

# **Spectacles of Dispossession: Representations of Indian Muslims in British Colonial Discourse, 1857-1905**

Padamsee, Alexander

The copyright of this thesis rests with the author and no quotation from it or information derived from it may be published without the prior written consent of the author

For additional information about this publication click this link.

<http://qmro.qmul.ac.uk/jspui/handle/123456789/1803>

Information about this research object was correct at the time of download; we occasionally make corrections to records, please therefore check the published record when citing. For more information contact [scholarlycommunications@qmul.ac.uk](mailto:scholarlycommunications@qmul.ac.uk)



**Spectacles of Dispossession: Representations of Indian Muslims in  
British Colonial Discourse, 1857-1905**

by  
Alexander Padamsee

Queen Mary College, University of London

Submitted for PhD, September 2003

### Abstract of Thesis

This thesis analyses some of the changing features by which Indian Muslims were identified in British colonialist discourse between the outbreak of revolt in 1857 and the partition of Bengal in 1905. Most of the texts examined emanate out of the relatively circumscribed Anglo-Indian official community, and range from personal correspondence, to ‘Mutiny’ memoirs, travel guides, and socio-political essays. The argument takes as its starting point David Washbrook’s description of the self-constitution of the Raj as a centralised, secular and neutral state arbitrating the claims of competing ascriptive racial and ethnic communities. Drawing on recent Lacanian analyses of the formation and maintenance of ideologies, as well as on the sociological schema of Zygmant Bauman, the thesis argues that in the post-1857 period the preservation of this official identity became dangerously reliant on a discourse of power centred on representations of Indian Muslims. Chapter One reads the stereotype of the Indian Muslim in 1905 for its most salient features – debased foreign origins, religious incontinence, isolation within Indian society, and secret ambitions towards temporal power. It then traces them back to their first marked appearance in colonial discourse in 1857. Chapter Two begins with a reassessment of the historiography with regard to Muslim ‘conspiracy’ during the revolt, as well as a reconsideration of official praxis towards Indian Muslims in the half-century before its outbreak. Proceeding to a detailed analysis of ‘Mutiny’ texts, it concludes that the unprecedented, widespread British misperception of ‘conspiracy’ stemmed in part from an irrational colonialist attempt to re-possess their own fractured secular ideology through tropes of Christian persecution. Chapter Three compares the highly ambivalent post-‘Mutiny’ representations of Indo-Muslim ‘fanaticism’ that resulted with a secularised late eighteenth-century discourse on Mughal figures of authority. It argues that the strikingly similar discourses of alienation and lack of self-command structuring both forms of representation derived from crises in the colonialist inability to command their own self-presentation as rulers within the Indian environment. In the later discourse, in particular, these instabilities issued in a disastrous process of representational stigmatisation and segregation.

### **Acknowledgements**

I am grateful to the Arts and Humanities Research Board for awarding me a Postgraduate Studentship. I would like to thank my supervisor, Dr Javed Majeed, whose own scholarship, encouragement and suggestions have made writing this thesis such a pleasurable and rewarding experience. And my wife, Kristen, without whom I could never have begun the task.



## CONTENTS

<b>Introduction</b>		5
<b>Chapter One</b>		
1.1	Indian Muslims and <i>India</i> : a preliminary discussion	18
1.2	“Mohammedanism” in <i>India</i>	24
1.3	Identity and disavowal in colonial representations	36
1.4	The tyranny of ‘Mohammedanism’	53
1.5	The ‘heroic self-denial’ of ‘Christian rulers’	58
<b>Chapter Two</b>		
2.1	Introduction	70
2.2	The pre-‘Mutiny’ discourse on Indian Muslims	81
2.3	A writer of ‘the known and the knowable’	105
2.4	Fantasy and Civilian identity	128
2.5	Forms of prophylaxis in Civilian ‘Mutiny’ accounts	151
2.6	Some preliminary conclusions	174
<b>Chapter Three</b>		
3.1	The Indo-Muslim ‘stranger’	205
3.2	Framing the Mughal: Warren Hastings and the problem of ‘dependency’	212
3.3	‘A wild and ardent faith’: testing oppositions in the post-‘Mutiny’ discourse	252
<b>Conclusion</b>		314
<b>Appendix</b>		
	<i>Colonel Mordaunt’s Cock Match</i> by John Zoffany, Lucknow, c.1784-86	326
	<i>Warren Hastings meeting Jawan Bakht</i> by John Zoffany, Lucknow, 1784	327
	<i>Colonel Mordaunt’s Cock Match, the ‘Ashwick Version’</i> , probably by Robert Home, Lucknow, c.1817	328
	<i>Key to ‘Colonel Mordaunt’s Cock Match’</i> , 1794	329
	<i>Embassy of Hyderbeck to Calcutta</i> , Mezzotint engraving (1800) after a painting by John Zoffany, c.1795	330
	<i>Mr. And Mrs. Warren Hastings</i> by John Zoffany, Calcutta, 1783-87	331
	<i>Warren Hastings</i> by Tilly Kettle, Calcutta, c.1775	332
<b>Bibliography</b>		333

## Introduction

In May 1888, travelling through the princely states of Rajputana as a reporter for the *Allahabad Pioneer*, Rudyard Kipling found himself unexpectedly bivouacked one night with three sepoys.<sup>1</sup> Settling down together around the campfire, the young Anglo-Indian journalist, anxiously knowledgeable, hastily established his credentials for his readers by fixing in place the ethnographic framework of the scene.<sup>2</sup> It is a brief, lightly sketched reference, but it determines the very possibility of the guarded conviviality that follows. ‘They were all Mahomedans’, he wrote simply and without fear of controversy:

and consequently all were easy to deal with. A Hindu is an excellent person, but...but...there is no knowing what is in his heart, and he is hedged about with so many strange observances [...] But a man who will eat with you and take your tobacco, sinking the fiction that it has been doctored with *shrab* [liquour], cannot be very bad after all.<sup>3</sup>

The almost fraternal evening that follows literally orients the bewildered traveller, serving as the one instance in his journey in which he inserts himself into an Indian social group for any length of time, and on a relatively equal footing; and with whom all his expectations of conduct are fulfilled. This tableau of shared expectations is all the more remarkable for its juxtaposition against an earlier, altogether different, encounter with a Hindu *sadhu* (religious mendicant). When asked directions, the *sadhu* ‘scowled at the driver, scowled at the fare, and then settled down in the dust, laughing wildly, and pointing to the earth and the sky.’<sup>4</sup> The reporter is faced here with a parody of conviviality, directed at no particular object, and directing him anywhere but onward. Its very lack of meaning is what seems to be so disturbing: ‘Now for a native to laugh aloud without reason, publicly and at high noon, is a

---

<sup>1</sup> Some of the details of this tour can be found in Harry Ricketts, *The Unforgiving Minute: A Life of Rudyard Kipling* (London: Pimlico, repr. 2000; 1999), Chapter Seven.

<sup>2</sup> The term ‘Anglo-Indian’ is used here, as throughout the thesis, as it was commonly understood by the British until 1947, denoting a British resident in India.

<sup>3</sup> Rudyard Kipling, *Letters of Marque* (Allahabad: Wheeler, 1891), p 143.

<sup>4</sup> Rudyard Kipling, *From Sea to Sea and Other Sketches: Letters of Travel Volume II* (London: Macmillan & Co, 1900), pp 384-85.

gruesome thing and calculated to chill the blood.’<sup>5</sup> On that occasion, there had been no sharing of information, tobacco and sleeping arrangements; only a retreat, pursued by laughter and a story that failed to materialise, a quarry that never had ‘the decency to be interviewed.’<sup>6</sup>

For Kipling, then, as for most Anglo-Indians, ‘Hindu’ and ‘Mahomedan’ were partly terms of orientation, the one baffling and the other encouraging his sense of being placed in India.<sup>7</sup> This is a division that is consistently played out through his journalism and fiction, nowhere more so than in a series of articles he wrote for the *Civil and Military Gazette* in Lahore between 1887 and 1888, and which he later collected under the title ‘The Smith Administration’.<sup>8</sup> Couched as comic tales of Anglo-Indian household management, Kipling in fact builds up a remarkably compressed portrait of Anglo-Indian views on the political ‘management’ of India. Largely a matter of reading correctly and manipulating its ethnic divisions (‘skilfully playing off people against people, sect against sect, and kin against kin’<sup>9</sup>), the narrator, Smith, relies upon essential character traits indicative of caste and religion. Nevertheless, as with the travels through Rajputana, the narrative appeal of the ‘The Smith Administration’ stories lies in the way in which its ironic ruler is frequently outfoxed by his unruly staff, his patient knowledge soon exhausted, his disciplinary measures overturned. While shedding an intentionally ironic light on the perspicacity of his theories of ‘divide and rule’, there remains a single seemingly predictable element among Smith’s ‘subjects’ on and through whom the principles of British justice and its manipulation of ethnographic characterisations manage to retain their sense of paramountcy. For as in Rajputana, checking anarchy, Kipling installs the invariant framework of orientation that anchors the illegible Hindu with the apparently reliable transparency of the ‘Mahometan’. And as the narrator is quick to point out, in his ideal household, his paradigm of Anglo-Indian governance, ‘the

---

<sup>5</sup> Kipling, *Sea*, p 385.

<sup>6</sup> Kipling, *Sea*, p 386.

<sup>7</sup> Ronald Inden, *Imagining India*, (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1990), p 86.

<sup>8</sup> Kipling, *Sea*, pp 341-68.

<sup>9</sup> Kipling, *Sea*, p 341.

Mahomedan element largely predominated; because the Supreme Government considered the minds of Mahomedans more get-at-able than those of Hindus'.<sup>10</sup>

This 'get-at-able' dimension is commonly considered by scholars as the keynote of late nineteenth-century colonialist discourse on Indian Muslims.<sup>11</sup> But although touched on in most critical studies on the literature of the period, and despite a predominance of Muslim characters in Anglo-Indian fiction far in excess of their numerical incidence in Indian society, it has oddly never been subject to more than an anecdotal treatment.<sup>12</sup> The terms of that treatment revolve around the core ideas that, both as former conquerors of India and as a familiar monotheistic corporate entity, the Muslims were invariably apprehended as figures of comparison for the British in India.<sup>13</sup> As such, they were considered a cardinal point on the map of discrete, absolutely differentiated communities by which Indian society was reconstructed in later colonialist records and literature.<sup>14</sup> Despite the periodically perceived fact that local factors such as caste ran across these divisions, informing Muslim as well as other communal structures, the British came to insist in particular in this period on 'the supposedly ineradicable sense of community dividing Hindus from Muslims and other non-Hindus'.<sup>15</sup> In this regard, the 'get-at-able' quality of the Muslim anchored the colonialist apprehension of Indian society as a whole. Like the increasingly rigid perception of caste in the later nineteenth century, Muslim legibility circumscribed and held in place, the fluidity of a Hindu society seen as threatening in its very ability to elude systems of apprehension, to direct the colonialist anywhere but onward.

---

<sup>10</sup> Kipling, *Sea*, p 345.

<sup>11</sup> Thomas R Metcalfe, *Ideologies of the Raj* (New Delhi: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p 89. The term 'discourse' is used here, and throughout the thesis, in Foucault's sense not simply of 'language', but of the spectrum of 'practices' which determines the conditions of 'emergence' for 'the objects of which they speak'. Michel Foucault, trans. A M Sheridan Smith, *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (London: Routledge, repr. 1995; 1972), pp 40-49

<sup>12</sup> Alan Greenberger, *The British Image of India: a Study in the Literature of Imperialism 1880-1960* (London: Oxford University Press, 1969), pp 47-48.

<sup>13</sup> Metcalfe, *Ideologies*, pp 138-40; Greenberger, pp 45-51; and Benita Parry, *Delusions and Discoveries: Studies on India in the British Imagination, 1880-1930* (Allen Lane, London; 1972), pp 49-50.

<sup>14</sup> Metcalf, *Ideologies*, Chapter Four.

<sup>15</sup> Susan Bayly, *Caste Society and Politics in India from the Eighteenth Century to the Modern Age* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, repr. 2001; 1991), pp 18, 99; Richard M Eaton, *The Rise of Islam and the Bengal Frontier, 1204-1760* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, repr. 1994; 1993), p 101.

Implicit to this idea of transparency and its role in ordering a kaleidoscopic, bewildering and alien world, is the cognate but far more problematic notion of similarity. Anglo-Indian literary representations of Indian Muslims therefore do not simply abound with the kind of virile, martial and 'active' qualities that the British frequently attributed to themselves; they are organised by them.<sup>16</sup> As with the opposing notion of Hindu 'effeminacy', the subject underwriting this reification of manly virtues and vices is that of paramountcy itself.<sup>17</sup> But in contrast to, for instance, the characterisations of the 'effeminate Bengali *babu*' or the Sikh 'lions of the Punjab', Anglo-Indian rhetoric surrounding Indian Muslims transcends the language of 'manliness' and 'martial races'.<sup>18</sup> It enters instead into a *continuum* with the British apprehension of themselves as holders of political power in India, but alien to, and deriving their origins and ultimate allegiances outside of, its immediate environment. When the beleaguered Smith departs for his travels, it is therefore Bahadur Khan, his Muslim 'khitmatgar', whom he appoints 'Viceroy' in his place. Even when (or indeed, because) Bahadur Khan fails in his duty, the Englishman insists on the definitively Anglo-Indian ruling qualities of his substitute as 'an administrator...decisive and capable-of-ruling-men'.<sup>19</sup> This consistent theme of congruence between Anglo-Indian and Indian Muslim exposes a relatively unexplored area of ambivalence in late colonial epistemologies. As Partha Chatterjee puts it, British rule in India was predicated on 'colonial difference', that is, on 'the preservation of the alienness of the ruling group.'<sup>20</sup> In the traumatised wake of the sustained evidence of indigenous coalition building in 1857-59, Anglo-Indians had become more than ever reliant on this form of self-construction, putting themselves

---

<sup>16</sup> Greenberger, p 46.

<sup>17</sup> This is a line of argument pursued by Mrinalini Sinha with regard to the figure of the 'effeminate Bengali *babu*' in *Colonial Masculinity: The 'Manly Englishman' and the 'Effeminate Bengali' in the Late Nineteenth Century* (New Delhi: Kali for Women, repr. 1997: 1995). On the more generalised association of Hinduism with femininity, see Inden, *Imagining*, pp 85-89.

<sup>18</sup> On the evolution and effects of colonialist descriptions of Sikh identity, see Richard G Fox, *Lions of the Punjab: Culture in the Making* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985).

<sup>19</sup> Kipling, *Sea*, pp 363-64.

<sup>20</sup> Partha Chatterjee, *The Nation and its Fragments: Colonial and Postcolonial Histories* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1993), p10.

forward as arbitrators of what they increasingly insisted was an irremediably heterogeneous, and disputatious, Indian social comity.<sup>21</sup> In his seminal essay on the sociology of the late nineteenth century Raj, David Washbrook has described this British self-projection as the vital, but avowedly neutral and discontinuous, hub of multiple and petitioning, ascriptive ethnicities.<sup>22</sup> The pervasive discourse of similarity that marks Anglo-Indian descriptions of Indian Muslims thus represents something of an anomalous area within British systems of knowledge in regard to their extrinsic relationship to Indian society. In entering, through Indian Muslims, upon a continuum of similarity (running from potency to decline, autocratic ruthlessness to paternal liberalism, discipline to decadence), perhaps more than in any other aspect of colonialist discourse, the British in India bound themselves as hostages to the consistent, indeed despotic, apprehension of difference. And yet given the prior paradigm of identification everywhere determining that apprehension, absolute difference is precisely the outcome already denied. In other words, the rule of ‘colonial difference’ was liable to collapse at its most familiar point of orientation. Clearly, the idea of the ‘get-at-able’ Muslim is more treacherous than it would seem, containing as it did the possibility of a potentially ‘vulnerable’ Anglo-Indian.

The consequent pressures exerted on Anglo-Indian representations of Indian Muslims are everywhere apparent in colonialist discourse. They can, for instance, be immediately detected in ‘The Smith Administration’. At the centre of Kipling’s narrative is the story of the disruption of peace and paramountcy; and as with the majority of such Anglo-Indian tales, located as the source of that disruption is a Muslim, here a ‘*coachwan*’ (coachman) conducting a ‘vicarious jihad’ against the goat-herder in Smith’s compound.<sup>23</sup> His capture, trial and expulsion lead to a

---

<sup>21</sup> Gyanendra Pandey, *The Construction of Communalism in Colonial North India* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, repr. 1994; 1990), p 16; D A Washbrook, ‘Ethnicity and Racialism in Colonial Indian Society’ in Robert Ross (ed), *Racism and Colonialism: Essays on Ideology and Social Structure* (The Hague: Nijhoff for Leiden University Press, 1982), p 157.

<sup>22</sup> Washbrook, ‘Ethnicity’, p 170.

<sup>23</sup> Kipling, *Sea*, p 345. The story of the coachwan extends over the first two articles reprinted in *From Sea to Sea*, ‘The Cow-House Jirga’ and ‘A Bazar Dhulip’. In the six stories that are directly related to the Smith household, only one (‘The Hands of Justice’) revolves around a Hindu central character.

recurrence of the feud, now directed at Smith himself, from outside the walls of the compound. At last, the coachman is caught again and imprisoned within its walls as ‘a living example and most lively presentment of the unrelaxing wrath of the State.’<sup>24</sup> But now, with his nemesis safely immured as a constantly visible example of British power in India, Smith begins to reveal something of his own investments in this odd tale of rivalry:

However well he may work, however earnestly strive to win my favour, there is no human chance of his ever rising from his present position so long as [Smith] Sahib and he are above the earth together.<sup>25</sup>

Invading from elsewhere (Corkler’s compound next door), liable to exile, but inevitably brought back within the realm, only to be there held apart: the Muslim figure is clearly both a necessary and disturbing presence for Kipling’s narrative of domestic management. He can neither be effaced from, nor intricated within its society, and yet he somehow proves, indeed narrates, the worth of its rulers. Moreover, this is an ambivalence literally inscribed. From his first appearance, there is a paradoxical quality to his ‘Muslim-ness’, signalled by the falsifying signs of caste, which lends to the coachman the oxymoronic designation, ‘*chamar*-Mahometan not too long converted’.<sup>26</sup> His ‘jihad’ is thus also a matter of pretence, simultaneously manipulative and in its cumulative, meaningless progression, self-directing – a fraudulent motivating force that effectively becomes irresistibly motiveless. But perhaps the most surprising issue of the masquerade is that, in bringing this anarchic figure to heel, the narrative comes alarmingly close to undoing the neutral, if exasperated, characterisation of its narrator. In the last lines of the tale he signals a distressed awareness that his own claims to uphold British justice, even in its more autocratic Anglo-Indian mould, are under threat. Like the imprisoned

---

Significantly, it is the only story in which an Indian manages to defy and escape the authority of the narrator unpunished.

<sup>24</sup> Kipling, *Sea*, p 351.

<sup>25</sup> Kipling, *Sea*, p 351.

<sup>26</sup> Kipling, *Sea*, p 342. *Chamar* is one of the denominations (*jati*) of the Hindu *Shudra* caste (S. Bayly, *Caste*, pp 9-10). As will be seen throughout the thesis, where caste intrudes in colonialist discourse on Indian Muslims, it does so most commonly as a deconstructive agent, falsifying other definitions.

‘*chamar*-Mahometan’, Smith becomes subject to a comparable form of motiveless malignity, making him in a sense, secondary to his Muslim nemesis. But by then the investments between them have gone too far: ‘a narrow-souled public may consider my present lenient treatment of him harsh and illegal...I will never, never part with Corkler’s *coachwan*’.<sup>27</sup> Even in this ephemeral comic tale, then, it would seem that a site of mutual deconstruction quickly opens out around the ‘get-at-able’ Indian Muslim. The presumption of a monolithic, fixed identity declared by Smith is belied by the paradoxes by which the ‘Mahometan’ is described: a fanatical Muslim who only pretends to be religious; an object of justice who will never properly be punished; a volatile, ungovernable figure of insurrection who must nevertheless be kept within the realm as a means of securing its stability. Far from offering a secure point or orientation, it is this very fluidity of identity that engenders the narrative and draws the Anglo-Indian into an inexplicable dependency.

While indicating some of the terms of this ambivalence, historians have as a rule, stopped short of attempting to test out its full implications. Critiques of British constructions of Indian society often tend either to situate their engagement with representations of Islam in India to the period of Company rule ending in 1857; or to treat them as largely unproblematised further examples to the broad sweep of colonial epistemologies of difference and antagonism.<sup>28</sup> Thus they frequently catechrise later colonialist observers such as Alfred Lyall or W W Hunter only in regard to their perceptions of Hinduism, despite the fact that their writings are saturated with, and significantly modified by, Islam as a conjoint figure of comparison.<sup>29</sup> As Washbrook points out, to fully understand the politicisation of ethnicity and race by Indian socio-political movements in the modern period requires the coherent analysis of the

---

<sup>27</sup> Kipling, *Sea*, p 351.

<sup>28</sup> See for instance: Lewis D Wurgraft, *The Imperial Imagination: Magic and Myth in Kipling’s India* (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 1983); Sara Suleri, *The Rhetoric of English India* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1992); and Jenny Sharpe, *Allegories of Empire: the Figure of Woman in the Colonial Text* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993).

<sup>29</sup> Inden, *Imagining*; Susan Bayly, *Caste*, Chapter Three. The works of both Hunter and Lyall are explored in detail in Section 3.3 below.



colonial state with which those movements engaged.<sup>30</sup> One consequence of this gap in the historiography is that colonialist representations of Indian Muslims have at times remained a blind spot for theoretical studies of the evolution of nationalist discourse.<sup>31</sup> Even in histories of Hindu nationalism in which British stereotypes of Islam in India are located as founding models for simultaneous ‘emulation and stigmatisation’, they are cited as if self-evident and straightforward, rather than historically variegated and complex phenomena.<sup>32</sup>

Most surprising of all, however, is the lack of any substantial interpretative rubric in otherwise comprehensive and nuanced studies of the development in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries of Indo-Muslim socio-political movements. In this regard, Francis Robinson’s important and groundbreaking account of the political genesis of the Aligarh Movement in the United Provinces in this period has set a course from which few historians have deviated in the last thirty years.<sup>33</sup> Broadly, he sketches the initial progress of the Muslim Urdu-speaking elite from a preoccupation with the loss of government patronage in 1857, to the development of a ‘loyalist’ strain of political rhetoric and institutional focus. When this mode of interaction fails to bring adequate results, there is a swing towards the more ‘militant’ petitioning of a new ‘Young Party’ of Indo-Muslim politicians and publicists, which results in the concession of the principle of separate electorates in 1909.<sup>34</sup> At every step of the process, the movement is interpreted as being guided by its relationship

---

<sup>30</sup> Washbrook, ‘Ethnicity’, p 171.

<sup>31</sup> See in particular, the refusal to subject Muslim stereotypes in the writings of Bankimchandra Chattopadhyay to any but a cursory acknowledgement, in Partha Chatterjee’s highly influential *Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World: A Derivative Discourse?* (London: Zed Books, repr. 1993; 1986), p 77. To some extent this omission is redressed in *The Nation and its Fragments*, Chapter Four.

<sup>32</sup> Christophe Jaffrelot, *The Hindu Nationalist Movement and Indian Politics 1925 to the 1990s* (London: C Hurst & Co, 1996), pp 20-21; John Zavos, *The Emergence of Hindu Nationalism in India* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2000), p 2; and Thomas Blom Hansen, *The Saffron Wave: Democracy and Hindu Nationalism in Modern India* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, repr. 2000; 1999), pp 60, 71.

<sup>33</sup> See for instance, David Lelyveld’s fascinating exploration of the cultural and institutional framework of that movement in his *Aligarh’s First Generation: Muslim Solidarity in British India* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, repr. 1996; 1978).

<sup>34</sup> Francis Robinson, *Separatism Among Indian Muslims: The Politics of the United Provinces’ Muslims 1860-1923* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, repr. 1994; 1974), pp 1-174.

with the government, first supplicating for the retention of its privileges, and finally demanding administrative 'separatism'. Government motivations on the other hand, are largely confined to a deep-seated suspicion of Indian Muslims after the events of 1857-59. Since Robinson, in consonance with the other major history of the period by Peter Hardy, notes the limited scope of Indo-Muslim co-ordination during those years, colonialist discourse in this respect remains a largely unexamined, irrational engine-room to the account as a whole.<sup>35</sup> More problematic, however, is the parallel observation that Anglo-Indian politicians regarded Indian Muslims as 'an important conservative force' for the maintenance of British rule.<sup>36</sup> Robinson does not attempt to articulate the faintly Machiavellian undertones to this observation with the perception that the British were themselves manipulated by their own fears. In effect, the movement driving the formation of a pan-Indian Muslim political identity is left responding to a series of irreconcilable and unpredictable contradictions.

Without giving British discourse a theoretical coherence, there is little possibility of fully recovering the 'mechanisms to exchange' between cultures through which certain racial and ethnic emphases may have been 'internalised' by the protagonists of Indian socio-political movements of the period.<sup>37</sup> Since in particular, the Aligarh Movement has been seen as crucially reactive, there is a worrying sense here in which it is portrayed by historians as the naively disorientated subject of what Richard Eaton has elsewhere called the 'fuzzy and tendentious' thinking of nineteenth-century colonialist perceptions of Indian Islam.<sup>38</sup> The aim of this study is to construct an alternative, more coherent narrative of some of the main elements to this Anglo-Indian thought. It is intended ultimately as a means of facilitating the process of reinterpreting the 'mechanisms to exchange' which clearly inform, but by

---

<sup>35</sup> Peter Hardy, *The Muslims of British India* (New Delhi: Cambridge University Press, repr. 1998; 1972), pp 61-70.

<sup>36</sup> Robinson, *Separatism*, pp 163-64.

<sup>37</sup> Washbrook, 'Ethnicity', p 158.

<sup>38</sup> Eaton, *Rise*, p 125. Eaton's phrase is itself indicative of the extent to which modern historiography has refused to engage with that thought on any but an empirical level.

no means direct, the genesis of Indo-Muslim self-descriptions at this time.<sup>39</sup> As such, it is intended to serve as another strand in the reconstruction of the full terms of dialogue involved in the formation of Indian political identities in the later colonial period.

The focus of the thesis will be on the conflicted questions of ‘separatism’, ‘alienness’ and ‘antagonism’ as they were manifested in Anglo-Indian writings about Indian Muslims in the later nineteenth century. Through detailed readings of a wide range of Anglo-Indian texts it will attempt to trace and account for this discourse from its initial marked appearance in 1857 until the first physical enactment of its underlying rationale in the partition of Bengal. These texts have been selected deliberately from within the orbit of the official community which, it will be argued, was most closely involved with the formation of this discourse. Directed outwards from that community as tools for the formation of public opinion both in India and Britain, they are intended to fill out what Christopher Bayly has recently described as ‘the dead ground between what is now a vibrant social history of India and its apparently lifeless intellectual history’.<sup>40</sup> It is this area of discursive formations that constituted an important, if concealed, element in the administrator Sir John Malcolm’s infamous assertion that ‘our Indian Empire is one of opinion.’<sup>41</sup> It represents a level of textual polemic between the physical act of data gathering and the final arguments of political documentation, but mediated by the same strata of Anglo-Indian society responsible for both. Moreover, as we shall touch on in Chapter Three, it was an arena of debate that was closely monitored by the indigenous educated elites of colonial India.<sup>42</sup> The plethora of genres addressed here is intended

---

<sup>39</sup> Farzana Shaikh has approached this discourse from the vantage point of Islamic norms of expectation in *Community and Consensus: Muslim Representation in Colonial India, 1860-1947* (Bombay: Orient Longman, repr. 1991; 1989).

<sup>40</sup> C A Bayly, *Empire and Information: Intelligence Gathering and Social communication in India, 1780-1870* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p ix.

<sup>41</sup> J Malcolm, ‘Report of the General Committee for Public Instruction’ in *Friend on India*, 27 October, 1836, quoted in Bayly, *Empire*, p 2.

<sup>42</sup> See for instance, Sayed Ahmad Khan, *Review of Dr Hunter’s Indian Musalmans: Are they Bound in Conscience to Rebel Against the Queen* (Benares, 1872), pp 5-6. On the often unexpected indigenous interpretations and reformulations of this level of public debate, see Javed Majeed, ‘Narratives of Progress and Idioms of Community: Two Urdu Periodicals of the 1870s’, in David Finkelstein and

to demonstrate the remarkable coherence of underlying themes across a wide range of Anglo-Indian cultural productions, a unity that invests those forms with such rhetorical force. Following the approach mapped out by Sander Gilman, each of the examples are analysed as ‘structured systems of representations’ which, ‘no matter what the medium, can be construed as “texts” for the study of stereotypes.’<sup>43</sup> The surprising contradictions manifested by these stereotypes, in contrast to the uniformity of their structuring themes, urges in this case a reconsideration of Clive Dewey’s contention that:

the crucial factor, clinching most policy decisions, was the constant repetition of simple axioms by large numbers of comparatively obscure officials. What made one course of action seem preferable to another was the incessant reiteration of easily remembered slogans, not the original insights of brilliant minds.<sup>44</sup>

In regard to colonialist discourse on Indian Muslims, it will be argued that ‘simple axioms’ are the least reliable guides to the complex, and highly ambivalent, currents of thought in which they were always implicated. ‘Fanaticism’ such as that of the ‘*coachwan*’ can be at one and the same time a ruthless, self-directing force and a matter of strategic pretence. Rather than the stereotype itself, it is the contending currents from which it emerges that provide an insight into the course of policy in this respect, and which implicitly informed the responses of indigenous observers.

Chapter One will attempt to set the parameters of the discourse as it had evolved by the early twentieth century. Beginning with a close reading of a particular Anglo-Indian text, Flora Annie Steel’s *India* (1905), it notes the disparity between its markedly limited representations of Indian Muslims and the multivocal Indo-Muslim socio-political public arenas of the period. But as a means of exposing its specific emphases at that time, it concentrates on testing these representations against the

---

Douglas M Peers, (eds), *Negotiating India in the Nineteenth-Century Media*, (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2000), pp 135-63; and Ayesha Jalal, *Self and Sovereignty: Individual and Community in South Asian Islam Since 1850* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2001).

<sup>43</sup> Sander L Gilman, *Difference and Pathology: Stereotypes of Sexuality, Race, and Madness* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985), p 26. The role of stereotypes in colonialist discourse is discussed in more detail in Section 1.3 below.

<sup>44</sup> Clive Dewey, *The Mind of the Indian Civil Service* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, repr. 2000; 1993), p 9.

wider modes of late nineteenth-century British perceptions of Indian society, as well as noting their connections to earlier eighteenth-century descriptions of ‘oriental despotism’. In Section 1.3 some of the methodological issues are taken up with regard to colonialist investments in their forms of knowledge and representation. An argument is put forward for the relevance, and potential vulnerability, of the self-projection of the British Indian state as secular and neutral, comparing it as a system based on prohibition and disavowal to that of the Lacanian conception of socialisation. In particular, a case is made there, and in Section 1.5, for the relevance of the investments and instabilities imported into that identity by the official community during the period under discussion. Chapter Two carries these questions over into a detailed examination of some of their accounts of Muslim ‘conspiracy’ in 1857-59. As a preface to this discussion, the first two sections re-examine the modern historiography surrounding colonialist perceptions of and praxis towards Indian Muslims in the preceding half-century, as well as detailing the actual extent of coordinated Indo-Muslim participation in the events of the ‘Mutiny’.<sup>45</sup> Arguing that the outbreak of ‘Musulmanophobia’ in 1857 was not only out of all proportion to Indo-Muslim activity, but constituted a significant departure in colonialist discourse, this revised assessment therefore suggests the value of a re-examination of the motivations and rhetoric involved in that phenomenon. The conclusions reached here are then tested out through the experiences and correspondence of Alfred Lyall, at that time a fresh recruit to the Indian Civil Service. Partly using a Lacanian model of the formation and preservation of ideologies, the patterns of representation that emerge from those letters are then compared with other accounts of the period by ICS officials, and a preliminary set of themes sketched out as a guide to the post-1859 discourse.

In Chapter Three, Zygmunt Bauman’s description of ‘the stranger’ is put forward as a useful model for interpreting the broader currents of official attitudes

---

<sup>45</sup> The quotation marks around the term ‘Mutiny’, here as throughout the thesis, advert to the misleading implication that those events were confined to a sepoy rebellion, rather than the congeries of rebellions that seems to have taken place in 1857. Bayly, *Empire*, p 329.

over the next half-century. Section 3.2 goes on to draw comparisons between the radical indeterminacy of the Indo-Muslim ‘stranger’ and late eighteenth-century figures of Mughal authority. The intention here is to de-centre the primacy of religion as a factor in the construction of the Indo-Muslim ‘stranger’ in the wake of rebellion, since representations of that earlier comparable figure did not necessarily rely upon religious determinants. Rather, the argument pursued is that the ‘stranger’ is, above all, the object of a nascent discourse over power. Finally, these observations are tested out, in Section 3.3, on the mature writings of Alfred Lyall, collected in *Asiatic Studies: Religious and Social* (1882), and through the influential volume by W W Hunter on the so-called ‘Wahabi conspiracy’, *Indian Musalmans: Are They Bound in Conscience to Rebel Against the Queen?* (1871). Both are read as narratives that mimic the genre of the Sensation Novel in terms of disguise and discovery, as a mode of attempting to forestall the final revelation and unmasking of the Anglo-Indian lineaments of the conspiratorial figure of the Muslim ‘fanatic’. Here, as throughout this study, it is the Indian Muslim as an elusive, as opposed to ‘get-at-able’, figure of comparison that provides the explanation for his extraordinary and lethal appeal to the disorientated colonialist official in pursuit of a safe perch on Indian society. For by 1905, it was no longer the ‘established coherence’<sup>46</sup> of Islam that made it such an important part of colonialist epistemologies, and which had at one time drawn the British towards its appropriation as a compass in India. Rather, on the eve of the constitutional establishment of the principle of ‘separate electorates’, it was the very impossibility of placing the Muslim on a map of India that came to organise the solidifying patterns of Anglo-Indian discursive conceptions of their socio-political environment.

---

<sup>46</sup> Metcalf, *Ideologies*, p 138.

## Chapter One

### 1.1 Indian Muslims and *India*: a preliminary discussion

When Flora Annie Steel (1847-1929) published *India* in 1905 it had been seventeen years since her residence there as part of the official Anglo-Indian community had ended, and almost forty years since she first became acquainted with her subject.<sup>1</sup> Sold primarily on the back of her phenomenal success as a writer of fiction for an equally Anglo-Indian and Metropolitan audience (all her novels were first published in London), *India* offered the prospective British traveler a poetic conspectus of Indian history, contemporary social ethnography and ‘insider’ shopping tips, packaged with all the proprietorial assurance of a seasoned ‘India hand’. Alongside *The Complete Indian Housekeeper and Cook* (which she had co-authored with Grace Gardiner in 1888), it was to become a popular classic of Anglo-Indian travel literature, reprinted (with only minor corrections to the main body of the text) a further five times in the subsequent three decades.<sup>2</sup>

Though rooted in the 1870s and 1880s during which her experience of the country was formed, Steel’s description of twentieth-century colonial India survived without emendation as a serviceable guide to its contemporary indigenous society for almost twenty years. It was only at the time of the publication of the fourth edition in 1923, in the wake of the widely reported civil unrest caused by the Noncooperation Movement (in alliance with the Khilafatists) from 1919-22, that the publishers decided its lack of more recent socio-political detail posed any sort of threat to *India*’s viability as a guidebook

---

<sup>1</sup> Flora Annie Steel accompanied her husband, Henry Steel, out to the Punjab in 1868 where he served in the Indian Civil Service; she returned to Britain on his retirement in 1888. For details of her life, see Violet Powell, *Flora Annie Steel: Novelist of India* (London: Heinemann, 1981).

<sup>2</sup> These were restricted to ‘the correction of a few misprints...the provision of one or two footnotes...the modernisation of the spelling of Indian names’, a ‘revised...Index’ and the addition of a concluding chapter on ‘The Problems of India’ (discussed below). ‘Preface’ by H Clive Barnard to 1923 edition, reprinted in Flora Annie Steel, *India* (London: A & C Black, 1929), pV. All further references are to the 1929 edition.

and added a hastily-executed final chapter by H Clive Barnard.<sup>3</sup> As an afterword to Steel's determinedly static vision of an essentialised and fragmented society, Barnard's abrupt prophecy of a self-determining 'federated' India should have signaled to its readers a deeper problem with the practical relevance of the foregoing narrative. In fact, though, *India* was to last out the decade, with a final edition published in 1929, and it remains a remarkable instance of the persistence of parallel economies of knowledge and representation in British thinking about Indian society in the late colonial period.

The notion of parallel economies of knowledge about India has been used by Bayly to describe colonial systems of information collection in the post-1857 Raj.<sup>4</sup> His study of the British engagement with indigenous systems of social communication makes a forceful argument for resituating colonial knowledges of India, Orientalist, taxonomic, as well as the ever-increasing media of what Christopher Pinney (borrowing from James Clifford) has called 'para-ethnography',<sup>5</sup> within the 'vast hinterland' of the 'Indian ecumene'. That is, to see it as intermeshed with, and until 1857 dependent on, pre-colonial means of extracting, interpreting and disseminating knowledge about India. The events of 1857-59 were to shatter these interlocking economies and momentarily force Anglo-Indians to the conclusion that they had never penetrated more than the 'externals of Indian life'.<sup>6</sup> One consequence of this vital rupture was that subsequent colonialist understandings of Indian society were shaped by an unprecedented reliance on Western modes of information collection and interpretation (typified by the inauguration of the census in India in 1871), combined with the marked distrust of – though not infrequent resort to – all other indigenous, pre-colonial sources. 'By the 1870s', Bayly concludes,

---

<sup>3</sup> For an overview of the period, see Sumit Sarkar, *Modern India, 1885-1947* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1993; 1985), Chapters 4, 5.

<sup>4</sup> Bayly, *Empire*, p 372.

<sup>5</sup> Pinney, 'Colonial Anthropology in the 'Laboratory of Mankind'', in C A Bayly (ed), *The Raj: India and the British 1600-1947* (London: National Portrait Gallery, 1990) p 254.

<sup>6</sup> Bayly, *Empire*, p 316.



‘British knowledge [about India] had become more reactive and static.’<sup>7</sup>

Steel’s narrative of Indian society as a series of discrete, fragmented ‘little Indias’<sup>8</sup> – divided into impermeable linguistic, regional, religious and social formations – is very much a product of that rupture in the British mode of apprehending India which characterises the later nineteenth century. The preoccupation with the ‘ordering of difference’<sup>9</sup> – the perception and enforcement of static, essentialised divisions of Indian society – that dominated Anglo-Indian thinking in the decades succeeding the ‘Mutiny’ diverged sharply from the simultaneous explosion of nationwide forms of indigenous representation and political agglomeration. In this respect, conspicuous by their absence in *India* are the substantial developments in Indo-Muslim socio-political identifications over the last half-century, a diverse spectrum of movements ranging from the ulama-led reformist Deobandis, to the popular revivalism of the *Ahl-e Sunnat*, and the profusion of more obviously ‘modernist’ educational, scientific and literary societies.<sup>10</sup> Indeed, only a year after its publication, the All-India Muslim League was formed, staking its own claim to ‘a new world of Indian party politics’.<sup>11</sup> As scholars such as David Lelyveld, Barbara Metcalf and Usha Sanyal have shown, each of these movements and their ‘publicists’ eagerly appropriated the new media of communications, institutional organisation and funding, in order to influence a multivocal and increasingly politicised set of cross-regional constituencies.<sup>12</sup> Steel’s determinedly circumscribed vision in *India* thus

---

<sup>7</sup> Bayly, *Empire*, p 351.

<sup>8</sup> Bayly, *Empire*, p 352.

<sup>9</sup> See Thomas Metcalf, *Ideologies*, Chapter 3.

<sup>10</sup> See for instance, Usha Sanyal, *Devotional Islam and Politics in British India: Ahmad Riza Khan Bareilwi and his Movement*, (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1996); Barbara Metcalf, *Islamic Revival in British India: Deoband 1860-1900* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982); Lelyveld; and Rafiuddin Ahmed, *The Bengal Muslims, 1871-1906: a Quest for Identity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, repr. 1988; 1981).

<sup>11</sup> Lelyveld, p 103.

<sup>12</sup> Drawing on Habermas, ‘publicists’ is the term Bayly gives to the variety of indigenous activists appropriating the new forms of social communication, particularly in the post-‘Mutiny’ period (Bayly, *Empire*, pp 338-64). For a useful collation of figures on the rapid expansion of vernacular publishing (discussed with reference to Urdu publishing in particular), see Robinson, *Separatism*, pp 77-78. For a recent study of aspects of the rise of Hindi literature and publishing in the same period, see Vasudha Dalmia, *The Nationalization of Hindu Traditions: Bharatendu Harischandra and Nineteenth-century*

conforms to the Anglo-Indian reaction to these kinds of aggressive indigenous intrusions, a psychic ‘circling of wagons’ apparent in increasing colonial obsessions with issues of racial contamination and native disorder pursued through legislation on health, policing, and moral and social purity.<sup>13</sup> Accompanying these apartheid inclinations in the late nineteenth century was a renewed emphasis on ritual, tradition and caste hierarchies as the keys to colonial descriptions of India.<sup>14</sup> This perceived feudal character of Indian society not only developed as a natural concomitant of British concerns with constructing manageable units of administration, but was a defensive response to the promiscuous and threatening ability of the new class of indigenous ‘publicists’ to freely cross between informational spheres. It was this class which was proving so adept at entering and manipulating the gradual expansion of Indian patronage in government administration, and the opportunities opened up by electoral reforms (begun in the 1880s as a means of devolving the task of enforcing growing tax demands).<sup>15</sup> As Bayly convincingly demonstrates, Indian society could never have been perceived as radically ‘other’ because of the proximity, interaction and dependence with which its relationship with the Anglo-Indian community had always been conducted.<sup>16</sup> Nevertheless, in contrast to the expanding indigenous networks of social communication and patronage, from the 1840s

---

*Banaras* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1997).

<sup>13</sup> The prevailing separatist ethos is captured well by Anthony King in his seminal study of the residential architecture of the period: King, *The Bungalow: The Production of a Global Culture* (London: Routledge, 1984); on the post-‘Mutiny’ ruthless demarcation of urban space into native and British zones in colonial Indian cities, see especially, Veena Talwar Oldenburg, *The Making of Colonial Lucknow, 1856-1877* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984). On colonial health and policing policies, see Mark Harrison, *Public Health in British India: Anglo-Indian Preventive Medicine, 1859-1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994); David Arnold, *Colonizing the Body: State Medicine and Epidemic Disease in Nineteenth Century India* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993) and idem, *Police Power and Colonial Rule: Madras 1859-1947* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986); and on the sometimes farcical colonial efforts to legislate moral and racial purity, see Kenneth Ballhatchet, *Race, Sex and Class Under the Raj: Imperial Attitudes and their Critics, 1793-1905* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1980).

<sup>14</sup> On later nineteenth century ideological reconstructions of ‘traditional’ Indian society in the context of a self-consciously imperial British state, see Bernard Cohn, ‘Representing Authority in Victorian Britain’, in Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger (eds), *The Invention of Tradition*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, repr. 1999; 1983), pp 165-211; and Clive Dewey, ‘Images of the Village Community: a Study in Anglo-Indian Ideology,’ in *Modern Asian Studies*, vol 6 (1972), pp 291-328.

<sup>15</sup> Bayly, *Empire*, pp 374-75.

<sup>16</sup> Bayly, *Empire*, p 371.

onwards, and particularly in the wake of the rebellions of 1857, the Anglo-Indian community found itself significantly withdrawn from the more direct, indigenous knowledge bases of the Indian 'ecumene'. Ever more reliant on Western taxonomies of gazetteer, census and survey, it simultaneously promoted a parallel economy of Orientalist constructions of an entrenched feudal Indian environment, quite at odds with the statistical flux of populations, religious communities and regional dispersal which its institutional records everywhere recorded.<sup>17</sup> Bridging the growing rift between these modes of apprehension were precisely the kind of popular 'para-ethnological' works of Anglo-Indian literature represented by Steel's *India*.

This crucial divide between colonialist forms of knowledge, and its tendency to be cemented by the deployment of ideology over local observation, is nowhere more apparent in Steel's narrative than in the selective presentation of Indian Muslims as an isolated and decaying community helplessly gripped by pre-'Mutiny' visions of Mughal glory. As a means of sketching an initial framework for this thesis's analysis of the principal constituent elements of that particular Anglo-Indian vision and the rationale behind its longevity, it is instructive to compare Steel's perception in 1905 of Indo-Muslim society as subsumed by a distressed Mughal gentry fixated on an imperial past, to the Indo-Saracenic style of architecture that had emerged victorious at the turn-of-the-century from its battle with the Gothic style over British Indian building design.<sup>18</sup> Both *India* and the Indo-Saracenic were to survive into the 1920s as anachronistic, insistently imperial, visions of a rapidly changing colonial environment – the Indo-Saracenic reaching its apotheosis in the new capital at Delhi, still being built at the height of the cross-communal Khilafat and Noncooperation Movements. In his study of the evolution of the Indo-Saracenic style, Thomas Metcalf has pointed out that the retrogressive vision

---

<sup>17</sup> For a lucid survey of these ideological contradictions, see Metcalf, *Ideologies*, Chapter 5.

<sup>18</sup> Metcalf, *An Imperial Vision: Indian Architecture and Britain's Raj* (London: Faber, 1989), especially Chapters Three and Five.

it proffered of an irretrievably fractured and mediaeval Indian society involved the rehabilitation of the Mughal empire as a worthy predecessor to the British, and in particular, as an artificially reconstructed example of a 'foreign' invader successfully transformed into an imperial Indian polity.<sup>19</sup> In projecting an ethic blended from British and Indo-Islamic features, the Indo-Saracenic aimed at the aesthetic reconstitution of a perceived heterogenous social comity through the assimilating body of an encompassing imperial polity. The following study will attempt to analyse the widespread Anglo-Indian depiction of an incorporated body of Indian Muslims in just these terms: that is, as a reconstituted element in an artificially-constructed ethic directed towards the projection of a transformative (and transformed), encompassing British Indian state. As in the Indo-Saracenic, the Indian Muslim elements of this blend are indispensable to its self-definition: their wholeness and separateness linked (often ambivalently) to the illusion of its incorporative function; their obsolescence required for its renascence after the trauma of 1857. Available, in the first instance, through Steel's narrative of *India*, it is to the local mechanics and specifically Anglo-Indian genealogies of these representational issues that this thesis now turns.

---

<sup>19</sup> Metcalf, *Imperial*, p 56.

## 1.2 'Mohammedanism' in *India*

The structure of the text of *India* mimics that of the more practical travel guides of the period (such as *Murray's Handbook: India, Ceylon and Burma*, 1903), in which the sections are grouped around the themes of history, religion, architecture, art and handicrafts. Unlike most travel guides arising out of a purely Metropolitan context, however, Steel chooses to give her narrative a scientific cast by adopting the syntax and categorisation of the census for the titles of her three consecutive chapters on religion (respectively, 'Hinduism'; 'Mohammedanism'; 'Buddhism, Jainism, Parseeism, Animism').<sup>20</sup> This reference to the All-India census signals not only the pointedly Anglo-Indian textual authority Steel wishes to arrogate for her guidebook (and therefore its ability to command the most up-to-date *localised* resources of the Orientalist archive), but to an important rationale for the descriptive paradigms by which her narrative of contemporary Indian society – present only in these chapters on religion – is constructed.

The census in India grew out of the early nineteenth century British project of the wholesale collection of social and economic information about India at a district level, arranged into a series of Gazetteers which came to serve as the primary archival source for British local revenue administration. Formally coordinated under W W Hunter's direction in 1869, the pan-Indian 'Imperial Gazetteer' (as it was renamed) had already begun to be supplemented in the 1850s and 1860s by provincial censuses aimed, as has been described above, at redirecting the perceived anecdotal, indigenous modes of 'knowing the country'<sup>21</sup> into the Western paradigms of statistically-based information-collection on which administrators increasingly came to rely in the aftermath of the

---

<sup>20</sup> *Murray's Handbook: India, Ceylon and Burma* (London: J Murray, 1903), like most others of the period, contents itself with brief surveys of 'Mahommedans' and 'Hindus'.

<sup>21</sup> The phrase is taken from Bayly's, 'Knowing the Country: Empire and Information in India', *Modern Asian Studies* 27, 1 (1993), pp 3-43.

‘Mutiny’. The first All-India Census was conducted in 1871-72 and renewed on a decennial basis throughout the rest of the colonial period; by the end of the nineteenth century it had superseded the Gazetteer as the primary vehicle for the organisation of the bureaucratic infrastructure of British Indian administration.

In contradistinction to the census in Britain, as Kenneth Jones has pointed out, ‘from its very inception, the Indian census employed religion as one of its fundamental categories’:<sup>22</sup> along with caste, religious affiliation was taken by census officials as the basic unit of enquiry into the social stratification of Indian society.<sup>23</sup> Underlying the methodology of the census was the larger ideological trend towards the British apprehension of Indian society through the lens of religion that, since the late eighteenth century, had helped shape the knowledges of India in fields as diverse as law, language and even clothing.<sup>24</sup> What the census did, at a time in which British knowledge of its Indian subjects had suffered a traumatic epistemological rupture, was to entrench a discursively ontological categorisation (as it was understood and used by most colonial officials in India) into the diachronic representation of an increasingly mobile indigenous population. From 1871, then, the dynamics of Indian society were contained for British observers by the official inscription of what Ronald Inden, borrowing from R G

---

<sup>22</sup> Jones, ‘Religious Identity and the Indian Census’, in N Gerald Barrier (ed), *The Census in British India: New Perspectives* (New Delhi: Manohar, 1981), p 78. Between 1801-1931, religion was used only once as an object of census enquiry in Britain – in the 1851 Census of Religious Worship, which concerned itself exclusively with religious affiliation, was implemented on a voluntary basis, and whose statistics were considered highly provisional, the results being published separately from the main census reports (Jones, ‘Religious’, p 76). For a more detailed account of this census, see also Gerald Parsons, ‘From Dissenters to Free Churchmen: The Transitions of Victorian Nonconformity’, in Parsons (ed), *Religion in Victorian Britain: Volume One: Traditions*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, repr. 1997; 1988), pp 67-117. Note how the title of this British census (‘of Religious Worship’) itself distinguishes religion as a performative rather than ontological category.

<sup>23</sup> Bernard S Cohn, ‘The Census, Social Structure and Objectification in South Asia’, in Cohn, *An Anthropologist Among the Historians and Other Essays* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, repr. 1994; 1987), p 242.

<sup>24</sup> See for instance, Bernard S Cohn, *Colonialism and its Forms of Knowledge: the British in India* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1997). For a cogent precis of the morphology of the pervasive perception of Indian society through religion in the nineteenth century, see Metcalfe, *Ideologies*, especially pp 132-48). On the role of religion in the evolution of colonial law, see also, Michael R Anderson, ‘Islamic Law and the Colonial Encounter in British India’ in David Arnold and Peter Robb (eds), *Institutions and Ideologies* (Richmond: Curzon, 1993), pp 165-85.

Collingwood, has referred to as the ‘substantialised agent’ of religion<sup>25</sup> – that is, effectively ordering that dynamic according to hypostatized divisions. It should be understood as more than happenstance that, within an evolving Raj sociology of officially-ascribed, competing ethnicities, the statistical sedimentation of this representational strategy of containment had the immediate effect of precipitating among indigenous observers a new conceptualization of religious community as ‘fundamentally insecure’, liable for the first time, not only to a detailed analysis of change in terms of growth or diminution, but to a disturbingly new comparative framework.<sup>26</sup> At the very start of the post-Mutiny period, then, colonial stability and indigenous insecurity were mutually interdependent perceptions, closely tied through the census to religious identity.

While Steel’s literal reproduction of census categorisation replays the crucial nexus between the census and all subsequent colonial studies of Indian society,<sup>27</sup> it also reverses the expectations of the census by pointing that social enquiry back towards a broader description of the religions themselves. In one respect, that reversal is merely the restatement of the paradox of census categorisation (indeed, its banalization: effortlessly moving between ‘Hinduism’ and ‘Hindus’). More significantly, though, it serves to obscure the anachronous descriptive tropes that Steel deploys in her construction of a ‘contemporary’ Indian society (and which, we can assume, played no small part in steering the successive print-runs through three decades of unprecedented social upheaval). The category of ‘Animism’, for instance, was by 1905 (when Steel took it up) under considerable pressure by various indigenous groups (Muslim and Hindu) lobbying to reclaim sections of its putative adherents for their own constituency; and similarly ‘Sikhism’, which Steel absorbs into the larger denomination of ‘Brahmanism’/ ‘Hinduism’, had by the time of the second Punjab census of 1868 been established as a

---

<sup>25</sup> Ronald Inden, ‘Orientalist Constructions of India’, *Modern Asian Studies* (1986), pp 402-3, 428.

<sup>26</sup> Jones, ‘Religious’, pp 84-85.

<sup>27</sup> For the imbrication of later Anglo-Indian Orientalist texts and the census, see Cohn, ‘Census’, pp 241-42.

separate census denomination.<sup>28</sup> In other words, at the very threshold of Steel's account of contemporary Indian society, its socio-political context is effectively excised by the descriptive strategies built into its specifically Anglo-Indian framework for ethnographic enquiry.

What is being suggested in these reflections on the simultaneously atemporal and diachronic deployment of religion by Steel is that the gap that appears to have opened up in *India* between Orientalist and local colonial paradigms (for instance, between Steel's textual experience of 'Brahmansim/Hinduism' and her local observations of Sikhism in the Punjab where she spent twenty years as the wife of a colonial official) is one mediated by the very language of colonial practice. The paradox here surrounding a hypostatized religion as the primary mode of ethnographic enquiry is not simply an anomalous slippage between the larger theoretical and more immediate practical discourses, as Bayly has suggested often exists between Orientalist and official writings by Anglo-Indians,<sup>29</sup> but a form of conflicted discourse central to all Anglo-Indian apprehensions of India, in which religion operates as a descriptive means of containing a threatening social dynamic. In the context of this thesis' exploration of a British discourse on Indian Muslims, however, it is significant that the faultline opened up by this paradox within the narrative of *India* aligns itself most noticeably along the axis of the central chapter on 'Mohammedanism', and that the division it enforces between 'Mohammedanism' and its neighbours is one founded on a unique and unmistakable absence: the absence, that is, of religion.

For, unlike 'Hinduism' or 'Jainism', 'Mahommedanism' in Steel's narrative, is formed in an exegetical vacuum; its genesis in *India* appears purely temporal. While the chapter on 'Hinduism' demanded an examination of 'creed', 'conception' and 'eternal conviction' before passing on to the details of customs and festivals, 'Mahommedanism'

---

<sup>28</sup> Steel, *India*, p 85; Jones, 'Census', p 79.

<sup>29</sup> Bayly, *Empire*, p 326.



begins and ends with ‘population’, ‘type’ and ‘circumstances’.<sup>30</sup> In one sense, this separation between ‘Hinduism’ and ‘Mohammedanism’ in *India* reflects the larger Hegelian division of Asia into two geographical and racial entities. Hegel’s terms for this division have been translated as ‘Hither’ and ‘Farther’ Asia, by which he referred to, respectively, what is now broken up into the Near/Middle East and the Far East.<sup>31</sup> ‘The nations of hither Asia’, Hegel wrote, ‘belong to the Caucasian, i.e. the European stock’ and were to some extent unified by Islam.<sup>32</sup> Through Islam they represented to the Christian West what Ronald Inden has described as ‘a false, fanatical cousin’.<sup>33</sup> In contrast, the nations of ‘Farther Asia’, loosely unified by Buddhism, were deemed, principally in the form of India and China, its ‘true Others’.<sup>34</sup> One essential component of this division, which was to persist throughout nineteenth century British historiography of India, was the temporal opposition between the two:

With the Persian Empire we first enter on continuous History. The Persians are the first Historical People; Persia was the first Empire that passed away. While China and India remain stationary, and perpetuate a natural vegetative existence even to the present time, this land has been subject to those developments, which alone manifest a historical condition.<sup>35</sup>

‘Continuous History’, then, was in India only considered an appurtenance of its later invaders from ‘Hither Asia’. Thus, neither history nor time figure in Steel’s chapter on ‘Hinduism’, but might be said to be the hegemonic formations of her understanding of

---

<sup>30</sup> Steel, *India*, p 63, 73, 80.

<sup>31</sup> Ronald Inden gives a concise discussion of these divisions, taken from Hegel’s *The Philosophy of History*, in Inden, *Imagining*, pp 49-56.

<sup>32</sup> Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *The Philosophy of History*, trans J Sibree (New York: Dover, 1956), p 173.

<sup>33</sup> Inden, ‘Orientalist’, p 424. In this regard, it is worth noting Steel’s own use of the denomination ‘Mahommedanism’ out of a variety of possible Anglo-Indian terminologies for Indian Muslims at the end of the nineteenth century (‘Musalmans’, ‘Mahommedans’, ‘Moslems’). As Said has pointed out, the term ‘Mahommedanism’ – erroneously implying ‘the followers of Mohammed’ – reflects its pervasive comparison in pre-twentieth century Western literature with ‘Christianity’ (Edward Said, *Orientalism*, (London: Penguin, repr. 1991; 1978), p 60. For a more explicit development of this comparison in the Anglo-Indian context, see Sections 2.4 and 2.5 below.

<sup>34</sup> Inden, ‘Orientalist’, p 424.

<sup>35</sup> Hegel, p 173.

‘Mohammedanism’, annexing the synchronic elements of religion itself so that the description of ‘creed’ becomes less a matter of philosophical exegesis than its historical manifestation in contemporary India in ‘the lees of a dead [Mughal] court’.<sup>36</sup>

But the element of temporal grounding indicated by the narrative concentration on ‘population’ and ‘circumstances’ accounts for only one aspect of the faultline that opens up around ‘Mohammedanism’ in *India*. A secondary dislocation can be glimpsed in the manner in which the temporal element is withheld from Steel’s brief portrait of ‘Parseeism’ – itself derived from ‘Hither Asia’, and therefore a religion which might have been expected to have been coupled with ‘Mahommedanism’ under its temporal sign. If the influence of Hegel’s readings of what he calls the ‘Hindoo’ and ‘Mahometan’ religions, representing the different aspects of ‘Hither’ and ‘Farther Asia’, can be distantly felt in the different descriptive modes of Steel’s early twentieth-century conception of ‘Hinduism’ and ‘Mahommedanism’, her characterisation of ‘Parseeism’ as ‘fit[ting] in better with Western forms of thought than do the more mystical abstractions of Hindu philosophy’ would indicate an opaque, but nevertheless broadly congruent, reflection of this same schema.<sup>37</sup> Hegel situates what Steel calls ‘Parseeism’ as the spiritual impetus necessary to the condition of ‘continuous History’ that he attributes first to the Persians:

But here in Persia first arises that light which shines itself, and illuminates what is around; for Zoroaster’s “Light” belongs to the World of Consciousness – to Spirit as a relation to something distinct from itself..<sup>38</sup>

It is this ‘Spirit’ that Hegel understands as the point of meeting between the ‘Hither Asia’ and the West, and which is contrasted with ‘Farther Asia’, and with ‘the Hindoos’ in particular:

In contrast with the wretched hebetude [*sic*] of Spirit which we find among the

---

<sup>36</sup> Steel, *India*, p 77.

<sup>37</sup> Steel, *India*, p 85.

<sup>38</sup> Hegel, p 173.

Hindoos, a pure ether – an exhalation of Spirit – meets us in the Persian conception. In it, Spirit emerges from that substantial Unity of Nature, that substantial destitution of import, in which a separation has not yet taken place – in which Spirit has not yet an independent existence in contraposition to its object.<sup>39</sup>

This ‘independent existence’ is the vital relation of Self to the world, predicated on the Individual, and precipitating ‘Continuous history’. Its absence in their construction of Hinduism lies at the centre of the Romantic idealist depiction of human agency in Indian civilization as ‘displaced...on to an internal, spiritual nature which [the idealist] wanted to see as ineffable’;<sup>40</sup> and it is this passivity that explained India as an environment in which history was enacted by invaders, and not by the inheritors of the ancient (Hindu) Indian civilisation. Since Steel’s conception of history in India, like that of most of her Anglo-Indian contemporaries, draws heavily on this Romantic tradition, we would certainly expect ‘Parseeism’ to find its place in her taxonomy alongside ‘Mahommedanism’ as an alien – and in every way, antithetical – importation.

Yet the reference to a philosophical consonance between ‘Parseeism’ and ‘Western thought’ is introduced at the very end of the passage, and only as an afterthought to the striking image which she places at the centre of her brief portrait of the ‘Parsees’. It is that image which Steel uses as the primary means of locating ‘Parseeism’ within the larger framework of the religions of *India*; and it is one that points unexpectedly towards a taxonomic configuration that runs directly counter to the Hegelian divisions (between ‘Hither’ and ‘Farther Asia’) which her comparison to ‘Western thought’ might have been thought to endorse: ‘The Parsees’, she writes, ‘are...outwardly even more European than the Europeans; but within, the old faith of the fire-worshippers remains less touched by Western thought than Hinduism in Calcutta.’<sup>41</sup> What is remarkable in this definitive image of the ‘Parsees’ is the way it effortlessly lifts

---

<sup>39</sup> Hegel, pp 177-78.

<sup>40</sup> Inden, *Imagining*, p 73. For a useful summary of the Romantic conception of India and its close relationship to that of Hegel, see Inden, *Imagining* pp 66-69.

<sup>41</sup> Steel, *India*, p 85.

them beyond the narrative concern with historical origins that marks the chapter on ‘Mahommedanism’ – and would here presumably necessitate reference to the Persian empires of what Marshall Hodgson calls the Axial and Pre-Axial ages<sup>42</sup> - and places them instead into the ‘primitive’ orbit of Steel’s Romantic conception of ‘Hinduism’, recasting their prophetic religion in the mould of an ancient ‘Farther Asian’ civilisation impervious to historical change. Ontologically separated from Hegel’s historical Persians, the locution used – ‘outwardly...European...but within...untouched...’ – instead refers explicitly to the narrative’s earlier portrait of the ‘Hindu’ who often conceals his ‘unalterable belief’ beneath a ‘Europeanised’ exterior.<sup>43</sup> This unexpected marriage within the narrative of ‘Hindu’ and ‘Parsee’ – across the divisions of ‘Asia’ and the temporally-mapped body of the ‘Mahommedan’ – retroactively illuminates the absence of a similar invariant core of religion in the Indian ‘Mohammedan’.

Part of the explanation for what we might call the ‘indianisation’ of (in the language of nineteenth century racial taxonomy) the ‘Semitic’ origins of the ‘Parsee’ – semantically drawn into the circumference of an invariant Aryan ‘Farther Asian’ ancient civilisation<sup>44</sup> - can be found in the preoccupation of nineteenth century Orientalist discourses with the idea of conquest.<sup>45</sup> In these discourses on philology, ethnology and history, India is repeatedly described as an ‘ancient civilization’ which, despite its

---

<sup>42</sup> Hegel’s first ‘Persian empire’ was the Achaemenid, 538-331BC (Hegel, p 181). The death of Zoroaster preceeded its founding by approximately two decades and Zoroastrian Mazdeism, an important feature of the Achaemenid empire, became the official state religion of the Sasanian empire around 275-292AD - in other words, at about the same time as Christianity was becoming established in the Roman empire (Marshall G S Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam: Conscience and History in a World Civilization. Volume One: The Classical Age of Islam*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, repr. 1977; 1974), p 141, 126-27. Given this comparable timeline, and Hegel’s influential association of the Persians and their religion as together inaugurating ‘continuous History’, Steel’s comparison of ‘Parseeism’ and ‘Hinduism’ should not be considered a simplistic equation of antique religions – that is, of two religions predating Christianity.

<sup>43</sup> Steel, *India*, pp 67-68.

<sup>44</sup> Steel’s chapter on ‘Our Aryan Brother’, along with her later discussion of ‘Animism’, makes clear that she conceives of the ‘Hindu’ as distinctly Aryan. The identification of the ‘Parsee’ and ‘Hindu’ is no less remarkable for the way in which it bypasses common late colonial racial taxonomy. For an excellent set of essays on the impact of racial theory in colonial India, see Peter Robb (ed), *The Concept of Race in South Asia* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1995).

<sup>45</sup> For the importance of ‘conquest’ to Orientalist constructions of India, see Inden, *Imagining*, pp 54-56.

repeated invasions (distinct from the original Aryan incursion), ‘had survived into the present more or less unchanged.’<sup>46</sup> ‘Hindu’ and ‘Parsee’, philosophically antithetical, are semantically united under the sign of resistance to invasions and their now shared survival – more or less ‘unchanged’ – in contemporary India. Though ostensibly that invader is British (inciting in both a skin-deep European aspect), the secondary implication is their linkage in common opposition to the Muslim despoilers of their ancient civilisations, in Persia and in India.<sup>47</sup> The binding of ‘Parsee’ and ‘Hindu’ within the conception of Indian history in *India* appears anomalous only if we ignore its consequent separation of the ‘Mahomedan’ not just from the rubric of ‘unalterable’ belief that produces contemporary Indian society, but from the shared role within that society of subjection to an invading power.

We can begin to see here that the location of ‘Mohammedanism’ in *India* on the fault-line of the diachronic and synchronic categories of census and religion, on the temporal divide of ‘Hither’ and ‘Farther’ Asia, and in the Romantic conception of an ancient civilisation resistant to Muslim conquest, is part of a relentless, undisclosed process of what can be thought of as the deconstruction of the very denomination, Indian ‘Mohammedan’. If we then situate the text – despite its apparently anachronistic census categories – in its specifically late colonial context, the absence of religion (in the confinement of its description to ‘population’ and ‘situation’, in its temporal grounding and particularly in the divorce of the Indian ‘Mohammedan’ from any invariant religious core) becomes an implicitly political argument. As Partha Chatterjee has shown, by 1905 nationalist discourse in India had long begun the process of appropriating and

---

<sup>46</sup> Inden, *Imagining*, p 55.

<sup>47</sup> Hegel also refers to the conquest of the ‘Zend’ people (whose ‘canonical books’ are those ‘on which the religion of the ancient Parsees is founded’) by the ‘Mahometans’, but only as a means of illustrating Persia as ‘the first empire that passed away’, and thus its fundamental constitution as the first example of ‘continuous History’ (Hegel, p 176). By its implicit echo divorced from the larger Hegelian schema of history in Steel’s narrative, we can gauge the degree of selectivity that produces Steel’s ‘Parsee’ as semantically affianced to the ‘Hindu’.

demarcating from the colonial state an ‘inner’ or ‘spiritual domain’ (as opposed to the ‘material’, ‘outer domain’ ceded to colonialism) as a primary arena of self-determination.<sup>48</sup> The denial of such a – here religious – ‘inner’ core to the Indian ‘Mohammedan’ figures neither a merely Romantic nor a purely historiographical rupture. What begins to surface are the lineaments of a process which entails the socio-political detachment of the ‘Mohammedan’ from contemporary Indian society itself.<sup>49</sup>

It is important, however, to distinguish that detachment as a necessary by-product rather than the goal of this process in the narrative of *India*. Returning briefly to the language of the text, we can further understand that the invariant core of religion withheld from the ‘Mohammedan’ not only produces a disturbing disconnection from the ‘Hindu’ of ‘unalterable belief’ and the ‘Parsee’ unchanged ‘within’, but gives rise to a curious effect within the chapter on ‘Mahommedanism’ as a whole. For in Steel’s narrative, ‘Mahommedanism’ is not so much a description as a misnomer for its Indian practitioner. Its manifestation in *India* goes beyond signaling its absence, the hollow core of an invariant religion, but occurs rather as the accretion of a series of negative signs. Customs are seen as ‘repugnant to the whole teaching of Mahommed’; Indian ‘Mahommedans can only be described as a ‘social comity...riddled and permeated with Hinduism’; even the more positive portrait of ‘Mohammedan’ gentlewomen is – inevitably – set out as ‘a compendium of all the most Christian virtues’.<sup>50</sup> So relentless is this descriptive undoing of the category ‘Mahommedanism’ that Steel’s concluding comment that the ‘Mahommedan is not at his best in India’ is not simply an exercise in bathetic irony, but a suspiciously disingenuous reading of her own narrative:

---

<sup>48</sup> Chatterjee, *Fragments*, pp 3-14. For a fuller discussion of this process in nationalist discourses, see Chatterjee, *Nationalist*.

<sup>49</sup> Although it does not fall within the remit of this thesis, it could be argued that an even more overt process of the descriptive detachment of Muslims from their South Asian context continues to play its part in travel literature today. See for instance, V S Naipaul, *Beyond Belief: Islamic Excursions Among the Converted Peoples* (London: Abacus, repr. 1999; 1998), pp 263-381, especially pp 264-65, 274.

<sup>50</sup> Steel, *India*, p 74, 79, 75.

semantically speaking, the ‘Mahommedan’ is not in *India* at all.<sup>51</sup>

And it is here that we can properly discern an important impulse behind the process of disassociation that produces Steel’s ‘Mahommedans’ as a community divorced from their religion. Because cumulatively, the effect of this disconnection is not simply the suggestion of an irreligious, but of a markedly *secularised*, community.<sup>52</sup> A clue to an important constituent of its epistemology – and the true starting point for this chapter’s examination of the colonial discourse on Indian Muslims – can be found in the opening line of the second paragraph of ‘Mahommedanism’: ‘With the exception of enforced converts from the Jat and Rajput races, all the Indian Mahommedans are, like ourselves, alien to the soil.’<sup>53</sup> Yoked to the irreducible ‘foreignness’ of the majority of the Indian Muslims, it is the apparently innocuous phrase, *like ourselves*, which points towards a crucial, though unacknowledged, motivation behind the secularised description of ‘Mohammedanism’ that follows. Steel’s ‘ourselves’ does not refer to the British metropolitan audience for which the guide-book was published, but to the officially secular identity of a far smaller, and (to use Sara Suleri’s trope) *intimate* audience: Anglo-Indians.<sup>54</sup> The description it precedes, it should be remembered, is of a community that appears almost phantastically within the text, its presence in contemporary ‘India’ always on the point of dissolution; a community divorced from Indian society, just as the institutions and institutional knowledges of colonial rule – predicated on difference – constantly reinforced for the British in India,<sup>55</sup> and as *India*

---

<sup>51</sup> Steel, *India*, p 80. This process of disassociation from the Indian context within the narrative of *India* needs to be distinguished from increased claims, particularly among the *ashraf* (and those aspiring to *ashraf* status) in the later nineteenth century, to genealogies deriving outside South Asia. For some of the ideologies surrounding these claims and their relationship to Mughal political culture, see Shaikh, pp 94-96, 114-18. On ‘ashrafisation’ among Indian Muslim communities, see Imtiaz Ahmad, ‘The Ashraf-Ajlaf Distinction in Muslim Social Structure in India’, in *Indian Economic and Social History Review* 3 (September, 1966), pp 268-78; and Rafiuddin Ahmed, *The Bengal Muslims*, passim.

<sup>52</sup> For further reflections on the ideologies behind this ‘secularisation’, see Section 1.4 below.

<sup>53</sup> Steel, *India*, p 73.

<sup>54</sup> The notion of ‘intimacy’ as a means of understanding the psychic interdependence of colonised and colonist is developed in Suleri, pp 1-23. These arguments will be pursued in the next section.

<sup>55</sup> Chatterjee, *Fragments*, p 10.

itself replicates with the marginal (and in tone, embattled) appearance of the Anglo-Indians in the final chapter of the text. And most importantly, it is a community deformed by its commitment to the preservation of power ('[the Indian Mohammedan's] position wars with his religion'<sup>56</sup>); a commitment that, for the Anglo-Indians, as Suleri has so pointedly observed, charges every colonial encounter with the simultaneous possibility of the loss of power.<sup>57</sup> The relentless process of dissolution that structures Steel's chapter on 'Mahommedanism' – and, it will be argued, the larger Anglo-Indian discourse on Indian Muslims – cannot be understood, or uncoupled from, her own seemingly unconsciously inserted community.

---

<sup>56</sup> Steel, *India*, p 80.

<sup>57</sup> Sara Suleri, *The Rhetoric of English India* (Chicago, 1992), p 6.



### 1.3 Identification and disavowal in colonial representations

To insist upon this ‘coupling’ of ‘Mohammedan’ to ‘Anglo-Indian’ is unexceptional in the context of the theories of colonial discourse analysis inaugurated by Edward Said’s *Orientalism* (1978). But it is necessary to go further than merely confirming the ‘production’ of Eastern subjects for a Western Metropolitan audience as a process of identity-formation dependent on a discourse of ‘Otherness’<sup>58</sup> (available here, for instance, in a reading of ‘Mahommedanism’ in *India* as so many points of inversion between the anatomised Muslims and the inferred, integrated ideal of British Christians in India). It is necessary, rather, to begin to problematise the casual admission of *identification* between coloniser and colonised that, it will here be argued, directs the colonial representation of Indian Muslims.

While Said’s insight into ‘Orientalism’ as a markedly ‘paranoid’ discourse disclosed the existence of complex modes of fantasy inherent in Western representations of Eastern society, *Orientalism* itself paradoxically suggested an unchallenged autonomy – as well as a misleading transhistoricity – available to the imperialist in the field of representation.<sup>59</sup> Building on Said’s work, Homi Bhabha has sought to deconstruct this appearance of autonomy and to re-frame ‘Orientalism’ within the specificity of the colonial encounter. In doing so, he has developed a more inflected understanding of the psychic ‘processes of subjectification’ that envelop both coloniser and colonised – in effect, repositioning both as, equally, the ‘colonial subject’.<sup>60</sup> This reframing of the ‘colonial subject’ (native and colonialist) within a psychic economy of the mutually responsive circulation of intensely ambivalent affects, has given rise to two significant criticisms: that its psychoanalytic apparatus

---

<sup>58</sup> Said, pp 1-73.

<sup>59</sup> For some recent critical analyses of Said’s work, see Bart Moore-Gilbert, *Postcolonial Theory: Contexts, Practices, Politics* (London: Verso, 1997), pp 34-73; John Mackenzie, *Orientalism: History, theory and the arts* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995), pp 1-19; Aijaz Ahmad, *In Theory: Classes, Nations, Literatures* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, repr. 1994; 1992), pp 159-220; and Robert Young, *White Mythologies: Writing History and the West* (London: Routledge, repr. 2001; 1990), pp 126-40.

<sup>60</sup> Bhabha, ‘The Other Question: Stereotype, Discrimination and the Discourse of Colonialism’, in Homi K Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 2000), p 67.

has the tendency in Bhabha's work to sublimate the considerable materiality of the political and economic relations of subordination that are the most immediate and determinative affects of colonialism; and that it has the additional propensity to reproduce psychoanalysis as a universalising discourse capable of describing non-Western societies, but inadequately problematised as itself racially-encoded and specific to the historical context in which it was generated.<sup>61</sup> The first criticism will be addressed below.<sup>62</sup> For the moment, it is only necessary to emphasise that Bhabha's contribution to the understanding of the colonialist (as opposed to, but not separated from, the colonised) as a psychic subject negotiating an alien and alienating environment, form the focus of the discussion in this section. The 'agency' of the colonised, problematised by critics of Bhabha's theories (whether, for instance, the subversive effects of 'mimicry' are the result of transitive or intransitive native acts of resistance<sup>63</sup>), is therefore only at issue here insofar as it restrained or directed the colonialist will to represent: in short, as a pressure acting upon colonialist psychic processes from the realms of what Elizabeth Wright has described as 'brute existence', and which Lacan has theorised as 'the Real.'<sup>64</sup> Though having a substantial and immediately political effect upon the psychology of colonial descriptive strategies, it will be approached in the discussion in this section primarily as an immanent – and refigured – presence within those psychic processes. On the latter question of psychoanalysis as a universalising, racially-encoded discourse, it is rather suggested that as a mode of criticism it is an unusually well-fashioned tool with which to examine these processes at work in the late nineteenth century European mind.<sup>65</sup>

---

<sup>61</sup> See Bart Moore-Gilbert, *Postcolonial*, pp 114-151; and Abdul JanMohamed, 'The Economy of Manichean Allegory: the Function of Racial Difference in Colonialist Literature' in Henry Louis Gates (ed), *Race, Writing and Difference* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987).

<sup>62</sup> But see in particular, Moore-Gilbert, *Postcolonial*, pp 140-51.

<sup>63</sup> For the problems attendant on Bhabha's conceptions of native agency and intentionality, see Moore-Gilbert, *Postcolonial*, pp 131-33.

<sup>64</sup> Elizabeth Wright, *Psychoanalytic Criticism: a Reappraisal*, (Oxford: Polity Press, 1998), p 102.

<sup>65</sup> The seminal study of this racial encoding remains that of Sander L Gilman, *Freud, Race, and Gender* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993).

Working on the premise that ‘it is the realm of representation and the process of signification that constitutes the space of the political’,<sup>66</sup> Bhabha has sought to reinterpret that ‘signification’ in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries as doubly-inscribed by the coincidence of a post-Enlightenment discourse of ‘civility’ – with its assumptions of democracy and the universal rights of man – and the inimical despotic modes of colonial conquest and governance alongside which it was formulated.<sup>67</sup> At every point of its articulation, he argues, the colonial discourse that emerged in this period was thus inevitably split between the language of democratic national self-expression and the imperial depotism that shadowed it. It is in this sense that he reads the ‘colonial moment’ as fundamentally interrogative of the very constitution of a British identity.<sup>68</sup> Bhabha’s work explores this idea of the ‘splitting’ of a British identity along the axes of empire and nation through its manifestation in the particular representational strategies of colonial discourse. He locates these strategies as highly ambivalent ‘sites of enunciation’; never simply an act of interpretation, but rather an agonistic ‘act of communication between the I and the You’ which repeatedly challenges the authoritative basis from which (and towards which) those cultures – British, Indian, and British *in* India – are addressed.<sup>69</sup>

Bhabha’s ‘I’ and ‘You’, then, refer primarily to the colonialist and the shifting sites of identification he/she is forced to adopt in order to maintain divisions constantly under threat of erasure. These divisions run both between the colonialist and the native subject under representation, and between the colonialist as the bringer of civilisation and ‘democracy’s despotic double’. The imaginative identificatory praxis he locates at the heart of the rhetorical project of liberal humanist ethics (in, for instance, J S Mill’s ‘On Liberty’)<sup>70</sup> thus becomes in colonial discourse a problematic site of multiple inscription as it seeks to legitimate the ‘rule of colonial difference’.

<sup>66</sup> Bhabha, ‘The Postcolonial and the Postmodern’ in Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, p 190.

<sup>67</sup> Bhabha, ‘The Commitment to Theory’ in *The Location of Culture*, p 32.

<sup>68</sup> For an illuminating analysis of the persistence of the myth of British ‘civility’ into twentieth century Metropolitan culture, see Jacqueline Rose, *States of Fantasy* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), Chapter Three. Some of her insights are taken up in Section 1.5 below.

<sup>69</sup> Bhabha, ‘Commitment’, p 36.

<sup>70</sup> Bhabha, ‘Commitment’, p 24.

That is, it represents a potential site of destabilisation at the heart of the systemic hierarchization of the indigenous population, in which the colonialist is simultaneously placed as ontologically separate, as both the arbiter and the point of difference.<sup>71</sup> The act of interpretation, and the strategies of representation it gives rise to in this discourse, invariably aim at constituting the colonised as a ‘population of degenerate types on the basis of racial origin, in order to justify conquest and to establish systems of administration and conquest.’<sup>72</sup> Despite the ‘play’ involved in adopting (in order to represent) different points of identification within these descriptive strategies, ultimately what is at stake in colonial discourse is the separating out of the colonised as a ‘social reality which is at once an ‘other’ and yet entirely knowable and visible.’<sup>73</sup>

Bhabha’s analysis of the basic unit of this discourse, the stereotype, offers up a representational paradigm in which what is known – the essential degeneracy of the native – requires constant repetition; is repeatedly made obvious and visible, and can, at the same time, never be proven.<sup>74</sup> This is because the assumed ‘fixity’ of the native (always degenerate, and always visibly so) operates as a means of occluding the ‘multiple beliefs and split subjects that constitute colonial discourse’, and which are already inscribed into the very site of his representation.<sup>75</sup> Its myth of purity – racial, cultural, historical – encoded into the stereotype is in fact representative of a desire to contain the disturbing hybridity in a British identity consequent on the ‘colonial moment’ (at once the benevolent instrument of civilisation and ‘democracy’s despotic double’; part of a universal ‘family of man’, but ontologically separate from its native incarnations<sup>76</sup>). The representational contradictions attendant on every attempt to capture the ‘fixity’ of the native (for instance, those between synchronic and diachronic modes of representation explored in the previous section) must be

---

<sup>71</sup> Chatterjee, *Fragments*, p 10.

<sup>72</sup> Bhabha, ‘Other’, p 70.

<sup>73</sup> Bhabha, ‘Other’, pp 70-71.

<sup>74</sup> Bhabha, ‘Other’, p 66.

<sup>75</sup> Bhabha, ‘Other’, p 74.

<sup>76</sup> Bhabha, ‘Sly Civility’, in *The Location of Culture*, p 96.

understood as the local signs of a frustrated desire to disavow an unacceptable *colonialist* impurity. Or rather, in Bhabha's Lacanian inflection, the manifestation of 'identification' and 'disavowal' which the desire for purity (an image of self-identity that is not split) provokes, and which the fetishistic repetition of the stereotype partly (but never wholly) assuages. At the heart of Bhabha's argument, then, is the contention that colonialist representational strategies – locally expressed by the stereotype – can never be secure at any point of their articulation, since there is no 'secure [or pure] point of identification' for the colonialist to draw upon.<sup>77</sup> It is this important observation that will now be taken up with regard to the later Raj's sociology of ascriptive multiple ethnicities (described in the Introduction). The argument it prompts, aims at destabilising the assumptions of hegemony in the field of representation invested by the British in this self-constituted model, by turning its framework inside out to get at the rhetorical dependencies that ran counter-directionally to the flow of descriptive patronage. In other words, the intention is to rephrase (but not to defer) the question of what immediate political uses their descriptive strategies served, by asking alongside of it, What did the colonialist *need* from the representations of Indian Muslims? The answer to this question, it will be suggested, shares a fundamental affinity with Bhabha's understanding of the stereotype, in that an important component of the colonialist demand to represent, was the need *not* to describe themselves.

With this in mind, this section will now turn to the model of 'misrecognition' that Bhabha refers to for his study of the stereotype,<sup>78</sup> and attempt to use it as a first means of untangling the lines of affect running between the colonialist and colonial representations of Indian Muslims. The concept of 'misrecognition' is here derived from Lacan's 'mirror stage'.<sup>79</sup> Lacan, following Anna Freud, uses the word, *meconnaissance*, by which he intends the 'failure to recognise', or 'misconstruction',

---

<sup>77</sup> Bhabha, 'Other', p 69.

<sup>78</sup> Bhabha, 'Other', p 77.

<sup>79</sup> Jacques Lacan, 'The mirror stage as formative of the function of the I as revealed in psychoanalytic experience' in Lacan, *Ecrits: A Selection* (London: Routledge, repr. 1999; 1997), trans Alan Sheridan, pp 1- 7.

that is inherent to all forms of knowledge.<sup>80</sup> It is this definition of knowledge as a continuous dialectical process of recognition and disavowal that is of particular relevance to all colonialist representations of indigenous populations.<sup>81</sup> Essentially a psychoanalytical developmental model, the ‘mirror stage’ figures the process by which the subject first recognises and relates to themselves as an agent in the world. Though a crucial stage of ‘identification’, it is effected, paradoxically, through the appropriation of an ‘alienating’ identity (the mirror image); and it is in the successful assimilation of this ‘temporal dialectic’ that ‘a relation between the organism and its reality’ is first established.<sup>82</sup> Put simply, in recognising an image of themselves that exists at first separately in the ‘outside’ world (what Lacan, using Freudian terminology, designates the *Umwelt*) and integrating it into their ‘inner organisation’ (*Innenwelt*),<sup>83</sup> the subject begins the crucial process of the dialectic between the two on which their apprehension of themselves and their actions in the world will be based. Or more crudely still: first there is the subject; then there is the world; and finally, there is the subject *in* the world. As Lacan describes it, the completion of the ‘mirror stage’ not only ‘decisively projects the formation of the individual into history’ but ‘will henceforth link the *I* to [all] socially elaborated situations.’<sup>84</sup> It is a process that, like all primal psychoanalytic scenes, has important reverberations throughout the psychic life of the subject; and it is one that has the recurrent potential of inaugurating ‘paranoic knowledge’ of the world – that is, fragmented knowledges based on the fundamental discordance between the inner and exterior organisations of the subject’s ‘reality’.<sup>85</sup>

---

<sup>80</sup> Lacan, *Ecrits*, p xi.

<sup>81</sup> Bhabha, ‘Other’, p 77. For an informative discussion of dialectical knowledge in Lacanian thought, see Wright, pp 99-119.

<sup>82</sup> Lacan, ‘The mirror stage’, in *Ecrits: A Selection*, p 4. An account of the development of this theory can be found in Elisabeth Roudinesco’s ‘The Mirror Stage: an Obliterated Archive’ in Jean-Michel Rabate, ed, *The Cambridge Companion to Lacan* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), pp 25-34. For some interesting reflections on how Lacan came to see this theory as containing the essence of much of his later thought, see Jane Gallop, *Reading Lacan* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, repr. 1996; 1985), Chapter Three.

<sup>83</sup> Lacan, ‘Mirror’, p 4.

<sup>84</sup> Lacan, ‘Mirror’, pp 4-5.

<sup>85</sup> For a description of the implication of the mirror stage in the disruption of this inner ‘organization’ and outer ‘reality’ and its potential relationship to the formation of ‘paranoic’ knowledge, see Lacan,

Lacan describes the ‘mirror stage’ (somewhat bathetically, perhaps, given its centrality to the psychodrama of the ego he uses it to illustrate) in the literal terms of a child’s confrontation with its specular image. His description is worth reproducing here for the concise way it dramatises the kind of spatial model of apperception we wish to enlist in a reconsideration of colonialist representational strategies:

This act [of recognizing his specular image], far from exhausting itself,...once the image has been mastered and found empty, immediately rebounds in the case of the child in a series of gestures in which he experiences in play the relation between the movements assumed in the image and the reflected environment, and between this virtual complex and the reality it reduplicates – the child’s own body, and the persons and things, around him.

Lacan here maps out a model of what he calls ‘situational apperception’, in which the ego begins to work out the relationship of its ‘empty’ specular image to the complex of images around it, and how that complex constitutes a meaningful ‘outer’ reality which then relates to the ego. Lacan calls this total system a ‘quadrature’:<sup>86</sup> ego, ‘empty’ bodily image, virtual environment, ‘real’ environment. All must be brought into a manageable alignment before the ‘history’ of the subject can be inaugurated. If, broadly speaking, psychoanalysis is concerned with mapping out the negotiation of bodily drives in the world, then we may conceive of the mirror-image as the specular threshold on which that negotiation first takes place. What Lacan calls the ‘total form of the body’<sup>87</sup> – the integration of the ‘quadrature’ of ego, bodily images and world – will from the moment of its inception interpose everywhere between subject and the world. It is a stage and site of socialisation to which the subject will have particular recourse as he/she negotiates those moments of what Elizabeth Wright has aptly called ‘undecidability’ – when the boundaries between ‘bodily drives’ and the ‘reality principle’ are under stress.<sup>88</sup> In the context of what we might aptly term the ‘undecidability’ precipitated by the ‘colonial moment’, Bhabha appears to suggest, that stage is reinvoked and negotiated anew. The alignment of the Lacanian

---

‘Aggressivity in psychoanalysis’ in *Ecrits*, especially pp 18-19.

<sup>86</sup> Lacan, ‘Mirror’, p 4.

<sup>87</sup> Lacan, ‘Mirror’, p 2.

<sup>88</sup> Wright, p 16.

‘quadrature’ is excavated as the (colonial) subject attempts to ‘postulate a series of equivalences, samenesses, identities, between the objects of the surrounding world.’<sup>89</sup>

Bhabha pursues the Lacanian schema into a fourfold armature of simultaneous ‘metaphoric/narcissistic’ and ‘metonymic/aggressive’ responses at work in the colonial stereotype.<sup>90</sup> In a trenchant critique of his deployment of this psychoanalytic model, Bart Moore-Gilbert has suggested that Bhabha’s ‘method would be unable to explain the varied patterns and expressions of affective structures like ambivalence in diachronic terms, thus registering the fact that certain stereotypes emerged in particular periods and locations, and often in response to specific socio-political developments.’<sup>91</sup> Moore-Gilbert’s observation is a necessary one in the context of the intention in this thesis to analyse some of the psychic and rhetorical investments at work in Washbrook’s historical model of colonial neutrality. It is therefore proposed to take Lacan’s insights into the ‘mirror stage’ as a useful analogy for the *apperceptional* strategies of the colonial subject’s representations of his/her environment. In other words, as an insight into a similar series of alignments made during and in the aftermath of ‘Mutiny’ by the colonialist between themselves and their ascriptive racial and ethnic objects of representation. More than ever, that ascription had become dependent on – and required constant re-validation by – the self-projection of the image of a ‘neutral’ colonial state.<sup>92</sup> Lacan describes the completion of the ‘mirror stage’ as just that moment at which a ‘normalising’ representational system comes into being that will organise ‘the whole of human knowledge’.<sup>93</sup> If the *apperceptional* paradigm of late colonial sociology can thus be compared to a recurrent moment in the socialisation of the ego (the object of the ‘mirror stage’), we can begin to understand the ‘neutral’ identity of the colonial state as itself entering into a kinetic dependency – always liable to disturbance – with the

---

<sup>89</sup> Bhabha, ‘Other’, p 77.

<sup>90</sup> Bhabha, ‘Other’, p 77.

<sup>91</sup> Bart Moore Gilbert, *Postcolonial*, p 151.

<sup>92</sup> As Washbrook describes it: ‘The British experience of Indian society was mediated through systems of reckoning and evaluation, which centred on the implications of ethnicity and race... They lay at the core of the hegemonic ideology of the Raj’ (Washbrook, ‘Ethnicity’, p 157).

<sup>93</sup> Lacan, ‘Mirror’, p 5.



representational paradigms it seeks to legislate.<sup>94</sup> Indeed, we can go further and suggest that those representations are not only what legitimates and strategically determines its socio-cultural identity in colonial India, but are simultaneously, in a sense, the hostages to which it is bound.

‘Misrecognition’, in this analysis, refers in part to the strategies of disavowal by which these dangerous interdependencies are managed, and through which the apprehension of a ‘neutral’ colonialist identity is continually reconstructed. But it also refers to the primary identification on which they are constituted – the assumption of an alienating image that begins the renewed process of apperceptual situation. In this regard, it is useful to recall Lacan’s observation that this process of assimilation ‘situates the agency of the ego...in a fictional direction’; that is, as a *creative agent* in the ordering and re-ordering of its world.<sup>95</sup> And furthermore that management (or productive mismanagement) is premised on an ‘exteriority’, a visible referent that is primarily performative – recognizable only as long as it maintains or can be perceived to maintain, that quality of visibility.<sup>96</sup> It is this that gives the stereotype its currency, but also obscures the fictional processes by which it has been ‘worked up’.<sup>97</sup> That curious conjunction of visibility and fictionality with which every renegotiation of situational apperception will be invested is, of course, a telling characteristic of ‘Orientalism’, yielding what Said has described as its paranoid mode of articulation as ‘declarative and self-evident’.<sup>98</sup> It is also, though, the principal rhetorical strategy by which the ‘neutrality’ of the post-‘Mutiny’ colonial state is asserted. Like the stereotype, from the 1858 Proclamation of Queen Victoria onwards, the identity of the British state as ‘neutral’ (and bound up with that, ‘secular’) can *never be reiterated enough*. The instances of its disassociative enactment become the principal – and more significantly, the occluding –

---

<sup>94</sup> Or as Lacan puts it, upon the completion of the ‘mirror stage’, ‘the very normalization of this maturation [is] henceforth *dependent*, in man, on a cultural mediation...’ (Lacan, ‘Mirror’, pp 5-6. My emphasis).

<sup>95</sup> Lacan, ‘Mirror’, p 2.

<sup>96</sup> Lacan, ‘Mirror’, p 2.

<sup>97</sup> Bhabha, ‘Other’, pp 79-80.

<sup>98</sup> Said, p 72-73.

characteristic by which the Anglo-Indian is described. In this sense, the colonialist official identity is itself, after the 1858 declaration of neutrality, always performative, and even more disturbingly, like the stereotype, can never, finally, be proven. In short, the assumption of this 'neutral' identity is here posited as the primary 'alienating' image through which the colonialist's representational universe in India is henceforth constructed.<sup>99</sup>

In the colonial stereotype, 'lack' necessitated its constant repetition. By 'lack', Bhabha refers to the gap between the sign and what it signifies: in other words, the essential division between the pre-language wholeness of the body, and the fragmented perception precipitated by the 'mirror stage' and its consequent entrance into the Symbolic order structured by language. This is the dialectic between body and language at the heart of Lacan's theories.<sup>100</sup> What Bhabha has done is to identify, through the furious repetition of the colonial stereotype, a renewed crisis over this essential division: that is, the colonialist's inability to properly signify his/her environment as a reflection of an undifferentiated self, one not split by the paradoxes attendant on the 'colonial moment'. He has therefore drawn a direct parallel between the desire to represent indigenous society and what he calls an 'archaic affirmation of wholeness/similarity',<sup>101</sup> that primal sense of bodily wholeness before the crisis of the 'mirror stage', before the entrance into language. Just as that moment can never again be captured, so a British identity before the fracture of colonial experience is irretrievable (that 'colonial moment' having been entirely coterminous with the birth of British identity). In this respect, 'lack' is an inevitable element in all forms of colonial representation. In the stereotype, Bhabha perceives its transmutation, however, into a 'productive ambivalence': its incessant repetition implies the presence of 'lack', and thus the continued presence of the desire for the quest for

---

<sup>99</sup> This perception of the dependency of the 'neutral' colonial state on representing others in order to fill out and validate its own empty contours has been used, in the context of descriptions of religious competition, by Pandey, *Construction of Communalism in Colonial North India*, passim ; and Gauri Viswanathan, *Outside the Fold: Conversion, Modernity, and Belief* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, repr. 2001; 1998), p 17.

<sup>100</sup> Wright, p 99.

<sup>101</sup> Bhabha, 'Other', p 74.

‘wholeness/similarity’. ‘Lack’, in this schema, is precisely what keeps the economy of desire going. But at the same time, it performs the key function of generating ‘negative difference’.<sup>102</sup> In registering its insufficiency to signify the colonialist’s total bodily schema, the ‘lack’ of the stereotype also – and crucially – ensures that representations of indigenous society can never imply (or return to the point of) representations of the colonialist. The colonialist thus remains both the arbiter and point of difference, without the implications of similarity that difference entails. This is a singular achievement, for, as Partha Chatterjee has argued in the context of colonial representations of Indian history, ‘identity’ and ‘difference’ are always mutually dependent signs produced within a ‘universal theory of the modern regime of power.’<sup>103</sup>

Bhabha’s ‘negative difference’, then, is that aspect of the racial stereotype which withholds the implications of difference/similarity from their return to the colonial site of enunciation.<sup>104</sup> In this sense, it is a remarkably empowering psychic outcome, leaving the colonialists free to describe, unfettered by the connections established between themselves and their systems of representations. It could even be argued that such an analysis partly reproduces the autonomy of Said’s binary. Instead of paranoiac and object of paranoid discourse, however, we are presented with a slightly different, perhaps even more powerful formulation. It can be glimpsed in the use of the epithet ‘negative’, which bears a striking comparison to the functions of the ‘negative therapeutic reaction’ within the psychoanalytic relationship itself.<sup>105</sup> The semantics are worth elaborating on here. Since that relationship can in some ways be seen to mimic the superficial effects – and even mannerisms – of colonial discourse, the return of its language to a prior scene of colonial exchange necessarily brings with

---

<sup>102</sup> Bhabha, ‘Other’, p 75.

<sup>103</sup> ‘It is obvious, of course, though not always noticed that the difference which produces India (or the Orient) as the “other” of Europe also requires as its condition an identity of Europe and India; otherwise they would be mutually unintelligible.’ Chatterjee, *Fragments*, p 32.

<sup>104</sup> Bhabha, ‘Other’, p 75.

<sup>105</sup> Lacan, ‘Aggressivity in Psychoanalysis’, in *Ecrits: A Selection*, p 13.

it the potential shadow of those assumptions of the disposition of power and manipulation.<sup>106</sup>

Lacan describes the (ideal) analyst as the ‘pure mirror of an unruffled surface’ in which the *imago* [image] of the subject is reflected.<sup>107</sup> It is through this mechanism of the efficient withdrawal and impassivity of the analyst that the pathology of the subject is manifested. Indeed, ‘analytic action’ can even involve the ‘inducing in the subject a controlled paranoia’ to further draw out the symptoms of the illness.<sup>108</sup> Thus the ‘negative’ reaction aimed at here involves a simultaneous form of defence and exposure. Defence, that is, for the analyst themselves and for the success of the processes they control; and exposure (toxic, self-revelatory) for the analysand. In this respect, it is also a remarkably compressed form of the ‘principle of compulsory visibility’ for the ‘disciplined’ and the invariable exercise of the ‘disciplinary power...through its invisibility’ that Foucault has argued emerged in the late eighteenth century, and which has been identified as a primary mode of representation in colonial discourse.<sup>109</sup> The ‘disciplined’ here are the spontaneously visible signs of the stereotype; the ‘disciplinary power’ is the legislator of those signs, the colonialist, always one step ahead of the implications of similarity – always, in short, invisible. In other words, it is being suggested that, in Bhabha’s semantic linkage of ‘negative’ psychic affects, the colonialist as the object of critical discourse is also simultaneously figured as its analyst.<sup>110</sup> The ‘productive ambivalence’ the colonialist manages through the stereotype could be interpreted as the result of this conflation, whereby the colonialist psychically revolves, in Bhabha’s argument, between the two positions of analyst and analysand to effect a therapeutic outcome: the self-revelation of the

---

<sup>106</sup> It is these assumptions that inform Ronald Inden’s instructive comparison of the Indologist and the psychoanalyst in their roles as the ‘knowing subject’ towards the ‘known’ - the Other - comparably manifested as the Indian and the analysand (Inden, ‘Orientalist’, pp 420-21).

<sup>107</sup> Lacan, ‘Aggressivity’, p 15.

<sup>108</sup> Lacan, ‘Aggressivity’, p 15.

<sup>109</sup> Pinney, ‘Representations,’ pp 150-51.

<sup>110</sup> It could be argued that this semantic conflation of colonialist and analyst distantly echoes commonly-held colonialist views of their relationship to Indian objects of scrutiny. Ronald Inden, for instance, has made a similar, instructive comparison between the assumptions of the Indologist and the psychoanalyst in their roles as the ‘knowing subject’ towards the ‘known’, the Indian subject and the analysand (Inden, ‘Orientalist’, pp 420-21).

pathology of the Indian subject (the ‘self-evident’ stereotype), and the stasis, concealment of the colonialist/analyst.

The problem here for the historian is that the autonomy of affect discerned in the stereotype, its (however precarious) ability to maintain a ‘self-evident’ difference, though perhaps locally effective, is misleading when replaced into the larger strategies of representation in which that stereotype is so variously deployed. Bhabha rightly describes the inconsistency of the deployment of the stereotype as inherent to the paradoxes it seeks to contain, but fails to pursue this insight to its conclusion: namely, that the stereotype is not the ‘basic unit’ of colonial discourse, but one of its more flexible signs. It does not structure the colonial language of representation; it merely populates it. In this sense, the stereotype tells the historian nothing of material value about those larger strategies of representation; indeed, it could even be said to partially deflect the historiographical enterprise by re-translating an important source of its material – the rhetorical figures of colonialism – into an irreducibly self-referential language. In order to account for some of these limitations in Bhabha’s understanding of colonial representational strategies, it is useful to return briefly to an important impetus for Bhabha’s study of the stereotype, Frantz Fanon’s *Black Skin, White Masks*.<sup>111</sup> Fanon was the first critic of colonial culture to employ Lacan’s ‘mirror stage’ (or ‘period’, as his English translator calls it) as a means of understanding colonialist culture as directed by ‘alienation’.<sup>112</sup> His implicit bias, however, is always towards an understanding of those processes of alienation from the point of view of the colonised. Inevitably, he often fails to pursue the possibilities of his theories fully into the realms of what he calls the ‘duping’, that is, the ‘whites’ of his study.<sup>113</sup> This failure is most noticeable in Fanon’s central formulation, which, given the reading above, appears to have acted as a spur – and perhaps circumscription – to Bhabha’s analysis of the stereotype:

---

<sup>111</sup> Indeed, Bhabha’s foreword to the 1986 Pluto edition of *Black Skin, White Masks*, entitled ‘Remembering Fanon’, is remarkable for the way it offers the opportunity for a retrospective of all the key points of his own critical thinking.

<sup>112</sup> Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, (London: Pluto, repr. 1986, 1967), pp 161-64.

<sup>113</sup> Fanon, p 29.

When one has grasped the mechanism [of the mirror period] described by Lacan, one can have no further doubt that the real Other for the white man is and will continue to be the black man. And conversely. Only that for the white man The Other is perceived on the level of the body image, absolutely as the not-self – that is, the unidentifiable, the unassimilable. For the black man, as we have shown, historical and economic realities come into the picture.<sup>114</sup>

While Bhabha's theory of the stereotype interrogates the integrity of that 'not-self', he appears to revalidate Fanon's underpinning assumption about the transhistorical and transgeographical hegemony that produces it. Which is to say that, in effect, he reaffirms Fanon's implication that the colonialist's will to represent operated entirely on the level of a rhetorical dialectic between the psyche and its arbitrarily-determined image, with no reference to the more intractable realms from which that image emanated.

What this section is attempting to argue is that, on the contrary, changing historical and economic realities are closely implicated in the workings of the 'mechanism' for the colonialist in India, and that those considerations partly engender the particular kinds of representations of difference and alienation that structure colonialist discourse.<sup>115</sup> For, translated to the larger schema of a constellation of competing ascriptive ethnic entities around the reflective (that is, organising and affirming) hub of the British Indian state, we can begin to see that Bhabha's insights into the stereotype as never finally proveable, as requiring constant visibility, and as repeatedly registering a 'lack' that can never satisfactorily be effaced, make the 'neutral' identity of post-'Mutiny' British India a potentially precarious – indeed volatile – point of dependency. As they came to believe had occurred in 1857, instabilities or insufficiencies in the signification of that 'neutrality' had immediate political consequences. As a political identity, its collapse was unthinkable, since by the end of the nineteenth century all Anglo-Indian rhetoric returned to neutrality as the legislating idea of the Raj's structure; it had quite literally become the sign of the

---

<sup>114</sup> Fanon, p 161.

<sup>115</sup> This is a seam of criticism already richly mined by Sinha in reference to stereotypes of the 'effeminate Bengali *babu*'; and more generally, by Bart Moore-Gilbert in *Kipling and 'Orientalism'* (London: Croom Helm, 1986).

Raj.<sup>116</sup> But as an alienating identity, one assumed at the point of entrance into a renegotiated psychic and political environment in post-‘Mutiny’ India, ‘neutrality’ was – as in the schema of the ‘mirror stage’ – no more than an ‘empty’ specular image. It required continual substantiation through being brought into alignment with the representational universe through which it could be filled with meaning. It is in this context that post-1858 colonial representations of Indian Muslims need to be understood as not only a strategy of identification rather than pure inversion, but as a means of overcoming the ‘lack’ of that renegotiated crisis of socialisation whereby the image assumed is always, and necessarily, incommensurate. In short, we need to understand those representations as situated on the fault-line of the British emergence into a new symbolic order of self-representation; an order paradoxically structured by the language of representing others.

In re-framing the question of official colonialist identity as an historically variable process of socialisation available to Lacanian modes of interpretation, two final points can be emphasised. The first is that, as an affect of self-identity, the stereotypes of Anglo-Indian literature are neither irreducible, nor invariant. As Sander Gilman has observed, ‘paradigm shifts in our mental representations of the world can and do occur.’<sup>117</sup> The latent tradition of stereotypes available for use and subject to periodic ‘revaluation’ within any given society are always the products of anxiety over the question of that society’s sense of ‘self-integration’. Stereotypes therefore arise or are ‘revaluated’ whenever the sense of control exerted by a community over its own social identity comes under threat; and it is in this regard that they should never be seen as ‘isolated from the historical context’.<sup>118</sup> Moreover, as a form of public affirmation over the question of (a threatened) social integration, the

---

<sup>116</sup> Washbrook, ‘Ethnicity’, p 157. As Gyanendra Pandey writes, the later nineteenth century British state in India was ‘far more self-consciously ‘neutral’ – standing *above* [author’s emphasis] society, and not really part of it - than any previous state, a position that no previous state had claimed or desired. For a long time, moreover, the claim to ‘neutrality’ formed a large part of the argument for the perpetuation of colonial government’ (Pandey, p 16). This emphasis on ‘neutrality’ as a means of separating the Anglo-Indian from Indian society places ‘secularism’ at the heart of Partha Chatterjee’s ‘rule of colonial difference’ (Chatterjee, *Fragments*, p 10).

<sup>117</sup> Gilman, *Difference*, p 18.

<sup>118</sup> Gilman, *Difference*, pp 19-20.

reformation and maintenance of stereotypes must be understood not only as part of a wider process of socialisation. They must be interpreted as the signs of an inherently ideological language, since ideologies are themselves primarily structured as a means of social incorporation.<sup>119</sup>

Crises in the maintenance of a group identity are thus inextricably linked to the social construction of their environment. Dislocations in the latter are conceived of in Lacanian thought as coming from the realm of an intractable reality, one that resists the hegemony of systems of representation (or 'symbolisation'), and which entails immediate effects upon the self-construction of identities. This is the dialectic of social identity around which Lacan's model of situational apperception is built.<sup>120</sup> Yannis Stavrakakis has explicitly located this dialectic within political discourse, since it is always the 'dislocation of the preceding socio-political order' that creates a reciprocal perception of dislocation (or 'lack') in collective self-representations. That perceived insufficiency in the self-projection of a social identity then serves as the primary cause of the 'desire for a new discursive articulation', a process that often involves the revaluation of stereotypes discussed above.<sup>121</sup> The second point of comparison that we can therefore emphasise between Washbrook's description of ethnic ascription and the Lacanian model of socialisation, is that both systems are predicated on prohibition. Specifically, the Lacanian subject's entrance into socialisation is marked by their submission to the awareness of their inability to fully represent themselves. The subject accedes to the innate insufficiency of the forms of symbolisation by which they will now reconstruct their social reality, and through that that reconstruction, represent themselves as social beings. All sites of identification are henceforth shifting, temporary, and partial; and the implicit perception of this fact, above all others, organises their understanding of their social environment. Similarly, in the assumption of the ideology of secular neutrality, and particularly in its re-assumption after the dislocations of 1857-59, the colonialist implicitly agreed to

---

<sup>119</sup> Slavoj Žižek, *The Sublime Object of Ideology* (London: Verso, repr. 1999; 1989), p 126.

<sup>120</sup> Yanni Stavrakakis, *Lacan and the Political* (London: Routledge, 1999), pp 67-68.

<sup>121</sup> Stavrakakis, p 74.



submit to the fundamental insufficiency of their public self-identity. The penalty for entering upon the sociology of the later Raj was the abnegation by the British of the ability to freely describe themselves. By relinquishing the complete satisfaction of their own identity, they inaugurated the dialectic of ascriptive representation. It is in this sense that we might translate the Lacanian imperative that there is no subject 'which is not already a social subject' into an Indian colonial context.<sup>122</sup> Which is to say, the insufficiency, or 'lack', in the 'secular' and 'neutral' colonialist official ideology was inevitably played out in their racially and ethnically ascribed social environment. But at the same time, it was this dimension that continually threatened to fill out, and dispossess, the contours of an otherwise empty social identity. The particular parameters of this highly ambivalent dialectic will now be taken up in the next two sections with regard to the mechanism of disavowal that is always the corollary of identification, and which, it will be argued, structures the peculiar fate of the 'Mahomedan' in *India*.

---

<sup>122</sup> Stavrakakis, p 37.

#### 1.4 The tyranny of ‘Mohammedanism’

It has been suggested that Steel’s Indian ‘Mahommedan’ is essentially a secular entity. That secularity is achieved, in part, through a series of negative comparisons to the category ‘Mahommedanism’. Indeed, as one by one other forms of description (geographical, racial, social) are exploded, it is the rapid accumulation of these negative signs – the accretion of customs ‘repugnant’ to the ‘whole teaching of Islam’, an alienated ‘social comity’ (‘riddled...with Hinduism’) – that performs the initial narrative task of definition.<sup>123</sup> In this way, ‘Mahommedanism’ as a deconstructive category (literally separating ‘Indian’ and ‘Mohammedan’) paradoxically becomes the means by which the narrative as description continues to function. The portrait that evolves out of this paradox, centred on the relationship – antagonistic, incommensurate – between the two terms, Indian and ‘Mohammedan’, is thus necessarily characterised by the notion of degeneration. The apparent bathos of Steel’s concluding comment that the ‘Mahommedan is not at his best in India’ is misleading precisely because *not* being at his best is what the ‘Mahommedan’ in *India* is all about.

Of course, ‘decline’ has always formed an important trope in the modern Western perception of Islam. For Western writers reflecting on the Enlightenment ideal of progress through the apprehension of things Islamic, ‘decline’ as an illustration of Islam’s essential lack of ‘perfectability’ becomes (in the words of Aziz Al-Azmeh) ‘metaphysically necessary’.<sup>124</sup> More specifically here, Steel’s degenerated ‘Mohammedan’ joins the larger trend in later imperial ideologies that insisted upon Indian racial ‘decline’ as a necessary corollary to a self-consciously British rule of progress (and in particular, feeds into the long-held British perception of the enervating influence of the Indian environment on non-indigenous racial

<sup>123</sup> Steel, *India*, pp 73- 74.

<sup>124</sup> Aziz Al-Azmeh, *Islams and Modernities* (London: Verso, repr. 1996; 1993), p 172.

stock).<sup>125</sup> But the dialectic between ‘Mohammedanism’ and the Indian ‘Mohammedan’ in *India* goes beyond its obvious impetus in Orientalist and imperialist theories of racial degeneration. It produces a figure central to the late colonial discourse on Indian Muslims, one not simply disconnected from or incommensurate to, but actively corrupted by, religion. Steel spells out the nature of this corruption in the final paragraph of the chapter:

His star is not in the ascendant, and his position wars with his religion. That enjoins conversion by the sword if need be, and an almost fierce intolerance of the idolater. His whole *entourage* therefore is galling, and the friction shows itself in a lower moral standard in the many.<sup>126</sup>

Apart from a reference to ‘Mahommedan’ visions of ‘heaven’ as ‘an eternal procession of sensual pleasures’,<sup>127</sup> this retrospective explanation of the preceding portrait of moral and social degeneration constitutes the only attempt to describe Islamic doctrine in the chapter. It is a common enough colonial misreading of what Marshall Hodgson has called ‘kerygmatic piety’ (that is, piety ‘focused on history’<sup>128</sup>), developed in the High Caliphal Period of Islam and adapted by nineteenth century Indian Muslim intellectuals attempting reformulations of their faith.<sup>129</sup> What was conceived of as the example of a glorious past sealed in the ‘classical period’ of Islam, both as an ideal and as holding out the possibility of future spiritual and material renewal for the Muslim community, functions here as a form of inexhaustible

---

<sup>125</sup> Kate Teltscher, *India Inscribed: European and British Writing on India 1600-1800* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, repr. 1997; 1995), pp 111-15. For an excellent discussion of representations of racial degeneration in nineteenth and early twentieth century European discourses, see Daniel Pick, *Faces of Degeneration: A European Disorder, 1848-1918* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989); for a conspectus of Victorian racial theories centred on the conviction of ‘Aryan decline’ in India, see Metcalf, *Ideologies*, pp 80-92; on British perceptions of ‘Hindu decadence’ in the mediaeval period, see Inden, *Imagining*, pp 117-122; and for a recent insightful analysis of indigenous disruptions to imperial narratives of ‘progress’ in nineteenth century India, see Javed Majeed, ‘Narratives’, pp 135-63.

<sup>126</sup> Steel, *India*, p 80.

<sup>127</sup> Steel, *India*, p 79.

<sup>128</sup> Hodgson, pp 362, 359-92.

<sup>129</sup> The complex role of history as ‘decline’ and ‘ideal’ in one of the most celebrated Urdu works of the nineteenth century, Altaf Hussain Hali’s *Musaddas-e Madd o Jazr-e Islam (The Flow and Ebb of Islam, 1879)*, is discussed in Christopher Shackle and Javed Majeed (trans and eds), *Hali’s Musaddas: The Flow and Ebb of Islam*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), pp 51-53.

tyranny through which the corruption of the Indian ‘Mohammedan’ is endlessly re-enacted.

This cycle of corruption finds a partial genealogy in European perceptions of Mughal rule since the seventeenth century as a paradigmatic form of ‘oriental despotism’.<sup>130</sup> Alain Grosrichard has suggestively described this paradigm as an economy of ‘enjoyment’ which, primarily in travel accounts, presented a spectacle of the ceaseless consumption and reproduction of power aimed at the simultaneous gratification of and disavowal by, a European audience.<sup>131</sup> At the centre of this economy he locates the despot himself as a necessary absence, a ‘vanishing point’ into which the service of the realm is drawn, never to be satisfied.<sup>132</sup> What Steel retails to the early twentieth century Metropolitan reader is an inversion of that economy of ‘enjoyment’, divested of power and producing not ‘jouissance’ (to borrow Grosrichard’s Lacanian terminology) but an eternal ‘galling’. In a sense, it is an economy of powerlessness: in place of the absent despot, an immanent, unassuageable religious tyranny; in contradistinction to the despotic mode of self-pleasuring, an inexhaustible spectacle of self-destruction, enacted and witnessed by the Indian Muslim as a proxy for the British reader.

Significantly, however, this spectacle has managed to bridge the rupture of the illusion of ‘oriental despotism’ that followed the intrusion of the British observer as a political force increasingly located within that economy of power in late eighteenth century India. As Grosrichard makes clear, the undisclosed participation of the European observer in the economy of ‘oriental despotism’ was dependent upon the

---

<sup>130</sup> Teltscher, p 29. Like all figures of ‘oriental despotism’, it also shares in the common Orientalist perception of the Muslim as ‘a creature in diremption, as the unlikely coexistence of sheer animality on the one hand, and an abstract, hence forever forced and repressive, principle of order on the other’ (Al-Azmeh, *Islams*, p 170). The ‘unlikely coexistence’ of animality and a repressive despotism of order (obeying the commands of his religion) in Anglo-Indian representations of Indian Muslims is explored below in Section 3.3.

<sup>131</sup> Alain Grosrichard, *The Sultan’s Court: European Fantasies of the East*, trans Liz Heron (London: Verso, 1998; originally published in French in 1979), pp xvi-xix. Though largely focussed on the Ottoman Empire in the eighteenth century, Grosrichard makes frequent reference to the Mughal court in both the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, particularly through the accounts of Francois Bernier and Niccolao Manucci.

<sup>132</sup> Grosrichard, p xxi.

illusion of the observer's detachment from the spectacle. It was this separation (or rather, a disavowal of the knowledge of participation) which enabled belief in the integrity of the fantasy.<sup>133</sup> Thus the perception of 'oriental despotism' in late eighteenth and nineteenth century India by British observers involved a precarious game of comparisons, distinctions and disavowals quite different from contemporary French accounts of the Ottoman Empire. Indeed, so precarious were these distinctions for the Anglo-Indian community that, from the last quarter of the eighteenth century, British rule in India was itself frequently inscribed with the language of despotism, often by more distant Metropolitan commentators, (most famously, for instance, in Burke's speeches at the impeachment trials of Warren Hastings<sup>134</sup>).

What, then, is startling about Steel's portrait of the Indian 'Mohammedan' is the manner in which the British observer/participant has apparently been extricated and the integrity of the illusion – inverted; self-destructive rather than self-pleasuring – returned to its place in the late colonial travel guide.<sup>135</sup> That such a restoration is brought about through the antagonistic role of religion – religion crucially divorced from government – points towards another, more recent phase in the genealogy underlying Steel's seemingly self-contained portrait, one in which the tyranny of religion and the integrity of the illusion of separation can be identified as the traces of a specific earlier unresolved debate over Anglo-Indian identity. Just as the rise of the

---

<sup>133</sup> Grosrichard, p xvi.

<sup>134</sup> Teltscher, pp 163-72. This transposition continued into the mid-nineteenth century, culminating in the annexation of Awadh in 1856: see, for instance, Malcolm Lewin, *Has Oude Been Worse Governed by its Native Princes Than Our Indian Territories by Leadenhall Street?* (London, 1857); R W Bird, *Dacoitee in Excelsis or The Spoliation of Oude* (London: J R Taylor, 1856). J S Mill's 'On Liberty' (published in 1859 after his retirement from service with the East India Company) is perhaps the key instance of the post-'Mutiny' attempt to redefine the concept of 'oriental despotism' for British governance in India as a necessary - indeed, altruistic - tactic of the 'civilising mission' (see Bhabha, 'Sly', p 96). As if drawing her own historical line under this particular phase of the discourse of 'oriental despotism', Steel inaugurates her most popular portrayal of Indian Muslims (in her 'Mutiny' novel, *On the Face of the Waters*, 1896) with the auction of the ex-King of Awadh's emaciated menagerie, in which both British and Mughal despotisms are implicated (the insensitive purchase of a royal parrot by a British officer has tragic consequences in the later uprising). The pre-1857 colonialist discourse of 'oriental despotism' will be taken up in more detail in Section 3.2.

<sup>135</sup> As Suleri has argued in the context of preserving the 'obscurity' of India through the rhetoric of the sublime, the 'myth of integrity' was vital to the preservation of the 'fiction of [the British observer's] invisibility'. Suleri, p 39.

paradigm of ‘oriental despotism’ accompanied and reinforced the construction in the West of concepts of modernity during the Enlightenment,<sup>136</sup> it will now be argued that the restoration of an uninterrupted economy of corruption to a circumscribed community of Indian Muslims, propelled not by power but by the unappeasable appetite of religion, is in part derived from the contested identity of a *religiously* neutral modern British state in India after 1858.<sup>137</sup> It is here that the process of excavating the invisible participant in the redirected paradigm of what we might call in its inverted late colonial manifestation, ‘oriental dispossession’, should first be directed.

---

<sup>136</sup> Grosrichard, p xi.

<sup>137</sup> In Grosrichard’s Lacanian schema it is the impossibility of the satisfaction of the despot’s appetite, rather than the desired currency of power/love, that fuels the economy. Grosrichard, p xxii.

### 1.5 The 'heroic self-denial' of 'Christian rulers'<sup>138</sup>

The question of the inter-relationship of religion and state in British rule in India, so often debated in the second half of the nineteenth century, is conspicuously underplayed in the narrative of *India*. In the three historical sections, 'The Rajputs', 'The Great Moghuls', and 'The Western Rulers', religion as a (deleterious) factor is used to draw a line under pre- and post-1858 British rule. Indeed, the disavowal of the nexus of government and Christianity provides the only concrete explanation of the difference between the two dispensations.<sup>139</sup> The relegation of the chapter describing 'The Anglo-Indian' to the very end of the text, conclusively separated from the descriptions of contemporary Indian communities through the lens of religion ('Hinduism', 'Mahomedanism', 'Buddhism, Jainism, Parseeism, Animism'), implicitly emphasises this epistemic break, and with it, the logic of colonial difference, as in part, predicated on religious identity. Consequently there is no mention in the chapter on 'The Anglo-Indian' of either religion or religious neutrality. Instead, the chapter, as in most Anglo-Indian literature of the period, concentrates exclusively on the portrait of the embattled colonial official, underpaid, overburdened and implicitly secular.<sup>140</sup>

In attempting to lock the question of the religious identity of the Anglo-Indian community into the pre-1857 period of British rule in India by referring to it only in a causal (but historically cauterised) relationship to that epistemic rupture, the 'Mutiny', Steel insists, in 1905, upon the apparent success of the self-proclaimed religious

<sup>138</sup> The phrases are taken from Alfred C Lyall, 'Our Religious Policy in India' in Lyall, *Asiatic Studies: Religious and Social*, (London, 1882), 262, 274.

<sup>139</sup> Steel, *India*, p 60. Given the argument advanced here concerning the nexus of religion and government, it is suggestive that the morally opprobrious language applied to Company rule – its 'aggression', 'shady transactions', 'double-dyed scoundrels', and pervasive 'feeling of shame' (Steel, *India*, pp 56-61) – appears to anticipate some of the rhetoric of corruption that surrounds the Indian 'Mohammedan', almost as if religious incontinence (the ungoverned Christian missionaries; the ungovernable Muslim conscience) and corruption were cognate afflictions.

<sup>140</sup> For an interesting exposition of the ideology of work in representations of Anglo-Indian bureaucracy as a means of obscuring problematic aspects of the colonial enterprise, see Daniel Bivona, *British Imperial Literature, 1870-1940: Writing and the Administration of Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), Chapter 3.

neutrality of the British presence in India. Although their identity as Christians became an important means of Anglo-Indian differentiation from Indian society in the latter half of the nineteenth century, it was an identity consciously separated from the public sphere in which their ‘official’ roles as representatives of colonial authority were enacted.<sup>141</sup> Steel seems to suggest that the possibility of a connection between public and private affirmations of faith, which was widely understood to have precipitated the events of 1857-59,<sup>142</sup> is no longer a subject of debate; it would have no place in an Anglo-Indian guide to modern colonial India.<sup>143</sup> But it is precisely this exemplary separation that is invoked by what we can now more exactly characterise as the faulty secularisation – involuntary, destructive – of Steel’s Indian ‘Mahomedan’.

To understand the nature of the interlinked identities of secular ‘Anglo-Indian’ and religiously-tyrannised Indian ‘Mohammedan’ it is necessary to pursue this portrait of faulty secularisation beyond its appearance as either self-aggrandising inversion or as an uncanny form of self-representation.<sup>144</sup> Christopher Bayly has recently argued for a reinterpretation of colonial policies in India in the second half of the nineteenth century in the light of the persistence of what he calls ‘crypto-Christian ideas’ at a variety of official levels of interaction with Indian society.<sup>145</sup> Contrary to post-1858 Anglo-Indian rhetoric (taking its cue from Queen Victoria’s 1858

<sup>141</sup> Metcalf, *Ideologies*, pp 47-48. The problematic of Anglo-Indian differentiation from Indian Christians in ‘Mutiny’ accounts is explored in Section 2.5 below.

<sup>142</sup> On this perception of ‘religion in danger’ as a primary cause of the ‘Mutiny’, see for instance, Alfred Lyall, ‘Our Religious Policy in India’ in *Asiatic Studies*, pp 273-75.

<sup>143</sup> Steel attempts a similarly covert circumvention of this problem of the interaction of officially secular and privately (even aggressively) Christian Anglo-India in her novel, *The Hosts of the Lord* (1900), in which, during a fictional, late nineteenth-century small-scale revolt in a North Indian town, two Anglo-Indians, one an erstwhile member (female) of a questionable missionary group, the other an army officer, are detached from their respective besieged spheres, and manage together to prevent the religiously-motivated uprising from escalating any further, setting British rule in the town back on its course. This romantic solution is tellingly enacted on the liminal – and transforming – space of the river that connects the missionary encampment, the fort and the Indian town. The novel is discussed in more detail in Section 3.3 below, in reference to the enabling role played by the instigator of the revolt, a disaffected – Muslim - army officer.

<sup>144</sup> Freud’s essay on ‘The Uncanny’ has been adapted by Gail Chiang-Liang Low (prompted by Bhabha’s model of ‘mimicry’) to describe the undesired return of the familiar as an alienated, destabilising image in colonial discourse. Chiang-Liang Low, *White Skins, Black Masks: Representation and Colonialism* (London: Routledge, 1996), pp 113-15.

<sup>145</sup> Bayly, ‘Returning the British to South Asian History’ in C A Bayly, *The Origins of Nationalism in South Asia* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1998), pp 284-85.



proclamation of the religious neutrality of her government in India<sup>146</sup>), Bayly argues that what had amounted to a ‘covert confessional state’ in the 1840s and 1850s in India, was carried over into the very institutional fabric of British rule in the second half of the nineteenth century, in educational policies steeped in ‘Victorian religious mores’, and most of all, in an Anglo-Indian mindset that continually focused on ‘the moral rearmament of self and community’.<sup>147</sup> Drawing on the insights of Andrew Porter in particular, he posits an imperial state in nineteenth-century India ‘mirrored by and informed by a British Protestant...spiritual empire...[that] moulded, limited and directed, even if it did not determine the ideology of most officials and other expatriates.’<sup>148</sup>

Alongside his call for the reassessment of government policy in the light of this religious imperative, Bayly makes a rather broad case for a renewed analysis of emergent indigenous political ideologies of the period for the possible influences of late imperial Christian ideologies on such nationalist concepts as, for instance, ‘*sewa*, or service, [as] an energizing public doctrine.’ In returning Victorian doctrinal debate to the history of colonial India, however, Bayly appears to make the assumption of a largely uncontested and unconscious process of assimilation into those emergent indigenous political ideologies. This perception of a species of indoctrination leads, for instance, to the somewhat simplistic conclusion that, rather than Vedic or Enlightenment systems of thought, ‘it was Christian moralizing which informed Gandhi’s encounter with the West’.<sup>149</sup> One might contrast such a polemic notion of indoctrination with Shackle and Majeed’s more cogent analysis of the adaptation of

---

<sup>146</sup> For the full text of the Royal Proclamation, see Michael Maclagan, ‘Clemency Canning’: *Charles John, 1<sup>st</sup> Earl Canning, Governor-General and Viceroy of India, 1856-62*, (London: Macmillan, 1962), pp 350-52.

<sup>147</sup> Bayly, ‘Returning the British’, p 280, 284-85.

<sup>148</sup> Bayly, ‘Returning’, p 279; Andrew Porter, ‘Religion and Empire: British Expansion in the Long Nineteenth Century’, in *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, Volume XX, No 3 (1992), pp 270-390.

<sup>149</sup> Bayly, ‘Returning’, p 285. Bayly’s insight here could be considered somewhat reminiscent (and therefore lacking the timeliness) of V S Naipaul’s famous description (in 1964) of Gandhi as ‘The Colonial’ (V S Naipaul, *An Area of Darkness*, (New York: Vintage, repr. 1981, 1964), pp 72-87). For a more nuanced analysis along these lines, see Gerard Studdert-Kennedy, *British Christians, Indian Nationalists and the Raj* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999).

ideologies such as Samuel Smiles' ethic of 'self-help' in a late nineteenth century Muslim reconstruction of Islamic history and doctrine in which the Prophet, re-imagined to some extent in the figure of a Victorian social reformer (but drawing equally from earlier Islamic traditions of moral conduct that had begun to be re-emphasised in the earlier nineteenth century), effectively contests a British Orientalist discourse that denied such personal virtues as self-discipline to Indian Muslims, while simultaneously drawing on the 'ludic' qualities of those stereotypes of decadence to create an alternative, at times competing, source of energy within the narrative.<sup>150</sup> Similarly, while Christian moralizing no doubt played a part in Gandhi's ethos, in historiographical terms it might, for instance, be more fruitful to speculate on the role of 'manly Christianity' (and its accompanying notions of chivalry) in late imperial representations of passive Hindus as an important but overlooked impetus in the genesis of Gandhi's reconstruction of the feminised Hindu male as an oppositional, religiously-centred persona.<sup>151</sup> Common to both Muslim and Hindu reformulations, it is being argued, is an implicit awareness of, and engagement with, a colonial discourse centred on constructions of specific religious communal identities that were partially moulded by often unconsciously displaced Victorian doctrinal thought. It is through the prism of these aspects of colonial representation of Indian society, as much as through any more direct vehicles of Victorian moral doctrines, that (frequently disguised) disquisitions on Christian identity in colonial India were often

---

<sup>150</sup> Shackle and Majeed, *Hali's Musaddas*, pp 76-79.

<sup>151</sup> Ashis Nandy's explication of the influences of the Sermon on the Mount and Wildean androgyny on Gandhi's adoption of the principle of non-violence as a critique of the colonial culture of masculinity does not take into account the persistence in colonial chivalric ideologies of forms of 'muscular Christianity' that had long since been problematised or eclipsed in Metropolitan culture. Nandy, *The Intimate Enemy: Loss and Recovery of Self under Colonialism*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, repr. 1994; 1983), pp 48-55. For a useful survey of the resurgence of chivalric codes and their interdependence with 'muscular Christianity' in the nineteenth century, see Mark Girouard, *The Return to Camelot: Chivalry and the English Gentleman* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981); and for some recent analyses of the role of ideologies of masculinity and notions of chivalry in Anglo-Indian literature, see Jenny Sharpe, *Allegories of Empire The Figure of Woman in the Colonial Text* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993); Nancy L Paxton, *Writing Under the Raj: Gender, Race, and Rape in the British Colonial Imagination, 1830-1947* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1999), especially Chapter 3; and Sinha, *Colonial*.

first refracted by British writers, and encountered and contested by indigenous intellectuals in colonial India.

Before proceeding to a detailed examination of some of the effects wrought by the problematic of Christian identity in Anglo-Indian thinking about Indian Muslims in the second half of the nineteenth century, it is useful to begin by complicating Bayly's description of a largely Protestant 'spiritual empire' by recalling that alongside its periodic self-definition in opposition to Catholicism as 'the antithesis of true religion', Protestant congregations in Victorian Britain were characterised by often bitter conflict, both between and within, dissenting and establishment camps.<sup>152</sup> While such doctrinal rivalry played only a circumscribed part in colonial settings, it is worth proposing a tentative religious characterisation of the British official community in the later nineteenth century in more specific denominational terms than has usually been attempted, in order to approach more precisely the ethos out of which religious arguments were made in Anglo-Indian society.<sup>153</sup>

Bayly's perception of a consensus over Anglo-Indian distaste for government intervention, and its voluntarist ethos of self-help, makes the potentially misleading assumption of a questionable degree of homogeneity among the Anglo-Indian community in regard to the propagation of Christian doctrines and what he has called a 'deep suspicion of state intervention' in religious issues.<sup>154</sup> Andrew Porter's description of nineteenth century 'colonial white settler societies' as 'almost without exception...hostile to missionary ambitions' disregards an important anomaly in Anglo-Indian society whereby Indian Civil Service officials were often found faithfully supporting in private the activities of missionaries which in public they were

---

<sup>152</sup> John Wolffe, 'Victorian Religion in Context', in Wolffe (ed), *Religion in Victorian Britain. Volume 5: Culture and Empire* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1997), P 15; Gerald Parsons, 'Reform, Revival and Realignment: the Experience of Victorian Anglicanism' in Parsons (ed) *Religion in Victorian Britain, Volume 1: Traditions* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988), pp 14-66; Gerald Parsons, 'From Dissenters to Free Churchmen: the Transitions of Victorian Nonconformity', in, *Ibid*, pp 67-116; for the role of Catholicism as an oppositional rallying point for the construction of a British identity, see Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation, 1707-1837*, (London: Vintage, repr. 1996, 1992).

<sup>153</sup> But on these distinctions, see also, Bart Moore-Gilbert, *Kipling and 'Orientalism'*, pp 112-15.

<sup>154</sup> Bayly, 'Returning', p 285.

forced to officially disown, indeed frequently reprove.<sup>155</sup> This ambiguous position in the first quarter-century after Victoria's proclamation was further compounded by the leading role taken by the Church Missionary Society, born out of the evangelical wing of the Church of England, in the 'campaign to evangelize India' through an active 'partnership of church and state'.<sup>156</sup> As Alfred Lyall complained in 1872, if in 'Great Britain the relations of State to religion are still in a very delicate position...Englishmen at home do not always realise or make allowances for the degree to which the universal problem of the proper functions of government becomes complicated...whenever we have to decide upon the attitude which *Christian rulers* should take up in regard to the numerous creeds and sects which abound in [India].'<sup>157</sup> Anglo-Indian religious policy, as Lyall's article makes clear, was as much concerned in 1872 with that epithetical identity, 'Christian' (substituted by 1905, it would seem from Steel's narrative, with the less controversial 'Western') as with the enforcement of non-Christian denominational equality.

While there has as yet been no conclusive research done on the denominational allegiance of ICS officers in the second half of the nineteenth century, it is possible to make the above – necessarily tentative – characterisation of a largely Anglican official community using Clive Dewey's invaluable study of the education of the Indian civil service during the 'era of competitive examination'. Dewey

---

<sup>155</sup> Porter, 'Religion and Empire', p 381. Sir Charles Trevelyan, for instance, was enrolled as an honorary vice president in the Christian Vernacular Education Society, the flagship of renewed missionary endeavour founded in the immediate post-'Mutiny' period, but was later, as Governor of Madras, to publicly condemn Bible education in Government schools. David W Savage, 'Evangelical Educational Policy in Britain and India, 1857-60' in *The Journal Of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, Vol 22 (1994), No 3, p 444, 452. Like his contemporaries, Sir Bartle Frere and W W Hunter, Alfred Lyall privately supported Christian Missions while strongly advocating state religious neutrality (Parveen Shaukat Ali, *Pillars of British Imperialism: A Case Study of the Political Ideas of Sir Alfred Lyall, 1873-1903*, (Lahore: Aziz Publishers, 1976), pp 39-40; Francis Henry Skrine, *Life of Sir William Wilson Hunter*, (London: Longmans, 1901), p 98). This potential conflict is taken up in the next section with particular reference to Lyall's flirtation with the possibilities offered by his perception of state-sponsored religious sectarianism in imperial China.

<sup>156</sup> Savage, 'Evangelical Educational Policy', p 437. In contradistinction to official rhetoric, the nineteenth century was to witness the gradual movement of the CMS towards the 'centre of the English establishment' (T Thomas, 'Foreign Missions and Missionaries in Victorian Britain' in John Wolfe (ed), *Religion in Victorian Britain. Volume V: Culture and Empire* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1997), p 124).

<sup>157</sup> My emphasis. Alfred C Lyall, 'Our Religious Policy in India', in Lyall, *Asiatic Studies: Religious and Social* (London: John Murray, 1882), p 258. The article was originally published in *The Fortnightly Review*, April 1, 1872.

identifies the professions of recruits' fathers during this period as overwhelmingly drawn from among landowning, professional (solicitors, barrister, physicians and surgeons) and Anglican clergy (as much, at one point, as 25 percent) – in other words, from the constituencies most solidly allied to the established Church.<sup>158</sup> The same period also witnessed the dramatic – though fluctuating – increase in the percentage of recruits that passed through Oxford and Cambridge, as Macaulay's 1854 committee had urged in their review of the system of competitive examinations.<sup>159</sup> Throughout the nineteenth century a strong Anglican ethos prevailed in both universities, surviving the partial abolition of religious tests in 1854, which had insisted on subscription to the nine articles of faith of the Church of England;<sup>160</sup> and even after the repeal of all religious tests in 1871, the general ethos remained markedly establishment – indeed, to such an extent that Nonconformists in the 1890s felt compelled to agitate for their own colleges in Oxford free from its influence.<sup>161</sup>

In short, what is being proposed here is the salience of an Indian Civil Service characterised by a strong Anglican ethos in its struggle to come to terms with renewed arguments in post-‘Mutiny’ India over the proper relations of church and state. This is not to argue that Anglo-Indian officials sought any formal political expression for a Christian state in colonial India. It is rather to foreground a set of impulses, formally restrained and rationally set aside, that must be understood as potentially immanent in official colonial discourse. If we then situate that broadly establishment-orientated official community in the midst of a predominantly Nonconformist, not infrequently

---

<sup>158</sup> Clive Dewey, ‘The education of a ruling caste: the Indian civil service in the era of competitive examination’ in *The English Historical Review*, Volume 88, (1973), Table 2, p 284. As B B Misra concludes, ‘[in the nineteenth century] the social complexion of the candidates selected...remained by and large from the higher middle classes’ (Misra, *The Bureacracy in Inda: An Historical Analysis of Development up to 1947*, (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1977), p 203). For a contrasting picture of the social background of Nonconformist congregations, ranging from the commercial middle-class constituency of the Unitarians to the trade unionist elements of Primitive Methodism, see Gerald Parsons, ‘From Dissenters to Free Churchmen’.

<sup>159</sup> See Table 1 in Dewey, ‘The Education of a Ruling Caste’, p 276. By 1896 as much as 77 percent of ICS recruits were drawn from among Oxbridge graduates.

<sup>160</sup> Owen Chadwick, *The Victorian Church. Part 1* (London: A&C Black, 1971), p 480-81.

<sup>161</sup> P T Marsh, *The Victorian Church in Decline: Archbishop Tait and the Church of England* (London: Routledge, 1969), p 84, 238-39.

adversarial, missionary constituency,<sup>162</sup> we can begin to appreciate how the issue of disestablishment – one central to Victorian mid-century religious controversy<sup>163</sup> – might have been translated into a colonial context in which the possibility of religious particularism was once again (problematically) raised. These potential lines of cleavage that might form around the official Anglo-Indian community need to be taken into account if only as an ethos against which the mind of the ICS required constant vigilance (in league with its former Metropolitan opponents, it might be said, against its own inclinations).<sup>164</sup> Given the fissiparous nature of British Anglicanism in the later nineteenth century, in which a range of responses towards disestablishment in Ireland in 1869 included, for instance, agitation by some Anglican clergymen in the 1870s in favour of formal disestablishment in England (fearing an interventionist Parliament),<sup>165</sup> it would be misleading to read into even a broadly conservative Anglican ICS any straightforward, if privately-held, consensus over the role of Christianity in colonial government. Nevertheless, bearing in mind the remarkable contrast between an overwhelmingly Anglican official community in India and the substantial percentage of Nonconformist congregations in Britain (the 1851 Census of Religious Worship revealed that the Church of England attracted less than half of the aggregate of British church-goers on ‘Census Sunday’), it is possible to posit, at the very least, a set of potentially destabilizing reflexes at work in Anglo-

---

<sup>162</sup> Although the Church Missionary Society was to take an initial lead in Metropolitan missionary politics aimed at the eventual evangelisation of India in the immediate aftermath of the ‘Mutiny’, at this time it was still ‘unusual for an Anglican clergyman, even an Evangelical one, to take up missionary work as a vocation’ (T Thomas, ‘Foreign Missions and Missionaries in Victorian Britain’, p 103). The adversarial politics of early Indian missions is discussed in P Carson, ‘An Imperial Dilemma: the Propagation of Christianity in Early Colonial India’ in *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, Volume 18, pp 169-90; David Savage gives a detailed account of the renewed fervour of missionary politics in the wake of the ‘Mutiny’, and in particular against the Queen’s Proclamation, in Savage, ‘Evangelical Educational Policy in Britain and India, 1857-60’.

<sup>163</sup> Chadwick, p 6.

<sup>164</sup> Though distinctions between ‘officials’ and ‘settlers’ was to become a stronger feature of the later rather than earlier nineteenth century, even in the 1820s and 1830s Company employees were not infrequently labelled by radicals among the latter community as essentially ‘Tory’, and accused of obstructing Protestant Dissenting religious missions in favour of the Anglican establishment. P J Marshall, ‘The Whites of British India’, p 30, 34.

<sup>165</sup> Parsons, ‘Revival and Realignment’, p 57.

Indian official engagement with the relationship of the evolving British state to all questions of religious expression or representation in colonial India.<sup>166</sup>

Arguments regarding the religious neutrality of the state in such a context, then, must be read against the grain because that is precisely the spirit in which they were – often zealously – first made. In this respect, we need to re-read Steel's beleaguered and misunderstood Anglo-Indian official of 1905 as embattled partly against the very 'secularism' which had become his/her badge.<sup>167</sup> If by the beginning of the twentieth century such impulses had been banished beyond the framework of popular narrative, it is necessary to emphasise that even in the earlier period during which Steel resided in India, any desire for a visible relationship between church and state could not be expressed as a conscious element of the political identity of the official community in which she lived. Jacqueline Rose has convincingly argued for the integral part played by fantasy, not only in disclosing the 'unspoken components of social belonging', but in the very construction of the political identities through which societies express themselves historically.<sup>168</sup> Her persuasive observations on these fantasmatic (and fantasmagoric) elements in embattled national imaginings prompt the question of what happens when such an essential component of national identity as religion becomes translated into (and in a sense, delegitimated within) the context of a colonial state in which religion cannot be expressed as a part of national life?<sup>169</sup> In her chapter on 'civility' as a form of moral imperative at the heart of English national self-definition Rose invokes Christopher Bollas's psychoanalytic concept of 'violent innocence' to explain the link between English 'civility' and the

---

<sup>166</sup> Gerald Parsons, 'From Dissenters to Free Churchment', p 70; *idem*, 'Revival and Realignment', p 59.

<sup>167</sup> As an Inspector of Schools in the Punjab, Flora Annie Steel would have included herself among the beleaguered officialdom. The argument being advanced here about the instabilities attendant upon the 'badge' of secularism is only partially addressed in Clive Dewey's study of the (religiously-inflected) sense of mission in the twentieth century careers of two Anglo-Indian officials (Dewey, *Anglo-Indian Attitudes: The Mind of the Indian Civil Service*, (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, repr. 2000; 1993).

<sup>168</sup> Rose, *States*, p 5, 7.

<sup>169</sup> As Rose writes – in reference to Linda Colley's account of the construction of a British national identity in *Britons* – 'the two great icons which Colley places at the centre of English national life [are] property and God.' Rose, *States*, p 72.

objects against which it is constituted. As a mode of projective identification (whereby ‘you pass across to the other facing you what you least like inside your own head, so that they hold it and become answerable for it at one and the same time’<sup>170</sup>) ‘violent innocence’ offers an approach towards a partial understanding of the problem of disestablishment in colonial India as it played itself out in the Anglo-Indian official psyche. In this reading, ‘secularism’ as an article of faith in Anglo-Indian official discourse, like ‘civility’ (indeed, as a colonial manifestation of its correlative, ‘detached benevolence’<sup>171</sup>), can be characterised as a moral imperative, not so much constructed in response to its object of chastisement (religious incontinence), but as a means of refiguring a perceived undesirable prior relationship to it.<sup>172</sup> We might then understand the degree of, by turns, alarm and punishment that are the basic narrative of colonial accounts of unregulated indigenous religious activity as partly enacting and purging ‘its own felt ‘criminality’’ (with all the pleasure that such punishment – enforcing a reassuring distance – entails).<sup>173</sup>

The consolidation of the doctrine of ‘secularism’ as an integral component of Anglo-Indian political belonging in the later nineteenth century can thus to some extent be figured as the by-product of an Anglo-Indian inability to acknowledge the radical dislocation of one of the ‘icons’ of British identity: the outcome, in other words, of what we might call a peculiarly colonial ‘violent innocence’. Similarly, Rose’s description of how the moral conscience, because it draws from the same sources of energy as the objects it ‘seeks to tame’, is always vulnerable to ‘a stunning propensity to defeat itself’, can be utilised to bridge the separation between Steel’s embattled and self-righteous secular Anglo-Indian official in 1905 and her descriptions of indigenous communities defined and directed by religion.<sup>174</sup> Indeed,

---

<sup>170</sup> Rose, *States*, p 59.

<sup>171</sup> Rose, *States*, p 61.

<sup>172</sup> Mannoni based his critique of colonialist sociological observations of native societies on a similar reading of projective identification. Octave Mannoni, *Prospero and Caliban: The Psychology of Colonization*, trans Pamela Powesland (London: Methuen & Co, 1956), p 20.

<sup>173</sup> Rose, *States*, p 60. This reading helps explain not only its primacy, but the peculiar urgency, of what Pandey calls ‘the narrative of communal riot’ in colonial discourse (Pandey, *The Construction of Communalism*).

<sup>174</sup> Rose, *States*, p 57.



drawing on those same energies that the moral doctrine of ‘secularism’ sought to contain, it can be argued that the willingness with which the official Anglo-Indian mind was soon to embrace the principle of separate electorates based on religious exclusivism (in the Morley-Minto reforms of 1909) is a cogent illustration of Rose’s cognate observation that ‘as soon as [civility/morality] acquires the status of conviction or badge...it starts internally to disintegrate, rushing headlong into the arms of its foes.’<sup>175</sup> This highly unstable element of reciprocity at work between the evolution of an official colonial secular identity and the Raj ‘sociology of multiple ethnicity’ based primarily on religious categories, is of direct relevance to an understanding of how representations of Indian Muslims by Anglo-Indians in the late nineteenth century might have acted as signposts in what – upending V S Naipaul’s phrase – we might call a British ‘way’ in the colonial world.<sup>176</sup>

In this reading it is necessary to extend the notion of ‘violent innocence’ as a means of ‘shedding’ unwanted histories (as Rose deploys it in the construction of an English national identity from within the Metropolitan context – ‘violent innocence abroad’) into the colonialist culture itself in which such traumatic histories, among them an armed insurrection triggered in part, it was widely believed, by the operations of a ‘covert confessional state’, are always close at hand, and always figuring a terrifying prolepsis.<sup>177</sup> Suleri’s injunction that in the intimacy of the colonial context the moment of the ‘transfer of power’ charges every encounter with what she calls the ‘precarious condition of the present tense’, reminds us that in grappling with a religious identity (or multiple perceived indigenous religious identities) the Anglo-Indian official was simultaneously preoccupied with precisely this question of the fundamental instability of paramountcy.<sup>178</sup> In a sense then, this thesis will approach the subject of religion – as those officials did – as a form of language in an ongoing colonial discourse on the future of British rule in India. It is here, in the context of

---

<sup>175</sup> Rose, *States*, p 68.

<sup>176</sup> V S Naipaul, *A Way in the World: A Sequence* (London: Heinemann, 1994).

<sup>177</sup> Rose, *States*, p 60, 63

<sup>178</sup> Suleri, *Rhetoric*, pp 5-6, 21, 111.

‘the anarchic disempowerment underlying [the colonial] system of control’, that Anglo-Indian ‘secularism’ departs from the fantasy of English ‘civility’ and enters instead into a process of misrecognition aimed at preventing the disclosure of an impossible identity in the aftermath of revolt: that of the Anglo-Indian *Christian* ruler.<sup>179</sup> The paradox of that conflicted colonialist identity, it will be argued in Chapter Three, can be seen enacted in the simultaneous deployment in Anglo-Indian literature, particularly in the 1870s and 1880s, of representations of Islam in India as a ‘tall obelisk pointing direct to the sky’, the often admired, implacably visible aspect of a cohesive religious identity; and as the invisible figure of conspiracy which, propelled by political dispossession and always eluding any commensurate punishment, reveals the alienating contours of a hidden mirror colonial state as it pursues the secret goal of ‘theocratic Home Rule’.<sup>180</sup> But it is to the source of ‘Mahometan revival’, that apocalyptic spectre of pan-Indian Muslim insurgency which was periodically to convulse Anglo-Indian society throughout the second half of the nineteenth century, that this thesis first turns in order to map out the initial mechanisms of prohibition and disavowal. As Chapter Two will now explore in detail, the Muslim ‘fanatic’ as a pan-Indian figure of insurrection was born into colonialist discourse in the events of 1857-59. It was the surprising, and highly ambivalent, forms of investment made at that time by ICS officials in the rhetoric of Muslim ‘conspiracy’ that underwrote the paradoxical terms of his later conspiratorial reincarnation in the Anglo-Indian imagination, and marked out his road to isolation in *India*.

---

<sup>179</sup> Suleri, *Rhetoric*, p 115.

<sup>180</sup> Alfred Lyall, ‘Our Religious Policy in India’, in *Asiatic Studies*, p 276. The two main texts under discussion in Section 3.3 are Lyall’s *Asiatic Studies* and Hunter’s *Indian Musalmans*. For some other instances of the debate initiated by Hunter’s book and the ‘Wahabi’ trials of the 1860s, see: ‘A Mahometan Revival’ in *The Cornhill Magazine*, Vol XXIV, No 142, October, 1871, pp 421-37; W Nassau Lees, *Indian Musalmans: being three letters reprinted from the ‘Times’ with an article on education, reprinted from the ‘Calcutta Englishman’*. With an appendix containing Lord Macaulay’s *Minute* (London, 1871); Anonymous review of ‘W W Hunter, *The Indian Musalmans*’ in *The Atheneum*, London, Saturday August 26, 1871, p 263; N B E Baillie, ‘On the duty of Mohammedans in British India,’ in *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, 1881, pp 430-34; for an indigenous contemporary perspective, see Sayed Ahmad Khan, *Review on Dr Hunter’s Indian Musalmans: Are they bound in conscience to rebel against the Queen?* (Benares, 1872).

## Chapter Two

### 2.1 Introduction

The subject of this chapter as a whole is the particular set of emphases that emerged in the representations by Indian Civil Service officers of Indian Muslims during the traumatic events of 1857-59. These representations will be examined in detail, first through the correspondence of Alfred Lyall (1835-1911), and then through a comparison of those writings with other ICS official accounts. Before proceeding to that discussion, however, the following two prefatory sections will concern themselves with a reassessment of the historiography surrounding the extent of Indo-Muslim coordinated activity during 1857-59, and of British perceptions of Indian Muslims in the preceding half century. The central thesis proposed in these sections is that the events of 1857-59 established for the first time in Anglo-Indian discourse a rhetoric of potential pan-Indian Muslim disaffection with British rule. This emotive language was significantly at variance with Anglo-Indian intelligence reports at the time, yet neither the manner of its emergence, nor the tenacity with which it was maintained in the next quarter century, has ever adequately been explained. The emphasis here is on the novelty of such a perception in Anglo-Indian ideological constructions of Indo-Muslim society, entailing as it did the violent conflagration of a series of related but hitherto discrete elements. It will be argued that the precise delineation of the mechanisms of that conflagration is necessary to any critical analysis of the rhetorical and psychological investments subsequently made by the Anglo-Indian official community in their reconstructions of Indo-Muslim society.

Without the recognition of 1857-59 as a transformative moment, it could be argued that the historiography of British representations of Indian Muslims can proceed only along the lines of enquiry that Anglo-Indian observers had themselves laid out in the

wake of the ‘Mutiny’. These are concisely conveyed in an extract from the official report on the genesis of rebellion in the North-West Provinces:

The green flag of Mahomed too had been unfurled, the mass of the followers of the false prophet rejoicing to believe that under the auspices of the Great Mogal of Delhi their lost ascendancy was to be recovered, their deep hatred to the Christian got vent, and they rushed forth to kill and destroy.<sup>1</sup>

Three apperceptions are typically conjoined in this summary, each explaining the other: Muslim discontent centred on the dispossession of the former Mughal rulers; the natural and irresistible appeal of militant war to all Muslims; and the Christian identity of the British rulers as an essentialised provocation to Indian Muslims. These introductory sections will contend that until 1857 none of these elements had played a significant role in Anglo-Indian constructions of Indo-Muslim society; and that their conjunction at this time has never been adequately explained. In pursuing these observations, it is anticipated that a fuller apprehension of the post-1857 process of what Bernard Cohn has called the ‘desacralization of the Mughal emperor’ can be obtained with reference to its relevance to the British discourse about Indian Muslims in this period – an area of analysis with which his seminal essay only briefly treats, but which the following two sections will argue was in fact central to Anglo-Indian attempts to re-define the colonial state.<sup>2</sup>

Alfred Lyall had only one year’s service in the ICS under his belt when the ‘Mutiny’ broke out in 1857. Nevertheless, his immediate perception of the irruption of a religiously-driven, Muslim-led rebellion against British rule was typical of most Anglo-Indian accounts both during and after the ‘Mutiny’.<sup>3</sup> They commonly insisted that the Muslims of India had taken over what had originally been no more than a localised sepoy

---

<sup>1</sup> *Notes on the Revolt in the North-Western Provinces of India* (London, 1858), p 159. Quoted in Hardy, p 63.

<sup>2</sup> Cohn, ‘Representing Authority in Victorian India’, in Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger (eds), *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, repr. 1993; 1983) pp 165-210.

<sup>3</sup> Durand, *Lyall*, p 69. Lyall’s family background and education, as well as a more detailed examination of his letters in 1857-59, can be found below in Sections 2.3 and 2.4.

revolt and turned it into a holy war of persecution aimed at the restoration of the Mughal empire.<sup>4</sup> Lyall was to sum up this version of events fifteen years later:

In Delhi, Lucknow and other centres of disaffection the Mahomedans at once caught the contagion of rebellion, and almost immediately seized the lead of it, using the wild, aimless fury of the soldiery for their own compact and straight-pointed political designs.<sup>5</sup>

Modern historiography has repeatedly concluded that this widespread perception among the British of a Muslim ‘conspiracy’ in 1857 was out of all proportion to the available evidence.<sup>6</sup> There are several points that can be briefly emphasised here. The first is that Muslim socio-religious movements actively advocating a ‘jihad’ against the British state in pre-‘Mutiny’ India played almost no part in the events of 1857-59;<sup>7</sup> and that while there was sporadic propagandist activity by some of the ulama (religious scholars), there is little evidence of any coordination among them.<sup>8</sup> The most recent conclusions in this

---

<sup>4</sup> Metcalf, *Aftermath*, p 298; Bayly, *Empire*, p 321. Important exceptions to this widespread belief included the Governor-General Lord Canning. After the suppression of the ‘Mutiny’, he was vilified by the Anglo-Indian press – under the soubriquet of ‘Clemency Canning’ – for failing to exact adequate retribution on the Muslims as a treasonous pan-Indian community (Hardy, p 71; for examples of Anglo-Indian press attitudes towards Canning as a ‘Mussulman’ collaborator, see *The Indian Punch*, 1859, Vol 1, Nos 1-12, pp 2, 18, 90-91, 102-3, 114-15, 126-27, 136-37, 142-43).

<sup>5</sup> ‘Islam in India’ in Lyall, *Asiatic Studies: Religious and Social* (London: John Murray, 1882), p 239. The essay was first published in the *Theological Review* in 1872.

<sup>6</sup> The most recent, overall assessment of the causes and genesis of the ‘Mutiny’ can be found in Bayly, *Empire*, pp 315-338. On Muslim involvement see the detailed regional studies by Eric Stokes, ‘Nawab Walidad Khan and the 1857 Struggle in the Bulandshahr district’, in Stokes, *The Peasant and the Raj: Studies in Agrarian Society and Peasant Rebellion in Colonial India* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980; 1978), pp 140-58; and E I Brodtkin, ‘The Struggle for Succession: Rebels and Loyalists in the Indian Mutiny of 1857’, *Modern Asian Studies*, 6:3 (1972), pp 277-90.

<sup>7</sup> This was even noted at the time by George Campbell (Hardy, pp 67-68). Harlan Otto Pearson points that not only did the largest socio-reform movement of the period, the *tariqah-i muhammadiya* (whom the British called ‘Wahabis’) ‘not join as a community against the British’, but the leader of the Bombay ‘Wahhabis’ even provided assistance to the British during the disturbances. Pearson, ‘Islamic Reform and Revival in Nineteenth Century India: the Tariqah-i Muhammadiya (PhD thesis, Duke University; 1979), p 56.

<sup>8</sup> As Usha Sanyal has pointed out, Bayly’s assessment of ulama involvement may partly stem from a confusion of Bareilly in Rohilkhand and Rae Bareilly in Awadh, the birthplace of the so-called ‘Wahhabi’ movement of Sayyid Ahmad Barelwi. In fact, the Rohilkhand ulama were opposed to Barelwi’s movement (Sanyal, p 30). Similarly, his valorisation of ulama fatwas (judicial opinions) from Deoband and Thanā Bhawan may well have a doubtful provenance (see Metcalf, *Deoband*, pp 82-83). These confusions may lie behind his persistent overstatement of the extent of ulama coordination (Bayly, *Empire*, p 320). On the limited nature of this participation in 1857-59: see Avril A Powell, *Muslims and Missionaries in Pre-Mutiny India* (Richmond, Surrey: Curzon, 1993), pp 272-4; Metcalf, *Deoband*, pp 83.

regard are that religiously-inspired Muslim participation was neither cohesive, extensive nor, ultimately, significant in its impact upon the 'Mutiny'.<sup>9</sup> At the level of the Muslim service gentry, Eric Stokes has demonstrated that even in the districts adjacent to the Delhi court (in particular, the district in which Lyall served at the time), loyalty to the former Mughal regime played a marginal part.<sup>10</sup> At the level of the semi-autonomous Muslim polities in colonial India, the picture is even less convincing.<sup>11</sup> The interventions on the side of the British by the Nizam of Hyderabad and the Nawabs of Rampur and Murshidabad (among others) proved decisive to the relatively swift conclusion of the British military campaigns.<sup>12</sup> Most important of all for the argument advanced in this section, the Mughal emperor, whose authority was nominally restored by the original mutineers from Meerut, consistently issued proclamations in a language that appealed to a cross-communal constituency – communications which were closely monitored by the besieging British.<sup>13</sup>

Studies of Indo-Muslim history during the colonial period have been particularly notable in this reiteration of the lack of evidence of Muslim 'conspiracy', since the resulting British attitudes and retributive measures were to have such an important impact on the evolution of both the 'modernist' and 'traditionalist' Muslim socio-reform movements in the second half of the nineteenth century.<sup>14</sup> Given the increasing detail with which these studies have, in the last thirty years, analysed the variety of Muslim responses in this formative period to the British accusation of 'disloyalty', it is

---

<sup>9</sup> Bayly, *Indian*, pp 184-88.

<sup>10</sup> Stokes, 'Nawab'.

<sup>11</sup> Hardy, p 67.

<sup>12</sup> Hardy, pp 69-70; Bayly, *Indian*, p 183.

<sup>13</sup> Bayly, *Empire*, pp 325-26; Metcalf, *Deoband*, pp 83-84; Bayly, *Indian*, p 187.

<sup>14</sup> Hardy, pp 61-70; Metcalf, *Deoband*, pp 80-86; Francis Robinson, *Islam and Muslim History in South Asia* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2000) Chapter Six. An idea of the residual power of the accusation itself can be gauged by the way in which it continues to require refutation even in studies of Indo-Muslim history concerned with the period before the 'Mutiny' (see for instance, Powell, *Missionaries*, pp 272-74, 279, 283-84, 291). On British retributive measures towards Indian Muslims, see also Thomas R Metcalf, *The Aftermath of Revolt: India, 1857-1870* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1965), pp 298-305.

remarkable how little attention has been paid to the complex shifts within that British discourse, towards which the leaders of these Muslim movements often reacted and shaped communal perceptions.<sup>15</sup> As a result the historiographical record has been left with what could be regarded as a deeply problematic imbalance. As early as 1859, the British had determined that there was no factual basis to the idea of Muslim ‘conspiracy’ – yet the Anglo-Indian belief in it persisted into the twentieth century.<sup>16</sup> This disparity between the British historiographical record and the Anglo-Indian conviction of a globalised Muslim revolt in 1857 points to the presence of a complex of undisclosed ideologies with which all sections of Indian society, were forced (often unknowingly) to enter into daily dialogue in their own constructions of Indo-Muslim identity.<sup>17</sup> In regard to the Indo-Muslim dialectic with the British in the later nineteenth century, it opens up a crucial line of enquiry, perhaps most forcibly in the writings of Sayyid Ahmad Khan. His repeated engagement with a British discourse of ‘disloyalty’ and ‘backwardness’ structured the genesis, and informed the evolution, of his Aligarh movement, from which emerged the first generation of Muslim political leaders in late colonial India. Such a line of enquiry might usefully be initiated, for instance, by a re-examination of his collection of biographies addressed to the British, *An Account of The Loyal Mohammedans of India* (1860-61), as infected by what Sara Suleri has seen (in the context of colonialist

---

<sup>15</sup> The two key studies of these movements are: Lelyveld, *Aligarh*; and Metcalf, *Deoband*.

<sup>16</sup> Hardy, p 69. Muslim ‘conspiracy’ is central to the narrative of Flora Annie Steel’s ‘Mutiny’ novel *On The Face of the Waters* (1896); and of course, it is present in *India*, in the form of the feigned ‘slackness’ of the Muslim community as she saw it fifty years after the ‘Mutiny’, still ‘ready to strike if it finds the opportunity’ (Steel, *India*, p 78).

<sup>17</sup> This kind of daily interaction at a variety of levels below that of the political arena has only relatively recently begun to receive nuanced historiographical attention. For instance, Javed Majeed’s study of two Urdu periodicals (including Sayyid Ahmad Khan’s ‘modernist’ journal, *The Aligarh Gazette*) during the 1870s usefully illustrates the degree to which the Urdu press operated in a shared informational order with the Anglo-Indian as well as other vernacular press (Majeed, ‘Narratives’, pp 135-163); and the wide-sweeping changes introduced into the judicial interaction with Indian society after 1858, and particularly the increasingly narrower interpretations of Muslim law by British judges, are given an interesting account with reference to the ‘Aga Khan Case’ brought by Khoja Muslims in 1862, in Amrita Shodhan, *A Question of Community: Religious Groups and Colonial Law* (Calcutta: Samya, 2001), Chapter 3. Unfortunately, as regards the influence of the post-‘Mutiny’ discourse on non-Muslim native constructions of Indo-Muslim identity, there has as yet been little sustained critical attention.

ethnography) as the ‘mutual fear attendant on acts of colonial self-definition’ that shows itself in the limitless classificatory list – the very open-endedness of Sayyid Ahmad’s (abandoned) project pointing towards a latent, unconscious apprehension that, finally, the question of ‘loyalty’ could never be proved: that something beyond the accusation itself was at stake.<sup>18</sup> These pamphlets, as well as *The Causes of the Indian Revolt* (1859), were addressed by Sayyid Ahmad directly to the British to counteract the ‘anti-Muslim’ British bias that he was only too well aware of in Anglo-Indian writings in the post-‘Mutiny’ period,<sup>19</sup> and that he returned to refute again in 1871 in his letters to the Anglo-Indian newspaper, *The Pioneer*. Alfred Lyall’s own counter-refutation of the arguments (and even the evidence) put forward by Sayyid Ahmad in these letters is not only a remarkable instance of the fundamental misprisions and doubts at work between Muslim and British discourses, but of the urgent British needs answered in the language of Muslim ‘disloyalty’.<sup>20</sup>

We can begin the process of excavating some of the general features of the pre-1857 British discourse on Indian Muslims by first pointing up the element of the teleological that most distorts the modern historiographical account. Although for ‘most British observers in 1857 a Muslim meant a rebel’,<sup>21</sup> this perception marked a radical shift in the nature of British representations of Indian Muslims; for Anglo-Indian observers, the equation of religious faith and political loyalty had never before been considered as either straight-forward or self-evident. Francis Robinson’s assessment of the pre-‘Mutiny’ colonial discourse is perhaps the most demonstrably teleological in its

---

<sup>18</sup> Suleri, p 21. Though the form of these biographies was partly determined by Indo-Persian *tazkhira* traditions, it could be argued that they were also designed by Sayyid Ahmad Khan (himself an ICS officer) to appeal to the ethos of large-scale ethnological enumeration that had by the 1860s come to characterise Indian Civil Service descriptions of native society. Hali notes that the pamphlets were discontinued ‘due to lack of interest on the part of the Muslims’ (Altaf Husain Hali, *Hayat-i Javed*, trans Qadiri and Mathews (Delhi: Idarah-I Adabiyat-I Delli, 1979; 1901), p 69).

<sup>19</sup> Hali, pp 60-69

<sup>20</sup> Lyall, ‘Islam’, pp 246-47. This post-‘Mutiny’ debate is addressed in detail in Section 3.3.

<sup>21</sup> Hardy, p 62.



failure to take account of this development. ‘After the British became the paramount power,’ he writes:

They tended to see the Muslims as the displaced rulers whom they expected, as a group, to resent the loss of their former power and to be strongest in resisting foreign rule and western civilisation. From this anticipation there sprang the most important source of British awareness of the Muslims: the threat they presented to the security of the Raj.<sup>22</sup>

This assumption lies at the core of his examination of later British policy with regard to Indian Muslims – indeed, he considers it ‘one of the most important facts of British Indian history’.<sup>23</sup> Nevertheless, it could be argued that Robinson here credits the British with the kind of transhistorical, essentialised opposition that after 1857 they came to invest in their understanding of Indo-Muslim attitudes towards themselves; and in this respect it could be said that he accedes to, rather than historicizes, the consistency of Anglo-Indian self-perceptions.<sup>24</sup> Though Robinson’s assessment appears directly to contradict that of the other major overview of Indo-Muslim colonial history, Peter Hardy’s *The Muslims of British India* (1972), they share certain key assumptions that need to be highlighted before the problems attendant upon Robinson’s teleology can be examined.

Unlike Robinson, Hardy locates the events of 1857 as precipitating, rather than confirming, the British view of Indian Muslims as a potentially rebellious collectivity. He contends that ‘the effect of 1857 was to make [the British] conscious of Muslims as Muslims and to endow them...with a corporate political character which in British eyes Muslims had not previously possessed.’<sup>25</sup> However, the only assumption that lends coherence to his presentation of British perceptions of the ‘evidence of Muslim

---

<sup>22</sup> Robinson, *Separatism*, p 99.

<sup>23</sup> Robinson, *Separatism*, p 100.

<sup>24</sup> The argument here is not for any exceptional status for Robinson, but rather the typicality of his thesis in this regard. For another, more recent example of a certain transhistoricity in characterising Anglo-Indian perceptions of Indian Muslims, see P Robb, ‘Impact’.

<sup>25</sup> Hardy, p 62.

responsibility for mutiny and rebellion’ is precisely that for the British in 1857, acts performed by Muslims were, by definition, committed by Muslims *as* Muslims. His ‘evidence’ for the catalyst to this perception is thus largely a list of uncoordinated rebellious activities committed by Muslims.<sup>26</sup> In other words, although Hardy explicitly denies the possibility of the pre-1857 British aggregation of the Indian Muslim communities, like Robinson, he appears to suggest that given the right circumstances, such an aggregation would ‘naturally’ spring to the British mind. The right circumstances, it would seem, were a large-scale (even if obviously cross-communal) insurrection. Implicitly then, Hardy validates the pre-‘Mutiny’ existence of a British apprehension about inter-regional Muslim insurrection directed against themselves; and since the idea of such a ‘conspiracy’ itself presumes the possibility of large-scale incorporative activity, his description of the post-1857 emergence of a British tendency to ‘incorporate’ Indo-Muslim identity must be treated as something of an anomalous formulation in his historical narrative. It would be more accurate to say that, in Hardy’s account, the incorporation of Indian Muslims was a perception exposed, rather than substantiated, by the events of 1857 – and that both the catalyst for that exposure and its prior manifestation, was an already imagined conspiracy. However, because it is an assumption so deeply embedded within the logic of Hardy’s narrative of the ‘Mutiny’, the British perception of an Indo-Islamic communal identity based on ‘conspiracy’ receives almost no critical attention.<sup>27</sup> As with Robinson, who argues the British predication of Indo-Islamic identity on the idea of ‘conspiracy’ solely on British observations written after 1857,<sup>28</sup> its invariance over a period of a hundred years is presumed self-evident.

---

<sup>26</sup> Hardy, pp 63-66.

<sup>27</sup> We can only register its echo in Hardy’s elliptical explanation of the appeal of ‘Muslim responsibility’ to British ‘minds knocked off balance by fear and wounded pride’ (Hardy, p 63); and in a much earlier reference to the Mughal emperor serving as a focus for Muslim discontent – an idea he discounts as relevant by 1857 (Hardy, p 33). This latter point will be taken up below.

<sup>28</sup> One of Robinson’s primary texts here is Greenberger’s *The British Image of India*, from which he derives the sense of ‘affinity’ – and therefore presumably rivalry – between the British and Indian Muslims since the eighteenth century (Robinson, *Separatism*, p 99). His reference, however, is to Greenberger’s

The accounts of both Robinson and Hardy reflect a broader historiographical consensus that the ‘Mutiny’ re-activated and entrenched a British tendency to view the Muslims as an implacably hostile, pan-Indian political community.<sup>29</sup> That this consensus so closely corroborates post-1857 Anglo-Indian historiography seems to have been taken as no more than a confirmation of its validity.<sup>30</sup> In order to fully understand the changes that overtook British representations of Indian Muslims during 1857-59, this untested congruence must first be problematised. Bayly’s recent comments on the disjunction between formal Orientalist texts and the localised perceptions of Anglo-Indian administrators – drawn as they were from a close interaction with the Indian informational ‘ecumene’ – offers a useful path into that process.<sup>31</sup> It prompts the question first as to the extent to which the tendency in some of their more formal histories to postulate the common aspiration of the Muslims of India for a ‘return’ to paramountcy in India<sup>32</sup> actually impacted upon the local observations and administrative praxis of the Indian Civil Service; and secondly, as to what forms the interaction between the two took in 1857-59. These questions remain relevant despite Bayly’s contention that the reactions of the British in 1857 represented, primarily, a failure of just those localised spheres of information (and thus ICS officers often fell back on broader Orientalist

---

illustration of these strands of colonial thought through the fiction of late nineteenth century authors such as Flora Annie Steel and G A Henty (Greenberger, pp 45-47).

<sup>29</sup> See Metcalf’s summary in *Ideologies*, pp 139-40.

<sup>30</sup> Perhaps the most consistent example of this validation is the way in which William Hunter’s ‘sensational’ (as one contemporary called it) and seminal text on Muslim ‘conspiracy’, *Indian Musalmans* (1871), has repeatedly been used by historians as an unproblematised guide to the mostly pre-‘Mutiny’ insurrectionary activities of the Indian Muslim ‘Wahhabi’ movement. See, for instance, Robinson, *Separatism*, pp 99-100; for an instructive contrast, see Metcalf, *Ideologies* (p 141), where Hunter’s text is contextualised within a growing British post-‘Mutiny’ ‘obsession with [Muslim] conspiracy’. Hunter’s text is discussed in detail in Chapter Three.

<sup>31</sup> In particular, Bayly argues for the re-examination of nuanced colonial ‘knowledge’ in the nineteenth century with regard to the Anglo-Indian understanding of Indian Muslims; it is his contention that the transgeographical and transhistorical prejudices of ‘formal orientalist texts’ were generally eschewed by Anglo-Indians for the detailed local knowledge of the individual ICS officer. Bayly, *Empire*, p 326.

<sup>32</sup> J S Grewal, *Muslim Rule in India: The Assessments of British Historians* (Calcutta, Indian Branch: Oxford University Press, 1970), p 168.

theories of Indo-Muslim motivation).<sup>33</sup> Their relevance derives from the fact that such a coordinated default position about Indian Muslim ‘conspiracy’ was not only unprecedented, it opposed all previous ICS praxis. As we shall outline in the following section, the administrative reactions, accounts and predictions surrounding the periodic ‘evidence’ of apparently coordinated Muslim insurrectionary events and movements in the preceding hundred years contradict the idea of a day to day, pragmatic Anglo-Indian perception of the likelihood – or indeed, the possibility – of either inter-regional Indo-Muslim agglomerative action or Indo-Muslim incorporative disaffection. Bayly’s disjunction between the ‘local’ and the Orientalist would seem – in this scenario at least – a choice of opposites.

That such a choice is, in terms of historiographical assessment, untenable is perhaps indicated by Bayly’s not delving more deeply into the question of why the British perception of a Muslim revolt in 1857 was an ‘official response out of all proportion to the threat’.<sup>34</sup> Moreover, he appears to have no historiographical interest in the related question as to why the informational breakdown of the Company systems should have come to centre quite so forcefully on the idea of Muslim ‘conspiracy’ (this, despite his observation that it was the not the more potentially oppositional ‘purist’ sects but the flexible ‘syncretic’ practices of Sufism that had always guided the ICS understanding of Islam in India).<sup>35</sup> The ‘default position’ on which Bayly appears to rely is one previously endorsed by Eric Stokes, as the result of a British ‘hankering’ in 1857 after a ‘simplistic explanation’ for a bewildering complex of processes taking place.<sup>36</sup> The counter-argument proposed here is that to overcome decades of exactly those accumulated, localised layers of information and praxis stressed by Bayly’s recent

---

<sup>33</sup> In Bayly’s view, it was the ‘subtle change in the quality of information coming in to colonial officials in the 1840s and 1850s’ that was responsible for their inability to predict the ‘Mutiny’. Bayly, *Empire*, pp 316-17.

<sup>34</sup> Bayly, *Empire*, p 317.

<sup>35</sup> Bayly, *Empire*, p 321.

<sup>36</sup> Stokes, ‘Nawab’, p 150.

monograph, and reach such a dangerously generalised default position, required more than (though not excluding) an Anglo-Indian desire for simplicity. To hold on to that default position, as many ICS officers (including Alfred Lyall) did for decades after, and in the face of all available contemporary historiographical evidence, could only mean that the overwhelming conviction of Muslim ‘conspiracy’ that swept the Anglo-Indian community in 1857 must have operated in conjunction with other, undisclosed currents of thought – currents that mediated the broader ‘mussulmanophobia’ of Orientalist texts<sup>37</sup> and the localised knowledge evident in ICS praxis. Using secondary historiographical sources, the next section will outline the mechanisms involved in this conjunction of discourses, refining Bayly’s thesis of a disjunction between the ‘local’ and the Orientalist discourses by seeing them as coming together in 1857 in literally revolutionary forms. The succeeding sections of this chapter will then attempt to excavate from particular ‘Mutiny’ accounts, some of the undisclosed ideological elements involved in bringing about this conjunction.

---

<sup>37</sup> Bayly, *Empire*, p 326.

## 2.2 The pre-‘Mutiny’ discourse on Indian Muslims

Two major related strands to what we might call the pre-‘Mutiny’ Anglo-Indian discourse of Muslim ‘conspiracy’ concern us in this section. They can be glossed here (and will be dealt with in turn) as the discourse of Muslim ‘fanaticism’; and the discourse of Mughal ‘dispossession’.

It is useful to begin the analysis of the early nineteenth century British view of a ‘fanatical’ Muslim identity in India by noting that, while religion had always been a primary category in the British reading of Indian history (dividing it into Hindu and Muslim periods<sup>38</sup>), the meaning of that category with regard to social incorporation was, if not chimerical, then liable to frequent shifts, even in its most generalised usages. If, as Pandey has demonstrated, the ‘colonial construction of Indian society’ was in constant flux, only reaching its ‘fixed and ‘developed’’ form in the later nineteenth century, the role of religion in achieving that ‘fixity’ can only really begin to be demonstrated from the 1840s onwards, where it acted in conjunction with ‘caste’ to delimit rather than aggrandise, the pan-Indian political identity of the native social subject. For it was ‘caste’ as a divisive socio-religious category – and not as the agglomerative unit of a larger religious constituency – that came to predominate and organise Anglo-Indian ethnography in the first half of the nineteenth century.<sup>39</sup>

Pandey has argued that the construction of ‘caste’ typologies in British colonial records worked to obscure – or indeed obliterate – historical context.<sup>40</sup> The characterisation of, for instance, the *julaha* (‘weaver’) communities in northern and central India as constituting a ‘bigoted’ and ‘fanatical’ Muslim caste shifted attention away from – and ultimately discounted – the economic motivations that drove their

---

<sup>38</sup> James Mill’s *History of British India* (1818) was the most influential example of this kind of periodization.

<sup>39</sup> Pandey, pp 66-68.

<sup>40</sup> Pandey, p 107.

participation in the civil disturbances of 1813, 1837, 1842 and 1849.<sup>41</sup> ‘Fanaticism’ in this instance was a retroactive characterisation that helped obscure the decisively interventionist colonialist role in destroying the market for locally-manufactured cotton goods in North India. Through the recasting of socio-economic grievances into the narrative of ‘religious prejudices’, the British officials gradually funnelled the issues into a narrative of ‘law and order’: that is, caste-bound lawlessness and the corrective operations of a colonial state bent on preserving the integrity of the larger Indian social body.<sup>42</sup> Activated in the description of particular ‘caste’ identities, then, the British perception of Muslim ‘bigotry’ was (paradoxically, given its essentialism) a moveable commodity in comparison to the potential pan-Indian affective capacity with which Anglo-Indian observers would invest it in and after 1857. Pandey’s contention that in colonial accounts, ‘caste’ tended to construct ‘mythic’ stereotypes emptied of history,<sup>43</sup> perhaps misses the dual movement here of ‘caste’ and ‘fanaticism’. Both are essentialist descriptions destructive of socio-political identity; but where ‘caste’ isolates the native subject within the larger, changeless Indian social body, ‘fanaticism’ inflates the local and immediate to the global and the transhistorical.<sup>44</sup> Together they perform a pincer-like operation that simultaneously locates the Muslim weaver within the Indian social body and makes of him an invasive, essentially foreign, presence. Moreover, at the same time as a supra-local Muslim ‘fanaticism’ is brought within Indian society, it acts as the catalyst for the disciplinarian structure of the British state to follow in its wake.

We might usefully place this instance of the progressive (negatively defined) ‘Islamicisation’ of these North Indian Muslim weaver communities by the British in the context of a wider process of the descriptive ‘outcasting’ of perceived criminal communal

---

<sup>41</sup> Pandey, Chapter 3.

<sup>42</sup> Pandey, p 70.

<sup>43</sup> Pandey, p 107.

<sup>44</sup> Since Hindu ‘bigotry’ towards Muslims is nowhere substantialised as an innate ‘caste’ characteristic during this period, we may safely assume that Muslim ‘bigotry’ was not conceived by the British as purely the product of its Indian environment.

identities in the 1830s and 1840s. Radhika Singha has argued that the British obsession with the labelling and stigmatisation of so-called ‘criminal communities’ during this period was linked to the extension and consolidation of colonial hegemony not just across the newly conquered territories of British India, but into the Indian states themselves.<sup>45</sup> These periodic ‘drives’ towards the extension of a British ‘rule of law’ commonly designated entire castes or tribes as ‘criminal’ and sought to set them outside of Indian society while at the same time drawing on their connections to it in order to justify the increasingly interventionist role of the colonial state and its self-definition as the preserver of the integrity of Indian society.<sup>46</sup> In this respect, it could be argued that the construction of the ‘bigoted julaha’ during this period bears comparison to the ‘systematisation’ in colonial records of a ‘criminal’ *thagi* community. ‘Thuggees’ were conceived of as a form of ‘fanatical’ and supra-local caste, arising out of, and closely intertwined with, Indian society but nevertheless dedicated through their religion (seen by the British as a mixture of Hindu and Muslim rituals) towards its violent destruction. This dual location – within and without the Indian social body – justified and helped define the wide-ranging powers and disciplinarian role that the supra-local colonial state was carving out for itself.<sup>47</sup> In this sense, *thagi* partially mediated the evolution of a more direct interaction between the colonial state and Indian society. Its progressive criminal characterisation underwrote the colonialist civilising narrative, while the colonial obsession with ‘unknowable fraternities’ and the criminalisation of peripatetic groups,

---

<sup>45</sup> Radhika Singha, ‘‘Providential’ Circumstances: The Thuggee Campaign of the 1830s and Legal Innovation’ in *Modern Asian Studies*, 27, 1 (1993), pp 83-146.

<sup>46</sup> Singha, p 89, 119-23. It should be noted that although the ‘systematisation’ involved in these ‘drives’ represented a new, more comprehensive ambition for the extension of colonial authority, the essentialisation of criminal behaviour and its attribution to particular communities had always played a part in the construction of the colonial state. See for instance, Eugene Irschick on the British categorization in the late eighteenth century of certain South Indian ‘tribes’ as ‘criminal by birth’, in *Dialogue and History: Constructing South India, 1795-1895* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), p 88.

<sup>47</sup> On the fascination that this dual location exerted on the colonial mind see Javed Majeed’s excellent discussion of Meadows Taylor’s novel *Confessions of a Thug* (1839). Javed Majeed, ‘Meadows Taylor’s *Confessions of a Thug*: the Anglo-Indian Novel as a Genre in the Making’, in Bart Moore-Gilbert (ed), *Writing India, 1757-1990: The Literature of British India* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1996), pp 86-110.



mendicants and lay preachers, helped construct the framework for the colonial conception of lawful Indian society.<sup>48</sup>

The colonial account of Muslim ‘fanaticism’ during the first half of the nineteenth century closely follows this criminalising rationale.<sup>49</sup> It was represented in colonial records as a series of discrete though cognate ‘conspiracies’ located simultaneously within and without Indian society; it sought to explain these ‘conspiracies’ as resulting from the machinations of ‘lawless’ elements and as primarily destructive of the cohesion of Indian society. In this respect, the construction of Muslim ‘fanaticism’ during this period served to make the security of the colonial state coefficient with the preservation of Indian society. Most important of all, as Pandey has argued, it was a rationale that served to redirect the potential exposure of the larger socio-economic narrative of colonialist intervention in Indian society. Thus in Bengal from the 1820s to the 1850s the British characterised the agrarian Muslim reformist movements of the *fara’izis* and the followers of Titu Mir as essentially marginal religious confederacies working towards communalist, ‘fanatical’ ends. Such a definition called forth from the colonial state a relatively circumscribed response centred on the issues of ‘law and order’,<sup>50</sup> and obviating the more direct threat they posed to the state itself as movements of agrarian revolt.<sup>51</sup> The *fara’izis* were made up almost exclusively of illiterate Muslim cultivators, directing their protests against a largely Hindu landlord class and European indigo planters;<sup>52</sup> the divisions and issues they struggled against were the result of the changes effected by the British in land distribution by the Permanent Settlement in Bengal

---

<sup>48</sup> This concern with peripatetic figures and groups was at the heart of the later ‘Thuggee’ campaigns (Majeed, ‘Confessions’, pp 87-88, 90).

<sup>49</sup> This is an argument touched upon in Robb, ‘Impact’, pp 145, 158-59. However, he fails to make the crucial distinction between pre and post-1857 colonial discourses on Indian Muslims with which this section is concerned.

<sup>50</sup> Hardy, p 56.

<sup>51</sup> Rafiuddin Ahmed, *Bengal*, p 44. The most comprehensive account of the Fara’izi movement is given in Muin-ud-din Ahmad Khan, *History of the Faraidi Movement in Bengal 1818-1906* (Karachi, 1965). See also, Ahmed, *Bengal*, pp 39-50 and Kenneth W Jones, *Socio-Religious Reform Movements in British India* (New Delhi: Foundation Books, 1994), pp 18-25.

<sup>52</sup> Ahmed, *Bengal*, pp 46-47; Jones, *Socio Religious*, pp 20-21.

(1793).<sup>53</sup> The centrality of this agrarian base and its determining role in driving the movement also led to frequent clashes with Muslim landlords, and eventually with the British state itself.<sup>54</sup> Because of the British perception of the *fara'izis* as primarily promoting 'fanatical', communal issues aimed at disrupting the status quo of native society, colonial accounts commonly confused them with the followers of the *tariqah-i muhammadiyah*, the socio-religious reform movement of Saiyid Ahmad of Rae Bareilly.<sup>55</sup> Yet despite this misperception colonial records before 1857 are distinguished by their complete disinterest in globalising these movements as threatening a pan-Indian infection (and it is significant in this respect that the language of Muslim 'fanaticism' as a contagious disease was a distinctly post-1858 development). British responses to *the tariqah-i muhammadiyah* were entirely localised. Even when, after the formal annexation of Punjab by the British in 1849, the *mujahidin* of Sayyid Ahmad turned their attentions away from the Sikhs and onto the British, they were still regarded as an insignificant threat and their militant activities treated as no more than border skirmishes (at the time of the first direct clash with British forces at Kotla in 1852, the *mujahidin* movement numbered approximately 600 men in total).<sup>56</sup> There is even the suggestion that the British may have been content to allow the movement to flourish before 1849 as a means of undermining the Sikh state.<sup>57</sup> This appears a likely scenario, given a not dissimilar Residency complicity over a jihadist movement in Awadh in 1856 which the British hoped might fuel their case for annexation (the short-lived movement eventually involved over four hundred combatants in open warfare with the state forces of Wajid Ali Shah).<sup>58</sup>

<sup>53</sup> Ahmed, *Bengal*, p 44. Hardy, p 56.

<sup>54</sup> Ahmed, *Bengal*, p 45.

<sup>55</sup> Ahmed, *Bengal*, p 41.

<sup>56</sup> Hardy, pp 54-55. Pearson, pp 54-55. It should be noted that until the annexation of Punjab, the *tariqah-i muhammadiyah* showed little direct interest in the European presence in India, Powell, *Missionaries*, pp 103, 105.

<sup>57</sup> Pearson, p 50.

<sup>58</sup> Robinson, *Islam*, pp 145-6; Michael H Fisher, *A Clash of Cultures: Awadh, the British and the Mughals* (New Delhi, Manohar, 1987), pp 228-234. This passive British encouragement took place, moreover, in

Although the records reveal a growing British interest in gaining accurate statistical measures and ethnographic information about these Muslim socio-religious reform movements that is reminiscent of the fascination with ‘unknowable fraternities’ so much a feature of the Thuggee panics,<sup>59</sup> there is no evidence before 1857 of any real apprehensions by the British of either the spread of these movements outside of their immediate locales or of a connection made between them and any wider Muslim ‘conspiracy’. This is an important distinction for the argument being made here: their role in the self-definition and extension of the British state during this earlier period was primarily as outcasts from lawful Indian society. Though, like the ‘Thuggees’, there remained a fascination with their ambiguous links within Indian society (which certainly helped galvanise the perception of Muslim revolt in 1857), it is only in the post-‘Mutiny’ period that a tendency to link all these movements under the misnomer ‘Wahabi’, and the sensational uses made by the Anglo-Indian press of informer depositions from the State trials between 1865-71 (as well as the low rate of actual prosecutions), suggest a more direct parallel with the specifically pan-Indian preoccupations of the Thuggee campaigns.<sup>60</sup> This earlier localising, circumscriptive inclination meant that the British before 1857 were able to recognise that, for instance, the *mujahidin* espousal of the eventual overthrow of the British state was a marginalised reformist rhetoric distantly aimed at ‘purifying’ a putative Indian Muslim *ummah* – and not the statement of the pandemic ‘straight-pointed political designs’ into which it was absorbed in the wake of the ‘Mutiny’.<sup>61</sup>

While the language of criminalisation and the legal framework that accompanied the British ‘drives’ towards labeling and stigmatising particular groups began to be

---

the knowledge of open and pan-regional support for the ‘jehadis’ by important Muslim leaders in North India (including the Begum of Bhopal).

<sup>59</sup> Singha, pp 117-19.

<sup>60</sup> For the British ‘the thugs were ‘Citizens of India’ and not of any ‘particular division’ (Singha, p 89). On the problems of prosecuting *thagi* crime, see *ibid*, p 135; for the British fascination with *thagi* ‘informer’ testimonies, see Majeed’s excellent analysis in ‘*Confessions*’.

<sup>61</sup> Lyall, ‘Islam’, p 239.

constructed in earnest in the 1840s, the process of marginalising Muslim ‘fanatical’ involvement in disruptions of colonial authority can be seen at work as early as 1806, in the accounts of the Muslim sepoy revolt that took place in the South Indian garrison town of Vellore. Although the impetus for the mutiny appeared to have originated in Mysore and drawn on the ideology of the recently deposed Muslim ruler Tipu Sultan (whose capital Srirangapatam had fallen to the British only seven years previously) as a ‘warrior pir’, the British administration in Madras focused their accounts on identifying the ‘faqirs’ and ‘wandering sufis’ who had spread the message as isolated, criminal elements who had no institutional affiliation and stood outside of orthodox Indo-Muslim society.<sup>62</sup> The Madras Surgeon General at the time, Edward Balfour, decried the ‘faqirs’ as ‘a low, profligate set of men, held in great disesteem by all classes of the community.’ Anticipating the later official discourse on ‘criminal tribes’ and drawing on the supposed idiom of ‘orthodox classes’, he pronounced these perceived instigators of the mutiny as: ‘Be-sharra literally, without law, i.e., they do not act up to the precepts of Mahomed.’<sup>63</sup>

Though we may detect here an element of the desire to deflect the possibility of a wider regional insurrectionary movement based around the ‘spiritual’ authority of the defeated ruling dynasty of Mysore (reflective of the relatively recent British paramountcy here),<sup>64</sup> the guiding rationale of this narrow focus accords more obviously with the process of the criminal outcasting of Muslim ‘fanaticism’ from Indian society that was to become a more noticeable feature of the ensuing decades. In this instance, the power of that rationale can be gauged by the lack of urgency shown by the British in the aftermath of the Vellore mutiny in restructuring their regiments to reflect a potentially volatile

---

<sup>62</sup> Susan Bayly, *Saints, Goddesses and Kings: Muslims and Christians in South Indian Society 1700-1900* (New Delhi: Cambridge University Press, , 1992; 1989) pp 226-28.

<sup>63</sup> Quoted in Bayly, *Saints*, p 228.

<sup>64</sup> This ‘spiritual’ authority was perhaps not as straightforward a matter as Susan Bayly’s description of ‘warrior pir’ cults indicates, given the cross-communal ethos built up by Sultan Tipu Ali in his predominantly Hindu kingdom (on which, see Kate Brittlebank, *Tipu Sultan's search for legitimacy. Islam and kingship in a Hindu domain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997).

Muslim element.<sup>65</sup> Similarly, although the mutiny in Java in 1816 by Indian Muslim sepoys shook the British complacency about its officers' ability to control the native ranks, it did not precipitate any significant administrative innovations.<sup>66</sup> This contrasts strongly with the changes in army practice introduced immediately after the Barrackpore Mutiny of 1824, for which insensitivity towards Hindu rituals had been perceived as the prime motivation. Indeed the introduction of 'Maulvies' to the North Indian regiments was only effected after the Barrackpore Mutiny (a rebellion exclusive to Hindu regiments), and then only to balance the necessity of appointing 'Pandits' to help assimilate the disorders attendant upon the British construction of a new Hindu military 'high-caste' army<sup>67</sup> – for it was the mutiny at Barrackpore, and not those in Java or Vellore, that had 'alarmed the Company most.'<sup>68</sup> This apparent imbalance between a desire to placate potentially rebellious Muslim and Hindu contingents in the Indian army is less reflective of the larger percentage of Hindu sepoys in the North Indian regiments than it is indicative of the British approach to religion as a category deconstructive of, rather than incorporating, Indian society: it was not pan-Indian Hindu rebellion that was feared, it was the breakdown of the British attempt to use a high-caste Hinduism to isolate and organise a British army ethos that was at stake in the Barrackpore Mutiny.

In general, in terms of military recruitment, the focus of army administrators had always centred on caste and region, as opposed to the larger religious blocs. This had been the practice since the inception of army recruitment in the mid-eighteenth century, when Robert Orme first demarcated the 'martial races' of India 'according to their climatic environment and dietary habits'.<sup>69</sup> These criteria – caste and climatic

---

<sup>65</sup> Roger Beaumont, *Sword of the Raj: the British Army in India 1747-1947* (New York: Bobbs-Merrill, 1977), p 104. Although Bayly notes some 'interesting parallels' between the Vellore and 1857 army revolts, he does not follow this through with speculations as to their differences in terms of British responses. See Bayly, *Indian*, p 179.

<sup>66</sup> Bayly, *Indian*, p 185.

<sup>67</sup> Seema Alavi, *The Sepoy and the Company: Tradition and Transition in Northern India, 1770-1830* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1998; 1995), pp 90-94.

<sup>68</sup> Alavi, p 282.

<sup>69</sup> Alavi, p 37.

environment (drawing on the example of the agricultural base of the British army) – had been the exclusive considerations behind the large-scale recruitment of a mainly high caste Hindu ‘peasant army’ in Bengal and Upper India. Where consideration of the Indo-Muslim character did play a part in the British ordering of army regimental life, it was as a component of a wider concern with continuity in a secularised Mughal military culture.<sup>70</sup> This is not to suggest that Indo-Muslim typologies were ignored in characterisations of potential native recruitment, but more often they centred on questions of finance rather than religion. In the late eighteenth century, for instance, Colonel Pearse of the Madras army had speculated in a letter to Warren Hastings that Muslims rather than Hindus, should be targeted for the army, since:

The Mussulman will live well whilst he can; is seldom worth a rupee, and therefore has a tie upon the service that the other has not...For this reason, and for this only, I must give it as my opinion, that all possible encouragement ought to be given to Mussulmans; and that we ought to cease to seek for tall smooth-faced Hindoos , and to get shorter and rough-faced Mussulman soldiers.<sup>71</sup>

Ironically, at the turn of the century when desertion had ceased to be a problem and a high-caste Hindu peasant army was deemed inappropriate for the newly Ceded and Conquered Territories, the army made financial *solvency* the key criteria in recruitment of the Muslim Rohilla-Afghan cavalry.<sup>72</sup> Fifty years later, it was their reliance on these predominantly Muslim army regiments – particularly those from Rampur<sup>73</sup> and Madras<sup>74</sup> – that proved crucial to the suppression of important strategic rebellious areas in North India.

Before 1857, then, Islam as an incorporating, pan-Indian category finds little practical application within Anglo-Indian administrative praxis. It remains in this earlier

---

<sup>70</sup> For instance, in the recruitment of the Rohilla cavalry regiments. See Alavi, Chapter 5.

<sup>71</sup> ‘A Memoir of Colonel Thomas Deane Pearse’, in *Bengal Past and Present*, April-June 1909, Volume 3, No 2, Serial No 8, (Calcutta).

<sup>72</sup> Alavi, pp 229-30.

<sup>73</sup> Alavi, p 231.

<sup>74</sup> Bayly, *Indian*, p 183.

period, mainly a broad ideological compass and enumerative tool. ICS officers appeared rarely to have acted on the perception of a strong causal link between the mass of Indian Muslims (and particularly those who served as Company employees) and either Muslim 'disaffection' or an essentialised Muslim 'fanatical' character. This argument can be carried through into all other areas of British administration in pre-'Mutiny' India. In the Residency system, for instance, Michael Fisher has proved that there was no correlation between postings and religion. Muslim officials 'do not seem to have been either favoured in or disbarred from service in Residencies attached to Muslim rulers.'<sup>75</sup> This de facto cross-communal policy appears to have operated in posts up to and including the senior position of the Mir Munshi, who facilitated all important exchanges between the Resident and ruler as well as between the Resident and his Residency staff (up to 1835, three-quarters of Mir Munshi posts were in fact held by Muslims).<sup>76</sup> Indeed, Fisher concludes that until 1857 'the Muslim service elite played the prominent role within the Residencies'.<sup>77</sup>

Fisher's study of the communal makeup of the Residency system in this period is based on his own 'aggregation of thousands of isolated references drawn from the day to day records of each Residency.'<sup>78</sup> The statistical analysis under communal divisions of government employment records was begun by the British only in the 1840s; but where such analyses were undertaken, they pointed towards a similar Muslim predominance in the direct administration of British territories in North India.<sup>79</sup> This Muslim command of government patronage demonstrates the extent to which the Company had absorbed and relied upon for its infrastructure just those official classes of the Mughal service gentry

---

<sup>75</sup> Michael H Fisher, *Indirect Rule in India: Residents and the Residency System 1764-1858* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1998; 1991), p 318, 364.

<sup>76</sup> Fisher, *Indirect*, p 321, 323.

<sup>77</sup> Fisher, *Indirect*, p 362.

<sup>78</sup> Fisher, *Indirect*, p 317.

<sup>79</sup> For instance, see the figures compiled by Robinson for the subordinate, judicial and executive postings for the North-West Provinces in 1857; and for the whole of the United Provinces in 1887 and 1913. Robinson, *Separatism*, p 46.

which it was thought in 1857 had risen up for what Alfred Lyall called ‘that last desperate spring after the shadow of a lost empire’; and for whom, after 1857, the opportunities for the ‘higher subordinate ranks of the civil and military classes’ were to fall sharply away.<sup>80</sup> More specifically it was the relationship between these elite Muslim classes and a perceived wider Muslim ‘fanatical’ constituency, that the Mutiny was considered to have originated and spread. That connection proved difficult for British historians to pin down in the succeeding decades; indeed, the triangular relationship of the Muslim landed and service elites, Muslim reformist movements such as the ‘Wahabis’ and the Muslim ‘masses’ would form the core of disputation among Anglo-Indian observers for the next half-century.<sup>81</sup> 1857-59 was considered the moment at which they had coalesced, and the repetition of that event was, until the 1880s, seen as not only plausible, but immanent. For William Hunter, it was the elites (‘the best men’) who were ‘not on our side’, and thus ripe for inflammation by the ‘fanatical’ elements; for Alfred Lyall, it was the ‘inconsiderate and uneducated mass of them’ who were ‘against us’.<sup>82</sup> What animated both officials, however, was the same understanding of an implacably oppositional and corporate community that had revealed itself in 1857.

The process of circumscribing and criminalising Muslim ‘bigotry’ that took place in the first half of the nineteenth century had far-reaching consequences in 1857. The widespread perception by ICS officers at that time that ‘fanaticism’ had broken out all over North India entailed a seismic reevaluation of what constituted ‘lawful’ Muslim society. In effect, the mutually-reinforcing ideas ‘criminal’ and ‘lawful’ society had been

---

<sup>80</sup> Lyall, ‘Islam’, p 240. Note how Lyall’s judicious phrasing for the passage from which this is taken implies, but does not explicitly state, a government policy of communal discrimination in recruitment after 1858. Lelyveld divides the Mughal service gentry broadly between a largely Hindu zamindari and an official and military class drawn mostly from among Muslims (Lelyveld, *Aligarh*, p 25). Eric Stokes’ study of the Bulandshahr district in which Lyall served demonstrates that in general neither class nor religious affiliation ultimately determined the response of these Mughal service elites during the ‘Mutiny’ (Stokes, ‘Nawab’).

<sup>81</sup> These are in fact the main arguments that drive Hunter’s *Indian Musalmans*, as well as Lyall’s rebuttal to them in ‘Islam’.

<sup>82</sup> Lyall, ‘Islam’, p 246.



turned inside out, so that after 1857 the rationale behind the criminalisation of Muslim ‘bigotry’ – that is, its role in defining a ‘lawful’ Indian society – was brought to bear on the wider Muslim community. The acceleration of instances of perceived communal rioting after 1857 (and its reading back into past accounts of civil disturbances) was partly a result of this dramatic reversal of idioms. What before was isolated outside of Muslim society, was now brought firmly within its constitution; the idea of Muslim ‘bigotry’ was no longer to be confined to caste typologies or sectarian influences. This globalisation of the criminalising rationale had a twofold consequence. The first was that the dual process of placing the Muslim ‘fanatic’ within Indian society, but segregating him there as an essentially foreign, invasive presence, was from 1858 onwards, implicit in all British representations of Indian Muslims; and it is precisely this rationale that organises Steel’s portrait of Indo-Muslim society almost fifty years later in *India*. The second consequence of relevance here – and it is one that has been oddly neglected in histories of the period – is that bringing the ‘criminal’ characteristic of ‘fanaticism’ within Muslim society meant also seeing it rooted in the very structure of the pre-‘Mutiny’ British Indian state. However, this perception – entirely novel to British administrative ideology – should not be seen as either accidental to, or solely consequent on, the widespread explanation of Muslim ‘conspiracy’ in 1857. As will now be argued, the two are interdependent features of British thinking during and after the ‘Mutiny’. British dispossession of the Muslim service elites from their predominant role in its administration, and the accompanying rhetoric of a general Muslim ‘backwardness’, must be regarded as part of the process of the redefinition of the relationship of the newly emergent imperial British state to Indian society: as a part, that is, of the shedding of its own incarnation as a continuum of Mughal rule.

With these observations in mind, we can turn to the second strand of the pre-1857 discourse of Muslim ‘conspiracy’, that of the idea of ‘Mughal dispossession’, and address more precisely the question of the actual mechanism by which the inflation of Muslim

‘conspiracy’ in 1857 took place in Anglo-Indian perceptions. This strand represents a formalised, textual discourse about the dispossessed Muslim rulers of pre-colonial India, a rhetoric that derives its force from the common British historiographical division of Indian history into Hindu, Muslim and British periods.<sup>83</sup> However, in relation to the Mughal emperors and successor states of the eighteenth century, it is one that, paradoxically, only occasionally entailed specifically religious considerations. In his *History of British India* (1817) James Mill draws a crucial distinction between ‘sovereign’ and ‘priest’ under ‘Mahomedan’ rule, arguing forcefully that there was little alliance or confluence of interests between the two. In making this point, he goes as far as claiming that under the Mughals the Muslim ‘priests’ were themselves dispossessed of temporal power.<sup>84</sup> Javed Majeed has usefully redirected critical attention to the ‘self-reflexivity’ of Mill’s *History* in its use of British India for ‘fashioning a critique of British society itself’.<sup>85</sup> Mill’s perception of Mughal secular rule should thus also be seen in the context of his arguments for a uniform ‘rule of law’, as opposed to the ‘tyranny of priestcraft’ that he saw at work in both Britain (in its ‘Common Law’) and India (in the codification of Hindu and Mohammedan laws).<sup>86</sup> Nevertheless, despite its preoccupation with the reform of Metropolitan legal structures, the *History* became a ‘standard work for English officials’ in India and eventually a textbook for candidates for the Indian Civil Service, as well as a textbook of the Company’s college at Haileybury.<sup>87</sup> The influence of Mill’s distinction between ‘sovereign’ and ‘priesthood’ under Mughal rulers was thus an integral component of the Anglo-Indian official conception of Muslim rule formed in the first half of the nineteenth century. Alfred Lyall – himself a graduate

---

<sup>83</sup> See for instance James Mill’s *The History of British India* (abridged edition: Chicago: University of Chicago, repr. 1975; 1817) and Mountstuart Elphinstone’s *The History of India: the Hindu and Mahometan Periods* (London: Murray, repr. 1843; 1841).

<sup>84</sup> Mill, pp 306-7.

<sup>85</sup> Javed Majeed, *Ungoverned Imaginings: James Mill’s The History of British India and Orientalism* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), p 128.

<sup>86</sup> For a discussion of these issues, see Majeed, *Ungoverned*, Chapter 4.

<sup>87</sup> Javed Majeed, *Ungoverned* p 128.

of Haileybury in 1856 – places the distinction at the heart of his characterisation of Mughal rulers in his essay, ‘Islam in India’ (1872).

Historians have perhaps failed to give due attention to the changes that overcame post-1857 British representations of Indian Muslims on exactly this point. With regard to India’s ‘dispossessed’ Muslim rulers in Anglo-Indian historical discourse, conceptions before and after 1857 differ significantly on the relationship between the mass of Muslim ‘believers’ and the Mughal state. Where in the half-century before the ‘Mutiny’ the notion of Muslim disaffection seems to have referred consciously to the Mughals, and to an implicitly secular idea of Mughal rulers, during and after 1857 ‘dispossession’ is seen as a peculiarly *religious* grievance among Indian Muslims in general. Hinged between the two periods (receiving his education and first year of experience before the ‘Mutiny’), Alfred Lyall usefully illustrates this shift of emphasis. While he agrees with Mill’s assessment of the (comparative) secularity of Mughal rule, he redirects the argument towards the larger paradigm of a transhistorical, peculiarly Muslim relation to temporal power, of which the Mughals are only ‘bad’ examples.<sup>88</sup> Thus Mill’s positive assessment is effectively reversed and thrown aside as a poor predictive tool when dealing with ‘Islam’ in India. The true guide to the future of Muslims in India becomes the supra-local model of global Islamic history – a model in which the Mughals can appear only insofar as they performed as better or worse *Muslim* rulers.

After 1857, then, a new will to conflate enters the historiography regarding the temporal and religious in Indo-Muslim rule; and the axiom that in Islam, religion and politics represent ‘two sides of the same medal’<sup>89</sup> is one earnestly enforced by later, rather than earlier, nineteenth century Anglo-Indian writers.<sup>90</sup> The novelty of this post-1857 element can best be illustrated by comparison to the writings of Bishop Heber as he

---

<sup>88</sup> Lyall, ‘Religious’, p 289-90; Lyall, ‘Islam’, p 238.

<sup>89</sup> Lyall, ‘Islam’, p 236.

<sup>90</sup> Bayly gives William Muir as one such example of this (in Bayly’s view, ‘disappointing’) development. Bayly, *Empire*, p 326.

travelled through Upper India in 1824, a year after his appointment as the Bishop of Calcutta. Though new to the country, Heber's journals display a remarkably nuanced ability to absorb and reproduce a variety of entrenched Anglo-Indian attitudes towards religion. Given the frequent citation by historians of Heber's observations regarding the seditious usages of religious communication in early nineteenth century,<sup>91</sup> his sober assessment of the potential for Muslim disaffection is instructive. Following Mill's distinction, Heber is keen to explain precisely those distortions attendant upon the slippage between the temporal and religious ambition of Indian 'Mussulmans' that Lyall, fifty years later, conflates and re-directs into an altogether different paradigm. Thus Heber reproduces the nostrum that 'if a fair opportunity offered, the Mussulmans, more particularly, would gladly avail themselves of it to rise against us', but then explains that 'this is from political, not religious feeling.'<sup>92</sup> Though the two can be combined, in that the insensitivity towards deposed Muslim rulers, might have 'awakened questions and scruples among the fierce Mahommedans about obeying an unbelieving nation', he regards those questions as a 'digression', quite separate from Government 'interference with their religion'.<sup>93</sup> The Mughal emperor is clearly cast here as a 'political' rather than a 'religious' figurehead. While the boundaries between the two spheres are not impermeable, there is neither anxiety attendant upon their violation nor any impetus towards their removal. More importantly, the only channel between them involves a dialogue between the British and the deposed rulers. 'Mahommedan' religious scruples are thus relegated to the role of an affect of British diplomatic miscalculations; they possess no autonomous potential. The only way that the channel between the deposed Muslim rulers and the mass of 'fierce Mohammedans' can be accessed is through the

---

<sup>91</sup> See, for instance, Bayly, *Empire*, p 315.

<sup>92</sup> M A Laird (ed), *Bishop Heber in Northern India: Selections From Heber's Journal* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971), pp 144-45.

<sup>93</sup> Laird, p 145.

blundering Anglo-Indian official (in Heber's journal, it is Lord Hastings who is held to account).<sup>94</sup>

It should be remembered that Bishop Heber made these remarks only twenty years after the Company had annexed the territories of Upper India through which he travelled, and had neutered the last vestiges of Mughal power in Delhi. By 1857, as Peter Hardy remarks, Anglo-Indians had long since decided that 'the Mughals in Delhi were an anomaly and their existence a matter of indifference even to the Muslim population of the East India Company's territories.'<sup>95</sup> The effective deconstruction in the Anglo-Indian official mind of the potential of the Mughal emperor as a figurehead to a pan-Indian Muslim (as opposed to cross-communal) constituency was accompanied in these years by the gradual disinvestment in Mughal rituals, administrative structures and forms of communication, a process most visibly marked by the Company's decision in 1837 to supersede Persian as the language of administration. Bayly argues that this withdrawal from the Indian (and particularly, the Mughal<sup>96</sup>) informational order and the accompanying tendency to fall back on European-derived statistical analyses and modes of communication, accounted for the degree to which the British in India found themselves unprepared for the events of 1857-59.<sup>97</sup> He does not, however, draw any lines of affect between this process and the 'disproportionate' perception of Muslim 'conspiracy', which the British saw as being centred on the apparently restored figurehead of the Mughal emperor.

---

<sup>94</sup> It is worth considering here whether the British manipulation of the symbol of what Mujeeb calls 'the degenerate and unhonoured figure seated on the throne of Delhi' may have played a part in reinforcing the continued lip-service paid to him during this period by some of the orthodox ulama, such as Shah Abdul Aziz (who continued to call him the *Imam al-Muslimin*, while describing him as utterly without power or influence beyond Delhi. M Mujeeb, *The Indian Muslims*, New Delhi: Mushiram Manoharlal, repr. 1995; 1967, pp 390-391).

<sup>95</sup> Hardy, p 33.

<sup>96</sup> For a fascinating account of the early, often competitive interaction of Mughal and Company administrative and informational institutions, see Michael H Fischer, 'The Office of Akhbar Nawis: The Transition from Mughal to British Forms', in *Modern Asian Studies*, 27 (1993), pp 45-82.

<sup>97</sup> Bayly, *Empire*, pp 315-17.

But if such a line is drawn, and then placed against the background of Heber's (altogether typical) remarks thirty years earlier, it becomes clear that the missing link of the occasionally blundering but nevertheless decisive, Anglo-Indian official opens up the possibility that Muslim 'conspiracy' represented for the British more than proof of the 'obscurantist' and 'traditional' character of the uprising.<sup>98</sup> For the figure of the British official preserving the rituals of Mughal power (or threatening their disruption, as Heber castigated Lord Hastings) was integral to the representation of British authority in early nineteenth century India. By seeing the threatened abrogation of that role through the symbolic restoration of authority to the Mughal emperor, the idea of Muslim 'conspiracy' may have, at first sight, presented itself to the British in the recognisable but estranged lineaments of the 'uncanny'. The aspect of the 'uncanny' that appears to apply here is given 'special emphasis' by Freud in his 1919 paper on the subject:

An uncanny effect is often and easily produced when the distinction between imagination and reality is effaced, as when something that we have hitherto regarded as imaginary appears before us in reality, *or when a symbol takes over the full functions of the thing it symbolizes...*<sup>99</sup>

It is precisely this symbolic aspect that characterised the British attitude towards the Mughal emperor and his relationship to Muslim disaffection. Like the 'uncanny', which always 'leads back to what is known of old and long familiar',<sup>100</sup> the earlier British belief in the decisive role of the Anglo-Indian administration in controlling a channel between the symbol of the Mughal ruler and the Muslim masses (and as effectively damming it), can be seen returning in 1857 as its familiar opposite: the apparently religiously-marked image of political disempowerment represented by the autonomous Muslim rebel bringing to life the symbol of Mughal authority. This crucial element of estranged, often

---

<sup>98</sup> Bayly, *Empire*, p 320.

<sup>99</sup> 'The Uncanny', in Sigmund Freud, *Art and Literature*, Vol. 14 (London: Penguin Freud Library, 1990), p 367. Emphasis added.

<sup>100</sup> Freud, 'Uncanny', p 340.

terrifying, ‘recognition’ structures many of the accounts of the time, and is forcefully recreated by Lyall when he wrote in 1872:

As all can recollect who were in Northern India in 1857-8,...the English turned fiercely on the Mahomedans *as upon their real enemies and most dangerous rivals...*<sup>101</sup>

The transposition here of the epithet ‘fierce’ so commonly applied to Muslims (as in Heber’s ‘fierce Mohammedans’) onto the Anglo-Indian avenger and the disturbing element of self-revelation it appears to signal are issues that will be discussed in more detail in the following sections. What needs to be emphasised here is not only the manner in which Muslims are both separated from Indian society and made to serve as the exclusive expression of its rebellion – a dual process immanent within the criminalising rationale discussed above – but that it is a process predicated on that fatal sense of recognition. Indeed, in Lyall’s uncanny locution, it is an event precipitated by recognition.

The tropes of recognition and revulsion that pervade British descriptions of Muslim activity in 1857-59 stem, then, partially from the ‘uncanny’ reversal of the symbolic function of the Mughal emperor; and the sense of dispossession that permeates these accounts of ‘Mahomedan pretenders’ often resonates with what Freud identified as the uncanny feeling of ‘repetition’ and the ‘helplessness experienced in some dream-states’.<sup>102</sup> Just as revealing are the attitudes displayed towards the Mughal emperor in the Anglo-Indian press in the years succeeding the ‘Mutiny’, where a form of exorcism appears to have taken place, hollowing out the symbol of Mughal authority on precisely those points that had so horrifyingly seemed to come together during 1857-59. The emphasis here is strongly (and bitterly) laid on the Mughal emperor’s puppet-like

---

<sup>101</sup> Lyall, ‘Islam’, p 239. Emphasis added.

<sup>102</sup> Freud, ‘Uncanny’, pp 358-59. See for instance, the sense of helplessness in the face of the mounting and repetitive catalogue of betrayals by the ‘Mahomedan pretenders’ in 1857, recalled by Sir George Campbell in his *Memoirs of My Indian Career*, vol 1 (London, 1893), pp 243-44 (cited in Hardy, p 66).

qualities (his diminutive stature; the manipulation by others) alongside an anxiety to bring out the perceived ‘Muslim’ character that he had suddenly assumed in British eyes (typically taking, in the cartoons, the form of a European caricature of ‘Semitic’ features: thickened lips, hooked nose and Islamic skull cap<sup>103</sup>). Alongside the idea of puppetry is the portrayal of the rebel Mughal court as a theatrical Muslim mockery of British rule, what one cartoonist referred to as the ‘topsy turviness of Empire.’<sup>104</sup> This ‘theatricality’ has its origins in the depiction of Mughal rule in British writing of the eighteenth century in which the British are implicitly figured as the ‘real thing’ against which the empty Mughal image is animated.<sup>105</sup> The implication of the hollowness of Mughal power was designed to substantiate the emerging sense of British pan-Indian authority at that time; similar figures of comic theatricality were invoked against the Muslim rulers of Awadh in the mid-nineteenth century as a rhetorical preparation for the annexation of the state by the British.<sup>106</sup> The marked difference to be noted here is the way in which the Mughals uncannily embody and destabilise the British self-image: their rhetorical separation is, in 1857-59, disrupted; their roles momentarily confused. The campaign of vilification conducted by the Anglo-Indian press against Lord (‘Clemency’) Canning in 1859 often displaced these disturbing reverberations onto a common Metropolitan target, who could then serve as a means of reinforcing an Anglo-Indian sense of community. Canning was

---

<sup>103</sup> See, for instance, the cartoon in which the childlike emperor is dangled between two huge British sailors. *The Indian Punch*, 1 January 1859, p 6.

<sup>104</sup> *The Indian Punch*, 1 February 1859, No 2, p 69. In Kaye and Malleon’s widely-respected later history of the ‘Mutiny’, this idea of hollow theatricality is reproduced in the figure of the Mughal emperor as ‘a pensioner, a pageant, and a puppet...a reality and a sham at the same time.’ John W Kaye and George B Malleon, *Kaye and Malleon’s History of the Indian Mutiny, 1857-8*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn (London, 1892), ii, p 4 (quoted in Cohn, ‘Representing’). The ‘reality’ here, of course, refers obliquely to the now obscured role of the British in the construction of the ‘political paradox’. In Steel’s ‘Mutiny’ novel *On the Face of the Waters* (1896), the Mughal court is portrayed almost solely through the conceit of theatrical deception.

<sup>105</sup> Teltscher, pp 112-13.

<sup>106</sup> See in particular, William Knighton, *Nawab Nasir-ud-Din Haider of Oudh: His Life and Pastimes* (New Delhi: Northern Book Centre, repr. n.d.; 1855).



thus constantly set up in comparison with the ludicrous pretensions of the Mughal emperor, and equally as an abettor of bloody Muslim deeds.<sup>107</sup>

Despite this early attempt at displacement, however, there remained in the Anglo-Indian press a recurrent and horrifying sense of the ‘uncanniness’ associated with the reanimation of the symbol of Mughal authority by Muslim ‘fanaticism’. It is lucidly illustrated in this description of a coat of arms imagined in 1859 for the ‘Ex-king of Delhi’:

A naked arm, sable, clutching musket and bayonet with English child impaled thereon splashed with blood, all (as the Ex-king would say) quite proper. Child surrounded by a halo, or; - the whole upheld by a cobra, sable, being fed by a white hand; this being decidedly improper.<sup>108</sup>

This typically confused, contemporary Anglo-Indian view of the restoration of Mughal rule, revolves around the disturbing placement of the British within the Mughal image – a horrifying juxtaposition symptomatic of uncanny recognition (‘the naked, sable arm’ impaling the child; the ‘white hand’ feeding the cobra that ‘upheld’ it).<sup>109</sup> Its central icon is one of Christian martyrdom, a form of rhetoric that, as we shall see in the following sections, was linked in particular to the Muslim rebel and his holy war of persecution (Flora Annie Steel would later use the image of a child about to be impaled on the lance of a Muslim ‘fanatic’ to bring together the hero and heroine in the climactic scene at the centre of her ‘Mutiny’ novel).<sup>110</sup> Thus Muslim ‘conspiracy’ becomes the animating

---

<sup>107</sup> See, for instance, the cartoon comparing ‘The Great Mogul’ and ‘The Great Po-gul’ (‘madman’: ie Canning) in *The Indian Punch*, 1 September 1859, pp 102-3; and the cartoon depicting Canning in a harlequin hat, condemning an Englishman while pardoning a ‘Mahomedan offender’ (who has killed ‘twenty Christians’) in *The Indian Punch*, 1 August 1859, pp 90-91. Both cartoons rely for their effect on the satirical combination of hollow theatricality and Muslim ‘conspiracy’.

<sup>108</sup> *The Indian Punch*, 1 January 1859, p 20.

<sup>109</sup> The snake as a (treacherous) symbol of the Mughal emperor is used by Flora Annie Steel in her description of Muslims of Lucknow, inhabiting the ‘lees of a dead Mughal court’ with ‘the slackness of a sleeping snake which has still poison in its fang, is still ready to strike if it finds the opportunity’ ( Steel, *India*, p 77-78). It is, of course, an intensely charged Christian symbol which, as with the category of the ‘uncanny’, centres on the idea of dispossession and exile from ‘home’.

<sup>110</sup> ‘the old man...followed fast on the child with long lance in rest like a pig-sticker’s. An old man in a faded green turban with a spiritual relentless face.’ Steel, *Face*, p 208.

presence within the Mughal 'coat of arms'; the implicitly Muslim 'sable' arm enacts the bloody deed. At the same time, however, the 'white hand' succouring the Mughal 'cobra' becomes closely interwoven with that idea of Muslim 'conspiracy'. Indeed, the British appear, on one level, to be figured as both the impaled child and the cause of its martyrdom; through the succoured Mughal, the point of recognition has shifted uncomfortably on to the Muslim 'fanatic'; and in effect, the martyrdom becomes a collaborative enterprise.

The suggestion of collaboration, however, in a 'satire' produced as late as 1859 (in other words, at some distance from the initial reactions of horror at Muslim 'treachery') necessitates further contextualisation with regard to the uncanny feelings of recognition and revulsion produced by the reanimation of the symbol of Mughal authority. As the next two sections will argue with reference to the 'Mutiny' correspondence of Alfred Lyall, the intervening location of the Christian halo is here neither accidental, nor solely a matter of heightening the melodramatic effect. In the first instance, as indicated above, it adverts to the Muslim nature of the Mughal treachery. But its usage in a determinedly Anglo-Indian journal such as the *Indian Punch* (whose cartoonists were by no means tardy in the martyrdom of the Metropolitan autocrat Lord Canning) carries another, secondary implication: that the 'white hand' and the 'English child' may be different in kind, if not in colour; and that consequently the collaborative martyrdom is not as straightforward as Muslim and British. The key is to be found in the Christian identity of the victim which offers a contrast to the abetting 'white hand', and suggests that the latter is intended to represent the secular hand of Government. The absence of reference to a cheroot or other distinguishing feature (beloved and invariable Canning props of the *Indian Punch* satirists) suggests that Government is not specifically thought of here in terms of the post-'Mutiny' treacheries of Canning, but refers specifically to the pre-'Mutiny' Company Government and its policy of propping up the treasonous Mughal authority (literally feeding, through its pensions to the Mughal

emperor's family).<sup>111</sup> The secondary effect of the halo, then, is to begin the process of distancing Anglo-Indian identification with the pre-‘Mutiny’ dispensation. Pre- and post-‘Mutiny’ identifications, ‘white’ and ‘English’, are here differentiated by a Christian sign, just as the pre- and post-‘Mutiny’ Anglo-Indian communities were to be differentiated by a renewed and fiercely demonstrative private faith.<sup>112</sup>

That this distancing effect is also allied to – indeed dependent upon – the enabling presence of Muslim ‘conspiracy’ is an important clue to its appeal during the events of 1857-59. But it does not entirely explain the extension and inflation of that appeal beyond the exile of the Mughal emperor to Rangoon and his subsequent death in 1862. For that we must understand the British construction of Muslim ‘conspiracy’ in 1857 – as an alternative (criminalised) religiously sectarian Indian state centred on the figurehead of the Mughal emperor – as a form of rhetorical revolution in the discourse of Muslim disaffection: the beginnings, that is, of a rhetorical conflation of the elements of Muslim ‘fanaticism’ and pan-Indian political authority, elements previously held apart in the Anglo-Indian mind by the figure of the British Indian administrator. In this reading, however, the events of 1857-59 should not be seen as overturning the British belief in the comparatively secular nature of the former Mughal state (in all future representations the aspect of puppetry would predominate over the initial element of Semiticisation). Rather, they precipitated the circumstances for finally and irrevocably supplanting the symbolic authority it held within a British conception of the Indian state – first, by investing it with a determining religious element; and then by holding the Muslim ‘community’ to account

---

<sup>111</sup> This conclusion is also drawn from the observation that throughout 1859 the *Indian Punch* consistently represented Government on ‘Muslim’ issues through the (cheroot-smoking) figure of Lord Canning. If the post-‘Mutiny’ government is intended here by the reference to the ‘white hand’, it would be primarily in its continuity with the pre-‘Mutiny’ policies of succouring the Mughal court. As well as a Metropolitan figure for displacement, it could be argued that for the Anglo-Indian press at this time Canning became a useful channel for implicitly villifying the Pre-‘Mutiny’ Company policy – and that in this regard, his constant association with the deposed Mughal emperor was a way of distancing prior Anglo-Indian associations.

<sup>112</sup> Metcalf, *Ideologies*, pp 47-48.

for its failure to bind together a pan-Indian polity:<sup>113</sup> in effect, holding them to account for perverting what the British had from James Mill onwards regarded as the only source for the legitimacy of the former Mughal state: its potential for a cohesive pan-Indian dispensation.<sup>114</sup> The subsequent, disproportionate rhetorical violence enacted in the ‘aftermath of revolt’ by the British upon the Muslims – alongside the physical destruction of the royal Mughal cities of Shahjahanabad in Delhi and of nawabi Lucknow – bears some comparison to the kind of parricide that all such revolutionary creative acts require.<sup>115</sup> It was followed in the ensuing decades by the acceleration of the systematic abolition of all inherited Mughal institutions of government, and the massive reduction of its Muslim personnel in every department, actions now requiring no further justification than an essentialised Muslim ‘disloyalty’ and a supporting rhetoric, developed in this period, of Muslim ‘backwardness’ – a language that was quickly adopted by other native government officers.<sup>116</sup> The new British state would henceforth be defined partly by the distance it put between itself and a disgraced, regressive – and now repudiated – Mughal inheritance.

The logic consequent on the violent conflation in 1857 of previously discrete rhetorical elements had thus begun the process of refashioning the self-identification of the British in India. However, its stability as a discourse safely quarantined from the reborn British Indian state was by no means assured. For if 1857-59 was the moment at which the British in India began to lay to rest their fictive Mughal persona, their failure to

---

<sup>113</sup> Cohn’s ‘desacralization’ of the Mughal emperor which he locates at the heart of the British declaration of an ‘insider’ Indian imperial identity, took the form in 1858 of a British ritual predicated on precisely the reinforcement of this conjunction of elements, Mughal and ‘Muslim’ – the eating of pork and drinking of wine by British army officers in the Mughal Red Fort in Delhi. Cohn, ‘Representing’, pp 165, 209.

<sup>114</sup> In this respect, James Mill’s qualified valorisation of the Mughal empire (in contrast to its predecessors) emulates earlier histories such as Alexander Dow’s *The History of Hindostan* (1768) and Francklin’s *The History of the Reign of Shaw Aulum* (1798). On this point see Hardy, p 32.

<sup>115</sup> Harold Bloom, *The Anxiety of Influence: A Theory of Poetry* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1973). For the bewildered reactions of the Mughal service gentry during this period, see Frances W Pritchett, *Nets of Awareness: Urdu Poetry and its Critics* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), pp 3-30. On the destruction of the ‘old city’ of Lucknow, see Oldenburg, pp 21-61.

<sup>116</sup> Robinson, *Separatism*, pp 99-103.

complete the task is partly attested by its repeated resurrection during the next quarter century as the now apparently autonomous agent of Muslim ‘conspiracy’ inflated to the role of a spectral rival to British paramountcy – a role in which it would function as an integral component of the definition of the new imperial state. And a role, as the following sections will now take up in detail with regard to the local mechanics of its genesis in 1857, that problematically cemented the persecuted Christian into the reconstruction of an integrative, secular Anglo-Indian official identity.<sup>117</sup>

---

<sup>117</sup> The remaining four sections of this chapter will explore the specific characteristics of the new discourse of Muslim ‘conspiracy’ in 1857. Further, more direct reflections on the pre-1857 discourse on Mughal rule and its relationship to the post-‘Mutiny’ rhetoric of ‘conspiracy’ are pursued in Section 3.2 below.

### Section 2.3: A writer of ‘the known and the knowable’<sup>118</sup>

The following two sections will concern themselves principally with the ‘Mutiny’ correspondence of Alfred Lyall. In this section, it will be argued not only that Lyall’s perception of the question of Muslim ‘conspiracy’ during the events of 1857-59 was a typical product of his generation of ICS officers. But that the development from the intemperate language of the besieged young official of the correspondence to the judicious prose of the senior elder statesman may be taken, in regard to his descriptions of Indian Muslims, as symptomatic of that generation. In this respect, Lyall’s later reputation for reasonable analyses of Indian society casts a useful retrospective light on his characterisations of Indian Muslims in 1857. Since his views formed on this subject during the ‘Mutiny’ ‘remained with him to the end of his life’, the lurid rhetoric of the correspondence may well conceal a fundamental framework not only for his own mature considerations on the Muslim constituency of Indian society.<sup>119</sup> They would seem additionally to indicate a similar consistency of investments and assumptions by his later, approving contemporaries as well. Following on from the reflections made in this section on his later reputation, this point will be taken up again in detail in Section 3.3 through situating those essays as part of a broader progression in Anglo-Indian discourse from ‘Mutiny’ to ‘Wahabi conspiracy’. In order to further argue their relevance to a wider spectrum of Anglo-Indian opinion in 1857, Sections 2.5 and 2.6 in this chapter will carry forward some of the conclusions derived from Lyall’s ‘Mutiny’ correspondence into other official accounts of the period.

Alfred Lyall was one of the last generation of ICS officers turned out by the East India Company college at Haileybury. He left for India in 1855, two years before the

---

<sup>118</sup> Mortimer Durand, *The Life of the Right Honourable Sir Alfred Comyn Lyall* (London: William Blackwood & Sons, 1913), p 461.

<sup>119</sup> Durand, p 68.

final demise of the college and the irruption of the 'Mutiny'.<sup>120</sup> His elder brother had been through Haileybury and joined the Indian army; his younger brother, James, would shortly follow him out to India, later rising to the position of Lieutenant Governor of Punjab.<sup>121</sup> Lyall himself served in a variety of senior postings in the ICS, eventually being appointed Lieutenant-Governor of the North-West Provinces and Oudh; and finally returning to London to serve as a member of the Council of India from 1888 until his official retirement in 1903. He continued to advise the government on Indian affairs in an unofficial capacity, most notably during the agitation for separate Muslim electorates between 1907 and 1909.<sup>122</sup> Like most 'civilians' of the period, Lyall's background combined a staunch Anglicanism with a history of family service in India. His father, Alfred, was Rector of Harbledown, Kent;<sup>123</sup> one uncle had been the Dean of Canterbury, another a Director of the East India Company, and a third a Lieutenant Colonel in the Indian Army.<sup>124</sup> In this combination of Anglican Protestantism and Indian service Lyall conforms to the typical ideological mould of the Anglo-Indian official in the second half of the nineteenth century outlined in Section 1.5.<sup>125</sup> This sense of speaking from within a particular ideological constituency is confirmed by the phenomenal success of his *Asiatic Studies: Religious and Social*, which were reprinted five times between 1882 and 1903, and a selection of these essays made in 1907 sold more than eight thousand copies within six years, many of them in India.<sup>126</sup> Indeed, it was through the estimation of these essays, most of them first published in the preceding decade, that his career was primarily advanced within the ICS;<sup>127</sup> according to his friend and colleague Mortimer Durand, as

---

<sup>120</sup> Durand, p 27.

<sup>121</sup> Durand, p 17.

<sup>122</sup> Robinson, *Separatism*, p 432-33.

<sup>123</sup> Durand, p 8.

<sup>124</sup> Durand, p 4.

<sup>125</sup> Ali, p 23.

<sup>126</sup> Durand, p 419. For a selection of newspaper reviews of Lyall's work, see *Papers of Alfred Lyall*, British Library, MSS Eur F132/98 and MSS Eur132/157.

<sup>127</sup> Dewey, *Mind*, p 116.

early as 1873 his reputation had spread widely throughout the official community.<sup>128</sup> The success of Lyall's literary work among Anglo-Indians can in part be attributed to his habit of reflecting back to them essential, though often unspoken, 'truths' that they held both about Indian society and their role as administrators and rulers in India.<sup>129</sup> Durand signals this perception in his conclusion that:

The main characteristic of Lyall's work, both in verse and prose, is its truthfulness, its careful regard for the realities of life. Though he had to an unusual degree the gift of imagination, he never allowed himself to be tempted too far from the region of the known or the knowable.<sup>130</sup>

As well as flagging Lyall's membership of a shared (Anglo-Indian) community of knowledge and acceptable opinion, the 'known or the knowable' here adverts in particular to the kind of ethnographical observation on which the ICS officers of the period prided themselves. In this respect, Durand is keen to emphasise that the essays in *Asiatic Studies* originally grew out of the dissertation on 'sects and religions' that Lyall appended to his *Berar Census Report* (1868), a region in which he served as Commissioner between 1867-82.<sup>131</sup> It was certainly this quality of disquisitions formed, as one of his editors praised them, from 'observation *in situ*', that impressed his Metropolitan readers.<sup>132</sup>

This apprehension of arguments drawn from the verities of Anglo-Indian civilian opinion and ethnography needs to be emphasised against the more recent characterisation of his writings by Clive Dewey as 'lonely peaks in the history of British understanding of India.'<sup>133</sup> Section 3.3 will attempt to re-locate his essays on Indian religions – and in particular, his writings on Islam – as often covert disquisitions on the role of colonial

---

<sup>128</sup> Durand, p 170.

<sup>129</sup> Durand wrote of his uncollected papers that the distinguishing feature was their presentation of 'clear ideas of things hitherto unseen, or seen in a glass darkly.' Durand, p 478.

<sup>130</sup> Durand, p 461.

<sup>131</sup> Durand, pp 138-39.

<sup>132</sup> Durand, p 173.

<sup>133</sup> Dewey, *Mind*, p 115.



government and the potential relationships towards religious identity which it might adopt. Whether pursuing the mechanics of state-sponsored religion in China, the missionary prospects of Hinduism, or the strengths of community within Islam, it is colonial governance and Anglo-Indian official identity that remains their central preoccupation.<sup>134</sup> Moreover, while Lyall was certainly unusual among his contemporaries in the length and frequency with which he treated the question of relations in Asia between religion and the state – and particularly after 1858, that of church and state in India – it is important to recall that there was considered nothing either unreasonable or beyond the bounds of received Anglo-Indian opinion in his analyses of these issues. Indeed, it was through the quality of reasoned and reasonable argument that his reputation was won within the ICS. On appointing him to the sensitive post of Indian Foreign Secretary in 1878 Lord Lytton commented favorably on ‘the Lyall habit of seeing both sides of a question’;<sup>135</sup> and in 1888 Lord Dufferin wrote that:

He will not give you a very strong opinion on any subject, nor is he always constant in his views, but he will put before you in a very clear manner everything that is to be said on one side or the other.<sup>136</sup>

This was a reputation that, as we shall see, Lyall appears consciously to have traded on, pouring scorn on the ‘sensational’ polemics over Indian Muslims indulged in by other Anglo-Indian writers.<sup>137</sup>

Lyall’s struggle with the Christian element to Anglo-Indian official identity should similarly be understood as anchored within that same popular and officially-sanctioned body of Anglo-Indian opinion. Like most of the writings emanating out of the

---

<sup>134</sup> The essays here referred to are, respectively: ‘Relations Between the State and Religion in China’, ‘Missionary and Non-missionary Religions’, and ‘Islam in India’, all reprinted in Lyall, *Asiatic Studies: Religious and Social* (London: John Murray, 1882).

<sup>135</sup> Quoted in Ali, p 20. One of Lyall’s most important tasks in this post was to negotiate with the Amir of Afghanistan, and then to help administrate the military campaigns there in 1879-81 (Durand, pp 216-25).

<sup>136</sup> Quoted in Ali, p 22.

<sup>137</sup> This is the basic strategy pursued against W Nassau Lees and William Hunter in Lyall’s review of their contributions to the debate, ‘Islam in India’ in *Asiatic*, pp 228-257.

ICS during this period, it evolved not only within the prevailing political strictures concerning the impossibility of an officially-sanctioned Christian element to colonial governance, but was driven by a genuine perplexity as to the precise interrelations of faith and empire. As mentioned earlier, throughout his career Lyall, along with other prominent contemporaries, such as Sir Bartle Frere, showed a preference for privately supporting Christian missions in colonial India, but publicly advocating Indian Government neutrality.<sup>138</sup> Despite this private encouragement, Lyall was far from being uncritically committed to his Anglican faith, and even further from a commitment to the institutional policies and structures of the Anglican Church. On the contrary, there was a strong measure of doubt about his faith, evident in his early letters but gaining a momentum in the 1870s, that led him increasingly towards the reputation of a ‘notorious free-thinker’.<sup>139</sup> As early as 1864, he had written to his sister about the ‘dreary desert of scepticism’ in which he was ‘wandering’.<sup>140</sup> His often rhetorically covert manipulation of a Christian ethic in his analyses of colonial governance should thus not be confused with a fanatical, or even ardently religious purpose. Rather, in common with many ICS officers, faith in his writings is always at the service of governance; or to be more precise, the primary utility of faith in *Asiatic Studies*, as in most Anglo-Indian thought of the period, lay in its unifying ethos for imperial structures. The idea of a Christian ‘providence’ at the service of an imperial sense of identity was given its most direct and influential expression in J R Seeley’s *The Expansion of England* (1883); but as Studdert-Kennedy has recently argued, in the Anglo-Indian community of the later nineteenth century it was an article of faith that ran ‘right across the political spectrum’.<sup>141</sup> If Lyall was rare in his willingness to publicly debate the religious policy of the colonial

---

<sup>138</sup> Ali, pp 39-40.

<sup>139</sup> Dewey, *Mind*, pp 115-16.

<sup>140</sup> Durand, p 109. Behind much of his pessimism about the future of the church was the belief that ‘dogmatic theory’ was headed for extinction; and that, ‘without the dogmas you can’t hold a faith together’ (from a letter of 1874, quoted in Durand, p 174). Lyall’s admiration for the effects of dogmatism are implicit to all his considerations of Islam in India.

<sup>141</sup> Studdert Kennedy, p 143.

government, his growing 'scepticism' helps point up the paradoxically secularised orientation of his enquiries as, time and again in his essays and letters, he attempts to envision a marriage of almost cynical convenience between state and religion in which the goal is never evangelical conversion and enlightenment, but the longevity and above all, the cohesiveness, of dominion.

Lyall's reputation for even-handedness was gained in particular for his treatment of the subject of indigenous Indian religions in his essays.<sup>142</sup> Given the apparent immoderation of his 'Mutiny' correspondence with regard to Islam, it is therefore all the more surprising that he should have come to be regarded by his contemporaries (as well as by later historians) as a force of reason and tolerance on the all-important question of Muslim 'disaffection'.<sup>143</sup> In fact though, both the apparent 'mussulmanophobia',<sup>144</sup> of the letters and the markedly moderate and reasoned arguments of the essays coincided with a persistent vein of scepticism typical of the development of Anglo-Indian officials on the subject of Muslim 'loyalty' between 1857 and 1882, when *Asiatic Studies* first appeared.<sup>145</sup> During this period Lyall was to become Foreign Secretary to the Indian Government, playing a key role in the diplomatic and later military campaigns against the Amir of Afghanistan. Later he served as Lieutenant-Governor of the North-West Provinces, presiding over the early genesis of the Aligarh Movement in the 1880s, the forum for the first generation of Indian Muslim politicians. Some of his obituaries hinted that he had been unfairly 'passed over', for the succession to the Viceroyalty; but the truth would seem to be that a Lieutenant-Governorship was at the time the highest office to which an ICS officer could aspire.<sup>146</sup> In view of the later official consequence to his

<sup>142</sup> *The Pioneer Mail* (Allahabad), 13 June 1913, Lyall Eur MS F132/98.

<sup>143</sup> K K Aziz, *Britain and Muslim India: A Study of British Public Opinion Vis-à-vis the Development of Muslim Nationalism in India, 1857-1947* (London: Heineman, 1963), p 27.

<sup>144</sup> The term was coined by ICS officer E A Reade in Agra in 1857 to describe a form of mass hysteria that overtook the British there in the first two months of rebellion. Bayly, *Empire*, p 326.

<sup>145</sup> On this later tacit persistence of scepticism among key Anglo-Indian officials, see Robinson, *Separatism*, Chapter Three. On the gradual emergence of the idea of the 'loyal Muslim', see Aziz, Chapter 2.

<sup>146</sup> Durand, p 254. For a selection of obituaries, see Lyall MS F132/98.

opinion within the Indian government, as well as his close involvement in Muslim-related affairs, the relationship between the birth of the idea of Muslim ‘conspiracy’ in 1857 and the development, a quarter of a century later of the British policies of co-opting Indo-Muslim elites is perhaps nowhere better demonstrated than in the continuity between Lyall’s earlier and mature writings. It was during the 1880s that the concept of the ‘loyal Muslim’, which became a cornerstone of British political strategy for the next thirty years, was first consciously mooted among Anglo-Indian Civilians, who in turn helped to introduce it into policy-making bodies in Britain.<sup>147</sup> Though he fell short of a full endorsement of this perception, Lyall was a repeated spokesman in the 1870s against impassioned rhetoric over the issue of Muslim ‘disaffection’.<sup>148</sup> The publication of his essay, ‘Islam in India’ (1872) first took place in England, and was intended as an intervention in that debate on the side of moderation. The carefully marshalled theories and exempla in that essay (later revised for inclusion in his *Asiatic Studies* in 1882) were a specific refutation of the arguments for the continued relevance of Muslim ‘disaffection’ set forth by W W Hunter in *Indian Musulmans: Are They Bound in Conscience to Rebel Against the Queen?* (1871).

This brings us to the second point by which the retrospective argument for some degree of generalisation of the processes of representation in the earlier correspondence becomes relevant. As Section 3.3 will explore in detail, the strategies of representation in Hunter’s book draw upon precisely the same models as those of Lyall’s essay. The representations of Indian Muslims in both works are remarkably congruent, and the processes by which they are constructed, almost identical. Lyall’s arguments against the possibility of a pan-Indian rebellious Indo-Muslim community and Hunter’s insistence upon just this apocalyptic spectacle, are drawn from the same sources; though seemingly

---

<sup>147</sup> Aziz, pp 14, 24.

<sup>148</sup> Lyall’s hesitancy over the ‘myth of the loyal Muslim’ (as K K Aziz phrases it) was in fact fairly typical of serving Civilians in India at the time, despite the efforts of Syed Ahmad Khan (in particular) to influence the official Anglo-Indian mindset. See Robinson, *Separatism*, p 127.

ranged on opposite sides of opinion, together they can be taken to represent an undisclosed Anglo-Indian communal consensus. The patterns that begin to organise Lyall's thought on Indian Muslims in 1857 are thus found to be, in 1871, globalised among Anglo-Indian officialdom, despite the exact stripe or drift of the various positions. Paradoxically, then, the question of 'disaffection' they so hotly contest can be seen as, to some extent, irrelevant to the strategies of representation that structure its production. As it is just these strategies that link the earlier letters to the later essays, their genesis in the rhetoric of Lyall's 'Mutiny' correspondence is at least suggestive of a similar earlier communal consensus. Moreover, it can be posited at this point (the next two sections will elaborate in detail on this proposition), that as with later Muslim 'disaffection', the actual question of Muslim 'conspiracy' in 1857-59 was partly an adjunct to, rather than a primary cause of, its widespread appeal.

Although there exist extensive collections of 'Mutiny' archives, Lyall's letters are a unique survival from the period in terms of relatively uncensored, immediate Civilian responses.<sup>149</sup> The vast majority of British 'Mutiny' sources come from military personnel, the wives of Civilians caught up in the events, official Civilian communications and evidential narratives, and later reconstructed Civilian memoirs.<sup>150</sup> The genesis of the language surrounding the actual emergence of the idea of Muslim 'conspiracy' among Civilians is in fact poorly represented in comparison to the seeming wealth of documentation available – but it is in the language itself that the explanation for its birth partly lies. This important distinction between the language of construction and reconstruction can be readily confirmed by a brief comparison to, for instance, Mark Thornhill's later memoir of his 'Mutiny' experiences as a Magistrate at Muttra, published

<sup>149</sup> *Papers of Alfred Lyall*, British Library MSS Eur F132/3, containing letters sent to his family between 1857-60. Unless otherwise indicated, all quotations are taken from this archive.

<sup>150</sup> For non-official communications during the 'Mutiny', see the useful bibliography of material available in the India Office Library (London) and Centre for South Asian Studies (Cambridge) collections set out in Christopher Hibbert's *The Great Mutiny: India, 1857* (London: Penguin, 1978). For a more comprehensive listing, see Rosemary Seton, *The Indian 'Mutiny' 1857-8: A Guide to Source Material in the India Office Library and Records* (London: British Library Publishing, 1986).

in London in 1884. Thornhill's deployment of the epithets of 'ghazee' (Muslim holy warrior), 'fanatic' and descriptions of their (otherwise unmotivated) attacks on 'Christians' requires, in 1884, no further explanation. They are intended to build up, through their simple repetition, the effect of the idea of Muslim 'conspiracy' without in any way entailing its specific justification; the language is, literally, its own explanation.<sup>151</sup> The narrative thus serves the requirements of sensational detail and popular Metropolitan expectations, while neatly circumventing the problem of the official discountenancing (and disproving) of the theory of Muslim 'conspiracy' by the Government of India in Bowring's report of 1859.<sup>152</sup> In contrast, Lyall is forced to build up the picture of Muslim sectarian persecution by justification from one cause to the next. The confusion and comparative prolixity of such justifications is uniquely a characteristic of the moment of the construction of the discourse. Though we will see some of its patterns at work again in the mature rhetoric of both Lyall and Hunter, the historian is easily misled by a now entrenched sociology in which Muslim 'conspiracy' appears to constitute its own explanation. The only question then to be asked is one that is confined to the realms of pure historiography (did it in fact take place) – and to which Thornhill's rebuff is the repeated, and seemingly unanswerable, epithet of 'ghazee/fanatic'.<sup>153</sup>

---

<sup>151</sup> Mark Thornhill, *Personal Adventures and Experiences of a Magistrate during the Rise, Progress and Suppression of the Mutiny* (London, 1884), pp 185-86, 266-68, 283, 287, 301-2, 318-20.

<sup>152</sup> A more detailed analysis of Thornhill's text is made in Section 2.5.

<sup>153</sup> We can see the partial submission to such parameters by modern historiography in its own catechistic recitation of the incidence of 'ghazis', without trying to analyse the local applications of the word. This word is a commonplace in most popular accounts of the 'Mutiny' today, and remains similarly without further explanation or interrogation (see for example, Hibbert, p 162). More surprising, however, is its unproblematised repetition by many academic discussions of this period. See for instance, Eric Stokes in his chapter on Bulandshahr District, *Peasant*, pp 140-158. Stokes' failure to subject the term to some form of textual interrogation doesn't only occur when he draws it from British sources; he seems to adopt the expression from communications with the Delhi court as well, but equally without attempting to explain the nature and contextualised meaning of terms such as 'infidel' and 'ghazi' when they routinely crop up in court correspondence (see for instance, p 147). More recently, in Bayly's excellent analysis of the modes of rebel communication in 1857-59, the use of the term 'Muslim holy warriors' by the Delhi newswriters remains comparatively free of critical interpretation, despite his brilliant re-contextualisation of other forms of terminology in late eighteenth and early nineteenth century Persian newsletters (Bayly, *Empire*, p 329). This lack of analysis of the language of rebel communications and propaganda across the range of 'Mutiny' historiography has left the field open to some dangerously polemical appropriations. For recent examples, see Niall Ferguson, *Empire: How Britain Made the Modern World* (London: Allen Lane, 2003), in which

Alongside his restless desire to elucidate justifications for his perception of Muslim ‘conspiracy’, the problematic nature of self-identifications in Lyall’s ‘Mutiny’ correspondence (as well as in his later essays) flags an often overlooked aspect of the correspondence that separates it out from contemporary official communications, and connects it more firmly to the essays that were later to make his reputation: that is, its pervasive sense of hybridity, split between colonialist site of enunciation and Metropolitan site of address. In almost every other letter, we find Lyall either proudly attesting to, defensively re-negotiating, or often having simply to justify, his newly-acquired role as an Anglo-Indian and a colonialist. Throughout the correspondence – even when under dire threat – he remains deeply conscious of what he seems to consider the prejudicial preconceptions of his often disapproving, family ‘at home’.<sup>154</sup> Contemporary official communications (such as that of Charles Currie on the insurrections in the Bulandshahr district in which Lyall served<sup>155</sup>) lack this crucial, intensely conflicted quality in their accounts of Muslim ‘conspiracy’ in 1857. But it is precisely this element that imparts to Lyall’s letters (and later to his essays) their unique and comparatively unrestrained impulse towards explanation and exculpation. It therefore not only opens them up to a depth of analysis often otherwise unavailable, but it does so on precisely the fault-line between colony and Metropole that lies behind so much of the energy and commitment put into Muslim ‘conspiracy’ by the ICS cadre.

Lyall was ironically dismissive of the motivations at work in the rush to publish narratives and memoirs, which he predicted in a letter to his sister Sybilla as early as 22 November 1857, declining himself the suggestion that he should seriously consider bringing out his own narrative. In fact though, he appears to have been acutely sensitive

---

the ‘Mutiny’ is reduced to a ‘war in the cause of religion’ – a generalisation Ferguson feels free to make on the ‘scant Indian testimony which has survived’ (p 147).

<sup>154</sup> See for instance: 25 January 1856; 2 June 1856; 25 June 1856; 17 January 1857; 12 May 1857; 18 May 1857; 24 November 1858; 26 December 1858; 20 January 1859.

<sup>155</sup> Eric Stokes makes extensive use of Currie’s correspondence, especially with regard to Muslim ‘conspiracy’, in his detailed chapter on the Bulandshahr district in 1857. Stokes, *Peasant*, Chapter 6.

even during the ‘Mutiny’ to the literal value of his insights and descriptions for a Metropolitan audience. For instance, writing to his mother on 26 November 1857, he mentions a letter he had written to Mr Holland and subsequently shelved as more suitable for possible journal publication at some later date. In many of the letters, his self-conscious generalisations on India and Indian governance have the ring of someone posturing for a future, wider audience (referring earnestly to ‘the Indian question’<sup>156</sup>). There is even occasionally a remarkable similarity between the letters and certain passages of the later essays, suggesting that Lyall himself saw an essential continuity between the opinions he expressed privately and those that would characterise his public persona as an Anglo-Indian official.<sup>157</sup> Several letters bear evidence of his own editorial hand, neatly repeating some of the passages obscured by his handwriting or the deteriorating paper, adding dates, place-names, and even occasional contextualising commentary. These editorial interventions indicate that he was later keen to preserve the collection, and may even have seen it as a valuable (and therefore presumably to some extent, typical) source for future historians. They would certainly seem to indicate an awareness – and one might even conjecture, approval – of a homology between his earlier and later opinions, reinforcing the impression his essays often give that his understanding of Indian Muslims is based substantially on the events of 1857-59. In this regard, it is at least significant that the internal evidence of the collection as a whole suggests Lyall did not withdraw or censor any letters.

The unusual integrity of the archive bring us to the final points that can be made in arguing for the relevance of Lyall’s ‘Mutiny’ correspondence to the wider responses of the official Anglo-Indian community in 1857-59. These are historiographical issues concerning the typicality of Lyall’s experience of and responses to, the issue of Muslim ‘conspiracy’ during the ‘Mutiny’. There are three points that need to be emphasised. The

---

<sup>156</sup> Letter to Mr Holland, 27 March 1859.

<sup>157</sup> On the subject of Muslim ‘discontent’, compare for instance, the letter to his mother of 21 May 1858, with the arguments (and even some of the phrases) of ‘Islam in India’.



first is that the sheer size of the archive (88 letters between January 1856 and mid-1860), the frequency of despatch (at least two letters sent every month in 1857-58), as well as its preservation as an uncensored body of communications, make the correspondence a uniquely coherent text among British 'Mutiny' sources. There is literally no contemporary archive of Civilian correspondence home to which they can be cross-referred as a means of confirming the kind of analysis of language and structure that follows. For that reason, the conclusions reached must to some extent remain tentative. Ultimately, they rely for corroboration on the comparison with themes found in published accounts undertaken in Section 2.5; and on their relevance to the subsequent essays which will, in Section 3.3, be compared both to Hunter's volume and to late nineteenth century Anglo-Indian fiction. The second point to be made here is that while the comprehensive analysis that follows is unique in treating the correspondence as a complete text, individual letters have frequently served as typical examples of Anglo-Indian perceptions of Indian Muslims during this period.<sup>158</sup> In this sense, the following analysis may be regarded as an expansion, rather than a revision, of the current historiographical perception of 1857-59. The most forceful illustration of the importance of the letters in that historiographical record can be found in Thomas Metcalf's comprehensive and cogently argued account of the ideologies of the British rule (recently reissued as Volume 4 of the authoritative *New Cambridge History of India* series), in which the letters are adduced and quoted as typical reproductions of British perceptions of Muslim perfidy at the time, comparable, for instance, to the attitudes of other contemporary Anglo-Indian officials such as John Lawrence and William Muir.<sup>159</sup>

---

<sup>158</sup> See for instance: Robinson, *Separatism*, p 102; Stokes, *Peasant*, Chapter 6; Metcalf, *Aftermath*; E C T Chew, 'Sir Alfred Comyn Lyall: a Study of the Anglo-Indian Official Mind' (unpublished PhD thesis, Cambridge, 1969), passim; and Ali, passim.

<sup>159</sup> Metcalf, *Ideologies*, pp 139-40. Metcalf's explanation for this phenomenon is that it was drawn from a common British pool of stereotypes of Islam as a belligerent religion given to sectarian 'animosity', and that this was fuelled among Muslims in India by a resentment of the usurpation of Mughal rule by the British. While the following section seeks to expand on the relevance of stereotypes of Islam, as we have already outlined in Section 2.1 and 2.2, the notion of a predominant element in earlier Anglo-Indian perceptions of a rebellious pan-Indian Muslim constituency is somewhat teleological.

The final point to be made concerns the specific local historical context of the correspondence. Eric Stokes' illuminating reconstruction of the events of 1857-8 in the Bulandshahr district, and his insistence on the typicality of those events with regard to Muslim 'conspiracy' at the time, offers perhaps the most forceful extra-textual argument for considering Lyall's responses both as part of a common Anglo-Indian spectrum, and as an invaluable instance of the misfit between event and interpretation that is the hallmark of Muslim 'conspiracy' during the 'Mutiny'.<sup>160</sup> Stokes demonstrates that Lyall's perception of Muslim activity in his district was entirely in accord with those of his colleagues, such as Charles Currie, and typical of the British throughout India who, he writes, 'hankered after a simplistic explanation of the revolt and found it in the theory of a general Muslim conspiracy.'<sup>161</sup> Superficially, Lyall's perception appears to have been shaped by the attempts of Nawab Mohammed Walidad Khan of Malagarh to secure leadership of the variety of rebellious groups in Bulandshahr in mid-1857. The Nawab's main source of legitimacy sprung from the Mughal throne in Delhi; and although it is not specifically mentioned in either Stokes' account or in Lyall's' correspondence, it is possible that he may have periodically utilised Islamic symbols as one of the means by which he tried to secure consent to his leadership (among, for instance, the Muslim Gahlot and Rajput Chauhan peasant communities). However, Stokes' meticulous account also makes clear that by far the largest and most active group of local rebels in the district, and those responsible for key attacks on British power in Sikandarabad and the town of Bulandshahr (from which they ousted the British briefly on 10 June) were in fact the caste of (Hindu) Gujars. We can gather as much from Lyall's own account, in a letter to his father dated 12 May 1857, in which he puts down 'all mutinous acts' in the district to the 'criminal caste of Goojurs'.<sup>162</sup> One of many such (to use Bayly's

---

<sup>160</sup> Eric Stokes, 'Nawab' pp 140-58.

<sup>161</sup> Stokes, *Peasant*, p 150.

<sup>162</sup> Lyall's observation in this regard appears to have been corroborated at the time. See N A Chick (ed), *Annals of the Indian Rebellion containing Narratives of the Outbreaks and Eventful Occurrences, and*

description) ‘robber-bands’ on the margins of rural peasant, and the lower echelons of urban, society, the Gujars appear to have played a haphazard, though prominent, role across Northern India at this time, plundering Muslims and Hindus indiscriminately.<sup>163</sup> In Bulandshahr, they proved wholly unreliable allies to the Nawab, eventually deserting him entirely after his flight across the Ganges to Rohilkhand on 28 September.<sup>164</sup> Lyall could have been under no misapprehension that a religious sectarian cause of any kind would have had any appeal to them, let alone the call for a Muslim ‘holy war’. He appears to signal as much when, on 30 August, he wrote to his father that the (Hindu) Jats are ‘held by us, Goojurs by the Mahometans’, making a revealing equation that appears to separate out the question of ‘loyalty’ from religious ideology, while still maintaining the typology that ‘Mahometans’ are self-evidently disloyal. In general it seems that the Nawab’s use of even his nominal (and disputed) license from the Mughal court appears to have had little influence with any of the factions that briefly allied with him; and among the magnate class he found at best a ‘malevolent neutrality’ in their attitudes to the British.<sup>165</sup> This situation prevailed until after the British (including Lyall) were driven from the town of Bulandshahr and all instruments of their rule in the District had seemed to fail. It was then that some of those Muslim (and at least as many Hindu) landed families who had suffered most from the reassignment of land revenues in the last twenty years, fell in with the Nawab. Even here, though, Muslim magnate families divided their loyalties according to the extent to which branches had been expropriated by the British, rather than through any obvious religious motivation. The largest Muslim landowner of the district, Abdul Latif Khan, prevaricated fatally, declaring for the mutineers only after the flight into Rohilkhand – and even then, hastily withdrawing support and making a

---

*Stories of Personal Adventures During the Mutiny of 1857-8 With an Appendix Comprising Miscellaneous Facts, Anecdotes etc* (Calcutta: Sanders, Cones and Company, 1859), pp 279-81.

<sup>163</sup> C A Bayly, *Rulers, Townsmen and Bazaars: North Indian Society in the Age of British Expansion 1770-1870* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, repr. 1992; 1983), p 364.

<sup>164</sup> Stokes, *Peasant*, pp 147, 157.

<sup>165</sup> Stokes, *Peasant*, pp 150, 156.

dash back to his fort in Khanpur, from where he sent in his revenue payment to the British.<sup>166</sup>

Thus the picture that emerges from Bulandshahr from May to late September 1857, (when the district was secure again), and which would have presented itself to Lyall at the time, is of pockets of various competing groups, only a few of whom may have openly espoused a Muslim affiliation. Stokes writes that the Sheikh and Bahlim revenue-free grantees, ‘raised the green flag...and directed the Mussulmen to rebellion’; and the Saiyids of Shikapur declared ‘holy war’ (though only once the Nawab and his forces had been ejected from the district, and, as we shall see, two months after Lyall had already come to see the Muslim hand behind the ‘Mutiny’); but this seems to be the sum total of such examples.<sup>167</sup> Stokes’ conclusion, that Muslim rebellious activity in the district was ‘to a large degree incidental’, is echoed by the survival throughout the Lyall correspondence, and long after he first globalises Muslim ‘conspiracy’, of a parallel, if contradictory, perception that within Bulandshahr ‘every man does what is right in his own eyes’,<sup>168</sup> and that far from participating in a ‘national revolt’, each ‘plunders for themselves’.<sup>169</sup> On one level, then – the level at which he participates in the complex of events and motivations at work in Bulandshahr – he remains conscious of an endemic pattern of atomisation; and is, in his correspondence, keen to emphasise just those elements of disunity. But at the same time, and not infrequently within the same letter, Lyall returns repeatedly to focus his attention on and aggrandise the role of what he calls ‘Musulman patriots’<sup>170</sup> in organising and orchestrating the ‘Mutiny’ as a vicious crescentade against the British. Since it is only this factor that appears in his accounts to give the idea of a ‘national revolt’ any cohesion, we may wonder that his desire for simple

---

<sup>166</sup> Stokes, *Peasant*, pp 152-53.

<sup>167</sup> Stokes, *Peasant*, pp 154-55.

<sup>168</sup> Stokes, *Peasant*, p 151; Lyall’s letter to his father, 30 August 1857.

<sup>169</sup> Letter to his mother, 26 November 1857.

<sup>170</sup> This phrase appears in the letter to his mother, dated 26 November 1857. The concept of ‘patriotism’ is never linked to Hindu rebels – a point that is taken up in the next section.

explanations should entrench so perilously on his worst nightmares. As regards his overarching perception of the ‘Mutiny’, part of the answer may well lie in a predictable need to fragment the idea of a civil rebellion through the notion that Muslims were pursuing their own agenda. Such an explanation is, however, tendentious in the case of his observations in Bulandshahr, since the value of a Muslim ‘holy war’ within the religiously-disparate bodies that made up the rebel causes in the district was demonstrably minimal, and its application at best haphazard (and in this regard it is no surprise that nowhere in the correspondence is a local example of Muslim-Christian persecution adduced). Moreover, as the preliminary discussion which will be undertaken now indicates, the relationship between Civilian and ‘Mahometan’ in the correspondence is clearly a deeply distressing and dangerous one, transcending either the unconscious need for ‘simple explanations’, or indeed any consciously-structured, Machiavellian intention to overlay the politics of ‘divide and rule’ onto a local narrative of the ‘Mutiny’. If Lyall’s correspondence replicates a typical Anglo-Indian perception of Muslim ‘conspiracy’, and if his district is itself typical of the events of 1857-59, then it is plausible to conjecture that the dynamics behind the dangerous appeal of Muslim sectarianism within the correspondence are at the very least comparable to those of his contemporary Civilian community. For the Muslim ‘conspiracy’ that Lyall refers to was not local, but globalised: the exempla he cites all derive from outside of his own particular experience; and the uses to which those perceptions were eventually put helped make his reputation within the service.

Before we turn in detail to Lyall’s correspondence in the next section, it is useful first to sketch out a rough framework for his apprehension of Muslim ‘conspiracy’ in 1857. While Christianity is one of the starting points for his reflections on native hostility, and a rhetoric of fanaticism quickly comes to shape his descriptions, the characterisations constructed during this correspondence are far more complex than the simple essentialised hostility towards Indian Muslims perceived both by his biographer

and more recent historians.<sup>171</sup> These characterisations frequently operate within a common comparative map of ‘Hindoo’, ‘Mahometan’ and ‘Christian’, often rearranging these elements in a curiously consistent triangular constellation whereby the ‘Hindoo’ is relegated almost to the role of communicant between the two monotheistic lines of opposition. It is a configuration most cogently expressed by Lyall in a letter of 1857 in which he considers characteristics of insurgent native responses:

There is always something very laughable to me in the way these Hindoos will walk off with their enemy’s property the moment that he is down. Plunder always seems to be their chief object, to obtain which they will perform any villainy, whereas the Mahometans only seem to care about murdering their opponents, and are altogether far more bloody-minded. Those last hate us with a fanatical hate that we never suspected to exist among them, and have everywhere been the leaders in the barbarous murdering and mangling of the Christians.<sup>172</sup>

There is in these stereotypes, the common stages of paranoid reversal to which, according to Bhabha, all colonialist representation is liable. First comes the narcissistic colonialist demand from the native ‘Other’ for a narrative that affirms the integrity of the identity and role of the colonialist.<sup>173</sup> Using Lacan’s formulation, this might be expressed as the recurrent complaint of all ‘misrecognition’, in which the ‘Other’ is called upon to return an (impossible) unfractured, idealised image of the self: *You never look at me from the place from which I see you.*<sup>174</sup> The apparent refusal of that recognition by the native (which Bhabha problematically reads as ‘resistance’<sup>175</sup>) is then followed by its reconstitution as the declarative and oppositional, an expression of pure aggressivity: *he*

<sup>171</sup> Durand, pp 68-69, 80, 86; Metcalf, *Ideologies*, pp 139-40.

<sup>172</sup> *Papers of Alfred Lyall*, British Library MSS Eur F132/3. Unless otherwise indicated, all Lyall’s letters from India are taken from this archive.

<sup>173</sup> Bhabha, ‘Sly’, pp 97-98. ‘Narcissism’ here refers to the paranoid regression to a ‘fixation at the stage of [primary] narcissism’, first noted by Freud. This entails a detachment of the libido from a particular object, and its reattachment to the ego, often involving ‘traces of megalomania’, which can ‘by itself constitute a paranoia’. Sigmund Freud, ‘Psychoanalytic Notes on an Autobiographical Account of a Case of Paranoia (Dementia Paranoides)’, in Angela Richards (ed), *Case Histories II, Penguin Freud Library Volume 9* (London: Penguin, repr. 1979; 1955), p 211.

<sup>174</sup> Jacques Lacan, *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis* (London: Hogarth Press, repr. 1977; 1973), p 103.

<sup>175</sup> See Bhabha, ‘Sly’, pp 93-101.

*hates me.*<sup>176</sup> If we read this into Lyall's above description of the 'Mutiny', we find that apparent refusal and its return as the declarative, split clearly between 'Hindoo' and 'Mahometan' responses. The 'Hindoo' insurgent refuses to engage in the British demand for an affirmative narrative of rebellion and counter-insurgency: the minute his opponent is 'down', the 'Hindoo' turns away to plunder. There is not even the suggestion here that he has engaged to the extent of putting his opponent 'down'; the 'Hindoo' rather wanders on almost as a passive observer after – or parallel to – the scene of action. But if the 'Hindoo' refuses his oppositional identity, the 'Mahometan' exceeds it. His is an opposition that not only precedes its object (any specific engagement during the 'Mutiny'; any local or immediate cause); but one that can never be satisfied by its attainment. While the 'Hindoo' is expressed in direct relationship to the underlying economic determinant of the 'Mutiny' – 'property' – the 'Mahometan' is encoded with a sign whose only material referent is the body of the Christian colonialist, which itself fails to satisfy (inciting not just 'murder', but 'mangling').

Lyall's expression here of the tripartite relationship of Hindu, Muslim and British thus offers us two interconnected paradigms. The first is that of the Hindu who refuses to engage with the British narrative desire for the affirmation of its identity as a counter-insurgent, and is distracted instead by the immediate economic rewards – a child-like 'wandering' off after baubles. In contradistinction to this failure to engage with the British narcissistic demand, the Muslim appears disconnected from the economic motive; instead, the destruction of the body of the Christian Anglo-Indian becomes his sole motivation (a point made even clearer in a letter written by Lyall a year later in which Muslim participation in the 'Mutiny' is represented as a 'war of extermination'<sup>177</sup>). The juxtaposition of these responses suggests a rhetorical connection between them, whereby the incommensurate aggression of the Muslim seems to compensate for the tendentious –

---

176 Bhabha, 'Sly', pp 98-100.

177 Durand, p 80.

and psychologically disengaged – response of the Hindu; irritation and bewilderment on the part of the colonialist with Hindu disengagement appears to return as the furious and insatiable appetite of the Muslim for murderous combat.

That element of insatiability is by no means accidental to the portrait. Lacan's formulation of the narcissistic demand entails a dialectic between the subject and the imaginary realm of the Real which, it is conjectured, lies beyond all systems of articulation. Returning from that imaginary realm, the response to the narcissistic demand is thus inevitably enmeshed and distorted by its formulation in a symbolic system, and so registers an inevitable 'lack' – that which it cannot properly signify. That 'gap' between the Real and its symbolic articulation is what maintains the system of desire, ensuring the continual circulation of representations.<sup>178</sup> Identity formation is predicated on exactly this 'circular play between lack and identification';<sup>179</sup> and it is the promise of closing this gap – between the Real object and its representation – that fantasy holds out (even a horrifying fantasy is preferable to the unbearable doubt signalled by the disclosure of that 'lack'<sup>180</sup>). But at the same time, it should be noted that fantasy holds out only the promise of closure; by its very nature, it prohibits its realisation.<sup>181</sup> If we understand that Lyall's descriptions of Hindu and Muslim insurgents represent an identificatory investment, a creation of 'Others' predicated on the subject's own identity-formation, then the element of insatiability manifested in the murderous Muslim corresponds to the kind of deferral of satisfaction that keeps alive the system of desire and representation. Thus in Lyall's fantastic depiction of the murderous 'Mohamedan' insurgent, the Muslim 'Other' will necessarily never be satisfied by the simple destruction of the body of the Christian Anglo-Indian: his insatiability is that which upholds the representation – just as the fantasy of his murderous appetite paradoxically holds at bay

---

<sup>178</sup> Stavrakakis, pp 1-35.

<sup>179</sup> Stavrakakis, pp 34-35.

<sup>180</sup> Stavrakakis, p 151.

<sup>181</sup> Stavrakakis, p 47.



the other, more troubling and complex questions of the revolutionary movements of 1857-59.

We can detect in Lyall's early representation of Indian Muslims as slaves to a murderous unassuageable fury, a link in the chain that unites Alain Grosrichard's self-pleasuring oriental despot of the late eighteenth century and Flora Annie Steel's early twentieth century economy of 'galling' enacted by the dispossessed Indian Muslim (see above, Section 1.4). But while both the 'jouissance' of the despot and the inexhaustible, self-destructive 'galling' of the later Indian Muslim take place in an apparently self-enclosed system of representation – one in which the Muslim acts as a spectator by proxy for a distant British audience – in Lyall's more immediate despatches from the 'Mutiny' frontline the Christian bodies are placed squarely within the economy of insatiability. Indeed those bodies are quite clearly figured as the prime instigators of that economy – the indivisible units of desire that propel the Muslim's actions. Nevertheless, the effect of circumscription is broadly comparable, since the narcissistic demand for recognition which produces the pure aggressivity of the Muslim simultaneously seals him in an economy of representation located, like that of the despot and Steel's dispossessed, beyond the immediate historical narrative. The preoccupation of the 'Mohamedan' with 'mangling' Christians effectively lifts him out of the immediate revolutionary context of 1857-59. His response thus fails to address the crucial but unspoken, question of power, while at the same time his over-compensatory engagement with the Anglo-Indians (as Christians rather than colonials) prevents the disclosure of the larger 'Mutiny' narrative by re-routing it into the, by then familiar, report of a communal riot. Within this historically occlusive interpretation, the murderous aggressivity of the Muslim becomes not only a means of answering the Anglo-Indian narcissistic demand for recognition, but of containing the Muslim potential for threatening the hegemony of the British Indian state – for it is the *Christian* Anglo-Indian, and not the British state, that is apparently under attack.

There are, then, three preliminary conclusions we can draw from this early representation of Indian Muslims in Lyall's writing. The first point to be made is that their representation is figured as a response to – indeed a compensation for – a certain passivity, or lack of engagement portrayed in the representation of Hindus. We might here also make the cognate observation that 'Hindoo' passivity is linked to the material referent of 'plunder', so that the elusive figure of the 'Hindoo' is wholly constructed through the underlying economic motive of colonial rule; and it is this conjunction which produces his disengagement and thus acts as a secondary incitement to mortal combat between Muslim and Christian. So while Muslim and Christian are apparently figured on a plane divorced from material referents, in fact their engagement is propelled by the prophylactic obsession of the 'Hindoo' with precisely those economic rewards. A quarter century later, in *Asiatic Studies*, this tripartite tableau is frequently reproduced, with the material referent of the 'Hindoo' body serving as a passive object of conversion, but operating in a strikingly similar manner of incitement to the two monotheistic combatants. However, now conflated with the Indian landscape against which the Muslim-Christian struggle takes place, the 'Hindoo' himself becomes, in a sense, an object of 'plunder'.<sup>182</sup> The suggestion must therefore be made here that there exists a strong correlation between 'conversion' and 'plunder' in Lyall's symbology for which the lines are first clearly drawn in the connections between moral and material planes made in 1857.

The second conclusion that can be drawn from this early illustration of Lyall's tripartite perception of mutinous native society, is that the oppositional aggressivity of the 'Mahomedan' is bound up with colonialist fantasy: that is, it sustains a system of representation that lies outside of history and that helps forestall a direct engagement with its problematics. This is something that must be borne in mind we come to consider the

---

<sup>182</sup> This tripartite conceit in particular organises Lyall's essay, 'Our Religious Policy in India', with its final apocalyptic battle-lines of conversion in which the Hindu is conflated with the landscape as both the background to, and the prize of, British-Muslim conflict (p 276).

language surrounding Wahabi ‘conspiracy’. The markedly apocalyptic language later employed there by Lyall (as well as on the subject of conversion) serves essentially conservative purposes. As Steven Goldsmith has pointed out, apocalyptic rhetoric in a political context is always an ‘attempt to arrogate power by speaking in/of a voice that originates outside of history.’<sup>183</sup> At the same time, he writes, ‘as a rule of thumb, this wishing away of history reflects extraordinary, and seemingly insurmountable historical pressures.’<sup>184</sup> The transhistoricising tendencies at work in Lyall’s later reflections on the role of religious communities in Asia, and especially of the agency of Islam, thus have their roots firmly in the kinds of political needs served by Muslim ‘conspiracy’ in 1857.

The third point to be noted here, is that at the heart of this representational system, circulating its economy, lies the Christian Anglo-Indian. This final observation needs to be underscored for the analysis that follows in the next section. At the same time as Lyall’s typical mid-century ‘reevaluation’ of Muslim-Christian persecution lifts the Anglo-Indian beyond the contingencies of history, it retroactively authorises the renewal of an historically-contextualised Christian ‘Civilian’ (Indian Civil Service) identity – but one that is predicated on the presence and unappeasable demands of the Indian Muslim: predicated, that is, on the call to fantasy. For if we return to the narcissistic demand for authorisation as it is expressed by Lyall’s embattled Civilian of 1857, we can detect a secondary, unspoken question prompted by that same element of ‘insatiability’ – or we might call it uncertainty – that seals the ‘Mahometan’ in an economy of desire and aggression. That question can be simplified as the classic Lacanian formulation of doubt: *What does he really want from me?*<sup>185</sup> In seeking to defer the uncertainty it opens up, the young Civilian’s implicit, necessary response – *He wants me to be a Christian* – promises to recreate his Christian identity as an irreducibly fantasmatic construction.

---

<sup>183</sup> Steven Goldsmith, *Unbuilding Jerusalem: Apocalypse and Romantic Representation* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993), p 21.

<sup>184</sup> Goldsmith, p 32.

<sup>185</sup> This is the Lacanian demand, *Che Vuoi?*, the response to which invariably represents the beginnings of fantasy (Zizek, *Sublime*, pp 110-29). This concept is given a fuller treatment in the next section.

In short, we can conclude that for Alfred Lyall, at the founding moment of its reconstruction in 1857, the Christian Civilian identity is based on – as with all fantasmatic constructions – a necessarily deferred realisation; and that both the incitement to its public reappearance and the agent of its deferral, is the representation of the Indian Muslim. In this respect, it could be said that the *transcendence* of that Christian identity – its ability to rise out of its Indian circumstances – is made possible by the presence of the murderous ‘Mahometan’. Here, we might refer back to *The Indian Punch* cartoon of the coat-of-arms for the ‘ex-King of Delhi’ by noting that the destruction of one (the Christian child) is precisely what serves to bring the other (the ‘sable’ Muslim hand) into visibility. Conversely for the young ICS officer, the Christians come into being through the over-determining presence of Muslim aggression, appearing only on the margins of ‘Mahometan’ fanatical pursuit, and only as lifeless bodies – on the very point, that is, of their disappearance from Indian soil. It is this repeated ambiguous trope of occlusion, each protagonist produced and at the same time effaced by an over-determination of the other’s representation, that should be borne in mind as we turn now to a fuller consideration of Muslim sectarian persecution in Lyall’s correspondence.

## Section 2.4: Fantasy and Civilian identity

In Lyall's description of the Muslim insurgent in his letter of 11 July 1857, we have noted that the discovery of murderous Muslim aggression recasts the colonialist as persecuted Christian. At the same time, it also implies that the motivation of the 'Mahometan' is not exhausted – or fully explained – by the attainment of the Christian body: 'murdering' the Christian will drive the Muslim on, but 'mangling' implies that it will not satisfy him. As suggested in Section 2.3, the secondary question entailed in this note of uncertainty corresponds to the Lacanian formulation '*che vuoi?*': 'what does the 'Other' really want from me?'<sup>186</sup> It is a question brought on by the disjunction between the symbolic and imaginary ('Real') identifications perceived in the 'Other'; it seeks an impossible total identification between them, one that would erase the uncertainty contained in the act of representation. However, it is precisely this disjunction between representation and object (symbolic and Real) that circulates the economy of desire and necessitates further representation. Since the closure of that disjunction is itself an impossible desire, *che vuoi?* is a question that cannot finally be answered (and this follows the fundamental assumption in Lacanian thought that 'the politics of the subject, the politics of identity formation, can only be understood as a politics of impossibility'<sup>187</sup>). For Lyall, then, what the 'Mahometan' actually wants from the Christian Anglo-Indian is only the starting point; it is his role as the 'Other' posing the question to the traumatized colonialist that is important. For it is at this point – at the emergence of the question *che vuoi?* – that ideological fantasies are constructed.<sup>188</sup>

Ideologies, it has been remarked, are, effectively, social promises; they promise the restitution of 'a lost state of 'harmony, unity and fullness';<sup>189</sup> and in so far as all

---

<sup>186</sup> Zizek, *Sublime* pp 110-29.

<sup>187</sup> Stavrakakis, p 35.

<sup>188</sup> Zizek, *Sublime*, pp 114, 118.

<sup>189</sup> Stavrakakis, p 52.

ideologies posit the potential existence of an undivided social body – ‘society’ – they are essentially ‘corporatist’. Indeed, as Slavoj Žižek has written, ‘society as a Corporate Body is the fundamental ideological fantasy’.<sup>190</sup> Just as individual fantasy aims at the restitution to the subject of a lost, pre-symbolic wholeness, collective ideological fantasies can be seen as the masks – or ‘screens’ – necessary to preserve the fiction of undivided social incorporation.<sup>191</sup> In Lacanian terms, fantasies mask the ‘gap’ that reveals the contingency of the Other, the misfit between the symbolic and the Real in all representations – and thus they seek to mask the contingency of the subject’s own identity. In this sense, they are only an oblique response to the question ‘*che vuoi?*’: the uncertainty over what the ‘Other’ wants is transmuted through fantasy into what the subject needs. In the case of ideological fantasy, that need is for the effect of purposive – indeed, utopian – social cohesion.

On one level, then, it would be reasonable to characterise the implied imperative of ‘Mahometan’ aggression in Lyall’s letter as the call to the reconstitution of a fractured Anglo-Indian sense of identity and motivation through the idea of Christian community. As discussed in Section 1.3 above, Homi Bhabha has located the primary fault-line for the colonialist sense of identity as lying between a liberal and ‘enlightened’ Metropolitan identity and an unpalatable colonialist rapacity, a paradox contained in his description of the colonialist as both ‘father and oppressor’. Some historians have argued that although the events of 1857-59 may have briefly disclosed the self-image of despotism to the British in India in the vacuum left by the apparent repudiation of their liberal mission, it was a possibility quickly ‘obscured’ in the rush to decisive and terrifying retributive action.<sup>192</sup> The appeal of the ideology of Christian community as a means of swiftly

---

<sup>190</sup> Žižek, *Sublime*, p 126.

<sup>191</sup> Žižek, *Sublime*, p 126.

<sup>192</sup> Metcalf, *Ideologies*, p 44-46. Recent critiques of the subsequent literature of rebellion that came to preoccupy Anglo-Indian writers over the next fifty years, have suggested that the violence of that response by the British appears to have re-inscribed, rather than erased, the disjunction between despot and progenitor of liberal values. See Maire ni Fhlathuin, ‘Anglo-Indian after the Mutiny: the Formation and Breakdown of National identity’ in Stuart Murray, ed, *Not on Any Map: Essays on Postcoloniality and*

incorporating such a fractured colonialist identity during that initial period of extreme crisis, and redirecting its focus outward towards just such a retributive course of action, undoubtedly plays a part in explaining both the perception of Muslim ‘conspiracy’ in 1857-59 and its early and widespread acceptance. We may recall here Geertz’s explication of the ‘extrinsic theory’ of ideology formation. The construction of cultural symbol-systems, he points out, ‘come most crucially into play where the particular kind of information they contain is lacking, where institutionalized guides for behavior, thought, or feeling are weak or absent.’<sup>193</sup> It is this sudden absence of ideological guidance that prompted a turn towards a language of Christian solidarity in 1857. More particularly, the appeal of the perception of sectarian persecution which lies at the heart of Muslim ‘conspiracy’ in 1857 is reinforced by Geertz’s conclusion that it is the attempt of such ideologies at a time of crisis ‘to render otherwise incomprehensible social situations meaningful, to so construe them as to make it possible to act *purposefully* within them, that accounts both for the ideologies’ highly figurative nature and for the intensity with which, once accepted, they are held.’<sup>194</sup> The sudden destruction of all institutional ideologies in 1857, and the problem of future meaningful action, would seem, superficially at least, to be key to the Civilian attachment to, and refusal to relinquish, the particular ideology of Muslim-led communal persecution.

In its simultaneous linking of Muslim ‘conspiracy’ and Christian persecution, and its emphasis on the centrality of this perception to all subsequent events, Lyall’s correspondence certainly bears out this proposition. The first mention of rumours of a sepoy mutiny occur in his letter to his mother, 7 April 1857; and the first concrete reports of an uprising in his letter to his father, 12 May 1857. Although he refers here to the ‘greased cartridges’ (objectionable in their use of pig and cow fat, to both Hindu and

---

*Cultural Nationalism* (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1997), pp 67-80; see also, Wurgraft, pp 68, 95-100.

<sup>193</sup> Clifford Geertz, ‘Ideology as a cultural system’, in Robert Bockock and Kenneth Thompson (eds), *Religion and Ideology: A Reader* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1985), p 81.

<sup>194</sup> Geertz, p 82. The italics are mine.

Muslim communities) as the cause of sepoy ‘disaffection’, there appears to be at this point no differentiation between Hindu and Muslim grievances. A month later, even after the outbreak of open rebellion in his own district of Meerut and the observation that a ‘Mussulman Nawab’ has ‘proclaimed himself commander of the district under the authority of the King of Delhi’, there is still no mention of a sectarian Muslim ‘conspiracy’. Indeed Lyall specifically exonerates the Mughal emperor – without glossing any religious affiliation – as an unwilling figurehead to the (again communally undifferentiated) ‘mutineers’.<sup>195</sup> It is only in the letter of 11 July – in which the tripartite tableau quoted in the preceding section is constructed – that the first references both to Muslim ‘conspiracy’ and to specifically Christian-orientated persecution occur (we may, for instance, compare it to the 14 June letter to his father, wherein the ‘murdered...women and children’ are only glossed as ‘English’). From this point onwards in the correspondence, all atrocities (including the massacre at Cawnpore [Kanpur] by the followers of the Hindu rebel leader, Nana Sahib) are specifically put down to Muslim sectarian aggression towards the Christian British in India;<sup>196</sup> and the retrenchment of British paramountcy in India becomes, in part, a defence of Christian community in the face of sectarian hostility. The (often, self-) accusation of the despotic Civilian which had so preoccupied Lyall’s pre-‘Mutiny’ correspondence home, and had called forth elaborate and indignant defences of the role of the British in India, is all but absent from the ensuing two years of correspondence. Indeed, it could be argued that the terms of those youthful defences (predominantly, employing the arguments of liberal paternalism<sup>197</sup>) are transmuted exclusively, in all of Lyall’s later published writing, into

<sup>195</sup> Letter to his father, 14 June 1857.

<sup>196</sup> Letter to his father, 30 August 1857; letter to Mr Holland, 13 March 1858; letter to his mother, 19 March 1858; letter to his father, 14 May 1858; letter to his mother, 26 September 1858; letter to his father, 24 November 1858; letter to Mr Holland, 27 March 1859. Lyall’s rhetorical conversion of Nana Sahib’s followers should by no means be regarded as isolated: for his highly successful ‘Mutiny’ play, *Jessie Brown; or the Relief of Lucknow*, Dion Boucicault converted the Nana himself. Patrick Brantlinger, *Rule of Darkness: British Literature and Imperialism, 1830-1914*, (Ithica: Cornell University Press, 1988) p 206.

<sup>197</sup> See for instance, the letter to his mother of 25 June 1856, MSS Eur F132/2; and the letter to his brother-in-law Mr Holland, 17 January 1857.



the language of communal arbitration, where the only despotism recognized is religious – and thus the object of Anglo-Indian scrutiny, rather than the subject of Civilian actions. If we take Lyall as, in this regard, a typical instance of the psychology of colonial governance in India at the time, the immediacy of this shift in focus not only indicates the centrality of the ‘Mutiny’ in the development of the ‘communal narrative’ which Gyanendra Pandey has argued for as the commanding centre of the colonialist mindset in nineteenth century India.<sup>198</sup> It also begins the task of replacing the question of colonialist religious identity as a complex and dynamic factor in the genesis of the language of, and the growing preoccupation with, ‘communalism’ and religious fanaticism, as the central issues of governance in late colonial India.

The revolutionary nature of the conjunction of Christian Civilian and Muslim persecutor that appears in the letter of 11 July, is further emphasized by the fact that the possibility of an Indian Muslim impulse to rebellion is unprecedented in Lyall’s correspondence up to this point. Indeed, between his arrival in Calcutta in January 1856 and 11 July 1857, there are only two other references to Indian Muslims in the previous 35 letters.<sup>199</sup> The first occurs on 22 February 1856, in which the ‘Musulman’ is preferred over Hindu servants as more trustworthy and worthy of ‘respect’; the second appears in the letter of 7 April 1857 alongside, but not linked, to the first rumours of sepoys’ disaffection. In this letter, Lyall describes a visit to the ‘Great Mosque’ in Delhi which he abandons due to the ‘disapproving countenances’ of the ‘true believers’ there (their disapproval appears to be of his status as a non-Muslim tourist), and later details further gossip of a poster in the city calling on all Muslims to ‘revolt’ – but despite their textual juxtaposition he makes no connection between the two, and considers the possibility of an open rebellion only in terms of ‘natives’ coming together in ‘combination’: in terms,

---

<sup>198</sup> Pandey, p 17

<sup>199</sup> *Papers of Alfred Lyall*, British Library MSS Eur F132/2, containing letters sent to his family in 1856; and MSS Eur F132/3.

that is, of the unity imparted to ‘sepoys’ by ‘our army discipline’. The 11 July revelation of a specifically Muslim ‘conspiracy’, stemming from an unsuspected Muslim aggression towards the Christian British, must therefore be regarded as the creation of a new and paradigmatic understanding of Indian Muslims in Lyall’s thought – a micro-instance, then, of the paradigm formation that has been (in Sections 2.1 and 2.2) posited in Anglo-Indian perceptions of Indian Muslims during this period.

The use of the word ‘paradigm’ here is deliberate. The sudden change that occurs at this point in Lyall’s correspondence – as in Anglo-Indian discourse in general – bears a striking parallel to Thomas Kuhn’s account of the way in which new paradigms are created in scientific revolutions, marking off the development of a scientific field from the previously encyclopaedic and inchoate groups of observations and recondite information that formed its only structure. In such revolutions in scientific knowledge, the new paradigm changes the manner and direction of all subsequent research; it narrows down the field and re-directs its focus, which is hereafter always dependent on – either leading towards or emerging out of – the further ‘articulation’ of that paradigm.<sup>200</sup> For Lyall, the change in direction, focus and understanding of Indian Muslims that occurs around the time of his letter of 11 July is nothing less than just such a revolution, organising all previously loosely-structured knowledge and re-focusing it in a novel direction that would endure for the rest of his Indian career. Only two months earlier he had assured his mother that his sister-in-law, Mary Jane, would be perfectly safe in the Indian hill district where she was currently staying, since there she would ‘have no dealings with the Hindoo’ (18 May 1857). By ‘dealings’ with ‘the Hindoo’, Lyall refers to the barbarities of the rebels in general, indicating that at this point ‘Hindoo’ and ‘mutineer’ were for him entirely interchangeable descriptions. After 11 July, however,

---

<sup>200</sup> Thomas S Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, repr. 1996; 1962), pp 10-34. The connections that are made below between Lyall’s early correspondence and his later published writings illustrate just this relationship of a revolutionary paradigm to its dependent field of ‘knowledge’.

the focus turns swiftly to the Muslims, so that for the next four months every letter is punctuated by a reference to Muslim treachery, bloodthirsty behaviour (almost never specifically detailed) or sectarian aggression.

The creation of a new paradigm for Indian Muslims does not occur in isolation. It is in fact a dual revolution, in that the revelation of the treacherous Muslim appears effectively to engender Lyall's discovery of a Christian component to the identity of the Civilian. For, as with the now linked trope of Muslim/persecutor, the Civilian is here considered for the first time in Lyall's letters, as a *visibly* Christian identification (one that appears to be bestowed – indeed, insisted upon – by others). Although the propagation of Christianity has been discussed with his brother-in-law, Mr Holland, it is talked of purely under the provenance of unsponsored (and in his opinion, misguided) missionary activity; the state plays no part in any of his deliberations on the subject.<sup>201</sup> The notion of the Anglo-Indian bureaucrat being perceived as a Christian is thus born into the correspondence as a whole only at the point of Muslim sectarian aggression – again, a forceful micro-instance of the larger process sketched in Section 2.2, and illustrated there by the cartoon of the 'ex-King of Delhi's' arms, where Christian and Muslim are produced as interdependent icons. If we concede that Christian incorporation acts as an ideological foundation for the re-integration of a fractured Anglo-Indian Civilian identity, we might then plausibly conclude that, in Lyall's writing at this time, the idea of Muslim 'conspiracy' is at least integral to, if not partly at the service of, its construction. However, the precise nature of that identification, and its role as an ideologically cohesive foundation for psychologically cogent, punitive action, is perhaps less straightforward than may at first appear. As we shall see, these complexities in

---

<sup>201</sup> Letter of 17 January 1857. The only other mention of his own Christian identity comes in his letter to his sister Sibylla, 24 February 1857, when he relates how the native staff in his office had to remind him of Ash Wednesday, and upbraid him for neglecting his duty to observe it. We might even regard this as a proleptic instance in the correspondence of Civilian religiosity being 'discovered' at the hands of native insistence.

Lyall's correspondence have important consequences for the kind of representations of Indian Muslims on which the Civilian-Christian identification is primarily dependent.

Not the least part of the appeal of such an identification was the potential it contained for re-soldering Anglo-Indian connections to Metropolitan Britain. As Linda Colley makes clear in her recent study of the narratives of British subjects captured by Muslim polities from the seventeenth to nineteenth centuries, the British Protestant identity that was forged in this period, came about not only in contradistinction to Catholic Europe, but partly through periodic, orchestrated 'Islamophobic' campaigns, in which the Church of England played a leading, and formative, role.<sup>202</sup> Fears of forced conversion, mutilation and execution were played up and disseminated throughout the local parishes – often taken door to door by the parish priest in search of campaign contributions towards ransom demands.<sup>203</sup> Indeed, some of the narratives of returned captives were composed specifically as re-affirmations of Protestant faith, and were frequently brought out by Anglican publishers.<sup>204</sup> During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries in particular, then, the spectre of Muslim sectarian persecution had formed an important element in welding together a specifically Protestant British public.

Colley's observations extrapolate the point made by Norman Daniel, in his seminal study of European discourses on Islam during the mediaeval period, that polemical arguments about Muslims and Islamic doctrine, even when nominally addressed to Muslims, were always primarily aimed at the formation of European Christian communities of opinion.<sup>205</sup> In reflecting on the later career of mediaeval conceptions of Islam, Daniel points out that the literature of the enlightenment period was largely structured by the content of earlier mediaeval concepts, such as the essentialised

---

<sup>202</sup> Colley, p 76.

<sup>203</sup> Colley, p 78.

<sup>204</sup> Colley, p 92.

<sup>205</sup> Norman Daniel, *Islam and the West: the Making of an Image* (Oxford: Oneworld; 1960, 1997), p 304; a similar point is made in Maxime Rodinson, *Europe and the Mystique of Islam*, trans Roger Deinus (London: I B Tauris, 1988), pp 8, 18.

violence of the religion, and Mohammed's 'hypocritical' nature;<sup>206</sup> and that among nineteenth century Europeans, 'the English Christians...exhibited more clearly the continuing influence of an unmodified mediaeval tradition at its most uncompromising.'<sup>207</sup> Nevertheless, the eighteenth century may also be seen as a turning point in Britain in the manner in which the mediaeval notion of Islam as a misguided, and foredoomed, schism of Christianity came to be largely re-figured as a means of attacking a perceived decadence in British Protestantism.<sup>208</sup> This was nowhere more apparent than in Gibbon's influential history, *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* (1776), in which the advent of Islam itself is figured as a response to the disarray of the Christian Church, sealing Islam and Christianity into reciprocal patterns of decay and 'revolution'.<sup>209</sup> Gibbon clearly intended his historiographical conclusions to reach out as exempla to a contemporary audience, at times making direct comparisons between zealous Muslim societies and the 'the present decay of religious fervour' among British Christians.<sup>210</sup> His descriptions of a fanatical, protestant Muslim rebuke to Christian apathy were then rephrased in the nineteenth century by popular historians such as Charles Mills, who saw Muslim-Christian confrontations throughout history increasingly in terms of the moral probity of the latter, especially in the early Crusades, in rising to the challenge of and confronting a belligerent and territorially voracious Muslim polity.<sup>211</sup>

---

<sup>206</sup> Daniel, pp 310-13.

<sup>207</sup> Daniel, p 326.

<sup>208</sup> Daniel, p 304; Albert Hourani, *Islam in European Thought* (Cambridge: University of Cambridge Press; 1991, 1996), pp 19-22.

<sup>209</sup> Edward Gibbon, *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, (London: Chatto and Windus, repr. 1992; 1960), p 649. Lyall's perception of contemporary decadence in the Anglican church is certainly influenced by his reading of Gibbon's portrait of the early Christian church – letter to his mother, 21 May 1858.

<sup>210</sup> Gibbon, *Decline*, p 669.

<sup>211</sup> Elizabeth Siberry, *The New Crusaders: Images of the Crusades in the Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries*, (Aldershot: Ashgate Pub, 2000), pp 10-11; Charles Mills, *An History of Muhammedanism comprising the life and character of the Arabian prophet and succinct accounts of the Empires founded by Muhammedan arms* (London: 1817); Mills, *History of the Crusades* (London: Longman, 1820). It is worth noting here that Mills' *History of Muhammedanism* was dedicated to and encouraged by the Orientalist and Governor of Bombay, Sir John Malcolm, marking one instance of the permeable boundaries running between popular Metropolitan literature, the specialised world of the British Orientalists, and Anglo-Indian governance. Others that may be cited with reference to Crusade historiography during the first half of the nineteenth century include: the biography of the seminal seventeenth century poet of crusader lore,

By the mid-nineteenth century it was this view that had come to dominate the British perception of past Muslim-Christian confrontations, appealing broadly to the popular imagination, often through Church-sponsored publications such as that put out in 1851 by the Library of Useful Knowledge, entitled *The Soldier of the Cross, or Scenes and Events from the Times of the Crusades*, in which the incursions of the Crusades had become simpler parables of zealous Christian defense against a ‘growing Moslem menace’.<sup>212</sup> Throughout the nineteenth century the figure of the Crusader was reproduced as a model of Christian endeavour, described and eulogized in such mass-reproduced works as Kenelm Digby’s *The Broad Stone of Honour* (1822); and it was these ‘hugely popular’ manuals of chivalry that largely determined the British public apprehension of Muslim conduct – and appropriate Christian response – in far-flung lands.<sup>213</sup>

Lyall’s own recourse to a language of Muslim sectarian persecution should be set against this background of Metropolitan expectations of Muslim-Christian rivalry. The conjunction of Muslim ‘conspiracy’ and the ideology of Christian community represents, in part, an attempt to offset the anxiety that is manifested time and again in his letters that his experiences during the ‘Mutiny’ have isolated him further from his Metropolitan background; and that the public ‘at home’ have utterly failed to understand or sympathise with the horrendous experiences of besieged Anglo-Indians in 1857-59.<sup>214</sup> In this regard, the resurrection of the language of the Crusades in figuring the possibility of purposive (that is, retributive) Christian action is at least a predictable element of the correspondence.<sup>215</sup> Lyall’s use of it marries his cause and circumstances to a common

---

Torquato Tasso, by the Bishop of Calcutta, R Milman; and James Burnes, the Physician General of India, who published *A Sketch of the History of the Knights Templar*, (Edinburgh: Blackwood, 1837).

<sup>212</sup> Siberry, p 20.

<sup>213</sup> Siberry, p 38; see also, Mark Girouard’s useful survey of the popular literature that drove the nineteenth-century reconfiguration of the Crusading legends in *The Return to Camelot*.

<sup>214</sup> This anxiety appears to reach a climax with the return of one of his letters home in 1857, whose content he feared had utterly alienated him from his family. Letter to his father, 30 August 1857, MSS Eur F132/3; see also his letter to his sister, Catherine, 20 January 1859, in which he continues to apologise for the ‘bloodthirsty’ words that caused the earlier rift.

<sup>215</sup> See for instance, the letters to his father on 24 November 1857 and 14 May 1858.

source of British national imagination, one that, as Colley convincingly illustrates from the fall of Tangiers in the seventeenth century to the retreat from Kabul in the 1840s, had brought together the British public at home and their colonialist compatriots imperiled in distant lands by Muslim aggression.

What is perhaps less amenable to this broad level of explanation, is the way in which that element is repeatedly articulated in the correspondence in terms of deferral and displacement. For instance, on 24 November 1858, Lyall writes to his father:

The Mussulmans have always been the deadly enemies of Christians, and always will be. You will never convert them, and had better make up your mind to extirpate them from Europe. I declare that nothing would give me greater pleasure than to join in a regular crusade against every Mohametan in any country where Christians dwell, and to try in fair fight the battle of the Cross against the Crescent. [letter 24 November 1858]

The conjunction of Christian and Muslim under the rubric of retributive action is here displaced outside of colonial India (with the suggestion that such a course of action might well be pursued in Europe), and into the conditional future ('Nothing *would* give me greater pleasure'). Lyall's frame of reference here of course, is to the continuing reality of Ottoman power as an obstacle, both militarily and financially, to European trading ambitions in the first half of the nineteenth century.<sup>216</sup> The symbolic power that it held for Britons in this period is well captured by the popular reception and enduring appeal of Byron's *Turkish Tales* (which Lyall cites in his letter to his father, 24 July 1857), which re-interpreted the idea of Christian and Muslim in armed, chivalric conflict, re-locating the scene, for a Romantic readership, from the Middle East to the borders of Europe and updating it to more recent times.<sup>217</sup> Nevertheless, it is significant that Lyall turns away

---

<sup>216</sup> C A Bayly, *Imperial Meridian: The British Empire and the World 1780-1830* (Harlow: Longman, 1989), pp 229-33; Martin Lynn, 'British Policy, Trade, and informal Empire in the Mid-Nineteenth Century', in Andrew Porter (ed), *The Oxford History of the British Empire, Volume 4: The Nineteenth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), pp 111-12, 117-20. Hereafter cited as *OHBE 4*.

<sup>217</sup> Nigel Leask, *British Romantic Writers and the East: Anxieties of Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), Chapter One; Mohammed Sharafuddin, *Islam and Romantic Orientalism: Literary*

from the immediacy of the colonial encounter to draw on this more distantly felt scene of conflict, for the pattern here of displacement, temporal and geographical, is one common to Civilian accounts of the Muslim-British encounter in 1857.<sup>218</sup> Within colonial India itself, Lyall's locution appears to suggest, a 'regular crusade' and 'fair fight' is not possible. When the prospect of carrying out such a religiously-sectarian course of action in India is occasionally brought up in his correspondence, it is either to be prosecuted solely in terms of lawful political retribution (that for instance, 'they' – as implicitly non-denominational Civilians – should be left alone by the 'philanthropizing' Metropolitan public to 'settle accounts well and fully with the Mussulman and sepoys'<sup>219</sup>); or the Christian element to the equation is displaced onto an impersonally-expressed subordinate consequence, semantically divorced from the direct actions of Civilians:

As for the Mahometans they may appeal to our generosity and mercy, but they cannot complain of injustice, whatever we may do...If the Mussulmans could by any means be entirely exterminated, it would be the greatest possible step towards civilizing and Christianizing Hindostan.<sup>220</sup>

Effectively, there is no instance in the correspondence of the proposition that Anglo-Indian Civilians *as* Christians would be capable (or desirous) of joining in a retributive crusade against Muslims in colonial India.

The most immediate historiographical explanation for this repeatedly circuitous locution is that while a *de facto* 'confessional state' may, as Bayly contends, have been operating before 1857, the sociology of the Raj described by Washbrook, and entrenched well before the 'Mutiny', foreclosed the option of the open declaration of a Christian sectarian government. Even at the height of the Mutiny, it appears to have only been considered by a few – an extremist, evangelical element – among the Civilians in

---

*Encounters with the East* (London: I B Tauris, repr. 1996; 1994), pp 214-74. The significance of Lyall's reference to 'The Giaour' is discussed in more detail below.

<sup>218</sup> See below for a further discussion of this kind of displacement in other Civilian accounts.

<sup>219</sup> Letter to his mother, 19 March 1858.

<sup>220</sup> Letter to his father, 14 May 1858.



India.<sup>221</sup> In the preceding half-decade, at the level of policy-making the only effect of Christian evangelical pressures on colonial governance in India would seem to have been the gradual devolution by the state of powers and properties pertaining to native religious institutions ‘directly to authorities – priests and trustees – constituted within them.’<sup>222</sup> Although there was an increase in official toleration of missionary attacks on their religious traditions and customs throughout the 1840s and 1850s, during and in the immediate aftermath of 1857-59 these were widely seen as the (reprehensible) key to native disaffection.<sup>223</sup> While there is no direct reference in Lyall’s letters to Christian evangelism as a cause of native disaffection, we can reasonably assume a certain level of self-censorship as a member of the ICS, and one to whom the future of British rule in India was always a pressing concern.<sup>224</sup> And yet, as we have argued above, a Christian Civilian identity within the letters is first expressed as an affect of Muslim persecution. How then can we understand this identity as an ideological promise of cohesion, and more particularly, as a basis for future action, if it cannot be expressed as a common vehicle for retribution?

We can begin to answer this question by testing out the distinction between a generalized language of morally-enjoined Biblical retribution that pre-dates Lyall’s 11 July revelation of Muslim ‘conspiracy’, and a specifically Christian Civilian language of victim-hood that structures his subsequent thoughts on Muslim involvement. This apparent differentiation can be initially characterized in Lyall’s correspondence as the language of the Old and New Testaments; that is (for the purposes of this discussion), as the languages of, respectively, punishment and martyrdom. We may take as an example of the former, his letter to his father of 14 June 1857, anticipating the revenge which he thought would soon be enacted upon the Delhi mutineers:

---

<sup>221</sup> See for instance H B Edwardes, *Our Indian Empire: Its Beginning and End* (London: Young Men’s Christian Association, 1861).

<sup>222</sup> D A Washbrook, ‘India, 1818-1860: The Two Faces of Colonialism’, in Porter (ed), *OHBE* 3, p 416.

<sup>223</sup> Washbrook, ‘India’, pp 416-417, 420.

<sup>224</sup> Letters to his mother, 26 December 1858, 27 February 1859.

At any rate, I trust that our soldiers will kill all in Delhi. I was greatly struck by the appropriateness of the First Lesson of last Sunday, which told how Joshua went up against the royal city of Ai, and smote all the inhabitants with the edge of the sword. I intend to draw my morality from the Old Testament for some time to come. I never until now thoroughly appreciated the wholesale slaughters and cruelties of the Jewish chiefs. But this is a horrible country...

This reference to the Old Testament, and its morally-sanctioned codes of vengeance, are entirely typical both of the writings of British protagonists of 1857-59, and of the nineteenth century historians who later attempted to explain the violence of the British during this period (Kaye, for instance, wrote in 1864 of Englishmen who were ready ‘to strike at once, smiting everywhere, hip and thigh, like the grand remorseless heroes of the Old Testament’<sup>225</sup>). Lewis Wurgraft refers to this language as the ‘scriptural framework’ used to contain an unpalatable British savagery, which was otherwise routinely displaced on to the native rebels.<sup>226</sup> This observation needs some qualification. In Lyall’s use of it here, the Biblical language of retribution has a twofold, paradoxical effect of morally aggrandizing British violence, and at the same time sealing it within a barbaric pre-modern context – and so implicitly equating it to a peculiarly Indian, rather than British, circumstance, since India was commonly figured as a primitive and ancient phase of civilization frozen in time by the mediaeval Muslim invasions. For Lyall, as for many of the British at that time, the savagery of 1857-59 was a reversion brought about by an eternally barbaric Indian context.<sup>227</sup> The accession to a language of Biblical retribution thus signals the rupture of the ‘liberal mission’ and the ensuing sedimentation in British perceptions of Indian society in the latter half of the nineteenth century as a mediaeval and intransigent feudal construct, one that insists upon, and incites, a similar response from the Civilian. But as Lyall’s letters repeatedly demonstrate, this accession also

---

<sup>225</sup> John William Kaye, *History of the Sepoy War in India, 1857-8* (London: W H Allen, 1864), Volume 2, p 208, quoted in Wurgraft, p 97.

<sup>226</sup> On the historiographical dichotomy of the savage ‘mutineer’ and the ‘emotional control’ of the ‘stern and resolute Englishman’ constructed after 1857, see Wurgraft, pp 95-100.

<sup>227</sup> Letter to his father, 30 August 1857; letter to his mother, 19 March 1858. For another contemporary example, see Thornhill, p 115.

displaces the British as Christian avengers – into the past, and onto others. In this regard, the language of Old Testament retribution is as much the negation as the revelation, of a modern Anglo-Indian Christian identity. This is an important aspect of the Biblical language of retribution, one that makes it comparable to the New Testament rhetoric of Christian martyrdom associated with Muslim sectarian persecution. In terms of self-representation, both displace rather than access, the idea of an immediate Christian-Civilian identification, the one into a pre-Muslim past, and the other, as we shall explore below, into an impossible, post-Muslim future.

Before we turn to the language of martyrdom, there are two further points to be made about the inter-relationship of the two Biblical languages. They concern the specific displacement here onto the ‘Jewish chiefs’. It is necessary to bear in mind that in European historiography of the Middle Ages, Islam and Judaism were often conflated as cognate Semitic forms of idolatry; more recently, in the wake of William Jones’ philological divisions of language and civilisation into Indo-European (Aryan) and Semitic categories, the idea of the ‘Semitic spirit’ lay behind much of Orientalist thinking in the nineteenth century.<sup>228</sup> The first point to be noted, then, is that the language of atrocity used here – ‘wholesale slaughters and cruelties of the Jewish chiefs’ – anticipates the kind of rhetoric that Lyall later comes to confine exclusively to Indo-Muslim acts.<sup>229</sup> The second observation, is that in making his larger point about the barbarous divisiveness of Indian society through reference to the wars of the ‘Jewish chiefs’, Lyall accesses a latent mode of anti-Semitic discourse still prevalent in the first half of the nineteenth century. This line of thought in popular British culture continued to characterise Jews as radically unassimilable, a people apart who were to be contrasted with – and were thought of as pernicious to – nationalist cohesion.<sup>230</sup> Such a form of

---

<sup>228</sup> Rodinson, p 12; Hourani, pp 27ff.

<sup>229</sup> This point is made in more detail below.

<sup>230</sup> Frank Felsenstein, *Anti-Semitic Stereotypes: A Paradigm of Otherness in English Popular Culture, 1660-1830* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1999) pp 246-47.

anti-Semitic discourse should be borne in mind as potentially immanent to the later deployment of the Semiticised Indian ‘Mussulman’ in Lyall’s letters as a figure divisive to the coherence of a pan-social insurrection in India in 1857 – as, essentially, an insular group within the body of insurgents, but responding to an extra-national agenda. As the Reverend Cave-Browne, stationed in the Peshawar valley in 1857, signals when he describes the effect of Muslim ‘conspiracy’ on ‘native’ Indian society as ‘the flame which was brought *from without*’, the perception of a renewed relationship of the Indian Muslim to his non-indigenous Semitic origins was a pervasive, if often latent, by-product of 1857-59.<sup>231</sup> Indeed, by the late 1870s it had become a commonplace of ‘Mutiny’ historiography.<sup>232</sup> Both these points – Semitic violence, and the suggestion of a divisive, extra-national Semitic agenda – must be understood as stereotypical signs of identification brought forward by the British revision of their perception of Indian Muslims in 1857-59. It is partly for this reason that the Old Testament language of retribution falls away after 11 July in Lyall’s correspondence: the framework of ‘Semitic’ codes of revenge is displaced on to the ‘bloodyminded’ Muslims; the disunity of ‘native’ society encapsulated by their separate agenda. In other words, the language of the Old Testament is already partially present in their representation; to have invoked those codes of tribal revenge in reference to British interaction with Indian Muslims would have thus brought the Civilian within the system of representation constructed precisely to mask his complicity, and to preserve his apparent independence (this point is taken up in more detail below). In this sense, the shift from a Biblical language of

---

<sup>231</sup> Rev J Cave-Browne, *The Punjab and Delhi in 1857. Being a Narrative of the Measures by which the Punjab was Saved and Delhi Recovered During the Indian Mutiny* (Edinburgh: William Blackwood and Sons, 1861) p 7. My italics.

<sup>232</sup> We can hear it in, for instance, *The Story of the Indian Mutiny* (Edinburgh: Nimmo, Hay and Mitchell, 1878), as the author describes the effects on the ‘Mohammedans’ of a prophecy foretelling the demise of the British: ‘They, with Shylock-expressiveness, washing their hands with invisible soap, noiselessly laying the one palm on the other; while they flashed an Oriental resolve on blood from their amber eyes, did something more than intend that upon [the foretold day] a merciless centenary should be held. They would, at whatever cost of blood and treasure expel from their country the Nazarene intruders, and restore the power of the followers of the Prophet.’ (p 20).

retribution to one of martyrdom should be regarded as more apparent than real. It could almost be said that in his representations of Indian Muslims, Lyall employs both languages at once, the one, as it were, persecuting – and thus inciting – the other.

In the light of the multiple forms of displacement evident in the Old Testament rhetoric of retribution, we can now consider more precisely the language of Christian martyrdom at the hands of Muslim ‘fanatics’. It is here that Žižek’s observations about the connections between the element of impossibility at the heart of the Lacanian politics of identity, and the idea of deferred fulfillment inscribed into all social ideologies, can be utilized to complicate our understanding of Muslim ‘conspiracy’ in Lyall’s writing. We can begin to unpack this insight with reference to a particular aspect of the deferral of purposive Christian Civilian action: the element of parity that it appears to signal between the representation of Christian Civilian and ‘Mahometan’ desires. From 11 July when the idea first enters the correspondence, Lyall’s perception of Muslim persecution is immediately and repeatedly linked to the question of retribution, which is in turn characterised as an unfulfillable fantasy, balked by the impossibility of ever adequately carrying out such a revenge.<sup>233</sup> In this immediate sense, the fantasy of Christian Civilian identity represents an ideological promise that can never be realized. ‘Christian’ reaction is deferred as soon as it is voiced, whereas a more generalized and secular language of retribution finds unrestricted expression throughout Lyall’s letters. For instance, writing to his father on 1 June 1857 describing the lawless actions of local villagers, Lyall boasts that:

I have been instrumental in causing some of them to be hanged and shot and flogged, and I never feel the slightest compassion. These cowardly villains have robbed and murdered hundreds of travellers and others, and I intend to shoot them down wherever I meet them. I flatter myself that I have done much against them already. I have burnt two villages to the ground and intend to burn twenty more.

---

<sup>233</sup> See in particular, letters of 11 July 1857; 13 March 1858; 14 May 1858; 24 November 1858.

In contrast to such straightforward assertions, on 11 July Lyall immediately follows up his observation that it is the ‘Mahometans’ who have led the way in the ‘barbarous murdering and mangling of the Christians’, with the conjoint, and consecutive, observation that ‘I’m afraid we shall never repay them as they deserve’.<sup>234</sup> This, the first mention in his correspondence of the theory of Muslim ‘conspiracy’, is immediately coupled with the idea of a revenge that, like the insatiability of the ‘Mahomedan’, can never be consummated. At the very outset of Lyall’s perception of a united Muslim opposition, then, the reader is struck by a curious parity between ‘Mahometan’ and ‘Christian’ desires. The element of balked fulfillment, it seems, engenders the parametric terms of their representation. Indeed, an undisclosed measure of reciprocity could be said to exist between the limits imposed on those representations. Not only are both reliant on the element of deferral for the continuing forms of their interaction, but the (necessarily incomplete) representation of either infers, and depends upon, the simultaneous presence and frustration of the other. Moreover, because, from 11 July onwards the Christian vocabulary of Old Testament retribution is gradually replaced by a language of enforced martyrdom (of, that is, the impossibility of Christian revenge)<sup>235</sup> centred on Muslim ‘conspiracy’, the very idea of a Christian Civilian ideology is only thereafter ever fully accessed in the letters in the form of the murderous but forever frustrated, Muslim. In other words, it exists purely through its own repeated, endless destruction.

---

<sup>234</sup> Letter to his father 11 July 1857.

<sup>235</sup> The enforced martyrdom of Lyall’s letters should be distinguished from an Evangelical Protestant rhetoric of Christian martyrdom that emerged soon after the outbreak of the ‘Mutiny’. The terms of that rhetoric were partly a response to the more generalised usage of Christian ‘martyrdom’ commonly circulating among the Anglo-Indian community. In this regard, see for instance the attempts made by the Reverend William Owen to separate out his own accounts of ‘Mutiny’ martyrdom as evincing the requisite criteria of public confession and adherence to the Christian faith, and a willingness to die for that adherence. His specific disavowal of the mass of victims at Cawnpore as true martyrs is made for precisely those reasons (Owen, *Memorials of Christian Martyrs, and other Sufferers for the Truth in the Indian Rebellion* (London: Simpkin, Marshall, 1859), p 26-27, 180). Owen’s concern is to articulate a Christian ‘victory’ over ‘sin and satan’; Lyall, on the other hand, draws no such doctrinal conclusions or distinctions from his accounts. As discussed below, the idea of Christian ‘martyrdom’ is here (and in other ‘Mutiny’ accounts) conscripted into a wider Anglo-Indian cultural rhetoric of victim-hood forged during the ‘Mutiny’.

If we turn these observations inside out, we can initially conclude that the entire system of representation of Muslim ‘conspiracy’ – and along with it, the ideology of Christian martyrdom – is structured through the mutual incitement of what we might think of as Christian Civilian and Muslim ‘insatiability’. In this regard, it is unsurprising that the parameters of impossibility that determine both are the only stable coordinates that accompany the trajectory of Muslim ‘conspiracy’ in the letters. All other tropes surrounding this rhetoric seem to accumulate value and attach themselves more or less gradually, and more or less exclusively, to its emergent forms. These two elements, on the other hand, appear and remain fixed in relation to each other from 11 July onwards, reproduced only under the auspices of Muslim ‘conspiracy’. Whenever Muslim ‘insatiability’ is flagged (through a recurrent declension of ‘fanatical hatred’<sup>236</sup>), deferred Christian retribution (most frequently signaled by Lyall’s use of the conditional tense<sup>237</sup>) is quickly, and often immediately, brought into view.<sup>238</sup> Moreover, that reciprocity can be inferred even when it is not specifically invoked. In other words, a Civilian ideology of communal solidarity and (deferred) purpose becomes the invisible partner to the progress of Muslim ‘insatiability’. In terms of the representation of Muslims, this conjunction becomes over the course of two years, quite literally, catastrophic. Muslim ‘insatiability’ is globalised through a rhetoric of apparently meaningless blood-lust that spills out beyond the bounds of Muslim-Christian encounters and comes to organise all other forms of representation in the letters.<sup>239</sup> We can chart the fleshing out of this

---

<sup>236</sup> 11 July, 30 August 1857; 19 March 1858; 24 November 1858; 18 September 1859

<sup>237</sup> For instance: ‘I *would* see any number of Mussulmans cut to pieces’ (30 August 1857; or ‘I *could* go every day and glut my eyes with the sight [of dead Musulmans], but...’, (23 October 1857); or ‘*If* by any means the Musulaman could be entirely exterminated...’ (14 May 1858). Italics added.

<sup>238</sup> See in particular, 11 July, 30 August 1857; 13 March, 14 May, 24 November 1858

<sup>239</sup> On Muslim ‘bloodthirstiness’, see in particular the letter to his mother, 19 March 1858: ‘the Indian Mussalman is beyond comparison the most obscenely bloody monster that ever was created...Nearly every act of peculiar turpitude that has been done by the low Mahometan mob, set on by the higher Mussulmans, and especially by the Moulvies etc etc [sic]. And if [to] the bloody nature of any one atrocity there be superadded a dash of obscenity, you may safely attribute it to a Mussulman.’ The ‘etc etc’ would here seem to flag the ways in which Lyall appears to be drawing on common discourses, both within the Anglo-Indian and Metropolitan communities.

process by examining its effect on the parallel role of the ‘Hindoos’ over the course of the year before and after 11 July. What we find is that as the language of Muslim ‘bloodthirstiness’ inflates, the references to caste (for instance, ‘Goojur’) outrages abates and becomes subsumed under the swiftly solidifying – and cleansing – category of ‘Hindoo’. So revolutionary and comprehensive is this parallel process of globalisation that not only does caste disappear for a while as a meaningful descriptive category from the correspondence, but by 30 August, the category of ‘Hindoo’ itself appears cleansed of complicity in what is by now an exclusively ‘Mahometan conspiracy’, leaving Lyall free to tell his mother that: ‘I do not bear any spite against the Hindoos (excepting the sepoys) and I am always rather sorry to see them killed...’. By 13 March 1858, in a letter to his brother-in-law, Mr Holland, he confidently describes the rebels as ‘Mahometans and sepoys’ only. By 26 September 1858, the revolution in paradigms is complete: Lyall avows to his mother that even ‘Hindoo sepoys’ are ‘guiltless’ of all atrocities. Given the reciprocity that we have already noted between the two forms of ‘insatiability’, we can see how, effectively, representations of the ‘Mutiny’ as a whole in the correspondence are increasingly organised by an implicit ideology of Anglo-Indian communal solidarity – but one that is crucially dependent on the management and globalisation of Muslim ‘conspiracy’.<sup>240</sup>

We can press this point about reciprocity further by returning again to the ‘Ex-King of Delhi’s Coat of Arms’. We may recall how the interdependence there of Muslim and Christian iconography becomes meaningful only within the overarching Mughal framework of the whole. The clarity of the Christian symbol (the child’s ‘halo’) is not matched by the ‘sable hand’; it is the determining framework of the deposed (Muslim) monarch that invests their coexistence with meaning. In literal terms, neither Mughal nor

---

<sup>240</sup> We may note too a forceful illustration here of the larger process discussed in Section 2.2 in which, during the ‘Mutiny’, the discourse centred on caste (here, the Gujar caste) is literally overwhelmed and absorbed into the previously loosely perceived larger affiliative religious identities – even though the two discourses might seem irreconcilable (as here with the rebellious ‘Goojurs’ and the exonerated ‘Hindoos’).



martyred child can generate their full meaning without the other. Thus the Mughal is invested with an Islamic sign by the ‘halo’, which in turn brings to life the ‘sable hand’ as a sectarian element driving the whole system of meaning. Similarly, even as they appear to engender it, both ‘halo’ and ‘hand’ are themselves only made meaningful by the Mughal-Muslim framework. This reciprocity is the source of the tension that Lyall’s correspondence viscerally draws out, and which the element of deferral holds in such precarious balance. Even as Muslim ‘conspiracy’ supplies the political meaning of the ‘Mutiny’ as a whole, it must, in representational terms, evoke, and draw its own rationale from, the trope of Christian Civilian martyrdom. In other words, like the ‘sable hand’, it can never fully take its place as a self-generating system of representation. Conversely, however, it is the invariable presence of the murderous Muslim that is required to invest the emptied Civilian identity with (Christian) meaning. The role of deferral, then, is not simply tangential to the system of representation by which Muslim ‘conspiracy’ operates in the letters. It is in fact crucial to its continued functioning since, by acting as a prophylactic between the Christian, Civilian and Muslim elements, it forestalls the immediate disclosure of the paradox of reciprocity by which the system as a whole is upheld. Just as the Muslim must be forever striving for, but never reaching, his desired genocidal goal, the Christian Civilian can not even begin to plumb the depths of communal retribution. The moment he does so, the system of representation collapses.

In this regard, then, we may say that within the correspondence the idea of Muslim ‘conspiracy’ can have coherence only so long as it remains immanent to, but not actually coexisting with, the representations of the Christian Civilian. Deferral and displacement act to preserve that immanence, so that, like the ‘Coat of Arms’, it is always maintained as the outer framework lending coherence to the representations (for instance, Muslims attacking Christians) within – even as, paradoxically, its own meaning is entirely constituted by them. If we briefly turn again to the letter of 11 July in which Muslim ‘conspiracy’ is first figured, we can begin to perceive some of the other means by

which that immanence is preserved. For the tableau of 11 July is literally as well as figuratively, a staged encounter. The letter in fact describes Lyall's participation in a British attack on a local fort in which some insurgents who had been 'plundering' the countryside had taken refuge. He boasts about having helped in the killing of 'about 130 men', and then goes on to describe how 'after taking the fort we let loose a crowd of people who had been plundered and harried by these miscreants and they went to work with a will, stripping bare every house in the most artistic manner.' There then follows the passage in which the 'plundering' 'Hindoo' and 'mangling' 'Mahometan' make their conjoint appearance. Set 'loose' upon the insurgents for precisely that purpose by the British, and following on from a massacre by the British in which Muslims seemed to have played no part,<sup>241</sup> the characteristics of the avaricious Hindu and murderous Muslim are then evoked in an isolated schema of comparison apparently distinct from the British frame of reference. It is into this seemingly Indian tableau that Lyall introduces for the first time the Anglo-Indian Christian victim ('us'). That Christian figure therefore is set at two removes from the Civilian action of the letter: first by the comparison to the plundering 'Hindoo'; and secondly, displaced in time and scene – for the actual interaction of Muslim and Christian has no literal place in the British encounter described; it happens elsewhere, beyond the immediate purview of the narrative.

This displaced staging of Muslim-Christian interaction literally instances the deferral inscribed into all representations of Muslim 'conspiracy' in Lyall's

---

<sup>241</sup> There is in fact an interesting recension of 'bloodthirstiness' in this letter that would seem to expand upon Wurgraft's point regarding the British displacement of violence. The scene begins with Lyall's own actions: 'I have an English rapier, sharp as a needle at the point. This I drove through the breast of one man, completely blunting the fine point on his backbone.' It later moves on to describe the loyal, 'perfectly staunch' Gurkha soldiers, 'always to be seen in the foremost rank with their faces smeared with their enemies' blood, as is their custom, and hewing away with their long knives.' Both British and Gurkha are linked through the concern with weaponry and tactics (though the 'Goorkha' is separated out through the reference to 'tradition'; whereas Lyall is concerned to detail the modernity of his 'English rapier' against the Indian 'merely cutting sword'). Outside of these two warrior-encoded figures lies the apparently method-less 'Mahometan' butchery of civilian corpses, which has neither a traditional nor a modern rationale and takes place without reference to time or place or warfare. For another example of the methodless fanatic in contrast to the British techniques of warfare, see Thornhill, pp 267-68.

correspondence. We should therefore think of it as another means by which the representations of Christian Civilian and Muslim are maintained as discrete elements, and the system as a whole preserved and extended. It would be useful here to widen out the frame of reference for a discussion of some of the other common prophylactic devices with which other Civilian narratives seek to enclose Muslim ‘conspiracy’, separating it out from the Christian Civilian through whom it is initially engendered. For as we shall see in the next section, the ‘elsewhere’ of Lyall’s letters – the displaced staging of Muslim ‘conspiracy’ – is a common feature of almost all Civilian ‘Mutiny’ narratives contemporary to, as well as those published at some remove from, the events of 1857-59.

## Section 2.5: Forms of prophylaxis in Civilian ‘Mutiny’ accounts

This section will expand upon the notion of the ‘displaced staging’ of Muslim ‘conspiracy’ in Lyall’s ‘Mutiny’ Correspondence by analysing the forms of its incidence in a variety of contemporary ICS accounts. We can start this process by locating one such instance of displacement in a narrative published in *The Delhi Gazette* in December 1857, by J F Kitchen, Head Assistant to the Collector of Goregaon. Kitchen begins his account with the news received by the Magistrate that a body of mutineers from the ‘3<sup>rd</sup> Cavalry’ were headed towards the city with the intention of ‘polish[ing] off Goregaon Christians’<sup>242</sup> – but it is largely characteristic of the narrative as a whole that the rebel ‘sowars’ (cavalrymen) are not glossed according to their religious affiliation. The only signs of any peculiarly Muslim disaffection are confined to the mention of some disquiet among the ‘Moslems of the force’ accompanying his flight from Goregaon to Delhi, and a ‘green flag’ carried by some insurgents from the ‘Gwalior Contingent’.<sup>243</sup> The signs of disaffection among the troops are apparently removed by ‘a change of locality’; and the rebels carrying the ‘green flag’ pose no immediate threat. In short, like Lyall, Kitchen has little direct experience of Muslim ‘conspiracy’. Quite the reverse, in fact: the narrative ends with a testimonial by the author on behalf of the (Muslim) Nawab of Jhujjur for his protection of ‘Christians’, and particularly for sheltering the author’s family.<sup>244</sup> Nevertheless, following directly on the heels of this testimony, Kitchen concludes and summarises:

The future is still hidden from us; but I hope to see the whole of India gradually calm down, as the Goorgaon [sic] District is gradually doing and I trust that the

---

<sup>242</sup> ‘Narrative of the Outbreak in the Goorgaon District. To the Editor of *The Delhi Gazette* by J F Kitchen’ in *Extracts from Indian Journals* (Cheltenham: 1894), p 2.

<sup>243</sup> Kitchen, pp 8, 10.

<sup>244</sup> Kitchen, pp 12-13.

firm Christian foundation upon which our empire should rest for the future, will defy all the assaults of infidel treachery and rebellion.<sup>245</sup>

Aside from its indication of how quickly the idea of Muslim ‘conspiracy’ took hold among Civilians during the ‘Mutiny’, Kitchen’s testimony provides a seemingly casual and commonplace instance of the displacement at work in all Civilian accounts – that is, the way in which Muslim ‘conspiracy’ almost always takes place beyond the bounds set by the narrative itself. Thus Kitchen’s summary literally bears no relationship to the foregoing account; the ‘Christian’ persecution it adduces happens (we must conjecture) ‘elsewhere’. It should come as no surprise that that ‘elsewhere’ points, like Lyall’s insatiable ‘Mohammedan’, towards a Civilian communal future dimly descried. It is almost as if the mention of one, by necessity, brought about the sudden and abrupt presence of the other in the narrative.

This ‘elsewhere’ seems to operate equally between, as well as within, Civilian narratives. Which is to say, that Muslim ‘conspiracy’ can be displaced between two apparently congruent accounts of the same events. For instance, if we look at the exhaustive compilation of – amongst others – Civilian ‘Mutiny’ narratives entitled *Annals of the Indian Rebellion* and edited by N A Chick in 1859, we find that time and again the question of Muslim ‘conspiracy’ is elided between source material (the original Civilian account) and the common narrative of Chick’s compendious text. This is starkly demonstrated in his precis of the narrative of William Edwards, Judge and Collector of Budaon in Rohilkhand at the time of the outbreak of the rebellion. Already in its third London edition by December 1858, Edwards’ narrative is a striking example of the swiftness with which ‘Mutiny’ accounts were absorbed into what we might, borrowing a contemporary euphemism, describe as a Metropolitan economy of ‘info-tainment’.<sup>246</sup>

---

<sup>245</sup> Kitchen, p 13. ‘Infidel’ here, as throughout Civilian discourse during the ‘Mutiny’, implies Muslim, as opposed to Hindu (generally designated ‘pagan’ or ‘heathen’). This was its common usage by Europeans throughout the nineteenth century. Rodinson, p 59, n120.

<sup>246</sup> William Edwards, *Personal Adventures during the Indian Rebellion in Rohilcund, Futtehghur, and Oude* (London: Smith, Elder and Company, 1858). By the time of its publication, the publishers Smith,

More importantly, alongside the dozens of other narratives listed by Chick, it demonstrates both the inter-textual nature through which the histories of the ‘Mutiny’ were later constructed, and the way in which the personal and the demi-official were promiscuously intertwined in the genesis of Muslim ‘conspiracy’. (Chick’s *Annals* was to become a key reference work on the subject of the ‘Mutiny’ for all later historians in the nineteenth century;<sup>247</sup> it seems also to have been the source for many reconstructions of ‘Mutiny’ events in novels, and even in later memoirs<sup>248</sup>). For the apparent misfit between the Metropolitan publication of Edwards’ narrative, and Chick’s demi-official encyclopaedic volume ultimately proves no obstacle to the translation between them of the idea of Muslim ‘conspiracy’.

Unlike the positivist recitation of figures and events in the *Annals*, Edwards account turns on the ambiguity of perception into which he as an eyewitness enters as he tries continually to penetrate the question of loyalty and treachery in all of his encounters. Since he is forced soon after his flight from Budaon to rely upon native protectors, this question of perception provides much of the narrative interest. Indeed, in keeping with both the immediacy of the narrative (which frequently contradicts itself, reinforcing the literal day-to-day progression of his understanding of events) and the topsy-turvy mutinous world it recreates, those encounters are often left unresolved as to the true intentions of his captors and guides. Thus we are left unsure by the end whether the ‘Thakoors’ who give him shelter acted as his captors, ready to denounce him should the tide of events turn, or whether they were loyally shielding him from the murderous plans of their neighbours (fearing the worst at one point, Edwards bitterly complains that ‘[the Thakoors] are always ready to give credit to sinister rumours, and never to any in our

---

Elder and Company already had five ‘Mutiny’ narratives in its back-catalogue (for details of which, see the listings in the end-pages of the Edwards volume).

<sup>247</sup> And continues to be so even now. See for instance, the Introduction to Salim Al-Din Quraishi (ed) *Cry For Freedom: Proclamations of Muslim Revolutionaries in 1857* (New Delhi: Sang-e-Meel Publications, 1999).

<sup>248</sup> Thornhill, for instance, appears to have borrowed some of his rhetoric directly from Chick. Compare his account of the massacre of ‘Christians’ in Agra (p 201) and that of Chick, p 767.

favour'<sup>249</sup>). All information within the narrative is, in this way, infected with doubt, relying on the many, often lethally, unreliable native informants through whom his picture of the rebellion is largely built up. However, when occasionally Edwards does put forward an, in his view, incontrovertible assertion, it usually runs counter to the narrative of Muslim 'conspiracy'. For instance, he insists that he is 'full satisfied that the rural classes [who joined rebellion with the sepoys]...could not then have been acted upon by any cry of their religion in danger' (p 17); and that despite rumours of unrest during 'Ede', the 'Mohammedans' of Burdaon were easily manipulated by him, 'knowing as I did that a bitter animosity existed between several of them' (p 4). Indeed, Muslims figure in the narrative almost uniformly as faithful guides,<sup>250</sup> 'friends',<sup>251</sup> and protectors (see in particular, the 'Shaikh of Shikooporah'<sup>252</sup>). Where reference is made to the possibility of Muslim 'conspiracy' (on only two occasions), it comes in the form of potentially misleading information given by natives, neither approved nor denied by the narrator.<sup>253</sup> In short, Muslim 'conspiracy' is at best a marginal feature of the atmosphere of disinformation that drives the narrative forward. In its relatively concrete examples of individuals tried and tested as to loyalty (wherever this is possible – see, in this regard, the chequered career of Nawab Ahmed Yar Khan<sup>254</sup>), the Muslims of the narrative are almost invariably shown in a favourable light; and needless to say, given the dubiety that informs the structure of Edwards' account, no single encounter is made the basis for any larger generalisations. Nevertheless, when it is absorbed by Chick into his larger narrative of the Budaon district in 1857-59, Edwards' account undergoes a radical transformation: 'Whether Oudians or not,' Chick writes, 'everywhere [Edwards] found

---

<sup>249</sup> Edwards, *Personal*, p 159.

<sup>250</sup> See for instance, Sooltan Mahommed Khan (Edwards, *Personal*, p 23).

<sup>251</sup> In reference to Mooltan Khan, who takes Edwards into his house at one point (Edwards, *Personal*, pp 53, 57).

<sup>252</sup> Edwards, *Personal*, pp 21-22, 24.

<sup>253</sup> Edwards, *Personal*, pp 146-47, 156.

<sup>254</sup> He first takes in Edwards, then seemingly betrays him, and then later appears to save him from betrayal (Edwards, *Personal*, pp 44, 47, 56-57).

the Mohammedans more hostile to the British than the Hindoos'.<sup>255</sup> Made to serve as the principal source for the history of the district in 1857-59, Edwards' account is here haplessly forced into a narrative of Muslim 'conspiracy' that had by 1859 gained its own momentum and consistency. The evidence for the 'conspiracy' itself – as with Lyall's staged encounter, and Kitchen's abrupt irruption of Muslim and Christian – falls outside of Chick's text. Indeed, it seems to take place in an 'elsewhere' lost in translation from Edwards to *Annals*. In this literal sense, the encounter between 'hostile' Muslims and persecuted British, in Budaon, as in the districts of Meerut or Bulandshahr, occurs beyond the narrative.<sup>256</sup>

But it is in Mark Thornhill's later memoir of the 'Mutiny' that the projection of Muslim 'conspiracy' from outside of the narrative field of vision is most readily apparent. Here, as with Lyall's letters, the Christian Civilian is safely quarantined from direct exposure to Muslim sectarianism even as the narrative itself becomes entirely subsumed by the idea and descriptions of Muslim 'conspiracy'. As discussed in the previous section, 'conspiracy' as such is never explicitly stated by Thornhill; instead, it is built up through the pervasive representation of Muslim 'fanaticism', which as we will now see, becomes a unifying motif for the narrative.<sup>257</sup> The irruption of Muslim sectarianism into Thornhill's account is signalled both at the level of content and of form, dividing it almost exactly into two distinct and equal halves. The first half of the narrative develops a strictly linear sequence of events and perceptions, in which Thornhill recounts the outbreak of hostilities in Muttra (in the Meerut district) and his flight from there to Agra. In terms of content, there is no mention in this first section of either Muslim 'fanaticism' or the suggestion of sectarianism; indeed, Muslims appear to figure within it exclusively

---

<sup>255</sup> Chick, p 348.

<sup>256</sup> It is worth pointing out that it was in precisely these kinds of districts – all lying relatively close to the Delhi throne – that the heartland of Muslim 'conspiracy' was thought to be located.

<sup>257</sup> As suggested in the last section, the line separating 'conspiracy' and 'fanaticism' is a highly deceptive one. See, for instance, his summary of the causes of the rebellion, in which he describes 'Mohammedan fanaticism' as induced partly because 'our rule, never popular with them, had of late become the object of their aversion'. Thornhill, p 333.



in the role of loyal companions and, not infrequently, saviours.<sup>258</sup> Nor does the high incidence of Muslim loyalty (and especially of the tireless fidelity of his principal guide, Dilawar Khan) prompt the narrative to relate it to, or contrast it with, the idea of Muslim ‘treachery’. Similarly, where, for instance, a perceived Muslim predisposition to unity of purpose is cited, it is only brought in as a counter-example to the disunity of caste-bound ‘Hindoo’ society in Muttra, and is not commented on in regard to the larger ‘Mutiny’ narrative.<sup>259</sup> In other words, like Kitchen’s narrative, or the letters of Alfred Lyall up until 11 July 1857, there appears to be almost no overt trace of Muslim sectarianism, or indeed perfidy, in the first half of the narrative.

The introduction of the suggestion of Muslim ‘conspiracy’ into Thornhill’s narrative occurs with his arrival in Agra just after the outbreak there of the open rebellion which he has already encountered in Muttra and the intervening countryside. The uprising in Agra takes place in the town outside the fort in which the British have already barricaded themselves. It entails the mutiny of the armed (and mostly Muslim) police force, destruction of the Civil Station and Cantonment, and the apparently sectarian murder of several ‘Christians’ there and in the city by a mutineer-led mob. It is at this point too that the form of the narrative undergoes significant revision, abandoning the relatively strict linearity of the first half for constant, although mostly undisclosed, forays into knowledge that could only have been gained after the narrative has come to an end. Past, present and future come together in Agra at precisely the point when narrative and narrator are literally stalled – that is, imprisoned within the besieged walls of the fort. Thus Muslim ‘conspiracy’ comes into being for Thornhill as a series of events taking place in the cantonment and civil station of the town outside the fort walls, garnered it would seem from the retrospection of the – sometimes published – accounts of others.

---

<sup>258</sup> Thornhill, pp 45, 54, 69, 134, 137, 141, 144, 149, 150, 151, 156, 160, 163.

<sup>259</sup> Thornhill, p 80. The concept of a peculiar Muslim genius for ‘unity of purpose’ was a common theme of European discourse from the late eighteenth century onwards. Hourani, pp 25-27.

Thornhill's own eyewitness account, then, does not feed into the larger narrative of events at Agra, so much as it is literally subsumed by them. Monologue gives way to polyphony, and it is between these competing, though often unsourced, 'observers' (such as Chick's *Annals*), that Muslim 'conspiracy' is constructed. In this sense, within the narrative, 'conspiracy' can only be accessed through the staging device of later, alternative narratives. It is thus both the means by which the narrative first transcends its own linear, monologic limitations, and the object of that transcendence. On another level, it is also the means by which Thornhill joins his own story to that of the larger 'Mutiny' narrative: Muslim 'conspiracy' literally welds him into the Anglo-Indian community.

As well as time, the advent of Muslim 'conspiracy' is also destructive of the limitations of place to which the foregoing narrative has submitted, allowing it to transcend the confined and partial circumstances of its viewpoint. For Thornhill the narrator is made to see precisely what Thornhill the protagonist of the memoir could not – the actual event of Muslim sectarianism; that is, the murderous encounter of Muslim with Christian. This transcendence of the unity of time and place by the idea of Muslim 'conspiracy' is vividly brought out in the abrupt introduction at this point of a series of ghostly stories in which figures from the fort's Mughal past manifest themselves to British witnesses (Chapter XXV 'Ghost Stories'). The first tale concerns the ghost of the Emperor Akbar who, on being told by a sepoy that the building is now a 'Company Fort', rises up and declaims: 'It is false! The house is mine! mine!! mine!!!'<sup>260</sup> The scene is then expanded to take in the history of Mughal rule, and the importance attached to Akbar 'by the natives'.<sup>261</sup> No attempt is made to spell out the significance of this juxtapositioning of Mughal rule with the massacre of 'Christians' beyond the walls. But the history here seems to refer back to a proleptic conversation between his office peons

---

<sup>260</sup> Thornhill, p 236.

<sup>261</sup> Thornhill, p 243.

before the outbreak of the ‘Mutiny’, in which the importance of the symbol of the Mughal throne is first disclosed to the author:

As I listened, I realised as I had never done before, the deep impression that the splendour of the ancient court had made on the popular imagination, how dear to them were its traditions, and how faithfully all unknown to us they had preserved them. There was something weird in the Mogul Empire thus starting into a sort of phantom life after the slumber of a hundred years.<sup>262</sup>

This proleptic, uncanny feeling becomes manifest in the narrative – in the form of Akbar’s ghost – at precisely the moment at which the treachery of the ‘Mohammedan officials’ in the Civil Service and Police appears to reveal itself, encouraging the mob outside the fort walls to riot, and to set about murdering ‘Christians’ (like Lyall, Thornhill is keen to emphasise the exclusivity of Muslim bloodthirstiness: ‘In every instance the murderers were the mutinous [Muslim] police’<sup>263</sup>). Separated literally by the walls of the fort, and metaphorically by the different time-zones of the narrative that here intrude, Christian Civilian, Mughal pretensions to power, and murderous Muslim are brought into an unmistakable – and unglossed – alignment. But – crucially – they never coalesce.

In terms of both form and content, then, we can say that Thornhill’s account as a whole is partly structured by the problem of how to represent Muslim ‘conspiracy’ while simultaneously preserving its immanence to, rather than collision with, representations of Muslims and Christian Civilians. By maintaining the linearity of the sequence of events and perceptions in the first half of the narrative, and by rupturing that integrity only once he as a protagonist is removed from the field of narrative vision, Thornhill is able to preserve a barrier between himself and the event of Muslim sectarianism every bit as effective as Lyall’s staged encounter.

Nevertheless, that rupture is also partly deceptive, for it involves the implicit re-casting of Muslim ‘conspiracy’ backwards into the key events of Thornhill’s flight from

---

<sup>262</sup> Thornhill, p 7.

<sup>263</sup> Thornhill, p 197.

Muttra. We have noted one such instance in the recovered prolepsis of the peons' conversation about the Mughal empire. Other re-readings include: the mysterious flight from the house of the 'Seths' who had been protecting him, now explained on his arrival in Agra (though the explanation by the Seths must have actually occurred long after the narrative ends), by the revelation of a 'plot' by the Seths' 'Mohammedan guards' to 'murder us all' – which Thornhill retrospectively perceives was 'our greatest peril',<sup>264</sup> and the explanation for the terrifying and ghostly parade of convicts which had blocked their road to Agra<sup>265</sup> as the work of the treacherous 'Mohammedan official' who had thrown open the Agra gaol at a pre-arranged signal.<sup>266</sup> Indeed, these retrospectively recast events can be seen as links in a chain that leads inevitably towards, and is ultimately given meaning by, Muslim perfidy. For instance, the earlier 'phantom' of the Mughal Empire is connected to the convicts by their presence as 'phantoms from another world' who render the British 'invisible' by their refusal to take note of (or indeed even to look at) them,<sup>267</sup> becoming in effect, as they rattle their broken British chains, uncanny apparitions of the loss of British power – just as Akbar's ghost later returns to haunt the dispossessed British imprisoned within 'his' fort, discountenancing their claims to authority or ownership. A similar continuum of associations can be unearthed with regard to the earlier reference to Muslim unity of purpose triumphing over native disunity. This motif is echoed later by an almost identical reference to British cohesion as the secret to their first conquests over a divided Hindu society<sup>268</sup> – which in turn, in the second half of the narrative, finds a larger echo in the emphasis laid upon the disunity of the British officials of Agra in the face of a cohesive Muslim-led uprising within the city, purportedly coordinated by Muslim 'officials' with the army mutineers encamped

---

<sup>264</sup> Thornhill, p 163.

<sup>265</sup> Thornhill, pp 145-48.

<sup>266</sup> Thornhill, pp 195-96.

<sup>267</sup> Thornhill, p 147.

<sup>268</sup> Thornhill, p 126.

outside the city.<sup>269</sup> Thus Muslim unity of purpose becomes an uncanny usurpation of a now dispossessed British virtue.

In this way, the apparently senseless events of the first half of the narrative are given meaning by the perceptions of the second – which are themselves structured principally by what is learnt outside of the narrative of the determining hand of the ‘Mohammedans elsewhere’ who ‘had shown that they were as a body bitterly hostile to our rule.’<sup>270</sup> Even in Agra itself, the determining events take place beyond the insulating walls of the fort, and as with the plot by the ‘Mohammedan guards’, are only given coherence by later reconstruction. Thus the operations of that sectarian ‘bitterness’ are consistently displaced outside of the narrative, even as they provide the means by which the text as a whole can be drawn together and infused with meaning. As with the other narratives discussed, these centripetal, unifying effects of Muslim ‘conspiracy’ occur only after the events themselves, they are always accessed ‘elsewhere’. Similarly, their primary effect is to point the narrative forward towards an undisclosed future, from the vantage point of which the conspirators have already been unmasked; and towards whose retributive justice the narrative may soon advance.<sup>271</sup> Most important of all with regard to this discussion, is that they act effectively and invariably to segregate the author from any actual encounter with the workings of Muslim ‘conspiracy’. In this regard, the otherwise puzzling disjunction between the two modes of narrative in Thornhill’s memoir can only be explained by the observation that in the first half of the narrative, what his protagonist self didn’t know – literally, as well as effectively (through retrospection) –

---

<sup>269</sup> Thornhill, p 262.

<sup>270</sup> Thornhill, pp 179-80.

<sup>271</sup> The final chapters of Thornhill’s account describe his service with the volunteers who accompanied the military column that followed from Agra in pursuit of the ‘rebel army’. It should come as no surprise, given the above discussion, that even there the protagonist serves only as a witness to a partial revenge that takes place outside the immediate scope of the narrative, leaving only the mutilated Muslim bodies for him to discover (the mutilation, he is told, being the work of over-zealous Sikhs). Thornhill, p 313.

couldn't harm him. And neither, of course, could it disturb the necessary integrity of the concept of Muslim 'conspiracy'.

We can begin to see how this pattern of the segregation of Christian Civilian from the staging point of Muslim 'conspiracy' works on a variety of levels, between as well as within texts, and is endemic to Civilian accounts of the 'Mutiny'. Because Muslim 'conspiracy' is invariably a retrospective affect (never immediately present), deferral must be understood in those narratives as an organising principle for all systems of the representation of Muslim-British encounters in 1857-59. Given both these factors – the omnipresence of Muslim 'conspiracy', and its keynote of deferral – we can further see how it holds the potential for deflecting the question of the representation of the interaction of colonialist and insurrectionary colonial society as a whole. Where 'Mutiny' occurs, the 'fanatic' Muslim intrudes; and his intrusion entails the deferral/displacement of the insurrectionary event – through himself, as it were, to 'elsewhere'.

In comparing the prophylaxis employed by Lyall to preserve Muslim 'conspiracy', there is one further point we can make using Thornhill's narrative. It concerns a tendency that also recurs in Lyall's later arguments surrounding the future of British governance in India, and it entails the destabilisation of the category of 'Christian' itself – in the 1870s a not altogether unpredictable rhetorical outcome, given the strict code of secularity that had come to prevail.<sup>272</sup> But in 1857-59, when confronted with a Muslim-led 'war of religion' (to borrow Niall Ferguson's reprisal of nineteenth century rhetoric), the opacity of meaning that comes to attach to the label 'Christian' is perhaps less easily understood, since it was precisely that descriptive epithet which the British were claiming as one of the principal determinants of the course of the events at hand. Nevertheless, across a range of Civilian accounts of this period, from the Metropolitan-

---

<sup>272</sup> See in particular, Lyall, 'Our Religious Policy'.

published memoir to the demi-official Anglo-Indian conspectus of events, the category of ‘Christian’ often appears to contain several possible definitions (such as ‘native’, ‘Eurasian’, ‘Anglo-Indian’, ‘European’ and ‘Civilian’) but to frequently elude direct conflation with any single constituency, and direct contact with any British variant in particular. Indeed, for most accounts, there is no one definition of the category, from the most generalised to the most specific, that is consistently maintained throughout. Of especial relevance here, is the variety of means by which this opacity consistently maintains the separation of the categories of ‘Civilian’ and ‘Christian’ at the immediate lexical level, even though their conjunction might be signaled on a deeper semantic level. In this regard, the role of the Muslim ‘fanatic’ is conspicuous, both, it would seem, as an incitement to that lexical separation and, paradoxically, as the primary means by which its import is negated.

This particular paradox can be located in Lyall’s letter of 11 July 1857, in which the Civilian is first identified as a Christian object of Muslim murderous intention. In one sense, the unwonted attention of the Muslim ‘fanatic’ relates to the only previous occasion in which the idea of the Civilian possessing a Christian persona has occurred in the letters. On that occasion, as it is described in a letter of 24 February 1857, Lyall’s identity as a Christian had also been disclosed – and in part, constituted – through native eyes, when his office staff had upbraided him for forgetting an important ‘festival’ day in the Christian calendar (Ash Wednesday). In other words, a Civilian-Christian identification first appears in the correspondence as dependent on native affirmation. On 11 July, however, the nexus drawn by Indian Muslims between ‘Christian’ and Civilian is, in a more literal, semantic sense, incomplete. Lyall writes that: ‘[The Mohametans] hate us with a fanatical hate that we never suspected to exist among them and have everywhere been the leaders in the barbarous murdering and mangling of the Christians.’ As it stands, although ‘the Christians’ at first appears to refer directly to the English (‘us’), in fact it may literally refer to native ‘Christians’ only – or indeed, to native and

British. The grammatical ambiguity is left unresolved, even though, at least on a secondary level of meaning, a link appears to have been made between ‘us’ and ‘the Christians’. But if we do parse ‘the Christians’ as referring to natives only, the category itself becomes, retrospectively, an obstacle intruding between ‘fanatical’ Muslim and Civilian (‘us’). In this immediate lexical sense, the Muslim could be said to incite a separation of the category of the British as rulers from the potential category of the British as Christians. This brings up the paradox that, on the one hand, ‘Christianity’ as a constituent of British identity may here be read as an affect of native (Muslim) actions – that is, we know the ‘us’ to characterise the British as ‘Christians’ only because of the Muslim disclosure (through persecution) of native (‘the’) ‘Christians’. But on the other hand, we may say that the separation of British church and state, at least linguistically, is brought about by precisely that ‘fanatical’ Muslim presence (intervening between ‘us’ and ‘the Christians’). It is in the light of this kind of linguistic ambiguity, that the category of British ‘Christian’ in the correspondence can be said to be both dependent on and at the same time, partially effaced by, the Muslim ‘fanatic’.

The tension surrounding this ambiguity can be seen in Lyall’s letter to his father, dated 30 August 1857. Describing the intensity of feeling ‘against’ the British felt by the Indian Muslims, he deletes ‘us’ from the phrase, ‘us Christians’; then, in reference to the opposing ‘fury’ it has summoned up in the British, he deletes another epithet (most probably, ‘Christians’) and replaces it with ‘us’. In other words, precisely how the Civilian is to be labeled in the context of Muslim sectarianism has become a matter of conscious (and decidedly problematic – the correspondence as a whole is remarkably free of emendations) debate. What follows is a definite pattern of what we might describe as displaced description, whereby the British are always, and only, ‘Christians’ by a process of adjacent, and for the most part secularised, epithets, apparently enjoined by the presence of Muslim ‘conspiracy’. Thus in his letter of 19 March 1858: ‘Now if [the Mohammedans] will do such [barbarous] things [to Hindoos] what will they do to *our*



*people*, whom they hate and fear so intensely.’ Or in his letter of 27 March 1859: ‘I am surrounded by a population of deadly enemies – I speak of the Mahometans, who inhabit all the towns, and I imagine how delicious it must be to breathe freely among *my own people*.’ Or, perhaps most conspicuously, in his letter to his father, dated 24 November 1858: ‘the Mohamedans...are a set of bloodthirsty fanatics who hate *us* to a man, and who will never be reconciled to *us*...perhaps the recent outrages upon *European consuls* may in some degree open the eyes of the English. The Mussulmans have always been the deadly enemies of *Christians*, and always will be.’<sup>273</sup> In this last example, not only does the secular (third-person) denomination ‘European consuls’ intrude between ‘us’ and the sectarian imagery of Muslims and Christians in open conflict, but that image is itself translated into the third person and abstracted geographically and temporally from the colonial encounter. At a superficial linguistic level, then, the effect of Muslim sectarianism in the correspondence seems to be to open out the potentially problematic category of British ‘Christian’ to a series of re-negotiations. Each instance of re-negotiation in the letters, however, tends towards the cumulative opacity of the relationship between ruler and faith. The more sharply defined the role of the ‘fanatical’ Muslim becomes, the more the Civilian retreats into a variety of, sometimes disavowed, non-Christian classifications. In this regard, we may say that, in Lyall’s letters, even as he incites their separation, the Muslim ‘fanatic’ effectively becomes the most visible link between the Civilian and his ‘Christian’ identity. We might therefore further suggest that it is the radical uncertainty in the one category – ‘Christian’ – that may partly account for the over-determination of the other: for in Lyall’s letters, as in other Civilian accounts of 1857-59, no comparable sense of ambiguity attaches to the Muslim rebel: he is always, and visibly, ‘fanatical’.

---

<sup>273</sup> Emphases added in this, and the previous two quotes.

Although published almost a quarter of a century later, the opacity that surrounds the category of ‘Christian’ is still apparent in Mark Thornhill’s memoir of 1857. The denomination itself is introduced late in the narrative, in reference to two ‘Christian clerks’ taking refuge in the house of some ‘Seths’ and being warned that ‘the feeling against Christians was so strong that if their presence was suspected it might cause the mob to attack it.’<sup>274</sup> Although no specific explanation is imparted, it would seem that ‘Christian clerks’ refers either to native converts or Eurasians<sup>275</sup> (‘clerks’ being a grade of civil service generally beneath Anglo-Indian employment);<sup>276</sup> while the conjoint reference to the ‘feeling against Christians’ then implicitly expands the category to include the British. Since it leaves these assumptions unexplained, the narrative appears to split itself in terms of audience. For a Metropolitan audience unversed in the structure and jargon of the Indian Civil Service (and perhaps misled by the reference to the clerks being made to change out of their ‘European clothes’), insurrection is for the moment eclipsed by religious sectarianism – even though, on another level, it may have been thought that ‘Christians’ is a term synonymous with the British in India. However, for an Anglo-Indian readership, the idea of ‘Christianity’ as an object of sectarian hostility is here first introduced – at the commonplace level of terminology – through the bodies of native ‘clerks’. Insurrection and sectarianism are in this way conflated and simultaneously displaced onto a native conduit. From the start, then, beyond its broadest religious definition, a certain opacity attaches to the category of ‘Christian’ in the

---

<sup>274</sup> Thornhill, pp 88-89.

<sup>275</sup> In the nineteenth century the British in India commonly referred to those of mixed European and Indian heritage as ‘Eurasians’. The terminology has been adopted here for convenience (to distinguish them from the then British Anglo-Indians).

<sup>276</sup> In the two decades prior to the ‘Mutiny’, and following on from Bentinck’s era of reform in Indian Civil Service employment, Indians faced increasing obstacles to the path of higher office in the ICS. The most recent of these was the Charter Act of 1853 introducing competitive examinations. Since these were held in London, most native applicants now found themselves effectively shut out of covenanted service. While they continued to fill subordinate posts, particularly in the revenue and judicial departments, very few rose into the higher administrative levels. During this period, the percentage of Eurasians employed in these subordinate posts increased disproportionate to the aggregate of native recruitment and to their own percentage of the population. R P Sikka, *The Civil Service in India: Europeanisation and Indianisation Under the East India Company (1765-1857)* (New Delhi: Uppal Publishing, 1984), pp 109-10, 154-86.

narrative. For a Metropolitan audience, it extends to a variety of potential social, political and ethnographic readings – are the ‘Christian clerks’ native converts, Eurasians, Europeans or subaltern British? For its Anglo-Indian audience, it exists at the level of sectarianism and insurrection. That is, it defers the issue of whether hostility to ‘Christians’ arises out of British political or purely native communal sources, obscuring the question as to what extent ‘Christians’ is simply a political denomination. However, in obverse proportion to the extent to which these sources of antagonism are confused, for Anglo-Indians its primary result would seem to be an incipient distancing – through the native object – of the category ‘Christian’ from colonialist. If for the Metropolitan readership the opacity of the category seems to achieve an almost diametrically opposite effect – that is, bringing colonialist and ‘Christian’ closer together – its issue is remarkably congruent. The clerks are not – at an immediate linguistic level – being persecuted for being British government servants; consequently, later on when the British are under attack, at one level it will not be clear whether they suffer more or less or for no other reason than, the same sectarian hostility under which ‘Christians’ (native or otherwise) have first been produced as targets. Of importance here is the fact that this confusion will exist whether or not they – the British – are specifically labeled ‘Christians’. In other words, the idea of the British as sectarian objects of persecution has been established without having to include them definitively within a religious communal category. The division between Anglo-Indian and Metropolitan readership is thus more apparent than real. In this respect, we may note again how J F Kitchen’s narrative, originally intended for an exclusively Anglo-Indian audience, begins with the the approach of ‘80 rebel sowars of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Cavalry’ who intended to ‘polish off Goregaon Christians’,<sup>277</sup> – an unexplained description that would have been imprecise as to ethnicity even among its own community of readers. For to describe the British in Goregaon as

---

<sup>277</sup> Kitchen, p 2.

‘Goregaon Christians’ would have been unthinkable; and to suggest that all Christians except the British in Goregaon were under threat would have been equally absurd. Effectively, ‘Goregaon Christians’ interposes ‘native Christians’ between the British and the ‘rebel sowars’. For Anglo-Indians as much as for any Metropolitan audience, then, opacity would seem to be the point.

This phenomenon, observable in Thornhill, Kitchen and Lyall, as in other Civilian accounts, can be partly explained by a desire to reinforce, both to themselves and to the Metropolis, the supposedly reactionary ‘religious’ nature of the multiplicity of rebellions faced in 1857-59. By widening out the category of ‘Christian’ from its common pre-1857 usage as a synonym for British/European,<sup>278</sup> so that it now included, and often failed to differentiate Europeans from, native converts and Eurasians, the perception is reinforced that it is primarily religion, and not secular colonial rule, that is under attack.<sup>279</sup> By then, as it were, losing themselves within the category, the British can both de-escalate the nature of the attacks into a communal riot of sorts, and simultaneously

---

<sup>278</sup> In official discourse before and after the ‘Mutiny’, converts were invariably termed ‘native Christians’. (Gauri Viswanathan, *Outside the Fold: Conversion, Modernity, and Belief*, (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, repr. 2001; 1998), p 81); the earliest provincial censuses listing ‘Christianity’ as a category were always concerned to maintain distinct ‘Native’ and ‘European’ subdivisions (Jones, ‘Religious’, p 79).

<sup>279</sup> It should be emphasised here that it is not being suggested that such sectarian attacks on ‘native Christians’ did not take place. Indian Christians were certainly on occasion the targets of sectarian hostility in 1857-59 – although this can to some extent be put down to their perceived roles as symbols, and not infrequently as employees, of colonial rule (on this viewpoint, see Avril A Powell, ‘Muslim-Christian Confrontation: Dr Wazir Khan in Nineteenth Century Agra’ in Kenneth W Jones, ed, *Religious Controversy in British India: Dialogues in South Asian Languages*, (Albany: SUNY Press, 1992), pp 77-92). There have been no detailed statistical studies or analyses undertaken in this area. But for a more general, if anecdotal, discussion of Christian persecution in 1857-8, see Stephen Neill, *A History of Christianity in India: 1707-1858* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), Chapter 18; and Jeffrey Cox, *Imperial Fault Lines: Christianity and Colonial Power in India, 1818-1940* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002), pp 30-31. The main point to be made here, however, is the marked disparity between the occasions for these attacks and their incidence and importance in Civilian accounts. In this regard, it should be noted that despite more than a half-century of an expanding missionary presence, native converts in northern India in 1857 formed a negligible percentage of the population (Powell, *Missionaries*, pp 162, 286; Viswanathan, p 78); for instance, one estimate puts the figure for ‘Native Christians’ in the whole of Punjab province in 1852 as no more than 2000 (Avril A Powell, ‘Processes of Conversion to Christianity in Nineteenth Century North-Western India’ in Geoffrey A Oddie, ed, *Religious Conversion Movements in South Asia: Continuities and Change, 1800-1900*, (Richmond: Curzon Press, 1997), p 17. This disparity is registered in Thornhill’s account when he admits that, notwithstanding the fact that they are made to account for the entire course of the uprising in Agra, ‘not many were, indeed, killed’ (Thornhill, p 201).

attempt to escape the very category of communalism by means of the smokescreen of native ‘Christians’, who – as here – invariably become the immediate object of descriptions of sectarian assaults. However, the contradictory nature of these impulses – to bring the narrative of the ‘Mutiny’ in line with a communal riot, but requiring at the same time to escape being identified as the cause of such an event – makes of the category a potentially dangerous site of representation. In this sense, as both lure and snare, the narrative is caught between seeking clarification (that, for instance, ‘Christians’ other than themselves were under attack) and seeking to defer, at least for the moment, all question of clarity (that they, as Christians, may be the inevitable cause and focus of a concerted, potentially proto-national, communal rebellion).

As in Lyall’s correspondence, the figure of the Muslim ‘fanatic’ works in Thornhill’s narrative to challenge, but ultimately to reinforce, precisely this ambiguity in the self-representation of the British ‘Christian’. He incites the introduction and repeated presence of the ‘Christians’ in the narrative, while his sectarian intentions are thwarted by an increasingly nebulous British component to that presence. So effective is this process, that the category is rendered opaque equally to Metropolitan and Anglo-Indian reader: from the moment of his entrance, there is literally no privileged position from which its meaning can be accurately gauged. Aside from the ‘clerks’ (and as in the Lyall correspondence), the narrative contains no mention of ‘Christians’ until the first rumblings of Muslim ‘conspiracy’. They are then apparently introduced initially as a counterweight to the ‘Mahommedan police’, because of whose prejudice their ‘volunteer corps’ is unfairly disarmed by the misguided Civilian officials.<sup>280</sup> At this point, we may interpret the category as referring only to natives, a perception underlined when the narrator describes the retreat into Agra fort of the ‘English and Christians’.<sup>281</sup> It is only when a ‘jihad’ is declared by the ‘Mohammedans’ of the city, and the subsequent

---

<sup>280</sup> Thornhill, p 181.

<sup>281</sup> Thornhill, pp 188, 198.

murders are described, that a marked degree of confusion begins to surface in the category.<sup>282</sup> The narrator, now drawing on – unnamed – sources other than himself (under the Chapter XIX heading, ‘Prior Events’), records that the ‘jihad’ was to be prosecuted against ‘Christians only’ (as opposed to, presumably, Hindus). He then clarifies that: ‘Many of the victims were women, many were children; with one or two exceptions, all were natives.’<sup>283</sup> Until this clarification, not only might ‘Christians’ have been assumed to be a purely native denomination, it appeared to have been one that did not even account for the ‘Eurasians’. This group had been earlier brought into the narrative alongside with, but distinct to, the ‘Christians’. Here they served as a counterweight to the delusive ‘trust’ placed in ‘Mohammedans’ by the Agra Civilians, being one of the groups who were discriminated against in the active prosecution of that prejudice (‘Christians and Eurasians’).<sup>284</sup> Nevertheless, the single example that Thornhill cites to illustrate the massacre of the ‘Christians’ in Agra city, turns out to be – though is here not specifically referred to as – a ‘Eurasian’ (‘Major Jacobs’).<sup>285</sup> The category ‘Christian’ which had begun its life in the narrative alongside the potential ‘Mohammedan’ conspirator and had been invested with a meaning distinct from the ‘English’ and ‘Eurasians’, becomes at the outbreak of Muslim ‘conspiracy’, inclusive of both. However, where it is necessary to point out that the actual victims of the ‘jihad...against the Christians only’ were, with ‘one or two exceptions’, not British, the narrator avoids making any such stipulation as to the – previously demarcated – group of ‘Eurasians’. The Muslim ‘fanatic’ is here not only a catalyst for the introduction and expansion of the category of ‘Christians’, but at the same time appears to necessitate the sequestering of the British from its definition. In other words, in terms of representation, the potentially dangerous clarity he brings to the category ‘Christian’, disclosing and

---

<sup>282</sup> Thornhill, pp 199-201.

<sup>283</sup> Thornhill, p 201.

<sup>284</sup> Thornhill, pp 179-80.

<sup>285</sup> Thornhill, p 201.

constantly re-interpreting its presence in the narrative, ultimately works to exclude rather than define the colonialist; as in Lyall's correspondence, the result is the effective uncoupling of colonialist from his visible religious identification. As if to underline this shift in focus, having dismissed the 'one or two' British 'exceptions', the narrator goes on later to refer to the 'entire Christian population' who had 'taken refuge within the walls of the fort' – bringing the category, at the close of the murderous Muslim-led uprising, to an apparently inclusive, but now largely impenetrable and effectively destabilised, status.<sup>286</sup> What happened in Agra cantonment, civil station, and city during the 'riots' of 1857, has been established: a sectarian murder-spree. By whom, it couldn't be more clear: the 'Mohammedan' police force, inflaming, leading and directing the citizenry. But against whom, is now, at an immediate linguistic level, all but opaque, for the only category offered, 'Christians', has lost most of its social, ethnic, and political connotations. That loss in the definition of the object of rebellion is fed back into the narrative in the form of a lethal strain of uncertainty over rebel motivations – beyond, that is, the self-fulfilling, rampant sectarianism on display. The ultimate effect of this climactic scene, then, is the bold relief of the Muslim 'fanatic' in contradistinction to the near-complete effacement of the British 'Christian'.

In short, then, one must conclude that here again Muslim 'conspiracy' redirects the supposedly motivational communal categories of the 'Mutiny' ('British', 'Christian') to an 'elsewhere' beyond the reach of narrative scrutiny, and so preserves its own system of representation intact. The distance in time separating Thornhill's narrative from the 'Mutiny', as well as the different strategies available to the genre of the memoir (able, for instance, to draw on other sources of narrative and temporal schema), means that the devices used to separate Muslim 'fanatic' and British Christian lack the more visceral, improvised air of the constant, fraught re-negotiations of self-representation seen in

---

<sup>286</sup> Thornhill, p 201.

Lyll's letters. The memoir should not, however, be regarded as distinct in kind. This can be more directly inferred by reference to the very contemporary official and demi-official sources from which Thornhill appears to have gained some of his information for the chapter entitled 'Prior Events'. For some of these sources, directed at an exclusively Anglo-Indian audience, are themselves impregnated with a remarkably similar ambiguity rendering the category 'Christians' problematic in much the same way, and producing – as in Thornhill's narrative – the curious result of a consistent omission in the published informational record: that is, the precise number of British who were killed through sectarian aggression in the three days of rioting in Agra in 1857.<sup>287</sup> In this regard, and by way of concluding this discussion of the destabilised category of 'Christians', we can briefly compare the official 'Narrative of Events attending the Outbreak of Disturbances and the Restoration of Authority in the Agra District in 1857-8', compiled in 1859 by the then Magistrate of Agra, A L M Phillips, for the records of the Commissioner, Agra Division.<sup>288</sup> Phillips' sources for his narrative included both military and Civilian official memoranda, as well as Anglo-Indian journalism, and regional Civilian reports – in other words, he drew on a variety of communal and official resources to stake his claims to an authoritative and comprehensive statement and explication of events in Agra.<sup>289</sup>

Nevertheless, we find in his narrative precisely the same disparity between the definition of the persecutory Muslim 'fanatic' and the opacity of definition attending his 'Christian'

---

<sup>287</sup> For instance, see the 'List of murders committed in the city during July 1857, with notes of rewards recommended for the apprehension of criminals', published in 1859 in Chick, pp 788-89. Most of the names on the list are of European origin, with no apparent indigenous inflection; presumably a proportion – perhaps as low as the 'one or two exceptions' mentioned by Thornhill – were in fact British. Yet there is not a single classificatory sign to mark them out. For example, 'Major Jacobs', whom Thornhill describes as of mixed French and Indian parentage, appears on the list alongside of, but not distinguished from, Mr F C Hubbard, whom the magistrate, Phillips, describes in his own narrative (also reproduced in Chick) as a British 'professor of literature' at Agra College (Chick, p 766). See also the standard 'Mutiny' history of Kaye, pp 391-393; and William Muir's compendious two volume *Records of the Intelligence Department of the Government of the North-West Provinces of India During the Mutiny of 1857* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1902). The omission of these details in Muir's selection is all the more conspicuous, since Muir was himself stationed in Agra at the time of the uprising.

<sup>288</sup> Published in full in Chick, pp 756-68.

<sup>289</sup> Chick, p 756.



victims, which later organises Thornhill's account. The first mention of the latter category refers to an official order that all the families of 'Christians' repair to the fort for safety. Since it simultaneously refers to the 'native garrison' to be withdrawn from the fort, it might seem that 'Christians' begins life in the narrative as a potentially exclusive category (a reversed model for Thornhill's 'English and Christians').<sup>290</sup> However, at the same time, a note of ambiguity to the category would seem to be sounded by the observation that on receiving news of the open rebellion at 'Allygurh', 'great alarm was felt by the Christian population'.<sup>291</sup> As with the early reference to the threat to 'Goregaon Christians' in Kitchen's narrative, the phrase 'Christian population' must here include the British while at the same time having the secondary effect of disclosing, if not interposing, a native constituency. That neither the exclusive nor inclusive definitions bespeak a commonly understood mode of Anglo-Indian discourse – and one therefore requiring no qualifications – is signaled by the reference to a separate order made later for 'the admission of *Native* Christians into the fort'.<sup>292</sup> Even at the level of official informational communications, then, the term 'Christians' represents in British 'Mutiny' accounts, an unstable descriptive category. This instability is quickly diffused throughout Phillips' narrative which, while pointing (like Bowring in his contemporary report) to several factors indicating the absence of an orchestrated Muslim 'conspiracy',<sup>293</sup> comes to rest entirely on the idea of a 'fanatical' 'Mohammedan' campaign motivated precisely by that single, and here irreducible, object, 'Christians':

From the time of the proclamation [of the reign of king of Delhi] the property of Christians wherever they could be found in the city was plundered and themselves, both men, women and children ruthlessly murdered.<sup>294</sup>

---

<sup>290</sup> Chick, p 757.

<sup>291</sup> Chick, p 757.

<sup>292</sup> Chick, p 762. Italics added.

<sup>293</sup> For instance, Phillips defines the proclamation of the 'reign of the king of Delhi' by the Muslim 'Cotwal, Murad Alee' as 'an act spontaneous on the part of the Cotwal and the police, and not to be imputed to any impulse from the rebel force' (Chick, pp 766-67). From the safe distance of retirement, Thornhill implies – though he does not insist upon – quite the opposite, Thornhill, pp 188-89.

<sup>294</sup> Chick, p 767.

As in Thornhill, the uprising in Agra is focused on a category that is by this point all but impenetrable. Thus when Phillips records ‘the number of Christians who were...murdered’, the precision with which he divides the figures into ‘men’, ‘women’ and ‘children’, stands in stark contrast to the lack of *any* other identifiable classifications (such as ‘English’, ‘European’, ‘native’ or ‘Eurasian’). We can further contrast the absolute opacity of the category with the care which is taken to describe the Muslim constituency: ‘the [Mohammedan] police...were joined by the butchers, and Mewatees of Wazepoorah and other places, and by the low Mahomedan rabble’ – though not by any ‘Mahomedan...of any repectability’ or ‘leaders of the Mahomedan citizens.’<sup>295</sup> In this way, a similar linked imbalance occurs in the official script, between the recession of the British ‘Christian’ and the occlusive and self-explanatory presence of the Muslim ‘fanatic’. The result, even at this official and purely explanatory level of narrative, is the preemptive deconstruction of all explanation beyond the categorical, and irreducible, description of Muslim-Christian sectarianism. At the same time, of course, here as in Lyall, Kitchen, Thornhill and Chick/Edwards, the one event that eludes description is the actual Muslim encounter with the British ‘Christian’.

---

<sup>295</sup> Chick, pp 766-67.

## Section 2.6: Some Preliminary Conclusions

We can begin to summarise the effects of the system of representations denoted in this chapter as Muslim ‘conspiracy’, by underlining the most immediate import of the destabilisation of the category ‘Christian’. In contrast to the lack of reciprocity seen in the disinclination shown by Lyall’s ‘Hindoo’ to engage with the colonialist demand for recognition, one potential consequence of this destabilisation is the suggestion of ‘indigenisation’ that it seeks to attach to the British ‘Christian’. In this regard, the now inclusive category ‘Christian’ acts as a partial defence against the vacuum of motives disclosed by the events of 1857-59: that is, as one means by which the idea of colonial despotism is held at bay, and a renewed understanding of British relations to Indian society constructed. The briefly resurgent, and as the narratives demonstrate, deeply conflicted desire to present themselves as, and to bind themselves to, an indigenous community, is (ironically enough, after the free usage that his own narrative makes of them) given bitter expression by Thornhill in his concluding chapter, when he argues that ‘the only class on whose fidelity it was found we could rely was the one whom our policy had discountenanced, and whose increase it had prevented, namely, the native Christians.’<sup>296</sup> Similarly, it can be heard in W J Shepherd’s *A Personal Narrative of the Outbreak and Massacre at Cawnpore* (1879), when he speaks of the ‘Eurasians and Anglo Indians’ as ‘essentially [sic] a new nation in embryo’.<sup>297</sup> In the narratives discussed above, however, such ‘indigenisation’ is only possible to the extent to which the presence of the Muslim ‘fanatic’ can be demonstrated and described, for the clarity of

---

<sup>296</sup> Thornhill, p 334.

<sup>297</sup> W J Shepherd, *A Personal Narrative of the Outbreak and Massacre at Cawnpore During the Sepoy Revolt of 1857* (2<sup>nd</sup> Edition, Lucknow: London Printing Press, 1879; 1862), pp 66-67. For the brief flirtation with Eurasians in 1857-9, see Ballhatchet, p 100. The preceding half-century was characterised by a gradual – and from the 1830s onwards, inflexible – social distancing from them by the Anglo-Indian official community. See Ballhatchet, pp 96-111; and C J Hawes, *Poor Relations: The Making of a Eurasian Community in British India, 1773-1833* (Richmond: Curzon, 1996).

that figure masks the slippages, fissures and contradictions that would otherwise be exposed. Necessarily, then, the Muslim ‘fanatic’ in most Civilian accounts becomes an *over-determined* figure, one whose presence requires constant re-inscription.

At the same time, as we have seen in these Civilian accounts, there exists a remarkable multi-variety of forms of prophylaxis that shield the presence of the Muslim ‘fanatic’ from that of the Civilian. Whether it be through Lyall’s motif of deferred and displaced ‘revenge’; or by means of the inter-textual ‘elsewhere’ from which ‘conspiracy’ often occurs; or through the multiple layers of narrative time and geography that separate it out in Thornhill’s account; or indeed, the ways in which the British ‘Christian’ slips in and out of definition as the clarity of the ‘fanatic’ approaches: time and again, Muslim ‘conspiracy’ shows itself to be an organising presence in Civilian ‘Mutiny’ narratives, but one whose very elusiveness preserves its functional role. If, as argued above, we are to understand this organising function as motivated primarily by the need for a cohesive ideology of community, we must approach the figure of the Muslim ‘fanatic’ in 1857-59 as effectively bearing the burden of colonialist ideological desires: in short, as being drafted into the project of carrying forward the very idea of their survival as a governing community in India.

For this reason, it is useful briefly to underscore some of the features of the continuous re-inscription that we have come across in this chapter. For it is in the revaluation of these specific stereotypes, available from a vast range of such resources in British discourse about Islam in the nineteenth century, that we can see for the first time the peculiar features that would now mark the colonial discourse on Indian Muslims in the succeeding decades, features that are more than a little familiar, since they represent precisely those qualities that had suddenly become so necessary and disturbing to the colonialists themselves. There are three interdependent elements which we can highlight in order to bring into focus the outlines of the figure of the Indian Muslim in post-‘Mutiny’ Civilian discourse, and the crucial function of the prophylaxis involved in his

maintenance. The first of these elements is one that we have already underlined in our discussion of Steel's *India* text fifty years later: that is, the descriptive separating out of the Indian Muslim from Indian society in general. In this chapter we have seen it most obviously at work in terms of Semiticisation, whereby the Indian Muslim is discovered to be responding to an influence from 'without'. Thornhill draws explicit attention to it in his conclusion that 'Mohammedan fanaticism', one of the (in his view) prime causes of the 'Mutiny', was itself 'born during the present century in Arabia, [and] had some few years previous to the mutiny become diffused throughout India.'<sup>298</sup> But it is also implicit in Lyall's relentless temporal and geographical displacement of Indo-Muslim sectarianism onto the Middle East, mediaeval Spain, and the Ottoman fringes of modern Europe.<sup>299</sup> That displacement is itself a covert means of preserving the system of representation (Muslim 'conspiracy') through which the Christian Civilian is maintained as an immanent self-representation within colonial India, always on the point of extinction but equally held in view, at the point of a Muslim dagger. In the same manner, and as we have just seen, the very 'fanaticism' that pushes the Muslim out of colonial India appears to have the equal and opposite effect, of indigenising British 'Christians' – again, as a fragile presence, slipping in and out of reach in an unstable category. This hidden reciprocity, for which the opacity of the category 'Christians' and the elusiveness of Muslim 'conspiracy' are both defensive and preservative mechanisms, is one that becomes in the ensuing decades an important rhetorical element in the self-definition of the renascent, secularised British state. In some respects, we may say that the failure of the state to recreate itself in an indigenous idiom, and the consequent vacuum created in terms of self-representation for the governing Anglo-Indian community, is partially inscribed in their discourse after 1857 on to the increasingly Semiticised and isolated Indian Muslim. His presence carries forward the reciprocal idea, at least at the

---

<sup>298</sup> Thornhill, p 333.

<sup>299</sup> See in particular, his letter of 30 August 1857.

representational level, of a potential binding of Briton to Indian society – a potential partly kept alive at the sharp point of a perceived, omnipresent Semitic belligerence.

The second, interdependent, feature that can be brought forward from the foregoing discussion of Muslim ‘conspiracy’ is the perception of unity through which it operated in Anglo-Indian discourse. We have mentioned this perception with regard to Mark Thornhill’s narrative, in which the supposed cohesiveness of the Muslim invaders is contrasted with the disunity of ‘native’ (meaning Hindu) society, making of it an easy conquest. Later in the memoir this idea of unity resurfaces – revealingly – in precisely the same terms, but now with the British seen in the role of conquerors whose cohesive military might in the eighteenth century overwhelmed the fragmented caste Hindu polities. The two points of comparison are again further brought together by the contrast of the unity of Muslim revolt outside Agra fort and the divided, bickering British officialdom within. The idea of Indo-Muslim unity is in this way in Thornhill’s narrative always in an undisclosed comparative relationship with the British in India. We have also argued that in Lyall’s correspondence a similar theme can be discerned. Alongside the Semitic idea, it is caught, for instance, in the phrase ‘Mussulman patriots’, suggestive of foreign allegiances and of unbreakable solidarity. This idea is specifically seen as destructive of the possibility of a ‘national revolt’.<sup>300</sup> However, if, apart from Muslim ‘conspiracy’, the ‘Mutiny’ in Bulandshahr district is a fragmentary affair in which ‘every man does what is right in his own eyes, villages [...] fighting against village’,<sup>301</sup> it nevertheless contains the possibility of solidarity through the British; as he writes to his mother on 7 April 1857: ‘our army discipline has taught the sepoy the art of combination.’ Thus the ‘patriotism’ of Indian Muslims appears to link up in the correspondence with the earlier example of British unity. Significantly, this too has the effect of indigenisation, since the former is destructive of ‘national’ cohesion, whereas

<sup>300</sup> Letter to his mother, 26 November 1857.

<sup>301</sup> Letter to his father, 30 August 1857.

the latter, British, influence is said to impart its specific prototype. The notion of Muslim unity is thus for Lyall, as for Thornhill, a covertly comparative constituent. Ultimately, its effect in Anglo-Indian discourse is that the ‘Mussulman patriot’ emerges from the events of 1857-59 inscribed with the very idea of community, one that, as an example to the British, is ambiguously marked. At once an incitement to, and destructive of, its national variant, it represents at the same time an uncanny version of the kind of supra-national territorial unity so attractive, and elusive, to the troubled British Indian state. In this regard, the very perception of Muslim ‘conspiracy’ can be seen as caught up with an attempt to contain the intolerable and contradictory pressures placed on the British sense of unity during the ‘Mutiny’. This is vividly brought out in Lyall’s statement that the ‘Mahometans’ and ‘sepoys’ alone were responsible for the ‘Mutiny’,<sup>302</sup> making a direct equivalence in terms of militancy consonant with that notion of unity in British discourse about Islam which had, at least from Gibbon onwards, fixed it as reliant upon ever-expanding, militant territorial conquest. Without such military ‘enthusiasm’, it was believed Islamic society necessarily reverted to its former tribal disunity.<sup>303</sup> Thus the unity of the sepoys and Muslims, reliant on a decisively defeated military imperative, was seen to be re-appropriated to the British Indian state – even as the suggestion of military despotism was displaced on to them. In terms of the representations of Indian Muslims in Anglo-Indian discourse, that notion of a despotic militant unity became in the next two decades an omnipresent counterpoint to the peaceful extension of the powers of the renascent, secular state. It could be said that the unity of the latter was, in representational terms, dangerously reliant on the renewal and constant re-deployment of the former.

---

<sup>302</sup> Letter to Mr Holland, 13 March 1858.

<sup>303</sup> Gibbon, pp 653-654, 678; on Hegel and the ‘triumph of enthusiasm’ behind the ‘unity’ of early Islam, see Hourani, pp 26-27.

That these two reevaluated stereotypical features of Indian Muslims, unity and ‘outsiderness’, are also part of a self-referential discourse among the official community in India, can be usefully reinforced by reference to two adjacent contemporary British discourses: that of the evangelical wing of the Anglo-Indian community, and of what we might call a Metropolitan imperial evangelism. Our object in this comparison is to illustrate both the specificity of the forms of representations we have been examining to their immediate colonial context, and the ways in which they join with and influence the contemporary extra-colonial discourse. It has been argued that these forms arose partly through the erection in Civilian discourse of a dangerously porous set of boundaries running between representation and self-representation. The irradiation of these particular features of Indo-Muslim representation appears to result when those faulty boundaries are threatened with exposure. This chapter has therefore sought to illustrate and account for some of the variety of forms of prophylaxis that attempt to separate out the Civilian and his Indo-Muslim persecutor. It has been argued that by means of this prophylaxis Muslim ‘conspiracy’ was preserved and extended throughout the rhetoric of Civilian representations of 1857-59, and that such rhetoric carried forward – in a by no means unambiguously-marked discourse – the very idea of the British as a cohesive governing community in India. We should therefore expect to find that where the specific characteristics of contemporary Civilian discourse, with its peculiar restraints and elisions, are missing, the presence of the Indian Muslim would either be rendered unnecessary, or defused of the kind of stereotypical features we have seen in Civilian accounts.

In this regard, and as an example of contemporary Anglo-Indian evangelical arguments, we may cite William Edwards expanded ‘Mutiny’ narrative, published in 1866 with an accompanying, additional chapter on the ‘facts’ and causes of the



rebellion.<sup>304</sup> Chick's earlier, over-hasty induction of Edwards' original account into a narrative of Muslim fanatical disaffection is here even further traduced by the way in which Edwards' now open espousal of the need for the 'evangelicization'<sup>305</sup> of India is still almost entirely unaccompanied by the question of Muslim 'conspiracy'.<sup>306</sup> Freed by retirement from the constraints placed on such public advocacy, Edwards is able to speak openly of the urgent need in colonial governance in India for the kind of unity that wholesale conversion might offer, and to make a direct connection between the absence of such a unifying factor and the problematic of governing Indian society from without:

*We are and ever must be regarded as foreign invaders and conquerors, and the more the people become enlightened and civilized the more earnest will, in all probability be their efforts to get rid of us. Our best safeguard is in the evangelization of the country; for, although Christianity does not denationalize, its spread would be gradual, and Christian settlements scattered about the country would be as towers of strength for many years to come, for they must be loyal so long as the mass of the people remain either idolators or Mahomedans. They could not desire any other than a Christian dynasty in India.*<sup>307</sup>

In other words, in the context of the events of 1857-59, he is able here to access the interdependent questions of community and alienation without recourse to the prophylactic presence of the Indian Muslim. Moreover, he is able to do so in the very Christian terms by which the fearful spectre of Muslim 'conspiracy' had itself apparently been constructed. This is a cogent illustration of the way in which, for Civilians, Muslim 'conspiracy' is in reality not a religious question, but one primarily of political

---

<sup>304</sup> William Edwards, *Reminiscences of a Bengal Civilian* (London: Smith, Elder & Co, 1866), Chapter XX, pp 305-340.

<sup>305</sup> Edwards, *Reminiscences*, p 336.

<sup>306</sup> For instance, while he notes the longstanding 'hope' of Indian Muslims for the return of Mughal ascendancy, he also points to the equal sympathy for this notion in the majority of 'Hindoo subjects'. He concludes: 'I have good grounds for believing that the King of Delhi was the centre of a feeling of nationality in their minds, as well as in those of the Mahomedans. Indeed no one, who has had the opportunities I have possessed of judging of the real sentiments of the natives, can doubt that a feeling of nationality has sprung up in India...As years have rolled past, the Mahomedans of India have become gradually Hindoo-ized in thoughts and habits. The ancient antipathy between the races has, to a great extent, disappeared, and they are not much more separated now from their Hindoo fellow-countrymen, than different castes of Hindoos are by caste from each other.' Edwards, *Reminiscences*, p 307.

<sup>307</sup> Edwards, *Reminiscences*, p 336. Emphasis in the original.

paramountcy. Moreover, it is a question specific to a particular location and set of terms and restraints – those that pertain, that is, within what Mary Louise Pratt has called the ‘contact zone’.<sup>308</sup> Edwards’ insistence on a Christian solution from the safe distance of England in 1866, does not require an occluding (foreign and unified) Muslim presence precisely because he is free to name his real protagonists.<sup>309</sup>

In his popular course of lectures, published as *The Expansion of England*, the historian J R Seeley accesses an apparently different, but as we shall see, cognate form of freedom.<sup>310</sup> He does so on behalf of a very un-Civil constituency, the Metropolitan evangelists of imperialism. From the seemingly more secure distance of Cambridge in 1883, Seeley summoned up the frank vision of British imperialism in India as representing, for all intent and purposes, ‘the greatest Mussulman Power in the world’, an ‘Asiatic conqueror’ usurping the ‘succession of the Great Mogul’.<sup>311</sup> This characterisation is placed at the heart of his arguments over the British Empire in India. Since dominion in India is itself characterised as the ‘greatest of the anxieties of England’, the notion of the British Indian state as effectively a continuation of Mughal rule must be read partly as a means of straddling, and suppressing, the central

---

<sup>308</sup> Pratt defines ‘the contact zone’ as ‘the space of colonial encounters, the space in which peoples geographically and historically separated come into contact with each other and establish ongoing relations, usually involving conditions of coercion, radical inequality, and intractable conflict’ Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (London: Routledge, repr. 1995; 1992), p 6.

<sup>309</sup> Comparison to Reverend J Cave-Browne’s 1861 narrative is instructive. Still a serving member of the Anglican chaplaincy that had accompanied the Bengal army in 1857-59, Owen neither openly advocates an evangelical crusade nor hesitates to point the finger squarely at Muslim sectarianism. Indeed, it is interesting to conjecture whether, in the almost comically splenetic terms with which he denounces the ‘wily Mohammedan’, we are not hearing the sublimated tones of an already forestalled evangelism. While remaining just this side of the official barrier, the idea appears to be invariably implicit to his formulations of ‘conspiracy: ‘Of the view [the author] has taken of this struggle for life or death, he still retains the opinion which he advanced from the first – it was *Mohammed* or CHRIST for India’s future – the former represented by the Mussulmans of Hindostan, with their Hindoo dupes, and the latter by their Christian rulers.’ Cave-Browne, p XV. Emphasis in the original.

<sup>310</sup> *Expansion* sold half a million copies in the 1880s, and until the mid-twentieth century remained in print as one of the most influential history textbooks in British schools during this period. (J R Seeley, *The Expansion of England: Two Courses of Lectures* (London: Macmillan & Co, 1886)). E H H Green, ‘The Political Economy of Empire, 1880-1914’ *OHBE Volume Two*, p 346; John M Mackenzie, *Propaganda and Empire: the Manipulation of British Public Opinion 1880-1960* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, repr. 1994; 1984), pp 179-180.

<sup>311</sup> Seeley, pp 176-177.

problematic with which his book is concerned, that is, the unity of what he calls ‘Greater Britain’.<sup>312</sup> This is a startling proposition in the light of what we have seen of Civilian rhetorical struggles with the problem of the unity of governance in India, and the ways in which the British are invariably separated out from precisely that perceived Indo-Muslim relationship with, and pretensions to, power. Far from deploying prophylactic devices, Seeley appears free to reinvent the British in India *as* Muslims – a similar kind of freedom, then, to that which allows Edwards to point the way forward, without the prophylactic presence of the Muslim ‘fanatic’, to the security of an India evangelised.

For Seeley, like Edwards, the question at hand – and one addressed directly – is that of ‘foreign domination’.<sup>313</sup> In this regard, India poses the ‘harder problem’ for the potential stability of union in the Empire, that of ‘a ruling race of Englishmen in a country which they cannot colonize.’<sup>314</sup> It is for this reason that he divides up his lectures into two courses, the second being devoted entirely to the question of India and the differential model it presents to the historian of empire (and the theorist of its future – for Seeley, the two roles should always be combined). His solution, partial and as we shall see, not without its own problems, is to realign the British as part of a process at first foreign to India, but now to be considered as a kind of (as he puts it) ‘internal revolution’.<sup>315</sup> In effect, he proposes that not only are the British successors to Mughal rule, they might actually bring about its natural development – the Christian means, paradoxically, by which the Mughal paradigm may be transformed into an indigenous polity. This is, essentially, a revolution in rhetoric. Seeley offers no new sources for his reinterpretation,<sup>316</sup> neither does he eschew Civilian observations (Hunter’s *Indian Musalmans* is a key text for his generalisations about contemporary Indian Muslims<sup>317</sup>).

---

<sup>312</sup> Seeley, pp 175-6.

<sup>313</sup> Seeley, *Expansion*, p 204.

<sup>314</sup> Seeley, *Expansion*, p 168.

<sup>315</sup> Seeley, *Expansion*, p 208.

<sup>316</sup> Mackenzie, *Propaganda*, p 179.

<sup>317</sup> Seeley, *Expansion*, pp 275, 277.

But in reading the British directly into the continuum of Muslim rule, his analysis of British Indian governance in the wake of 1857-59 exposes the kinds of investments in and covert comparisons with, Indian Muslims that constitutes the hidden bedrock of Civilian rhetoric. Thus Muslim ‘fanaticism’, and in particular, the idea of a Muslim ‘conspiracy’ behind the ‘Mutiny’, play no part in his understanding of either 1857-59 or its immediate aftermath.<sup>318</sup> Consequently he has no need of any boundaries, permeable or otherwise, between the British in India and Indian Muslims: comparison – indeed, mimicry – is the point. In short, he is talking about power in ways that, in the wake of the ‘Mutiny’, were simply unavailable to Civilians.

Which is not to say that his goals were entirely dissimilar from those of Civilians. In terms of the unity and alienation we have been discussing, Seeley’s synthesis of Mughal and British rule has in fact at least one congruent aim: the rhetorical ‘indigenisation’ – and thus strengthening – of British rule in India. Like Civilian accounts of the period, his emphases therefore ultimately fall upon Muslims as essentially a ‘foreign domination’; but they do so in order to make the point that ‘the English did not introduce a foreign domination into [India], for the foreign domination was already there.’ In this reading, there is nothing novel about the British entry into India: the British ‘were foreigners indeed, but...this could make no difference in India, where most Governments were foreign, where the Great Mogul himself was a foreigner.’<sup>319</sup> Having seemingly sidestepped the problem of alienation, he then completes the descriptive indigenisation of the British in India:

[the British conquest of India is] not an event belonging to the foreign department. It is an internal revolution in Indian society, and it is to be compared to one of those sudden usurpations or *coups de ’etat*, by which a period of disturbance within a community is closed.<sup>320</sup>

---

<sup>318</sup> For Seeley, it was the pre-‘Mutiny’ decades of annexation that ‘aroused a disquiet in the minds of our Hindu subjects which issued in the mutiny’. Seeley, *Expansion*, p 289.

<sup>319</sup> Seeley, *Expansion*, p 210.

<sup>320</sup> Seeley, *Expansion*, p 211.

Thus the problems of community and alienation which issue in Civilian accounts in the over-inscription of those features in the representation of the Indian Muslim, here results in the quite different spectacle of the Muslim/British rule as successive stages in the completion of a continuum of indigenous revolutions. Like the original Aryan invaders, they are ‘foreigners indeed’, but through that very ‘foreignness’ they are revealed as the consummate insiders; they are revealed, in effect, as the perfection of Indian society.<sup>321</sup>

In order to bring the British within Indian society, then, Seeley’s rhetoric turns that society inside out, making of it a society of foreigners. In this regard, the Muslim invaders are belated Aryans, and proleptic of the British usurpation. Thus the first invasion of Mahmud of Ghazni is figured as ‘the practical discovery of India for the world...[he] is to India, as it were, Columbus and Cortez in one’,<sup>322</sup> and Christianity, a ‘product of the fusion of Semitic with Aryan ideas’, may ultimately serve in India as a ‘reconciling element between ourselves and these contending religions’.<sup>323</sup> However, it must be recognised that this utopian possibility is offered not by way of moving India out of the past and into the future, but as a means rather of preserving what he perceives as the stasis – or as Seeley puts it, ‘the political deadness’<sup>324</sup> – of Indian society.<sup>325</sup> For the conceit of what we might call the ‘indigenous invader’ by which Seeley attempts to remove the suggestion of novelty from British Indian paramountcy, carries with it the unstated, but deeply disturbing, possibility of a similar successive ‘revolution’, one that is now ‘internal’ to the British nation/Empire itself.<sup>326</sup> By bringing India into alignment with ‘Greater Britain’ through the rhetorical strategy of making it into a land of

<sup>321</sup> Seeley, *Expansion*, p 205.

<sup>322</sup> Seeley, *Expansion*, p 280.

<sup>323</sup> Seeley, *Expansion*, p 278.

<sup>324</sup> Seeley, *Expansion*, p 203.

<sup>325</sup> As discussed in Chapter One with reference to Flora Annie Steel’s *India*, the perception of Indian society as essentially changeless is a common point of European Orientalist discourse (on this see Inden, *Imagining*, passim). Seeley’s innovation in *The Expansion of England* was to utilise this stasis as a rhetorical prop for the preservation of ‘Greater Britain’ (see below).

<sup>326</sup> For Seeley, the British nation and Empire should be considered as coterminous (*ibid*, pp 45-46).

foreigners, Seeley has broached the possibility of contamination working its way back through the Empire and into the heart of the Metropolis. This is an immanent danger throughout the *Expansion*, that in searching for the unity of Empire, Seeley opens up the idea of English nationalism to the infection of foreign diversity. He guards against this in the first course of lectures dealing with Canada, the ‘West Indian Islands’, South Africa, Australia and New Zealand, by literally emptying them of any indigenous population, so that he can then describe these ‘groups’ as ‘inhabited chiefly or to a large extent by Englishmen and subject to the crown.’<sup>327</sup> India, set aside as in no way comparable, appears to become, in the second course of lectures, an uncanny double to the ‘empty’ colonies of Englishmen, threatening them with the spectacle of an indigenised population of English foreigners – and one, moreover, that is ‘drawn every year for good or evil more closely together [with England].’<sup>328</sup> Thus to describe them as a ‘Mussulman power’ implies on the one hand that in its Indian Empire, the British colonists – carriers of British nationhood – are made foreign to themselves; they appear to participate in a social dynamic internal to India and transformative of all its successive invaders. In this regard, they threaten the very idea of the integrity of the export of British nationality that drives Seeley’s thesis. But it is also to distance them rhetorically from ‘Greater Britain’; as with the separation out of the two courses of lectures, India and its colonists are, in a sense, descriptively quarantined. In contradistinction to the Civilian rhetorical boundaries drawn up and obsessively redrawn between Muslim and British, effectively what we get here is Muslims as prophylaxis, boundary-markers between the British and British Indian empires. Far from summoning up a British communal solidarity, they represent an attempt at enforcing a rhetorical dis-unity among the different quarters of ‘Greater Britain’.

---

<sup>327</sup> Seeley, *Expansion*, p 10.

<sup>328</sup> Seeley, *Expansion*, p 305.

In effect then, their deployment in *The Expansion of England* is as ambiguously marked as that of the Civilian discourse on Indian Muslims. At once a perverse vehicle of indigenisation (making of the British, indigenous invaders), they are simultaneously brought into play as a means of segregating the British colonists from British nationhood as a whole. However, there is an ironic reversal of terms at work here: where in Civilian accounts Indian Muslims are represented as disruptive of Indian unity and attaching themselves instead to a larger Semitic 'patriotism', the British colonist in India is figured by his imperial theorist as holding together an Indian unity while at the same time both segregated from and threatening to, a larger British imperial union. In a sense, Seeley configures the Anglo-Indian community in reference to the British Empire in much the same way as they had done to that of the Indian Muslim in 1857-59 in terms of a potential Indian nationalism. Where the two discourses appear to coalesce is in making of the Indian Muslim a crucial boundary-marker in the quest for self-definition – making of him, that is, the point at which self-possession is both potential, and potentially lost.

In this regard, Seeley's thesis links up with the third feature of British Indo-Muslim representations that we have touched on in this chapter, one which can usefully point us forward to the post-'Mutiny' Civilian literature: the tropes of possession and dispossession, of Mughal plenitude and loss, that recur in Civilian narratives. In one sense, Seeley's subject in *The Expansion of England* is loss itself. Fear of loss – of empire and of nationality – lie behind all the arguments put forward in the lectures;<sup>329</sup> but its implications become most apparent in the second course of lectures on India. In particular, they do so in his attempts, running through each one of the eight lectures, to re-define the British possession of India in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries as anything but a process of 'conquest'. Here, the examples set by Muslim invaders, as well

---

<sup>329</sup> Peter Burroughs, 'John Robert Seeley and British Imperial History', in *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, January 1973, Volume 1, No 2, pp 191-212.

as by Muslim polities outside of India,<sup>330</sup> provide a crucial counterpoint.<sup>331</sup> At times, they are figured as positive indicators (demonstrating, for instance, how invasion per se has failed to fuse the ‘Brahmanists’ into a national entity);<sup>332</sup> at other points, they serve as counter-examples (for instance, in their being ‘irresistibly impelled to the conquest of India by [their] Mussulman faith’).<sup>333</sup> In the actual matter of ‘conquest’ – of, that is, the physical acquisition of and dominion over Indian territory – Seeley worries away at the duration, size and strength of Mughal rule until he can conclude that as an empire it constituted no more than ‘a mere moment’ in India’s history, hardly constitutive of even ‘geographical’ coherence. This then becomes a prolepsis of the equally brief British dominion, whose impact upon the subcontinent and potential as an empire is thus held open to the future, and even to future nullification.<sup>334</sup> The net effect of these comparisons between British and Muslim rule is, in this way, always that of the maintenance of the fundamental stasis that Seeley perceives in Indian history and society. Ultimately, he seems to contend, Muslim intervention in India can never be productive of innovative change. Even where Seeley appears to actively argue for their interference – as with his contention that from the time of the Muslim invasions ‘the tie of nationality was broken’<sup>335</sup> – the force of this pattern invariably undermines the possibility of innovation (thus it turns out that the foreign importation of Brahmanism had already done as much<sup>336</sup>). When he comes to figure the role of Muslims in contemporary Indian society, it is again to see them as producing a direct and perfect counter-balance to any other force at work. For instance, he notes that the ‘discontent’ of the dispossessed Muslim government officials counteracts ‘any gratitude’ that the enfranchised ‘Brahmin

<sup>330</sup> See for instance, his contention that the tributary paid by the Khedive of Egypt to the Ottoman emperor instances a counter-example to the British empire in India where no such tax is levied ‘which does not in any shape return to the country.’ Seeley, *Expansion*, p 182.

<sup>331</sup> See in particular, Lecture IV: ‘How We Govern India’.

<sup>332</sup> Seeley, *Expansion*, p 226.

<sup>333</sup> Seeley, *Expansion*, p 280.

<sup>334</sup> Seeley, *Expansion*, pp 223-24.

<sup>335</sup> Seeley, *Expansion*, p 204.

<sup>336</sup> Seeley, *Expansion*, p 205.



cultivator' might feel towards the British government;<sup>337</sup> and conversely, the opposition which the 'Hindu population' might have been expected to show has been 'dragnaded by foreign military Governments, until the very conception of resistance has been lost.'<sup>338</sup> Effectively, then, through the representation of Muslims in Seeley's lectures, the idea of substantive change in India, and therefore the possibility of substantive loss in terms of the British Empire in India, is consistently displaced. Equally displaced, of course, is the possibility of loss through the retention of dominion in India, with its calamitous risk of the infection of diversity spreading throughout the rest of 'Greater Britain'.

We can say, then, that if loss is the true subject of Seeley's thesis, the representations of Indian Muslims in *The Expansion of England* act consistently to attempt to nullify its potential. By entering upon these imperial questions primarily through these representations, Seeley's text reveals itself as an indirect product of the events of 1857-59 and the Civilian discourse they generated. As in that discourse, they become a means of deferring the problematic of the future British state in India. However, the crucial distinction that needs to be drawn between the two discourses is the manner in which Civilian accounts during and in the aftermath of the 'Mutiny' invariably deploy forms of prophylaxis that seek to separate out the Muslim and British protagonists. Through these protective devices, the idea of Muslim 'conspiracy' and its resulting representations of Indian Muslims, ambiguously inscribed with the idea of a community of governance, are preserved and extended throughout Civilian discourse; they become a means of talking about a possible future British Indian state, without entering directly into the disturbing visibility of self-representation. In other words, they offer a mode of rhetoric that, at one level, displaces the possibility of dispossession. In contrast, Seeley's approach to the problem of loss is to see Muslim polities in India as having, in a sense, never had anything *to* lose. In his reading, they enable and are

---

<sup>337</sup> Seeley, *Expansion*, pp 275-76.

<sup>338</sup> Seeley, *Expansion*, p 276.

produced by, a similar state of inertia by which the British dispensation in India may be preserved. Thus he attempts to forestall loss by questioning the very possibility of possession. Ironically, he is able to do this by freely possessing his representations of Indo-Muslim history and society as open and visible points of comparison.

To mark this key difference in the two discourses we can briefly underscore the very different manner in which possession and dispossession are figured in Civilian accounts of 1857-59. For it is here that the boundaries running between representation and self-representation in Civilian writings show themselves most exposed and liable to precipitous collapse. This is perhaps most obviously illustrated in Mark Thornhill's account, in which the tale of the appearance of the ghost of the Mughal emperor Akbar occurs at the moment in which the dispossession of the British, besieged in the fort at Agra, is mirrored by the narrative's own stalled progress. The recourse here to the plenitude of Mughal history brings with it the idea of loss and dispossession, first broached in the conversation between the clerks and overheard by the author in his own government office before the outbreak of 'Mutiny'. The suggestion there of the continuing power of the Mughal throne over the mind of the Indian native now returns as the uncanny demand by the emperor's ghost that: 'The house is mine! mine!! mine!!!'. It returns too in the 'phantoms' of British power, the prisoners of Agra jail released by the treacherous Muslim official, who later pass by Thornhill's party:

They made no attempt to molest us, they did not appear to see us; they neither turned their heads nor quickened their pace. They moved on with the same slow, silent steps and vanished in the darkness...at each step their chains rattled. They passed on as might phantoms from another world – dimly seen, silent, regardless – issuing from the darkness, gliding by, and re-entering it.<sup>339</sup>

That they are 'phantoms' of British power, returning as uncanny figures of dispossession who no longer 'see' their former gaolers, is vividly reinforced by the later sight of the

---

<sup>339</sup> Thornhill, pp 146-47.

British bungalows at Agra which the ex-prisoners have set alight, turning them into 'cages of fire'.<sup>340</sup>

Thornhill's memoir of 1884 is able to utilise these kinds of uncanny tableaux to such literary effect precisely because the literal moment of potential dispossession had passed. The ghost of Akbar is, in the end, contained within a tale, and retailed as part of the pleasure that the genre offered up to its Metropolitan readers. Similarly, the subsequent description of British attempts within the fort to excavate a blocked up staircase to reveal hidden Mughal chambers, plays with the Romantic themes of *vanitas* common in nineteenth-century literature, leading to the contemplation of 'generations [that] had come and gone, dynasties [...] reigned and past away.'<sup>341</sup> They are nevertheless suggestive of the idea of an unreachable Mughal plenitude, a history of possession that both eludes and at points threatens to over-turn, the sense of mastery that the narrative wishes to re-establish over the events of the 'Mutiny'. In Alfred Lyall's correspondence, however, we can locate a far more visceral instance, in which the threatened dissolution of the lines of division running between self-representation and the representation of the Indian Muslim, offer up an altogether more disturbing and uncanny aspect of the trope of dispossession. They do so, predictably, at the only time in which Lyall attempts to recount his (more or less) direct encounter with a 'fanatical' Indian Muslim. Here, the recourse to literary containment as itself a form of prophylaxis is far more eloquent of the powerlessness inherent to the kinds of representations that we have discussed in this chapter. The incident occurs on an expedition to a 'Mussulman village' with the Volunteer Horse formed in Meerut. As he writes to his father in 24 July 1857: 'Two Ghazis, or Mahometan fanatics, sworn to exterminate the enemies of the Faith, made a desperate resistance in a Mosque, but were overpowered and cut down.' Like Thornhill's encounter with the bodies of dead 'ghazis', Lyall appears to happen on the

---

<sup>340</sup> Thornhill, pp 155-56.

<sup>341</sup> Thornhill, pp 233-34.

scene after the event; the third-person locution leaves it unclear as to whether he was involved in this particular killing or not.<sup>342</sup> He then writes:

I took the opportunity, as I stood with bloody rapier over them, of favouring an excited audience with some lines from the Giaour [sic], beginning “with sabre shivered to the hilt”. They fought and died quite in the orthodox Mussulman manner, the Koran in one hand and the scimitar in the other much to my edification, as I like to see things done properly, and with a dash of romance about them.

Despite the gratuitous detail of his ‘bloody rapier’, Lyall here attempts to re-direct the disturbing immediacy of this encounter into the controlled cadences of a common Metropolitan literary genre<sup>343</sup>. His choice provides, however, an insight into the way in which this unprecedented – and as it were, unprotected – encounter cannot, despite the theatrical artifice and self-irony, be so easily disavowed.

Lyall’s reference here is to Byron’s ‘The Giaour’, published to great acclaim in 1813 as one of three *Turkish Tales*. Through these tales in particular, Byron played a central role in the first half of the nineteenth century in shaping British public perceptions of the ‘East’.<sup>344</sup> Recent scholarship has concentrated on the ways in which the *Tales* undermine the ruling dichotomy of occidental and oriental identities.<sup>345</sup> They narrate a series of crossings between the two, and in particular between Christian and Islamic affiliations, using multiple narrators to destabilise the idea of a singular Europe or European perspective. Byron’s own philhellenism gave to these poems a critical perspective with which to view both Ottoman and British imperialism, but also to test out

---

<sup>342</sup> If he is actually responsible here, the third-person locution is worth noting given his lack of reticence and detail elsewhere in claiming hand to hand encounters (see for instance, letter to his father, dated 11 July 1857).

<sup>343</sup> This is in fact the only occasion in the correspondence in which, while recounting to his family a scene of battle, Lyall seeks out a literary metaphor.

<sup>344</sup> Brantlinger, *Rule*, p 136. Byron was an evident influence on Lyall’s later poetry; but from his schoolboy efforts the particular influence of the *Turkish Tales* are clear, especially in the ways in which they led him to reflect on the larger theme of the passing of cultures – themes which he tended at that time to portray through chivalrous Muslim figures (in for instance, his schoolboy poems ‘El Ultimo Suspiro Del Moro’ and ‘Boabdil’s Farewell’). Durand, *Lyall*, pp 23-24.

<sup>345</sup> Leask, p 61.

particular ideas on the mutability of nationhood. In this sense, the poems rehearse anxieties over the deformations attendant on the extension of a British identity into an imperial arena – anxieties that, as we have seen, continued to preoccupy and animate Seeley’s text seventy years later.

As with the other two tales in the series (‘The Bride of Abydos’ and ‘The Siege of Corinth’), ‘The Giaour’ is superficially a story of vengeance,<sup>346</sup> and for that reason alone might have presented itself easily to the young Assistant Magistrate rampant over the bodies of his fallen enemies. But in specifically identifying with the Giaour himself (whose murderous actions the lines he cites describe), he unconsciously draws attention both to an alienating sense of political dispossession, and to the secondary implied possibility of the dissolution of his own national identity, the central unifying motif of the poem.<sup>347</sup> To summarise, the story concerns the love triangle between Hassan (a Turkish nobleman), Leila (a Circassian – Greek – maid in Hassan’s harem) and the Giaour (a Venetian apostate to Islam). The infidelity of Leila with the ‘Giaour’ precipitates her death (drowned by Hassan), and the eventual murder of Hassan by the ‘Giaour’. The fateful encounter between these two occurs in the middle of the poem and marks the first point in which direct speech is given to the ‘Giaour’.<sup>348</sup> The real name of the ‘Giaour’ is in fact never revealed, so that he is effectively constructed through ‘Muslim’ eyes – the denomination ‘Giaour’ is first given by the Turkish fisherman whose narrative begins the poem. In Byron’s own notes to the poem, he cites its Arabic derivative as ‘*Jawr*, a “deviating” or “erring”’.<sup>349</sup> In this way, the poet seems to suggest that an original identity is beyond the reconstructive power of the narrative; the hero is to be defined, as it were, under the rubric of his own journey outwards from his Venetian island (the

---

<sup>346</sup> Sharafuddin, p 271.

<sup>347</sup> Sharafuddin, pp 260-61. The choice is significant in that it specifically undercuts the kind of expectations his family might have had from such an encounter. For instance, these themes play no part in the far more populist scenes of Christian-Muslim chivalric confrontation in Scott’s *The Talisman*.

<sup>348</sup> Lines 655ff, Lord Byron, Ernest Hartley Coleridge (ed), *The Poetical Works of Lord Byron* (London: John Murray, 1948), p 270.

<sup>349</sup> Lord Byron, p 265.

coincidence of his maritime imperial origins would have been more than significant to Byron's English readership). Thus the attempted return of the 'Giaour' to his Christian faith, in the form of the monastery he haunts in the latter half of the poem, can never be complete; he may mutely witness, but never join in with its ceremonies.

The murder of Hassan marks the effective self-dispossession of the Giaour, and his condemnation to wander 'on earth as Vampire sent/Then ghastly haunt thy native place/ And suck the blood of all thy race' (Lines 765-67). By choosing this moment in the narrative, Lyall melodramatically summons up not only the figure of the Byronic hero, freely entering into his own tragic fate, but the more disturbing idea of the hero making of himself, as one critic has written, 'a foreigner, not only to England and the West, but also to ordinary piety and worship'.<sup>350</sup> It is for this reason that 'The Giaour' has been called a 'vampire poem', and the Giaour a 'nationless' hero.<sup>351</sup> As Ken Gelder has written, the representation of the vampire fixes him as 'unassimilated', as an 'internationalised character who is excessive to national identities'.<sup>352</sup> The fatal instant of, as it were, de-nationalisation, occurs in the very lines that Lyall chooses to quote:

Fallen Hassan lies – his unclosed eye  
 Yet lowering on his enemy  
 As if the hour that sealed his fate  
 Surviving left his quenchless hate;  
 And o'er him bends that foe with brow

---

<sup>350</sup> Sharafuddin, p 266.

<sup>351</sup> Ken Gelder, *Reading the Vampire* (London: Routledge, 1994) pp 26-27. Gelder situates the vampire in the context of – among other discourses – British anti-Semitism (pp 13-17). This point is made in greater detail in H L Malchow, *Gothic Images of Race in Nineteenth-Century Britain* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996), pp 153-65. The plurality, and promiscuous application, of racial typologies in British cultural discourse during this period has often been remarked upon by critics (see for instance, Patrick Brantlinger, 'Race and the Victorian Novel' in *The Victorian Novel*, ed Deirdre David, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001, pp 149-68; and C A Bayly, p 153). In proposing colonialist perceptions of the Indian Muslim as a vampire-like figure, the argument here implicitly suggests nineteenth-century British anti-Semitism as one such potentially plural discourse, occasionally exchanging Muslim and Jewish 'Semitic' objects of censure.

<sup>352</sup> Gelder, p 23.

As dark as his that bled below.<sup>353</sup>

It is a moment in which a ghastly identification is effected between Muslim victim and apostate killer, one that is echoed throughout the second half of the poem.<sup>354</sup> Since, as Gelder describes it, ‘the vampire is an Other who is ‘disconcertingly familiar’ to the Self’ – is, in other words, a manifestation of ‘the uncanny’ – we may think of this identification as entailing a form of dispossession.<sup>355</sup> Through the murder of Hassan, the Giaour becomes the unholy spectre of a self estranged, haunting the cloisters of the monastery at the end of the poem, eternally separated from his origins: ‘He passed – nor of his name and race/He left a token or a trace’.<sup>356</sup>

Given Seeley’s later description of India as a land of foreigners, one in which the Anglo-Indian ambiguously threatens and throws into relief the racial, religious and communal integrity of both the other colonies, and the English nationality itself, Lyall’s identification here with the unassimilable, vampiric Giaour is at least highly suggestive. As in the Giaour’s encounter with Hassan, the here comparatively unmediated Civilian interaction with the Muslim ‘fanatic’ appears to expose a raw awareness of the fragility of the possession of his own self-representation, its liminal positioning with regard to his Metropolitan readers and his Indian circumstance. The asymmetry he attempts to enforce between himself and the ‘ghazis’ through reference to the ‘Koran’ and the ‘scimitar’ (neither of which feature in the scene in the poem), is belied not only by the suggestion of the uncanny consequence that awaits his actions, but by the equally uncanny fit between the fate of the Giaour and Lyall’s own representations of the unassimilable Indian

---

<sup>353</sup> Lines 669-74.

<sup>354</sup> For instance, a parallel is drawn between Hassan’s palace, now turned tomb, and the ruin literally etched upon the Giaour’s face (lines 288-351 and 861-82). Both are prefigured by a similarly ruined Greek nationality (lines 1-167).

<sup>355</sup> Gelder, p 43.

<sup>356</sup> Lines 1329-30

Muslim.<sup>357</sup> If we may take the reference to 'The Giaour' as having some bearing on Lyall's self-representation in the correspondence, it is hard to evade the conclusion that the sacrifice between the two fictional combatants, of a European nationalist ideal,<sup>358</sup> discloses a peculiarly Anglo-Indian apprehension of self-dispossession in 1857-59. By citing Byron's own simultaneous working through of these questions upon the body of the Turk and the mind of the apostate, Lyall's representation of his relationship to the fallen 'ghazis' momentarily opens out the reciprocity running between the murderous, de-nationalising Semites and the Civilian who has here run them to ground. In a sense, the poetic genre and the third-person locution of the encounter are all that remain of the web of prophylaxis that everywhere else cocoons and preserves the integrity of the Civilian's discourse on the Indian Muslim.

This moment of self-revelation usefully points us back towards the idea of prophylaxis that this chapter has sought to demonstrate lies at the heart of all representations of Muslim 'conspiracy'. Although unusual for its apparently unintentional alignment of Civilian and Indian Muslim, we should not, however, think of it as essentially distinct, since 'The Giaour' is, like all vampire fiction, a 'fantasy...of incompleteness'.<sup>359</sup> Gelder has convincingly demonstrated that the vampire's function is to be that which is always in excess of signification to the national identity, to be that which can never be assimilated into the national self. As such, the vampire is in reality only a promise of the continuing need for signification, a sign that the idea of communal

---

<sup>357</sup> Lyall's fear of the vampiric consequences associated with the Indian Muslim is echoed not long after this encounter in a letter to his mother (23 October, 1857): 'However, we hang lots of people, Musulmans especially, and I flatter myself that I have been the humble means of putting to death a good many of them. I could go every day and glut my eyes with the sight, but I hardly ever do so, as I have somehow got lately a strange fear of what the old Greeks called Nemesis, so just do my duty in hanging them, and nothing more. For this same reason I never insult or curse them, as many do, but am particularly polite and deferential to them up to their last moment, insomuch so that some have been deluded into the idea that I was going to let them off.'

<sup>358</sup> Byron's description of Leila as 'Circassia's daughter/The loveliest bird of Franguestan' (Lines 505-506) makes explicit his conflation of Greek and all other European national identities, 'Franguestan' meaning 'the land of the Franks' (Europeans). See Byron's notes to 'The Giaour', p 269.

<sup>359</sup> Gelder, p 29.



cohesion – the basic pledge of all corporate ideology – is not completed, but momentarily deferred. In identifying himself as the vampire, Lyall shows up the confusion of his own relationship both to an English and to a potentially Indian, nationality. He places himself in the role of the liminal, the threatening. In short, he places himself in the role he has otherwise assigned to the Indian Muslim (it is one of the homologies of this self-representation that the original model for vampires in nineteenth British literature was in all probability himself not only a Muslim warrior against the Crusaders, but thought to have been an apostate from Christianity).<sup>360</sup> But this confused positioning in fact helps highlight the most important function of the vampiric (internationalised, bloodthirsty) Indian Semite in his, and in all Civilian accounts, of 1857-59. That function is the deferral of the realisation of a British identity in India; and what we might call the ‘Muslim uncanny’ is none other than the endless resurrection of this moment of deferral. For as Gelder has argued, the vampire ‘ceaselessly disturbs that identity by showing it to be always and at the same time foreign to itself.’<sup>361</sup> He does this by being always in our midst, secretive, and working to secretly infect us, to turn us into his own uncanny image. We can see this mesmeric, duplicitous figure in the Reverend Cave-Brown’s denunciation of the of the ‘Mussulmans of Hindostan’ and their ‘Hindu dupes’:<sup>362</sup>

Yet the Hindoo sepoy had also to be won over to insure success to the conspiracy, while its real ulterior object must be kept secret... Thus, under the idea that an attack was being meditated on their religion, the great body of Hindoo sepoys, mere tools in the hands of their pundits, who had been first won over [by the Mussulmans], were caught in the trap laid for them by the wily Mohammedan, who himself also pretended to find in the same unhappy cartridge, with its fancied odour of hateful pig’s fat, a religious motive for rebellion...<sup>363</sup>

---

<sup>360</sup> Gelder, p 24.

<sup>361</sup> Gelder, p 41.

<sup>362</sup> Cave-Browne, p XV.

<sup>363</sup> Cave-Browne, pp 5-6.

Not only is Indian society as a whole – ‘pundits’ as much as ‘sepoys’ – the ‘dupes’ of the ‘wily Mahomedan’, but his own religion is a matter of pretence. His secret purpose appears to be the similar alienation of India from its own true self. This same atavistic, secret presence can be found at work even in the formal assessment of the causes of the Mutiny made for Canning in 1859 by his Private Secretary, L B Bowring, when he writes that:

Considerable prevalence has been given to the report that the Mahomedans were the prime movers of the revolts, that a conspiracy on their part of long standing has been concocted under the eyes of the Government and that the sepoys were their dupes and blind instruments. It is true that the Mahomedans in many parts of India are ill-disposed towards the British Government...It is also true that every Mahomedan would gladly see the day when his faith should again be in the ascendant...*But allowing this to be an accurate exposition of their secret aspirations*, it cannot militate against facts which tend to show that the Mahomedans only took a partial share in the mutiny and that after its development.<sup>364</sup>

Thus Bowring concedes ‘the facts’, while leaving the larger context of conspiracy agonisingly open and awaiting further potential confirmation – awaiting, that is, the true moment of discovery.

It is precisely this element of revelation, with its curious admixture of horror and felt relief, which we have seen in all the accounts explored above, and which is so clearly expressed by Lyall in his letter of 11 July 1857 in its denunciation of ‘a fanatical hate *that we never suspected to exist among them*’.<sup>365</sup> The scene he later quotes from ‘The Giaour’, in which Hassan and the Giaour are locked in each others sights in death, is preeminently such a moment of revelation, when the secret enemy is disclosed, the estranged self first beheld (‘his unclosed eye’/Yet lowering on his enemy’), and the transposition effected. This kind of revelation – the discovery of the secretive, venomous

<sup>364</sup> ‘Note by L Bowring [1824-1910] on the causes of the Mutiny and on the part taken in it by the Mahomedans’, No 362, *Papers on Miscellaneous Subjects, Canning Papers*, India Office Collections, British Library. Quoted in Hardy, p 69. Emphasis added.

<sup>365</sup> Letter to his father, 11 July 1857. Emphasis added.

Semite in the midst of and mirroring, the British Indian state – would become an important constituent of Anglo-Indian discourse on Indian Muslims for at least the next half century. As late as 1905, we can find the distinct echo of its fatal secrecy in Steel's account of a degenerated, fragmentary urban Mughal society, its torpor only the 'feigned slackness of a sleeping snake which has still poison in its fang, is still ready to strike if it finds the opportunity.'<sup>366</sup> For the quarter century following the 'Mutiny' in particular, however, it would appear that the further away the British Indian state moved in its ability to define itself in any other than a legalistic sense, the deeper the 'vampire' penetrated its discursive fabric, and the more alarming its inevitable re-discovery. Perhaps the definitive text in this regard is Hunter's *Indian Musalmans* (1871), which will be taken up in Section 3.3. In that demi-official investigation, the Civilian author turns British India inside out to reveal a ghostly, second bureaucratic state attached to its infrastructure, sucking precious financial and moral resources through a network of 'Wahabi' preachers and secret supply lines, and conveying them to the borders of British influence. There they nourish a monstrous growth of sectarianism determined to invade and overwhelm its host. As we shall see, by far the most monstrous aspect of this simultaneous invasion from within and without is its semblance of normality: its preachers undistinguished from any others in the subcontinent, its instruments of communication set up and run by the British, its headquarters uncannily mocking those of a local government building.

Gelder's 'reading' of the vampire brings us back to the Lacanian terminology with which, in Section 2.4, we sought first to explicate the role of fantasy and deferral in the Civilian discourse on Muslim 'conspiracy'. For what is revealed by this inquiry into the multiplicity of forms of prophylaxis by which Indian Muslims were constructed in 1857-59, is the essential function of what Lacan has called the 'Symptom' (in Gelder's

---

<sup>366</sup> Steel, *India*, p 78.

analysis, the implicitly Semitic vampire is the Symptom *par excellence*).<sup>367</sup> The ‘Symptom’ always offers itself as a paradox (as in, for instance, the living-dead vampire), a piece of non-sense at work in an otherwise apparently functioning ideological space. Its irruption into that ‘rational’ space calls attention to the limits of the ideology to signify a given reality.<sup>368</sup> In Lacanian thought, however, it is not an anomalous element. Rather, the ‘Symptom’: ‘far from announcing the ‘imperfect realization’ of [...] universal principles – that is, an insufficiency to be abolished by further development – functions as their constitutive moment.’<sup>369</sup> Paradoxically, it is by embracing the ‘Symptom’ (through its misrecognition) that the subject interpellates themselves into the ideology. For the irrationality of the ‘Symptom’ is constitutive of the founding irrational premise of ideology, which offers itself as a universal principle capable of resolving all the tensions at work in a given social field. The irrationality of the ‘Symptom’ is, in this respect, a motif of senselessness through which the insufficiency of the ideological is made manifest.<sup>370</sup> But if it brings that insufficiency into a disturbing visibility, the ‘Symptom’ also acts as a timely reminder of the necessity for ideology as a defense against the originary lack in all systems of signification.<sup>371</sup> It therefore – paradoxically – offers an opportunity for the subject to confirm the very ideology it seems to threaten. Thus the Semitic vampire brings to life the divisive corruption at work in the national soul, but presents the opportunity for it to cohere again in his exorcism. In this regard, assenting to the irrationality of the ‘Symptom’ is the prime means by which the subject becomes ideological.<sup>372</sup>

---

<sup>367</sup> Zizek has located its workings in that later European image of Semitic menace, the National Socialists’ perception of Jewish conspiracy in Germany in the 1930s. Zizek, *Sublime*, pp 48-49, 114-15, 127-28.

<sup>368</sup> Zizek, *Sublime*, p 21; Stavrakakis, p 64.

<sup>369</sup> Zizek, *Sublime*, p 21.

<sup>370</sup> Zizek, *Sublime*, p 23; Stavrakakis, p 65.

<sup>371</sup> Stavrakakis, p 34; Zizek, *Sublime*, pp 127-28.

<sup>372</sup> This assent is achieved through its consistent misrecognition (Zizek, *Sublime*, pp 43, 75-79). Despite the apparent difference in emphasis, there is an essential agreement between Zizek’s discussion of the centrality of the ‘Symptom’ and that of Stavrakakis, who implies a reciprocal process when he describes the ‘Symptom’ as a key signifier for lack within ideological systems and then refers to the necessity for the re-institution of the harmony of social fantasy through its stigmatisation (Stavrakakis, pp 64-68, 109). The

This is the paradox that Žižek has in mind when he writes that the ‘internalization’ of ideological state apparatuses,

by structural necessity, never fully succeeds...there is always a residue, a leftover, a strain of traumatic irrationality and senselessness to it, and [...] *this leftover, far from hindering the full submission of the subject to the ideological command, is the very condition of it.*<sup>373</sup>

If we consider this in relation to Washbrook’s description of the model of the Raj sociology of competing multiple ethnicities, the symptomatic strain of the irrational is immediately manifest. That model, developed throughout the nineteenth century but given its most important restatement in Victoria’s proclamation in 1858, was predicated on the British maintaining the state as an equidistant, disassociated mediator between themselves and all native socio-religious communities. In his essay, ‘Our Religious Policy in India’ (1871), Lyall summed up the paradox inherent to this doctrine of what he ironically termed ‘perfect neutrality’, when he referred to the glaring fact that it was imposed and administered by ‘Christian rulers’: in other words, he knowingly placed the Anglican ICS officer at the centre of the web of colonial interrelations. Having pointed out the kernel of non-sense that structured this particular ideological fantasy, Lyall then goes on to throw in his own illustration of Žižek’s argument for the key role and necessity of ‘senselessness’, by giving to the ideology, finally, his own reaffirmation.

Muslim ‘conspiracy’ reproduces precisely this paradox by embodying that point at which the state could not be disconnected from the play of communal relations. It is an example of the hysterical symptom, that which is repressed returning to tell of the act of

---

logic of ‘stigmatisation’ is implicit to the analysis of the post-‘Mutiny’ Anglo-Indian discourse on Indian Muslims that follows in the next chapter. For a fuller – if more playful – account of the operations of the ‘Symptom’, see Žižek, *Enjoy Your Symptom* (London: Routledge, repr. 2001; 1992); and also, Colette Soler, ‘The paradoxes of the symptom in psychoanalysis’, in Jean-Michel Rabate (ed), *The Cambridge Companion to Lacan* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), pp 86-101. For a lucid exposition of the catastrophic processes potential to all cultural stigmatisation in modern societies, see Zygmunt Bauman, *Modernity and the Holocaust* (Cambridge: Polity, repr. 2002; 1989).

<sup>373</sup> Žižek, *Sublime*, p 43. Emphasis in the original.

displacement.<sup>374</sup> Here, it is the knowledge of the contingency of the colonial state – its place within the play of communal relations – that had been displaced, and which had returned in 1857 as Muslim ‘conspiracy’. That contingency, as discussed in Section 1.5, was nowhere more apparent than in the Anglican nexus of religious and political identities, now exposed, misrecognised, and stigmatised, in Muslim ‘conspiracy’. In this regard, Muslim ‘conspiracy’ could be said to be the purest expression of the founding inconsistency that, by mid-century, constituted the ruling colonial ideology in India. In universally taking it up and assenting to its truth, the ICS were at once misrecognising and re-affirming their faith in, the ideology of the neutral state. That they did so through its symptomatic irrationality (the secret nexus of persecuted Christian ruler and sectarian Muslim subject) is perhaps the most cogent demonstration that the ‘perfect neutrality’ of the state was an ideological fantasy, and not simply a matter of pragmatic policy.<sup>375</sup> As Žizek has demonstrated, ideological fantasy is most clearly shown in the misrecognition of its constitutive irrationality by the continued act of its performance – that is, in the subject attempting, through that very irrationality, to enact and create its social reality *as* ideological fantasy.<sup>376</sup> In this way, by acting out the ‘fact’ of Muslim ‘conspiracy’ the ICS effectively – non-sensically – re-affirmed its fantasy of disconnection from Indian society, as though the truth of the latter were somehow *embodied* in the perception of the former, rather than traduced by it. Žizek calls such paradoxical action – enacting that which, on another level, we know to be untrue – the ‘cynical reason’ which upholds all ideological fantasies.<sup>377</sup> Paradoxically, then, assenting to Muslim ‘conspiracy’ was a prime means for the ICS official of showing his (irrational) belief in the (fantastic) truth

---

<sup>374</sup> Žizek, *Sublime*, p 26.

<sup>375</sup> In contrast, we may usefully recall Edwards’ memoir in which both neutrality *and* ‘conspiracy’ were absent. Ironically, he later stated his own - evangelical - fantasy in precisely the pragmatic terms that characterised arguments upholding ‘perfect neutrality’ (see above). That more than pragmatism was at stake for him, is perhaps indicated by the unusual frequency with which, in his original account, he had recourse to prayer and the Bible (Edwards, *Personal*, pp 23, 55, 57, 94, 99, 139-40, 143, 147, 149-51, 165-66, 178-79, 185, 206).

<sup>376</sup> Žizek, *Sublime*, pp 32-34.

<sup>377</sup> Žizek, *Sublime*, pp 29-30.

of the ruling state ideology. In other words, it was a vital, unreasoning, constituent in the reconstruction of that ideology. Its future prominence in Anglo-Indian discourse in one form or another – conspiracy, communalism or even conspicuous co-option – was not only assured, but necessary.

In Lacan's late works, he went even further in his valuation of the 'Symptom', seeing it as the only point that gave consistency to the subject.<sup>378</sup> Misrecognising the inconsistency of the 'Symptom' time and again was, in this reading, the only way that the subject could remain ideological. Lacan's insight is suggestive in the context of the representations of the Indian Muslim that emerged in 1857, opening out as it does a valuable aspect of their future interaction with the self-representation of the state. This nexus concerns the precarious effect of stasis upon the latter; and it points us finally back to the principal consequence of the variety of forms of prophylaxis that we have encountered in Civilian narratives of 1857-59. Ultimately, as we have seen, those devices operated to preserve Muslim 'conspiracy', holding back the fatal encounter of Muslim 'fanatic' and Civilian victim (or indeed, avenger). If, as suggested above, the proper function of that 'conspiracy' was as the 'Symptom' of an embattled – indeed, disintegrating – ruling ideology of the British in India in 1857, then far from precipitating its final, apocalyptic destruction, prophylaxis acted to maintain – indeed, to momentarily secure – the entire system of colonial self-representation. In this regard, we may note how Muslim 'conspiracy' during the 'Mutiny' partially reproduces the effects of the inexhaustible economy of self-pleasuring that we have described as the hallmark of the late eighteenth century European discourse on the 'Oriental despot', and which we have also compared to the 'self-galling' of the Indian Muslim in Steel's *India* over a hundred years later (Section 1.4). That is, it acts to induce the effect of stasis in the economy of

---

<sup>378</sup> To distinguish this renewed interpretation, Lacan designated this signifier as *sinthomme*. For an excellent discussion of which, see Zizek, *Sublime*, pp 75-79.

representation through the illusion of a self-enclosed and self-perpetuating system.<sup>379</sup>

Just as the despot is eternally self-pleasuring, and the later Indian Muslim forever galled by his own unappeasable appetite, the British state attempts to make of itself the subject of an inexhaustible action of destruction, the final effect of which, in terms of self-representation, is a similar stasis. Like the martyred child in the *Indian Punch* cartoon, it is produced eternally at the moment of its extinction; it can never grow into its mature state; but neither can it finally be extinguished.<sup>380</sup>

The essential destructiveness of the ‘Symptom’ of Muslim ‘conspiracy’ is thus itself a potential mechanism for the preservation of the stunted experience of late colonial ideology. It enacts the paradox of a deadly saviour, threatening a final extinction which never arrives, but which holds back an even more devastating reality. For, as Žižek so lucidly puts it, the ‘Symptom’

is an element clinging on like a kind of parasite and ‘spoiling the game’, but if we annihilate it things get even worse: we lose all we had – even the rest which was threatened but not yet destroyed by the symptom.<sup>381</sup>

At a time of unprecedented change, during and in the aftermath of ‘Mutiny’, the discovery of this potential for preservation in the figure of the vampiric, ravening Semite diverted British self-representation into a cycle of ambiguous victories over an ever more elusive foe. It opened out a seemingly self-sustaining economy of representation that took the place of self-description, even as the state set about its most radical innovations in its pan-Indian forms of institution. However, it should not be seen as an inviolate system impervious to the contingency of its colonial situation. On the contrary, as with Seeley’s co-option of Indo-Muslim history in order to preserve a vulnerable imperial

<sup>379</sup> This kind of representational ‘deathlessness’ was built into nineteenth-century British anti-Semitic discourse about the ‘wandering Jew’, and reproduced in the cursed immortality of Bram Stoker’s *Dracula*. Malchow, p 161.

<sup>380</sup> Rudyard Kipling’s *Kim* (1898) is built around precisely this tension between youth and maturity. For a useful discussion of these metaphors of arrested or unnatural ageing in colonial discourse from the late eighteenth century, see Suleri, *Rhetoric*, pp 32-36.

<sup>381</sup> Žižek, *Sublime*, p 78.



stasis (here again, echoing Anglo-Indian discourse), it should be understood as, pre-eminently, a strategy of powerlessness, threatening at any moment (as instanced in Lyall's Giaour speech) to collapse and confront the colonialist with the fractured image of his own ruling epistemology.

This is the underlying instability that we will explore in the next chapter through the later writings of Alfred Lyall, and in William Hunter's *Indian Musalmans*. While Muslim 'conspiracy' produced a – perversely reassuring – point of consistency for the colonial ideological subject, the keynote of the discourse that followed 1857-59 is predominantly one of ambivalence. For what emerged in the wake of the 'Mutiny' was a Semiticised, corrosive figure comparable to that of Zygmunt Bauman's conception of the 'stranger'.<sup>382</sup> 'Strangers', Bauman writes, 'are the true hybrids, the monsters – not just unclassified, but unclassifiable. They do not question just this one opposition here and now: they question oppositions as such, the very principle of the opposition, the plausibility of dichotomy it suggests and feasibility of separation it demands.'<sup>383</sup> 'Strangers' move incongruously across the barriers erected by the legislating authorities of modern polities; like the 'Symptom' they expose their contingency.<sup>384</sup> In entrenching upon the paradox of the ruling dichotomy – that of secular legislator and religiously-determined subject – the British construct of Muslim 'conspiracy' engendered just such a 'stranger' in the midst of the late colonial state. Volatile, secretive, paradoxical and, ultimately, demanding of segregation, the Indian Muslims of colonialist discourse had become figures of terror and ambivalence, vitally linked to its fragile ability to order and maintain its own identity.

---

<sup>382</sup> Zygmunt Bauman, *Modernity and Ambivalence* (Cambridge: Polity Press, repr. 1998; 1991), pp 1-75. This concept will be taken up in more detail in the next chapter.

<sup>383</sup> Bauman, *Ambivalence*, p 58.

<sup>384</sup> Bauman, *Ambivalence*, pp 59-60, 67.

## Chapter Three

### **Section 3.1 The Indo-Muslim ‘stranger’**

This chapter will concern itself with the problem of representing Indian Muslims that emerged in Anglo-Indian discourse in the wake of the ‘Mutiny’. It has been suggested that a useful starting point for understanding this discourse can be found in Zygmunt Bauman’s concept of ‘the stranger’, a figure that challenges the legislating powers precisely in their constitutive function to construct boundaries within and around social knowledges and formations. Bauman’s reflections on the ordering and classificatory imperatives of the modern polities that produce these phenomena are aimed primarily at the rise of the European nation state.<sup>1</sup> Nevertheless, his definition of the remit of the ‘intellectuals’ who guide the legislating hand is one that can usefully be extended into the colonial domain. Following Foucault’s formulation of the close fit between knowledge and power, Bauman posits the sociology of modern societies as comprised of the ‘dominating’ and the ‘dominated’, whereby the former – in his terms, the ‘intellectuals’ – are possessors of the knowledge through which the ‘uncertainty’ generated by the latter may be contained.<sup>2</sup> These are forms of knowledge about the ‘dominated’ that, either by their very (‘primitive’) nature or by their lack of ‘education’ the ‘dominated’ cannot attain, and without which they cannot function in a modern society. Moreover, for the ‘intellectuals’:

the intensity and the scope of their domination depends on how acute is the sense of uncertainty or deprivation caused by the absence of knowledge in an area serviced by a given group of sages, teachers or experts. More importantly still, it depends on the latter’s ability to create or intensify such a sense of uncertainty or deprivation; to produce, in other words, the social indispensability of the kind of knowledge they control.<sup>3</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> For a fuller historical exposition of these developments, see Bauman, *Legislators and Interpreters: On Modernity, Post-modernity and Intellectuals* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1987).

<sup>2</sup> Bauman, *Legislators*, pp 1-20.

<sup>3</sup> Bauman, *Legislators*, p 19.

This kind of ‘uncertainty’ was endemic to the colonial project, and was nowhere more apparent than in the structure of the colonial state in India. There the radical ‘uncertainty’ consequent on (to use Suleri’s phrase) the ‘absence of precedence’ in the founding of the British Indian state unleashed the energies behind the vast bureaucratic assembly of colonial knowledges on, and over, ‘primitive’ Indian society.<sup>4</sup> At the centre of that project, and standing as a bulwark against the ‘uncertainty’ of India within the British Empire, was the ICS officer.

Indeed, in Bauman’s incisive reading of the self-constitution of the ‘expert’ we appear to have something of a blueprint for the ICS official from at least the early nineteenth century, both in terms of how he represented himself in India, and how he came to be perceived in Britain.<sup>5</sup> In regard to the marshalling of knowledge in the consolidation of the colonial state itself, we can detect an analogous process to that which took place in the emergence of modernity that Bauman has analysed in northwestern Europe, when there was forged:

a new type of state power with resources and will necessary to shape and administer the social system according to a preconceived model; and the establishment of a relatively autonomous, self-managing discourse able to generate such a model complete with the practices its implementation required.<sup>6</sup>

This was from the start a far more ambiguous process for empire than Metropolis. From the late eighteenth century the autonomy of that model in British India was precariously wrested from the increasing interference of Metropolitan authorities; and the knowledges that structured its new ‘imperial archive’, particularly in their reliance on native informers, always carried with them the potential ‘hollowness’ and

---

<sup>4</sup> Suleri, *Rhetoric*, pp 46–48. On the colonial project of information-gathering, see Cohn, ‘Census’, pp 224–254; and idem, *Colonialism*; Bayly, ‘Knowing’, pp 3–43; and Thomas Richards, *The Imperial Archive: Knowledge and the Fantasy of Empire* (London: Verso, 1993).

<sup>5</sup> The success of that self-representation by the second half of the nineteenth century may be gauged by, for instance, reference to the figure of Murthwaite in Wilkie Collins’ *The Moonstone*, who is able to supply the crucial information on the genealogy of the deadly, and elusive, intruders from India into British Metropolitan society, and whose ‘superior knowledge of the Indian character’ is unquestioned. Collins, *The Moonstone*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, repr. 1998; 1868) p 318.

<sup>6</sup> Bauman, *Legislators*, p 2.

collaborative fragility of the colonial project.<sup>7</sup> Liable to collapse into little more than a sliding chain of signifiers, behind the endless proliferation of information there always lurked (again, to quote Suleri) the possible ‘sublime failure of lists’, unable finally to fix upon their object.<sup>8</sup> Here again, according to Bauman, we are dealing with a symptomatic modern anxiety, for the ‘territorial and functional separation’ that articulated the new modern polities were themselves reflective of the anticipation by the legislating authorities of problems in meaning. They were, in this sense, illustrative of its (necessarily) contingent state:

As long as the segregation remains continuous and closely guarded, there is little chance that the probability of misunderstanding (or at least the anticipation of such misunderstanding) will ever diminish. Persistence and constant possibility of hermeneutic problems can be seen therefore as simultaneously the motive and the product of boundary-drawing efforts. As such, they have an in-built tendency to self-perpetuation.<sup>9</sup>

In drawing up and guarding those boundaries, the legislators of the colonial Indian state, following their Europe-based counterparts, were involved in a process of ‘sociation’, establishing the dichotomous definitions of ‘friends’ and ‘enemies’, ‘natives’ and ‘foreigners’ by which colonial society would be fixed. As with the national entity, enforcing such ‘cosy antagonisms’ was a foundational activity of colonial ordering, and policing their borders maintained that crucial ‘classificatory ability’ by which the legislators were themselves defined.<sup>10</sup>

Within the mature colonial state in particular, all border-crossings between those definitions inevitably threatened the self-constitution of the legislators; and with the potential failure of their classificatory ability ensued the possibility of a

---

<sup>7</sup> On the ‘hollowness’ of the colonialist project, see in particular Suleri’s analysis of Burke’s use of the concept of ‘the sublime’ in order to guard against its revelation (Suleri, *Rhetoric*, Chapter Two). On the perceived instabilities underlying the collaborative nature of Anglo-Indian knowledges about India, see Javed Majeed’s excellent account of the late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century debates between Orientalists and Utilitarians in *Ungoverned Imaginings*, especially Chapter One. These concerns about the collaborative nature of colonial knowledges of India intersected with what was seen as a debilitating financial dependency on Indian society – on which see in particular, Bayly, *Indian*, Chapter Two.

<sup>8</sup> Suleri, *Rhetoric*, p 30.

<sup>9</sup> Bauman, *Ambivalence*, p 57.

<sup>10</sup> Bauman, *Ambivalence*, pp 55-56.

commensurate 'behavioural paralysis'.<sup>11</sup> In other words, like the nation, the colonial state existed partly through its will to self-definition; any inability to define its structures of sociation struck at the roots of its ability to function. If, as has been argued in Chapter Two, the perception of Muslim 'conspiracy' that emerged in 1857-59 was inscribed with the idea of colonialist communal cohesion and self-representation, then the Indo-Muslim figure that followed in its wake was one irradiated with the ambivalence that now more than ever attached to that identity. The primary point of ambivalence, as we have already suggested, lay in the lethal connections made between a colonialist Christian identity and a perceived ontologically-hostile native communal category. The multiplicity of forms of prophylaxis that we have examined in the previous chapter aimed simultaneously at preserving that Christian identity so crucial to the reconstitution of colonialist purpose, and holding at bay its mortal implications for British rule in India. The consequence, it has been argued, was the production of the Muslim 'fanatic' as the Symptom by which the colonialist sought – paradoxically – to repossess the ideological fantasy of colonial secular neutrality. Inscribed with an unmistakable religious connection, but whose presence nevertheless holds in place a secular neutral ideology, the Indo-Muslim Symptom spoke to the heart of a conflicted colonialist identity. The second, related point of ambivalence lay in the marks of foreign allegiances destructive of Indian national aspirations which were 'revealed' in the 'Mussulman patriot' of Civilian 'Mutiny' discourse, marks that held both the traces of a repudiated colonialist despotism and the desire to transcend their liminal Indian circumstances. On both these points we may recall Suleri's interpretation of Burke's rhetoric of 'the sublime' preserving India intact as an unreadable spectacle precisely in order to avoid the mutual unmasking of the spectator complicitous with the invasive colonial project.<sup>12</sup> Denied the option of a Metropolitan willed blindness,

---

<sup>11</sup> Bauman, *Ambivalence*, p 56. It is this kind of knowledge failure that lies behind the 'information panics' that Bayly has described as one of the key characteristics of the post-'Mutiny' British Indian state (Bayly, *Empire*, Chapter Ten). Two interesting recent attempts to examine the colonial state's preoccupation with securing its knowledge borders can be found in Viswanathan and Shodhan.

<sup>12</sup> Suleri, *Rhetoric*, pp 38-39.

here it is the very (misrecognised) legibility of the Indian Muslim that is required to forestall the reciprocity running between representation and legislator.

Seen in part through the lens of a specifically colonialist ambivalence, the Indian Muslim of Anglo-Indian discourse thus embodied during the 'Mutiny' a crossing of exactly those boundaries by which the legislating powers conceived of and policed its relationship to Indian society. It is in this regard that we may say they emerged in 1859 as figures of incongruity comparable to Bauman's 'stranger'. Their very presence threatened to expose the paradoxes behind the defining categories through which the state constituted itself as both separate from, and the integrator of, Indian society – both caught within and arbitrating from without, the perceived deadly play of communal relations. For, as Bauman describes him, the 'stranger'

stands *between* friend and enemy, order and chaos, the inside and the outside. He stands *for* the treacherousness of friends, for the cunning disguise of the enemies, for fallibility of order, vulnerability of the inside.<sup>13</sup>

To place the Indian Muslims on one or the other side of those categories, and to resurrect impermeable barriers, had thus become imperative to the 'restoration' of an uncontaminated and secure colonial self-identity. Given both the violence with which the colonialist paradox had marked them in 1857-59 and the less palatable realities that they now – Symptom-like – held at bay, inevitably it was to prove an impossible task. The logic of this failure is inescapable; threatening the very plausibility of legislation – of that is, constructing and maintaining the boundaries of the ordering process – the 'stranger' must ultimately, in Bauman's words, be 'tabooed, disarmed, suppressed, exiled physically or mentally – or the world may perish.'<sup>14</sup> This is, of course, the same catastrophic logic of 'stigmatisation' visited upon the Symptom; and its aim, as with the revelation and exorcism of the vampire, is the maintenance of an ideology under attack from an intractable and invasive social reality.<sup>15</sup> Marking the

<sup>13</sup> Bauman, *Ambivalence*, p 61. Emphases in the original.

<sup>14</sup> Bauman, *Ambivalence*, p 58.

<sup>15</sup> On stigmatisation of the Symptom, see Stavrakakis, pp 65, 100-109; Žižek, *Sublime*, pp 110-13, 127-28. The connection between Bauman's 'stranger' and the stigmatised Symptom in ideological systems has been pointed out by Stavrakakis, p 101.

Symptom with an indelible and visible difference becomes, under this logic, an irreversible process.<sup>16</sup>

There is, then, an explicit connection being made here between the emergence of the Indo-Muslim ‘stranger’ in 1859 and the descriptive isolation enforced upon the Indian Muslim of Steel’s *India* almost fifty years later. This chapter will concentrate on the interim period, and particularly on the first quarter century following the ‘Mutiny’, in which the attempts to ‘legislate’ the Indian Muslim into visibility are most furiously in evidence in colonialist discourse. In place of the stigmata of visibility<sup>17</sup>, it will be argued, what we are confronted with is an over-abundance of contradictory inscription that hollows out the subject of representation and carries across into the colonialist’s self-identity a similar element corrosive of meaning. For as Bauman has demonstrated, all such attempts to press distinctions upon the ‘stranger’ are doomed to under- and over-determination, exposing ‘the failing of the opposition itself.’<sup>18</sup> Section 3.3 will take up this theme in reference to the later essays of Alfred Lyall and W W Hunter’s *Indian Musalmans*. Before we explore the phenomena of indeterminacy in post-‘Mutiny’ discourse, however, it is useful first to turn to a peculiarly Anglo-Indian representation of an earlier moment in British Indian history which bears some interesting parallels to the period now under discussion. In particular, the object in making this comparison is to destabilise the ostensible subject of the later discourse as centred on religious fanaticism, by making clear some of the connections between British representations of Mughals and later, Muslims, on precisely this theme of indeterminacy outlined above. For while the logic of stigmatisation is specific to the representations of a pan-Indian Muslim constituency that emerged in 1859, it is important to bear in mind their partial genealogy in an earlier discourse of dispossession centred on, and entailing comparisons with, Mughal figures of authority – a discourse that, as we have already sketched out in Section 2.2,

<sup>16</sup> Stavrakakis, p 65; Bauman, *Ambivalence*, pp 67-68.

<sup>17</sup> Using Goffman, Bauman points out that stigmatisation – whether of the Symptom or the ‘stranger’ – is primarily aimed at making visible, and fixing, a ‘virtual social identity’. Bauman, *Ambivalence*, p 67.

<sup>18</sup> Bauman, *Ambivalence*, p 59.

was reanimated in 1857.<sup>19</sup> Especially in the period prior to the confrontations with Tipu Sultan of Mysore in the 1790s, these earlier representations often eschewed any particular, or over-riding, concerns with religious affiliation, revolving instead more directly around questions of power and producing at moments of crisis, as in the instance we will now examine, a marked over-inscription of difference that opens up disturbing implications for the self-representation of colonialist authority. The comparison detailed below, then, is intended to point up the central problem of representing power and authority that lies at the heart of the post-‘Mutiny’ ‘Musulman’ question, and which is the implicit context for all productions of the ambiguous figure of ‘the stranger’.

---

<sup>19</sup> The use here of the phrase ‘Mughal figures of authority’ will be discussed in the next section.



### **Section 3.2 Framing the Mughal: Warren Hastings and the problem of ‘dependency’**

This section will explore certain aspects of the conflictual relationship that obtained between the nascent colonial state in India in the late eighteenth century and what will be here designated as ‘Mughal figures of authority’ with whom it came into contact. The section does not propose to revisit specifically the relations between the Company and the Mughal emperor, whose military power had been so decisively curtailed in 1757, but whose nominal political influence was an important, if troubling, source of legitimation for at least the next century. Instead, taking Bernard Cohn’s seminal analysis of those relations as a starting point, this section will discuss some of the ways in which British rule attempted to represent its authority over the major Mughal successor states through and against whom, it was struggling to secure and extend its trading monopolies, and its control over land revenue resources.<sup>20</sup> As will be seen in Section 3.3, the strong elements of ambivalence that characterise these attempts bear direct comparison with the problematic of representation in the post-‘Mutiny’ discourse on Indian Muslims. This comparison is therefore also a forceful instance of the circularity of colonial discourse, in which the question of the ‘transfer of power’, as Suleri has pointed out, is always close at hand, charging every encounter with the ‘precarious condition of the present tense.’<sup>21</sup> More importantly, it underscores the argument that will be made in Section 3.3 that religion – and specifically, the ‘fanaticism’ of the Indian Muslim – should be approached as a language primarily centred upon British paramountcy.

In particular, two related points arising out of Cohn’s essay ‘Representing Authority in Victorian India’ concern us here. The first is his argument that the paradox of Mughal nominal over-lordship was central to the dilemma of the

---

<sup>20</sup> Cohn, ‘Representing’.

<sup>21</sup> Suleri, pp 6, 111. Suleri’s insight is discussed in Section 1.5 above.

legitimisation of British power – and with it their ability to represent their own authority – until at least the vesting of sovereignty in the British monarch in the India Act of 1858. The second is his cognate observation that all related ceremonies and representations until then had about them the nature of what Sir John Kaye, referring to the ‘political paradox’ of the Mughal emperor, called ‘a reality and a sham at the same time’.<sup>22</sup> Through the detailed analysis of a particular representation of the interaction of Mughal and British figures of authority, this section will further explore the notion of the theatre of colonial self-presentation and the disturbing contradictions it gave rise to.

By opening out the definition of ‘Mughal’ to include the more substantial successor states who though independent, nominal fellow ‘diwans’ of the Mughal emperor,<sup>23</sup> were in fact tied into coercively collaborative relations with the British, it is intended to expand the context of British political self-representation. In eighteenth-century colonial discourse these states were understood as part of a wider, if now fragmented, Mughal paradigm;<sup>24</sup> the connections made in 1857 between a pan-Indian Muslim community and the history of the Mughal empire therefore included the discourses arising out of the relations with these successor states.<sup>25</sup> Nominal ‘Mughal’ sovereignty here becomes more than a matter of theatrical confusion; it enters into the problem of representing a position of paramountcy when those relations allowed for no such clarity. In this wider context, the discourse of

<sup>22</sup> Quoted in Cohn, ‘Representing’, p 171.

<sup>23</sup> The Mughal emperor formally conferred on the British the status of ‘diwan’ for the province of Bengal in 1765.

<sup>24</sup> It is just this understanding that kept British historiography of India in the eighteenth century in thrall to the idea of centrifugal chaos emanating out of and determined by the disintegration of Delhi structures of command. For the classic statement of this perception, see Percival Spear, *Twilight of the Mughuls: Studies in Late Mughul Delhi* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1951). For more balanced, recent reassessments, see Richard Barnett, *North India Between Empires: Awadh, the Mughals and the British, 1720-1801* (Berkeley: University of California, 1980); and Bayly, *Rulers*, and idem, *Indian*.

<sup>25</sup> Cohn emphasises the point that in the eighteenth century British self-representation took place ‘within’ the Indian state system (Cohn, ‘Representing’, p 170). The political negotiations between the Company and the Awadh state under discussion in this section were in fact brokered by the son of the Mughal emperor, Prince Jawan Bakht. In a sketch that may have served as the basis for the painting I will be examining, Warren Hastings and Nawab Asaf-ud-daulah of Awadh are depicted seated on the ground in front of the arbitrating figure of the Mughal prince (see Appendix, p.366).

powerlessness and dispossession which is the most prominent feature of the colonial depiction of the monarchies of Mughal successor states can be understood as, in part, a negative form of self-representation, a process of over-inscription aimed at rhetorically extricating the British from political paradoxes far more debilitating than that which maintained the fiction of centralised Mughal power. In reference to its 'Mughal' political environment, then, British self-representation in the late eighteenth century was not so much implicated in 'sham' theatre as unable at any point safely to take the stage. As we shall see in Section 3.3, it is this problem of indeterminacy and the urgent need for legibility that makes this earlier period salient to the post-'Mutiny' discourse.

Although I will concentrate on a particular moment in the history of the Awadh state, the aspects of the discourse of dispossession under consideration here are broadly applicable to other successor states such as Arcot, Mysore and Hyderabad. For instance, the broad impetus towards representing the monarchy of Awadh as fatally divorced from its polity can be seen at work from the late 1760s in the more frankly propagandist attempts to separate out the Muslim dynasty of Haidar Ali and Tipu Sultan from what was described as the 'ancient' and 'Hindoo' constitution of the Mysore state.<sup>26</sup> These strategies of representation, moreover, crossed religious and racial boundaries.<sup>27</sup> Ronald Inden has convincingly argued, for example, that from the early nineteenth century the British had sought to undermine Rajput state monarchies on the grounds that they were themselves a foreign Aryan imposition on a prior Dravidian tribal base.<sup>28</sup> Despite the concentration here on the representation of a Muslim monarch, and the comparisons that will be drawn from this analysis for the post-'Mutiny' discourse on Indian Muslims, it should therefore be kept in mind that the strategies under discussion are not dependent on religious affiliation. On the contrary, as we shall see, monarchy and not 'Muslim-ness' here alone concerns the

<sup>26</sup> Bayly, *Indian*, pp 81-82; Fisher, *Indirect*, p 403.

<sup>27</sup> Michael H Fisher (ed), *The Politics of the British Annexation of India, 1757-1857* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, repr. 1996; 1993), p 29.

<sup>28</sup> Inden, *Imagining*, pp 176-80.

British. Tied to a specifically British agenda that after 1857 narrowly identified Muslims with the Mughal figurehead, the strategies earlier deployed against Mughal figures of authority are rather the outcome of a much wider problem – that of conceiving of an unprecedented form of paramountcy within the Indian environment.<sup>29</sup> Cohn has aptly described this problematic as a process of the translation of a British ‘outsider’ into an ‘insider’, status.<sup>30</sup> In this sense of transgressing the boundaries between spectators and actors, the metaphor of the ‘theatre’ of possession and dispossession, and its conflicted scene of staging long before the enthronement of Victoria as Empress of India in the ‘Imperial Assemblage’ of 1877, merits further exploration.

The particular representation of a Mughal successor state authority we will here explore occurs in a painting by John Zoffany (1733-1810), commissioned by Warren Hastings, at the time Governor-General of Bengal (1773-1785), and entitled *Colonel Mordaunt’s Cock Match* (1784-1786).<sup>31</sup> The scene depicted is of a contest in the foreground between two gaming cocks whose attitudes partially echo those of their owners, Colonel Mordaunt, an ‘aid-de-camp’<sup>32</sup> to the Nawab Asaf-ud-daulah, titular ruler of kingdom of Awadh, and the Nawab himself, both of whom are placed in the centre of the composition. The scene is set outdoors beneath a vast tent, and a large and apparently tumultuous amphitheatre of spectators, Indian and European, is described around the similarly lively figures of Mordaunt and Asaf-ud-daulah. On the

<sup>29</sup> Fisher sees this lack of a model for colonial rule in India as the single most important factor in generating the ambivalence that characterised British policies towards Indian states, see Fisher, *Politics*, p 7.

<sup>30</sup> Cohn, ‘Representing’, p 165.

<sup>31</sup> See Appendix, p.365.

<sup>32</sup> ‘Memoirs and Remains of Eminent Persons: Biographical Anecdotes relating to the late Lieutenant-Colonel John Mordaunt, of the Honourable East India Company’s Madras Establishment’ in *The Monthly Magazine; or British Register*, March 1, 1808, p 140. Mordaunt was formerly ADC to Hastings (Mildred Archer, *India and British Portraiture 1770-1825*, (London: Sotheby Parke Bernet, 1979), p 148). Joachim Bautze and Martin Myrone have recently described him as commander of the bodyguard to Asaf-ud-daulah – though he cites no source (Joachim K Bautze, *Interaction of Cultures: Indian and Western Painting 1780-1910*, (Alexandria, Virginia: Art Services International, 1998), p 144; and Martin Myrone, *Representing Britain 1500-2000: 100 Works from Tate Collections*, (London: Tate Publishing, 2000), p 49). This may well reflect a confusion in the record between John and his brother Captain Henry Mordaunt (see Major V C P Hodson, *Officers of the Bengal Army 1758-1834, Part 3*, (London: Phillimore, 1946), p 327; and *East India Company’s Military Officers 1788-1792*, pp 8, 25).

right-hand side (from the viewer's perspective) the Nawab's throne has been vacated as he has run towards Colonel Mordaunt with both arms outstretched, apparently pleading an urgent point of gamesmanship with the Englishman. In the distance on the left-hand side can be seen an elephant and rider and behind them, another large tent. Although the centre of gravity of the painting is shifted on to the figure of Mordaunt through both the stillness of his posture and the brightness of his contrasting white outfit, it is in fact the Nawab who is placed at the geographical centre of the frame and who is, despite the naming of the painting, its ostensible principal object (a copy was in fact made of the *Cock Match* for Asaf-ud-daulah by Zoffany – and later copied by Robert Home – in which this centrality is only slightly further emphasised<sup>33</sup>).

There are three main reasons behind the selection of this particular painting as a structured text through which we can examine the stereotype of the Mughal ruler that was being created in colonial discourse in the late eighteenth century. The first lies in its situation – as with all the texts selected in this thesis – within an intensely Anglo-Indian milieu, negotiating relations between that milieu, its Indian environment, and the expectations of a Metropolitan audience. The second related consideration is the role which British portraiture during this period played in the diplomatic economy of Indian states, becoming objects of exchange and propaganda both between the Company and Indian rulers, as well as among the native states themselves.<sup>34</sup> In this respect, as with Mughal 'newswriters' of the period, and later Anglo-Indian journalism, British portraiture was enmeshed in an Indian economy of information and representation.<sup>35</sup> The third reason for its selection here is the first-hand involvement of *Cock Match* with an unprecedented moment of crisis both for the future of British rule in India and for the British Empire as a whole. As an artistic

<sup>33</sup> See the 'Ashwick version' in Appendix, p.367.

<sup>34</sup> Archer, *Portraiture*, p 149 and passim.

<sup>35</sup> Zoffany's copy of *Cock Match* (which has not survived) hung in the Daulat Khana of the Nawab's palace in Lucknow (on history of the various versions of this painting, see Archer, *Portraiture*, pp 148-150). On 'newswriters', see Fisher, 'Office', pp 45-82; and on the interaction of Anglo-Indian with Indian journalism in the late nineteenth century, see Majeed, 'Narratives'.

representation of that crisis, one that appears to depict the interaction of British and Mughal figures of authority, it remains a unique text, as yet untouched by critical analysis outside of a somewhat restrictive art-historical discipline.<sup>36</sup> It would be another fifty years before Anglo-Indian fiction emerged as a forum for such comparative artistic projects.<sup>37</sup> In terms of British painting in India, *Cock Match* was the first and last foray into a moribund genre; henceforward, artists would confine the representation of British and Indian society to separate quarters. In its simultaneous attempt to both figure and rise above the problem of political interaction it therefore offers a potentially innovative insight into the production of the signs of ambivalence which, it will be argued, structured colonialist discourse on its collaboration with existing indigenous regimes as it moved into its 'mature' phase at the end of the eighteenth century. As will be explored in the next section, this kind of indeterminacy strikingly pre-figures some of the issues that occur in the post-'Mutiny' period. I will take up these points in more detail below, but before I do so it is necessary to sketch in some of the historical background to the painting that lend it to comparison with the crisis that precipitated the evolution of the nineteenth-century British Indian state.

The occasion for the commission of *Cock Match* was the visit by Hastings to Lucknow in 1784 in order to re-negotiate the basis for the Company's relations with the Awadh state. Since being brought under effective British control in the Battle of Baksar in 1764 and the subsequent signing of the 'subsidiary' alliance with Clive in 1765, Awadh had become an indispensable source for Company revenues, in the form of trade, loans and troop 'subsides' for the maintenance of Company garrisons within the state.<sup>38</sup> In particular, Awadh revenues were of crucial importance to the regular payment of all the Company's Indian troops elsewhere, a bureaucratic efficiency that

---

<sup>36</sup> One aspect of the deficiency of this approach is that the historical battle of wills between the Nawab and the Governor-General which is clearly the principal subject of the painting has gone all but unnoticed. The most authoritative study of Zoffany's Indian works can be found in Archer, *Portraiture*, pp 133-68.

<sup>37</sup> Moore-Gilbert, *Kipling*, p 18.

<sup>38</sup> Michael H Fisher, 'Awadh and the English East India Company', in Violette Graf (ed), *Lucknow: Memories of a City* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1997), p 37.

underwrote British military supremacy at the time.<sup>39</sup> Because its own revenues were drawn from the Mughal structures of farming land revenues, and were thus subject to a variety of intermediaries, such regularity could never be guaranteed; and as with many of the 'subsidiary' alliances, the state fell quickly into arrears of payment. Together with increased revenue demands, this necessitated constant extensions of Company interference in Awadh administrative affairs. These included using its power of veto to influence the Nawab's selection of administrators and advisers; the expulsion from the kingdom of all Europeans unless they secured specific exemption from the Company (thus giving it a virtual monopoly of European military technology and personnel); and in the 1770s increased, and sometimes direct, involvement in revenue assessment and collection.<sup>40</sup> Indeed, it was the appointment of 'temporary collectors' by the British in 1781 that had led to a massive revolt by Rajput landholders in the south of the state. Asaf-ud-daulah's strategy of resistance to these encroachments on his sovereignty, as well as to the alarming drain of resources out of the kingdom, took the form of a pattern of passive non-compliance with Company demands, including strategies of decentralisation designed to hide the revenue resources of the state.<sup>41</sup> As much of the direct responsibility for enforcing the Company's control devolved upon the British Resident to the court, it is illustrative both of the success of those manoeuvres and the urgency of the demands, that within the first twelve years of the alliance the Company was forced to make ten new appointments to the post.<sup>42</sup> In the decade prior to Hastings' visit, the Residency changed hands several times between John Bristow and Hastings' own protégé, Nathaniel Middleton, whose recall in 1783 and the subsequent, unprecedented personal intervention of the Governor-General was itself an admission of the failure of the Company's aggressive policies. After six months of negotiations in Lucknow, Hastings finally agreed the start of a new, lessened financial burden on the Awadh

---

<sup>39</sup> Bayly, *Indian*, p 89; Arthur Wellesley, 'Memorandum on Marquess Wellesley's Government of India' (originally published in 1806), reproduced in Fisher (ed), *Politics*, pp 178, 180-81.

<sup>40</sup> Fisher, *Clash*, pp 82-83.

<sup>41</sup> Fisher, *Clash*, pp 83-85; Bayly, *Indian*, p 91.

<sup>42</sup> Fisher, *Indirect*, p 379.

state and the curbing of the powers of the Resident, a set of agreements – indeed, capitulations by the Company – that would endure for the next ten years.<sup>43</sup>

Hastings' intervention has to be set within the context of an unparalleled period of crisis and change for the British state in India, as well as for the security of the Empire itself. Bayly has located 1776-1783 as a period of far-reaching turbulence within the empire presaging the sweeping changes that were finally triggered by the French revolution and Napoleonic wars of the succeeding thirty years.<sup>44</sup> The crisis was born in part out of the American War of Independence and French wars of 1780-83, the former especially playing into a wave of agitation in Ireland (leading to the Irish Settlement of 1782 and devolved legislative independence). Marked by bloody slave revolts in the 1770s as well as increasingly independent trade connections by the creole elites with North America and Canada, during this same period there arose in the Caribbean a comparable 'fractious provincialism' that sought to assert itself against imperial control. And in India, defeats in the west by a resurgent Maratha confederacy in 1779 and the disastrous incursions into British Madras by Tipu Sultan and Haider Ali in 1780, led some Parliamentarians in London to consider the possibility of the forced expulsion of the British from the subcontinent. At the very least, the Company began to feel itself dangerously over-dependent on its system of 'subsidiary alliances' with Indian states. Ever since the seizure of Bengal in 1757 the Company's need for revenues to support its burgeoning military activities had left it all but insolvent. In turn, increased revenue demands on those states – the chief source for its revenue base – had forced native administrations to the edge of financial and administrative collapse. Some rulers attempted to stave off bankruptcy through territorial annexations (as the Nawab of Awadh had done to the Rohillas in 1774); others were forced to assign their lands to the Company (as the Nawab of Arcot had done in 1781-1782); and some even attempted outright revolt (as did the Raja of Benares in 1781, briefly besieging Warren Hastings himself). Since it was precisely

---

<sup>43</sup> Fisher, *Clash*, pp 84-85.

<sup>44</sup> Unless otherwise indicated, the discussion below of the British imperial context is taken from C A Bayly, *Imperial*, pp 86-99.



such urgent needs for revenues that had led the British to 'ratchet up' taxation in the Thirteen Colonies, and had thus precipitated the War of Independence, these events, combined with the military defeats in India of 1779-1780 and the financial failure of states like Arcot and Awadh, were more than a cause for anxiety in Calcutta and London. In the wake of the loss of the American colonies in 1776, they seemed to signal the breakdown of the imperial project in Asia as well.

Hastings' visit to Lucknow, commemorated by Zoffany in the *Cock Match*, was therefore at the very centre of a British imperial crisis of a scale that would not recur on the subcontinent until the 'Mutiny' almost seventy years later. Subsequent developments in fact were to prove this period one of transition to new imperial formations. Spurred on in particular by the trial of Warren Hastings over alleged corruptions in Awadh and the perceived mismanagement of revenue collection there, Parliament forced the Company Board of Directors to re-organise its financial structures leading first to the India Act of 1784, and in 1793 to the far-reaching changes of the Bengal Land Revenue Settlement. The succeeding administrations of Cornwallis (1786-1793) and Wellesley (1798-1805) began to sweep aside the 'subsidiary' alliances, and the foundations of the 'mature colonial systems' and its administrative apparatus were set in place.<sup>45</sup> Reflecting similar changes in Ireland, the Caribbean and Canada, East India Company officials were barred from private trade and increased powers ensured that the Indian markets were now ring-fenced for more direct supervision from London. In particular, the new Board of Control created by Pitt's India Act of 1784 meant that the disputes over the allocation of powers within India, and between India and London, that had been the chief characteristic of the early phase of British rule, were to some extent neutralised.<sup>46</sup> Hastings' six month stay in Lucknow (27 March to 27 August 1784<sup>47</sup>) was thus not quite the stage for the implacable reassertion of Company authority to which Zoffany's depiction of the

<sup>45</sup> Bayly, *Indian*, pp 76-78.

<sup>46</sup> Rajat Kanta Ray, 'Indian Society and the Establishment of British Supremacy, 1765-1818' in *Oxford History of the British Empire*, Volume 2, pp 513, 520.

<sup>47</sup> 'Lucknow Diary' of Warren Hastings January 1784 to 7 September, 1785, British Library Add MS 39879.

calm and resolute figure of the Englishman (Mordaunt) in the face of Indian mayhem, partly aspires. At best, the negotiations of the first Governor-General of British India had proved equivocal, and his departure for England and calls for his impeachment – developments for which he had already begun his defence from Lucknow<sup>48</sup> – were to mark the passing of an intensely embattled phase in the consolidation of colonial administration. He must therefore be regarded at the time of his arrival in Lucknow as a transitional figure, staving off the threat of institutional collapse presaged by Fox's East India Bill (1783) and the breakdown of relations with the Awadh jewel in the 'subsidiary alliance' system's crown. In short, he should be seen as, pre-eminently, a figure of the sudden and unexpected prospect of British powerlessness.

Zoffany's own arrival in Lucknow in June 1784, may have been due to advice he had received when he visited Hastings in Calcutta earlier that year.<sup>49</sup> From Hastings' diary it would seem that his presence at meetings between the Nawab, his ministers and Hastings was a fairly routine occurrence, probably because they were often held as his sitters, both European and Indian, posed for their portrait.<sup>50</sup> In one instance, at least, Zoffany appears to have recorded the negotiations themselves in a quick sketch, done at night around a campfire, in which Hastings is seated with his back towards the viewer and the Nawab is featured importuning him in a not dissimilar manner to that shown in the *Cock Match*.<sup>51</sup> In this way, Zoffany had unique access to the drama as it unfolded in Lucknow and must have been able to form at least some idea as to the kind of importance that the Company attached to those events, as well as to some of the issues involved. The very form of the *Cock Match*, aiming at a kind of conspectus of Lucknow society, from Company officials to European traders, local Indian landowners and financiers, and down to the

<sup>48</sup> See Hastings, *A Letter from the Honourable Warren Hastings, Esq, Governor-General of Bengal, To the Honourable Court of Directors of the East-India Company. Dated from Lucknow, April 30. With a Postscript, Dated May 13, 1784* (Pamphlets Volume 233, London; 1784).

<sup>49</sup> Entries dated 3 February and 3 June, 1784, in Hastings' 'Lucknow Diary'.

<sup>50</sup> See entries for June 4, 6, 12, 16, 23; July 3, 5, 7, 15, 16; August 10, and passim.

<sup>51</sup> See *Warren Hastings meeting Jawan Bakht* (1784) in Appendix, p.366. A 'euphonic quickness' at sketching was, according to Archer, one of Zoffany's 'more astounding attributes' (Archer, *Portraiture*, p 135).

incongruous assembly of townsmen and soldiers, suggests as much. Moreover, his careful attention to the activities of Europeans in the painting, and their predatory dispersal around the empty throne, show him to have been acutely aware of the wider competing mercantile interests that surrounded his patron's intervention.<sup>52</sup> For it was in part the unruly trading activities of men such as Antoine Polier, Claud Martin, and British traders like Mr Taylor (importuned by a native with what may be intended as a note of credit),<sup>53</sup> together with their Indian creditors, that had done so much to undermine the Awadh court and economy and encourage the monopolist intervention of the Company.<sup>54</sup> Even the Resident Bristow (not pictured) had decamped under Hastings' threat of investigation for financial irregularities.<sup>55</sup> In fact, Zoffany seems to make explicit reference to the problem when he has Hastings' assistant in Lucknow, Mr Wheeler, face both the throne and the obtruding figure of Claud Martin, one of the leading European financiers in Awadh at the time,<sup>56</sup> and places between his legs a cock aimed equally at throne and Frenchman (Zoffany's paintings often deployed such a Hogarthian kind of humour<sup>57</sup>). In this regard, the central theme of the painting should not be seen as confined to the 'cock-match' between the Awadh administration and the Company, but the problem of how to rise above the 'corruption' and dependency that European engagement with Indian society had seemed to bring in its wake. These were issues – particularly of the perceived 'corruption' of 'Asiatic governments' – around which moves for Hastings'

<sup>52</sup> This is the subject that also structures his *Colonel Antoine Polier with his friends Claud Martin, John Wombwell and the Artist, c 1786-1787* (illustrated in Archer, *Portraiture*, p 155).

<sup>53</sup> See the key to the figures in the painting given in Appendix, p.368.

<sup>54</sup> Bayly, *Indian*, pp 46-47, 52, 60. On the trading activities of the European community in Awadh at this time, see also: P J Marshall, 'Economic and Political Expansion: the Case of Oudh' (originally published 1975) reproduced Fisher (ed), *Politics of Annexation*, pp 201-23; Jean-Marie Lafont, 'The French in Lucknow in the Eighteenth Century' in Graff (ed), *Lucknow*, pp 60-89; Fisher, *Clash*, pp 85-86; and Fisher (ed), *Politics*, p 3.

<sup>55</sup> C Colin Davies, *Warren Hastings and Oudh* (London: Oxford University Press, 1939), pp 223-24.

<sup>56</sup> Lafont, p 75.

<sup>57</sup> But Zoffany and Hogarth also shared a tendency toward the rendering of an unusual 'wealth of subtle meaning' in their conversation pieces that marked them out among their contemporaries (Ellen G D'Oench, *The Conversation Piece: Arthur Devis and His Contemporaries*, (New Haven: Yale Centre for British Art, 1980), p 26). On the influence of Hogarth's works on Zoffany, see Ronald Paulson, *Emblem and Expression: Meaning in English Art of the Eighteenth Century* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1975), p 138; and C H S John, *Bartolozzi, Zoffany and Kauffman, with Other Foreign Members of the Royal Academy, 1768-1792* (London: P Allan, 1924), pp 30-31.

impeachment taking place at the time of the painting's composition (1784-86), would centre.<sup>58</sup> Ironically, it is a theme that is encapsulated in Hastings' instructions to Bristow on 23 October 1782 on the ideal relationship he wished him to have with the Awadh court, and the obverse of that ideal which he clearly feared was developing. 'There can be no medium,' he wrote, 'in the relation between the Resident and the minister, but either the Resident must be the slave and vassal of the minister, or the minister at the absolute devotion of the Resident.'<sup>59</sup> In this regard, we may say that *Cock Match* is only ostensibly the depiction of the vital intermingling between European and Indian society that historians have most commonly taken it for.<sup>60</sup> At a more complex level its entire structure is an illustration of the problem of dependency endemic to the 'subsidiary alliance', and thus to the genesis of the early colonial state. Like the Company itself in 1784, it desires to figure a means of rising above, and to some extent resolving, the turbulent circumstances of its engagement with India. Conceived at a comparable moment of crisis and institutional change,<sup>61</sup> and enmeshed in a similarly problematical comparative framework, it thus provides a useful figure of prolepsis to the issue of self-identity and its dangerous dependencies that underpinned the whole 'Musulman question' in post-'Mutiny' India. In particular, the Mughal figure that is produced at its centre in many ways predicts the kind of over-inscription and elements of paradox that would make of the Indian Muslim in that latter discourse such a problematic, volatile and necessary presence.

Zoffany's Indian work as a whole can be contextualised with regard to the colonial knowledge-gathering project outlined in Section 3.1 by seeing it in part as predicting the kind of 'para-ethnological' observation that nineteenth-century British artists and Company employees came to practise in India.<sup>62</sup> In this regard, his trip to India can be characterised as belated compensation for his unsuccessful attempt in

---

<sup>58</sup> Bayly, *Indian*, pp 76-78.

<sup>59</sup> Cited in Davies, p 194.

<sup>60</sup> Archie Baron, *An Indian Affair: From Riches to Raj* (London: Pan Macmillan, 2001), pp 111-12.

<sup>61</sup> The important institutional changes that took place in the 1860s and 1870s are detailed in Section 3.3 below.

<sup>62</sup> Pinney, 'Colonial', p 254.

1771 to join Captain Cook's second voyage to the Pacific, in which he invested heavily, and which made the reputation of the successful candidate, George Foster.<sup>63</sup> Indeed, it was the artist who accompanied Cook on his first voyage, William Hodges, who most probably introduced Zoffany to Hastings, and whose own tour of India between 1780 and 1783 may well have provided him with a model for emulation.<sup>64</sup> In tune with the expansionist phase of Empire-building, British art of the late eighteenth century was beginning to generate its own market for images of exotic lands captured and brought back to the Metropolis; and the search for new subjects, whether Maori 'chieftains' or Indian nawabs, offered, it was thought, legitimate informational tasks, as well as picturesque subjects. Zoffany's Indian venture was made at a time when there was in England almost no 'visual idea' of India.<sup>65</sup> Even a grand historical piece such as Francis Hayman's *Lord Clive meeting Mir Jafar, Nawab of Murshidabad after the Battle of Plassey* (1761-1762), while enjoying a notable success with the public, was in fact devoid of any first-hand experience of the subcontinent.<sup>66</sup> Zoffany's tendency to incorporate carefully-delineated Indian subjects into even his Anglo-Indian society portraits, unusual among his portraitist contemporaries, as well as the profusion of his sketches of purely Indian scenes, suggests that he may have seen the venture partly as an opportunity to broach an as yet untapped market.<sup>67</sup> As it turned out, however, the few Indian paintings he eventually exhibited damaged the critical reputation he had built up with royal commissions such as the *Tribuna at the Uffizi* (1772);<sup>68</sup> and despite the fame of the later Earlom engraving of *Cock Match*

<sup>63</sup> Archer, *Portraiture*, p 132.

<sup>64</sup> Partha Mitter, *Much Maligned Monsters: A History of European Reactions to Indian Art* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, repr. 1977; 1992), pp 123-24; Archer, *Portraiture*, p 134.

<sup>65</sup> Mildred Archer and Ronald Lightbown, *India Observed: India as Viewed by British Artists 1760-1860* (London: Victoria and Albert Museum in association with Trefoil, 1982), p 8; G H R Tillotson, 'The Indian Picturesque: Images of India in British Landscape Painting, 1780-1880, in Bayly (ed) *The Raj: India and the British 1600-1947*, (London: National Portrait Gallery Publication, 1990), p 141.

<sup>66</sup> Bayly, *Raj*, p 99.

<sup>67</sup> Archer, *Portraiture*, p 134.

<sup>68</sup> See for instance, the vicious review of his 'Hyderbeg on his Mission to Lord Cornwallis, with a View of the Granary erected by Warren Hastings, Esq at Patna' in Anthony Pasquin, *A Critical Guide to the Royal Academy for 1796* (London: 1796), p 20. On Zoffany's early 'instant success' in Britain, from his arrival there in 1760 until his departure for India, see D'Oench, pp 25-31.

(1792),<sup>69</sup> his hopes of creating an appetite for his Indian scenes in England were somewhat premature. It was in fact the books of prints of – most often, de-populated – Indian scenes, made for an expanding bourgeois market at the very end of the eighteenth and throughout the first decades of the nineteenth century, that were both financially and critically successful.<sup>70</sup> In something of a bitter coda to his Indian experience, his Pacific usurper, Foster, later borrowed and successfully retailed some of Zoffany's Indian sketches and props to a Metropolitan public suddenly hungry for 'Indian' scenes.<sup>71</sup>

If Zoffany's attempt to forge a relationship to an uncertain Metropolitan audience met with little immediate success, his rapid assimilation into, and financial reliance upon, an Anglo-Indian milieu lent to his paintings an ideological thrust comparable to much later writers such as Steel and Kipling.<sup>72</sup> This was in part due to his relatively long residence in India (1783-1789), as well as his intimate involvement with European society, official and non-official, in Lucknow, Madras and Calcutta. But it also stemmed from his remarkable ability to identify, and identify with, the concerns of his patrons, instanced in India above all in his most important source of patronage, Warren Hastings. This identification with the colonial project in the form of its most zealous and at the time, most powerful, administrator (in 1773, final authority over all the Presidencies was vested in the office of the Governor-General of Bengal) can be seen even in a much later work, *Hyderbeg on his Mission to Lord Cornwallis, with a View of the Granary erected by Warren Hastings, Esq at Patna* (c 1795).<sup>73</sup> Here Zoffany reverses the hierarchy that had come by then to structure most

<sup>69</sup> John, p 24; Bautze, p 145.

<sup>70</sup> Mackenzie, *Orientalism*, p 48. Financial success through Indian royal patronage also eluded Zoffany; but it seems to have been a lucrative venture for some of his contemporaries, notably Ozias Humphrys (pictured beside the artist himself in *Cock Match*). See *Memoirs of the Royal Academicians; Being an Attempt to Improve the National Taste by Anthony Pasquin* (London: Symonds, 1796), p 121.

<sup>71</sup> Archer, *Portraiture*, p 168. One of the artists to benefit from the new appetite for prints was the artist of Cook's first voyage, William Hodges (Archer, *Observed*, pp 8-10); but the real stimulus for prints of India came with the Daniells' *Oriental Scenery* (1796).

<sup>72</sup> For most British artists India ceased to be a popular destination by the mid-nineteenth century. Tillotson, p 141.

<sup>73</sup> See Appendix, p.369. For the sake of consistency, the titles of the Zoffany paintings used in this section generally correspond to those given by Mildred Archer. In the instance of *Hyderbeck*, the

European painting emanating from India, and especially the popular landscapes of William Hodges. There the European or Indian spectators add scale to the majesty of the Indian monuments in the background; and the irregularity of the landscape is harmoniously re-composed to complete a picture intended to allow the viewer to peacefully contemplate the transience of man in the face of an ancient and natural grandeur.<sup>74</sup> In contrast, in *Hyderbeck* the foreground is swamped by the depiction of a procession disrupted by the violence of a rogue elephant, as Indians in various attitudes of alarm, terror, nonchalance, and curiosity, lead the viewer's eye in confusion among the crowd. The point of rest is provided in the calm and relatively empty landscape in the background, and in particular by the singular monument of the granary erected by Warren Hastings at Patna. This naturalised, almost phallic, building is melded with the landscape in just the manner in which Hodges might have chosen 'pagodas'.<sup>75</sup> It provides the framework within which the panic of Indian disarray (which despite their masterful responses threatens to infect the British figures in the procession) can be pleurably enacted and contained. The transience lies entirely with the undermined pomposity of the Awadh royal procession (en route to petition the Governor-General); British rule seemingly belongs to another, atemporal and implacable, plane. Like Kipling's portraits of the barely-contained instabilities of British rule, Zoffany seems always to be seeking this narrative framework of implacability – the corrective 'steel frame' of the colonial machinery which operates from 'outside' of the perceived anarchy and disempowerment of colonial society.<sup>76</sup>

The Metropolitan success of Earlom's engraving of *Cock Match* derived to some extent from the public fascination with the trial of Warren Hastings (begun in 1788) and the whole question of the 'corruption' of Europeans abroad and

---

original designation has been used (see Note 64 above) since the title itself proclaims the artist's intentions.

<sup>74</sup> Tillotson, p 142.

<sup>75</sup> See for instance, *The Pagodas at Deogur* by Hodges (c 1787), illustrated in Tillotson, p 143.

<sup>76</sup> On this point see, for instance, Kipling's 'On the City Wall' in which the treachery successfully enacted upon the British narrator is then corrected by the impersonal machinery of the state in the last paragraph. The state reaches in, as it were, from the historical framework outside of the actual narrative of the story, and restores the momentarily disrupted colonial ordering of society. This text is discussed in detail in the next section.

promiscuously mixing with ‘Asiatic despotisms’, a scandalous situation which Zoffany appeared to have depicted with such relish.<sup>77</sup> Although no contemporary reviews survive to testify as to the exact tenor of its popular reputation, the engraving would most probably have fed into the then common Metropolitan fear that through the Company’s hitherto unchecked association with Indian society and its iniquitous practices, infectious forms of ‘corruption’ were being conveyed into British society.<sup>78</sup> The charge of despotic corruption was explicit in Burke’s admonitory rhetoric to Hastings during the trial, and as with all ‘conversation pieces’ *Cock Match* contains at least an element of disapprobation in that the unruly behaviour of the principals, as in Hogarth’s *The Rake’s Progress*, is echoed throughout the society (dis)ordered around them.<sup>79</sup> Thus the gaming dispute between Mordaunt and the Nawab is also figured as a mock romance played out between two lovers, arms spread to receive each other, the Nawab being portrayed in the beseeching feminine role with his eyes cast upwards as he rushes towards his ‘aid-de-camp’. This is then linked to the rather more licentious embraces in the crowd behind them, including that between a seated courtier and courtesan. On the left hand side, the attitudes of water-carrier and the woman stretching imploringly towards him, eyes upturned and head inclined, Nawab-like, again mimic the central pairing; and the spout of water he delivers into a young boy’s hands may have its own sexual connotations (as has been suggested may be read into the dispute at the back of the crowd featuring a young boy holding a cock and being abused by an older turbaned man<sup>80</sup>). Finally, in the top left-hand corner, beneath a spreading tree, a European man with his back turned to the viewer is pictured with his arm around an Indian woman. Since his red jacket and wig may have been partly intended to suggest a reference to the standing gentlemen (Colonel

<sup>77</sup> On the trial itself, see P J Marshall, *The Impeachment of Warren Hastings* (London: Oxford University Press, 1965).

<sup>78</sup> On this debate, see Teltscher, Chapter Five; and Suleri, *Rhetoric*, Chapter Three.

<sup>79</sup> Admonition was frequently incorporated into eighteenth-century ‘conversation pieces’ (Ronald Paulson, *Emblem*, 1975, p 124). Questions of genre are taken up in detail below.

<sup>80</sup> Myrone, p 49.



Polier) beside the throne who is looking down upon the courtesan and courtier,<sup>81</sup> the excited pairing of Indian ruler and European gentleman becomes a diachronic hall of mirrors that animates all levels of society and draws the disparate grouping of the painting into a more formalised tableau. Given that all the pairings are derived from the more primal interaction of the two cocks at the very front of the picture (a sport which in England was in the process of being recast as highly immoral and leading to more corrupt practices<sup>82</sup>), the tableau as a whole can be seen as subject to an admonitory gesture.

This admonitory impulse, captured in the repeated licentious pairings, carries another more potent, and complex, message about luxury, ‘dependency’ and the problematic balance of ‘credit’ both between Empire and Metropolis, and between Europeans and Indians.<sup>83</sup> The amatory exchanges, deriving from the primary motif of gaming, evoke a pervasive contemporary argument on, and ambivalence about, the idea of luxury. This issue is made explicit through certain interactions between the Europeans, and more importantly between Europeans and Indians in the assembled audience. Thus again, the upturned eyes of the Nawab are echoed by those of the seated servant displaying what appears to be an empty money-box to Lieutenant Golding in the right-hand lower corner of the picture, who is in turn importuned by a well-known European trader, Mr Orr, his palm held open expectantly. This betting motif is picked up by the Indian who appears to have handed a note (perhaps of credit) to Mr Taylor in the upper right hand corner. Beneath them, Lieutenant Pigot looks warily over to an Indian gentleman who seems to have taken from him a golden object and with whom he appears – like the Nawab and Mordaunt – to be engaging with in dispute. In this way, the romantic motif that echoes outwards from the central pair is itself paralleled by the idea of monetary exchanges that cross between Indian

<sup>81</sup> Polier was himself married to an Indian woman. However, Zoffany may well have intended in his interest in the courtesan, a reference to an earlier painting by Tilly Kettle that shows Polier watching the performance of ‘nautch’ girls (a copy of which is illustrated in Archer, *Portraiture*, p 85).

<sup>82</sup> Robert W Malcolmson, *Popular Recreations in English Society 1700-1850* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1973), pp 118-57; Roger Munting, *An Economic and Social History of Gambling in Britain and the USA* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1996), pp 17-21.

<sup>83</sup> Bayly, *Indian*, p 65.

and European, and is formally inscribed in the larger balance between the right-hand grouping of European gamblers and the more excitable exchanges on the left-hand side (open palms, upturned eyes) between water-carrier and seated Indians.

The British discourse on 'luxury' – which included the category of 'leisure'<sup>84</sup> – underwent a significant transformation in the eighteenth century. For much of the seventeenth century it had been associated with a moral censure against trade deficits, particularly in regard to the East India Company and its involvement of England in substantial foreign trade.<sup>85</sup> In this classical discourse, which was echoed by Whig arguments in the late eighteenth century, the conflation of luxury, credit and moral dissipation was contrasted against the virtue of landed property. The former was invested with a feminine duplicity, and the latter with the masculine qualities of solidity and durability.<sup>86</sup> Foreign trade was feared for its emasculation of morality, encouraging a prodigality that undermined the individual and the nation at once, particularly in regard to military strength. However, some advocates of foreign trade, such as Thomas Mun, a director of the Company, began to argue that where the balance between import and export could be maintained, luxury was to be cautiously welcomed. It was only where that balance gave way to an iniquitous increase in, and growing dependency on, imports that 'deterioration' was to be feared (an argument that is strikingly echoed by Seeley three centuries later in his fears over British Indian investments).<sup>87</sup> By the mid-eighteenth century these new currents of thought were taken up and expanded by, among others, Adam Smith and David Hume. Along with Adam Ferguson and William Robertson, these writers of the Scottish Enlightenment school of thought began to reformulate the terms of the relationship of the political idea of luxury in regard to trade and national benefits, and its hitherto civic humanist moral dimensions. In their advocacy of the benefits of luxury, they aimed specifically

---

<sup>84</sup> Christopher J Berry, *The Idea of Luxury: A Conceptual and Historical Investigation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), pp 5, 7.

<sup>85</sup> Berry, pp 101-103.

<sup>86</sup> Berry, pp 121,128; J G A Pocock, *Virtue, Commerce, and History: Essays on Political Thought and History, Chiefly in the Eighteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), pp 113-14.

<sup>87</sup> Thomas Mun, *England's Treasure by Forreign Trade* (London: 1664).

at undermining the key connections between luxury, effeminacy and military weakness.<sup>88</sup> In Hume's essay 'On Luxury' (1752), he described luxury as denoting an advanced stage of civilization and 'refinement', and as acting as a spur to the maintenance of good government in order to curb the natural avarice of men. He contended that a trading nation was a potent (as opposed to emasculated) one, an idea later taken up by Smith in his *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations* (1776). For Smith 'foreign commerce' provided an outlet for expense by 'the great proprietors', freeing up those who would otherwise have been employed by them as 'retainers' to become themselves 'merchants'.<sup>89</sup> Thus the 'market' becomes the structure of interdependence by which inequality is removed, a vision of 'opulence' encouraging 'freedom' that sought to obviate the censure of the civic humanists who regarded all but a landed independency as subject to moral corruption.<sup>90</sup> In this new vision of the free circulation of goods and credit through and between societies, good government consisted precisely in the neutral regulation of 'free trade', curbing its natural excesses, and freeing it of the restraining vices of speculation and 'dependency'. Furthermore, this conception of a competitive but interdependent society was specifically contrasted with those in Asia and Africa, where a slavish 'dependency' and lack of 'self-command' was thought to be the rule.<sup>91</sup>

However, one of the fault-lines exposed in these eighteenth-century currents of economic thought was in defining the precise relations of government to the new commercial society. Thus, in the writings of Adam Ferguson there inheres a continuing conception of a governing infrastructure of "dignities", institutions and

---

<sup>88</sup> Berry, pp 133-34. On the tensions surrounding the eighteenth-century political debate about the commercial emasculation of British military sovereignty, see J G A Pocock, 'Political Thought in the English-speaking Atlantic, 1760-1790: the Imperial Crisis', in Pocock (ed), *The Varieties of British Political Thought, 1500-1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), pp 246-83.

<sup>89</sup> Berry, p 157.

<sup>90</sup> Berry, p 154.

<sup>91</sup> The 'private liberty' thought to be denied in 'barbarous nations' provides a vital contrast in Smith's arguments in *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations* (1776). Berry, pp 159. 169.

‘offices’, which, if not timeless, are at least very ancient.’<sup>92</sup> There is a continuing appeal here to the solidity of an implicitly landed, and therefore ‘virtuous’ (because free of corrupting relations) body of officials, which at the same time he defines as modernising ‘informed professionals capable of scientific ‘modelling’ of government.’<sup>93</sup> Through these contending ideas, he effectively replicates the classical republican division between the institutions of government and civil society; but exactly how the one was to arise out of the other, and thus break through the cycle of competition and corruption, remains an unresolved debate. Recent scholarship on the writings of Adam Smith has similarly detected a strong and persistent appeal to the class of small landed proprietors through which the dangerous appetites of self-interest in commercial society may be restrained, and the idea of progress anchored.<sup>94</sup> And in contradistinction, there remains in the *Wealth of Nations* a recurrent strain of polemicism against joint stock companies, in particular the East India and South Sea companies, whose unchecked and purely self-interested desires pose a substantial threat to the ‘wellbeing’ of the nation.<sup>95</sup> There was, then, a continuing implicit notion in the arguments of the Scottish Enlightenment thinkers of what John Pocock has termed ‘the ideal of patriot virtue’ – that is, the unspecialised and therefore incorruptible antithesis of an agrarian, rooted foundation on which commercial society could be structured.<sup>96</sup> Both within the new ‘economical’ theorists, and between them and the civic humanists, the shared admission that ‘the political individual needed a material anchor in the form of property’ carried with it the unresolved question of autonomy and self-government.<sup>97</sup> How could an incorruptible government arise from the interplay of commercial relations; and how could self-

---

<sup>92</sup> Fania Oz-Salzberger, ‘Civil Society in the Scottish Enlightenment’, in Sudipta Kaviraj and Sunil Khilnani (eds), *Civil Society: History and Possibilities* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), pp 73, 77. Oz-Salzberger sees a similar appeal to ‘governing institutions, ripe with age and wisdom’ in the writings of David Hume and Adam Smith (Oz-Salzberger, p 59).

<sup>93</sup> Oz-Salzberger, p 64.

<sup>94</sup> John Dwyer, *The Age of Passions: an Interpretation of Adam Smith and Scottish Enlightenment Culture* (East Linton, Scotland: Tuckwell Press, 1998), especially Chapters Two and Three.

<sup>95</sup> Dwyer, pp 65-66, 71.

<sup>96</sup> Pocock, *Virtue*, pp 110-11.

<sup>97</sup> Pocock, *Virtue*, p 111.

command and interdependency resist political compromise and moral degeneration? Transposed to a nascent colonial scene of sociation, this is the underlying issue in Hastings' advice to his (hopelessly compromised) subordinate, Bristow, in which he maintained the reassuring, but highly impractical, binary of 'slave' and despot in regard to the Company's political relations to the Awadh court. The problem of the impossible 'medium' was to return to haunt Hastings in Lucknow, just as the idea of corrupting intermediaries haunted the Scottish theorists of commercial society. For as Pocock writes of their engagement with eighteenth-century 'commercial man':

If all political relationships were mediated, [commercial man] must in the last analysis be governed by intermediaries, whether these took the form of mercenaries, courtiers, clergy or representatives; and every theory of corruption, without exception, is a theory of how intermediaries substitute their own good and profit for that of their supposed principals.<sup>98</sup>

This intractable strain of pessimism over the ability of commerce to foster civil authority bears the impress of the Hobbesian thesis of the natural state of humans as acquisitive and competitive beings requiring a 'powerful and independent sovereign'.<sup>99</sup> But in the wake of the great Financial Revolution of the 1690s, in which the foundations of government were floated upon the tide of public credit, such absolutism – the estate of 'vassal' and master – was thought irrecoverable in Metropolitan Britain; government was now forever implicated in the giddy cycles of commerce.<sup>100</sup> In some ways, the trial of the arch-'nabob' Warren Hastings in the 1790s can be seen as an attempt to enact a punitive resolution of this intolerable political dilemma upon a safely alienated body. As an interpretation of the colonial context of this debate, however, *Cock Match* suggests that long before Edmund Burke's inaugural speech, the colonialist camp had already come against its own failure to plausibly resurrect a disassociated British despotic authority.<sup>101</sup> Given the role it had come to assume in the economy and imagination of Metropolitan society as

---

<sup>98</sup> Pocock, *Virtue*, p 122.

<sup>99</sup> Pocock, *Virtue*, p 107.

<sup>100</sup> Pocock, *Virtue*, pp 66-70.

<sup>101</sup> On the charge, and defense against, British despotic power during the trial of Hastings, see Teltscher, pp 163-72.

the prime intermediary for foreign trade, the East India Company was a predictable body on which to attempt to inscribe a measure of clarity in the debate between commerce and polity. As we shall see, Zoffany's choice for the public spectacle of alienation and punishment was no less a predictable and visible intermediary for his colonialist audience.

Bayly has described 'Scottish Enlightenment' thought as crucial to understanding the new emphasis on 'independency' and 'self-command' that infused the late eighteenth century imperial ethos and began the process of civil service reform which inaugurated the 'mature colonial systems'.<sup>102</sup> At the same time, however, he has located a contradictory and 'dominant tone' internal to colonialism in India that was 'agrarianist and aristocratic', shoring up iniquitous local institutions for the purposes of imperial security.<sup>103</sup> These tensions in colonial orientation mirror the contending Metropolitan currents of discourse around the related ideas of luxury, credit and healthy national commerce. Bayly's paradox of early colonialist praxis, entailing the vital question of 'dependency' and the problematic of political and commercial collaboration in India, was nowhere more apparent than in the subsidiary alliance system which, by the 1780s, was seen to be exposed to increasingly intolerable pressures. In this sense, the view from Lucknow, with its rapid turnover of disgraced Residents and the revenue frustrations imposed on the Company by a militarily impotent native ruler, could not be better narrated than through the charged subject of competition and financial exchange. Zoffany's choice of gaming and the interdependence of Indian and European society as his subject for the centrepiece in the set of commissions he executed for the departing Governor-General should thus be seen as more than fortuitous, offering as it did a chance to re-define the troubled

---

<sup>102</sup> Bayly, *Imperial*, pp 150-63.

<sup>103</sup> Bayly, *Imperial*, p 160. Again, there is a parallel here in the later discourse on Indian Muslims. This tension in ideological orientation was to resurface again most conspicuously in the immediate post-'Mutiny' period when widespread law reform was pushed through which aimed at extending colonial institutions deeper into Indian society, and thus bypassing as far as possible the perceived distortions of local practices and corrupt indigenous intermediaries. Simultaneous with these reforms there emerged an equally strong conservative impetus to shore up – if more through ritual than substantial powers – local aristocratic regimes that were now seen as a bulwark against a repetition of the events of 1857. Fisher, *Politics*, pp 24-25, 33-37.

terms of the Company's own 'game'.<sup>104</sup> Noting the entry for the fifth of April in Hastings' diary of a visit to Mordaunt on the occasion of a 'cock match', art historians have tended to see the scene as one directly selected or suggested by him, and as therefore narrowly memorialising his visit to Lucknow. In fact, Hastings was famously ambivalent about the joys of gaming. 'I neither drink, game, nor give my vacant hours to music,' he wrote later that year. 'And [give] but a small portion of my time to the other relaxations of society.'<sup>105</sup> As will now be argued, the interest that the painting held for him would have been less in the Indo-European licentiousness, than in its attempt to narrate an altogether more appealing message of Company independence and mastery encoded into the riotous crowd and the body of the Indian monarch.

The gendered notion of 'credit' in the eighteenth century, and its relationship to political and military emasculation, explicitly ties together the two parallel economies of exchange – financial and sexual – in *Cock Match*. The potency of Mordaunt's martial figure, his spare torso and muscular legs emphasised by his close-fitting gaming clothes, all too obviously mark him out here as the dominant partner in his exchange with the Nawab.<sup>106</sup> In contrast, the translucent, loose robes of the Nawab, gathered into what would have been perceived as effeminate drapes and folds, were a common means of depicting the passive femininity of Indian monarchs at the time. Before the fiercer engagements of the 1790s, and the taking of Seringapatam by the British in 1799, it had, for instance, been a routine practice of British artists to emphasise the 'effeminate flowing robes' of both Tipu Sultan of Mysore and his

<sup>104</sup> Zoffany charged Hastings 15,000 rupees for *Cock Match*, an enormous sum of money for an 'Indian' piece at the time, and five times more than he charged for any of his other commissions for the Governor-General (Archer, *Portraiture*, p 152).

<sup>105</sup> Letter to J Scott, 24 November 1784, cited in P J Marshall, 'Warren Hastings as Scholar and Patron' in Anne Whiteman, J S Bramby, P G M Dickson (eds), *Statesmen, Scholars and Merchants: Essays in Eighteenth-Century History Presented to Dame Lucy Sutherland*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1973), p 254.

<sup>106</sup> Mordaunt had the reputation of an astute and highly successful gambler in these exchanges with the Nawab. 'Memoirs and Remains of Eminent Persons', p 144.

army, against the tight breeches and jackets of the 'brutally virile' British.<sup>107</sup> Zoffany has underscored this contrast by inscribing the Nawab with shadows that emphasise pendulous breasts, and an improbable assemblage of cloth around his groin area that, in evoking a snail-like whorl, carries the equivocal suggestion of the classical motif for the vulva.<sup>108</sup> This insignia entails the possible influence here of a strand of antiquarian symbology that had entered European art in the seventeenth century and had continued throughout the eighteenth century to play an important role in the interpretation of Indian religious iconography. In the year of Hastings' visit to Lucknow, another beneficiary of his patronage, William Jones, published his seminal paper on the syncretism running between Indian and classical Western religions.<sup>109</sup> It marked a culmination of a burgeoning belief among scholars since the early eighteenth century that Indian and classical 'paganism' coincided, most especially in the practice of 'fertility cults'. Zoffany would certainly have been aware of these connections from an earlier commission for the celebrated antiquarian and collector of Indian 'erotic' art, Charles Towneley, a portrait he had executed by defining his sitter among and by, his private collection.<sup>110</sup> Given the increasing understanding of the interchange between Greek and Indian 'paganism' on the theme of fertility (which Towneley himself propounded), it seems probable that satirised elements of the idea of fertility reside in Zoffany's central placing of the Nawab in his effeminised glory, and inform the manner in which the idea of commercial bounty flows from him outwards throughout the Indian and European crowd. These debased elements of Indian religious iconography are then implicitly joined with the eighteenth century idea of the 'East', and in particular, India, as a woman offering her 'riches' to Europe. This was an image driving Company ideology, and famously embodied in a fresco in

<sup>107</sup> Susan Seitzer, 'Representations of the Reign of Tipu Sultan', unpublished paper presented at the conference on "Places in the Past": The Uses of History in South Asia', (London: Centre for South Asian Studies, School of Oriental and African Studies, 15-18 April 1997), pp 8-10.

<sup>108</sup> Rubens, for instance, wrote in extensive detail on the connection between the symbol of the snail and the vulva. Mitter, p 76. The 'snail' is also a common icon of fertility in some Indian cultures (*The Herder Dictionary of Symbols*, (Wilmette, Illinois: Chiron Publications, repr. 1986; 1978), p 176). The 'equivocal' nature of Zoffany's use of this icon in *Cock Match* is addressed below.

<sup>109</sup> William Jones, 'On the Gods of Greece, Italy and India' (1784).

<sup>110</sup> Paulson, *Emblem*, p 153; Mitter, pp 84-85.



East India House painted by Spiridone Roma in 1778, in which a dark, half-naked Indian woman, flowing robes swathed around her waist, offers up – head inclined, eyes upturned – to Britannia a velvet cushion from which necklaces of jewellery spill bountifully down towards the viewer.<sup>111</sup> *Cock Match* can therefore be read on one level as a comic reprise of the problem of the ‘wanton abandon of Indian wealth’ which Fox’s East India Bill had set itself the task – in direct competition with the Company – of constraining within a Parliamentary framework.<sup>112</sup> By casting that regenerative over-abundance in the figure of the Nawab, Zoffany appears to put in question the substance of the charge of extortion that had begun to beset his patron at the time of the painting’s composition. The Nawab is produced as a spontaneous and uncontrolled outpouring of wealth animating the economy of representation around him – an economy in which the accused is seemingly nowhere to be found. Because the painting as a whole envisions the framing eye of its patron, however, the idea of the proper containment of this outpouring is, in a sense, already wrested from the rhetoric of Parliamentarians, and quietly returned to its rightful authority.

The figure of the Nawab, then, can be read as intending visibility, set at the heart of the composition and inscribed with an icon of regeneration and passivity. Financial and sexual legibility combine in him in a way that seeks to triumphantly recast the recent history of Hastings’ negotiations and the Company’s growing unease with its political collaboration. In bringing this panorama of Indian wealth within Hastings’ home,<sup>113</sup> Zoffany literalises a common function of the ‘conversation piece’, one which he had already accomplished for Queen Charlotte in *The Tribuna at the Uffizi*, wherein the wealth of the Uffizi gallery was copied and brought back for inclusion within the English royal collections. Legibility and ownership were cognate aspects of this genre. It was a pervasive feature of eighteenth-century Anglo-Indian ‘conversation pieces’ to incorporate paintings of Indian life and landscapes into a drawing-room setting, thus retrieving and domesticating the Indian environment

<sup>111</sup> Illustrated in Bayly (ed), *Raj*, p 28.

<sup>112</sup> Suleri, *Rhetoric*, p 25.

<sup>113</sup> Hastings’ country residence at Daylesford was the final destination of *Cock Match*.

within a reassuring and proprietary European scene.<sup>114</sup> This was no more than a colonial translation of the essential purpose of the genre in rendering a narrative of power and in particular, power as vested in property.<sup>115</sup> We will take up the issue of property more directly in a moment; but first it is necessary to return to the dangerous figure of credit the Nawab bodily encompasses in the painting. As mentioned above, ever since the creation of the Bank of England and the National Debt in the ‘Financial Revolution’ of the 1690s, the popular imagination in Britain had been wary of the potential corruption that credit now invested in government.<sup>116</sup> It was feared that the virtuous independence of the classical civic ideal was fatally compromised by the infectious, courtesanal figure of credit; and such popular imaginings of the fantasy of credit and self-indulgence were even more readily invested in the image of Company collaboration with the effeminising corruptions of Indian wealth. Even as it presents a scene of vital commercial interchange, Zoffany would have been well aware that his message of bounty ran the risk of this perception of debilitating infection. For this reason, the gendering of credit as Indian feminine bounty delivering itself into the open, and barely restraining, gesture of the masculine figure of Mordaunt is further encoded with a complicating priapic suggestion. What we have described as the equivocal icon of female genitalia painted into the Nawab’s clothing is in fact ‘filled out’ with the paradoxically potent possibility of a very masculine stirring (it is this possibility that art historians have most tended to notice<sup>117</sup>). One possible source for this equivocation may lie again in the conflation of Indian and Classical fertility symbols that collectors such as Towneley had begun to advocate; in particular, it may

---

<sup>114</sup> See for instance, the plethora of Indian maps and paintings of Indian scenes and people in Zoffany’s *Colonel Polier with his friends Claud Martin, John Wombwell and the artist*, Lucknow, 1786-1787. A more exclusively masculine variation on the drawing-room scene, the model for this painting is that embodied by, for example, Philip Reinagle’s *Members of the Carrow Abbey Hunt* (1780) in which the paintings of country scenes, along with the guns and trophy heads on the walls, imply the casual possession of the unseen land by the informally posed gentlemen ‘hunters’ (illustrated in Myrone, p 48).

<sup>115</sup> Ronald Paulson, *Hogarth. Volume One: The ‘Modern Moral Subject’, 1697-1732* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971), p 224; John Berger, *Ways of Seeing* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1972), pp 106-109.

<sup>116</sup> Pocock, *Virtue*, p 108.

<sup>117</sup> Myrone, p 49.

advert to the coincidence long associated between Shiva and Dionysus.<sup>118</sup>

Towneley's own collection contained a miniaturised representation of a Hindu temple, featuring at its centre a Shaivite *linga*, towards which all the other icons are pointed.<sup>119</sup> That Zoffany may have mockingly inducted the simultaneous symbolisation of male and female procreative forms in the *linga*, as well as its place of honour in the Towneley composition, adds to the appearance in *Cock Match* of a self-induced rape. But it also attempts to guard against – as it were, sheathe - the complicity of the desiring viewer. The equivocal marks of genitalia reinforce the essential difference of the Indian monarch, monstrously both generating and absorbing rapacity, the organ of violation being replaced in his own uncontrolled body. The message would appear to be given out that he may be distinguished from the (all but absent<sup>120</sup>) Company in his lack of 'self-command', unable to harness his own wealth; and at the same time that he is, as it were, self-negating, stimulating, satisfying, and betraying, only himself. Thus the effeminate and emasculating infection of credit is, in a manner, confined to and absorbed by, its point of origin, leaving the viewer guiltlessly free to enjoy a self-enclosed economy of pleasure. Isolated from the Company, the Nawab is effectively produced – and in a sense, exorcised – as that classical motif of the loss of virtue, the dystopian figure of luxury feeding upon itself in an endless cycle of corruption and desire.<sup>121</sup>

Such a representation would seem to replicate Alain Grosrichard's sealed economy of 'jouissance' in which the oriental despot is both 'enjoyed' and disavowed by the distant Metropolitan spectator (see Section 1.4). This would then account for the further representations of licentious exchange that the Nawab appears to unleash

---

<sup>118</sup> Mitter, pp 86-97.

<sup>119</sup> For illustration, see Mitter, p 87.

<sup>120</sup> It is no accident that the only representative of Hastings' council – Wheeler – has his back squarely turned to the disporting Nawab.

<sup>121</sup> Berry, p 106; Pocock, p 112. The offending folds are all but lost within the rest of cloth in the Nawab's own copy of the painting (see the 'Ashwick version' in Appendix, p.367).

among his audience. For as Grosrichard writes, the despotic relationship to enjoyment, its consumption and manufacture,

is reproduced identically at every link in the chain. Whatever level he occupies the momentary holder of power desires simultaneously like *a* despot and like *the* despot. He is always simultaneously an absolute point of departure and a pure relay, all the way along the chain to its very end...<sup>122</sup>

This reading would then implicate the assembled Europeans partaking of the sport, at the same time as it disassociated the viewing Hastings and the governmental framework of Company involvement. Since, however, the painting as a whole marks a moment of interchange – of (to paraphrase Pratt) colonial ‘contact’ – the suggestion of a sealed economy of representation is inevitably misleading. The obvious problem set by the priapic-passive Nawab touches most immediately upon the figure of Mordaunt. As with so many British portraits of graceful virility in the eighteenth century his pose and physique is distantly derived from that of the *Apollo Belvedere*. It is intended to suggest a ‘majesty’ that at once includes and transcends ‘mere manliness’.<sup>123</sup> The reference is neither simply misplaced in such a scene of mortal vices, nor can it be considered as an unreflective piece of classicism. Rather, the note of aspiration it sounds – of, that is, a desire to transcend both its gender and its surroundings – marks the figure of Mordaunt as the troubled point at which the despotic economy reaches out beyond the frame and involves its viewer. What he seeks to transcend of course, is the Nawab’s emasculating potential. Specifically, the priapic potency inscribed into the effeminate despotic figure opens up the possibility that the female-male pairing of the Nawab and Mordaunt cannot contain the gender codes of the painting; a surplus of (male) potency threatens to reverse the roles. Instead of the Apollonian disavowal of the Nawab’s Dionysian invitation, Mordaunt’s outstretched arms may then signify their own female passivity, receiving and being

<sup>122</sup> Grosrichard, p 74. Emphasis in the original.

<sup>123</sup> Chloe Chard, ‘Effeminacy, Pleasure and the Classical Body’, in Gill Perry and Michael Rossington (eds), *Femininity and Masculinity in Eighteenth-century Art and Culture* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, repr. 1997; 1994), p 150.

mastered by the 'wanton abandon' of Indian wealth. This in turn upsets the secretly gendered message of Company mastery that provides the main framework of the painting and which leans it, as with all of Zoffany's 'conversation pieces', to a private and personal reading of ownership.

There are two figures that primarily convey this covert message, both of which have been oddly overlooked in past readings. They are figures of invitation and exhortation, and they are staring directly at the viewer (Hastings), the only characters in *Cock Match* to do so;<sup>124</sup> together they constitute the interlocking ideas of finance and sexuality. At the very back of the crowd, a bearded man dressed in white (and thus breaking up the darker Indian figures around him) points to a cock held by another man, and gazes out with half-open mouth. His message to the Governor-General is unmistakably that to Hastings belongs the winning 'cock' in this competition. The second figure is that of the courtesan seated behind the Nawab and being importuned by an Indian gentleman. Her coquettish gaze and equivocal smile repeat the promise of submission in Roma's fresco. Both staring figures, explicitly and implicitly, engender the viewer as male and as intimately involved with the tableau. In making the point about the Nawab's lack of 'self-command', and in seeking to confine the emasculating potential of credit to his body, the artist has set up within the painting a competing locus of masculine power. On the one hand, such an inscription partially defends the viewer against complicity with a desiring involvement for the Nawab's wealth. But equally, the Dionysian vitality that reverberates around the crowd, and thence outwards from the two frankly invitational characters, also threatens to draw within, and effeminise, its disavowed colonialist spectator. Secret mastery thus becomes not only licentious collaboration, but opens up precisely the image of Company corruption that the painting as a whole seeks to recast.

Thus the signs of equivocation are etched into, but cannot be contained within, the body of the Nawab. If *Cock Match* seeks to transcend an historical collaboration

---

<sup>124</sup> The painter himself, archly placed above the vacant throne, is in fact looking off to one side.

by holding only one partner to representational account, the economy of sexual and financial interchange it creates instead spills over into, infers, and involves, its hidden partner. In short, the illusory comparative façade becomes disturbingly real. Zoffany deploys several strategies to forestall its final dissolution, each one itself becoming implicated in the very process it attempts to halt. We will take up three of these strategies, centred on the already over-determined figure of Asaf-ud-daulah. The first is perhaps the most bathetic. In addition to the double-inscription of signs of male and female characteristics, Zoffany has added a third specifically to undermine, and de-limit, the dangerous surplus potency flowing out from Nawab to Governor-General. This is narrated here in the appearance of baldness entailed by the monarch's ludicrously shrunken white headwear (the proportions are tactfully rectified in the Nawab's own version of the painting<sup>125</sup>). In eighteenth century painting baldness (unmediated, for instance, by the styling of the hair at the back and sides as a wig) was a sign of at the least, 'unmanliness', and as a general rule, it cast the aspersion of impotence.<sup>126</sup> Thus the Nawab becomes at once, a figure of female passivity, priapic danger, and a comic flaccidity. He becomes, in other words, a figure of radical sexual indeterminacy, a paradoxical absence out of which issues the vital sexualised world of the painting.

The second strategy brings us back to the essential function of the 'conversation piece' to narrate the power of its patron in terms of property. For *Cock Match* is above all a tableau of dispossession. While the 'conversation piece' is concerned to detail the relations between people and their milieu, its primary orientation is always dictated by the question of ownership.<sup>127</sup> This is one of the reasons why legibility is of such importance to the genre,<sup>128</sup> and why any indeterminacy in *Cock Match* is lethal to its creator's purpose to return power to his balked employer. To understand how property is specifically drawn into the tableau it

<sup>125</sup> See the 'Ashwick version' in Appendix, p.367.

<sup>126</sup> Marcia Pointon, *Hanging the Head: Portraiture and Social Formation in Eighteenth-Century England* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), pp 117-20.

<sup>127</sup> Pointon, p 162; Paulson, *Emblem*, p 121.

<sup>128</sup> Pointon, p 161.

is necessary to conceive of the very limited design of which the ‘conversation piece’ invariably consisted in its outdoor setting. The lord of the manor, his wife, family and friends, are placed in the foreground to one side of the composition. Behind them, and filling out the rest of the painting in the background lies the manor, depicted in its natural surroundings. More often than not, the owner and his family are shown beneath one or more spreading trees, whose age and luxuriance symbolise the idea of landed property itself, durable, rooted and above all, providing continuity.<sup>129</sup> Owner and family; property and landscape; the symbolisation of rootedness: these form the essential groupings of the genre, whose ‘guiding aim’ it is to narrate the ‘definitions’ between them.<sup>130</sup> An earlier painting executed by Zoffany for Hastings, depicting the Governor-General and his wife in the grounds of their property in Calcutta, shows how the artist had already begun to translate these three principal structural components into their new colonial setting.<sup>131</sup> While *Cock Match* has been loosely described as a ‘conversation piece’ by art historians, they have not as a rule chosen to analyse its functions with regard to the formal features of the genre. This can be partly accounted for by the painting’s ambiguous setting beneath an open-sided tent – neither indoors nor outdoors – and by the lack of much in the way of obvious natural scenery. Yet Zoffany has made clear references both to the surrounding area and the elemental structure of the genre. Thus, instead of a formal manor, another tent is depicted in the background; and framing it, to one side of the painting, is a tall spreading tree. This last feature is of especial importance in the formal balance of the painting, for it is curiously echoed above the Nawab’s vacated throne, in the form of the round green fan attached to a standard. The ideas of solidity, durability and continuity that the tree symbolises in the ‘conversation piece’ are thus hollowed out, first by the exposed artificiality of the shrunken symbol, and then by the almost comic juxtaposition of an empty seat beneath it just at that point where the locus of power in the genre is invariably placed. In this way, the Nawab is deprived of precisely the

---

<sup>129</sup> Paulson, *Emblem*, pp 154-55.

<sup>130</sup> Paulson, *Emblem*, p 121.

<sup>131</sup> See Appendix, p.370.

qualities that he might, as the legitimate scion of the ruling family, have been expected to portray.

Furthermore, in the place of the expected landscape, Zoffany has chosen instead to fill up his canvas principally with a disparate array of Awadh society. In the handling of their composition, he follows the conventions of the picturesque as set out by William Gilpin in his hugely influential *Observations on the River Rye* (1782).<sup>132</sup> In a subsection of Chapter VII, entitled 'Remarks on Painting a Crowd', Gilpin urges upon the artist the use of 'refractory materials', as in 'agitated water' such as may be found in a turbulent ocean, to produce the variety of surfaces that underpins the aesthetic. In advocating the ocean as a suitable model, he points out that if 'in any of these swellings, and agitations, could be arrested, and fixed, it would produce that pleasing variety, which we admire in ground.'<sup>133</sup> The object is to juxtapose 'smooth' and 'rough' forms as in a picturesque landscape, since 'in managing a crowd, and in managing a landscape, the same general rules are to be observed.'<sup>134</sup> Under this aesthetic, then, crowds are not only resolved into elements of the landscape but can supplant it. Zoffany's resolution of the Indian crowd, and the manner in which these darker 'rough' forms are set off against the bright and smooth white figure of Mordaunt, is further accentuated as a 'picturesque' effect by the way in which he deploys the 'elliptical form' to shape the composition.<sup>135</sup> The crowd become in effect a natural 'amphitheatre' in precisely the manner prescribed by Gilpin and achieved in landscape painting through the use of the 'Claude glass'.<sup>136</sup> In this sense, despite the lively variety of forms, not only does the Indian crowd 'appear to belong to one whole',<sup>137</sup> but they come to represent the landscape of the painting. In other words, they are situated within the narrative of ownership; they are, in effect,

---

<sup>132</sup> The picturesque was soon to become the dominant mode for all British painting in India. Tillotson, p 141.

<sup>133</sup> William Gilpin, *Observations on the River Wye and Several Parts of South Wales, etc. Relative chiefly to Picturesque Beauty; made in the summer of the year 1770* (London, 1782), pp 62-63.

<sup>134</sup> Gilpin, p 77.

<sup>135</sup> Gilpin, p 93.

<sup>136</sup> Gilpin, p 65.

<sup>137</sup> Gilpin, p 77.



that which the Nawab, in vacating his place beneath the sign of continuity, has left masterless.

The Dionysian figure of the Nawab should therefore be contextualised within a framing narrative of possession encoded into *Cock Match*. His lack of sexual self-possession parallels this narrative of landed dispossession, and produces him as fatally divorced from the naturalised landscape of his subjects. But it also locates him as precisely that dangerously ‘fluid’ figure of ‘credit’ whose proper relationship to government had become so important to political debate in the eighteenth century. If we recall the terms of that debate as being set by the two opposed ideas of ‘landed’ and ‘mobile’ property, then it is possible to see that in retailing a narrative of dispossession Zoffany has necessarily invited into the painting an opposing form of stability, a balancing figure of the idea of the continuity of ownership. Without it, *Cock Match* would become a masterless vital world of appetites, a vision of credit rampant and feeding endlessly upon itself in a debilitating cycle of corruption. It would become, in other words, precisely that image of decadence narrated by William Knighton a generation later in his capacity as a member of the Oudh Commission, whose remit was to prepare the way for the annexation of the province of Awadh in 1856.<sup>138</sup> In 1784, however, the artist’s task was not to encourage the end of the ‘game’ of collaboration, but to encode it with a message of implicit present mastery. Given both the contradictions of agrarian aristocracy and trading ‘independency’ within Company praxis, and the larger eighteenth century opposition of landed to mobile property, it is hardly surprising that Zoffany should have chosen the classical allegory of masculine landed possession to offset the potentially effeminising figure of credit. To this end, he has employed a diachronic narrative both within the painting, and between it and its principal viewer. For the European man seated beneath that (‘real’) tree in the background may on one level refer jokingly to Colonel

---

<sup>138</sup> In contrast, throughout his narrative Knighton’s gaze all but empties the scenery of its European personnel; and where they do appear, they are unequivocally unmanned by the despotic economy. Compare in this regard, the figure of Mordaunt and that of Jones, the ridiculed ‘aide-de-camp’ of Nawab Nasir-ud-daulah (1837-1842) in Knighton, p 16.

Polier. But in the deeper narrative of property and possession, it refers to Hastings himself now simultaneously possessing the courtesan's invitation and the Awadh 'landscape'. This secret background tryst destabilises the primacy of the larger, central disporting Nawab and figures him instead as a passing phase in a longer perspective, an object of exchange between the Hastings-the-viewer and Hastings-the-viewed, the future 'real' proprietor. Dispossessed of his throne, the Nawab becomes liminal in time as well, located – as with all para-anthropological subjects – on the point of extinction.<sup>139</sup> But it also seeks to make of him an outsider in terms of the imaginary spaces constructed between viewer and object. For in this reading, Asaf-ud-daulah is not quite central to the painting, the courtesan is; and leading the viewing eye on from her, the private coupling that takes place beneath the symbol of ownership. Already obscured in terms of sexuality, the Nawab turns out to be lacking in any but peripheral focus; he is intended as that which the viewer must see through.

Zoffany's secret message of ownership is, however, a problematical one since *Cock Match* is pre-eminently a tableau of exchange. The viewing eye travels giddily around its proliferating motifs of financial and amatory interaction, among which the coupling beneath the tree and the allegory of landed property are all but lost, discernible only to the knowing patron. Inducted under the sign of the motility of credit, it cannot reconstruct a narrative of mastery, only one of momentary possession, and a continuing plot of exchange. Beyond the seated figure, the diachronic plane of the painting implies, lies another tent and scene of bacchanalian dispossession. Moreover, the surplus potency of the Nawab overturns the meaning of male-female coupling itself, so that to be set within the scene of *Cock Match* is to risk falling simultaneously within the unmaning economy of the priapic Nawab, and under the sign of the dangerous infection of his fertile passivity. In short, the radical indeterminacy of the figure of the Nawab deprives the genre of its cardinal points of

---

<sup>139</sup> Johannes Fabian, *Time and the Work of Anthropology: Critical Essays, 1971-1991* (Amsterdam: Harwood Academic Publishers, 1996; 1991), p 193. For an interesting recent analysis of the connections between 'para-anthropological subjects' and extinction, see Patrick Brantlinger, *Dark Vanishings: Discourse on the Extinction of Primitive Races, 1899-1930* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2003).

reference; the attempt to resurrect its plot of masculine ownership and continuity produces only the farce of collaborative emasculation and potential dispossession. The covert nature of Zoffany's inscription is thus equally a prior admission of its inevitable failure. This point brings us to the third strategy through which Zoffany attempts to stem the infectious economy depicted. For the effigy of Hastings-Polier is symptomatic of the problem of figuring his patron's relationship to the world of *Cock Match*, a problem of secure identification that is – like the Nawab's repeated licentiousness – itself replicated across the face of the painting, but nowhere more crucially than in the form of Colonel Mordaunt.

The identification of Hastings with the figure of Mordaunt is reflected to some extent in the Apollonian pose he strikes, inferring a quality of divinity – something more than 'manliness' – that betrays the need to extricate him from the debilitating sexual economy of the painting. It may also be reflected in the choice of the ambiguous political figure of Mordaunt himself, formerly a serving officer for the Company, now an aide-de-camp in an Awadh royal army that was itself under the de facto control of the Company administration. Moreover, in addition to his professional Company affiliations, Mordaunt was considered at the time to have operated as a spy for Hastings in the Awadh court.<sup>140</sup> But a more literal explanation might better apply here. According to at least one contemporary, the portrait of Mordaunt is strikingly inaccurate, his facial features in particular bearing no literal resemblance to those of the man so well known to Zoffany and Lucknow society.<sup>141</sup> This is an unusual – and unusually prominent – lapse in a painter renowned precisely for his ability to create miraculous likenesses. This was the skill that made his 'conversation pieces' so ardently sought after by patrons anxious to be recognisably enshrined for posterity, as well as for the cachet of instant recognition by and among their peers. From his sketch of Hastings' fireside deliberations with the Nawab and the Mughal prince Jawan Bakht, it is clear that Zoffany had at one point intended his

<sup>140</sup> 'Memoirs of Mordaunt', p 140-41.

<sup>141</sup> 'Memoirs of Mordaunt', p 140.

Lucknow centrepiece to portray the Governor-General directly in the act of negotiation. It therefore requires little in the way of a conjectural leap to suggest that the passing resemblance of the figure of Mordaunt – in posture, stance and build – to that of Zoffany's portrait of Hastings in the grounds of his Calcutta residence might be considered as more than coincidental. Moreover, the features ascribed to Mordaunt, including the high receding hairline and pigtail, can be recovered both from Zoffany's firelight sketch and from other more detailed portraits of the Governor-General. In particular, Hastings' facial characteristics as depicted in earlier portraits executed by Tilly Kettle in the mid-1770s bear a notable similarity to those of 'Mordaunt', opening out the possibility that Zoffany may well have aimed at reproducing in the 'Colonel', a youthful and martial reprise of his patron.<sup>142</sup> At the very least, these considerations would imply that some sort of representational fusion – or equally, obfuscation – was intended by the artist, and that the resulting Mordaunt-Hastings effigy should be considered as analogous in its ambiguity to the kind of disavowal that his Apollonian attitude embodies. On one level, it literally infers the presence of the Company proconsul both within and external to, a relationship with the Nawab, and the painting as a whole. At the same time, of course, it makes of him a comparably paradoxical figure, an absent presence out of which the narrative of colonial mastery is at once constructed, and rendered dangerously insubstantial.

This troubled question of presence brings us finally to the problematic of spectatorship that underpins the formal aesthetic of *Cock Match*. Essentially a depiction of ownership, the 'conversation piece' not infrequently omitted directly to represent its patron. Instead, the objects of his world, in a continuum that extended from his family to his mansion, were taken as representative of the absent patriarch. Their fixed, legible representation narrated the power of the viewer, the implied proprietor of the scene. The presence of Hastings within the framework of *Cock-match* is thus not simply a tautology; it is a sign that the indeterminacy inscribed into the Nawab has infected the rationale of the painting. The reciprocal traces of

---

<sup>142</sup> See Appendix, p.371.

equivocation that accompany the inferred presence of Hastings betray the artist's recognition that the spectacle of dispossession has replaced the theatre of ownership, that Company authority can neither remain outside of, nor can it be subjected to, the world of the painting.<sup>143</sup> Instead of the plot of ownership and immanence, the proliferation of the effigies of Hastings and their confused gender codings render a tableau in which the only consistent and coherent sign is that of theatricality – in other words, that each is playing an arbitrarily assigned part and that, depending on the point of view, all roles are open to negotiation. Such an admission of the contingency of representation and self-representation must amend Kate Teltscher's reading of the colonial production in the late eighteenth century of the 'safe colonial subject' as predicated on the increasing (if anxious) extension of British command over its representations.<sup>144</sup> Since the publication in 1763 of Robert Orme's *History of the Military Transactions of the British Nation in Indostan*, the presentation of Mughal rule as a form of theatrical masquerade had constituted an important rhetorical trope in the justification of British rule in India.<sup>145</sup> The 'sham' spectacle of eighteenth-century Mughal rule was contrasted with the solidity of British paramountcy, a form of self-representation that Burke was shortly to turn against Hastings, figuring him as both despot and 'the great Master of the Machinery' who 'had so long dazzled the eyes of the world with the splendour of his pantomimical deceptions'.<sup>146</sup> What Zoffany's painting exposes, then, is a prior and debilitating colonialist awareness not that they might be cast as despots, but that a despotic position within the canvas of colonial India is not available, and that what remains is only the farcical reproduction of the empty signs of despotic possession. The multiplication of effigies of Hastings – as the lover beneath the tree; as Wheeler facing the throne with a cock between his legs; and as the ambiguous figure of Mordaunt – only serves to produce British authority as its own form of masquerade, unable finally to fully represent possession

<sup>143</sup> On the importance of theatrical conventions to the genre, see Paulson, *Hogarth*, pp 210, 230.

<sup>144</sup> Teltscher, Chapter Four.

<sup>145</sup> Teltscher, pp 112-13.

<sup>146</sup> Quoted in Teltscher, p 168.

of the object of power. Furthermore, it suggests that rather than arising out of but remaining separate from, the spectacle of an unruly civil society, the spectator is everywhere present within and compromised by, its scene of misrule. This problem of separation from and impartial sovereignty over, civil society was one that preoccupied all eighteenth-century British political theorists. More specifically, the fatal implication of the ultimate spectator of *Cock Match* – that is, the chief representative of colonial government in India – provides a telling parallel to the problematic of the ‘impartial spectator’ that so troubled Adam Smith. Initially located in the form of public ‘opinion’ through which propriety and justice were upheld, by the final edition of *The Wealth of Nations* (1790), Smith had shifted its potential locus to that of the private conscience of the individual.<sup>147</sup> This retreat to the realms of private morality was an acknowledgement of the deepening deadlock in the debate between commerce and polity, and of the intractable problem of how an independent sovereign might arise out of and adjudicate commercial relations. Narrating a primal scene of commerce, *Cock Match* can in this regard be characterised as the limit-text of that debate. As such it offers a convincing illustration of the crisis of colonial government in its search for a paradigmatic articulation of its relations to Indian society. The terrifying ‘absence of precedence’ which Suleri has described as the symptomatic motif of colonial rhetoric is here reproduced in the near hysteria of the replication of the Hastings effigy. Unable to obscure the recognition that legitimacy, and with it, social propriety, can be established within the framework of the painting, his tautological reproduction further denies the possibility of a despotic position located outside of, and impartially adjudicating, its terms of reference. In other words, the representational dispossession of the Mughal both proceeds from *and* gives rise to, the impossibility of Company self-possession. In this sense, Mordaunt and the Nawab are equally bathetic figures of indeterminacy; far from lending a contrasting sense of solidity, they are representative primarily of mutually deconstructing colonial narratives. As if in recognition of the public humiliation that they so farcically

---

<sup>147</sup> Dwyer, pp 38, 74.

portray, the interactive phase of Anglo-Indian historical painting briefly lived and straightaway died, with *Cock Match*. From now on, whenever an Englishman and a Mughal figure of authority shared the same pictorial space, the latter would either be literally infantilised,<sup>148</sup> or safely dead.<sup>149</sup>

The mutual deconstruction of the two narratives of *Cock Match* is the most important point that needs to be carried forward from this discussion into a reading of the post-‘Mutiny’ discourse on Indian Muslims. The events of 1857-59 had reanimated the symbol of the dispossessed Mughal in colonial discourse and had seen its unprecedented conflation with a pan-Indian Muslim constituency. At the same time, the perception of Muslim ‘conspiracy’ to which it was connected was itself cocooned in a variety of forms of prophylaxis holding apart Muslim and British protagonists. Because Muslim ‘conspiracy’ sought – irrationally – to repossess the founding self-conception of British rule in India as secular and neutral, it produced in the Indian Muslim a radically indeterminate figure, one who crossed the most important boundaries of the British sociation of its colonial habitus. Inevitably there followed a process of representational stigmatisation and segregation aimed at legislating the Indian Muslim into visibility; and inevitably given its provenance in British secularity, this process revolved around the primary motif of religious incontinence, culminating in the sensationalism surrounding the ‘Wahabi’ trials of the 1860s and 1870s. The suggestion being made in this section is that both the need for legibility and the irredeemable indeterminacy of the Indo-Muslim figure in this later discourse, has a secondary rationale in an earlier scene of crisis, and the failure there of a colonial attempt to possess its own representation. This earlier scene witnessed the collapse of boundaries separating out the ‘sham’ spectacle of the Mughal figure of

<sup>148</sup> In his *Lord Cornwallis receiving the sons of Tipu Sultan as hostages at Seringapatam* (c 1792), Robert Home may well have unconsciously taken Mordaunt and Zoffany as his models (for illustration, see Bayly, ed, *Raj*, p 154). If so, it would be the completion of a cycle, since it seems likely that Zoffany himself was burlesquing the rather more majestic exchange of greetings in Francis Hayman’s *Lord Clive meeting Mir Jafar, Nawab of Murshidabad, after the Battle of Plassey* (c 1761-1762), a farcical replaying that repeats at the level of form the recognition of the emptiness of available ideological content.

<sup>149</sup> The most popular theme for historical depiction during the next fifty years was the discovery of the corpse of Tipu Sultan by Major General Baird in 1799 (Bayly, ed, *Raj*, p 159).

authority and the desired – even despotic – solidity of Company power. It produced a figure of paradox, alienated from the Indian society around him, and unable to command the will to power which he represented. All of these features were directed by and at the same time deeply destabilising to, the covert representation of an emergent colonialist state.

While there was a clear progression from this unruly figure of comparison to his final and literal dispossession in the form of the annexation of the state of Awadh in 1856, religion played almost no part in the system of representation that prepared the way for it. However, as William Knighton's lurid volume illustrates, by 1856 the problematic of British solidity had been decisively separated out of the frame of representation, so that what we are left with is a scene of self-despoliation not unlike that of Steel's hopelessly self-galled Muslim in 1905. What is being proposed here is not the inevitable progression of one process of stigmatisation to another, but the important parallels running between them. The conflation of Mughal and Indo-Muslim discourses in 1857 should thus not be considered as a matter of self-evident substitution, but as mutually illuminating and cumulative discourses centred on the dynamics of representing British colonial power in India. The primary point of comparison that we will now take up resides in the way in which the indeterminacy of the Indo-Muslim 'stranger' acts upon the self-representation of a newly re-emergent figure of colonial paramountcy at a comparable moment of crisis. Briefly, the next section will argue that the over-inscribed theatricality of the Mughal is strikingly re-played as a dangerously deconstructive figure of Indo-Muslim fanaticism, and that the connections between the two are therefore only superficially to be understood as drawn from a common religious affiliation. The real point of reference must rather be identified in the disorientated and elusive figure of a British administration still trying to place itself in respect to its colonial subjects. Still trying, in other words, to maintain its 'independency' outside of the socio-political canvas that is required to legitimate its authority.



### Section 3.3

#### **‘A wild and ardent faith’:<sup>149</sup> Testing oppositions in the post-‘Mutiny’ discourse**

As Zoffany’s *Cock Match* so vividly demonstrates, the colonialist crisis of confidence in the late eighteenth century was in part played out upon the representation of Mughal figures of authority. That process inevitably entailed a marked degree of over-inscription, primarily characterised by paradox and illegibility. Rather than rendering a visible portrait of disempowerment, Zoffany produced instead a figure of indeterminacy, an absence ordering the society around it. Caught both within and implicated from without that world, the British figure of authority is similarly invested with a disturbing illegibility, himself becoming a form of impersonation, unable finally to create and inhabit a stable persona of power. This section will argue the production of a similar corresponding illegibility in Indo-Muslim and colonialist figures in the wake of the ‘Mutiny’. As suggested in Chapter Two, the events of 1857-59 not only saw the exclusive conflation of Indian Muslims with the inheritance of a British discourse on Mughals; they further inscribed a perceived pan-Indian Muslim community with highly ambivalent notions of Anglo-Indian communal solidarity and purpose. Much of that ambivalence derived from the way in which Muslim ‘conspiracy’ transgressed important lines of demarcation between a British religious and officially secular identity. The consequence, as has been argued in Section 3.1, was the production of the Indo-Muslim ‘stranger’, a figure of radical indeterminacy. Now tied into the colonialist need to re-inscribe the prime boundaries of their habitus, the Indian Muslim of colonial discourse had become in 1857 a site of representation comparable to that of Zoffany’s Nawab; he had become, in other words, a means of transcending their implication within colonial society. As will now be illustrated with reference to the later published writings of Alfred Lyall and to W Hunter’s *Indian Musalmans* (1871), the visibility of the Indo-Muslim ‘stranger’ in

<sup>149</sup> Lyall, *Asiatic Studies*, p 149.

### Section 3.3

#### **‘A wild and ardent faith’:<sup>149</sup> Testing oppositions in the post-‘Mutiny’ discourse**

As Zoffany’s *Cock Match* so vividly demonstrates, the colonialist crisis of confidence in the late eighteenth century was in part played out upon the representation of Mughal figures of authority. That process inevitably entailed a marked degree of over-inscription, primarily characterised by paradox and illegibility. Rather than rendering a visible portrait of disempowerment, Zoffany produced instead a figure of indeterminacy, an absence ordering the society around it. Caught both within and implicated from without that world, the British figure of authority is similarly invested with a disturbing illegibility, himself becoming a form of impersonation, unable finally to create and inhabit a stable persona of power. This section will argue the production of a similar corresponding illegibility in Indo-Muslim and colonialist figures in the wake of the ‘Mutiny’. As suggested in Chapter Two, the events of 1857-59 not only saw the exclusive conflation of Indian Muslims with the inheritance of a British discourse on Mughals; they further inscribed a perceived pan-Indian Muslim community with highly ambivalent notions of Anglo-Indian communal solidarity and purpose. Much of that ambivalence derived from the way in which Muslim ‘conspiracy’ transgressed important lines of demarcation between a British religious and officially secular identity. The consequence, as has been argued in Section 3.1, was the production of the Indo-Muslim ‘stranger’, a figure of radical indeterminacy. Now tied into the colonialist need to re-inscribe the prime boundaries of their habitus, the Indian Muslim of colonial discourse had become in 1857 a site of representation comparable to that of Zoffany’s Nawab; he had become, in other words, a means of transcending their implication within colonial society. As will now be illustrated with reference to the later published writings of Alfred Lyall and to W W Hunter’s *Indian Musalmans* (1871), the visibility of the Indo-Muslim ‘stranger’ in

---

<sup>149</sup> Lyall, *Asiatic Studies*, p 149.

colonialist rhetoric narrates the desired invisibility of the rapidly changing and increasingly intrusive, post-‘Mutiny’ colonial state. His persistent illegibility, on the other hand, exposes the founding colonialist paradox of being at once a legislator and a spectator of the theatre of colonial neutrality.

Lyall’s situation within Anglo-Indian society as a writer of ‘the known and the knowable’ has already been discussed in Section 2.3. There it has been argued that his evolution from a young ICS recruit overtaken by Muslim ‘conspiracy’ in 1857 into the mature and diplomatic senior bureaucrat in the 1870s, looking to re-frame a secular and neutral colonial dispensation in its wake, is one that may be taken as typical of the Anglo-Indian official experience of the period. In straddling journalistic, official and literary public arenas, as well as in his attempts to mediate between Anglo-Indian and Metropolitan audiences, there exists a conspicuous congruity between Lyall’s *Asiatic Studies* and Hunter’s *Indian Musalmans*. Like Lyall, Hunter’s observations grew out of his official duties as an ICS officer and editor for the Government Gazette (of Bengal); and as with *Asiatic Studies*, *Indian Musalmans* was first published in Britain and provided a notable fillip to his reputation in India.<sup>150</sup> However, while Lyall’s essays drove his subsequent meteoric rise through the ranks of the Civil Service, Hunter was actually approached by the Viceroy Lord Mayo to write his account of the so-called ‘Wahabi’<sup>151</sup> conspiracy and trials then underway in India, and drew copiously from official government documents supplied by the Home, Foreign, and Military Departments.<sup>152</sup> *Indian Musalmans* duly received the ‘hearty approval’ of the Viceroy and excellent reviews from the Anglo-Indian press, and its publication accompanied his appointment as Under-Secretary in the Home Department.<sup>153</sup> On a return visit to London following

<sup>150</sup> Skrine, pp 199-204.

<sup>151</sup> The designation and spelling used here is taken from Hunter’s text. As will be argued below, however, the term ‘Wahabi’ as it occurs in colonialist discourse is not susceptible of any one definition – for instance, as a reference to the *tariqah-i muhammadiyah*. The quotation marks used in this discussion are intended to point out this distinction.

<sup>152</sup> Skrine, p 199. Hardy has suggested that Hunter acted as ‘a receiving set’ for official policy-makers at the time (Hardy, p 88).

<sup>153</sup> Skrine, pp 200, 195.

its tremendous reception there, 'he was received by the magnates of the India Office as one who had rendered signal service to the Empire.'<sup>154</sup>

*Indian Musalmans* was reprinted early the following year and then once again in 1876. Although at the time of Hunter's death in 1901 it was no longer available in Britain, it has been since recognised by historians as 'highly influential' in shaping late nineteenth century British attitudes towards Indian Muslims.<sup>155</sup> On the subject of the 'Wahabi' movement, which had become for Anglo-Indians at the time 'chief among Indian *causes celebres*', its effect was 'prompt and lasting'.<sup>156</sup> Nor was its influence confined to a solely British audience. In the late colonial period it appears to have been adopted by a Muslim readership and reprinted in 1945 'to meet a great demand' for its powerful account of 'the great Puritanic revival – the Wahabi Movement in Islam, and how it served to give expression to the agonies of a great nation who had just lost an empire and political power.'<sup>157</sup> Given this later, as it were cross-communal, consensus it is perhaps not surprising that in terms of its historiographical legacy, scholars appear now to accept its narrative of the movement as a matter of fact.<sup>158</sup> Such an acceptance is not infrequently accompanied by a dismissal of its populist literary qualities. Francis Robinson, for instance, sees it as not 'particularly well-argued or well-written' and as too hastily pushed into a prominence it did not deserve.<sup>159</sup> Nevertheless, he uses it elsewhere uncritically as a history of the *tariqah-i muhammadiyah* (The Way of Muhammad) reformist movement, their insurgency on the border, their activities during the 'Mutiny' and their pan-Indian organisation (the facts of which are addressed below). He not only accepts the designation of this movement as 'Wahabi', but sees it – much as Hunter

<sup>154</sup> Skrine, p 203.

<sup>155</sup> Pearson, p 221. Despite the importance it gained, David Lelyveld appears to be the only recent historian who has engaged with the text in any detail. Lelyveld, pp 10-12.

<sup>156</sup> Skrine, p 200.

<sup>157</sup> From the 'Publisher's Note' to Hunter, *The Indian Musalmans: Are They Bound in Conscience to Rebel Against the Queen?* (Calcutta: Comrade Publishers, 1945). There appears to have also been an Urdu edition published in India around the same time: Hunter, *Hamare Hindustani musalman Kya vuh apne zamir ke muttabiq malikah ke khilaf baghavat par majbur hain?*, trans. Dr Sadiq Husain (Lahore: Milne k patah, Iqbal Akadmi, 1944).

<sup>158</sup> Peter Robb, 'Impact', pp 3-4, 14.

<sup>159</sup> Robinson, *Separatism*, p 104.

of the later Deoband school (founded in 1860), whose ulama (traditional scholars) saw themselves as carrying on the reformist revolution begun by Shah Waliyu'llah and later taken up by Shah Abdul-Aziz and Sayyid Ahmad.<sup>164</sup> Similarly, the Aligarh movement of Sayyid Ahmad Khan (founded in 1875), whose own emphasis on Western-style scientific education appeared to British observers entirely at odds with both the Deobandis and the 'Wahabis', was in fact rooted in the same Delhi-based background of reform out of which the doctrines of Sayyid Ahmad of Rae Bareilly had evolved.<sup>165</sup> It is on this continuum of a broad Indo-Islamic reformist impulse that the *muhammadiyah* must be situated.

The extent of the influence of the *muhammadiyah* movement among Indian Muslims in the nineteenth century has never properly been ascertained. They encouraged and to some extent helped direct an explosion in vernacular religious publications that by the 1860s had at least made the Koran 'readily available to many if not most Indian Muslims'.<sup>166</sup> Francis Robinson has argued that this media revolution should be considered the single most important event for Indian Muslims of the period, substantially altering their perception of a personal relationship to God by beginning the process of marginalising the ulama as its traditional mediators.<sup>167</sup> But this wider process needs to be distinguished from the spread of more specifically *muhammadiyah* literature and doctrines, for which there seems to be little in the way of a solid evidential basis.<sup>168</sup> Moreover, despite their frequent conflation by British officials, the *muhammadiyah* movement differed in its aims, ideas and constituencies from other contemporary reformist movements such as that of the *fara'izi*, maintaining distinctly separate organisational infrastructures even in the province of

<sup>164</sup> Metcalf, *Deoband*, pp 75-80, 138-97.

<sup>165</sup> Ahmad, *Studies*, p 205; Lelyveld, p 72; Hali, pp 12, 33.

<sup>166</sup> Pearson, p 146.

<sup>167</sup> Francis Robinson, 'Technology and Religious Change: Islam and the Impact of Print' in *Modern Asian Studies* 27, 1 (1993), pp 229-51.

<sup>168</sup> Despite his repeated claims for its extensive popular support, the movement's most recent historian, Harlan Otto Pearson, provides no evidence for the dimensions of its constituency. See for instance, Pearson, pp 50, 57, 117.

Bengal in which they were primarily situated.<sup>169</sup> At the height of its activities in the 1840s it seems to have commanded only a circumscribed following for its jihadist (*mujahidin*) insurgency on the Northwest frontier;<sup>170</sup> and there is no evidence for any coalition of these movements in 1857. In fact, it would seem the *muhammadiyah* stood aloof as an organisation from the 'Mutiny'; indeed, the leader of the Muhammadi of Bombay even provided assistance to British officials during the disturbances there.<sup>171</sup>

Immediately following the publication of *Indian Musalmans*, Sayyid Ahmad Khan (at the time a member of the Anglo-Indian judicial service<sup>172</sup>) pointed to the danger of conflating the reformist movement designated as 'Wahabi' with an Indo-Islamic political imperative.<sup>173</sup> He insisted that until the 1850s the movement had never been directed against the British; and that the very idea of a jihad against Christians in India had never at any time formed a part of the philosophy of its founder.<sup>174</sup> These are detailed refutations of specific charges made by Hunter. But in fact the charges were already something of an anomaly since the official records clearly show that the British had taken very little notice of the movement before the 1850s. For the most part they had seen them as a useful diversion for the Sikh troops of Ranjit Singh before the annexation of Punjab in 1849.<sup>175</sup> It was only with the arrest and subsequent trial of Maulvi Ahmadullah of Patna in 1863 that any popular Anglo-Indian interest was taken in Wahabi activity. This interest was sustained throughout the next decade, even though it was becoming evident that the trials and investigations had during this period effectively ended the organised supply network of the Muhammadi within India, and entirely extirpated any active resistance on the

<sup>169</sup> Hardy, p 59. Ahmed, *Bengal*, pp 41, 44; Kenneth W Jones, *The New Cambridge History of India III.1 Socio-Religious Reform Movements in British India* (New Delhi: Cambridge University Press, repr. 1994; 1989), pp 18-25.

<sup>170</sup> Hardy, p 59.

<sup>171</sup> Pearson, p 56.

<sup>172</sup> Lelyveld, p 59.

<sup>173</sup> This tendency in Hunter's text has also had its influence on modern historiography. See for instance, Robb, 'Impact', p 151.

<sup>174</sup> Khan, *Review*, pp 15-19, 29.

<sup>175</sup> Pearson, p 50.

frontier.<sup>176</sup> Sayyid Ahmad Khan's quarrel with Hunter was thus not entirely a matter of specialised knowledge, but also of re-presenting to the British in India their own record of events.

Where his expert testimony as an Indian Muslim is drawn on in the article is in the implicit attempt to repossess the Urdu term *wahabi* itself. In order to do this he employs two concurrent strategies in his argument. The first involves a repeated insistence on the actual, and limited, dimensions of the movement as it then existed. He identifies 'Wahabis' as a group known as the 'Ahal-i Hadis', whom he locates as a purely Bengal phenomenon.<sup>177</sup> He denounces Hunter's apparent conflation of 'Musalman' and 'Wahabi'; and points out that, for instance, on doctrinal grounds the 'Ahal-i Hadis' could never have formed an alliance with the Pathan tribes on the frontier.<sup>178</sup> He then seeks to expose Hunter's apprehension of a secret supply network throughout India as a fundamental misreading of the circulation of *zakat*, the distribution of alms enjoined on all Muslims, and its personnel on the border as a mixture of fugitive Hindu and Muslim mutineers.<sup>179</sup> In contradistinction, his own conception of the size and standing of the constituency of Indian 'Wahabis' is encapsulated in an image partly designed to appeal to his British audience, in which he likens their persecution by the majority of Indian Muslims to that of the early Christians by the Jews.<sup>180</sup> The second strategy he employs entails a point by point refutation of the aims of the 'Wahabis' as necessarily hostile to British rule. He condemns Hunter's synopses of 'Wahabi' doctrines, characterising it as derived from a highly misleading Judaeo-Christian interpretation which, he argues, seems to come armed with the implicit assumption that all references to 'infidels' must refer – and refer violently – to the British in particular.<sup>181</sup> On the contrary, he insists, current

<sup>176</sup> Pearson, p 57.

<sup>177</sup> Khan, *Review*, pp 7, 11. Kenneth Jones identifies the *ahl-i hadis* as a Bengal-based group descended from the *muhammadiyah* (Jones, *Socio-Religious*, p 24).

<sup>178</sup> Khan, *Review*, pp 8-9, 12-14.

<sup>179</sup> Khan, *Review*, pp 20-21.

<sup>180</sup> Khan, *Review*, p 12.

<sup>181</sup> Khan, *Review*, pp 8-9. After 1857 Sayyid Ahmad Khan began the work of seeking terms of reconciliation between Islamic and Christian doctrine. Lelyveld, p 75, 111.

Muslim public deliberations over the question of loyalty were provoked in the first place by the Anglo-Indian press, and the aspersions and misinterpretations of the British in India.<sup>182</sup> He is also at a loss as to why the author should think ‘Wahabis’ in particular, and Indian Muslim reformers in general, should equate the planting of the ‘Crescent’ in India with the ‘burying’ of the ‘Cross’.<sup>183</sup> He carries this argument over into a re-reading of Hunter’s synopses of fourteen ‘Wahabi’ tracts. Here he demonstrates that either they pre-dated the ‘Wahabi’ movement; or they were aimed only at Sikhs; or they had nothing whatsoever to do with exhortations to ‘Jihad’ against the British (these last being distortions he identified as largely attendant on Hunter’s mistranslations).<sup>184</sup>

These two strategies of refutation, which between them occupy much of his article, are revealing of two key rhetorical emphases apparently at work in Hunter’s definition of the ‘Wahabi’. The first is that despite Sayyid Ahmad Khan’s specifications of the limited extent of the ‘Wahabi’ constituency, at times it can be seen expanding promiscuously in his text to fill out the contours of the ‘Indian Musalmans’ as a whole (this is discussed further below). The second, related emphasis concerns its consistent equation with – indeed definition by – the British state in India. It is the combination of these elements that draws the arguments of Sayyid Ahmad Khan beyond his immediate remit of properly identifying the ‘Wahabis’ and into a larger refutation of Hunter’s contention that ‘the reformation of the Musalman faith is inseparably linked with hatred against the Infidel conquerors.’<sup>185</sup> In making this case, he is specifically locating Hunter’s text as an attempt to appropriate Indo-Muslim history as an aspect of the British community. In order to retrieve the term *wahabi* he must therefore first sever it from its Anglo-Indian persona.

<sup>182</sup> Khan, *Review*, p 23.

<sup>183</sup> Khan, *Review*, p 29. The particular phrases he refers to occur in Hunter, p 61.

<sup>184</sup> Khan, *Review*, pp 29-39.

<sup>185</sup> Khan, *Review*, p 39.



There is evidence in the article, however, that Sayyid Ahmad Khan was unable, finally, to find a way to perform this operation. This failure can be glimpsed in his comparison of the Indian ‘Wahabis’ to the early Christians, with its suggestion of both teleological aggrandisement and a tacit acceptance of the terms of exchange by which ‘Wahabis’ could be defined. Towards its conclusion, however, he makes a more concerted attempt to break free of the detail and enclose Hunter’s annexation of the ‘Wahabis’ within his own critique, and it is here that the underlying terms of Hunter’s success can be most clearly gauged:

I cannot help thinking that Dr Hunter is describing an ideal race, whose standard of civilisation and whose patriotism have never yet been equalled in this world. Strength and firmness of mind, forethought, unity of purpose, reticence and secrecy, extraordinary skill in governing the minds of masses, without which an organization, such as Dr Hunter ascribes to the Indian Wahabis, could never have existed a week, have long been forgotten by the people of India.<sup>186</sup>

The marked ambivalence in this description is caught most by the use of the word ‘equalled’ – as opposed to, for instance, ‘achieved’. Along with the contradictory elision between the hypothetical and the historical that takes place between the two sentences, it suggests that the reviewer, consciously or otherwise, has to some extent entered into – indeed, partially appropriated – the conceit of an ‘ideal race’. By the end of the passage, he almost agrees that such a ‘race’ may have once achieved the qualities he indicates, and that through those qualities, they might be identified as connected to the ‘people of India’. Given the context, it is reasonable to infer that the ‘race’ in question is not to be conflated with the whole of the ‘people of India’, but refers to an Indo-Muslim unit. Indeed, since the notion of a Muslim ‘race’ in India was then a common self-identification by the *ashraf* (ruling) class from which Sayyid Ahmad Khan descended,<sup>187</sup> and since his remarks concern temporal governance, it would not be unreasonable to further infer that Mughal rule is at some level being

---

<sup>186</sup> Khan, *Review*, pp 40-41.

<sup>187</sup> Shaikh, p 79.

signalled.<sup>188</sup> Thus, despite his oppositional stance Sayyid Ahmad Khan concedes the very two rhetorical assumptions that his article had seemed explicitly intended to refute. Firstly that the veracity of Hunter's claims can be judged only against an inferred organic connection to a larger, racialised, Indo-Muslim unit;<sup>189</sup> and secondly, that such a 'racial' unit is inimical – that is, runs counter – to the fact of colonial India. In conceding these terms, he neatly expresses the ruling idea at work in Hunter's rhetoric that, for Indian Muslims (in their 'ideal' state) it is the present that is a foreign country. This should be regarded as a formulation distinct from that which Hardy has argued, wherein 'India could be made by the reformers to feel not like a home, but like a habitat.'<sup>190</sup> Indeed, in its dismissal of an extra-Indian context, this contemporary informed Indo-Muslim perspective throws a doubtful light on the purity of the genealogy of Hardy's interpretation (itself a source for Robinson's description of the movement<sup>191</sup>). No doubt drawing to some extent from his own 'passionate' interest in *wahabi* thought as a young man, Sayyid Ahmad Khan sees his only point of reference for this portrait within an *Indian* past.<sup>192</sup> At no time in his article does he recognise, explicitly or by implication, Hunter's alienating strain of rhetoric as either *wahabi* in origin, or indeed as derived from a recognisable *wahabi* Arabian context. But neither does he appear to feel the need to deny its implications. As his statement suggests, he recognises that Hunter's 'Wahabi' is predominantly defined by a system

<sup>188</sup> However, in addition to its Mughal class connotations, the term 'race' should also be regarded here as a collaboration in the text not only between its author and translator, but between itself and *Indian Musalmans*, in which 'race' is often used to denote a coherent Indo-Islamic entity. Although the title page of the review describes it as being written in 'original English corrected by a friend', Sayyid Ahmad Khan is known to have had at best a rudimentary grasp on the language (G F I Graham, *The Life and Work of Sir Syed Ahmed Khan*, (Karachi: Oxford University Press, repr. 1974; 1885), p 5; Lelyveld, p 33). Moreover, 'race' as a biological concept was not taken up with any consistency by Indo-Muslim writers until the early twentieth century; and even then, it interacted – as it most probably has done here – with other Islamic concepts of community, such as *qawm*, *millat*, and *'umma* (these issues are discussed in Javed Majeed, 'Pan-Islam and 'Deracialisation' in the Thought of Muhammad Iqbal' in Peter Robb, ed, *The Concept of Race in South Asia*, Delhi: Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1995, pp 304-27). The word 'race' should then be read as reflective of the dialogic nature of the article as a whole, engaging with and appropriating, rather than merely denying the perceptions of its Anglo-Indian interlocutor.

<sup>189</sup> For Hunter, Indian Muslims are a 'race ruined' under British rule. Hunter, pp 148-49.

<sup>190</sup> Hardy, p 59.

<sup>191</sup> Robinson, *Separatism*, p 100.

<sup>192</sup> Hali, p 38.

of power *within* India, but one which is nevertheless somehow incongruous to its Indian environment. 'Foreignness' is here a matter of chronology, not geography. In appearing to accept, however ambiguously, the premise that the subject of this system may, if only in a 'forgotten' past, have been the 'Indian Musalmans', he accedes to the proposition that they – or rather, Hunter's 'ideal' version of them – could not but be misplaced in colonial India. To this extent, he colludes with the text in agreeing that they are somehow integral to the definition of its parameters; but it is an agreement clearly undertaken with the recognition of the degree to which that textual state is both created and unmade, by their elusive presence. As his description illustrates, the discourse of governance in *Indian Musalmans* is primarily one of dispossession, in which the representation of the British Indian state is all but at the mercy of a secret, defining Indo-Muslim administration. For an advocate of the continued ruling prerogatives of a Mughal caste of administrators, this would have presented a field for negotiation rather than outright repudiation.<sup>193</sup>

Sayyid Ahmad Khan's ambivalent reaction essentially predicts, seventy years later, that of the anonymous Indo-Muslim editor. Both equate Hunter's 'Wahabi' with a lost Indo-Muslim past, expressly situating him within an Indian context. Conversely, Sayyid Ahmad Khan's recognition that such a figure cannot exist in a contemporary India is itself related to the kind of alienation by which the Indian 'Wahabi' becomes in later historiography (such as Robinson's) a purely generic variation on an Arabian original. In a sense it mimics the effect of the consistent designation 'Wahabi' in Hunter's text (never 'Ahal-i Hadis' or 'Tariqah-i Muhammadiyah'), by tacitly agreeing to excise the colonial context. In highlighting this homology of the chronological and geographical, it becomes apparent that the text's concern with a suddenly exposed alien infiltration primarily reflects an insecurity over the question of British immigration – literally, that is, its arrival at power in India. Thus the enforced semantic emigration in Hunter's use of the term

<sup>193</sup> Sayyid Ahmad Khan's views during this period on re-establishing the defining influence of the Mughal elite class within Indian governance are concisely set out in Shaikh, pp 93-96.

‘Wahabi’ is imbricated with the crisis of representing British rule in the wake of the ‘Mutiny’, a crisis partly revolving around the question of its continuing idiom of expression, foreign or indigenous. This imbrication of ‘Wahabi’ and British as mutually-defining sources of representation needs to be aligned both with the arguments in the last section illustrating the symbolic dispossession and alienation of the Mughal; and in regard to the discussion in Section 3.1 of the post-‘Mutiny’ attempt to reveal and fix distinctions between what is endemic and extrinsic to British India. In these interconnected contexts, the kind of ambivalence reflected in Sayyid Ahmad Khan’s review indicates a failure within *Indian Musalmans* (as in Zoffany’s dispossessed and dispossessing Nawab) to direct and delimit this discourse, one that has catastrophic implications not only for its subjects, but for the all too visible legislating colonialist hand. As we shall now explore in detail, in the colonial theatre of representation sorting the ‘insider’ from the ‘outsider’ can be a doubly lethal game.

Both Lyall and Hunter drew on their understanding of the events of 1857-59 to characterise the perceived hostility of the contemporary Indo-Muslim community. In particular, and along with most of their British critics, they insisted upon the fact of Muslim ‘conspiracy’ during the ‘Mutiny’, and the organic link between that ‘fact’ and the subsequent revelations of an extensive Wahabi network of conspirators within the borders of British India.<sup>194</sup> However, in his review of Hunter’s volume, originally published in *The Theological Review* in April, 1872, and republished in *Asiatic Studies* a decade later, Lyall makes a curious attempt to draw distinctions between their interpretations of Indo-Muslim history by first taking his colleague to task over the question of rhetoric. Noting that ‘the author is very well known in England as a writer on Indian topics’, and that he has ‘reached a grade of literary reputation perhaps never before so fully attained by an Anglo-Indian official’,<sup>195</sup> he nevertheless condemns ‘certain peculiarities in the style and manner of this spirited historical

<sup>194</sup> Lyall, ‘Islam’, p 239-40, 246-47; Hunter, p 89; W Nassau Lees, p 5.

<sup>195</sup> Lyall, ‘Islam’, p 238.

sketch.<sup>196</sup> Hunter, he writes:

rejoices in strong lights, in highly-finished episodes...He excels in the art of lively scenic representations of Indian history by artistic and effective use of European metaphors and phrases for Asiatic events and institutions, whereby his ideas and allusions are made to appear quite luminous and suggestive to educated Englishman...<sup>197</sup>

Consequently, Lyall complains, 'the similes and historical illustrations in which Dr Hunter luxuriates are often more striking than exact...and, moreover, the author is at time sorely vexed by an hyperbolic fiend which he would do well to cast out.'<sup>198</sup> In short, by alluding to Metropolitan genres and tropes Lyall is drawing up and exiling Hunter from, the more perspicacious and inflected Anglo-Indian official context; and thus Hunter's rhetoric conveys 'some notion of the truth, but not the whole truth'.<sup>199</sup> Given their common roots within this official milieu, and Hunter's unprecedented command over the most relevant and recent official documentation in India, it is an oddly overstated accusation. Stranger still from within the self-appointed ranks of 'experts and specialists' (to use Bauman's terminology), is its insistence on the question of veracity as to a great extent, a matter of style. The objection is encapsulated by Lyall's implied suggestion that Hunter's talent lies in 'imparting' to his 'personal knowledge of India' a 'style and shape demanded by the high standard of even popular literature these days.'<sup>200</sup> This sly put-down by one ICS aspirant to another bears further scrutiny, for it echoes a specific and consistent feature of many of the more informed reviews of *Indian Musalmans*. W Nassau Lees, a former Principal of the Muhammadan College in Calcutta, had picked up on precisely this point when he deplored its 'too sensational character'.<sup>201</sup> But it was Sayyid Ahmad Khan who spelt out the objection most clearly when he wrote not only that 'Dr

<sup>196</sup> Lyall, 'Islam', p 230.

<sup>197</sup> Lyall, 'Islam', p 230.

<sup>198</sup> Lyall, 'Islam', pp 230-31.

<sup>199</sup> Lyall, 'Islam', p 231.

<sup>200</sup> Lyall, 'Islam', p 229.

<sup>201</sup> Lees, p 12.

Hunter's work has made a great sensation in India', but that key aspects of his argument were, in his view, 'as true as any modern sensation novel.'<sup>202</sup>

Lyall's attack on Hunter's 'strong lights' has been echoed in later historiography,<sup>203</sup> but the more pervasive and timely accusation of 'sensationalism' has until now received no nuanced critical attention. For its reviewers in 1871, the word would have been loaded with specific connotations that drew attention to the situation of Hunter's text within a literary paradigm strongly wedded to journalistic and official sources – here, in the shape of the ongoing 'Wahabi' trials, and the articles about them first published by Hunter in the *Calcutta Englishman*.<sup>204</sup> In what might have been seen as a macabre instance of this relationship, it would also have adverted to the murders of the Chief Justice of Bengal and the Viceroy himself within six months of its publication, both at the hands of Indian Muslims (though no evidence was found then, or in subsequent historiography, to directly connect the murders to the Wahabi insurgents of Hunter's investigations).<sup>205</sup> But there are also other, altogether more suggestive levels, on which the accusation of 'sensationalism' would have been based. One of these entails the explicit connection made by reviewers between the 'Sensation' literary genre and the mode of the narrative itself, in which, as one anonymous reviewer put it, 'the detective of the day outdoes the exploits attributed to him in the latest sensation novel.'<sup>206</sup> In this sense, the characterisation of 'sensational' signals a recognition in the text of an attempt common to the genre of the Sensation Novel to actively mediate and refashion frustrated official and demi-official – that is, journalistic – descriptions of a particular social reality. In short, it proposes to uncover precisely those connections and conspiracies which elude the ordinary interventions of the legal institutions of social surveillance and discipline. Hunter's 'signal service' is in this respect more than a

<sup>202</sup> Khan, *Review*, pp 5, 36.

<sup>203</sup> Hardy, p 86.

<sup>204</sup> Robinson, *Separatism*, p 103.

<sup>205</sup> Robinson, *Separatism*, p 104; Hardy, p 84.

<sup>206</sup> 'A Mahometan Revival' p 437.

natter of biographical hyperbole; it implies a material extension of the official British interaction with its Indian environment.

However, there is another dimension to this idea of mediation in which the conflation of sensationalism and surveillance is, literally, a doubtful legacy. With the publication of Wilkie Collins' *The Woman in White* in 1860 the 'Sensation Novel' had quickly come to epitomise and dominate what Lyall refers to as the 'popular literature' of the following two decades.<sup>207</sup> It had even, in 1868, explicitly incorporated an Indian colonial dimension in Collins' equally celebrated novel, *The Moonstone*. There, Brahmins stalk the countryside of England in search of a gem stolen first from the temple at Somnath by Tipu Sultan and then by British looters during the storming of his capital at Seringapatam. As with all Sensation Novels, their murderous conspiracy exposes a deeper infection at work throughout all levels of English society. But it also narrates the cathartic re-alignment of a disturbed Metropolitan identity, framing its transgressive critiques (here, of British imperialism; in *The Woman in White* of the social incarceration of women) within a conservative resolution.<sup>208</sup> Given the discussion in Section 3.1 of the emergence in post-'Mutiny' India of the Indo-Muslim 'stranger', the Sensation Novel's obsession with secret infiltration from without marks it out as a genre peculiarly suited to the Anglo-Indian problematic of making visible and fixing that elusive constituency within its representative discursive framework.<sup>209</sup> At the same time, it offers to the colonial state an opportunity for narrating through the medium of a 'secret conspiracy' the resolution of its own elusive dimensions. In this respect, however, the marked ambivalence of this genre towards the project of revelation is perhaps worth emphasising ahead of the argument that follows. For the tension in the Sensation

<sup>207</sup> On the Sensation genre, see Lyn Pykett, *The Sensation Novel from The Woman in White to The Moonstone* (Plymouth: Northcote House in association with the British Council, 1994); and Nicholas Rance, *Wilkie Collins and Other Sensation Novelists: Walking the Moral Hospital* (London and Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1991).

<sup>208</sup> Pykett, Chapter Three, especially pp 71-72.

<sup>209</sup> Pykett, p 8. In *The Woman in White*, the invasive foreign conspiracy revolves around European spies in the streets and homes of England in the year of the Great Exhibition (1851), that definitive celebration of the new cosmopolitan Britain and its diverse empire.

Novel between transgressive revelations and conservative framework is strikingly reproduced in the contention at work on every page of *Indian Musalmans* between uncovering and deferring the final discovery of, a thoroughgoing will to rebellion among Indian Muslims. In this regard, Lyall's critique of the 'strong lights' and 'hyperbolic fiend' at play in the rhetoric may in fact betray a readerly frustration at the disproportion exhibited in the text between promise and fulfilment. For the most remarkable – and least remarked upon in subsequent historiographical citations – attribute of Hunter's 'signal service to the Empire' is his at times bathetic, *lack of clarity*. If the problematic of the Indo-Muslim 'stranger' is one of legibility, one might say that the repeated accusation that Hunter had given free rein to his 'sensational' style was hardly fair. In a sense, in 1871 the subject itself would admit of no other genre.

The conflict between a conservative and transgressive impulse in the Sensation Novel opens out the question of the wider background of legal innovation during the period under discussion. While historians have been quick to underscore the importance of the 'Wahabi' trials in forging an Anglo-Indian perception of Indian Muslims in the late nineteenth century, they have been less interested in the wider question of how such a markedly circumscribed movement could have come to such sudden and sustained attention, and have done so at the very moment when it had been all but extirpated.<sup>210</sup> Despite the immediate backdrop of Muslim 'conspiracy' during the 'Mutiny', the incongruity between object and response was noted even at the time.<sup>211</sup> Indeed, there had been accusations of repressive over-reaction in the Government campaign which (as suggested in Section 2.2) render it comparable to the excessive rhetoric and institutional response to the 'Thuggee' 'panics', trials, and campaigns of the 1830s. Radhika Singha has drawn convincing lines of correspondence between these events and the dramatic extension of a pan-Indian legislative reach to the colonial state.<sup>212</sup> In this respect, there is some grounds for

<sup>210</sup> See for instance, Pearson, p 57.

<sup>211</sup> This forms the basis, for example, of Lyall's critique in 'Islam in India'.

<sup>212</sup> Singha, *passim*.



comparison between the relation to dramatic new legislation of the novel by Captain Meadows Taylor, *Confessions of a Thug* (1839), and *Indian Musalmans*, instigated by Mayo partly as a rebuttal to the suggestion of ‘tyranny’ that had surrounded the conduct of his administration in regard to the ‘Wahabis’.<sup>213</sup> As with *Confessions* and the far-reaching Act XXX of 1836 which it threw into relief, the alarms and excursions of Hunter’s text can be seen as in part a justification for the unprecedented extension of Government intervention into Indian society in the 1860s – an intrusive trend in which Hunter himself, as Chairman of the Education Commission (1882), was later to play an important role.<sup>214</sup> This inter-relationship of text, ‘Wahabi’ ‘panic’, and legal innovation is crucial to an analysis of the Sensational tropes of transgression and conservation in *Indian Musalmans*, since they expose its provenance as, in part, a site of contest between opposing impulses in British rule at the time. These contradictory agendas can be briefly contextualised in terms of the comparativist debate that shaped nineteenth-century government policy in India.

By the 1820s reformist Utilitarian arguments had begun to gain ground from the more conservative Orientalist theories which had predominated throughout the late eighteenth century. During this earlier period the administrative innovations of Warren Hastings and the scholarship of William Jones had done much to shape the Orientalist perception that Indian society was ontologically different from that of Britain and therefore required a separate body of laws and administrative structures arising out of its own precolonial socio-political institutions. Jones had insisted that these laws could be extracted from native texts directly by informed British scholars and applied across British India. British administration in India was thus to be carried out in an essentially ‘Indian idiom’, one that carefully avoided disruption of the perception of continuity in rule.<sup>215</sup> Through his project of translations, Jones provided

<sup>213</sup> Pearson, p 221.

<sup>214</sup> On the interrelations of ‘Thuggee’ and legal innovation in Company rule, see Singha. The slippage between ‘Wahabi’ and the larger Indo-Muslim constituencies similarly parallels the porous boundaries in *Confessions* between ‘Thuggee’ as an esoteric cult and mainstream religious aspects of Indian society. Javed Majeed, ‘*Confessions*’, p 90.

<sup>215</sup> For a useful summary of Jones’ role in the legitimisation of British rule in an ‘Indian idiom’ see Javed Majeed, *Ungoverned*, pp 22-28.

the tools of scholarship required to effect the task that Clive had set British rule in India when he insisted to the Bengal Council in 1765 that above all the 'Company's sovereignty should be masked.'<sup>216</sup> In contradistinction, as early as the Governor-Generalship of Cornwallis (1786-93) Anglicist arguments advocating the rights of the individual had emerged to challenge the presumption of ontological difference and what Cornwallis came to see as the deleterious adoption by the Company of 'Asian despotism'.<sup>217</sup> As discussed in the previous section, this reformist impulse had its roots in the philosophical enquiries begun by the writers of the Scottish Enlightenment into the history and ideal configuration of civic society to the institutions of government. The nineteenth-century Utilitarian movement, from which the Anglicists would gain their most powerful advocates, evolved out of this body of writing, in particular through the transitional figure of Dugald Stewart, with its emphasis placed firmly on the role of legislation.<sup>218</sup> As Jeremy Bentham declared, the need was less in confirming historical precedence than in a concentration on 'what the Legislator *ought to do in future*'.<sup>219</sup> The debate between Utilitarian and Orientalist theories should therefore be seen as a development of the contradictions within eighteenth-century Anglo-Indian administration between its agrarian and aristocratic mode, and the increasing emphasis on commercial 'independency' and 'self-command' discussed in the previous section. Where the former attempted to interpret its remit in regard to what it saw as the historical development of indigenous institutions, the latter sought a way to lift the legislator beyond, and restrain, the inevitable corruption of its social context. In some ways, the increasing adoption among Indian legislators of the Utilitarian imposition of legislation with no other regard than to the felicific calculus, can be interpreted as a recognition of the kind of failure to situate British power within an Indian social context enacted in *Cock Match*.

<sup>216</sup> Quoted in Stokes, *The English Utilitarians and India* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, repr. 1982; 1959), p 1.

<sup>217</sup> Stokes, *English*, pp 3-6.

<sup>218</sup> The standard account of this development is still that of Stefan Collini, Donald Winch, John Burrow, *That Noble Science of Politics: A Study in Nineteenth-Century Intellectual History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), especially Chapters One and Three.

<sup>219</sup> Quoted in Collini et al, p 95. Emphasis in the original.

in this regard, the Utilitarian impulse in colonial India represented an excision of its own historical circumstances: reforming Indian society *de novo* implied a similar atemporal and supra-geographical reinvention of British rule. This is an important element in determining its post-‘Mutiny’ appeal. For although the arguments were never finally resolved between Anglicist and Orientalist modes of government in British India, at the time of the composition of *Indian Musalmans* Utilitarian ideals for Indian governance were being given unprecedented institutionalisation in a raft of legislation which enacted the new principle of innovation on a rapidly changing Indian society.<sup>220</sup>

At the heart of the Anglicist-Orientalist debate is that *locus classicus* of Utilitarian polemic over India in the nineteenth century, James Mill’s *History of British India* (1817). Javed Majeed’s recent excavation of the ideologies that informed Mill’s descriptions of India usefully draws attention to Mill’s preoccupation with the grounds for a new kind of comparativist discourse that was to gain ascendancy in the later nineteenth century. Under the terms of Mill’s polemic, India was not consigned to an imaginatively separate, impenetrable space (a region of the ‘sublime’, as Burke had described it),<sup>221</sup> or to its lost historical origins (an idea inaugurated by Jones’ ‘recovery’ of the Indo-European root of languages), but could be made to serve as the testing-ground for the formation of a modern, contemporary imperial British ethos. Such an ethos Mill argued, could only be enacted through a very different rule of law than had subsisted till then in British India (or indeed from that which subsisted in the oligarchic principles of eighteenth-century Britain, the primary object of his polemic). He therefore directed his critique towards the underlying assumptions of Jones’ project to create a constitution in India based upon the codification of Hindu and Muslim law; such a codification, he argued, carried forward into India the iniquities of ‘common law’ in England.<sup>222</sup> For Mill this rule of

<sup>220</sup> Stokes, *English*, pp 80, 257-68

<sup>221</sup> For a thoughtful analysis of Burke’s rhetoric on the ‘sublime’ and India, see Suleri, Chapter One; and for the role of ‘imagination’ as a language of displacement in Orientalist discourse, see Majeed, *Ungoverned*, Chapter Five.

<sup>222</sup> Majeed, *Ungoverned*, pp 145-50.

'common law' – that is, law proceeding out of, rather than being brought to bear upon, social institutions – was subject in India (as indeed he believed it to be in England) to intolerable mutations over time and place, arising as he thought out of the disorderly and arbitrary interpretations of native jurists.<sup>223</sup> As Majeed describes it, Mill's *History of British India* therefore set itself up as:

an attack on the common law tradition for which history was expressive of a community's sense of identity, and for which what was important was not the objective identity of the whole or part of the body of law over time, but the conviction of continuity upon which the believed identity of a people rested.<sup>224</sup>

The maintenance of that 'conviction of continuity', so crucial to early administrative practice in a British India deeply concerned to 'mask' its sovereignty, was in Mill's view nothing less than the propagation of a dangerous and morally despotic illusion. Since he had seen the arbiters of these institutions – 'priestcraft' – as being at the root of the barbarity of the Indian state, his arguments implied a similar arbitrary despotism attached to the ICS officers who enforced their judgements.<sup>225</sup> In this sense, Mill's philosophic Radical polemic developed the conservative Burkean discourse on Company rule from the late eighteenth century; but its intentions were not to advocate a retreat from the dangerous realm of colonial interaction, but to establish a more equitable basis for the comparison of colony and Metropolis. 'Asian despotism' was here a matter of collaboration, enacting upon other governments the iniquities of 'common law' in Britain. Mill's argument was therefore not that Indians should become more like the British, but that the British in India should be less like their Metropolitan counterparts. To do this, they would have to become not only strangers to their conception of Indian society, but to their own pre-'Mutiny' genealogy. At a fundamental level, then, the imposition of a Utilitarian agenda in India entailed for Anglo-Indians the revelation of themselves as foreigners in India. And at the same time it carried, perversely, the implication of self-estrangement.

---

<sup>223</sup> Majeed, *Ungoverned*, p 148.

<sup>224</sup> Majeed, *Ungoverned*, p 149.

<sup>225</sup> Stokes, *English*, p 54.

Mill's *History* had been a set text on the Haileybury syllabus and its critique of what it saw as the despotism of early Company rule constituted a primary reference point for all ICS officers of Hunter and Lyall's generation.<sup>226</sup> Nevertheless, in the two decades before, and for a few years after, the Mutiny a 'paternalist system' of administration had predominated in which respect for indigenous custom, and a personalised authoritarian style of rule, centred on the arbitrary power of the district officer.<sup>227</sup> A style of rule, in other words, based on just that form of 'local knowledge' that Mill had eschewed in his *History* through the framing of an all-encompassing British imperial ethos based on a universal rule of law.<sup>228</sup> Mill's Utilitarian project was carried on in these years by reformers such as C E Trevelyan; but it was not until the 1860s and 1870s that the legal structure required to effect his original call for a supra-local, empire-wide ethos was substantially established. This agenda principally took the form of law reforms pushed through by John Strachey and Stephen Fitzjames Stephens. The new law codes (in particular, the 1861 Code of Criminal Procedure, the Succession Act of 1865 and the Evidence Act of 1872) shaped a post-Mutiny legislative paradigm requiring a neutrality which, it was argued, was by definition unavailable to natives. For the first time during the British rule of India, the principle that good government could only be adjudged and maintained by foreigners had been inscribed into the constitutional framework.<sup>229</sup> This new legislative ethic, however, was less the triumph of Utilitarian ideals in official circles than has sometimes been thought by modern historians. The 'paternalist' trend with which it was associated in these years represented more than a matter of the happy coincidence of separate discourses, the disciplinarian style of the former enforcing the reforms of the latter.<sup>230</sup> It takes on rather the aspect of a simultaneous counter-trend

<sup>226</sup> Majeed, *Ungoverned*, p 128. Its influence can be felt throughout Lyall's own history, *The Rise and Expansion of British Dominion in India* (London: John Murray, repr. 1916; 1894), a text reprinted ten times in the two decades succeeding its publication in 1894.

<sup>227</sup> Stokes, *English*, p 268. For the ideals of what became known as the 'Punjab Style' of governance, see Dewey, 'Images of the Village Community: a Study in Anglo-Indian Ideology', in *Modern Asian Studies*, vol. 6, (1972), pp. 291-328; and Wurgraft, pp 32-41.

<sup>228</sup> Majeed, *Ungoverned*, p 138-39.

<sup>229</sup> Stokes, *English* p 283.

<sup>230</sup> Stokes, *English*, p 272.

owards the return to an Indian idiom. For it was during these years too that the pre-Mutiny' policy of annexation was sharply reversed and the machinery of Government swung behind efforts to shore up the indigenous aristocracy as a bulwark between itself and the Indian populace.<sup>231</sup> In a similar vein, the idea of purely consultative' councils comprising of India's 'natural leaders' was conceived in the wake of the suppression of revolt, and implemented in 1861. Partly a means of extending the burden of tax-collection, it was intended to constitute a form of 'darbar' (royal assembly) rule aimed at incorporating the landed gentry as a counter-balance to the new expanding class of English-educated Indians then beginning to petition for a share of government.<sup>232</sup> The concept of the 'darbar' that underpinned official deliberations during the evolution of these measures directly recalls the idiom of Victoria's Proclamation of 1858 in which she assumed the title of Empress of India. It further predicts the form of her Imperial Assemblage of 1877, and the vigorously renewed attempts to appropriate a Mughal imperial language of ritual and political incorporation that marked these years.<sup>233</sup> In other words, the inception of a material effort towards the disruption of continuity signalled by the new legislation was accompanied by the sudden return of a contradictory impulse to re-engage an Indian idiom for British rule.

Approaching the climax to his quest in *Indian Musalmans*, Hunter draws the reader's attention to the matter of the recent legislation. Specifically, he mounts a lengthy argument for the repeal of the Act of 1864 abolishing government nomination of *qazis* (Muslim 'judges', as he describes them).<sup>234</sup> He cannot state too highly the significance of this seemingly unremarkable piece of innovating, utilitarian legislation. 'The question', he insists, 'is one of the most important that ever came

<sup>231</sup> Fisher, *Politics*, pp 24-25, 33-37.

<sup>232</sup> For a balanced overview of these measures, see Shaikh, pp 50-58.

<sup>233</sup> On which, see Cohn, 'Representing'. As Thomas Metcalf has documented in terms of the built environment, this was a conflicted impulse that continued to organise British attempts at self-projection in India well into the early twentieth century. Metcalf, *Imperial*; and Metcalf, 'Past and Present: toward an aesthetics of colonialism' in G H R Tillotson (ed), *Paradigms of Indian Architecture: Space and Time in Representation and Design* (Richmond: Curzon Press, 1998), pp 12-25.

<sup>234</sup> Hunter, pp 189-92.

before the Indian legislator.’<sup>235</sup> His Indo-Muslim readers could only wonder at this inexplicable claim;<sup>236</sup> but at stake here for Hunter is exactly that problem of discontinuity which made the new law codes such contentious issues for the Anglo-Indian official community. As his text illustrates, the issue of nomination, a responsibility enjoined on the successors of Mughal rule, returns through the Indian Muslim to reveal the contours of an alien rule. Though the subject is placed under the general chapter heading, ‘The Wrongs of the Mahomedans Under British Rule’, the effects of the Act are seen as distortions to the British state. Specifically, in his estimation, every former aspirant to the office of *qazi* inevitably becomes an ‘apostle of disloyalty’ against the Government.<sup>237</sup> Thus the British neglect of its ‘masked sovereignty’ necessarily unveils a hostile environment. And yet equally, as Hunter insists in the same chapter, its shameful failure to step out from behind Mughal institutional norms had revealed a British dispensation crippled by a native-like ‘timidity’, and hopelessly mired in the ‘corruption’ of the ‘old system’.<sup>238</sup> On the one hand, the dangerous revelation of discontinuity; and on the other, the equally devastating revelation of a corrupting Indian (Mughal) persona. Running between the two, and revealing its contradictions, is the Indian Muslim – whether as the ‘kazi’ sitting in the British court frustrating ‘justice’, or ejected from the premises only to become the ‘apostle of disloyalty’ on its doorstep.<sup>239</sup> In this sense, he embodies within the text the deeply conflicted notion of self-revelation that characterised the colonialist search for an idiom of self-representation in the wake of the ‘Mutiny’. Moreover, at the same time as he is held up as a gauge of the need for colonialist invisibility, he is required to become the visible and alienated incarnation of a repudiated pre-‘Mutiny’ genealogy. Thus the current Muslim discontent is transformed, for instance, into an expression of the Company’s failure to openly

<sup>235</sup> Hunter, p 192.

<sup>236</sup> Sayyid Ahmad Khan, for instance, was frankly baffled by the importance Hunter attached to the Act. Khan, *Review*, p 50

<sup>237</sup> Hunter, p 191.

<sup>238</sup> Hunter, p 158-60.

<sup>239</sup> Hunter, p 163.

impose British education (that is, in English and using Christian instructors), instead of submitting to the 'gigantic system of fraud' by which they continued Mughal social customs and institutions.<sup>240</sup>

In short, then, the problematic of exposing or concealing yet another Muslim 'conspiracy' is centred on issues of Anglo-Indian self-revelation and self-strangement. To this extent, 'conspiracy' substitutes for a failed narrative of British power. And as with the over-inscription of the Mughal figure of authority, the impossible quest for a final, transfixing exposure is partly driven by the insoluble question of an Anglo-Indian ruling idiom. The Sensational handling of these contending currents of revelation and alienation, however, implies a marked difference to the effects of stasis surrounding the production of the Muslim 'fanatic' in 1857. There, the descriptive isolation of the Indian Muslim carried forward the concealed, reciprocal idea of a Civilian relationship to Indian society. As an outcast, the Muslim 'fanatic' narrated its constituency, a potential binding of British India kept alive at the sharp point of a perceived, omnipresent Semitic belligerence. Even so, requiring a constant and over-determined re-inscription, the cumulative effect of apparent stasis and clarity was deceptive. The variety of strategies of prophylaxis by which this hidden reciprocity operated was still liable to invasions of uncanny phenomena, or to sudden and precipitous collapse, opening out – as in Lyall's encounter with the fallen 'ghazis' – near-hysterical vistas of self-dispossession. In the Sensation genre, on the other hand, the ever-present possibility of self-dispossession is the *mode* of narrative rather than its exception. For this reason, there can be no viable construction of an 'Elsewhere' such as can be detected in 'Mutiny' narratives. Nor can there be the exposure of a pure point of opposition. Indeed, in the Sensation narrative the question of legibility is itself something of a red herring, leading the protagonist through torn veils of perception until finally confronted with an alienated aspect of themselves and their social reality. The climactic disclosure is always this revelation of an unpalatable connection between a known environment and an unruly,

---

<sup>240</sup> Hunter, pp 176, 183.



contingent reality that, it seems, is also – somehow – part of its fabric. This is a connection, of course, that turns out to be symptomatic – literally, that is, a manifestation of the irrational Symptom at work in an otherwise apparently consistent social realm. The tension between the transgressive and conservative impulses in the Sensation Novel, at once tearing apart and suturing that social fabric, thus mimics the continual struggle between the corrosive and preservative functions of the Symptom, ‘spoiling the game’ even as it gives it a vital consistency. Self-revelation in the Sensation Novel is therefore never final and absolute but momentary, contingent and always partial. It is structured through tropes of imposture and masquerade that specifically work to test out and deconstruct polar identities; perceptions of what is outside or extraneous to the social field and what is inside or integral to its constitution are inevitably confused, transgressed, or even transposed.<sup>241</sup> Separating them out again under this rubric becomes all but impossible. At the outset, then, we can say that the colonialist deployment of this mode of narrative necessarily signals the distressed recognition not only that the infectious indeterminacy of the Indo-Muslim ‘stranger’ cannot be contained, but that it arises out of an irremediable *British* disorder. With this in mind, we can now proceed to a more detailed analysis of the effects of the genre not only in *Indian Musalmans*, but as a model for the treatment of the Indo-Muslim ‘stranger’ in Lyall’s *Asiatic Studies* as well.

As suggested above, the Sensation Novel is formally structured by successive scenes of revelation and deferral, whereby the detecting narrative is led through layers of deception to the heart of the mystery. A brief plot summary might read along these lines: a disturbance enters the social fabric from without carrying with it a secret infection; the infection is conveyed to the protagonists within; they in turn begin the quest for its source, which leads them deeper into a suddenly unfamiliar social reality; misreading clues, they stumble upon an endemic corruption, at the same time themselves seemingly succumbing to the disease. A final revelation, in which their complicity in the infection is also discovered, purges the social body of its foreign

---

<sup>241</sup> Pykett, pp 2, 20, 24; Rance, pp 34-36.

lement, and restores the protagonists to their rightful place in society. Despite this resolution, however, it is the discovery of complicity that underwrites the plot – and indeed, the genre. In *The Moonstone*, the infection from without – in the form of the predatory Brahmins – illuminates, but has only a secondary effect upon, the main mystery; that is, they play only a peripheral role in actually solving the mystery of the theft of the gem from an English country house. Just as the original introduction of the ‘Moonstone’ into English society was the result of English actions (the looting of Tipu’s palace), its theft from the country house is found to have been accomplished, if unconsciously (he was sleepwalking), by the English hero, Franklin Blake.<sup>242</sup>

Similarly, in *The Woman in White*, the initial infection from without takes the form of an escaped inmate of a lunatic asylum. A connection (or if you like, contagion) is discovered between this ‘woman in white’ and the heroine, an heiress. It is only towards the end of the novel that the incarceration of the ‘woman in white’ is revealed to have been the lawless action of the heroine’s future husband (himself posing as an aristocrat); but not before she and the heroine have exchanged roles. A resolution can then only be achieved through the death of the ‘woman in white’ (comparable to the departure of the ‘Moonstone’ and the Brahmins from England) and the restoration of the heroine to her ‘rightful’ social identity and fortune. Needless to say, the moral basis of such a ‘rightful’ social order has of course by this point been thoroughly undermined.

This template fits precisely the structure of *Indian Musalmans*. Chapter One opens by identifying ‘fanatic swarms’ on the Northwest ‘frontier’<sup>243</sup> posing an immediate and infectious threat to the troops of the ‘British Plains’. By the end of the chapter the ‘chronic hostility’ they maintain there has been revealed as ‘chronic miseries...transmitted as a bitter legacy to ourselves.’<sup>244</sup> The narrative promises to

<sup>242</sup> Deploying an idiom of estrangement, this kind of reversal overturns the ‘propriety’ of almost all the main characters. It is a theme ironically reprised in the narrator’s remarks on the undoing of Godfrey Ablewhite, ‘How soon may our own evil passions prove to be Oriental noblemen who pounce on us unawares’ (Collins, *Moonstone*, p 222).

<sup>243</sup> Hunter, p 9.

<sup>244</sup> Hunter, p 42.

race the infection as it moves from without to within, British India; but of course, it remains one step behind its quarry; the contagion has already crossed the border and threatens to infect the entire social body. The chapter thus ends on a suitably Sensational note of deferral: 'Nevertheless, we failed to reach the heart of the evil...It is not the traitors themselves we have to fear, but the seditious masses in the heart of our Empire.'<sup>245</sup>

Chapter Two begins in earnest the task of uncovering the trail of the infection, from its perceived Arab origins to its British Indian headquarters in Patna. From the moment of its entry into British territory, however, it begins to evoke and become confused with, the colonial state itself. This development is first heralded by Hunter's remark that the British were guilty of 'pouring oil upon the embers which we had left for dead, and nursing them again into a flame'.<sup>246</sup> This image of resurrection prefaces a persistent strain of the uncanny, 'that class of the frightening which leads back to what is known of old and long familiar' and which in particular, estranges the 'homely' and the 'native'.<sup>247</sup> For instance, the economic genealogy of the 'Wahabi' movement is discovered to be located in the same famine of 1769, which 'first awakened the people of England to their responsibilities in India'.<sup>248</sup> Thus the foundations of the benevolent British Indian bureaucratic state were laid at just the place where the family of the chief revenue officer of the 'Wahabi' movement (Muhammad Shafi) first enriched itself, a point driven home by the fact that their fortune was made through supplying meat to the British troops.<sup>249</sup> In the same vein, the narrator-detective discovers that the 'Wahabi' buildings at Patna which outwardly resemble those of a Government district headquarters, contain within a dystopia of illegibility: 'a labyrinth of walls and outhouses with one enclosure leading into another by side-doors, and little secret courts in out-of-the-way corners.'<sup>250</sup>

---

<sup>245</sup> Hunter, pp 41-42.

<sup>246</sup> Hunter, p 44.

<sup>247</sup> Freud, 'The Uncanny', p 340.

<sup>248</sup> Hunter, p 94.

<sup>249</sup> Hunter, p 94.

<sup>250</sup> Hunter, p 69.

Moreover, the regional organisation employs a bureaucratic jargon based on the British Indian postal service;<sup>251</sup> like the Government it pursues an alternative form of provincial taxation emanating from a 'District-Centre';<sup>252</sup> and it preaches its doctrines directly outside the District Magistrate's courthouse.<sup>253</sup> By the end of the chapter this elaborate picture of an uncanny manifestation of the colonial state supersedes the actual 'Fanatical Conspiracy' (which bathetically, 'gives signs of breaking down'<sup>254</sup>), and prepares the way for a broader investigation into the true source of the 'mystery'<sup>255</sup> of repeated Muslim insurgencies: the genesis of the colonial state itself. In other words, the infection is now revealed as born within rather than carried from without, British India. More importantly, as with the uncanny metamorphosis of the personae of the leading protagonists of *The Moonstone* and *The Woman in White*, the roles of disguised conspirator and legitimate colonialist have at some mysterious moment been exchanged. Thus in Chapter Three it is the British state which is exposed as being not only a 'contemptible farce' in its earlier incarnation pretending deference to Mughal institutions,<sup>256</sup> but as being the subject of a mysterious transposition from which it has failed to free itself. For the moment of the crossover from Muslim to British rule is hidden from view. Like the bewildered heroine of *The Woman in White* who finds herself suddenly and inexplicably incarcerated in the lunatic asylum in place of her doppelganger (in fact, half-sister), Hunter declares almost exactly midway through his narrative: 'I find myself unable to place my finger on any given year or decade of years as that in which the change was effected.'<sup>257</sup> And not only have the identities of the (Muslim and British) protagonists been perilously confused, but the British state finds itself the subject of 'fatwas' which – intolerably - designate it a 'Land of Islam' ('Dar-ul Islam'). Reversing these decisions in order to revise the designation into what Hunter translates as 'Land of the Enemy'

<sup>251</sup> Hunter, p 98.

<sup>252</sup> Hunter, pp 81-82, 100.

<sup>253</sup> Hunter, pp 73-75.

<sup>254</sup> Hunter, p 105.

<sup>255</sup> Hunter, p 44.

<sup>256</sup> Hunter, pp 135-36.

<sup>257</sup> Hunter, p 136.

'Dar-ul Harb'<sup>258</sup>) becomes the explicit and over-riding concern of Chapter Three.<sup>259</sup> To do this, like all Sensation heroes, the author must assume the disguise of the enemy, taking issue with the 'Mohamedan Law-Doctors' to argue the doctrinal case for 'jihad' (or rather, 'hijra' – emigration – to a country from which 'jihad' can be waged). In short, it becomes the quest of the narrative to retrieve the identity of the hero/heroine and reconstitute the social fabric of an upturned British India – something that can only be done, of course, by unmasking the 'Wahabis' as its polar opposite. It is no coincidence that Hunter concludes that this would mean 'segregating' them from Indian society altogether.<sup>260</sup> As in most Sensation Novels, the exorcism of the moment of transposition requires a death, or an enforced migration.<sup>261</sup>

Alfred Lyall was not alone in his astonishment at the disturbing reversal of identity at the heart of the narrative of *Indian Musalmans*. One otherwise favourable reviewer, wondered at Hunter becoming 'every now and then more Mahometan than the Mahometans.'<sup>262</sup> W Nassau Lees echoed the point in his sardonic observation that judging him by his own evidence, [the author] would be a Wahhabi [*sic*], if he were not too good a Sunni or Shiah Muslim'.<sup>263</sup> But Lyall's own vitriolic condemnation goes beyond his overstated summary of the substance of Lees' complaints that Hunter

<sup>258</sup> Hunter's choice of 'Enemy' as a translation is itself significant of his preoccupation with re-establishing polar identities. As Sayyid Ahmad Khan pointed out, a more correct translation would have been 'country of war', placing the emphasis on the process rather than the opposing force (Khan, *Review*, p XIX). That Hunter has gone out of his way to create this idiosyncratic bias is confirmed by the fact that 'war' would seem to have been its more common definition among even the British in India. See, for instance, the roughly contemporaneous translation given by the ICS officer John Platt in John T Platts, *A Dictionary of Urdu, Classical Hindi and English* (New Delhi: Munshiram Mahoharlal, repr. 1997; 1884), p 476.

<sup>259</sup> Thus, for instance, the second half of *The Woman in White* is taken up with proving that the heroine is not the escaped inmate of the asylum that she has been labelled as by her villainous persecutor.

<sup>260</sup> Hunter, p 144.

<sup>261</sup> In *The Woman in White* we get both: the death of the 'woman in white' and the emigration (and later death) of the scheming Italian, Count Fosco.

<sup>262</sup> 'A Mahometan Revival', p 431.

<sup>263</sup> Lees, p 14.

as ‘out-Heroded Herod’.<sup>264</sup> In the original published version of *Islam in India*, he writes:

Stronger expressions could not have been employed if we Christians had done unto the Indian Mohamedans as their ancestors did so often to Christians; if we had persecuted them as Aurungzebe persecuted Hindus, or treated them with the hatred and savage cruelty shewn to unbelievers by Hyder Ali or Tippu of Mysore.<sup>265</sup>

Ten years later, in *Asiatic Studies*, Lyall amended the passage to read: ‘if we Christians had done unto Indian Mohamedans as Mahomedans *have elsewhere* done so often to Christians...’<sup>266</sup> The correction is worth noting for the sidelight it casts upon the author’s intention to lift the narrative beyond the local and into the wider, trans-geographic context – and thus the need to emphasise in terms not susceptible to ambiguity that ‘ancestors’ refers to an extra-Indian context (‘elsewhere’). It is this intolerance of the possibility in the original phrasing of a corrupting and inescapable cycle of relations between Christians and Muslims arising out of circumstances *within* India that exposes a hidden correspondence between the two apparently opposed authors. For the substance of Lyall’s charge against Hunter’s perceived partisan text is in fact its failure properly to separate out its combatants and rules of engagement. It is not Hunter’s ‘strong lights’ that are under attack, but the methodology of his narrative which leads him to ‘confound the essential with the accidental, to attribute to local and temporary causes symptoms which are inherent in and inseparable from our relations with the Mahomedans.’<sup>267</sup> In other words, he is being castigated for opposing what happens within India to what happens ‘elsewhere’. Lyall’s insistence on the primacy of the extra-Indian context – on that is, ‘the religious rivalry of a thousand years’<sup>268</sup> – as an infallible guide to contemporary colonial India is underscored between 1871 and 1882 by a blizzard of similar emendations to his

<sup>264</sup> Lyall, ‘Islam’, p 233.

<sup>265</sup> Lyall, ‘Islam’, *The Theological Review*, 1 April, 1872, p 225.

<sup>266</sup> Lyall, ‘Islam’, p 232. My emphasis.

<sup>267</sup> Lyall, ‘Islam’, p 234.

<sup>268</sup> Lyall, ‘Islam’, p 233.

ext.<sup>269</sup> The sheer pedantic scope and consistency of these revisions indicates that for its author, the original essay – written only fourteen years after the outbreak of the 1857 Muslim ‘conspiracy’ – had not sufficiently made the terms of rivalry within India clear. In other words, it suggests that he considered his own text as potentially liable to the same charge of confusion it had framed against Hunter.

Ironically, then, for both authors the further away the British in India travelled from 1857, the more they required the framework of Muslim-British confrontation elsewhere in order to understand their proper relations in India. Hunter imaginatively constructs the scenario of India being declared a ‘Land of the Enemy’, thus enforcing a ‘Wahabi’ emigration from which fresh and unambiguous battle-lines could be drawn up. Lyall traverses a thousand years of history, and an unspecified geographical range, in order to efface the ‘false perspective’<sup>270</sup> provided by commentators such as Hunter who mistakenly look to India itself for their answers. For both writers, India is a region of threatening transpositions, one in which the lines between Muslim and British can easily become confused or submerged. For Lyall in particular, the spectators of Metropolitan Britain, so easily taken in by the ‘effective use of European metaphors for Asiatic events and institutions’, are the audience upon whom the ‘travesty’ of ‘local peculiarities’ can have dangerous effects.<sup>271</sup> Above all, it can lead them to misunderstand the true nature of the presence and actions of the ‘English’ in India. In this sense, to ‘confound’ the ‘essential with the accidental’ refers equally – as it does in the text syntactically – to the fact of British rule within and that of Muslim sentiment beyond, India. As he puts it, authors such as Hunter (and W Nassau Lees – whose own critical review might have been expected to render him an ally) appear ‘to connect every kind of [Mohamedan] discontent with those blunders and faults for which the English can be directly blamed.’<sup>272</sup> Thus for Lyall it

<sup>269</sup> In total, there were 46 significant changes to the text of ‘Islam in India’, the bulk of which were directed towards underlining the wider extra-Indian context – and inevitability – of Muslim-Christian rivalry.

<sup>270</sup> Lyall, ‘Islam’, p 234.

<sup>271</sup> Lyall, ‘Islam’, p 230.

<sup>272</sup> Lyall, ‘Islam’, pp 233-34.

s only through the medium of an essentialised, transhistorical Muslim identity that the British in India can properly be understood by their Metropolitan spectators. Conversely, it is through their contact with Muslims as *Indian* subjects that they risk being misrepresented (in this case, by, in Lyall's view, the Metropolitan-ised Hunter) as religious despots – as if they 'had done unto the Indian Mahomedans as their ancestors did so often to Christians'. Once again, then, the Muslims of British India are located on the fault-line of the paradox of colonial secular neutrality. Only now it would seem that its exposure has become the inevitable result of any British failure to recognise a Muslim identity untainted by its Indian context.

Two principal implications flow from this post-'Mutiny' formulation. The first is that the integrity of the colonialist identity is ensured by the consistent apprehension of the pristine foreign origins of Indian Muslims: 'Semiticisation' perversely lifts the British out of their polluting colonial circumstance. The second is that any admixture of these polar identities carries with it the threat of the disintegration of the neutral colonialist persona and with it, the spectre of revolt. This is a scenario enacted time and again by late nineteenth-century Anglo-Indian literature. For instance, in her novel *The Hosts of the Lord* (1900), Flora Annie Steel rehearses revolt in a small North Indian town through the hybrid figure of Roshan Khan. Initially a subaltern officer in the British garrison ('smart as uniform could make him, still as discipline could hold him'<sup>273</sup>), he becomes the disaffected centre for a religiously-motivated rebellion by the Hindu citizenry. The revolt all but frees him of his debilitating British education and the novel ends with his death on the outskirts of town, his now openly sectarian, foreign identity doubly re-inscribed by the fact that he meets his fate at the hands of another fanatical Machiavellian outsider, the sword-wielding Italian Jesuit missionary. In misrecognising his Muslim origins, the British had sewn the seeds of revolt; in seeing them exposed and segregated, British rule had restored the town to its loyal self. A similar passage from hybridity to exposure and segregation fuels one of Kipling's most celebrated short stories, 'On the City Wall'

---

<sup>273</sup> Steel, *Hosts*, p 8.



1888). Like *The Hosts of the Lord*, the plot revolves around sedition and exposure. Here, the conspiracy is that of the Punjab-based Sikh Kuka movement; but there is evidence of its conflation in the narrator's mind with 'Wahabism'.<sup>274</sup> Although the revelation of the urbane, English-educated Wali Dad's fanatical Muslim self at the story's climax does not end the conspiracy, it does enable the otherwise passive figure of the English narrator to momentarily win the fickle attentions of the courtesan Lalun – that is, to seemingly become an 'insider' to the Indian world of the story. And in the larger framework, it also incites the closure of the story with the suppression of the conspiracy first by the rejection of the plotters by Indian society, and then by an anonymous, apparently inflexible colonial apparatus. Ultimately Wali Dad's exposure as a helpless fanatic makes visible, and precipitates the restoration of, that which the narrator had seemingly compromised through his attachment to the world of the courtesan and his unwitting involvement with her seditious plot: which is to say, it reveals the neutrality of the British state ('above all and behind all'<sup>275</sup>). At the same time, of course, it discloses the passive disposition of the rest of Indian society, unable and unwilling to participate in revolt.<sup>276</sup>

However, the facilitation through Wali Dad of the narrator's journey to the 'inside' of Indian society generates far more ambivalence than this reading implies. The narrator's final words that he had 'become Lalun's vizier after all'<sup>277</sup> suggest an uneasy transposition, not only to a subordinate place in Lalun's 'court', but as both a

<sup>274</sup> Specifically, the dates given by Wali Dad of the movement's battles with the British – 1846, 1857, 1871 – lead the narrator to ask if its imprisoned leader is a 'Wahabi'. Wali Dad's reply implies that had the leader not 'lost his religion', he may well have been considered one. The further, retrospective, implication is that it is for this reason that Wali Dad fails in his role in the conspiracy. Kipling, 'On the City Wall' in Louis Cornell (ed), *The Man Who Would be King and Other Stories* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), p 228.

<sup>275</sup> Kipling, 'City Wall', pp 222-23.

<sup>276</sup> Given its central role in the story, it is surprising that no sustained critical attention has been paid to the Muslim dimension to the dissonance between Wali Dad and Indian society. He is more frequently interpreted either as an expression of a hybrid – and therefore, in the view of the narrative, marginalised – nascent Indian nationalism; or as no more than a component of the communal problem frustrating a nationalist future. For an example of the former, see Teresa Hubel, *Whose India? The Independence Struggle in British and Indian Fiction and History* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1996), pp 34-44; and for a typical instance of the latter approach, see Parry, pp 239-42.

<sup>277</sup> Kipling, 'City Wall', p 243

subordinate to and a substitute for, Wali Dad himself, who is at one point named by Lalun as her 'king': 'In this house I am a Queen and thou art a king. The Sahib [...] shall be our Vizier – thine and mine, Wali Dad – because he has said that thou shouldst leave me.'<sup>278</sup> The ambiguous nature of this relationship appears directly to engender an over-inscription of sexualised imagery surrounding Wali Dad that is altogether reminiscent of Zoffany's Nawab. After the narrator's implication in the conspiracy to free the Kuka leader, Wali Dad is recreated as, all at once, the victim of sexualised self-abuse, the lover-victim of the narrator, and the impotent former lover of Lalun:

On returning to Lalun's door I stumbled over a man at the threshold. He was sobbing hysterically and his arms flapped like the wings of a goose. It was Wali Dad, Agnostic and Unbeliever, shoeless, turbanless, and frothing at the mouth, the flesh on his chest bruised and bleeding from the vehemence with which he had smitten himself. A broken torch-handle lay by his side, and his quivering lips murmured, '*Ya Hasan! Ya Hussain!*' as I stooped over him. I pushed him a few steps up the staircase, threw a pebble at Lalun's City window and hurried home.<sup>279</sup>

Details such as the 'broken torch-handle' and his 'shoeless, turbanless' state render Wali Dad here a Nawab-like figure of impotence and exile (in this case, literally stripped of all his markers of Indian identity); but one ambiguously positioned in a sexually submissive relationship to the narrator 'stooped over him'. The sexualised imagery of his 'religious' frenzy here brings to a climax an excitation that begins with, and facilitates, the narrator's entrance into the conspiracy: 'I turned as I spoke and looked at his face. [Wali Dad's] nostrils were distended, his eyes were fixed, and he was smiting himself softly on the breast.'<sup>280</sup> The narrator's blind participation in the conspiracy (ferrying the escaped Kuka leader through the city) then directly parallels – indeed, we might say, is described by – Wali Dad's self-abusive trajectory, ending as they both meet again under Lalun's window. This coterminous 'journey' seems to counter the more overt suggestion in the narrative that it is a dispossession

<sup>278</sup> Kipling, 'City Wall', p 233. Italics in the original.

<sup>279</sup> Kipling, 'City Wall', p 241.

<sup>280</sup> Kipling, 'City Wall', p 238.

that Wali Dad has brought upon himself. It indicates rather that they are linked in a process of self-dispossession, the terms of which – as the over-inscription betrays – have eluded the control of the narrator. Inevitably, then, the simultaneous cuckolding and neutering of the ‘young Muhammadan’ are soon replayed, when the narrator discovers later that:

Lalun’s arms round my neck were put there to hide the money that [her servant] gave to [the Kuka leader], and that Lalun had used me and my white face as even a better safeguard than Wali Dad who proved himself so untrustworthy.<sup>281</sup>

Thus the narrator becomes both neutered prophylactic (‘safeguard’) and cuckolded object of exchange, facilitating the union of Lalun and the figure of the Kuka leader: limiting, as one critic has put it, the representation of an inscrutable India and Kipling’s conception of a legitimate (if only because hopeless) expression of an Indian ‘nationalist’ aspiration.<sup>282</sup> Balked at the moment of fulfilment, he is revealed as excluded from and mastered by, the inner workings of Indian society. In short, the story exposes him as no less an impotent ‘vizier’ than Wali Dad had proved himself a self-abused ‘king’. Indeed, it is a measure of the extent to which the subject of dispossession has bested its author that the only successful bonding in this farce of mysterious couplings is that which takes place between Indian Muslim and Anglo-Indian, and ends beneath Lalun’s window. In a sense, their passion and purpose are uselessly expended together, and neither gain admittance to the ‘assembly’ within.<sup>283</sup>

As in *Cock Match*, then, dispossession in ‘On the City Wall’ is both mutual, and mutually inscribed. Although there is not the space here to go into it in any detail, a similar complex of parallelism, cuckolding, and mutual displacement between Roshan Khan and his erstwhile British colleague Captain Vincent Dering structures the plot of *The Hosts of the Lord*. The faint echo of Byron’s ‘The Giaour’ that can be detected in the name of Kipling’s courtesan, Lalun, is given a far more emphatic restatement in the form of the heroine Laila over whom Dering and Khan

<sup>281</sup> Kipling, ‘City Wall’, p 242.

<sup>282</sup> Hubel, pp 37, 39-43

<sup>283</sup> ‘All the city seemed to assemble in Lalun’s little white room...’ (Kipling, ‘City Wall’, p 225).

conduct their deadly rivalry. The terms of their own homosocial relationship are sealed when a bullet from Roshan Khan's gun, fired in 'impotent' rage against Laila, penetrates Laila's body – just as the Leila of 'The Giaour' becomes the murdered 'exchange object' that seals the vampiric coupling of the Giaour and Hassan.<sup>284</sup> In each of these cases, the narrative insists upon the self-revelation of the inherent and visible difference of the Indian Muslim, only to find itself implicated in an intimate and self-alienating relationship with him, one that ends by setting them both outside of Indian society. The Indian Muslim has become, in this sense, hostage to the contingency of colonial autonomy. Intended as a secure point of contrast, his over-inscription reveals him instead as an agent of dissolution upon their self-representation; Hassan-like, he hollows out rather than confirms, their claims to a neutral and paramount identity ('above all and behind all'). At the end of this section we will return to Hunter's quest to reassemble the persona of the British state through clarifying its relationship to the Indian Muslim. Before we do so, however, these Sensational themes of masquerade, revelation, and the hollowing out of identity, can usefully be pursued into the essays of his most astringent critic, Alfred Lyall. In particular, they can be used to further interrogate the self-accusation of insufficient clarity implied by the revisions to his review discussed above, in which he sought specifically to press home the message of extra-Indian Semitic origins and with it, the implied counter-image of a pure and polar, British identity.

Although Lyall included in the first edition of *Asiatic Studies* three essays which purport to draw their material from a wider source base than India, there is in fact only one chapter which actually deals directly with a contemporary extra-Indian context.<sup>285</sup> It is therefore significant that he should feel it necessary to travel as far away as China for this particular essay, concerning the possible relations between

<sup>284</sup> Steel, *Hosts*, pp 225, 272. The 'homosocial' male relationship in nineteenth century literature, and the role within it of the female 'exchange object' has been explored by Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick in *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985).

<sup>285</sup> The three general essays are: 'Influence Upon Religion of a Rise in Morality'; 'Witchcraft and Non-Christian Religions'; and 'Missionary and Non-Missionary Religions'. Religions set within an Indian context in fact form the overwhelming majority of his examples in these essays.

tate and religion. For an ICS official, of course, this form of geographical displacement would have been crucial to an exercise that was otherwise, under the post-Proclamation dispensation, publicly unthinkable. But in order to explore an imperial governmental relationship to religion, it would seem he had further been compelled by a similar search for an extra-Indian point of clarity to the one that drove his insistence on the prior Semitic context of Islam in India. In 1857-59, that latter extra-Indian Asian identification accompanied and legitimated the search for an Indian 'insider' status for the British by simultaneously establishing the counterpoint of a pure and polar Muslim 'foreign' and de-nationalising identity. We can therefore regard the essay on 'Relations Between the State and Religion in China' as to some extent a comparable attempt to reconfigure an otherwise disorientating British-Indian nexus from beyond its debilitating Indian circumstance. Such an interpretation is reinforced by reference to what appears to have been Lyall's principal source for this essay, the 1878 edition of Joseph Edkins' *Religion in China*.<sup>286</sup> Originally published as *The Religious Condition of the Chinese* in 1859, it was one of the first detailed accounts of a region of the world and a set of religious practices that had only just come under the popular scrutiny of the British Metropolitan public. The treaties concluded subsequent to the 'Opium' and 'Arrow' wars of the 1840s and late 1850s had not just opened the region up to British trading interests but had begun to incorporate it in imperial strategic planning. Indeed, some historians have gone so far as describing it in this period as becoming a part of British 'informal empire'.<sup>287</sup> Edkins' account was framed more as a travelogue than an Orientalist analysis (it was not until the 1890s that comparative religious studies turned to Chinese religion in any depth<sup>288</sup>). But as the more explicit title of the 1878 edition indicated, it had a strong missionary content that reflected its author's activities as one of a growing

<sup>286</sup> Lyall, 'State and Religion in China', in *Asiatic Studies*, p 130.

<sup>287</sup> Jurgen Osterhammel, 'Britain and China, 1842-1914' in *OHBE* 3, pp 148-49.

<sup>288</sup> It should be noted, however, that Buddhism, Taoism and Confucianism in China had all figured as examples in Hegel's systematisation of 'Determinate Religion' in his lectures of 1827. Nevertheless the first detailed Orientalist study was that of J J M De Groot, *The Religious System of China, its ancient forms, evolution, history and present aspect, manners, customs and social institutions*, Six Volumes (Leyden: E J Brill, 1892).

constituency of European evangelists in China.<sup>289</sup> This was a form of European presence which British consuls of the time saw as distinctly deleterious to their trading ambitions in the mainland. In particular, the preaching of Protestant missionaries was widely believed to be behind the millenarian movement that sparked off the Taiping Rebellion which, between 1850 and 1864, had done so much to undermine the desired stability of the Chinese government.<sup>290</sup> In travelling out of India, then, Lyall had not chosen a region free of the tension between imperial and religious modes of governance. Indeed, he had entered a realm no less susceptible to the explosive potential of Protestant evangelism than India itself, an issue that he refers to in the essay itself.<sup>291</sup>

In this context, it is plausible that, while drawing from an evangelist's account, the fact that Lyall makes no other reference to the propagation of Christianity partly reflects British imperial sensibilities in China as well as in India. But it also highlights the way religion in the essay can be consistently placed at the service of government rather than the other way around. It is a startling configuration of interests that strongly indicates the relevance to his discussion of the British self-constitution in India as the integrative, petitioned hub of competing religio-ethnic constituencies. Through the Chinese government prosecution of Taoism as a state religion, Lyall turns this model inside out; what would be a de-nationalising sectarian agenda in India, is revealed in China as its very opposite, an integrative imperial framework. Leaving India is, in this sense, a way of estranging, and thereby attempting to reappropriate, the terms of a confused British ruling identity there. However, Lyall's use of Edkins as his primary source material is, in this regard, highly instructive. For it seems that he has extracted the subject of what he characterises as the state's manipulation of religion, against the grain of the book's

<sup>289</sup> Edkins, *Religion in China: containing a brief account of the three religions of the Chinese: with observations on the prospects of Christian conversion amongst that people* (London: Trubner & Co, 1878).

<sup>290</sup> Osterhammel, p 155-57; Susan Bayly, 'The Evolutions of Colonial Cultures: Nineteenth-Century Asia', in *OHBE* 3, p 462.

<sup>291</sup> Lyall, 'State', pp 148-49.

own interests; Edkins himself only mentions it four times, and then for the most part, in no more than passing, neutrally-expressed descriptions.<sup>292</sup> While the stated subject of Lyall's essay is the state prosecution of religion, it is therefore important to underscore this decided bias with which he approaches its discussion. Which is to say, his evident interest in the question of religion in China is not one of conversion or evangelism, subjects which otherwise form the body of Edkins' book, but do so nowhere with reference to the state sponsorship of Taoism. This is a key observation with which to preface an analysis of the question of religious 'enthusiasm' that underscores his essay, and which is even at times directly addressed.<sup>293</sup> For Lyall, neither religion, nor Christianity in particular, of and for itself represents a desirable or substantial identity with which to stamp government. Indeed, it is the perceived potential of a religion – in this case, Taoism – for the fluid and markedly theatrical construction and reconstruction of the relations between state and society that makes it a subject of interest. Given the above discussion regarding 'insiders' and 'outsiders', it is inevitable that for a legitimating counterpoint to these recognisably Sensational motifs of masquerade and self-alienation, Lyall turns promptly to Islam as a self-evident and inflexible category. As with Wali Dad, the narrator requires its visible and involuntary self-declaration before his perilous journey within Asian society can begin.

As if taking his cue from Hunter, Lyall launches his essay in fine Sensational style, first with an uncanny manifestation, and then with a mysterious disappearance. The latter takes place after a prologue in which the 'climax' of Western forms of government is located in the modern ruling principle of 'divorce' between state and religion.<sup>294</sup> The genealogy of this principle is traced back to contrasting 'earlier notions' of 'union' between these institutions, notions which it is found are still manifest in Islamic polities, and in particular in the current Pan-Islamist doctrines of the Ottoman empire. Islamic empire is thus characterised as at once the polar

<sup>292</sup> Edkins, pp 48, 56-57, 65-66, 116.

<sup>293</sup> Lyall, 'State', pp 125, 149.

<sup>294</sup> Lyall, 'State', p 124.

opposite of British imperialism, and an ‘earlier’ stage of its development – in other words, as something akin to an uncanny manifestation of its discarded primitive persona. After then setting the Asian stage entirely in terms of the ‘barbarous’ impact of Islam on its forms of government, Lyall brings down the curtain on this prefatory act, only to raise it on a suddenly emptied scene. China, he points out, is unique in Western Asia in escaping a ‘Mahomedan invasion’, and thereby preserving its ‘political continuity’.<sup>295</sup> In doing so, the country has succeeded in effecting precisely that which India, under the Muslim ‘deluge’, had been denied: ‘bringing her religious doctrines and worship into practical co-operation with her secular organization.’<sup>296</sup> For this covert disquisition on British Indian governance, then, the vexed question of ‘continuity’ in the Indian context is introduced into an alternative Asian polity through the key excision of Islam. Because he has pre-characterised Islam as a prior manifestation of a European evolution, its excision implies that the trajectory of European history can also be interrupted, clearing an imaginative space for a new configuration of colonial intervention. This is, in effect, a classic Sensational paradigm: through its polar opposite that which is familiar is first estranged, then suddenly effaced. Moreover, the success of this imaginative intervention in colonial history thereafter relies upon its ability to reappear *between* definitions, both ‘inside’ and ‘outside’ the social realm:

The Chinese Government has this advantage, that although its dynasty is to some degree foreign, it is nevertheless not so far ahead of or so apart from the prevailing intellectual standard among its subjects that it cannot recognise or treat with religions of low or incongruous types without offending the public opinion of some influential body among its subjects.<sup>297</sup>

Thus the disappearance of Islam, and with it the interruption of European history, reveals less a pristine Asian polity than a contemporary imperial government founded on ambiguity – literally, neither ‘foreign’ nor indigenous. In this way, Lyall has reformulated the ambivalence of British Indian ‘continuity’, recreating colonial

---

<sup>295</sup> Lyall, ‘State’, p 127.

<sup>296</sup> Lyall, ‘State’, p 127.

<sup>297</sup> Lyall, ‘State’, p 129.



governance in the guise of an impenetrable Asian mystery. However, the preservation of that mystery is now reliant upon the prior characterisation of a conspicuous Muslim counter-example safeguarding the integrity of its borders from without.

Opacity appears therefore to offer itself up as a necessary, potentially productive trope. In striking contrast to Edkins, Lyall uses it deliberately to deepen the mystery. He conjures the Chinese government as an opaque and secretive presence which ‘surrounds itself with fictions and formulas’, presided over by an Emperor who ‘lives far away in Peking, shrouded in semi-divine mystery’.<sup>298</sup> He describes the duplicitous possibility of ritual as if, in a sense, the state enlists itself not only as actor, but audience; as if the maintenance of the illusion is its own rationale. This can be glimpsed in the marked disjunction that opens out between the refinement of the theatrical artifice of the ritual, and the wilful illegibility of its essential purpose:

The tradition of the Imperial Court is to keep the Emperor’s person in august and majestic seclusion; the practice is to set out all their administrative proceedings and acts of state under imposing formularies and high-sounding moral ordinances, *keeping the inner mechanism of the State secret and mysterious*.<sup>299</sup>

In the hands of government religion becomes a means of disguising its intentions, enforcing a distance between its own performance and its true self, now ‘secret and mysterious’. Religion here becomes, for Lyall, a matter of pure artifice. Thus the doctrine of transmigration in China is not simply described in theatrical terms; its very purpose is the production of theatre:

That world which is not a bourne whence no traveller returns, but only a stage in the circle of existence, a place where you change forms as costumes are changed behind scenes, and whence you may come forward again to play a different part in a different character or mode of being, or in a subsequent act of the same drama.<sup>300</sup>

By allying government to religion emptied of its meaning, however, Lyall opens up the possibility that the opacity surrounding the governmental ‘inner mechanism’

<sup>298</sup> Lyall, ‘State’, pp 144, 147.

<sup>299</sup> Lyall, ‘State’, p 128. My emphasis.

<sup>300</sup> Lyall, ‘State’, p 147.

masks a similar vacuity. Describing, for instance, the awards and titles distributed by the Chinese government to the souls of the dead, he makes a direct connection with the European gazetteer, the cornerstone of colonial administration, turning the one into a form of the other:

If such an institution as a Gazette were found in any other Asiatic country, one could hardly be wrong in taking it to be a very recent importation from Europe; but the Chinese, we are told, were publishing their Gazette...many centuries ago.<sup>301</sup>

If Islam represented an uncanny contemporary manifestation of a past phase of European history, modern European colonialism, it would seem, is pre-figured by the Chinese. Between them, the integrity of the British imperialist identity in Asia is put in question, so that it comes to seem itself an imperfect, artificial manifestation of original and determining Asian forms of government. Since the matter of artifice is its own rationale, the essay appears to hollow out British colonialism in India as literally a form without content. Thus Lyall's characterisation of the Chinese Gazette of the souls of the dead as a model of administrative paramountcy retrospectively ascribes to its European counterpart a dangerous lack of substance, turning inside out its paradigmatic capacity to render apparent, rather than disguise, the meaning of its Asian environment. In this sense, a more Sensational revelation could hardly have been approached. Moreover, the language of the essay itself enters into this blindness. The rationale of artifice means that the essay cannot allow itself consciously to interpret the intentions of the Chinese government: 'Whether seriously or cynically, the Government evidently thinks fit to fall in with and humour the anthropomorphic fanatics of its subjects...'<sup>302</sup> Here the grammar seems to be caught up in its own drama of indeterminacy, the opening conditional clause prefacing, and undoing, the idea of intentional deception it then propounds ('humouring' its subjects). Thus for Lyall, advocating the possibility of theocratic rule entails a radical dispossession in terms of the faculty – so crucial to Orientalism, but so deceptive in

<sup>301</sup> Lyall, 'State', p 134.

<sup>302</sup> Lyall, 'State', p 141.

the Sensation Novel – to discern meaning. Literally, neither the narrative nor the Chinese government can know itself.

As a productive outcome of this collusion in illegibility, the very idea of interaction between state and subject becomes, potentially, emptied of significance. Each is seen to be enacting a part in which it has no belief – or rather, the belief it manifests is only that of the need to perform its part properly. In particular, the crucial part of that relationship emptied of its legitimate meaning is the capacity of religion to express disloyalty to the state:

So the Chinese prefer to act as if the spiritual or divisive character of a *mauvais sujet* [disloyal subject] should make no difference to the authorities; and the people would probably think much less of a ruler who should take a religion of this kind too seriously when they themselves are by no means blind to its practical working.<sup>303</sup>

Religion is here not only a specie of counterfeit, but its part in defining an anti-colonial movement becomes in effect, hostile. Invoking religion as their substantial form, such an insurgency only serves to reveal the paradox that here structures its relationship with the state. Merely the confirmation of a known illusion, the ‘*mauvais sujet*’ renders himself all but invisible, incapable of substantial action – or as Lyall puts it, not to be taken ‘seriously’. In other words, in a world of impenetrable mystery fostered by religious interchange, the one irreducible pillar of meaning is the essential irrelevance of movements of insurgency that fail to perceive the illusion of religious theatre. Here then, is the anxious, conservative framework engirding the transgressive tendency of Lyall’s consideration of the role of religion in colonial governance. So long as ‘disloyalty’ expresses itself through the deceit of religion, it renders itself not only meaningless in the Asian colonial context, but a sure sign of its extraneous relationship to a society fully apprised of the duplicitous terms of religious exchange. It is on the basis of this compact, that Lyall sees subject and ruler in China joined as ‘insiders’ to the theatre of colonialism.

---

<sup>303</sup> Lyall, ‘State’, p 146.

Effectively, Lyall has turned the theocratic state inside out. Based on the illusion of religion, it conducts its affairs through empty rituals aimed at the mutual deception of ruler and subject. If that subject attempts an autonomous manipulation of their religious identity, they reveal only the terms of their own foolish self-deception. The state need not worry, since their protest is by its very nature, insubstantial, and ultimately self-defeating, instantly erasing all claims to speak for the society out of which they might arise. Since Lyall has described it as hypothetical outside of China, we would not expect to encounter elsewhere in *Asiatic Studies* the above description of the self-revelation and involuntary exile of the illegitimately disloyal subject. Nevertheless, as an indicator of one of the guiding presences at work in this oddly displaced essay, it is worth noting that there is a single instance in which precisely this ideal state of affairs comes to pass. It occurs in 'Islam in India' and concerns the activities of a 'Wahabi teacher' who comes to Lyall's district of Berar to preach the word of reform. He is soon accused by the citizenry of actually preaching 'sedition' against the government; and the colonial police, far from being alarmed at the possible seditious intent of a reformist zealot, are forced simply to take him under their 'protection' for his own good.<sup>304</sup> His call for religious purity, it would seem, had only made him vulnerable to attack from within society. Like Wali Dad, he had done no more than precipitate his removal from it and confirmed the nature of the compact between state and subjects. In this instance, then, the theocratic colonial utopia is given substance in India. The Asian region saved from the 'Mahomedan deluge' turns out to be a chilling illustration of Lyall's conception of a smoothly functioning colonial India, peaceably segregating the self-revealing 'outsider' from the knowing society within.

This Indo-Muslim context of Lyall's reinvention of colonial rule in Asia returns us to the opening arguments of the essay. For against its pervasive narrative of disguise and impenetrability, Lyall had specifically opposed the 'dead levelling hand of Islam', lending to Muslim rule a mortality that the productive theatre of the

---

<sup>304</sup> Lyall, 'Islam', p 247.

Chinese imperialist ‘circle of existence’ avoids.<sup>305</sup> In terms of imperialism, Islam represents the finite, China the future infinitive (‘at once the oldest of Asiatic empires, and the most likely to outlast all others now existing’).<sup>306</sup> Masquerade confers immortality; the inability of Muslims to disguise themselves and their ‘intolerant’ monotheism<sup>307</sup> provides the necessary fatal counterpoint. In short, he concludes, the ‘barbarity’ of their system consists in its ‘simplicity’.<sup>308</sup> It is presumably for this reason of ‘simplicity’ – or visibility, if we were to rephrase in terms of the system of masquerade he describes in China – that Lyall considers Islamic rulers in West Asia as only achieving an ‘impersonation’ of ‘the full idea of theocracy’.<sup>309</sup> However, in the context of the disquisition on theatre that follows it, this phrase merits further consideration. In particular, it draws attention to the terms by which Lyall’s reading of the full idea of theocracy becomes necessary. Without fully enlisting religion, he sees the non-theocratic ruler in Asia as being left not only incomplete (‘in a dangerously imperfect condition’), but as vulnerable himself to impersonation:

He leaves in other hands a lever that may be used to upset him, and he is cut off from the control and direction of an active, never-resting machinery, always at work among his people.<sup>310</sup>

Like the protagonist of a Sensational mystery, he is open to appropriation and manipulation by an anonymous ‘machinery’. In failing to deploy the masquerade of religion, Lyall suggests he will inevitably be possessed by it. This possession carries the implication that in being ‘cut off’ from the ‘lever’ of ‘direction’, he will become the victim of the same kind of paradox which, as a theocrat, he would force upon religious insurgents such as the ‘Wahabi teacher’. In effect, his identity will be hollowed out and with it, his substantial presence within Asian society – a possibility, it must be remembered, always present in the Anglo-Indian consciousness of the

---

<sup>305</sup> Lyall, ‘State’, p 127.

<sup>306</sup> Lyall, ‘State’, p 126.

<sup>307</sup> Lyall, ‘State’, p 126.

<sup>308</sup> Lyall, ‘State’, p 126.

<sup>309</sup> Lyall, ‘State’, p 126.

<sup>310</sup> Lyall, ‘State’, p 125.

fragility of their 'empire of opinion', and of themselves as self-conscious, even self-deluding, actors before a potentially hostile audience.<sup>311</sup> But it also further implies the presence of a particular substantial agent by whom the identity of the colonialist in Asia – or the absence of his identity – can be possessed. Lyall's claim that Islamic rulers only 'impersonated' the truly theocratic state indicates that in his estimation they may represent precisely such an agent, able to inhabit and direct another persona. In this respect, he implies that their (only partially successful) masquerade engenders his imaginative reinvention of British imperialism as a theocracy; they force the British into disguise. This perception is spelt out in Lyall's prior description of the Pan-Islamic activities of the Ottoman Sultan:

for the Sultan has lately been disclosing some anxiety about the spiritual unity of Islam, and is showing a disposition to employ his claims to the Kaliphate as a means of taking upon himself the functions left vacant by the disabilities of a non-Mahomedan ruler in Mahomedan countries.<sup>312</sup>

Since it was not published elsewhere, Lyall's essay on China may have been written as late as 1882. In which case, he would here be referring not only to the massive investments of British 'informal empire' in Egypt in the late 1870s but to its actual invasion and occupation by the British in 1882. These events had been preceded and accompanied by the rise in Pan-Islamist sentiment and the cause of the Ottoman Caliphate fostered there by Jamal al-din al-Afghani and Shaykh Muhammad 'Abduh. However, clearly another, more intimate, point of reference is India itself, where despite the reservations voiced by Sayyid Ahmad Khan, Pan-Islamist ideas had been adopted by sections of the Indo-Muslim intelligentsia in the wake of 1857-59. Especially following the perceived lack of effective British aid to the Turks against the Russians in 1877-78, al-Afghani's writings and his 'bitterly anti-British' feelings had struck a sympathetic, if initially muted, chord.<sup>313</sup> The motivations of Sultan Abdul Hamid II in wishing to promote the Caliphate had been questioned by al-

<sup>311</sup> Bayly, *Empire*, p 4; Metcalf, *Ideologies*, pp 79-80, 198-99; Cohn, 'Representing'.

<sup>312</sup> Lyall, 'State', p 125.

<sup>313</sup> Ahmad, *Studies*, pp 55, 60-61.

Afghani himself.<sup>314</sup> Nevertheless, the suggestion by Lyall that the Turkish Sultan has staked his claim to the Caliphate ‘with no pretensions to sacred character’ of his own, indicates that he represents for the author precisely the model of theocratic masquerade on which the essay is based.<sup>315</sup> As his intentions are to fill a ‘vacancy’ left by ‘non-Mahomedan’ rulers, we can posit that at some level Lyall considers the ‘imperfect’ identity of the British colonialist state to be under threat from the idea of an Islamic possession.

The disappearance of Islam with which the body of the essay begins is thus not so much a mystery the narrative sets out to explore, discovering in its place an uncontaminated region that it might imaginatively colonise. On the contrary, it represents the apprehension of a persecutor – and a possession – it must somehow elude. In this light, the portrait of a state founded on impenetrability must be read as an attempt primarily to forestall the reappearance of what might be thought of as an overfilled point of origin, a dispossessing (nominally ‘Muslim’) agent that might overwhelm its carefully maintained lack of substance. In a sense, this threat of dispossession *is* the meaning of the ‘inner mechanism’ that must keep itself shrouded in mystery. With this in mind, we can return the essay on China to its place in the obsessive pursuit in *Asiatic Studies* of a means of establishing a British purchase on Indian society and history. In particular, two interconnected sets of tropes surrounding Islamic possession that recur in the other essays in the volume facilitate its deconstruction as an overfilled and disorientating point of origin. Directly echoing the phrase used above in regard to the incursion of the Ottoman Sultan, the first set of tropes revolves around the image of a ‘vacancy’ open to manipulation. In his essay ‘The Religious Situation of India’, the idea of such a ‘vacancy’ created by British rule in India is brought up time and again as a matter of urgency, presaging a form of ‘spiritual’ anarchy (‘interregnum’). He describes this unfilled ‘vacancy’ as the collision of the forces of ‘civilisation’ working itself out on Indian society in terms of

---

<sup>314</sup> Ahmad, *Studies*, pp 63-64.

<sup>315</sup> Lyall, ‘State’, p 125.

both possession ('pouring of new wines into old skins') and a self-destructive will to disorientation ('a dissolving force...cutting away of anchors instead of hauling them up').<sup>316</sup> This is an 'upheaval' which neither Britain nor Christianity will be able to direct,<sup>317</sup> but above all, it is British rule that creates the 'vacancy' into which it will be directed:

Some great movement is likely to come about in India, if only the peace lasts; but what may be the complexion of that movement, and whither its gravitation, is a question which time only can answer.<sup>318</sup>

Thus the British engender the circumstances of the 'vacancy' (by upholding the 'peace'), and will reap its consequences. But another unknown force will fulfil and manipulate it.

The second set of tropes is directly connected in this essay to this worrying perception of a 'vacancy' waiting to be filled, and to the cognate notion that the coming 'binding idea' is organically bound to British actions. They indicate that the question of priority is in fact central to the idea of possession that haunts *Asiatic Studies*; but also that the implied location of this priority in a peculiarly Islamic imperative is deceptive. They are tropes that reflect upon the evolutionary model set out in the West Asian context, whereby Islamic polities are recognised only as a developmental stage of British imperialism. But they suggest that this model is itself constructed as a means of holding down a far more fluid and disturbing set of perceptions. In the defining context of colonial India, the confusion inherent to this interrelationship can be first glimpsed in the manner in which 'Mohamedan' and 'Mughal' are always interchangeable denominations, but are frequently defined in explicitly contradictory terms. Thus in 'Islam in India' the 'Mohamedan of that country' is purely a 'soldier of fortune'; and in the same paragraph he is a member of a community moulded by 'compact and straight-pointed political designs.'<sup>319</sup> But this

---

<sup>316</sup> Lyall, 'Situation', p 302.

<sup>317</sup> Lyall, 'Situation', p 301.

<sup>318</sup> Lyall, 'Situation', p 301.

<sup>319</sup> Lyall, 'Islam', pp 238-39.



'Mughal'- defined incarnation appears to be a metamorphosis from their earlier characterisation in the same essay as 'a community which is bound together by a common tie of faith' and thus resilient to political vicissitudes such as the 'termination of a period of supremacy'.<sup>320</sup> And yet at the same time, this 'Mohamedan' definition would seem to be proleptic of the mysterious later reversion from an exclusively military-political bond into an expression of 'sincere intolerance'.<sup>321</sup> Exactly this confusion can be seen in 'The Religious Situation in India' in Lyall's allusion to 'the weak and incomplete lien of Mahomedan faith' brought by the Mughals into India,<sup>322</sup> itself a direct contradiction of their irresistible evangelist designs set out only a few pages earlier.<sup>323</sup>

It would seem, then, that at some point Lyall considers the transformation from a political to a religious imperative took place. On the one hand, he seems to deny this kind of an interpretation by insisting repeatedly and – given the clear and contradictory divisions he himself draws up – irrationally on the nostrum that for Muslims, politics and religion are 'two sides of the same medal'.<sup>324</sup> More consistently, however, there is a division set up by the tenses in which he deploys these two epithets, the former in the past and the latter in terms of the present. Moreover, in 'Islam in India', the transition between the two definitions appears to take place in 1857, only after which can the 'present religious temper' of the Indian Muslims be perceived.<sup>325</sup> In other words, he places the British in a defining, catalytic role, engineering the transformation of the 'weak and incomplete lien of Mahomedan faith'. The implied dating of that transforming moment to the events out of which the colonial state was reborn from its Company incarnation already suggests something of a mutual inscription. Elsewhere, when this perception of reciprocity is given more direct expression, the 'Mutiny' – and indeed, the post-'Mutiny' political dispensation

<sup>320</sup> Lyall, 'Islam', p 235.

<sup>321</sup> Lyall, 'Islam', p 244.

<sup>322</sup> Lyall, 'Situation', p 291.

<sup>323</sup> Lyall, 'Situation', p 288.

<sup>324</sup> Lyall, 'Islam', p 236.

<sup>325</sup> Lyall, 'Islam', p 240.

- is carefully excised; but although the purely religious motivation provided by Christianity predominates, it is one guided by a British political hand. In 'The Religious Situation in India', for instance, he warns that:

Orderly Christian rule has given to Islam in India an opportunity for becoming regenerate and for reuniting its strength, which it owes entirely to us. We have restored its communications by sea and by land; we have already felt some of the consequences of pulling down the barriers which Ranjit Singh and his Sikhs set up on our north-western frontier between the Mahomedans of India and the rest of Western Asia. Mahomedanism may yet occupy a larger space in the history of Indian rationalism...<sup>326</sup>

At the same time, this conceit of a symbiotic link between Islam and British rule replaces back into a colonial Indian context the evolutionary model of his essay on China, wherein Islam is the manifestation of a European primitive persona. Thus 'Mahomedan' spiritual despotism and its will 'to prevail and, if need be, to persecute' is:

only an anachronism; the unquiet spirit now abroad in India is no other than that spirit which troubled all Christian Europe for so many centuries, and which even in England has not yet been quite exorcised by the modern doctrine of toleration, or the modern affection of indifference.<sup>327</sup>

This phrase, 'the modern affection of indifference', recalls the theocratic charade; its anxiety over an underlying, mysterious and full identity here indicating that of a spiritually tyrannous Christianity, of which the rampant 'Mahomedans' are only an anachronistic manifestation. This current 'revivalism' is moreover, merely a response to the 'keen sense of emulation' stimulated by Christianity in India.<sup>328</sup> And unconsciously mirroring the 'dead levelling hand of Islam', Lyall links that stimulation directly to the fact that it has been 'levelled down by a neutral government to mere denominational equality', thus bringing British political and religious institutions at once into alignment with each other and Indian Islam.<sup>329</sup> The

<sup>326</sup> Lyall, 'Situation', p 301.

<sup>327</sup> Lyall, 'Islam', p 242.

<sup>328</sup> Lyall, 'Islam', p 244.

<sup>329</sup> Lyall, 'Islam', p 243.

cumulative effect of this highly ambivalent set of images therefore is of a contemporary Indo-Islamic community catalysed by the British from a secular to a despotic religious incarnation. Simultaneously, Lyall conveys his sense of the uncanny irruption of a prior, substantial Christian persona from which the contemporary Indo-Muslim community takes its cohesive shape and persecutory purpose. This would seem to represent a reversal of the masquerade imagined through the portrait of the Chinese government, in which it is the British who were portrayed as the belated vehicle for an Islamic original. Here, it is Islam that proffers the aspect of a 'vacant', and disorientating, imaginative space colonised by the British. However, to take possession of it is also, in the confusion of categories that follows, to risk possession. It is precisely this disorientation that engenders the paradox of a religion playing a part in the 'history of Indian rationalism' – of, that is, 'Mahomedanism' fulfilling the 'rational' foundations of British colonial history in India. Moreover, since for Lyall 'rationalism' was specifically, and diametrically, opposed to the 'unreasoning certitude' of the 'Mahomedan faith', the unnatural coupling of the two terms can only point towards his apprehension of this possibility in terms of the usurpation of its current *Christian* incumbent.<sup>330</sup> In other words, the barriers between the concepts of religion and 'rationalism' in Lyall's thinking had already been breached.<sup>331</sup> In this regard, the equivocation that surrounds the definition of the Mughal-'Mohamedan' would appear to betray a pre-existing confusion about the lines of demarcation between religious and political categories as they refer to British rule.

<sup>330</sup> Lyall, 'Religious', p 276. In this sense, Lyall conflates Islam in India with Hinduism as a religion incapable of rational thought and essentially 'unenlightened', an important pillar of the justification for British colonialism in the nineteenth century. Inden, *Imagining*, pp 47-48, 93-97, 127-28.

<sup>331</sup> This breach, moreover, has not occurred on doctrinal grounds, since Lyall also saw the rise of 'rationalism' as sadly, if inevitably, deleterious to 'Western Christianity' (Lyall, 'Religious', p 276). Indeed, it must be considered as running counter not only to his own doctrinal thought, but equally to the mid-century cultural impetus in Britain to redefine a beleaguered Christianity against the terms of 'rationalist' criteria, and in contradistinction to the now discredited idea of 'natural theology' that had held sway in the previous century. On which, see F M Turner, 'The Victorian Conflict between Science and Religion: A Professional Dimension', in Gerald Parsons (ed), *Religion in Victorian Britain, Volume IV: Interpretations* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, repr. 1995; 1988), pp 170-97.

If we were to press the logic of this idea of prior British possession of a Muslim ‘vacancy’ into Lyall’s Chinese context, it would seem that the Ottoman Sultan was not himself the substantial agent of dispossession, but a displaced representation of the British influence in India. Indeed, to insist upon the relevance of the defining context of colonial India to the essay on China would be to see him as a less threatening aspect of that influence – and this would be altogether congruent with the strong vein of fantasy that overtly organises the essay. Thus, the substantial agency of Islam threatening the fragile mystery of Asian colonial rule would itself seem to be no more than an effigy of a persecutory *British* religious presence, which we can now locate as the overfilled point of origin propelling the journey out of India. This Sensational insight can be further elaborated by reference to a repeated insistence throughout *Asiatic Studies* that the Mughals ‘disorganized Hinduism without substituting any strong religious edifice of their own’.<sup>332</sup> Lyall argues here that it is their failure to ‘complete’ their religious avocation that has created the ‘vacancy’ in India.<sup>333</sup> Thus Muslim imperfection and British ‘civilisation’ become in this instance, the same disorientating agent. This transposition is by no means accidental. Lyall’s notion of ‘substitution’ in this regard resurfaces in another context, one that reveals the vital bridge to the disjunction of past and future ‘Mahomedan’ communal identities. It takes place in reference to the same piece of legislation – the Act of 1864 abolishing state appointments to the office of Qazi – that had so agitated Hunter, interrupting the perception of continuity and forcing upon the British a discomfiting visibility. In ‘Our Religious Policy in India’, Lyall comments on this rash move by saying: ‘The very fact that we had ousted Musalman sovereigns should have made us more careful to supply their exact place.’<sup>334</sup> Earlier in that same essay he had written that the ‘Mahomedans offer a kind of theocratic home rule’ with which the British,

<sup>332</sup> Lyall, ‘Situation’, p 289.

<sup>333</sup> Lyall, ‘Situation’, pp 289-91.

<sup>334</sup> A C Lyall, ‘Our Religious Policy in India’, *The Fortnightly Review*, No LXIV, New Series, April 1, 1872, p 406. Editing the essay for inclusion in *Asiatic Studies*, Lyall attempted to remove the direct equivalence of British and Mughal rule by inserting the phrase, ‘in some parts of the country’ after ‘Musalman sovereigns’. Lyall, *Asiatic Studies*, p 284.

'mere sojourners in the land', cannot hope to compete.<sup>335</sup> To compete, he therefore implies, and inhabit their role as rulers, the British would need to become the perfection of the insufficient theocracy they had 'supplanted'. They would need to become, in effect, the perfection of the 'incomplete lien of Mahomedan faith' in India. On the other hand, in refusing this incarnation, they ensured its Calvary-like return as the 'present religious temper' of their 'Mahomedan' persecutor.

We can now begin to see some of the more compelling reasons by which the reinvention of British colonialism that takes place through the Chinese government, and is seemingly propelled by a Muslim point of reference, needs to be displaced in this way. Through the repeated tropes of 'vacancy', 'imperfection' and 'completion' discussed above, it appears that the question of theocracy pertains to an Indian context in which the British fear the possibility that their 'secular' and 'neutral' identity has already been dispossessed. Figured through their perceived distortion of an 'imperfect' secular Mughal state, the grotesquely inflated, substantial and fatal theocratic agents stalking them through the pages of *Asiatic Studies* are none other than fantastic images of a terrifying, and desired, self-revelation. The dispossession they everywhere perceive is one that takes place at the hands of the imagined integrity, or 'wholeness', of the theocratic persona, an irreducible ideological identity not subject to the debilitating hybridity of the colonial state and its dependency on representing others. This is the real protagonist of Lyall's theatre of Asian transformations, the British theocratic figure who both propels and destroys the masquerade, always at hand as the secret agent of dispossession; always ready to fill out the 'vacancy' at the core of the colonialist ruling identity. Thus, the theocracy Lyall imagines in China, in which its creators cannot be detected, and whose purpose is unknown even to themselves, seems plausible precisely because of the excision of Islam as a form of *self*-representation. The absence of this self-referential vocabulary seems to promise an arena in which the colonialist government cannot be reached by

---

<sup>335</sup> Lyall, 'Our Religious Policy in India', *The Fortnightly Review*, p 400. This line was excised from the *Asiatic Studies* version.

these demonic, nominally Muslim, agents of self-discovery. In contrast, the only possible theocracy he can allow himself to imagine in India is one in which the mysterious 'inner mechanism' of their conflicted identity as 'Christian rulers' is repeatedly and dangerously revealed as the 'barbarous' and 'simplistic' 'Mahomedan' presence, always on the point of overwhelming the fragile stability of the state.<sup>336</sup> As in all good Sensation Novels, the heart of the corruption – what we have elsewhere characterised as the paradox of secular Christian rule – can only be approached through this kind of self-alienating, near-fatal transposition. Through, that is, the irruption and repossession of the Symptom, returning to the system of self-representation the precarious illusion of its consistency.

In Lyall's experiment in China, it is therefore only a matter of time before such an irruption of the suppressed point of alienation points him back towards colonial India. After all, without its return there would be no need for the narrative in the first place; its very purpose is yet another working through of exactly this scenario. In this regard, throughout *Asiatic Studies* the source of these hybrid Symptomatic effects is always close to the surface; once apprehended, like James' figure in the carpet they reappear everywhere. They can be detected, for instance, in Lyall's 'Wahabi teacher', who is no more than a heavily ironised incarnation of Christ himself:

He was an earnest reformer, and the abuses he denounced were patent; but in a few weeks he had quarrelled with the chief Moulvies of their district over questions of theology and ecclesiastic discipline, with all the Pharisees, and with Demetrius the silversmith... All parties virulently accused him of sedition against Caesar, that is, against the Queen's Government. The British officials, taking a broader view of their duty than did the Roman Gallio, not only refused to interfere in a dispute about religious law, but also took measures to preserve order and prevent violence to any man, and the Wahabi was placed under the special protection of the police.<sup>337</sup>

<sup>336</sup> Or as Wilkie Collins had put it only a few years earlier: the 'dark conspiracy [...] on foot in the midst of us' invariably reveals 'the Oriental noblemen who pounce on us unawares' to be none other than our own unruly 'passions'. Collins, *Moonstone*, p 222.

<sup>337</sup> Lyall, 'Islam', p 247.

It could be said that this kind of self-portrait, in which provocateur and provoked clearly represent for their author antagonistic aspects of the British state in India, constitutes the defining feature of the collection as a whole.<sup>338</sup> But its most bathetic instance occurs in China, inevitably betraying the promise it held out to its author as a region empty of Muslim manifestations. Thus, instead of harmonious utopia, the essay ends first with the rupture of the carefully wrought illusion of colonial theocratic invisibility, by the disorientating appearance of a Christian afreet. This takes the form of the 'Taiping insurrection' at the close of chapter, 'which is stated by all accounts to have derived its religious character and fervour from the misunderstood teachings of Christian missionaries'.<sup>339</sup> Predictably, the unexpected force with which this image appears to take over and decimate his conclusions over the possibility of a British theocratic state, ensures that it is then quickly repossessed and transformed into its Muslim alter ego. The 'misunderstood' Christian element becomes 'charged with a fanatic energy of a type more typical of Western than Eastern Asia'; and Lyall can do no more than lament in the final lines that:

Probably nothing is more perilous to a Government that has incorporated the elder and milder religions into his system, and has soothed them and lulled them into tame and subordinate officialism, than an assault upon those very religions by a wild and ardent faith suddenly blazing up in the midst of them.<sup>340</sup>

A remarkably lucid summary, then, of the workings of the Symptom and its reassuringly fatal action on every attempt in the volume to reinvent British India. Effectively, its endless repetition makes of *Asiatic Studies* an inexhaustible act of exorcism performed on the insoluble post-'Mutiny' problematic of figuring a British perch on Indian society. In the process, it has the effect of setting the Indo-Muslim

<sup>338</sup> The most phantasmagorical of these portraits entails the entirely imagined spectacle of Christian and Muslim missionaries ranged against each other (in 1872) across the whole of India, and poised to go into battle for the prize of passive and neutral Hindu proselytes. The battle threatens, of course, to obliterate the precarious peace upheld by the state (Lyall, 'Religious', p 276). It should be noted that there is no evidence, either in British records or indigenous perceptions at the time, of Indo-Muslim ambitions to evangelise outside their own communities (Sanyal, p 3; Jones, *Socio-Religious*, pp 210, 216).

<sup>339</sup> Lyall, 'State', p 149.

<sup>340</sup> Lyall, 'State', p 149.

'stranger' on its outer limits, a figure of paradox lighted into meaning only through the insatiable, inflationary rhetoric of opposition.

Finally, it is these two aspects of segregation and paradox that I wish to return to, and underline, in Hunter's own equivocal search for clarity through the exposure of the Indian Muslim. They are the fundamental terms by which the 'stranger' is always apprehended, situated simultaneously between the 'inside and outside'.<sup>341</sup> Not only does he expose 'the failing of the opposition itself', but his ambivalence puts in doubt 'the very principle of the opposition, the plausibility of dichotomy it suggests and feasibility of separation it demands.'<sup>342</sup> As we explored in Chapter One, these are the defining features of Steel's portrait of the Indian Muslim in 1905. There, the Muslim is separated out from the society in which he is discovered, susceptible only to the description of his self-deconstruction; literally opposed to his own existence in British India, he is the very embodiment of paradox. It is exactly this same image of an assembly of paradoxical, antagonistic components that structures Hunter's evocation of the 'Wahabi' conspirators over thirty years earlier. The astonishing consistency of these thumb-nail sketches in this respect is worth spelling out also for the manner in which they belie the very stereotype of Muslim inflexibility that the colonialist themselves had begun to insist upon from 1857 onwards. From the start of his investigation, Hunter is keen to establish this essential opposition between their stubborn failure to adapt to change and the 'more flexible Hindus' who were embracing British rule, 'pliant' where the Muslims are unbending.<sup>343</sup> This was a point on which Lyall agreed; the revealed presence of Muslim 'barbarity' required the fundamentally 'conservative' nature of the 'Mahomedan', possessed of dangerously 'reactionary susceptibilities'.<sup>344</sup> But on closer analysis, what becomes apparent in Hunter's 'Wahabi' history is not a self-evident trail of conspicuous fanaticism, but a succession of diabolically flexible protagonists, comparable to the kind of skill at

<sup>341</sup> Bauman, *Ambivalence*, p 61.

<sup>342</sup> Bauman, *Ambivalence*, pp 58- 59.

<sup>343</sup> Hunter, pp 11, 189.

<sup>344</sup> Lyall, 'Islam', p 251.



dissembling with which Lyall invests his admired Chinese theocrats. This theme of embodied paradox begins with Sayyid Ahmad, who manages to cover 'his former character as a robber beneath the sacred garb of a pilgrim', becoming a model instance of the oxymoronic 'Wahabi'; or as Hunter puts it, a 'freebooter-saint'.<sup>345</sup> For the narrative strongly hints that it is not so much a transformation as a simultaneous inner and outer identity: 'The internal change that took place in the Prophet's heart is known only to himself and to God, but it is certain that his whole outward conduct changed.'<sup>346</sup> Such a dissembling of extremes, however, in no way prevents his inability to operate in any other manner than as a self-evident 'fanatical incendiary', for it is precisely this quality that brings about his downfall, unable to conduct diplomatic manoeuvres among the Pathan tribes on the border.<sup>347</sup> He is thus at once, a robber masquerading as a saint, whose inner self is nevertheless essentially fanatically religious, and who, though a master of dissimulation, finds it impossible to conceal or manipulate the fact. The only consistency manifested in these descriptions is the antagonistic terms of construction, apparently leant coherence under the rubric of disguise. It is this idea of self-contradiction that organises each 'Wahabi' portrait. Indeed, it is the sole means of description; we are to understand them as essentially a distillation of paradox. Thus, Sayyid Ahmad's disciple Titu Mian is found 'preparing in secret God's revenge', then 'throwing off all disguise'.<sup>348</sup> But equally Muhammad Shafi, the 'right hand of the Conspiracy', is characterised entirely through the perception that 'there was nothing of the religious enthusiast about him': paradox applies, and organises, even where no apparent contradiction can be uncovered.<sup>349</sup> Similarly, when Hunter comments about the informer, Munshi Jaffir of Thanesar, that 'his secret duties threw a religious halo even over his detested profession' (of 'Scrivener'), he appears to suggest that his failure to disguise himself as any other

---

<sup>345</sup> Hunter, p 13.

<sup>346</sup> Hunter, p 61.

<sup>347</sup> Hunter, pp 17-18.

<sup>348</sup> Hunter, p 45.

<sup>349</sup> Hunter, pp 94-95.

than a religious fanatic, was itself a brilliant piece of mendacity.<sup>350</sup> One that, in addition, carries with it the implied disjunction between his 'secret duties' and their 'religious' sanctification. Thus religion can be at once: a disguise (Munshi Jaffir); the essence behind a disguise (Titu Mian); and an absence which can itself (in Muhammad Shafi's case) function as a near-perfect disguise. In Sayyid Ahmad, the narrative has already discovered all three of these elements operating together.

Perhaps more frankly than any other, the portrait of Munshi Jaffir discloses the fundamental terms of opposition at work in Hunter's 'Wahabi' riddle. The Munshi's 'secret duties' engender a 'religious halo' as a form of disguise because they do not themselves entail a religious element. Instead, through the Munshi, they are transmuted into the duplicitous effects rather than the substance of, religion. Moreover, the actual meaning of those 'duties' seems to be equally unknown to their possessor, tricked into pursuing his 'detested profession' by the idea that it promotes a religious goal (and therefore makes being a 'scrivener' bearable). The true identity of his 'duties' thus remains, in a sense, 'secret' even to himself. In this regard, there is a secondary identification to be made here between the deluded 'Wahabi' conspirator and the British victim of Muslim 'conspiracy' in 1857, in which the Muslim 'fanatic' narrated a potential binding to Indian society kept alive at the sharp point of a perceived Semitic belligerence. In so far as they are both objects of 'conspiracy', 'Wahabi' and Christian official may be perceived as, equally, Indian victims of a foreign persecution. For Hunter implies here that 'conspiracy' represents a separate, transforming agency, one that makes the Indian Muslim unknown to himself. This idea of victim and persecutor is given more direct expression in the narrative when Hunter remarks that Jaffir the Scrivener and Maulavi Yahiya Ali (the 'Spiritual Director of the Wahabi sect in India') were both 'earnest, conscientious men, who pricked themselves with the poisoned weapons which a false religion had put into their hands.'<sup>351</sup> The aspersion of 'false religion' is undermined by the open

<sup>350</sup> Hunter, p 89.

<sup>351</sup> Hunter, pp 90, 95.

admiration Hunter (along with most ICS officials of the period<sup>352</sup>) evinces throughout for the protestant reformist aspect of Islam, referring approvingly at one point, for instance, to the 'Wahabis' as the 'Unitarians of Islam'.<sup>353</sup> Indeed, it is one of the few occasions in the text in which Hunter (in contradistinction to Lyall) hazards a direct opinion on Islam itself. Clearly, the descriptive 'false' arises partly out of a sudden awareness of the need to differentiate it from the otherwise unspoken circumstance of the 'true' religion (Christianity) in India. The duplicity here should therefore be understood as reinforcing the primary argument concerning its dual manifestation, separated out from and passively hostile to, its adherent – becoming an object, like the Munshi's 'secret duties', which they cannot own, but by which they may be destroyed. What transforms the passive into active hostility, and turns the 'weapons' on their owners, is the act of displacement. This disjunction between Islam and its manifestation in India makes of the denomination 'Indian Muslim' the essential paradox of the narrative. Thus as it crosses the border, Islam becomes the instrument by which Muslims in India are made 'false'. Entering colonial India, Islam is inevitably transmuted into conspiracy, which in turn transforms its victims into the paradox of disguise – and thus forces upon them a form of non-existence, undone, as it were, by an internalised antagonism. Under this rubric, the 'distempered class' which Hunter insists 'must be segregated', would refer to all Indian Muslims.<sup>354</sup> Descriptively, of course, that segregation has already taken place.

This inevitable, falsifying action recalls another, more definitive, conjunction of Islam and transformation organising Hunter's narrative. Beginning as a 'revival' in which the 'religious element' predominates, Hunter describes the manner in which 'Wahabism' in India is soon overtaken by 'the more certain and more permanent hatred which the Indian Muhammadans feel towards the English'.<sup>355</sup> The religious element is here depicted as insubstantial – less certain, less permanent – than the idea

<sup>352</sup> Metcalf, *Ideologies*, p 142.

<sup>353</sup> Hunter, p 59. In this comparison he may also be drawing on Gibbon's reference to '[Mahomet's] infant congregation of Unitarians'. Gibbon, p 674.

<sup>354</sup> Hunter, p 144.

<sup>355</sup> Hunter, p 68.

of opposition. Lyall makes the reverse observation, that the British had catalysed the Indian Muslim from secularism to religious revivalism. The point of correspondence between the two interpretations lies in a debilitating marriage between a foreign and Indian identity, flushed out by an inevitable British agent. One might summarise it by saying that for both authors, at the core of Islam in India lies a transforming principle of opposition, an impossible desire for clarity arising out of the intolerable dilemma of displacement. In short, what makes of the Indian Muslim a contradiction in terms is the presence of his hybrid British origins. The real quest of *Indian Musalmans* is therefore not to uncover the ‘Wahabi’ in British India, but to approach again the devastating foreign element to the British conception of the Indian Muslim. This is the source of the appeal of Muslim ‘conspiracy’ long after the last ‘Wahabi’ conspirator, or ‘Mughal’ insurgent, had been found in India.<sup>356</sup> It carries within it an indispensable – and lethal – strain of Anglo-Indian communal identity, one that must be discovered, polarised and effaced. Deploying the Sensational mode, the narrative quest is therefore to remove precisely the alienating stigmata of displacement, uncovering and burying its British corpse all at once. Like the repeated exorcism enacted by *Asiatic Studies*, this is an impossible, inexhaustible process. As much as it entails the progressive Semiticisation of the Indian Muslim, it requires the constant visibility of its imperfect realisation as the necessary promise of a future, Symptomatic reappearance. On each occasion, however, the British element engineering the manifestation of ‘conspiracy’ can neither be entirely suppressed, nor finally separated out. In *Indian Musalmans*, it surfaces in the very idiom of the narrative, constantly evoking a relationship between the language of biological disease attached to ‘Wahabism’ and the relentless expression of British physical and psychic pain (‘chronic miseries’; ‘painful details’; ‘painful to dwell on’; ‘inexpressibly painful incident’; ‘a bitter legacy to ourselves’).<sup>357</sup> But as with the

<sup>356</sup> For instance, in 1901 Francis Skrine insisted on the continued relevance of *Indian Musalmans*, warning his readers that the threat ‘is graver at the present day, for we are face to face with a revival of the spirit of Islam throughout India’. Skrine, p 99.

<sup>357</sup> Hunter, pp 42, 142, 186, 204. For expressions of biological degeneration associated with the ‘Wahabi’, see Hunter, pp 21-23, 25, 42, 44, 67, 100, 144-145, 148-149.

Protestant missionary in China, it reappears most directly in the final image of the essay. Arguing for British restraint in dealing with Muslim disloyalty, Hunter makes a last confused reference to the figure of Muhammad Shafi, the ‘right hand of the Conspiracy’, whose family had made its fortune supplying meat to the British army, and who now returns as the most English of all apparitions. Indeed, as more English than the Anglo-Indians:

[Government] should never forget how George of Cappadocia, after a life of obloquy as a parasite, as a defaulting bacon-contractor to the Roman Troops, and as a dissolute archbishop, obtained an apotheosis by an unwilling death, and became Saint George of Merry England.<sup>358</sup>

The riddle of the ‘Wahabi’ is, in a sense, finally brought home in all of its irreducible ambivalence. If we destroy him once and for all, Hunter warns, we will be left alone with our treacherous selves. A Sensational ending of which Wilkie Collins himself might have been proud, it brings to a disturbing close a narrative that may itself be considered an apotheosis, one that would point the way forward for all future Anglo-Indian mediations. It is clearly the model for Steel’s quest in *India*, which ranges across the country only to uncover the meaning of its subject in the paradox of his self-galled incarceration. But then by this point, on the eve of the partition of Bengal, the genre had become largely ‘autonomized’ – had gained, that is, an atavistic rationale of its own.<sup>359</sup> Hers is therefore a portrait of isolation in which the real protagonists are artificially held apart at either ends of colonial society; and in which all that remains of their disorientating history is the curious and self-sufficient spectacle of a Muslim who cannot be Indian. Her casual epithet of identification, ‘like ourselves’, can now be identified as the deceptive trace of a failed and deeply disturbing language of self-description. Pushed to the margins of her narrative of *India*, the thoroughgoing segregation of the Indian Muslim represents the extent to which the Anglo-Indians had invested in that language in 1857; his relentless

<sup>358</sup> Hunter, p 211.

<sup>359</sup> Steven Goldsmith describes the concept of ‘autonomization’ as ‘the process by which a generic form, in certain circumstances, becomes differentiated from the social world in which it originates and comes to seem autonomous.’ Goldsmith, p 5.

semantic deconstruction, the pernicious and unpalatable hybridity he still retained fifty years later. Conceived as a fixed and cardinal point of visibility on their unstable map of an 'alien soil', he had become a sign which finally, like Kipling's laughing 'Sadhu', directed the colonialist anywhere but onwards.

## Conclusion

This study has sought to question the notion of the Indian Muslim as a 'get-at-able' point of orientation in colonialist discourse. It has therefore attempted not only to provide a more coherent and nuanced account for the consolidation in colonialist discourse by the early twentieth century of essentialised descriptions of Indo-Muslim antagonism towards the British Indian state, and of their irremediable isolation on the outer margins of Indian society. But also to interpret the less apprehended, but nevertheless marked, element of paradox that had by then come to structure this discourse. It has traced these three constituents back to their genesis in the perception of 'conspiracy' in 1857-59, a perception through which Indian Muslims emerged for the first time in British eyes as an integrated pan-Indian entity. The concentration by historians on the British need for a simple narrative of events, coupled with a predictable eruption of 'Musulmanophobia' fails to address adequately the radical discontinuity this remarkable phenomenon figured with previous colonialist praxis. Nor do these explanations account for its longevity and appeal, eluding the official factual refutations available from 1859 onwards; and reappearing in grossly inflated forms such as the 'Wahabi' trials of the 1860s and 1870s. Addressing this imbalance in the historiography of colonialist discourse, I have argued that historians have largely overlooked the contradictory ways in which 'conspiracy' was imbricated in 1857 with a peculiarly Anglo-Indian crisis of self-representation. At the same time as it irradiated important lines of demarcation between officially secular and Christian identities, 'conspiracy' served to contain and focus Anglo-Indian communal anxieties over the future and purpose of British rule. Detailed analysis of ICS 'Mutiny' texts reveals that the idea of the 'insatiability' of the Muslim 'fanatic' is exactly mirrored by the note of deferral inscribed into Christian martyrdom, and that together they constitute a compelling, if conflicted, narrative of future purpose and solidarity. Muslim 'conspiracy' becomes in this way marked with the idea of a projected, unreachable Anglo-Indian communal identity that momentarily defers the need for

self-representation. In addition, we find that displaced tropes of alien origins, the unifying effects of religion, and a foreign patriotism destructive of Indian nationalist cohesion, integrate these narratives with the suggestion of a potential future binding of Anglo-Indian to Indian society. As the category 'Christian' recedes into an opacity that facilitates this rhetorical binding, the figure of the Muslim fanatic becomes overdetermined, separated out from the society around him in a relentless process of Semiticisation.

In order to maintain this system of representation, however, the actual scene of Muslim-Civilian confrontation must either be consistently staged beyond the scope of 'Mutiny' narratives, or its combatants held apart by a variety of forms of prophylaxis. Whenever this prophylaxis between Civilian and Indian Muslim breaks down, the accounts become immediately liable to alarming and sudden visions of self-dispossession, in which the deferred colonialist identity is confronted with its own hollowness, filled by the substantial agency of a Muslim 'other'. Linking this anxiety with the interaction of colonialist idioms of self-presentation with Mughal institutional forms, I have suggested that Muslim 'conspiracy' in 1857 be regarded principally as a crisis in the configuration of paramountcy. In this context, the paradoxical figure of the Indian Muslim that emerges in post-'Mutiny' discourse is comparable to the disturbing indeterminacy with which Mughal figures of authority were represented at a similar moment of crisis in the late eighteenth century. For Anglo-Indians, the figure of the Indian Muslim carried forward a sublated dimension of their own communal identity, one to which, in the succeeding decades, they were drawn as a means of deferring the insoluble problematic of the projection of a neutral and secular colonialist persona. Caught between Utilitarian attempts to reform the British Indian state in the mould of a unified imperialist ethos, and the simultaneous resurrection of Indian idioms of self-presentation, the ambivalence of the Indo-Muslim 'stranger' became in this period a deeply disorientating, but nevertheless indispensable, point of reference. Segregated within Indian society, yet crucially distorting the imperial imperative of his Semitic origins, in Anglo-Indian literature he



persistently shadowed – indeed narrated – the complex rhetorical manoeuvres and frustrations of his colonialist authors. By the early twentieth century, this form of representation had taken on a life of its own. Effectively, it had become an ‘autonomized’ genre bearing even less comparison to the multivocal public sphere in which a variety of Indo-Muslim movements were then claiming their place, than had the plethora of rebellious constituencies to the single-minded religious mission of his forebear, the murderous Muslim ‘fanatic’ of 1857.

Far from being ‘get-at-able’, then, it is the very elusiveness of the Indian Muslim of Anglo-Indian discourse that underwrote his descriptive isolation. The concentration in this thesis on the first quarter century following the outbreak of rebellion in 1857 brings to light some of the less instrumental British compulsions that drove the later concession of the principle of segregation. It could be argued that the historiography of this process has been constrained by an underlying contradiction about the nature of the British conception of their Indian Muslim subjects. Robinson has placed this conception – that they were ‘regarded, quite wrongly, as separated, distinct and monolithic’ – at the generative hub of his explanation of the evolution of the India Councils Act of 1909. He looks upon it as a ‘self-sustaining’ belief, engendering the Aligarh Movement of the late nineteenth century, which in turn reinforced the conviction by demanding, between 1906 and 1909, the legislative enactment of its underlying rationale.<sup>1</sup> Yet there remains in his otherwise lucid summary of these events a vacillation between the insistence that arguments regarding British ‘divide and rule’ tactics have been comprehensively refuted, and the persisting key observation that the Muslims nevertheless represented to the Government of India ‘an important conservative force’.<sup>2</sup> The account of British motivations offered above proposes an alternative mode of explanation. As essentially a discourse about power,

---

<sup>1</sup> Robinson, *Separatism*, p 173.

<sup>2</sup> Robinson, *Separatism*, pp 163-64. The refutation referred to is that found in Matiur Rahman, *From Consultation to Confrontation: A Study of the Muslim League in British Indian Politics, 1906-12* (London: Luzac & Co, 1970), Chapters IV and V. For an emphatic statement of the ‘divide and rule’ arguments, see M N Das, *India Under Morley and Minto: Politics Behind Revolution, Repression and Reforms* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1964), Chapter VI.

the British conception of Indian Muslims goes beyond the idea of manipulation, and questions the priority, and stability, of the notion that they were a unified and separate organic entity. Instead, after 1857 this discourse *requires* them to be represented as such, in order that the British understanding of their own relationship to Indian society might be preserved intact. That is, Anglo-Indians came to require a constant clarification of Indo-Muslim separateness and unity as a means of forestalling an engagement with the ambivalence, and instabilities, contained in their own self-projection as the secular, neutral and discontinuous arbiter of that society. It is through this guiding rationale that the British were vulnerable to an unreasoning 'high regard for the trouble it was believed that the Muslims as a whole could cause', itself consolidating, legitimising, and indeed magnifying, Muslim League claims to segregated representation on behalf of that putative unity.<sup>3</sup> Thus, despite his resistance to League claims, Viceroy Minto ultimately found himself throughout the negotiations directed by the dictum 'that though the Mahomedan is silent he is very strong.'<sup>4</sup> Indeed, his initial opposition exemplifies the fact that this was a communal consensus that spread right across the Anglo-Indian political spectrum, and made of it such an effective force in bringing about a Liberal Government change of heart in London.<sup>5</sup> When former Lieutenant Governor of the United Provinces, now Lord Macdonnell, identified himself as the most outspoken opponent of the Act in London, he made his case from within that spectrum. His thesis therefore echoed that of his rival spokesman in London, Alfred Lyall, then advising Secretary of State Morley to support the establishment of separate electorates.<sup>6</sup> Where Lyall had, twenty years earlier, seen the Indian Muslim as deceptively displaced in his Indian environment, Macdonnell centred his rhetoric on the incontrovertible fact that the Hindus were the 'real people' of India.<sup>7</sup> In doing so, he also drew indirectly upon Hunter's conceit of the falsified and falsifying Indian Muslim, through the eradication of whose

<sup>3</sup> Robinson, *Separatism*, p 167.

<sup>4</sup> Quoted in Robinson, *Separatism*, p 168.

<sup>5</sup> Robinson, *Separatism*, p 155-59, 168-89.

<sup>6</sup> Robinson, *Separatism*, p 170.

<sup>7</sup> Quoted in Robinson, *Separatism*, pp 170-72.

(Mughal) institutions ‘the existence of the People discloses itself.’<sup>8</sup> What Macdonnell failed to intuit was that separate electorates were perhaps the most effective manner of making this point, while still leaving open the possibility of making it again at a later date. The implications this reading of the political vocabulary of 1906-9 might have for analyses of the Partition of India in 1947 would need to be carefully explored in regard to the subsequent development of colonialist discourse in this respect. Nevertheless, the reprinting of Steel’s guidebook indicates that this discourse retained some currency among Metropolitan readers well into the 1920s.<sup>9</sup> And Ayesha Jalal’s study of the diplomatic manoeuvres leading up to that final concession would tentatively suggest that the post-war British administration in India was more susceptible to the logic of segregation than anyone, including its ‘sole spokesman’, had imagined.<sup>10</sup>

Although the primary emphasis has been on addressing the apparent inconsistencies in colonialist rhetoric regarding Indian Muslims, the Anglo-Indian liability to the logic of partitioning is only one application of the conclusions stated in this thesis. There are three further areas of enquiry towards which this study might be directed. The first of these entails a re-evaluation of the complex interactions between Indo-Muslim and Anglo-Indian rhetorical strategies in this period, along the lines of the ‘dialogic’ analyses suggested by Christopher Bayly and Eugene Irschick.<sup>11</sup> This is the kind of textual investigation to some extent already undertaken by scholars such as Amrita Shodhan who has, for instance, contextualised the reformulation of Ismaili self-representations during the mid-nineteenth century in terms of their interactions with Anglo-Muhammadan law.<sup>12</sup> Similarly, Farzana Shaikh has explored the nexus

<sup>8</sup> Hunter, p 161.

<sup>9</sup> In this respect, some of the forms of interpretation applied in this thesis with regard to the mutual inscription of Anglo-Indian and Indian Muslim, as well as the rationale of segregation, could also be applied to E M Forster’s *A Passage to India* (1924).

<sup>10</sup> Ayesha Jalal, *The Sole Spokesman: Jinnah, the Muslim League and the Demand for Pakistan* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985). The successive reprints of Steel’s *India* would certainly point toward the continuing hegemony of these perceptions in Metropolitan Britain throughout the 1920s.

<sup>11</sup> Bayly, *Empire*, p 370; Irschick, p 4.

<sup>12</sup> Shodhan, Chapter 3.

between Islamic consensus and nineteenth-century colonialist forms of limited political representation; and Javed Majeed and Christopher Shackle have recently picked out and interpreted the incorporation of some Protestant cultural influences into Hali's *Musaddas*.<sup>13</sup> However, the conclusions reached in this thesis about the instabilities that characterise this colonialist discourse, and the importance of Islam as a point of reference for British images of power in India, may encourage the analysis of a text like *Musaddas* for its cognate interrelationship of ideas of power and loss. In particular, it suggests that in reformulating an Urdu rhetoric of loss and regeneration, Hali may at some level have drawn upon, and perhaps partly addressed, points of vulnerability apprehended in Anglo-Indian discourse. Similarly, it might be argued that in seeking a means of transcending the divisions within its putative constituency, the text perceives, re-appropriates, and weaves into the ideal of the 'charismatic community', the very note of deferred self-definition that had proved so dangerously appealing to an Anglo-Indian audience.<sup>14</sup> Such an analysis might prove fruitful for reinterpretations of the marked ambivalence evident in some of the subsequent genres of Urdu literature that drew so extensively on the *Musaddas* and whose multivalent rhetoric has so far been understood purely, and pejoratively, in terms of 'lament' and literary degeneration.<sup>15</sup>

At the same time, a similar line of enquiry may illuminate Sayyid Ahmad Khan's more direct engagement with Anglo-Indian discourse in his earlier publications, *The Causes of the Indian Revolt* (1859), and *An Account of the Loyal Mohammedan of India* (1860). The role of these works in the later development of the Aligarh Movement has rarely been addressed in detail; and yet it is here that his

<sup>13</sup> Shaikh; Shackle and Majeed, *Hali's Musaddas*, pp 1-80.

<sup>14</sup> The concept of the 'charismatic community' in nineteenth century Indo-Islamic thought is discussed in Francis Robinson, 'Nation Formation: the Brass Thesis and Muslim Separatism', in *Journal of Commonwealth and Comparative Politics*, 15, 3 (November 1977); and Robinson, 'Islam and Muslim Separatism' in D Taylor and M Yapp (eds), *Political Identity in South Asia* (London: SOAS, 1979), pp 78-112.

<sup>15</sup> See in particular, Ram Babu Saksena, *A History of Urdu Literature* (Allahbad: Ram Narain Lal, 1927); and Muhammad Sadiq, *A History of Urdu Literature* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, repr. 1995; 1964). For a critique of these works, see Pritchett.

claims to represent the Muslims of India to the British were first evolved.<sup>16</sup> In both works, Sayyid Ahmad Khan appears to be attempting to draft the assertion of unity in the British belief in ‘conspiracy’ into the task of describing an ‘imagined’ pan-Indian Muslim community.<sup>17</sup> In *Causes* in particular, he can be seen trying to suborn Anglo-Indian definitions of Indian Muslims as foreign to India, to the assumptions of the *sharif* elite, in order to claim for them an exceptional treatment, but one that masks the slippages between communities based on class.<sup>18</sup> Moreover, this is done from the perspective of a group that had rarely before identified itself exclusively in terms of religion.<sup>19</sup> Yet at other points, he seems to draw up distinctions and exclusions that contradict this conflation of terms. What emerges is a highly ambiguous discourse in which the precise nature of the ‘Muhammadan’ community under discussion is almost as opaque a presence (and of course, powerful for its opacity) as that of the British ‘Mutiny’ accounts it corrects. In the same way, Sayyid Ahmad Khan clearly plays on British anxieties in regard to acting through an Indian political idiom already colonised by Mughal precedent;<sup>20</sup> and similarly, it could be argued that he manipulates British fears over their dangerous visibility as Christians in India.<sup>21</sup> On the other hand, there is also evidence within the text that the author actually accedes to some of the Anglo-Indian assumptions regarding the size and predominance of Muslim involvement in 1857, even as he later specifically questions them.<sup>22</sup> These instances of a by turns conflicted, exploitative and collaborative, dialogue between Anglo-Indian and Indo-Muslim discourses open out a rich vein for the reinterpretation of later nineteenth-century Muslim ‘loyalism’ and early twentieth-century ‘separatism’ as vehicles for the negotiation of intensely hybrid and fluid idioms of

<sup>16</sup> See for instance, Lelyveld, pp 74-75.

<sup>17</sup> The sense indicated here is that used by Benedict Anderson in regard to the role of imagination in shaping nationalist communities. Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1983).

<sup>18</sup> Sayyid Ahmad Khan, *Causes of the Indian Revolt*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, repr. 2000; 1873), p 35.

<sup>19</sup> Lelyveld, pp 28-32.

<sup>20</sup> Khan, *Causes*, pp 11, 33, 48-49.

<sup>21</sup> Khan, *Causes*, pp 16-20.

<sup>22</sup> Khan, *Causes*, p 35, 47-50.

self-representation.<sup>23</sup> It is only through such dialogic investigations that we can begin to open out the narrow historiographical perception of ‘the contented client of Syed Ahmad’s time’;<sup>24</sup> and to properly question the prematurely sealed hypothesis that ‘by 1909, a Muslim identity was firmly established in Indian politics.’<sup>25</sup>

The second area of enquiry entails pursuing the deceptive fixity of British constructions of Indian Muslims into a reassessment of the evolution of Hindu nationalist thought. In particular, the conclusions reached in this thesis about the figure of the Indian Muslim as a disorientating point of comparison can be productively applied to a re-evaluation of the writings of ideologues such as V D Savarkar in the 1920s and 1930s. In this respect, the late nineteenth-century colonialist discourse on Islam in India has, for instance, been insufficiently explored in relation to Savarkar’s attempts, through his concept of ‘Hindutva’, to construct a monolithic category of Hinduism using Islam as a self-evident stable and exemplary organic entity.<sup>26</sup> Perhaps now more than ever, this kind of reconsideration is urgently needed. It could, for instance, help towards excavating the colonial genealogy of the speech by Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee to the Bharatiya Janata Party leaders in Goa during the communal massacres in Gujarat in April-March 2002. His references to the despotism of ‘jehadi Islam...which wants to mould the entire world’, and his insistence that ‘wherever there are Muslims, they do not want to live with others (who practise different faiths)’, are strikingly reminiscent of those of Alfred

<sup>23</sup> This sort of analysis might also be deployed on other textual levels, both in order to test the fluidity of discourses throughout the different levels of Anglo-Indian administration, and the dialogic ways in which they were received and reformulated in Indian society. One such nexus in this respect, might be Gauri Viswanathan’s recent study of the late nineteenth-century Bengal Census, and the way in which Islam was seen by colonial census enumerators and interpreters as secondary to an originary and mediating Hinduism (Viswanathan, pp 163-72). Subjects were therefore to be designated Muslim only to the extent that they demonstrated their distance from Hinduism through explicitly Arabian Islamicised features – a form of bias directly connected to the discourse this thesis has been examining. This institutionalised interpretation might then productively be studied in terms of its complex interaction with the process of ‘ashrafisation’ by which similar emphases were being sought out by socially-mobile Indian Muslim respondents. On late nineteenth-century ‘ashrafisation’, see Shaikh, p 4; Eaton, *Rise*, pp 121-22; and Ahmed, *Bengal*, Chapter Four.

<sup>24</sup> Robinson, *Separatism*, p 173.

<sup>25</sup> Robinson, *Separatism*, p 173.

<sup>26</sup> See for instance, Jaffrelot, *Hindu*, pp 17-33.

Lyall.<sup>27</sup> Where Vajpayee spoke of Muslims' preference 'to preach and propagate their religion by creating fear and terror in the minds of others', over a century and a quarter earlier, Lyall had written of:

Mahomedans, with their tenets distinctly aggressive and spiritually despotic, [and who] must always be a source of disquietude to us so long as their theologic notions are still in that uncompromising and intolerant stage when they openly encourage the natural predilection of all devout believers for the doctrine that their first duty is to prevail and, if need be, to persecute.<sup>28</sup>

Indeed, in terms of the prohibition of self-identification discussed in this thesis, the ideological crisis besetting the BJP-led coalition government bears some troubling points of resemblance to that of British governance in late colonial India.<sup>29</sup>

Finally, this thesis is intended as a contribution towards some of the more general, and embattled, recent attempts by scholars to disaggregate the monolithic categories through which Islam is still being constructed, both in countries of the North and of the South. Savarkar's consideration of the problem of unity frequently expressed itself in terms of what he called 'Pan-isms', which he saw as opposed to the unified territorial constituency of Hindus he sought to build; and chief among these 'Pan-isms' was the global reach and cohesive foreign allegiances of Islam.<sup>30</sup> The 'Hindu nation' was thus crucially reliant upon precisely the same binary construction that had sustained post-'Mutiny' Anglo-Indian discourse, in which the problems in the definition of the one category were deferred by focussing on the unreachable monolithic plenitude of the other. The reciprocity examined in this kind of binary in late nineteenth-century colonial India finds a further chilling echo in the crisis of definitions manifesting itself through the current revaluation of 'worldwide' Muslim 'conspiracy'.<sup>31</sup> It is a strategy of self-representation most famously put

<sup>27</sup> 'Vajpayee Hits Out at Jehadi Islam' in *The Hindu*, Saturday, 13 April 2002.

<sup>28</sup> Lyall, 'Islam', p 242.

<sup>29</sup> On this crisis, see 'The Best of Times for Hindutva' in *Business Standard*, Tuesday, 16 April 2002; and Thomas Blom Hansen and Christophe Jaffrelot, *The BJP and the Compulsions of Politics in India* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, repr 2001; 1998).

<sup>30</sup> Jaffrelot, *Hindu*, pp 26-27.

<sup>31</sup> Edward W Said, *Covering Islam: How the Media and the Experts Determine How We See the Rest of the World* (London: Vintage, repr. 1997; 1981), pp xxiv-xxxvi; Joel Beinin and Joe Stork (eds), *Political Islam: Essays from Middle East Report* (London: I B Tauris, 1997), Chapter Three.

forward by Bernard Lewis in his article, 'The Roots of Muslim Rage', and Samuel Huntington in his thesis on the 'Clash of Civilizations', and now given a political programme in the 'global war on terror' announced by the Bush administration.<sup>32</sup> The reliance this rhetoric places upon the perceived global cohesiveness of the category of Islam disguises the reciprocity at work between that elusive entity and the no less problematic, and plural, category of 'the West'. The historical invariance of the former as 'primitive and backward' is set in contradistinction to the historically situated 'modernity' of the latter; at the same time, the implicitly secular, neutral and democratising agenda of the latter is determined through the unremitting, predatory and despotic 'fanaticism' of its Islamic opponents.<sup>33</sup> As in colonial India, the intrusion of Islam obscures the local and political landscape, summoning up an answering, uninflected 'Western' 'Pan-ism'. Nor is this kind of binary deployment of Islam as a category solely the province of 'Western' ideologues. In his discussion of the 'discourse of cultural authenticity' that has played such an important role in the reform movements of the Arab Middle East since the end of the nineteenth century, Aziz Al-Azmeh has pointed out the workings of a not dissimilar set of occluding, oppositional categories. They result, in the language of reformers, in the construction of identities that are essentially 'empty', predicated – like Said's 'paranoid' discourse of 'Orientalism' – on a fundamental 'act of naming.'<sup>34</sup> In both the rhetoric of the reformers and in Western constructions of ontological Islamic difference, what is at stake is the 'unreflected assumption of the fixity and finality of the interlocutors', each seeking to stabilize itself through the naming of the other as discrete, homogenous and all too often, antagonistic.<sup>35</sup> As this thesis has argued in terms of the maintenance of the self-construction of British rule in India, such discourses rely upon, and can so easily be traduced by, the fatal appeal of monolithic designations. In

<sup>32</sup> Bernard Lewis, 'The Roots of Muslim Rage', *The Atlantic Monthly* 266 (September, 1990); Samuel P Huntington, 'The Clash of Civilizations', *Foreign Affairs* (summer, 1993). For critical discussions of these articles, see the new Introduction to the 1997 edition of Said's *Covering*; and Beinin and Stork, *Political*, pp 3-25.

<sup>33</sup> Said, *Covering*, pp 10-11, 30.

<sup>34</sup> Al-Azmeh, p 91.

<sup>35</sup> Al-Azmeh, p 17.



the Anglo-Indian image of Islam in India, the religious element concealed an ambivalent secular agenda; the foreign persona, a desire for an indigenous berth; and the perception of an unshakeable unity, the terror of a collapsing communal imperative. The task facing the analyst of a not dissimilar reascent image of Islam is therefore to uncover beneath its rhetoric of the 'clash of civilizations', the concealed recognition of a familiar hybridity.

# APPENDIX

**APPENDIX  
NOT DIGITISED AT THE  
REQUEST OF THE  
UNIVERSITY.**