorized version of those events under study. However, if on one hand a child is being instilled with notions of justice, tolerance and the common humanity of the people of the world, and on the other hand, s/he is being taught his/her

⁴ "The people of the Falkland Islands, like the people of the United Kingdom, are an island race. Their way of life is British; their allegiance is to the Crown." (3rd April 1982. Quoted in Barnett, 1982:30)

country's history from a racially biased perspective by means of textbooks soaked in imperialist sentiment bordering on arrogance, there must be an internal conflict. What the Dummetts call 'crypto-racialists', that is people

"who have, side by side within them, both deeply rooted racial prejudices and an awareness of the shameful of racial prejudice," (Dummett & Dummett, 1987:115)

are the end products of what could be seen as a double school standard.

Valerie E. Chancellor (1970), in her survey of history textbooks from 1800 up to World War I, shows how schools reflected and reinforced dominant racial attitudes in the rendering of Indian events. The event that occupies a disproportionately predominant position in relation to its real significance is the notorious 'Black Hole of Calcutta' affair of 1756. Few schoolchildren could have been unaware of this episode of Anglo-Indian history, as the idiom 'black hole' soon became part of the English language to refer to a prison lock-up and, more loosely, to a narrow, confined space where a large number of people are gathered.

Chancellor notes that this event was "widely reported in the textbooks" (1970:122) as an example of Oriental barbarity in comparison to British restraint. Keightley's Elementary History of England (1841), while conceding that

the Nawab of Bengal may not have deliberately intended to murder the English, suggests that "[their death] gave him no concern". Holborn's Historical Series (1882) reports that the Indian guards "savagely mocked" the Englishmen's cries for mercy, and Edwards' A School History of England (1901) describes the incarcerated English trampling each other down "amid the laughter of the guards". (Quoted in *ibid.*)

As regards post World War I textbooks, the legend of the 'Black Hole' continued to figure as the first encounter between the British and the Indians. The account given in The Complete History Readers, N^o VI, published in the 1930s⁵, is worth quoting as an example of the historian's role as storyteller. Certain elements are suppressed, others highlighted to create a "verbal fiction, the contents of which are as much invented as found". (White, 1978:42)

"At this time the Nabob of Bengal, Surajah Dowlah, was quite a young man, and, jealous of the growing power of the British, he suddenly attacked Calcutta, taking prisoners those who had not fled. One hundred and forty-six of these wretched prisoners were packed into a little room, where all night long they fought and struggled for the little air which was able to make its way in. When morning came only twenty-three remained alive; no wonder that fearful prison was spoken of as the 'Black Hole of Calcutta'.

Roused by this horrible event, Clive set off at once, recaptured Calcutta, and forced the nabob to submit.

⁵ The exact date of publication is not recorded.

Surajah Dowlah, however, allied himself with the French, who were only too willing to attack the British, and, in 1757, a great battle was fought at Plassey." (c. 1930: 138)

The more iniquitous the Nawab's behaviour appeared, the more meritorious Clive's became. As has been mentioned in 4.2.2., there was nothing very "great" about Clive's victory at Plassey, won as it was through intrigue. What is revealing about this account, which, like all of the Black Hole stories, is based on the tale told by one of the survivors, John Zephaniah Holwell,⁶ is the relationship of cause and effect that is established. Clive is portrayed as an instrument of justice, spurred by a deep sense of loyalty to avenge his compatriots, although it is doubtful whether Clive was roused by anything short of ambition and cupidity. (Spear, 1978: 81-6) Even accounting for exaggerations, there is no doubt that a certain number of British people were imprisoned by the young, inexperienced Nawab, but the event, which soon became part of imperialist hagiology, clearly established the cruelty and injustice of the Indian, which contrasted strongly with the integrity and

⁶ Holwell was a physician who made the first serious British study of Indian religion. He published essays on the doctrines, creation myths and festivals during the 1760s, but he is only remembered nowadays for his association with the Calcutta incident. (see History Today, vol.32, April 1982:32-37)

bravery of the Englishman, in this case, Robert Clive. The Complete History Readers makes no mention of the Amritsar massacre of 1919, the Indian Congress, or Gandhi, in spite of the fact that, or perhaps because, all three were rocking the British hold on India at the time the textbooks were in current use.

The Growth of the British Commonwealth, by Elsa Nunn, originally published in 1932 and reprinted for the thirteenth time in 1959, inevitably includes the story of the Black Hole. The emphasis is on the bravery-against-all-odds of the British, who "prepared to defend themselves" in a "little garrison", the women having been "hastily sent away". (1959:74) No mention is made of the speedy flight of the British Governor of Calcutta, Roger Drake, and his abandonment of his compatriots, including women and children, to the invading Indians. (Bowle, 1977:133; Wolpert, 1982:179-180) Nunn does indeed refer to Amritsar, but leaves rather a large number of details to children's imagination.

"On one occasion, a crowd came together to hold a meeting against the government's orders. Then a terrible thing happened. A British general, alarmed, ordered Gurkha troops to fire on them, and nearly four hundred were killed. This made many Indians more resentful against the British." (Nunn, 1959:184)

The general is not named; there is no indication of date or even year (the Black Hole is reported to have occurred

in June 1756); in short, the situation is not contextualized at all. This paragraph immediately follows the statement:

"Gandhi wanted the people to be self-controlled, but some were disorderly." What else could a schoolchild be expected to do but make the logical connection between "disorderly" and General Dyer's repressive action? In other words, the fractious children were rightly punished.

In John Bareham's The Age of Change (Book 4 of the Awake to History series, published in 1966) historical events are related in the form of stories. Story N^o 2, "The Trial of Lord Clive" is a dialogue between an uncle and niece taking place at the time of Clive's trial (1773). This book, in use during the sixties, depicts Clive as a misunderstood national hero in spite of the trial, which in fact was a Parliamentary investigation into the alleged corruption rife among East India Company servants. (Huttenback, 1975:7-8)

"\[Clive] was made a lord after he beat the Nawab of Bengal at the battle of Plassey. The Nawab had captured Calcutta, and locked our people there in a tiny room for a whole hot summer night. Most of them died. ... It is due to Clive that our Company now rules over a great part of India. He has made the Company rich and England powerful. We should be very grateful to him, instead of attacking him'.

Jane [the niece] agreed. She felt sorry for the great general, now that she knew his story." (Bareham, 1966: 12-3)

Twenty years after Indian independence, the fact that such blatantly imperialist textbooks were still being produced suggests that British society had not yet come to terms with the demise of the Empire.

The Black Hole was kept alive in popular memory by a rather self-defeating inclusion of the tale in a textbook published in 1973. Denis Judd's The British Raj attempts to give an impartial account of British colonization of India, and, in general terms, this objective is fulfilled. However, Judd includes the Black Hole incident and even devotes a whole page to it. Although he notes that the contemporary account of the affair (Holwell's), which he quotes verbatim, "perhaps [uses] over-dramatic terms" (1973:36), the amount of text spent on an incident that merely justified low opinions of the Indian people and "would ignite generations of British schoolboys with passionate indignation and outrage against the 'uncivilized natives' of India" (Wolpert, 1982:179) inadvertently breathes new life into an image that was finally being consigned to the imperial store-room.

Judd mentions Amritsar, although his discussion of the whole affair takes up less than a page, whereas his unsuccessful demystification of the Black Hole occupies one page. Dyer's action is almost condoned: "Until Amritsar, the British had been remarkably restrained under nationalist provocation". The massacre of over four

hundred people is described further down the page as "the strong hand shown at Amritsar" (1973:105) so the sub-text is obvious: the Indian nationalists were ungrateful terrorists. Valerie Chancellor points out that this was the underlying message to be found in the majority of pre-World War I textbooks:

"the most frequent impression conveyed about the Indians and their near neighbours, the Afghans, is that they are cruel and totally unfitted to rule themselves" (1970: 122) and that

"the Indians were lucky to be ruled by the British." (ibid., 123)

Nevertheless, there is a genuine attempt to view Britain's imperial role rather more critically in the period since decolonization. R.J. Cootes' Britain Since 1700, published in 1968, dedicates two chapters out of a total of twenty-seven to the Empire. Chapter 19, entitled "The British Overseas. The Empire (1783-1914) and the Irish Problem", makes no mention of the Black Hole and only refers to the Mutiny very briefly. Amritsar is forgotten completely, but possibly because of the time lapse between the end of this chapter and the beginning of chapter 25 (the second chapter on the Empire) which is entitled "Sunset on the Empire. The Commonwealth, Ireland and the EEC." Stephen Ashton's The British in India: From Trade to Empire, published in 1987, is the most recent

textbook examined. It avoids the Black Hole incident and portrays Clive as a corrupt opportunist. Amritsar is only listed in the chronology and discussion of the Mutiny, called the "Rebellion", is limited to a caption underneath the picture of a sepoy. Ashton's book, meant to be a social history, includes opinions from contemporary sources to reflect the attitudes of the people. Although the accent is on trade and social life, Ashton quotes Governor-General Hastings' unflattering view of Indians without adding a corresponding quote by a prominent Indian of the day, which no doubt would have been just as unfavourable.

"The Hindoo appears a being nearly limited to mere animal functions ... with no higher intellect than a dog, an elephant, or a monkey, might be supposed to be capable of obtaining". (1987:44)

According to Valerie Chancellor, the treatment accorded to the 1857 Mutiny is "another example of Oriental cruelty." (1970:122) A significant minority of nineteenth century textbooks do note that the British used excessively brutal methods to suppress the rebellion. Tower History Readers (1911), written for junior schoolchildren, states that "[the British] committed acts of revenge which, may be, we should now like to forget." (p. 161. Quoted in Chancellor, 1970:123) Certainly many authors took this advice as astonishingly few other

textbooks present a fair, impartial version of the events. In the vast majority of the textbooks written after the Mutiny, any previous criticism of British rule in India, for example accusations of exploitation during the days of the East India Company in the eighteenth century, disappears completely to be replaced by an avalanche of praise for Britain's imperial mission. Pitman's King Edward History Readers, published in 1901, tells schoolchildren that

"Under [Viceroy Lawrence's] able guidance the natives soon learned to recognise the justice and sound sense of their conquerors and gradually settled down to peaceful work in the rice-fields." (p.190-1; Quoted in Chancellor, 1970:123)

The Nawab of Bengal was by no means the arch villain of Anglo-Indian history books as that dubious honour must fall to Nana Sahib. He was the adopted son of the ex-Peshwa (prince) of Bithur, Baji Rao II, at whose death he hoped and expected to be recognized as the heir of the Maratha confederacy. However, in accordance with Dalhousie's doctrine of lapse (see 4.1.1.) the British refused to recognize Nana Sahib, and the large territory of the Maratha confederacy passed into British hands in 1853. (Huttenback, 1975:3 & 71; Gupta, 1963) As a result of this frustrated inheritance, Nana Sahib, like the Rani of Jhansi and Tantia Tope for similar reasons, emerged as popular leaders of the Indian cause, although none of them

were able to unite the people en masse in order to fight against the alien invaders. Nana Sahib was probably no more an early Indian nationalist than Robert Clive, and even the Indian historian, Pratul Chandra Gupta, by no means pro-British, describes him as "greedy and weak" and not easily "absolved from responsibility" for the Cawnpore massacre (1963:72 & 120), but this is still a long way from his stock role in British history books as the incarnation of evil. The Complete History Readers N^o VI shows the Indian leader, and by extension all Indians, in his true colours:

"At Cawnpore ...[Nana Sahib] turned on them savagely; about a thousand men, women, and children were besieged, and though they held out gallantly it began to be evident that their defence would be useless. At last Nana Sahib offered to let them depart in boats on the Ganges, but no sooner had they started than on all sides they were attacked, overpowered, and slain. Many of the women and children were dragged from the boats and taken prisoners; ... Numbers of the women and children had been murdered and their bodies thrust into a well, and when the British soldiers saw it they vowed a terrible vengeance on the natives." (c. 1930: 212)

The cruelty and cowardice of Nana Sahib is made more implicit by the continuous insistence on the courage of the British. Throughout the text describing the Mutiny, there are constant references to "a brave defence"; "[the British] braved the fire"; "... fought bravely"; "they held out gallantly" (p.214). The author of this narrative

is much more restrained when relating the British reprisals:

"Whenever they showed in force, the mutineers were attacked. Those captured were severely punished." (ibid.)

These "mutineers" included civilians, who, theoretically, could not mutiny as only soldiers, sailors, or other persons in subordinate position can mutiny against their officers. Moreover, the official British version of the events of 1857 was that it was definitely not a popular uprising.⁷ (Mason, 1991) Certainly the indiscriminate hanging of Indian peasants without any form of trial is a somewhat euphemistic term for 'severe punishment'. As George Otto Trevelyan reluctantly points out in his account of the siege of Cawnpore written in 1865:

"But the truth was that it mattered to [the British] very little whom they killed, as long as they killed somebody. ... our unhappy soldiers ... regarding carnage as a duty and rapine as a pleasure, they enacted a scene into the details of which an Englishman at least will not care to inquire." (1992:206-7)

As far as The Complete History Readers. N^o VI is concerned the 1857 Mutiny is the last event in Anglo-Indian history worthy of a schoolchild's interest as no further mention is made of the subcontinent in the book.

⁷ See also Ainslie T. Embree, (ed) 1857 in India. Mutiny or War of Independence?, Boston: D.C. Heath & Co., 1963.

Elsa Nunn's History. Book One. The Growth of the British Commonwealth, in current use in the early sixties, reinforces the accepted 'truth' that Orientals are treacherous and dishonest.

"Soon a terrible story was heard about the fate of English people at Cawnpore, a city not far from Lucknow. ... Just as the last man had got on board, Nana Sahib gave orders to fire. The unhappy people were shot down, the boats set on fire, and every Englishman killed, except four. The women and children were kept imprisoned. ... After this dreadful discovery the troops went into battle crying "Remember Cawnpore." (1959: 174-5)

Actually who fired the first shot will remain another of those historical enigmas, since had Nana Sahib intended to murder the British in cold blood, surely he would have ordered the confiscation of their weapons. Trevelyan does not doubt that it was "a dastardly breach of faith" (1992:134) as Nana Sahib had promised the British a safe conduct, but his account, like the majority of so-called first-hand accounts of the Mutiny, resorts to the mythical discourse used by imperial British historians, committed to the defence of the Raj. For them the Raj represented progress, civilization and all the positive attributes associated with them. On the other hand, India without the steadying hand of the British and under the leadership of men like Nana Sahib for example, represented anarchy and barbarity. Therefore, Nana Sahib had to become the signifier of India-without-the-British, and thus fulfil

the role of "world-noted malefactor" (ibid.,201), which, prior to the Mutiny, had been occupied by the Nawab of Bengal. It is not the purpose of this study to rehabilitate Nana Sahib or restore his good name as he was, no doubt, a scheming rogue,⁸ but it seems to me that ideological concepts such as civilization or advancement versus degeneracy or retrogression became the signified of Robert Clive or John and Henry Lawrence⁹ versus Siraj-ud-daula or Nana Sahib.

The British Raj (Judd, 1973) devotes a whole chapter (thirteen pages) to "The Great Mutiny". The emphasis is on the disloyalty of the Indians and the heroism of the British, no suggestion being made that the latter were in fact alien invaders. In spite of a detailed description of some of the more gruesome reprisals carried out by the British, it is outweighed by the inclusion of several first-hand accounts of survivors, in particular women left

⁸ Manohar Malgonkar, in one of the few Indian novels in English on the 1857 Uprising, rescues Nana Sahib from the stereotype of heathen villain. However, it is doubtful whether Nana Sahib was in fact the romantic hero Malgonkar creates in The Devil's Wind (1972).

⁹ John Lawrence, known as the 'Saviour of the Punjab' for his extensive economic, social and political reforms, was Viceroy of India from 1864-69. He became "an archetypical mid-Victorian hero". (Morris, 1982a:186) His brother Henry, former Chief Commissioner of the Punjab, was killed during the early days of the siege of Lucknow in July 1857.

widowed and childless. Judd also includes a picture of a Englishwoman, with two dead Indians lying on the ground next to her, shooting at a third Indian. The caption states

"Atrocities were committed by both sides in the Mutiny - and acts of heroism. The engraving shows Mrs. Wheeler defending herself against the mutineers at Cawnpore." (1973:70)

It remains somewhat ambiguous whether the acts of heroism were also 'committed by both sides' and the many Indians who took in and looked after fleeing English men and women at great personal risk were presumably not considered heroic enough as no mention of them is made.

Pamela Cardwell's The Indian Mutiny (1975) does present a fair, balanced account of the events of 1857. In line with most post-independence renderings of the rebellion, which no longer required the historian to defend the Empire, it practically coalesces with the Indian version. Cardwell includes an extract from a newspaper published in India in 1957, commemorating the hundredth anniversary of the War of Independence. Although this textbook is one of the most objective of those selected, it also contains a kind of 'black hole' in the shape of an inexplicable omission. Whereas the infamous Calcutta incident of 1756 was, until recently, faithfully reproduced lest British children should forget

how barbaric the 'coloured races' can be, the Black Hole of Lahore has been "passed over in silence by our histories". (Thompson, 1925:64)

In the early days of the Mutiny, a large number of sepoy from the 26th Native Infantry stationed at Lahore in the Punjab fled, after having been disarmed as a precaution. However, many of these fleeing sepoy were captured by Frederic Cooper, the deputy commissioner of Amritsar while trying to cross the river Ravi. Cooper's own account of the incident needs no commentary:

"As fortune would have it ... a deep dry well was discovered within one hundred yards of the police-station, and its presence furnished a convenient solution to the one remaining difficulty which was of sanitary consideration - the disposal of the corpses of the dishonoured soldiers.

... About 150 having been thus executed, one of the [Sikh] executioners swooned away (he was the oldest of the firing-party), and a little respite was allowed. Then proceeding, the number had arrived at two hundred and thirty-seven; when the district officer was informed that the remainder refused to come out of the bastion, where they had been imprisoned temporarily a few hours before. ... The doors were opened and, behold! they were nearly all dead! Unconsciously, the tragedy of Holwell's Black Hole had been re-enacted. ... Forty-five bodies, dead from fright, exhaustion, fatigue, heat, and partial suffocation, were dragged into the light, and consigned, in common with all the other bodies, into one common pit, by the hands of the village sweepers.

... The above account, written by the principal actor in the scene himself, might read strangely at home: a single Anglo-Saxon, supported by a section of Asiatics, undertaking so tremendous a responsibility, and coldly presiding over so memorable an execution, without the excitement of battle, or a sense of individual injury, to imbue the proceedings with the faintest hue of

vindictiveness. The Governors of the Punjab are of the true English stamp and mould, and knew that England expected every man to do his duty, and that duty done, thanks them warmly for doing it." (Cooper, 1858:160-164)

The text speaks eloquently for itself and, to my mind, proves that in the same way there are black holes and Black Holes, there are wells and Wells. It must be remembered that the well at Cawnpore, into which the bodies of the butchered women and children were thrown, became a kind of shrine to the British. They even had it covered with a mourning angel of white marble. (Morris, 1982a:236) Thus it appears from the texts discussed above that the dominant ambition of historians has been to

"make history - rather than fiction- the successor of epic as the repository of society's values and of its understanding of the world". (Gossman, 1978:35)

Although more recent textbooks attempt to be fair and balanced in their rendering of the history of the Empire, the tone had been set and the damage had been done by the biased accounts that were the norm in the texts written during the heyday of the Raj.

5.3. Novels That Make History.

5.3.1. Novels That Make Indians.

Clive's success at Plassey and the gradual spread of the East India Company over much of Indian territory brought the Indian experience home to many British people. Nabobs, that is, retired Company officials returning to Britain, displayed their wealth¹⁰ ostentatiously and often brought back Indian servants with them as they meant to continue living in the luxurious style they had become accustomed to in the East. (Fryer, 1989:77-9) Consequently, as discussed in 3.1., Indians were not unheard of in Britain during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. However, they were few and far between and the majority were employed as servants or ayahs to former company officials. Any Briton coming

¹⁰ It must be remembered that the original purpose of the East India Company had not been to govern India, but to make as much money as possible out of it. In The Surgeon's Daughter (1827) Walter Scott writes that "Britain ... was surprised by the return of individuals who had left their native country as adventurers, but now reappeared there surrounded by Oriental wealth and Oriental luxury, which dimmed even the splendour of the most wealthy of the British nobility." (1897:50-1)

into contact with an Indian in those days would probably have met a servant and thus have seen a person occupying an inferior social status.¹¹ If s/he had previously read any of the growing number of travellers' tales about the Orient, s/he would no doubt have read that the Indian was obsequious, docile and secretive. The sight of real Indians in a servile position merely reinforced what Edward Said calls the "textual attitude" towards the unknown. If a real-life encounter corroborates what one has read in a book, in this case the apparent docility of the Indian, not only does that fact become an authorized truth for that particular person, but it encourages him/her to expect docility to be part of the make-up of any Indian, real or fictional. As far as the individual is concerned, the authority of the text is proved beyond doubt, and, as a result, the docility of the Indian is actually increased as his/her docility stands for his/her essential Indianness. (Said, 1991:92-4)

¹¹ The reaction in Cranford to Major Jenkyns' Indian servant may have been fairly typical:
"We were rather dismayed at their bringing two servants with them, a Hindoo body-servant for the major, and a steady elderly maid for his wife; ... Martha, to be sure, had never ended her staring at the East Indian's white turban and brown complexion, and I saw that Miss Matilda shrank away from him a little as he waited at dinner."
(Gaskell, 1906:41-2)

Popular literature did much to strengthen such stereotypes,¹² as for most people the picture received of 'primitive' people and their lives derived from the large number of 'ethnographic novels' produced during the latter half of the nineteenth century. Writers such as R.M. Ballantyne, H. Rider Haggard, Rudyard Kipling and G.A. Henty possibly provided Victorian readers with their main source of information on the subject 'races'. (Greenberger, 1969:1; Thorpe, 1986:179) Although knowledge about 'primitive' people was increasing in many areas, such as anthropology and palaeontology, popular fiction spread ideas of racial superiority more effectively than the bulletins of the Ethnological Society of London, read by only a small minority of professional scientists.

Novels that dealt with the exotic tended to emphasize the savage side of life, which, on one hand, made the novels more exciting and fascinating to a repressed Victorian reader, while on the other hand, they stressed

¹² Another common 'fact' about Orientals and people of mixed 'race' was their absolute disregard for European moral standards. The association of Orientals with the degenerate underworld can be seen in Oscar Wilde's The Picture of Dorian Gray (first published 1891): "A half-caste, in a ragged turban and a shabby ulster, grinned a hideous greeting as he thrust a bottle of brandy and two tumblers in front of them [Adrian Singleton and Dorian Gray]" (1981:188-9)

the need for 'progress' to be taken to these outlandish places.¹³ (Street, 1975: 10-12 & 1986:100) Furthermore, the parts of foreign countries, such as India, which were described were presumed to be typical of the whole. As Allen Greenberger points out, most British writers set their Indian stories in the Punjab, the North West Frontier Province and the Himalayan foothills, so the reading public accepted scenes of village life as being representative of the whole of the subcontinent. Urban Indians, who no doubt would include many that did not conform to the stereotype character, are absent from much of imperial British fiction.

"The rural India that the British writers describe is, indeed, an almost Indianless India". (Greenberger, 1969:39)

In other words, the India depicted in much Anglo-Indian fiction is the India that the British wanted to see, with unobtrusive natives who acknowledged the superiority of the Sahibs. G.A. Henty, the author of approximately eighty historical novels for adolescents, nine of which were set in India or the bordering regions, centred his

¹³ India was also seen as an outlet to missionary zeal. Progress, in the guise of Christianity, was taken to India by people like Charlotte Brontë's St. John Rivers who "firm, faithful, and devoted, full of energy and zeal, and truth, he labours for his race; he clears their painful way to improvement; he hews down like a giant the prejudices of creed and caste that encumbers it." (Brontë, 1984:477)

stories around British colonial life with Indians barely having much more than walk-on parts. (Naidis, 1964:50-6)

What Greenberger calls the "Era of Confidence" (1880-1910), to which Flora Annie Steel, whose novel On the Face of the Waters will be discussed in the following section, belongs, was marked by a strong sense of the positive benefits to India and her people that British culture and values had brought. The Indians are invariably portrayed as passive, fatalistic and childlike, in contrast to the practical, assertive, dominant Englishmen. The British assumed that their ability to lead was an attribute of the white 'race', and that the black or brown 'races' were destined to obey. One of the most influential writers of this period was Rudyard Kipling, who, like many of his contemporaries, felt that the British had a moral duty towards India and expressed as much in his writing. His first-hand experience of India is reflected in his realistic portraits of Indian people, but his short stories and novels also legitimize the prejudiced attitudes of his British characters. (Walsh, 1990:160-2)

In his short story "The Head of the District", in which a Bengali is appointed Deputy Commissioner on the death of his British predecessor, Kipling shows how Indians lack the essential qualities of leadership which they would need were they to be allowed to rule their own country as

the Bengali deserts his post at the first sign of trouble. Moreover, the underlying message of the story is that without the British as a superior unifying force the Indians would never be able to agree amongst themselves. A Pathan's complaint to an English officer suggests the impossibility of Indians occupying positions of authority:

"But, O Sahib, has the government gone mad to send a black Bengali dog to us? Am I to pay service to such a one? And are you to work under him? What does it mean?" (Kipling, 1987:120)

Kipling's chameleon hero of his 1901 novel Kim is one of the rare nonstereotypic portraits of an Indian in colonialist literature. Nevertheless, underneath the apparent celebration of the variety and value of Indian cultures, the narrator insists on Kim's Britishness, despite all the character's vehement denials to the contrary. The boy's racial destiny is there, in his genes, and

"Though he was burned black as any native; though he spoke the vernacular by preference, ... though he consorted on terms of perfect equality with the small boys of the bazaar; Kim was white..." (1979:7)

Indian characters in Kim are intelligent and can think for themselves, but in Kim's relationship with the two opposing bands, Indians and Europeans, Kipling slips into the traditional stereotypic taxonomy: the rational versus the emotional. Kim is of practical use to the British,

who train him to become an intelligence agent, which, ironically, allows him to continue belonging to the people to whom he is emotionally tied: the Indians. (JanMohamed, 1985:78-81)

G.A. Henty's Indian novels, like Kipling's "The Head of the District" imply that the coming of the British Raj was beneficial to the natives. Novels like Through the Sikh War: A Tale of the Conquest of the Punjab (1893)

state quite explicitly that British rule brought peace and prosperity to India:¹⁴

"A generation or two at the outside and the English will be rulers in Serinagur I think, sahib. What a blessing it would be for the country! In the first place, there would be neither over-taxation nor oppression. All would live and till their lands and work their loom, secure of enjoying their earnings in peace." (Henty, 1893: 215)

Virtually all Henty's Indians are cowardly and dishonest, with the exception of the Sikhs, who, having remained loyal during the 1857 Mutiny, are more sympathetically portrayed. His heroes embody recognized British qualities

¹⁴ It must be noted that the Indian historian Prakash Tandon records a generalized feeling of relief, if not gratitude, in the first period of British rule after the annexation of the Punjab in 1849.

"What impressed our elders most, ...[was] a whole system of government that was bent to public good, with no apparent personal benefit to its officers". (1961:12) However, despite turning the Punjab into one of the wealthiest regions of India with the building of numerous canals, the British never managed to foment a sense of unity among the Punjabis, and this 'non-legacy' has survived until the present day.

of courage, honour and endurance and must have impressed thousands of Victorian and Edwardian schoolboys with their exploits. (Naidis, 1964)

In the novels of this period hardly any mention is made of the rise of Indian nationalism, in spite of the fact that by 1885 the Indian National Congress had been founded. (Huttenback, 1975:187) Whether this was due to ignorance or just plain indifference to the state of affairs only proves that the India that was written about was not necessarily the India that was actually experienced. Not only did these Raj authors reflect predominant British opinions but, in many ways, they helped to shape them and maintain them, as their stories were highly effective vehicles for imperialist sentiment. (Greenberger, 1969:62 & 202)

From 1910 to 1935 (Greenberger's "Era of Doubt") British writers begin to register changing attitudes towards India and the beginning of the end of the Raj. Indians begin to feature as more prominent characters, although Muslims would continue to be favoured over and above Hindus, being thought more reliable, less devious and, as the previous conquerors of India, more active and soldier-like. In one of the leading novels of this period, E.M.Forster's A Passage To India (1924), the main Hindu character, Professor Godbole, hovers between the comic

and the eccentric. However, none of the portraits of the characters (British and Indian) are very flattering and the chief Muslim figure, Dr. Aziz, is almost childlike in his candour and vulnerability. Moreover, his excitability and highly emotional nature reinforces the restraint and responsibility of British rule.

Writers of this period were less concerned with the effect of alien rule on the Indians than with the harm done to the British character as a result of absolute control over the subcontinent. Even an anti-Raj writer like George Orwell, who believed that the best thing the British could do would be to leave India and let the Indians manage their own affairs, was more concerned with the negative consequences of the Empire on the rulers than on the ruled. In his short story "Shooting an Elephant" (1936) the narrator is obliged to kill an elephant so as not to lose face with the natives. He is forced into acting, not as he would like, but as a sahib is expected to act. The white man is therefore imprisoned in a self-made gaol (Cawasjee, 1989:62; Goonetilleke, 1988:114), and, like Conrad's Kurtz, is "trapped by his own self-image". (JanMohamed, 1985:71) Orwell does not depict his Indian characters any more favourably than the pro-Raj

writers¹⁵ and in fact he only seems interested in India as far as its pernicious effects on the British are concerned.

Despite the realization that the days of the Raj were numbered, there was hardly any criticism of colonial rule. On the contrary, Britain's past accomplishments were generally regarded with respect and admiration as the following extract from Maud Diver's novel The Singer Passes: An Indian Tapestry (1934) illustrates:

"We can hand over the reins of Government, if nothing else will satisfy India. But we can't hand over with it, a gift for sound and just administration. It's a talent only certain races possess; and even so, it's the fruit of long experience. We've built it up, out here, on a scale that no race could have attempted or achieved." (p.504. Quoted in Greenberger, 1969:94)

From 1935 onwards, when the transfer of power into Indian hands became an acknowledged reality, Anglo-Indian fiction tends to look backwards as opposed to dwelling on the death throes of the Raj, which explains the predominantly nostalgic mode. Paul Scott's The Raj Quartet (1966-75), written almost twenty years after Indian independence, is possibly the most

¹⁵ Burma was part of the British Raj and its people were, to the British, indistinguishable from the Indians. In Orwell's novel Burmese Days (1934) the Burmese are extremely unpleasant characters and the only native character who is at all likeable is the Indian, Dr. Veraswami, who borders on the obsequious in his rather exaggerated pro-British sympathies.

representative of Greenberger's "Era of Melancholy". The four books centre on the British view of their role in India and the colonial experience itself, which is as Benita Parry defines it:

"the ultimately destructive psychological satisfactions of having power over subjugated peoples, which enslave the masters and paralyse their capacity for choice and the exercise of free will". (1975:366)

Scott's Indian characters have progressed somewhat from being Indians first and individuals only second, which was the tendency in traditional Anglo-Indian fiction (Greenberger, 1969:204), but his main Indian character, Hari Kumar, is as much an alien in India as the British. He could have been, and perhaps, should have been an ardent nationalist instead of an anglicized Indian. (Times Literary Supplement, 1966:629) He is no doubt what Thomas Babington Macaulay had in mind when he passed his notorious minute on education:¹⁶ an Indian in blood and colour but English in taste, in opinions, in morals and intellect. Despite being

"So English in thought, speech and behaviour that he is in fact a dark-skinned Englishman," (Mellors, 1975:66)

¹⁶ His resolution of 7 March 1835 declared "that the great objects of the British Government ought to be the promotion of European literature and science. ... [money should be] henceforth employed in imparting to the Native population knowledge of English literature and science through the medium of the English language." (Spear, 1978:126-7)

Hari Kumar is a misfit, rejected by both communities. Like his literary predecessor, Dr. Aziz, he is accused of a crime he did not commit, at least in The Raj Quartet there clearly is a crime, and like Aziz, he is cast in the role of the victim of British justice, which, by definition, is a passive and fatalistic one. However wrong Ronald Merrick is, he acts, whereas Kumar, in spite of his innocence, can only receive. Kumar's hybrid culture prevents him from really belonging to either side, which was the fate of the Anglo-Indians during the Raj. In fact, as Benita Parry argues, Kumar

"is more like a stereotype of an Anglo-Indian than of a cultivated Englishman or a westernised Indian." (1975:367)

The Anglo-Indians, the descendants of mixed parentage who were known as Eurasians prior to 1911, have never been favourably treated in British fiction. The members of this mixed breed were supposed to have acquired the worst traits of both 'races', the men being obsequious towards the English and imperious towards the Indians,¹⁷ and the women beautiful but scheming and devious. (Cawasjee, 1989:67) A community, which owed its existence to the

¹⁷ In Kipling's "His Chance in Life" (1887) Michele D'Cruze illustrates the 'typical' Eurasian attitude; "He would not be seen smoking a hookah for anything; and he looked down on natives as only a man with seven-eighths native blood in his veins can." (1987:92)

first Europeans, has rarely been sympathetically portrayed by British authors.¹⁸ who merely reflected the contempt with which these people were held by the Europeans in India during the Raj. As living reminders of the 'horrors' of miscegenation, the Anglo-Indians were scorned and marginalized.

Indian characters in British fiction have generally been misrepresented, or, to say the least, unfairly treated. They have been lumped together and labelled 'natives' or 'subject peoples', which, on one hand has been the equivalent of negating their individuality and, on the other, has become the signifier for 'evil' or 'ignorance'. This has been an image that has been created by imperialist fiction, more concerned with its ideological function than with the truth value of its representation. (JanMohamed, 1985:62-3) Even after decolonization, with the arrival of numerous Asians in Britain and the emergence of a community of British-born Asians, the literary character of the 'Indian' has not disappeared entirely from fiction as Dennis Potter's Ali in The Singing Detective (1988) proves. The Asian cardiac

¹⁸ Indian authors have been somewhat kinder to the Anglo-Indian community, for example G.V. Desani's All About H. Hatterr (N.Y., Lancer Books, 1970) Nevertheless, John Masters, in Bhowani Junction (1954), does give the two Anglo-Indian protagonists a chance to air their grievances.

patient, known to everyone as 'Ali', incarnates the childlike native bound by ties of affection to the Sahib, in this case the psoriatic, arthritic Marlowe. Ali is bullied and insulted by Marlowe, who in fact depends to a great deal on the kindness of the Asian, whose unflagging devotion has a very 'colonial' air to it.¹⁹

The image of the 'Indian' is being challenged in the latter part of the twentieth century by British Asian writers, as will be discussed in the following chapter. The survival of this negative stereotype owes much to the vast number of novels which were inspired by the 1857 Mutiny and which, to a greater or lesser extent, represented the 'Indians' as the forces of evil and disorder. The following section will look at five Mutiny novels in terms of their contribution to the canonization of the literary creation, the 'Indian'.

¹⁹ Suresht Renjen Bald argues that the character of Ali does not conform to the stereotype Indian as he is "drawn with care and love" and that both Ali and Marlowe share a 'skin' problem. (1991:417-8)

5.3.2. Novels That Make Mutinies.

In his annotated bibliography covering the years 1800 to 1970 (1973), Brijen K. Gupta records eighty-three novels²⁰ which have the 1857 Mutiny as their main theme. What is most interesting and highly significant about the Mutiny novels Gupta mentions is the fact that only one was written by an Indian author,²¹ the remaining eighty-two being the work of British writers. Gupta has only included novels about India originally written in English or translated into English, but even taking this into account, the virtual absence of Indian authors in comparison to British writers is, to say the least, remarkable. Indians writing in English have dealt more extensively with themes such as the Partition of the

²⁰ The exact number of Mutiny novels is difficult to establish. Ralph J. Crane states that "by the time of Independence the Mutiny had been the subject of at least forty-seven novels" (1992:11), whereas Steve Attridge puts the number even higher than Gupta: "about 100". (1986:60)

²¹ Moreover, Gopal Das Khosla's The Last Mughal (Delhi: Hind Pocket, 1969) centres around the aging Bahadur Shah rather than the uprising itself.

subcontinent after Independence²² and the events of 1857 have been left, as it were, to the historians. The British, however, have not simply used the Mutiny as an excuse to write romantic adventure stories of courage and determination, they have created a sub-genre of literature. (Attridge, 1986:60) Mutiny novels flourished in the last quarter of the nineteenth century and even in 1973 J.G. Farrell still considered it to be a valid literary subject.

It cannot be denied that the Mutiny inspired the Victorian imagination far more than either Crimea or the Zulu Wars. An anonymous journalist in Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine wrote that

"of all the great events of this century, as they are reflected in fiction, the Indian Mutiny has taken the firmest hold on the popular imagination." (1897:218)

Certainly during Queen Victoria's reign there was continual military action of more or less intensity going on in some corner of the ever expanding Empire, but few of these campaigns had any real impact on the arts²³ except

²² One of the best novels written about Partition is Train to Pakistan (Delhi: Ravi Dayal Publisher, 1992) by the Sikh historian and novelist, Khushwant Singh.

²³ I mention "the arts" because the Indian Mutiny was a source of inspiration for painting as well as literature. In February 1858 two of the first paintings dealing with the Mutiny first appeared in public at an exhibition of the British Institution: Edward Hopley's *Alarm in India* (1857) and Frederick Goodall's *The*

the Indian Mutiny and, to a lesser extent, Crimea. One of the main reasons why the events in India aroused the British public was, undoubtedly, the massacre of women and children and the suggestion of sexual violation of the former by black men. The Illustrated London News wrote about

"the wholesale butcheries of Englishmen and women, and the foul indignities previously perpetrated upon the latter." (29 August 1857)

This periodical published several letters written by people who had witnessed the rebellion at close quarters. One such letter, written by an officer whose regiment had mutinied in one of the stations in Oudh, says:

"... where the massacre [at Cawnpore] took place it is covered with blood like a butcher's slaughter-house. ... I looked down [the well] and saw such a sight as I hope never to see again. The whole of the bodies were naked, and the limbs had been separated..." (26 September 1857)

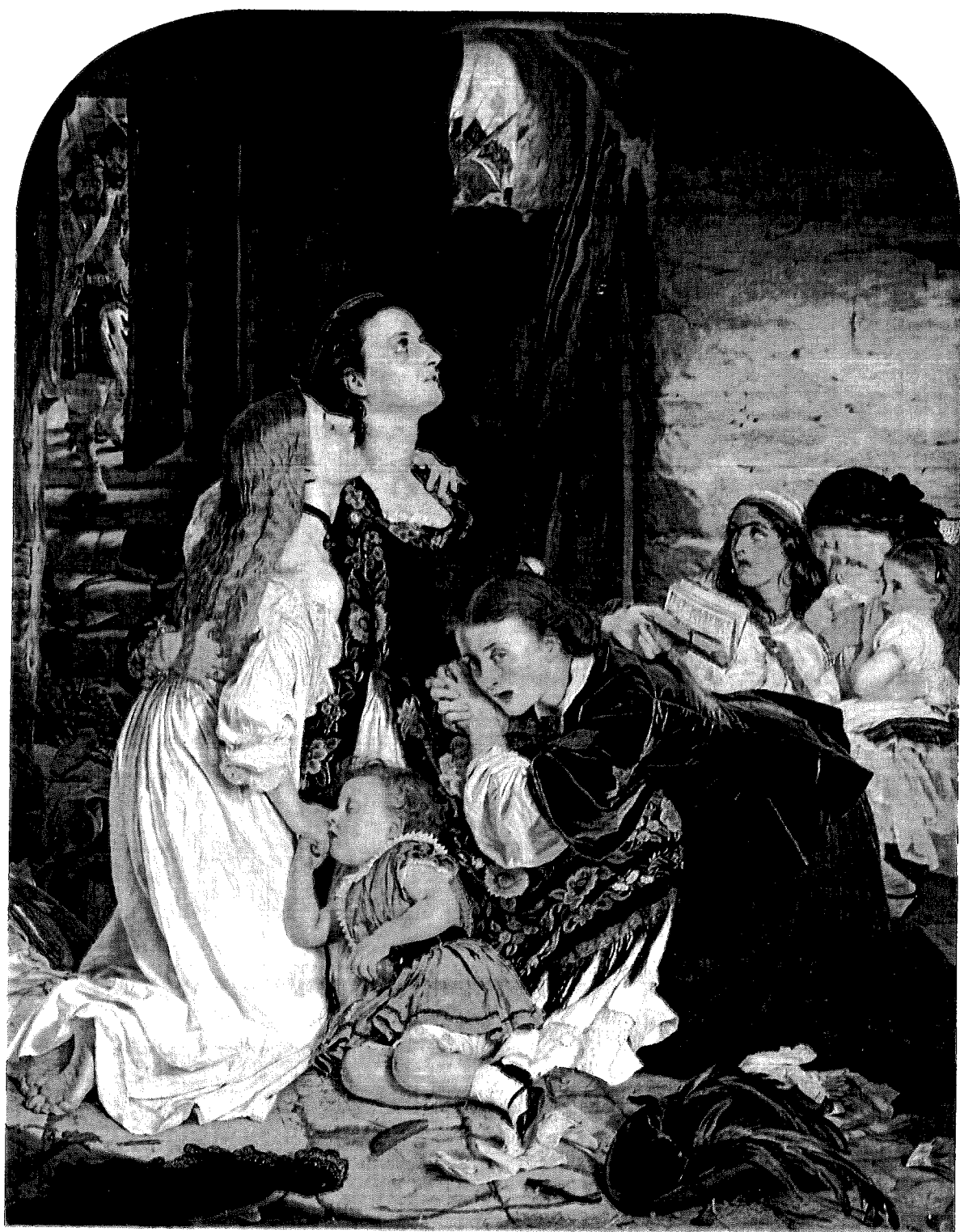
Another letter published in the same edition goes on to state that the women were "insulted so unmercifully" and kept alive for a few days after the massacre at the Satichaura Ghat (landing place for boats). The writer says that "the rascals have bad motives for sparing them so long." (ibid.)

The mere thought of sexual contact between blacks and

Campbells Are Coming [Jessie's Dream] (1858) (Allen, 1990) Thomas Jones Barker's *The Relief of Lucknow* (1859), one of the most famous episodes in British military history, is shown on page 330.

whites, and especially black men and white women, inflamed the British public, who considered this to be a transgression of a sacred taboo. In India, horror at the possibility of black men defiling the purity of white women led to savage reprisals against the natives, regardless of whether they had actually committed a crime, sexual or otherwise. In Britain, people responded to what they saw as an outrage by creating the myth of the 'Indian', a primitive, violent, licentious being, in literature or, as mentioned before, art.

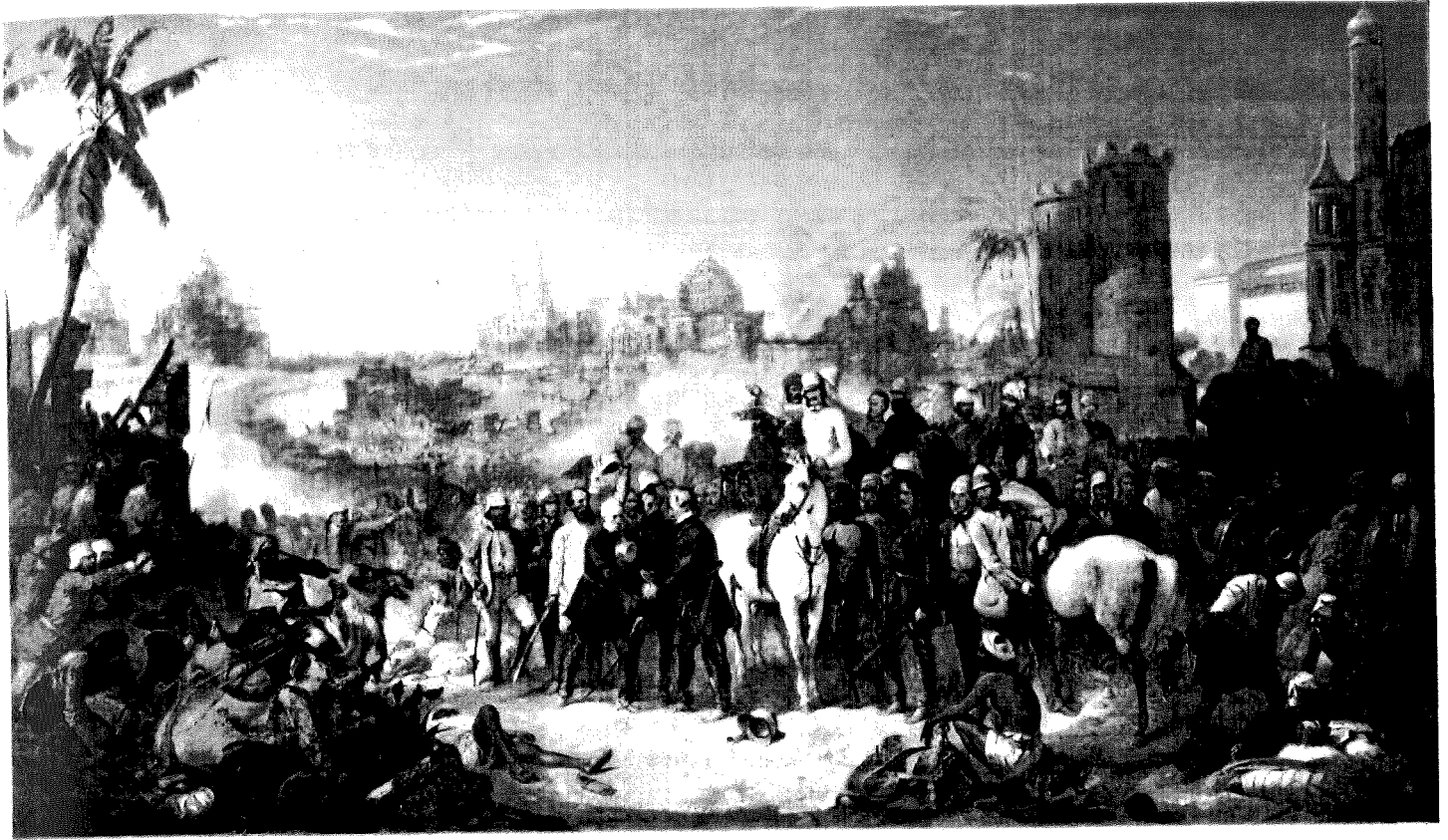
One of the paintings that had the Mutiny as its theme was Joseph Noel Paton's *In Memoriam* (1858). This painting (see page 329), which was considered highly offensive by visitors to the Royal Academy Exhibition in 1858, originally depicted a group of white women in martyr-like stance awaiting their fate at the hands of the sepoys, who were rushing in the door. Paton, who had not been in India when the events he painted were taking place, was obliged to tone down the painting, which he did by substituting the sepoys for Highland soldiers about to rescue the ladies. (Allen, 1990:155-6) It is undeniable that acts of violence and barbarity were committed by the Indians during the rebellion, but an increasing number of stories soon began to circulate in Britain about the disturbing events in the subcontinent, some of the sources



In Memoriam, Joseph Noel Paton, 1858.

Oil on panel, 123 x 96.5.

Private Collection.



The Relief of Lucknow, Thomas Jones Barker, 1859.

Oil on canvas, 105.4 x 181.3.

National Portrait Gallery, London.

of which were very dubious. As these tales spread, the details were exaggerated, with the result that extraordinarily gruesome narratives were repeated based on anecdote rather than historical veracity. The question whether English women were raped by the Indians is very likely to be a gross misrepresentation. Nujoor Jewaree, an Indian spying for the British, stationed in the 1st Native Cavalry, is reported to have said:

"Were any of our women dishonoured by the Nana Sahib or his people? None that I know of, excepting in the case of General Wheeler's youngest daughter, and about this I am not certain."

(Illustrated London News, 10 October 1857) ²⁴

Moreover, Roger Ballard regards the rape of the white women during the Mutiny as another of the myths invented by the British to support the image of the savage 'Indian' they had created. He argues that in an honour-bound society such as the Asian, one would only wish to discredit an enemy that one respected. As the Indians despised the British, they had no need and no desire to dishonour the white women.²⁵ It stands to reason that if one of the justifications, if not the justification, for

²⁴ In Manohar Malgonkar's novel The Devil's Wind (1972) Nana Sahib escapes from India and is next seen in Nepal and later in Mecca with a European women who turns out to be Miss Wheeler.

²⁵ Private communication.

the British presence in India was their racial superiority, any action that might lead to an impoverishment of the race, such as through miscegenation, was abhorred and deemed unnatural. Consequently, this deep-seated fear galvanized the British into a kind of collective hysteria, which ended in brutal and unfair punishments and reports of helpless female victims of unspeakable iniquities.

What Jan Carew calls "the naming game" (1985:31) played a decisive role in the subsequent interpretation of the events of 1857 in India. The British always insisted on the military nature of the uprising and could not admit to the possibility of a national revolt which could have undermined the stability of British rule. Therefore it became known as the "Sepoy Mutiny", which kept alive the belief in the trust and loyalty of the civilian population of India. Moreover, the term "mutiny" conjures up notions of insubordination, by which the lower position of the Asians in the racial hierarchy was reinforced. Any other name, such as "uprising" or "revolt" might have suggested cultural or political antagonisms, but would not have carried the connotations of disobedience. However, the Mutiny that was described in fiction bore little resemblance to the few localized outbreaks of disaffection

that the name 'Mutiny' suggested. The early Mutiny novels depicted

"a tempestuous event affording numerous opportunities for displays of superhuman British heroism." (Attridge, 1986:61)

By 1897 a considerable number of Mutiny novels had already been published, so many in fact that the writer in Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine could complain of too many "stock characters" appearing in these novels. In just forty years the theme would seem to have been exhausted, judging by what the article says:

"...there is always the young lady just out from home, to whom everything has to be explained, and the spiteful young lady who has come out a season or two before her, and whom she outshines. We suppose that it is impossible to dispense with the services of the gallant colonel of a native regiment who is confident to the last in the loyalty of his men, and who perishes by the first shot fired by them when they mutiny; but we may suggest that it would be somewhat original for the regiment to remain loyal, since there were in reality some that did so...." (1897:230-1)

However, the Mutiny would continue to be a popular theme for many years afterwards, even as recently as 1981 when Valerie Fitzgerald's Zemindar was published, but the advice of the writer in Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine was unfortunately not heeded by many authors. The Indians would remain the villains, and the British the heroes while the question concerning the right of the British to

govern India in the first place was rarely, if ever, taken up.

The accepted image of the Indian as a fractious child in need of the firm hand of the sahib was somewhat shattered by the 1857 Uprising. The Indians' expected naughtiness had suddenly developed into unexpected delinquency. This abrupt and uncalled for reaction obliged the British to redefine the Indian. He (invariably the women remained passive and alluring) became a danger to the smooth running of his country and therefore required much more control than a mere firm hand. Furthermore, he had given the British ample proof of his savage nature, which meant that he had to be kept well away from the European community, lest he put the well-being of the ladies in peril.

This distancing became more figurative than physical as the Raj progressed, but any social mixing with Indians was deeply frowned upon as Forster's Passage To India (1924) illustrates. Thus the post-Mutiny Indian, about whom dozens of books were written, is a deteriorated version of the earlier native who was still thought redeemable through conversion to Christianity and European ways. 1857 buried this ideal forever and the new 'Indian' created by British writers would represent

"the exact opposite of what may be defined as the true Englishman: with his stiff upper-lip, sense of humour, honour and sportsmanship." (Ferro, 1984:48)

Mutiny fiction has generally been woven around a traditional romantic plot and Flora Annie Steel's On the Face of the Waters (1897), considered to be one of the best novels of the sub-genre (Powell, 1981:95), is no exception. Steel includes two rival women, the attractive but unscrupulous one dying a gruesome death to make way for the plainer, honest one (Kate Erlton); a British ex-officer (Jim Douglas), expelled from the army on account of rash behaviour in his youth, who is the only one to realise that something was brewing among the sepoys; Kate's and Jim's saving of each other's lives during the siege of Delhi; and finally, the convenient death of Kate's husband, a rogue and a gambler, which allows her to marry Douglas, now restored to his former rank thanks to his heroic conduct during the recovery of Delhi. Steel's novel contains a considerable number of sub-plots and well-documented historical incidents²⁶

²⁶ One example of Steel's historical accuracy is her quoting of the only telegram that was sent from Meerut to Agra on the night of May 10th 1857, which was "the strangest telegram that ever came as sole warning to an Empire that its very foundation was attacked":
"The Cavalry have risen, setting fire to their own houses besides having killed and wounded all European officers and soldiers they could find near the lines. If Aunt intends starting to-morrow, please detain her, as the van has been prevented from leaving the station".
(Steel, 1897:172)

(Powell, 1981; Thorpe, 1986:181) and she appears to make a serious attempt to show that not all Indians were associated with the Mutiny, but the book centres around one idea, namely, the link between disloyalty and evil. One of the most memorable passages of the novel pays tribute to the one loyal sepoy of a native regiment who refused to mutiny:

"In all that wide plain one man true to his salt, heroic utterly, standing alone in the dusk. A nameless figure, like many another hero. Yet better so, when we remember that but a few hours before his regiment had *volunteered* to a man against their comrades and their country!" (p. 241; emphasis in original)²⁷

Although her book had originally been rejected by Macmillan, publisher of her previous novel, because the Mutiny was

"too deeply revered for the public to be sympathetic towards a book in which the faults on both sides were so clearly set out" (Powell, 1981:96)

in the words of Marc Ferro, Steel's account of the events of 1857 differs very little from the earlier, more biased ones, in that

"The mutiny is reduced to a history of cartridge grease." (1984:50)

Ferro argues that Steel's 'good' Indians are the ones who remained loyal, faithful, obedient and grateful, thereby reinforcing the imperial notion of the responsibility of

²⁷ All quotations from the novels under discussion are cited parenthetically with the page numbers only.

the 'superior race' to take care of what Winston Churchill would call in 1931 "three hundred and fifty millions of helpless primitive people". (Cannadine, 1989:104) Very early in the novel the childlike nature of the Indian is established:

"It was such an opportunity for ordering other men about as natives dearly love; so that the more autocratic a master is, the better pleased they are to gain dignity by serving him." (p.31)

Jim Douglas, who learns the tricks of disguise from a member of the Many-faced Tribe of Bunjâras and thus learns how to mingle unnoticed among Indians, is critical of the blindness of the British and their mismanagement of the Enfield rifles. However, even a character like this who is presumably more impartial towards the Indians sums them up as being "really children - simple, ignorant, obstinate". (p.156) Steel herself lived in India for twenty years and became Inspector of Schools throughout the Punjab, but she never rid herself of the prejudices of the day as her descriptions of the 'good' Indians show:

"Tiddu, a child himself like all his race in his delight in children, a child also in his capacity of sudden serenity," (p.320; emphasis mine)

Indian women in On the Face of the Waters likewise live up to expectations. Tara Devi, rescued from her husband's funeral pyre by Jim Douglas eight years before the events of the novel are unfolded, is a classic

example of the irrationality of the Orient. She has been prevented from being immolated at the age of sixteen by a horrified European, but she cannot be at peace with herself until she finally casts herself into the flames that are devouring her house at the end of the book.

"Such a mental position is well-nigh incomprehensible to Western minds. It was confusing, even to Tara herself; and the mingling of conscious dignity and conscious degradation, gratitude, resentment, attraction, repulsion, made her a puzzle even to herself at times." (p.27)

Steel twists Hindu religious rites somewhat to allow her to introduce a death-obsessed widow, who in fact could not be sati years after the demise of her husband.²⁸ She thus 'proves' beyond any doubt the submissiveness of Indian women "for ever inventing new shackles for themselves". (p.71) Steel's knowledge of Hindu practices leaves much to be desired. In order to present the Oriental woman as an example of ignorance and meekness, Steel conveniently confuses the two meanings of 'sati', which can refer both to a pure woman and to a widow who joins her deceased husband on the funeral pyre. Steel's Tara shaves her head and proudly declares herself to be 'sati', but the sacrifice would thus have been rendered useless in accordance with Hindu lore. The shaving of a sati's head

²⁸ For a clear discussion of *sati*, see Lata Mani, "Contentious traditions: the debate on SATI in colonial India", Cultural Critique, N^o 7, 1987: 119-156.

would be considered a sacrilege. (Naik, 1991:154) The incident is of minor importance but, as Kate Erlton does not cut her beautiful long hair off in spite of the need to disguise herself as a pious widow, the contrast with the self-abasement of the Indian woman, who does not question this enforced loss of personal beauty, is achieved.

The attitudes of the British characters in On the Face of the Waters towards the Indians tell us much more about how the natives were seen than the actions or words of the Indians themselves. Alice Gissing, the 'wicked woman' who entices Kate's husband away from her, confesses to a total disregard for the loss of human life when it is Indian:

"it doesn't feel to me like killing a human being, you know. I'm sorry, of course, but I should have been much sorrier if it had been a white baby." (p. 58)

Likewise, Major Erlton feels no brotherly love for fellow soldiers, when these are Indian:

"Treachorous black devils! I'd shoot 'em down like dogs - the lot of them." (p.145)

As Steel clearly has sympathy for Alice Gissing and Major Erlton, both raffish characters, who display unusual bravery in extreme circumstances, their scorn for the natives is far from being criticized. In fact it is easy to see such indifference as a foreshadowing of the

insensibility of the British after the Amritsar massacre of 1919 in which four hundred Indian lives were pointlessly lost.

Throughout her novel Steel insists on the courage and determination of the British. She refers to the counter-attack from the Delhi Ridge as

"The finest record of pluck and perseverance the world is ever likely to see." (p. 106)

In almost Churchillian tones she describes the aftermath of the blowing up of the Delhi magazine by nine Englishmen to prevent the ammunition from falling to the rebels:

"A corona [of rose-red dust] ... hung there for hours. To those who know the story it seems to hang there still, - a bloody pall for the many; for the Nine, a crown indeed." (p. 225)

Throughout the novel there are repeated reminders that, even in the moments when the very foundations of the British Empire were trembling, there was never any lack of that one quality that differentiated the English from the Indians:

"Two thousand and odd Englishmen [were] waiting for orders, for ammunition, for a General, for everything save - thank Heaven! -for courage." (p. 177)

"Everything seems to have been lost [on the 10th May 1857] save - thank Heaven once more! - personal courage." (p. 179)

"[after the explosion of the magazine] Yet even Mrs. Seymour only clasped her baby closer, and said nothing, for there was no lack of courage anywhere." (p.226)

"It needed a round shot to come whizzing a message of certain death over [the women's] heads, to give them back a courage which never failed again." (p. 232)

In contrast, the Indians are depicted as treacherous cowards, and, even the best of them, that is the ones who remain loyal, are undecided and wavering, unlike the determined British.

Flora Annie Steel's novel "sold like hot cakes up to her death in 1929" (Greenberger, 1969:64) and in many ways broke the mould of Mutiny novels written previously in that she does allow the British to make mistakes and is scrupulous enough to acknowledge the indiscriminate revenge that would seize a fanatical hold on the victors:

"[Kate's] own gentler nature was conscious of a pride, almost a pleasure in the thought of the revenge which would surely be taken sooner or later, by such as he [Mainwaring], for every woman, every child killed, wounded - even touched." (p.228)

"[Jim Douglas] felt that his very courage was becoming ferocity, and the thought that others ... must be sinking into it also, filled him with fierce joy at the thought of future revenge." (p.266)

"[Major Erlton] did not even think of the cause of his desire; he was absorbed in the revenge itself." (p.279)

Even one of the heroes of the Mutiny, John Nicholson, whom Steel obviously very much admired, is quoted as saying:

"If I had them [those responsible for the Cawnpore massacre] in my power to-day ... and knew I was to die tomorrow, I would inflict the most excruciating tortures I could think of on them with an easy conscience." (p.356)

Judging by the popularity of the book, her apparent fair treatment of the theme helped to mitigate the anger and hatred of the survivors of the events of 1857. She was told by an elderly correspondent whose wife had been killed in the Mutiny, that, forty years later, her book had at last enabled him to forgive India. (Powell, 1981:94)

However, On the Face of the Waters, because of its enormous success, also perpetuated the image of the Indians as child-like, devoted and volatile if they are good and devious, untrustworthy and savage if they are bad. Ralph J. Crane ascribes a complete lack of objectivity to the early Mutiny writers, who "became myth-makers in their own right". (1992:8) Steel may have done much to de-mythologize the role of the British in 1857, but she did little to rehabilitate the "pampered Brahmin sepoy[s]" (p.167) who, from page 279 onwards are referred to as "those others - Murderers", and deemed the culprits of the whole affair.

In comparison to Flora Annie Steel's attempt to deal with a momentous event in a balanced, conscientious manner, G.A. Henty's novel Rujub, the Juggler (1901), based on the Mutiny, ignores, or at best, omits any mention of the atrocities committed by both sides. The novel, written for adults unlike many of Henty's,

concentrates on romance and action (Naidis, 1964:55) and legitimizes British occupation and rule of India for thousands of early twentieth century readers. At first glance, Rujub, the Juggler promises to be an unorthodox version of the Mutiny. The hero, Ralph Bathurst, suffers from a kind of hereditary paralysis brought on by the sound of gunfire, which could prove to be more than a slight disadvantage during the hectic days of the summer of 1857. However, the presence of the heroine, Isobel, together with the aid of the supernatural in the shape of a juggler and his visionary daughter act as an antidote to his inconvenient malady. Isobel herself, while helping unconsciously to cure Ralph, is dealt a rather cruel punishment by Henty, who has her apply nitric acid to her face in order to preserve her honour from defilement by, none other than, Nana Sahib. No doubt, Henty, "that veteran favourite of young England" (Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine, 1897:225) did not disappoint his readers, adolescent or otherwise, with this three-volume Mutiny romance, which ends happily with Isobel's rescue by Ralph, now converted into a hero. Nevertheless, this novel did not add any new interpretation to the events of 1857, on the contrary, it merely reinforced the old clichés and, through their repetition by an established author, anchored them more firmly in the minds of its readers.

In volume II, Dr. Wade, who is presented as an expert on India, informs us that

"Their [Hindus'] history is full of cases of perfidious massacre. ... I know the Hindoos generally. They are mere children and can be moulded like clay; as long as we had the moulding, all went well, but if they fall into the hands of designing men, they can be led in another direction just as easily as we have led them in ours." (Vol. II, p.46)

Not only do the British characters insist on the primitive nature of the Indians and their need of a strong, guiding hand to govern them, but Henty has Rujub, the juggler who gives his name to the novel, acknowledge the superiority of the Europeans. His judgement is all the more 'impartial' as he hated the British for putting his own father to death many years previously for *dacoity* (gang robbery).

"Other conquerors, many of them, India has had, but none who have made it their first object to care for the welfare of the people at large. The Feringhis [foreigners] have wrung nothing from the poor to be spent in pomp and display; they permit no tyranny or ill-doing; under them the poorest peasant tills his fields in peace. ... We should be ruled by our native lords, but as soon as the white man was gone the old quarrels would break out and the country would be red with blood. ... I cannot love those I have been taught to hate, but I can see the benefit their rule has given to India " (Vol. III, p. 33-4)

The message is clear: the Indians cannot be left to their own devices because they would fight amongst themselves and this justification for the presence of the British would survive right up to Independence.

One would expect, perhaps ingenuously, that the arrival of Independence in 1947 and the gradual withdrawal of the British would alter the tone of any Mutiny novels written after this date. However, the fifties witnessed the publication of two Mutiny novels which could easily have been the work of George Alfred Henty for their pro-British bias and imperial undertones. John Masters' Nightrunners of Bengal (1951) and M. M. Kaye's Shadow of the Moon (1957) are just two examples of Greenberger's 'Era of Melancholy', during which writers of fiction set in India sought to dwell on the romantic and heroic episodes of the Empire as opposed to laying bare the shortcomings and excesses of the imperial period. That the events of 1857 were a military mutiny is accepted unquestioningly by both authors. Neither Masters or Kaye, both of whom had been born in India, allow the Indian cause to be expressed, there simply is no Indian cause. Moreover, as 'old India hands', they clearly mourn the passing of the Raj.

Masters has created the Savage (sic) family, the male members of which keep up the family tradition of service in India, either as East India Company employees or soldiers in the Indian Army. Rodney Savage, the hero of Nightrunners of Bengal, a descendant of William Savage, the destroyer of the Thugs, is very conscious of his

family's claim and responsibility to India.²⁹ He goes insane soon after the rebellion in Bhowani [Jhansi] and swears to kill anyone with a brown skin, thus paralleling the British revenge in the months following the Mutiny. (Crane, 1992:21) Barbarities on both sides are vividly described in Nightrunners of Bengal, for example the brutal murders and rapes committed by the sepoys (p. 196-201) are no worse than the equally gruesome execution of sepoys accused of treason and blown from a cannon. (p. 301)

However, in spite of Masters' attempt to write a balanced account, he cannot avoid falling back on the same stereotypes that Flora Annie Steel and G.A. Henty wrote about fifty years earlier. The 'good' Indians are those who are pro-British, those who do not support the Mutiny and those who realize, like Rujub the juggler, that the best thing for India is the rule of the white man. In Nightrunners of Bengal the village of Chalisgon is plagued with cholera, but, thanks to the efforts of the small

²⁹ A descendant of Captain Rodney Savage, survivor of the Mutiny, appears in Masters' two novels based on Indian Independence, Bhowani Junction (1954) and To the Coral Strand (1962). In the latter, another Rodney Savage tells a crowd of Indians celebrating their Independence on 15 August 1947 that: "It is not your country. It is mine. I made it, from a hundred countries, I and my great-great-grandfather, and my great-grandfather and so on." (p. 16; quoted in Narayanan, 1986:27)

group of fugitive Feringhis, including Rodney Savage, now cured of his insanity, the disease is overcome and the inhabitants swear their allegiance to the Raj forever. It must be said that the 'good' Indians have progressed somewhat from utter servility, but the emphasis is still on their gratitude to the British above all else.

Masters is not overfastidious about Indian historical characters and their motives. To accept his Rani-Regent of Kishanpur, obviously modelled on the Rani of Jhansi, one would need to suspend one's disbelief twice over. The Rani of Jhansi, like Masters' Indian heroine, fought for her son's rightful inheritance (the kingdom of Jhansi) but it is extremely unlikely that she would have given him up quite so calmly to the British, whom she regarded as usurpers and infidels, as Masters' Rani does. (Huttenback, 1975:71) In this respect, M.K. Naik complains of the lack of rigour, or careless indifference on the part of British authors, when describing Hindu or Muslim religious practices, when recreating historical figures and even when reproducing Indian names and forms of address.³⁰

³⁰ If an author such as Flora Annie Steel, who had lived in India for many years and who carried out research into the Mutiny archives in order to present a faithful account, not only of the events of 1857 but also a true picture of India, could have her Indian characters using impossible forms of greeting and oaths, not to mention her distortion of Hindu rites, one wonders what 'gems' of Indian life are presented to the unsuspecting reader by

(1991:142-164) He does not include John Masters' portrait of the Rani of Jhansi among his criticisms, but the woman who led her troops into battle and sacrificed her life for the Indian cause (see illustrations on page 349) does not bear much resemblance to the "musk and sandalwood woman" (p. 324) who ends her life for love of Rodney Savage. However, a tough, single-minded female freedom fighter does not tally with the stereotype of the docile and submissive Oriental woman, which, no doubt, was what Masters had had in mind.

Likewise, M.M. Kaye's Shadow of the Moon brims with the exotic appeal of the East and the allure of the Indian woman with lavish descriptions of Oriental palaces, gilded mosques and perfumed zenana women. Thus the deep-rooted "feminization of the colonial subcontinent" (Suleri, 1992:16) continues to be reproduced in imperialist narratives, as Kaye's novel, in spite of being written in the post-colonial period, merely resuscitates the aesthetic experience that India had represented for the British from the eighteenth century onwards. In this respect, in his annotated bibliography, Brijen K. Gupta praises M.M. Kaye's novel for its

less enlightened writers.

Top.

*Rani Lakshmi Bai
of Jhansi*

Bazaar oleograph,
c. 1930.
50.8 x 38.1.

National Portrait
Gallery, London.



Bottom.

*Rani Lakshmi Bai
of Jhansi*

Unknown artist,
c. 1890.
Watercolour and
Silver on paper.
43.5 x 27.5.

Indian Office Library.



"excellent reconstruction of India on the eve of the Mutiny outbreak; the atmosphere of joy and irresponsibility." (1973:114; emphasis mine)

There is no reason why Kaye, or anyone else for that matter, should not continue to use the Indian Mutiny as a backcloth for a spectacular romance, but what is perhaps more significant is the fact that Kaye and others can happily write their tales of the lost Raj with very little, if any, sense of guilt. Shadow of the Moon was reprinted in 1979 with "her latest bestseller" written under the title, which points to a demand by the reading public for glittering Oriental melodramas that remind them of the great colonial past, but scrupulously avoid any mention of the aggressive and exploitative character of the East India Company and later the British Raj. What Salman Rushdie calls "the rise of Raj revisionism" (1983b:130), exemplified by such films and television series as Gandhi, The Jewel in the Crown, and The Far Pavilions, can have contributed very little to the long-awaited destruction of Indian stereotypes, which, in turn, might have eased some of the tensions and misunderstandings arising from the arrival in Britain of migrants from the newly independent subcontinent.

Although, at first glance, Shadow of the Moon does not appear to be replete with the usual Mutiny stock characters (the heroine, Winter de Ballesteros, speaks

fluent Hindustani, having lived the first six years of her life in an Indian palace, and is more at home in India than in England), Kaye cannot forfeit the opportunity of producing an arch-villain in the shape of Kishan Prasad, a former jemandar (junior Indian officer) of the Company, now in league with Russian agents to bring about the fall of the British. Captain Alex Randall, one of the few clear-sighted Englishman, wages a personal war against both the blindness and stupidity of the British military leaders, reluctant to see treason even when it is under their very noses, and the avowed enemies of the Company, of whom Kishan Prasad is the most devious and the most dangerous. Randall's personal courage and scrupulous conduct are brought out in strong relief by the crass ineptitude and vulgar loutishness of the Commissioner of Lunjore, to whom Winter de Ballesteros is engaged to be married. Furthermore, Kishan Prasad, the scheming Indian rogue, is a perfect foil for the honesty and integrity of Alex Randall. The Englishman unintentionally saves his sworn enemy from drowning when he dives into a shark-infested sea under the mistaken impression that the man he is saving is a native servant. On one hand, the more noble qualities of the British 'race' are made manifest as Randall risks his life for an Indian, and on the other hand, the scene is presumably meant to be proof of the

ingratitude of the natives. Kishan Prasad grudgingly thanks Randall but vows to "do all in my power to pull down your Company's Raj." (p. 153) The Indians are not overtly presented as despicable and of inferior stock to the British, but Kaye does encourage the reader to infer this from her text by comparison with the often silent heroism of the British as in the case of the three Englishmen who, even under torture, do not betray the whereabouts of their compatriots hiding in the mansion of an Indian, Walayat Shah. (p.587)

While the English characters are allowed to justify the British occupation of India, the Indian version of the East India Company rule is filtered through Alex Randall, exasperated by unpatriotic thoughts:

"Why can't I believe, as [Henry] Lawrence and [John] Nicholson ... do, in the divine right of the British to govern?" (p. 135)

Furthermore, even these doubts, expressed in the early part of the novel, give way to more utilitarian reasoning by Randall himself:

"...as a nation, we cannot resist moving in and showing someone how to run his affairs when we see them being run damned badly. We regarded this country as being in a deplorable mess, and set out, fired by an entirely genuine and proselytizing zeal as much as the desire for profit, to put our neighbour's house in order and hand on what we consider to be the blessings of civilization. Which is why we have managed to combine conquest with a pleasant glow of self-righteousness." (p.570)

On only two occasions are the Indians given textual space for their views on the Company Raj and the rebellion. Alex Randall manages to gain access to a secret meeting of Hindus and Muslims plotting to overthrow the British, at the end of which a sacrifice is made to the goddess Kali.³¹ The scene is reported in vivid detail, doubtless owing to the fact that the sacrifice is a white child, and not a white goat as would have been expected. Thus any sympathy that Randall or the reader may have harboured for Indian discontent swiftly evaporates. After the massacre at Cawnpore, described, like the fictitious massacre of Lunjore, in gruesome detail, Walayat Shah, in spite of his hatred of the foreign conquerors, is made to abandon the struggle to overthrow the invaders, disgusted by the slaughter of

"captive women who have suffered the harshness of war and sorrow, and been robbed thereby of all strength and will, is a deed to blacken the sun! I will fight no more against the feringhis, since God can no longer be upon our side." (p. 560)

The killing of the women and children in the Bibighar was an appalling incident, but it is unlikely that Walayat Shah would have been any less revolted by the action of

³¹ It is interesting to compare this seditious gathering of primitive savages with the orderly meeting of Indian revolutionaries in the film Jhansi Ki Rani, directed by Sohrab Modi. (see The Raj Through Indian Eyes, 1991)

Colonel Neill in Benares. Neill arrived in the holy city on 3rd June 1857 with European troops, disbanded the local native regiment, lined them up and shot them, although they had not actually mutinied. Not satisfied with this shock treatment, Neill had any able-bodied man he laid his eyes on arrested and hanged for no other crime than the possession of a brown skin. In another part of India but almost simultaneously, on 10th June at Peshawar in the North-West Frontier Province (now in Pakistan), forty men were blown to pieces in "as public and dreadful a manner as possible" on the same grounds. (Thompson, 1925:41, Wolpert, 1982:238) In spite of the distance involved, news of these barbarities soon spread and was the spark that started the revolt of the native troops at Cawnpore. (Mohan, 1991) Needless to say, these incidents are not part of the Raj mythology and therefore do not deserve a place in Shadow of the Moon.

J.G. Farrell's The Siege of Krishnapur (1973) is a far more ambitious work than any of the previous four Mutiny novels mentioned. Farrell could write more dispassionately about India than Steel, Henty, Masters or Kaye for obvious reasons of age and context. Moreover, his prize-winning novel responds to the artistic challenge of analyzing a well-known historic event from a fresh perspective. Instead of continuing in the Masters/Kaye

tradition of action-packed stories of British heroism and romance, Farrell attempts to deconstruct many of the myths of the Raj. (Crane, 1992:28; Naik, 1991:7) While not actually questioning the validity of British rule in India, The Siege of Krishnapur does criticize the military policy-makers and high-ranking officers at the time of the rebellion. The action centres around the siege of the Residency at Krishnapur [Lucknow] and the survival of the diminishing British community trapped within. Although the novel is by no means devoid of love scenes, the events leading up to the Mutiny and the survival of the British in the Residency compound are stripped of the customary romanticism one had wearily grown to expect of a Mutiny novel. The pettiness of the memsahibs in the billiard room (p.164-170) is no more reprehensible than the outrageous exhibition of careless frivolity bordering on debauchery when Lieutenant Cutter rides his horse into his friend's bungalow and has the animal drink champagne to the amusement of the remaining guests at the 'tea party'. (p.57-9). This particular incident crystallizes any doubts about who was supposed to be civilizing who in India, and the novel questions the basic notions behind Western ideas of progress through the character of George Fleury, struggling to reconcile his aesthetic ideals with the growing materialism of the Victorian era.

Nevertheless, despite its critical stance, The Siege of Krishnapur does not dispel the traditional images associated with the portrayal of Indians in British fiction as might have been expected from a book written when the growth of an Asian community in Britain was an established reality. The fact that Farrell develops very few Indian characters cannot merely reflect the gulf which existed between the British and the Indians during the Raj as Ralph Crane suggests. (1992:27-8) This seems to be a poor justification for one of the more obvious weaknesses of the novel. Farrell recreates the atmosphere of class-consciousness and prudery in Victorian British India without allowing his characters to lapse into caricature. Moreover, he introduces a twentieth century voice to comment on nineteenth century occurrences. Damp patches appear at ladies' armpits, the intricacies of feminine underwear are analyzed, unwashed bodies, male and female, are actually said to stink and delayed periods are fretted over. Farrell's British characters, such as Dr. McNab eloquently defending his method for combating cholera; the Padre expatiating on the literal truth of the Bible; Louise Dunstable risking her reputation to help the 'fallen woman' and progressing from the empty-headed belle of the cold season to a competent nurse at the end of the siege, are all vividly and convincingly drawn.

However, few of the Indians who figure in the novel qualify for a proper name, let alone individual feelings or anxieties. The main Indian character and the only one who is given more than one line of speech is Hari, the son of the Maharajah of Krishnapur. Although he had been educated by English tutors, Hari's command of the language is faulty and, to say the least, comical. The use of hyperbolic or archaic English has been the usual way to represent Indian characters in Anglo-Indian fiction, (Attridge, 1986:66) which is taken as a correlative of their devious and deceitful nature. Hari does not use 'ye' or 'thou', neither does he imitate the Biblical language that M.M. Kaye puts into the mouth of one of her Indian intriguers:

"Thou would'st spare the young of the serpent? ..That is indeed folly, since one such, if allowed to live, will one day sire many. They must be destroyed; leaf and branch, root and seed." (1979:202)

But his stilted speech prevents either him or his views from being taken seriously.

"Soon I make daguerrotype but first I show you my pater. Come with me please. At this hour when it is so very much hot he is usually to be found 'in arms of Morpheus' which means, I understand, that he is asleeping. It is best time to look at pater when he is asleeping ... Correct!" (p. 78)

His obsession with progress and his blind admiration for anything Western suggests he may have been inspired by Orwell's Dr. Veraswami, who loyally defends the Empire

against the attacks by the Englishman Flory in Burmese Days:

" 'My friend, positively you are harping upon the subject of prisons!(sic) Consider that there are also other achievements of your countrymen. They construct roads, they irrigate deserts, they conquer famines, they build schools, they set up hospitals, they combat plague, cholera, leprosy, small-pox, venereal disease-' 'Having brought it themselves,' put in Flory. 'No, sir!' returned the doctor, eager to claim this distinction for his own countrymen. 'No, sir it was (sic) the Indians who introduced venereal disease into this country,' "

(Orwell, 1975:41)

Hari misinterprets Fleury's lack of enthusiasm for the gadgets contained in the palace armoury as the scorn of someone from an advanced civilization towards the fledgling attempts at progress by the backward Indians:

"But I see that this miserable machine, which show also, I forget to add, phases of moon, sunrise and sunset, day of week, is not worthy of your attention also. Correct. It is all very humble and useless materials such as you do not have in London and Shrewsbury." (p.80)

The fact that Fleury himself is later discovered by Hari to be "a very backward man indeed" (p.88) for his denunciation of materialism does not compensate for the absurdity of the Maharajah's son.

Likewise, the ludicrous palace scene with the uncontrolled cow and the extravagant opulence surrounding the Maharajah recalls and reinforces the unreal, dream-like atmosphere of the King's palace in Delhi in

On the Face of the Waters, where no judicious person could entertain the possibility of Indian self-government in such an atmosphere of illusions and superstitions:

"The outer court of the palace lay steeped in the sunshine of noon. Its hot rose-red walls and arcades seemed to shimmer in the glare, and the dazzle and glitter gave a strange air of unreality, of instability to all things." (Steel, 1897:249)

The British in The Siege of Krishnapur all pass judgement on the 'Indian', who is typecast into the role of subordinate for perpetuity. Fleury is told that "the apathy of the native is well known ... he is not enterprising." (p.34) General Jackson advises the Collector to "raise extra police with Mohammedan recruits, ...they're more reliable than Hindus or native Christians." (p.65) Fleury is told how "effeminate" rich natives are and is warned about not thrashing a Hindu too roughly as "they have very weak chests and you can kill them." (p.70) The final flourish to this tiresome list of stock Indian traits is the inclusion of the 'inscrutable East' cliché in the figure of the Prime Minister who accompanies Hari into the Residency.

"... the Prime Minister's eyes sparkled. But they sparkled not outwardly but inwardly, for the deity which was causing him such intense satisfaction was inside himself. The Collector was astonished by how little the Prime Minister had changed during his month of captivity.... The siege had simply made no impression on him whatsoever." (p. 225-6)

It could be argued that The Siege of Krishnapur is a satirical portrait of the British in India and therefore would have to reproduce the condescending attitudes that nineteenth century Europeans showed towards their colonial subjects. However, despite the fact that the British themselves are ruthlessly ridiculed by Farrell for their stubbornness and hypocrisy, no Indian character is given the opportunity to belie the stereotype offered by the British. Dr. McNab shows up the obstinacy of his colleague; Fleury's probing mind exposes the fanaticism of the Padre; Miriam's frankness contrasts with the prudery of Louise; but the only Indian to have a say is a somewhat petulant dabbler in new scientific discoveries. Only by a stretch of the imagination could one associate the powerless Maharajah's son with that most despicable of Indians, Nana Sahib, but for all his passion for progress, Hari cannot help being seen as merely another "effete Hindoo rake" as G. O. Trevelyan would describe the frustrated heir to the Maratha Confederacy in his account of the siege of Cawnpore. (1992:180)

The Siege of Krishnapur has been described as "easily one of the finest of the Mutiny novels" (Naik, 1991:6) and it cannot be denied that Farrell has unearthed a series of topics that previous novels of the sub-genre had never probed into. However, the Mutiny itself is merely a

pretext for questioning some of the assumptions about society that are taken for granted. There is no attempt to analyze the causes of the rebellion, or even the reasons for the support given to the British by the Sikhs, a number of whom are present in the Residency. Only one Sikh is given a name, Hookum Singh, the others remain an anonymous, impersonal mass of humanity even though they are fighting on the same side as the British. The sepoys, as might have been expected, are likewise unnamed, but they are even more effectively deprived of their individuality. They are seen only in terms of the English 'weapons' that kill them:

"A sepoy here was trying to remove a silver fork from one of his lungs, another had received a piece of lightning-conductor in his kidneys. A sepoy with a green turban had had his spine shattered by "The Spirit of Science"; others had been struck down by tea-spoons, by fish-knives, by marbles; an unfortunate *subadar* had been plucked from this world by the silver sugar-tongs embedded in his brain." (p. 317; emphasis in original)

In a novel which sets out to question progress, the Indians have not progressed very much themselves from Fleury's first impression of the "sea of brown faces" (p.24). Furthermore, the ingratitude of the natives is once more brought to the fore. The Collector regards the rebellion of the sepoys as "a waste of all the good work that has been done in India" (p.310), having previously justified the British presence to himself:

"It is good that the natives should be happy for surely that is ultimately what we, the Company, are in India to procure." (p.232)

In short, Farrell, like so many of his literary predecessors, dismisses Indian disaffection as a slight misunderstanding over greased cartridges, "the pot of grease, the cause of all the trouble," (p.332) and in this respect, it is unfortunate that a novel that won such a prestigious literary award as the Booker Prize in 1973 should rehash one of the myths of the Empire in such an uncritical manner.

Edward Thompson complained in 1925 that "the Indian case is not known to our people" (1925:84) and it is doubtful whether it is known even nowadays. Certainly with novels still being written with

"swashbuckling heroes, lost jewels and far pavilions, [and] Indians themselves ... tend[ing] to dwindle into colourful but insignificant specks on an exotic landscape" (Masani, 1987:5)

it might seem difficult that Anglo-Indian fiction will ever rid itself of this legacy of Empire.

5.4. Reproducing the White Consensus.

5.4.1. Selecting the "Facts".

In his recent work, The Cost of Free Speech, inspired by the Ayatollah Khomeini's *fatwa* on Salman Rushdie for his novel The Satanic Verses, Simon Lee observes that

"Politicians on all sides are becoming only too well aware of the power of the modern media." (1990:23)

This power can be seen in terms of a gentle, unobtrusive but persistent persuasion, aimed at the individual and conducted along similar lines to the advertising of consumer goods, as for example in modern election campaigns, as opposed to a coercive and aggressive intent to dominate a particular society. Although the message appears to be directed at the individual, it contains the prevailing attitudes of the in-group, consequently, acceptance of and adhesion to the beliefs dictated by the media involves an ever-widening circle of individuals sharing the in-group ideology.

Professor van Dijk's study Racism and the Press is based on the assumption that

"ethnic prejudices or ideologies are predominantly acquired and confirmed through various types of discourse or communication, such as socializing talk in the family, everyday conversations, laws, textbooks, government publications, scholarly discourse, advertising, movies and news reports." (1991:6)

As van Dijk points out, apart from the first two examples, the other forms of text are formulated by elite groups, who, in a sense, impose their own ideologies, ethnic or otherwise, onto the public at large. Once the in-group ideology has been legitimized and acquired by the general public, resistance from any of its members becomes increasingly difficult and discordant. (ibid., 6 & 37) To say that people's ideas are shaped by what they read in the press is a truism, but the choice of what is actually reported and how it is presented to the reader is not always accepted as being a deliberate manipulation of public opinion. The quality newspapers appear to be comprehensive, but the twenty or thirty pages of which they are comprised can only contain a limited number of reportable events. The process of selection of these events will depend on what the newspaper considers to be important or interesting. Likewise, a full front page article is automatically interpreted by the reader as being of greater significance than a four-line snippet on page nineteen. Consequently, the amount and prominence that a newspaper allots to a given event do not merely convey details about this event, they also inform the reader that this particular news is important and that the reader should also find it important. (Hartmann et al., 1974:92-4)

Transmission of the in-group ideology is taking place continuously and, in the case of the handling of racial matters within the news framework, those who control the mass media have helped, possibly more they had actually intended, to define the social reality of the post-war immigration from the New Commonwealth in terms of a danger to the white community. Although sociologist John Rex argues that

"the quality media have not been entirely useful in promoting racism [because] they represent the public face of a culture and society and must adhere to a minimal standard of political beliefs from which those which foster racialism tend to be excluded," (Rex, 1973:236)

the study conducted by Hartmann et al. (1974) and subsequent research carried out on the way race is handled in the British press (Troyna, 1981; Gordon & Rosenberg, 1989; van Dijk, 1991) demonstrate that, among other factors, the juxtaposition of race or ethnic names and violent or conflict words in headlines in both the quality and the popular newspapers gives a kind of legitimacy to well-worn racist assumptions.

In the same way, the media coverage of the Falklands crisis of 1982 can be seen as an example of a large scale campaign to convince the British people of the necessity of going to war with Argentina. The foregrounding of certain issues, the vast amount of space devoted to the fighting, not to mention the deliberate use of

Churchillian rhetoric all served to assert Britain's continuing capacity to play a dominant role in world politics and inspire a disillusioned nation with the splendour of her imperial past. (see 4.2.3. and Barnett, 1982) However, certain sectors of society would reject the idea of there having been any manipulation of the news during the Falklands crisis. Any edition of The Daily Telegraph and, in particular, the letters to the editor or the feature articles will bear witness to the fact that, for many people, questioning this selection of 'facts' is unpatriotic and ridiculous.³²

In 1859 John Stuart Mill wrote in On Liberty that

"[the] thinking [of ordinary people] is done for them by men much like themselves, addressing them or speaking in their name, on the spur of the moment, through the newspapers." (1991:73)

While he goes on to say that he is not complaining about this state of affairs, he does lodge a protest against the "tyranny of [public] opinion". (ibid.,74) Over one hundred years later, the tyrannical nature of the dominant group ideology still remains disturbingly in force and with regard to the subgroup of 'white ideology', the

³² The examples are too numerous to quote, but letters such as "Running down nation is the done thing" (31.5.85), "Chaos has followed end of British Empire" (16.4.91) and articles such as Paul Gordon's "Gandhi isn't good for you" (16.4.83) and Allan Massie's "What we lost with the Empire" (26.5.92), illustrate the point I am making.

racist attitudes of the general public have been formulated by the expressed or implicit opinions conveyed through the medium of history textbooks, popular literature and, what will be discussed in this section, newspapers.

In 3.2.2. a reference was made to the enormous difference in media coverage allotted to the Amritsar massacre of 1919 in comparison to the Mutiny of 1857. Admittedly, the former event only lasted one afternoon, despite the fact that the punishment meted out by General Dyer would breed unrest in the Punjab for many months, if not years, afterwards, whereas the Mutiny, which broke out on May 10 at Meerut was not effectively quelled until June 20 at Gwalior the following year. (Spear, 1978:141-2) However, even taking this into account and regarding the consequences of both events as more newsworthy than the incidents themselves, the relative indifference with which the slaughter of four hundred subjects of the British Empire was greeted is, to say the least, rather alarming. The firing on the crowd in the Jallianwala Bagh was an atrocity comparable with the massacre of the men, women and children at Cawnpore during the Mutiny in 1857, and yet the reactions from the public in Britain were in no way as indignant or as embittered. The actual events were not reported in any detail until December when the

progress of the Hunter Commission of Inquiry, appointed in October by the Coalition Government in London, began to arouse interest among the British public. The final report was issued in April 1920, and many people only became acquainted with this deliberate act of repression almost one whole year after it had occurred.³³

Despite the fact that the Hunter Commission reached an unanimous verdict condemning General Dyer's action, and Winston Churchill referred to the massacre as

"an episode which appeared to be without parallel in the modern history of the British Empire ... an extraordinary event, a monstrous event, an event which stood in singular and sinister isolation." (Quoted in Singh, 1977:166)

the apathy which characterized the general reception of the events pointed to the underlying assumption among high-ranking British officials that Indians were inferior beings and therefore should be treated as such. Indeed,

"one cannot imagine a similar incident occurring in a white colony". (Huttenback, 1975:182)

³³ Over seventy years after the massacre the papers on the Jallianwala Bagh incident are still restricted by special government act. British historian Michael Edwardes calls it "a very sinister affair [because] we still do not know the true story" and Indian historian V.N. Datta, who has carried out a great deal of research into the event, suggests that it was a trap carefully laid by O'Dwyer and the organizer of the meeting to teach the Punjabis a lesson. (The Raj Through Indian Eyes, December, 1991)

The reaction, or rather non-reaction, to Amritsar proved that British attitudes had progressed very little since the days of the Mutiny, the events of which featured in prominent positions in the leading journals and newspapers (Notes and Queries, The Economist, Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine, The Edinburgh Review Illustrated London News and The Times among others) during the second half of 1857 and much of 1858. During the fourteen months that the Uprising lasted the British press dwelt at length, not only on the barbarities committed by the mutineers, but also on the alleged primitive and child-like nature of the Indian. An extract from The Economist will serve as an illustration of the kind of image that was offered to the British public, many of whom would never have had the opportunity to disprove the truth of the opinions expressed as very few Britons had contact with Indians owing to the difficulties of travel and the comparatively small size of the Asian community in Britain at the time.

"The very outbreak itself in all its features shows that native character is still precisely what it was when Clive and his successors proved mere numerical strength utterly unavailing against combination, foresight, and even-minded energy. There has been no change in these respects; we have not yet taught our Indian subjects the secret by which less than half-a-million of one race have managed to govern one hundred and fifty millions of another race; nor have they learned to be other than the creatures of blind impulse which we found them to be a hundred years ago. ... many of the mistakes of judgement which have been committed are traceable to an idea that the native Sepoy is to be dealt with as you would deal with a phlegmatic,

reasoning Englishman, and that he is not a being half savage and half child, actuated by sudden and unreasoning impulses which he can hardly himself explain or control." (4 July 1857)

This deeply ingrained notion of the inferiority of the 'dark races' was insisted upon to justify British rule over India and did nothing to vindicate Indian disquiet over the presence of foreigners in their country. Illustrated London News almost exonerated the East India Company from any responsibility in the Mutiny:

"the errors hitherto committed in the government of India have not had their origin in cruelty or despotism, but in humanity and generosity..." (5 September 1857)

In comparison, Nana Sahib, and by extension all Indians, "[is] the most ruthless and treacherous scoundrel who ever disgraced humanity ... a monster of perfidy and cruelty". (ibid.)

The same edition goes on to praise "the women of England",

"[who] have indeed behaved nobly, and proved, as well as the sterner sex, the superiority of the British race over the population of India." (ibid.)

Racial superiority became a recurrent theme and the ideology expressed in the following extract would survive well into the twentieth century and was certainly widespread in 1919 at the time of the Amritsar massacre.

"It is only thus [a large infusion of the Anglo-Saxon element, in the shape, not merely of soldiers, but of civilians], and by the direct operation of the European race, that the native population can be raised above the influence of a corrupt half-civilization." (Illustrated London News, 31 October 1857)

The press has played an active part in the perpetuation of popular images of colonial peoples together with novels and history books, but of the three media possibly the newspaper is the one that reaches most people most effectively. Whereas the Victorians and Edwardians doubtlessly relied heavily on popular fiction for information about the expanding world, people in contemporary society are more likely to switch on the television or glance at the newspaper headlines before making the effort to open a book. Consequently, the role of the press in conveying public knowledge may be said to have acquired additional importance in the present century, possibly at the expense of the textbook and the novel. When reading nineteenth century newspapers the temptation to smile at the unashamed racism reflected in their pages is great, but the fact that such attitudes still survive and are frequently expressed in the contemporary press, albeit in a much more subtle way, is no laughing matter.

In 4.2.1 the question was raised about the role of the media in whipping up racial contempt for the newly arrived migrants from the former colonies. It has been suggested that rather than change people's attitudes, newspapers merely reflect the opinions of their readers and the letters to the editor, to a certain extent,

corroborate this argument. (Cashmore & Troyna, 1983:228) Moreover, the news media simply reinforce previously formed opinions as people tend to choose their newspapers according to their ideology. Dilip Hiro also argues that readers or television viewers are more likely to remember programmes or articles that coincide with their own views, rather than those news items with opinions which clash with their convictions. (Hiro, 1991:285) Nevertheless, earnest sentiments of justice and tolerance towards all peoples of the world can very easily be tempered after a continuous diet of carefully processed information charged with negative racial connotations. Even prior to Enoch Powell's 'Rivers of Blood' speech (see Appendix 2), the press had failed to present the migrants from the New Commonwealth as ordinary citizens, but rather as problems. The news media tended to project the image of a civilized, white British majority with alien people intruding on a basically homogeneous society. Powell's inflammatory speech and his deliberate critique of the Conservative Party leadership and the bipartisan stance on race provided the press with a controversial and delicate issue with which it could sway its readers.³⁴

³⁴ A comparison could be drawn between the treatment of blacks by the press and by the police. By the late 1960s the police had already contributed to the creation of a racial slant to crime but open conflict between the

From the sixties onwards, race and immigration would feature regularly in the British press and not only in connection with the legislation being passed. Articles on the deterioration of inner city areas attributable to the growing presence of black migrants reinforced the negative qualities associated with African and Asian people, such as dirt, squalor, poverty, violence and general primitiveness. (see "RACE/White Wolverhampton", The Observer, 14.7.68) Urban decay was seen to be caused by the new arrivals instead of being the result of governmental neglect, caused in part by World War II. Likewise, in the mid sixties the newspapers carried reports of tuberculosis and venereal diseases being more prevalent among Afro-Asian migrants than among native born citizens. (see for example The Times 20.11.64; 28.1.65 & 18.1.65) In this connection the press often focused on black people straining social services and becoming undeserving beneficiaries of the Welfare State, the two most notorious examples of 'black scroungers' being in 1976 and 1984.

In March 1976 two Malawi Asian families were housed in a hotel for six weeks because the local county council

police and the black communities would become a regular phenomenon from approximately 1968 onwards. (Solomos, 1990:101)

could find no other place for them to go. The Sun reported the case on its front page with the headline "Scandal of £600-a-week immigrants - giant bill for two families who live in a 4-star hotel" (4.5.76), implying that all immigrants were living in luxury at the taxpayer's expense but avoiding any mention of the fact that these people were United Kingdom passport holders whose automatic right of entry had been withdrawn under the 1968 Act (see 4.2.2). In 1984 the image of the immigrant scrounger emerged once more. The News of the World (18.11.84) carried the eye-catching headline "£476 A WEEK FOR WAITER ABDUL". Although the story explained that the dole payment was in fact an inclusive sum covering the cost of housing Abdul Bari and his wife and six children, the impact of the sensational headline caused an irate response from News of the World readers (25.11.84). Like the Malawi Asians, Bari was a British citizen and he and his seven dependants had been housed in one room of a hotel because the local authority could not find anywhere else for them to go.

As evidence of Asian culture being an aberration, stories of young Asian girls being forced into an undesired arranged marriage by tyrannical parents frequently made the headlines, especially in the popular press. The Daily Mail splashed the headline "SCANDAL OF

THE BRIDES FOR SALE" over its front page on 5 August 1985. The story claimed that young Asian girls were being sold by their parents to strangers who wished to obtain British citizenship and thus the right of abode in Britain. The Daily Mail claimed that this was a widespread practice, but failed to supply evidence in this respect. However, accuracy is not always deemed a necessary feature of popular journalism. The objective of reinforcing the stereotypes of an oppressive, unenlightened Asian culture and compliant, submissive Asian women justified the dubious means employed.

If the riots of 1958 had linked race with immigration firmly in people's minds (see 4.2.1.) in the aftermath of Powell's speech a new element could be said to have been added. Immigration was now officially termed not just a 'problem' but also a 'threat', whereas it might be argued that the only real 'problem' had always been the racism of the indigenous population. As James Walvin points out "The British people's immediate awareness and knowledge of race and racially related matters has been determined in large part by media coverage. Racial matters have been given the kind of coverage by the media ... which has scarcely done anything to dispel the older racial images and stereotypes." (1984:140)

The cultural climate was still permeated with racist assumptions and colonial discourse. The Daily Express could not think of a better headline than "Police find

forty Indians in "black hole" (2 July 1970) with which to report on the discovery of illegal immigrants in a cellar. Although history books are gradually letting this particular incident die a natural death, the media could not resist an allusion to the perfidy of the 'dark races'.

It is interesting to speculate whether race issues would have become so explosive had the media played down Powell's words because

"the events and statements following Powell's speech were prominently and meticulously reported in the press." (Hiro, 1991:249)

Likewise, Cashmore and Troyna argue that the saturated media coverage and emotive language used may well have created a situation of unease between the indigenous population and the black migrants that did not exist before. (1983:215) In this respect, despite the fact that Powell was not even an MP in 1988, on the twentieth anniversary of his notorious speech he was given unnecessarily extensive media coverage in several newspapers. In The Times he claimed that his earlier speech had been anything but sensational and that he had not overstated the effect of immigration on the indigenous population. Without actually mentioning the word 'race', Powell questioned the viability of a society containing "an element that is so visibly and self-consciously distinct from the rest." (19 April 1988) The Conservative